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POETS YOU'VE
NEVER READ



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POETS YOU LOVE

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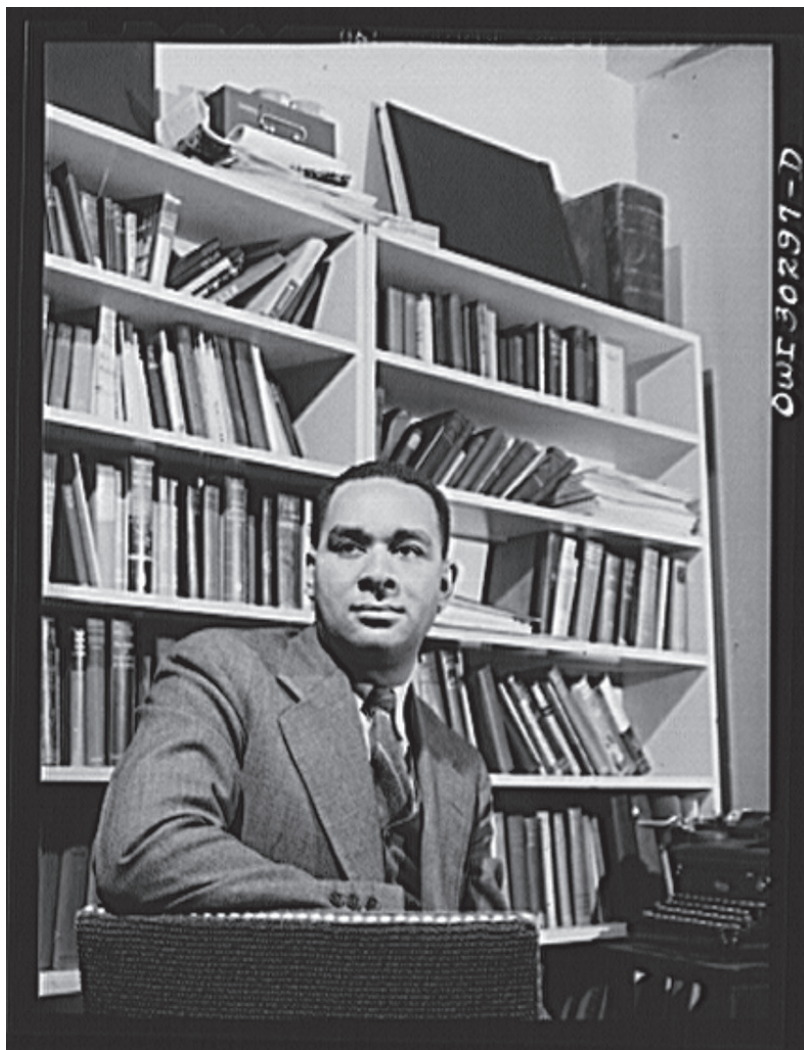
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RONNIE BURK

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RICHARD WRIGHT

1908- 1960

Of course, Richard Wright's prose is roundly celebrated. And, last fall, I reread *Black Boy*, his 1945 memoir that opens with his upbringing in Mississippi and Arkansas—then on to Chicago and his involvement with Communist Party. His prose-style is so exhilarating. We all know that much. I can't recall when I "discovered" his haiku—within the past ten years—and, in my mind, Wright's haiku are one of best by an American. How did these come into being? While ill and in exile, he picked up a book of haiku and this transformed his writing practice. His daughter Julia Wright has said, "My father's law in those days revolved around the rules of haiku writing, and I remember how he would hang pages and pages of them up, as if to dry, on long metal rods strung across the narrow office area of his tiny sunless studio in Paris [.]" In eighteen months, he wrote over four thousand. Scholar Jerry W. Ward, Jr. has written: "The attention to his poetry ought to be conducted with the same rigor we accord to his novels[.]"

—Kimiko Hahn, author of *Foreign Bodies: Poems*

459

I am paying rent
For the lice in my cold room
And the moonlight too.

755

A bloated dead cat
Emerging from melting snow
On a tenement roof.

816

Heading toward the sea,
Drifting into the cold rain,—
How strong the smoke is!

382

A valley village
Lies in the grip of moonlight:
How lonely it is.

812

Blossoming purple,
A forgotten artichoke
In a dark cupboard.



WENDY ROSE

Wendy Rose's career is among the most unusual in American writing. Born in Oakland in 1948 to a Hopi father and a mother of Miwok and European descent, Rose grew up in San Francisco with virtually no connection to any tribal community. In the mid-60s, Rose dropped out of high school and became active in AIM (American Indian Movement); she even took part in the Alcatraz Occupation. Eventually, Rose enrolled in college, bouncing around various community colleges before landing at Berkeley, where she earned a degree in anthropology. She went on to earn both an MA and a PhD in Anthropology and enjoyed a long teaching career at Berkeley, Fresno City College, and California State, Fresno. Rose served as the editor of the *American Indian Quarterly* and has worked as an illustrator, professor, researcher, historian, anthropologist, and poet.

Her first collection of poems, *Hopi Roadrunner Dancing*, was published in 1973. Several other collections followed including *Academic Squaw: Reports to the World from the Ivory Tower* (1977); *What Happened When the Hopi Hit New York* (1982); *The Halfbreed Chronicles and Other Poems* (1985); *Lost Copper* (1980), which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize; *Bone Dance: New and Selected Poems 1965–*

1992 (1994); and *Itch like Crazy* (2002). While Rose was establishing a reputation as a poet, she was also doing pioneering work as an anthropologist, writing about women in Tasmania and aboriginal tattooing in California.

Rose's poems are often characterized formally by a high mix of narrative and lyric structures and thematically by historical and personal trauma. Much of her early work chronicles a search for identity as a mixed-race woman, a feminist, and a political activist. Rose's work is remarkable for its ability to identify and name various sites as contact zones—California, the academy, the female body, the field of ethnography, and even American poetry.

Although Rose is virtually unknown in mainstream American poetry circles, she is revered among Indigenous writers and scholars. Along with writers like Leslie Marmon Silko and Paula Gunn Allen, Rose influenced an entire generation of Indigenous women poets, including Deborah Miranda, who cites Rose and her work, especially "Excavation at the Santa Barbara Mission" as critical to her development as a poet. Though she has not published a book of poems in over twenty years, Rose, who lives in the mountains near Yosemite National Park, is still writing.

—Dean Rader, author of *Self Portrait as Wikipedia Entry*

ALIEN SEEDS

(on reading a book about plants growing
wild in California)

How is it that I did not know the gold hillside near my house
is as foreign to the land as any intruder, as the straight boards
and liquid rock poured onto the land where my house stands?
All these, wild oats, the strangling grass, even the succulents
with the secret of moisture within, the tumbleweed
rode on the tails of strange beasts or were caught
in the wool of Spanish sheep. How can I not feel
the killing, the massacre that cleared the valley, the foothills,
the mountains of my kind? For every seed, its wagon train;
rhizomes colonize underground, spines catch foxes
on their little hooks—barbed wire crosses our nations
and taproots suck the stolen dew
no matter how dry the desert.
Thistles thrive on the most ravaged flesh;
invaders ruthlessly kill just as the bloodthirsty men
who drove their cattle from shrine to shrine
lowered their rifles, aimed, fired.
The Elders have always known this.
They fast and pray, then hunt
for exactly the right kind of grass
as their grandmothers before them;
they pick a few, never the first one,
never more than they need.
They return home with great art in their eyes.
And now they walk forever with empty hands,
baskets made thin with ribs sticking out.
Beads, yarn, safety pins replace beargrass and willow.
Eucalyptus rolls its seeds on the ground,
we slip and fall, hurtle into the sacrifice,
gather not grass but sorrow in our hands.
Vanishing Americans, endangered species,

vermin and weeds, call it what they will,
rock hard places where bones rattle down.

I EXPECTED MY SKIN AND BLOOD TO RIPEN

When the blizzard subsided four days later [after the massacre in 1890 at Wounded Knee], a burial party was sent . . . a long trench was dug. Many of the bodies were stripped by whites who went out in order to get the Ghost shirts and other accoutrements the Indians wore . . . the frozen bodies were thrown into the trench stiff and naked . . . only a handful of items remain in private hands . . . exposure to snow has stiffened the leggings and moccasins, and all the objects show the effects of age and long use . . . [items pictured for sale] moccasins \$140; hide scraper \$350; buckskin shirt \$1200; womens' leggings \$275; bone breastplate \$1000 . . .

—Kenneth Canfield's 1977 Plains Indian Art Auction Catalog

I expected my skin and blood
to ripen, but not be ripped from my bones;
like fallen fruit I am peeled, tasted,
discarded. My seeds open
and have no future.
Now there has been no past.
My own body gave up the beads,
my own hands gave the babies away
to be strung on bayonets,
to be counted one by one
like rosary stones and then
tossed to the side of life
as if the pain of their birthing
has never been.
My feet were frozen to the leather,
pried apart, left behind—bits of flesh
on the moccasins, bits of paper deerhide
on the bones. My back was stripped
of its cover, its quilling intact,
was torn, was taken away.
My leggings were taken like in a rape

and shriveled to the size
of stick figures
like they had never felt the push
of my strong woman's body
walking in the hills.
It was my own baby
whose cradleboard I held—
would've put her in my mouth like a snake
if I could, would've turned her into a bush
or rock if there'd been magic enough
to work such changes. Not enough magic
to stop the bullets, not enough magic
to stop the scientists, not enough magic
to stop the money.

EXCAVATION AT SANTA BARBARA MISSION

*When archaeologists excavated Santa Barbara Mission in
California, they discovered human bones in the adobe walls.*

My pointed trowel
is the artist's brush
that will stroke and pry,
uncover and expose
the old mission wall.

How excited I am
for like a dream
I wanted to count myself
among the ancient dead
as a faithful neophyte
resting there and in love
with the padres
and the Spanish hymns.

A feature juts out. Marrow
like lace, piece of a skull,
upturned cup, fingerbones
scattered like corn
and ribs interlaced
like cholla.

So many bones
mixed with the blood
from my own knuckles
that dig and tug
in the yellow dust.

How fragile
they have become
to flowat and fall
with my touch,
brittle white tips
shivering into mist.

How helpless I am
for the deeper I go
the more I find
couching in white dust,
listening to the whistle
of longbones breaking
apart like memories.

My hands empty themselves
of old dreams,
drain the future
into the moisture
of my boot prints.
Beneath the flags
of three invaders,
I the hungry scientist
sustaining myself
with bones of
men and women asleep in the wall
who survived in their own way
Spanish swords, Fransiscans
and their rosary whips,
who died among the reeds
to wait, communion wafers
upon the ground, too holy
for the priests to find.

They built the mission with dead Indians.
They built the mission with dead Indians.
They built the mission with dead Indians.
They built the mission with dead Indians.



PETER EVERWINE

1930 - 2018

In a short poem in his book “Listening Long and Late,” Peter Everwine addresses Tu Fu. That Tu Fu supposedly wrote ten thousand poems, fifteen hundred or so of which survive, is important in the poem. Everwine tells Tu Fu that he himself doesn’t have a thought in his head, let alone a line of verse. He ends the poem, “Tu Fu, chatterbox of delight/to indolence must I now add envy?”

I don’t know a lot about Everwine. I know that he was born in Detroit in 1930—his family from the evidence of the poems was working class—and grew up in Western Pennsylvania. I know he went to the Iowa Writers Workshop in its early days. I know he taught for most of his career at the California State University, Fresno (more commonly known as Fresno State). (Phil Levine, who was a huge champion of his work, also had his home base there.) He was, by accounts I’ve heard, a masterful bluegrass banjo player (on both the four- and the five-string instruments). He seems to have been at least as passionate about his musicianship as he was about his poetry. The one conversation I had with him, in Fresno, at the beginning of this century, was almost all about music. I know he died in 2018.

As the Tu Fu poem suggests, Everwine wasn’t a prolific writer. A new and selected volume, published when he was in his seventies, is under a hundred pages. There are two books after that, which I don’t have but which are, I suspect, slender also, and four volumes of translations, two of the Hebrew poet Nathan Zach and two of Aztec poetry. Everwine was not a chatterbox. What he lacks in bulk, though, he makes up in accuracy, an accuracy that even Tu Fu might envy. This accuracy is first of all one of tone (that is among other things an outcome of his musicality). But the accuracy of tone is accompanied by a world of other accuracies—of image, feeling, plot, transition, all light, deft, unassuming, lightly disappearing into themselves except for little escarpments of emotion, touchingly inevitable. On the other side of technique, Everwine gives us a homeliness, in the old sense of the word, a hominess, a quiet privilege of truthfulness, an inflection of timed sentiment. The experience is the everyday, but also the experience is that the everyday is what there is, all there is, except for the silence that lingers after the poem, a silence that expatiates, that expands. The work of poetry might be to transform the noise of the world and the noise of the mind into silence. Everwine does this as well as it can be done.

—Vijay Seshadri, author of *That Was Now, This Is Then*

Speaking of Accidents

Given the general murkiness of fate
you might, in my mother's words, "Thank
your lucky stars," a phrase she'd drop
into the lull between calamities
like a rubbed stone, then nod wisely
while it sank home, pure poetry,
meaning she loved the sound of it
more than its truth.

But precisely here one needs discrimination.

Our town drunk, steering by streetlamp home one night,
as was his custom, got fooled
beyond recognition when a fast freight at the crossing
fixed him to its glare. "Some men
are like moths," we said, and that
was the poetry in it,
meaning his sudden somersault into light.
Truth is, the world fell in on him
as it commonly does when you stray
from the garden path and run head on
into the pain that, until then,
was as lost as you.

The trick is to risk collision,
then step back at the last moment:
that ringing in your ears
might be construed as the rush of stars.

We all want stars, those constellations
with the lovely names we've given them blossoming
in the icy windblown fields of the dark.
Desire is always fuming into radiance,

though even a drunk can't hope to ignore
some fixity underfoot, some vivid point
closer to home where all the lines converge—
scars, I mean,
not stars.

THE WEDDING

She steps from the train
into a town she can't pronounce.
One man is dead. Now this one stands
on the platform wearing a gray cap.

She folds the letter again, the one
she knows by heart, and follows him over a bridge.
The river colors the stones yellow,
almost the color of her hair.

They enter the grocery store of Tony Maridon,
paesan who has come before them.
There, in the dress she's worn for days,
with no blessings and no flowers,

she marries him. She marries the garlic, the wine,
the bags of salt, the dead rabbits hanging
like bloody sleeves, the star of oil,
the moon of bread . . .

Pinota Castelnuevo.

She never learns English.
She attends many funerals.
She herself dies, her house
is razed, her garden paved with cement.

Only then does she enter America.

THE MEMORY

Now the litanies begin
in a low voice.

Vineyard of Perosa,
Fountain of Scarmagne,
White road on the hill of St. Martin . . .

Let it be a photograph and a black ribbon,
the stone inside a name,
the darkness inside the stone.

Let it be an old man talking
to a glass of wine;
a woman, to the pain in her legs.

Ricordo, ricordo
like a thread, like the dead silk
in a woman's hair, like the good suit
in which a man will be buried . . .

Late dusk in the new world,
men straggling home from the mines,
clink of metal, rickety pump
under the arbor, the radio humming
from the kitchen, rising
into the dark . . .

There are sounds one comes to treat
like silence.

My grandfather taps at the screen, back from the dead
with his sack of whispers,
his itch to abandon anything.

We Meet in the Lives of Animals

In Mexico a red flag signifies fresh meat at the market.

1

The red flag is up.
The beasts who came to market
from the high fields of light
sprawl heavily from hooks—yellow
with fat, spread-legged,
still beaded with blood.
Having been gentle,
they came easily.
Having opened their breasts,
they give up everything—heart, kidneys,
flecked lungs, the frothy dark rivers of organs,
self-stink of panic and shit—
shameless, without malice.
Even the flies enter them like hives.

2

In the dirt yard next door
the widow Tomasa has fired up
her black kettle. She calls out,
and my son goes running.
“Here,” she says, cradling
a cow’s bloody head from which she scrapes
its stringy flesh. “Here,
hold open its eyes.
It will see our hunger.”

And my son’s eyes fill as he touches
those milky ones.

They’re poor, I tell him later.

3

He weeps and has bad dreams
and will not be comforted.
What can I tell him? That we live
on the suffering of others?
That this, too, will pass?
The red flag is up, is waving.
We bang our empty bowls
and come before the lives of animals,
greeting them with nails and empty palms
as they come marching, marching
in their bloody rags.

And still he weeps.

4

At the jaw’s hinge
my son has a soft blond down I love to touch.
It is the delicate grass
in which a lion sleeps, the silken weeds
where the crow comes to rest.
In the good dream we leave the road
and enter a pasture
in which the grass is filling with light.
We hear a quiet footfall and turn.
And it is something like love.

The Fish/Lago Chapala

Sunrise, the tiny
almost transparent fish of Chapala
drawn in nets.
All afternoon shining and steaming
on the roadsides, scattered
or in small mounds
like fingers of broken glass.

At nightfall the dog licks me
with his mouth of fish.
The children's hair is spangled
with the stars of fish.
Our shoes darken
in their skins of fish.

☛

This morning, a procession
on the road
—a priest, four men lugging
a small painted coffin,
some women in dark shawls.

Morning of heat and thin smoke on the hills,
morning of one less child.

The women washed it,
the priest wrapped it in incense,
the fields rose
and blessed it with dust . . .

a child in a blue box
enters the earth
in a fragrance of fish.

☛

*the land was mesquite
prickly pear
rock
he saw his face in the water
into a tiny bowl shaped like a black nut
he let fall one tear
one drop of blood
and cast it into the lake*

this happened so long ago

*the tear became a fish
the drop of blood became a fish*

we eat the harvest

This bright rhythm of the brain
dodges frequency, a wreck
driven blind by the headlights
of the oncoming lane. Damnation
written in his nerves, the driver

weaves home, choking on his tongue.
Inheritance ties itself through flesh,
simple as the wicker handcuffs
barkers sell at carnival. The harder
I pull, the tighter the weave.

Touching my fingers together,
the loose shackles fall away.
Why are my hands steady? Light
trembles in leaves, in delicate
ears of two mule deer.

Even my heart
stumbles, another father dissolved
in moments of not-looking,
lost in the strobe of trains
speeding for opposite states.

Indifferent son, I palm loose duff,
split the good grain, and watch it
unravel in the mad dance of fire.

A Child's Fear of Numbers

TO judge the height of trees, I'd find my own,
compare the length of shadows for a scale.
The way the missing piece fit what was known
was just the way light draws a triangle.

I don't know what it taught to pace the pear
tree off across the yard. I'd forget
more important things: the rule for square
roots or how the neighbor kids got beat.

When I was four foot eight, my favorite trees
were always over forty. Maybe I
learned something's not quite perfect. Even leaves
can't forget their origins. To try

this exercise yourself, think how rule one
says none of this will work without the sun.



ANNE SPENCER

1882 - 1975

Anne Spencer (1882-1975) was born Annie Bethel Scales in Henry County, Virginia. Her mother was the daughter of a formerly enslaved mother and a wealthy Virginia aristocrat; her father, who was black, white, and Seminole, had been born into slavery. Her parents separated and she was eventually sent to Virginia Seminary in Lynchburg, VA, where she excelled. She studied Greek, Latin, Kant and Emerson. Upon graduating, Anne married classmate Edward Spencer, who found a job as a mailman. With him she moved to a house in Lynchburg, which they lovingly restored with items he found on his mailman's route, and outside of which, in a second linked lot, she built a stone writing shed and an extraordinary garden.

The Spencers had three children, but hired help so that Anne could have time to write. They also served as local activists, hosting the first meeting of the Lynchburg NAACP, at which Spencer met James Weldon Johnson.

This meeting had two interesting after effects: One: It launched years in which the Spencers hosted visiting black writers and activists as they passed through the Jim Crow South. Zora Neale Hurston, WEB Dubois, Langston Hughes and others all visited and stayed, partly because the Spencers' home was one of the rare places these travelers could be assured safe and comfortable housing. But these visits also became a hub for Black Arts Movement thinking. The second after-affect of Johnson's visit was that Johnson took an interest in Spencer's poetry and passed it to New York editors. Spencer being published alongside others of the Harlem Renaissance despite never visiting Harlem. Through Johnson, Spencer began to publish her work.

Spencer's output was always small: She published about 30 poems in her life. There are about 48 useable scraps from her archive, and many tantalizing fragments. These are, for complex reasons still difficult to access. Her colorful home is beautifully restored and on view in Lynchburg Virginia, and her poems and papers are in the archive at UVA.

—Tess Taylor, author of *Rift Zone: Poems*

Lady, Lady, I saw your face,
Dark as night withholding a star....
The chisel fell, or it might have been
You had born so long the yoke of men.
Lady, Lady, I saw your hands,
Twisted, awry, like crumpled roots,
Bleached poor white in a sudsy tub,
Wrinkled and drawn from your rub-a-dub.
Lady, lady, I saw your heart,
And altered there in its darksome place
Were the tongues of flames the ancients knew,
Where the good God sits to spangle through.

NEIGHBORS

Ah, you are cruel;
You ask too much;
Offered a hand, a finger-tip,
You must have a soul to clutch.



RONNIE BURK

1875 - 1947

The work of Chicano poet, collage artist, and AIDS activist Ronnie Burk (1955-2003) speaks forcefully today in its brilliant re-enchantment of the surrealist imagination. Burk connected a variety of artistic and social formations in his commitment to a fiercely independent poetic practice marked by an arresting quality of mind and a unique cosmopolitanism. Involved first with the Texas-based Raza Unida party, he later joined postmodern sensibilities inspired by Lorna Dee Cervantes and Ana Castillo to the Euro-Anglo-American avant-garde of Diane di Prima, Anne Waldman, and Philip Lamantia, such NYC figures as poet Charles Henri Ford, filmmaker Kenneth Anger, and artists Julian Beck and Judith Malina of The Living Theater, as well as a host of Third World anti-colonial thinkers. His friend and fellow writer Inés Hernández-Ávila described his poetry as one that voiced “the crisis in civilization at the end of the twentieth century” while also finding “the trap door out of this oppressive society.”

—Roberto Tejada, author of *Why the Assembly Disbanded*

[The following poems are drawn from journals, chapbooks, anthologies; and unless otherwise noted, from “*Apocalyptic Vision: Poems* by Ronnie Burk,” edited by Garret Caples, *Caesura*, Aug 13, 2021: <https://caesuramag.org/posts/apocalyptic-vision-poems-by-ronnie-burk>]

TATTOO BONE SCAR

it was green veins of light shot
on black silk of my eyelids
where screaming black chunks
of obsidian shattered
like cracked teeth
bleeding out
of the riveted mouth
of a conch
where the porous surface
of your face was pitted
with wires where the cremated
hearts of hummingbirds fluttered
in mid-air where the stars turned
over our silver clouded breaths
of nicotine

[*Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, March 1, 1979 p 25]

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EN EL JARDIN DE NOPALES

the beetle turned the sun
over & over el sol
like a turd
in its claw
it crawled, clawed
at the hard kidney sone meteorites
falling into the heart of the nopal

black hearts a red sunflower
the amputated hand began speaking sign language to her
it said, "PETRA, THEY'RE ANTS CRAWLING UP MY SPINEBONE"
or was it black peppercorns in her dark stone molcajete?
it all smelled the same gutting the fish
her fingertips the shrimp that few into her hair.
stone columns of Tulastaring at you
a roach crawls over the yellow checkered plastic tablecloth

how the water tasted of insecticide

[*En el jardín de nopales* (San José: Mango Publications, 1979)]

//

DREAM ON A BUS ON WAY BACK FROM HOUSTON INTO GALVESTON, ASLEEP IN THE CHAIR

what's open/are you open
have you opened/will you open
the door is cracked enough to
see an eye peer thru
& I keep knocking, "won't you
open the door there is a
peacock standing in a black
oak tree won't you please
come see?"

[*Revista Chicano-Riqueña* March 1, 1979 p 25]

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UPON SEEING SCENES FROM "PLATEAU" I DECIDE TO WRITE A FEW LINES TO MEREDITH
MONK AND CO.

Idaho Springs, Colorado, 1978

thunderheads on the plains
white clouds sweeping
jagged edges of some
distant mountain pink

lavender thistles
tearing-up
the asphalt
when you look out
over the land you see
white phantom coyotes
chasing thru fields
of dried agave stalks

when you look over the land
you see, budding clumps
of prickly pear, red rocks
all along the roadway
you see, if you look
the sun riding the backs of ants
carrying away the seedcorn

[*Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, March 1, 1980, Vol. 8 Issue 3, p 25]

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BLACK TULIP

Mating in Elysian Fields horned lions are tearing at each other. The meat of angels sliced to little orange poison pills. Your head blossoming the steel conjunction of Mars. Heavenly centaur, your job is to draw the star from the flower. In Siberia Iron Planet Jesus walks on water. Instamatic Jesus of the last two thousand years burnt to a crisp. Beneath the boiling waters lobsters scream for their terrified lives. A crayfish draws a diagram of a dissected human. All the organs labeled with a number and a planet. In a glass furnace dolls are melting—hair, teeth and eyes. Yahweh's mind evaporating a thin-out coating of high octane [viral loads] the image of Shiva on a couch of tiger skins. The Orishas in the celestial vault working overtime.

//

MEDUSA

I have shrunk to a twig watching
your beautiful face covered with ivy & sunlight
What can I say?
I have fallen into the hole of your galaxy
wanting passage into the entranceway of your heart
I snuck past the guard at checkpoint
opening a valise I gave you
razors,
toothpaste,
shaving cream
Red jade grasshoppers came to haunt my garden
Yes! I even tried to humor you with love
Seeing my body as an opportunity for joy
I ran into the surf holding your severed head above the sea
the pleasure was all mine

//

RETABLO

1.

Was it Woman in the shape of a Tree?
pink breast on the bark wood
the leaves of her hair change color
tiny incisions of light follow Her
to a meadow

streams of Mercury run through
Her body heavy with fleshy,
stubborn, octopus-child

a Star in her belly foretells
the goddess She is
Athanor, Vase, Flower of Milk

2.

She said, "make me a poem of Guadalupe"
I said I cldn't do it not green stars
nor the bliss of Her Presence
would shine from the pages
the folds of clumsy paper

3.

Mother of the Stars, Mother of the Neters
Mater Materia's Al-Kemi
weaving the nets of Mother Maya
I stood on the hills of Tepeyac
the city behind me

4.

The sky people will drink
my blood. I will pass
through Gate or arbor.
Maguey thorns will pierce
my arms. I will pass before
Her dark forgiving Face
as I fly into
the sun.

[*Goddess of the Americas; La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, edited
by Ana Castillo, New York, Riverhead Books, 1996, 151-2]

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IN PRAISE OF SUN RA

SATURN RULES IN THE BLACK COLORS OF THE RAINBOW SUN RA YOUR HAWK'S BEAK
DEVOURING THE SILENCE SUN RA WHAT IS THIS SOUND? IS IT THE LOVE SONGS OF
HOMOSEXUAL BLUE WHALES FUCKING IN THE GREAT PACIFIC OCEAN? IS IT FESTIVE
TOADSTOOLS IN EMERALD-FEATHERED MITRES OF THE PRIESTS OF TLALOC? IS IT A
FRACTAL IN THE PYTHAGOREAN EQUATION? SUN RA THE TATTOOED MASKS OF POLYNESIA
SWINGING THE TEMPLE GONGS PAST FLOTATION BLARING THE MANTRA OF EQUILIBRIUM
(TIMBRE OF THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE AS DEFINED BY THE WAVY LINES OF OLD FATHER
TIME) EXCORIATING THE BLACK OOZE OF ORIGINAL MATTER CONDUCTING A CHAOS OF
ORDER INSTIGATING OUR MUTUAL DEPARTURE ON THE GOLD WINGS OF A SCARAB
THEREBY UNDOING THE SAMSARIC SPELL CAST UPON US FROM THE PLANET OF KARMA

//

TELEGRAM

THE HAIRBRAINED BIRD RESTS ITS FEATHER-BRUSH SKELETON ON THE AERIAL MAPS OF
ALLUVIAL DEW. EVEN IF THE POOL CUE FOUGHT THE CRAB THE ROUTE TO THE
WATERCRESS CHAMBER WOULD BE ABOUT THE SAME DISTANCE AS THE INTESTINES OF A
TRANSPARENT BIRD.

THE GULLIES WORRY ABOUT THE RIVERS, THE RIVERS WORRY ABOUT THE FORESTS, THE
FORESTS WORRY ABOUT THE MOUNTAINS. BUT THE LAKES! THOSE TURQUOISE LAKES OF
GREEN SNOW HAD BETTER FORGET ABOUT EVER JOINING THE HATPIN MOUSTACHE FOR
LUNCH.

COCKATOO BIRD SNAKE. QUETZALCOATL. BONE DRILL.

THE SCALPEL LEFT THE SWITCHBLADE BEHIND TO DISSECT THE RED BIRD ORGAN WHILE
THE DRAINPIPE RAN OFF THE WATER TABLE TO SHORT-CIRCUIT THE PLANKTON-FISH-
SPINE ELECTRODE UNIT.

//

SOL Y LUNA

sol

Blue sky what thoughts are you holding for me today?
Thousands of envelopes blow down the city streets
Each one crisp, clean, apparently brand new
My hand reaches down to pick one up
Inside is a tiny red heart
Can I create the feeling this is love?

luna

Feeding. Feeding the air blue moonlight. Feeding
the navel of the ocean wisdom. Feeding the earth
manure of human frailty.

Terra Firma. Before any earthquake: On a planet
full of craters we go digging for diamonds
in the black sands.

//

SKY*BOAT

to Will Alexander

In the Horned Kingdom Cernunnos traces the veins of Jerusalem
To a cracked cistern in a field of poppy flowers
My kabalistic egg hatching the Sephiroth of the Lost Planetary System
Iron plumes of the ten thousand eyes of Ezekiel's Beast
Swirling a cyclone of black coronas
His vajra of coffin nails and colored threads
Tied with burnt cherub medallions
In the apparition zone having set fire to water
Rabid dogs dance in a fusion of tungsten light
Inflorescence of that Little Man in the bottle
Separating the salt from the ash
The Tormented Mermaid searches for her children
Abandoned in the sewers of the world
Density of carbon auroras fishing for a pearl
In the tributaries of a majestic keyhole
Manta rays return to the lake of blood

My mother in her lunar costume beating Hydra's wing

*

Uruborus of my third eye curled up in a mollusk
Hekate's gallery sails over the storm
Extracting rays from a nugget in a lead box
She knows nothing about the somnolent

Footsteps of the Philosopher's Widow
At the doorway to the dungeons of chaos
Pericles on a razor blade incubating quicksilver
Distilling filigree of disintegrating planet
Extinguishing Mars

*

When the peacock in the blue bottle attacks its mate
The crippled farmer knows it's time to water his silver trees
Holding a lantern of fireflies
A washerwoman pierces the diamondback salamander
Smoldering beneath the rocks
The royal couple poured into a gelatin cube
In the radium mines a necklace of thorns
Strangles the cross-eyed Gemini
Always the sun & moon in one face

*

In a moment Toussaint l'Ouverture will enter the turquoise
morning of Nezahualcoyotl's calligraphy room
And place a lei upon Queen Lili'uokalani
Marking the vevé of the Ruby Queen
On his left shoulder covered with epaulets
He will proclaim the sovereign rights for
The Constitution of The Garden of Earthly Delights

Heraldic star of Neptune's ray black jade insignia of the eagle-serpent
on a column of nopal smoke

Demon-slayer of purified ore His child in the red suit is Chango
Guiding Erzulie's spangled boat in, to the face of Tlaloc in Aquarius
Ogun! Of the red squares chasing tigers in a black mirror
Always Taurus! Your mangled star in the chalkyard
Boiling the leper's cloth nursing the Century back to sleep
To keep disease from overriding the emaciated devi of the dried-up rice paddy
Uranium swallows the rats scurrying about the graves of suicide kings

//

Listen: <https://unrequitedrecords.bandcamp.com/album/ronnie-burk-a-man-of-letters>

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