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## Three Oriental Scenes

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## THREE ORIENTAL SCENES

## I. HUNGER

A withered old Chinaman in short cotton drawers  
Comes along the dock at Shanghai, carrying  
An old tin can and a piece of board.

Under the stream of water flushing garbage from the ship's galley

(A notable passenger list on the Pacific liner,  
Proud distinction to sit at the Captain's table;  
Artichokes and avocado pears, squab and delicate fish,  
Fresh cream, rich frozen desserts all the way  
From Seattle back to Seattle.) the old Chinaman

Holds the wooden paddle; what is solid enough  
To stick to it, he puts in the can for food.

## II. ROMANCE

(To Osunu-San)

Each enameled grace  
Of that far afternoon  
In Kobe comes back still,  
Osunu. Young you were;  
Your petalled tongue  
Breathed flowers  
On the hard bamboo couch,  
Where your embrace  
Perfumed the casual place.

But I remember too  
That through the open window  
In the lazy warmth of waning day  
There came the voices  
Of American sailors  
Downstairs drinking beer.

## III. AFTER THREE YEARS IN THE TROPICS

I was grateful to the friend who pointed out the Southern Cross  
To me in Manila (fourteen degrees North Latitude).  
We stood on the seawall of brown rocks  
Beside Fort San Antonio Abad. The splendid night

Glowed. (Four hours before behind Mt. Mariveles—  
Now darkly grand far across the bay—sunset had been,  
As commonly after the rainy season ended, magnificent.)  
The calm bay sparkled, and a whiff  
From the *estero*, stagnant-rank nearby,  
Almost but not quite overwhelmed the breath  
Of the garden at the end of *Calle M. H. del Pilar*.

But seeing the great constellation of that other hemisphere,  
I felt none of the wide wondering awe that held me  
When as a boy I stood with family and neighbors  
(Near Niagara, North forty-two degrees)  
In our own backyard and surveyed the sky  
Alive with the circus of the Northern Lights.

C. V. WICKER

### RETURN IN THE RAIN

We left the heat behind; there were spatters of rain.  
We forgot the dryland in rising to Raton Pass  
and gazing down on the wet trees in the valleys,  
the lupines of indescribable blue enhanced  
by the rain, and locusts pink with clustered bloom;  
and among the red rocks and pines the purple thistles,  
and the mountain flowers I gathered as a child.

Now another dryland valley, with prairie dog cities  
I remember also from childhood; and beyond them,  
my eyes follow the familiar strange shapes of the mountains,  
seen through the unfamiliar and incongruous  
pouring of rain upon these arid hills,  
with the thunder loud in the skies accustomed to turquoise  
and bright sun now metamorphosed into lightning.

I have come to what once long ago was home,  
but now is changed and strange.

Then I see the piñons,  
bringing the memory of smoke like incense