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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