

THIRTEEN HORSES IN TWELVE STABLES
By
Edgar Paiewonsky-Conde

About these poems: they were written in New York City at a time when my breathing still sounded like the reaching out and letting go of the Caribbean on the soft sand. And the emptiness of presence and the plenitude of absence of that city and that sea were like being on both ends of the focused look of death. About poetics: there is only the one sense of the sound and in the sound the image that is the five senses of the imagination and in the image a breadth that is feeling and a depth that thinks.

—Edgar Paiewonsky-Conde

Flora: An Ode

*for the people
of Oriente
killed by the storm
October 1963*

I

A red south wind in winding
the newly awakened babes
to bite the meat of milk breasts
and grow their fingernails:

rev . o . lu . tion

and the wind carries scars and corns in open envelopes,
pain-eaten edges, bread rains, ammunition longings, resolutions
and the pistils petals pollen of the Cuban flower across an old America.

II

Flora

marooned the coastal groves of antiquity and sought the north
to found her new temple in the executive washroom:

with the breast buttoned up to the neck
eyes like a pair of glasses
hearts stretched like pockets
compounded sweat
priest's hands
devotion
nine men: nine men
neon needles speeding in their penis
precipitate bloom in the folds of the goddess:

fuel feed floods hollows
reaches between the teeth of wheels
blossoms two hundred and twenty four flowers a minute:

it will be a good autumn.

III

an invocation by drums:

come
worm-
blown
bellied
baby's
unbroken
toy
come
whore's
night-long
bee-stung
cunt's
dew-dawn
blue
come
dusty girl's
gnarled
scalp's
only
silky
hair
come

green
this green
with a blue
or white
just
one hole
in this green
of greens

IV

And she came
but she had learned unnatural ways.
She came in autumn
and her flowers were like office fans
her petals
like blades.

V

Island hooked to the cross-eyed sea.
 Rocky head, nail to the fish.
 Grain of smells in the salty sea.
 Sweat that blasts wide in the fish.

The sun chewed meters and needles
 and forgot the sun in salivas of cane.
 The peasants lingering on the stone of dawn
 felt burning cocks flap in their feet.
 With soil in their cells and cells in soil
 from a time of land as a mother owned
 with offspring like dandruff offerings
 to the owning green hunger of flowers.
 A furious meet of needless awls
 pricks nature in the beast, the blue-
 bled sea, in the breast, air
 rushing air up, to cram,
 to crisp the clouds, the white, the eyes.
 The sea a lumbar lunatic
 rams the doors of shore.
 Sky a giant piston
 pounds and pounds the ground.
 Vegetal huts are slumbering
 like snails in a rain of nails.
 The wind is a rodent pledged
 to woo a fledgeling's heart.
 With fishes gaping out
 from the sockets of her eyes
 Angela Santos Martínez
 beats with her baffled tongue
 the animal heart of Jesus.

Cattle butter packs
cracked bark.
Whitest salt
sharpest sucks
nipple's milk.
Slippery people
hold the hills
while behind
the old collide
like crippled crabs.

When the sea was sea
and even trees felt pain
and winds inhaled ensconced in scab
and fur feather hair caked with one same sadness
and legs were standing out of the ground
and the ground was sown with everything
then the sun resumed his unassuming air
and people made new roads as they descended.

17 St. Mark's Place: Self-Portrait 1

the leaves have given up their place: in the branch
october monday morning moves
without interruption

the boys are proud to spell their names: at school
they yawn beyond themselves: they glow
like sons of sons of prophets

I autumn walk from block to block: I move
within from street to street as if
my bones would never end

I flow like milk in endless trucks: I in-
tegrate my space: the pale diminished sun
knows all my names

17 St. Mark's Place: Self-Portrait 2

places
I cannot get to
in my mouth
infinitesimal grottoes
where eggwhite
has gone gray
outside I have much use for trees
they trafficlight my steps
they orchestrate my voices
voices
numbed by numbers
stamped and unaddressed
make their rounds
in packs
beyond dead ends
give me a treeless block
and I rush
in
through the front
then out to the back
where vegetarian eagles and octogenarian bluecollar rednecks
sip in cups october leave juice
where bruise-checked breezes braid
sweet blind sweat of brown
where shaven conductors rock without shame
eggs crack from inner knockings
and the sun bisymmetric
roundness
rehearsing stasis
recesses
sky

Ana Kushner

1887-1966

During the hurricane season the tourists never came.
 In routine weather
 they came, ready
 to give up a bone for a bargain.
 Of all the stores
 the beach was most
 economical: the sun, they thought, was
 skin-deep.
 We in the island knew the price.
 We knew that even faucets choked with water
 when the sea was running in the gutter.
 We knew, subtle, fatal, a sisterhood in water.

*Lord, show me this day
 the rusty rectitude of nails
 the thin peeled wall that never fails
 behind these photographs.*

Eleven years ago hurricanes first felt the fixed sadness
 of a circus lioness, seasons
 lost their contours, Main Street rats
 were decimated, and the tourists flooded the place
 all year round; eleven years ago
 I tore down my curtains, painted white
 the window panes, hung my oldest photographs.

They are my life.
Forever I sit and watch them scrutinize
the clumsy acrobatics of my face.
Tissue water waste caves in my skin.
Standing, I waver on the tightrope of my spine.

*Lord, show me this day
the rusty rectitude of nails
the pale blank space that never fails
behind each photograph.*

Brain bride bribes spies tail tide ties eyes cry each night no sky

Days

My weekdays pile in me like dirty clothes.
 The door is locked: is this inside or out?
 I keep my Sundays empty as my house.

I Edgarize my hours, towels, nose.
 I have ten fingerprints all of my own.
 My weekdays pile in me like dirty clothes.

Where heavy chairs stood once in repose
 the little lizards do their push-ups now.
 Empty as a Sunday I keep this house.

I love the way you talk: so well-composed.
 Your words are like a napkin on my mouth.
 My weekdays pile in me like worn out clothes.

The curtains hang like curtains: from their toes.
 I write these verses Monday, almost now,
 but always as a Sunday keep this house.

I've lost the breath to say my yes-and-no's.
 Between (within) these letters whiteness sounds.
 Weekdays pile like dirty worn out clothes.
 Empty always Sunday keeps this house.