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Patricia De La Fuente

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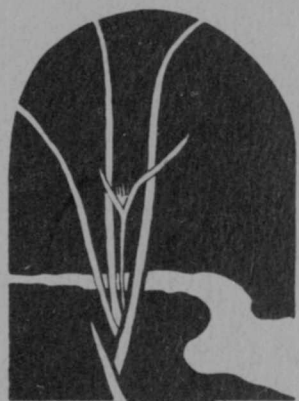
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Desk



riverSedge

Chicano Issue

a journal of
art
poetry
and
prose

vol. 2 no. 2



riverSedge

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contents

Leroy Quintana-Featured Poet	3, 22-26, 37-38
Ricardo Sánchez	4, 12, 60-62
Alurista	7
Rolando Hinojosa	8
Bruce-Novoa	10, 36
Tomas M. Calderón	14
Max Benavidez	15, 41
Pancho Aguila	17
Jesus Macías	18
Cordelia Candelaria	19
Ray González	20
Abelardo Delgado	21, 39
Luis Arturo Ramos	28-30
Angela de Hoyos	29-31
Manuel Francisco Sepúlveda "El Nune"	34
Alberto Ríos	35
Sergio Elizondo	42-54
Patricia De La Fuente	43-56, 59
Mario Garza	57
Ricardo D. Aguilar	58

graphics

Barbara Zapffe	5, 6
Berry Fritz	11
Naomi Lindstrom	16
Adolfo Gustavo Martínez	1, 23, 27, 40, 55
Pedro Reyna, Jr.	32-33, 37
Erren Seale	Incidental Art

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COMMITTEE OF SMALL MAGAZINE
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UNTITLED

In the name of the Father
we prayed, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit
and I remember we prayed
first thing in the A.M.
and Angelus at noon
and the last thing
before going home.

We prayed at Christmas
Lent, and Easter
and all the Holy Days.

We prayed for the Pope,
the Souls in Purgatory,
and for Peace.

And we prayed for
Mother Seton
to be canonized.

But I never prayed
until that day
in Viet Nam

when death walked by
(saw his sallow face,
the slanted eyes)

prayed so hard
the nuns would've prayed
for me to be

the first Chicano
to be canonized
Amen.

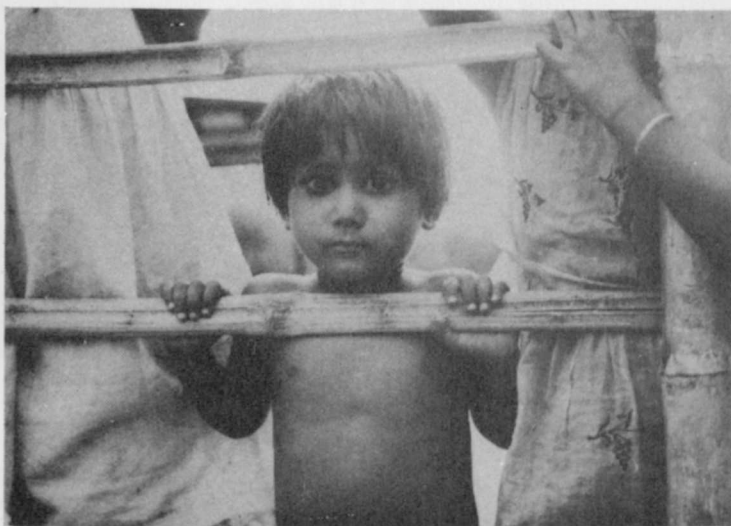
this nice place, rich,
where el paso nice people
sleep, unaware that hunger
wilts children
a few miles south, ay,
drinking with
striving-to-make-it-raza
who feel some guilt still
as to why they made it while
others didn't . . . do we want
programs in education, health,
job training? shit, bueyes >
we merely want to know that
the world is also ours
coronado section of El Paso,
in the state of Te(de)jas

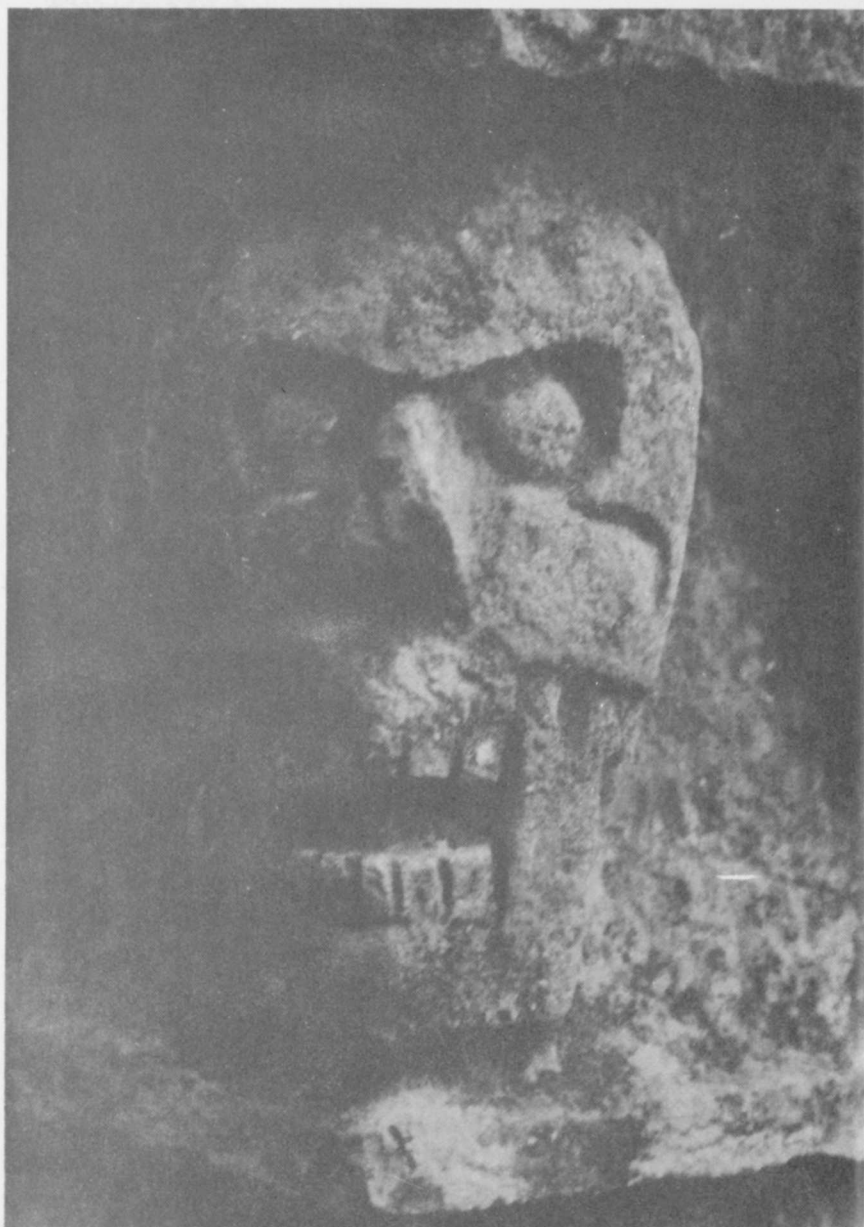
CORONADO

almost asleep,
the beer has found
its resting place
and in its way
enmeshed the mind & soul,
lulled the body's energy,
and every fibre of mine being
clamors within
for a reprieve,
 a sweet surcease,
 a call to sleep,
 to while away the time,
pero, and it's a big, big pero,
the others ask
that we partake of time
to chit and chat
about our human quandaries . . .

parole smiles out
slice after slice
of indignifying questions,
joblessness smites
and bites,
and the sores of
empty/pus spawned
huddled humankind
in every fetid barrio
gnaw & gnash
thoughtfeelings,
rip sanity apart,

& you want time
to chit & chat
as you strive
for sensitivity,
all it takes is sense
to realize
that hunger
means explosion





Barbara Zapffe
untitled

play on words

LIFE THROBS

life throbs
 in the depths
 of the surfaced
 chaos and at
 times it rattles
 thunder
 . . . people won
 der often
 where to find
 noah
 no, a . . . ?
 si, a . . . ?
 c, i, a . . . ?
 questions
 re
 main
 while pots
 blossom
 and re
 volution
 volts, and revs
 and plots

BLACK OUTS

black outs
 roll thee clouds
 on, above
 the asphalt
 wilder
 ness, and thee
 prohibition
 sinks in
 too, also thee
 in
 tree
 cacies
 of thee law
 less elect
 ricity
 prevails
 in thee
 hands
 of prof
 it
 eers
 and war
 mongrels

BRODKEY'S REPLACEMENT

Red George Three's name is Louie Dodge.
He's Regular Army; in it, he says,
For the Big Ride: thirty years with nineteen to go.
He's made SFC twice, but he's lost the stripes,
And it's back to E-5 again.

Comparing notes on our forward ob., we found
He told Hatalski he knew machine guns; Frazier said
He told him mortars, and we all laughed for
Dodge told me he was an artilleryman.

Most of his sentences begin with
'Son-of-a-bitch. I remember one time'
And then he's off and running. But it's no good:
He has a terrible memory and worse,
No imagination; he will usually include
Something that has happened to us since he's been here.
But he means no harm;
He's terrified and just wants to spend
(and end) his stretch in peace:

There he is again.

“This is Are Gee Tee . . . How are things up there?”

“This is Badger Four. You got anything to report?”

“This is Red George Three; just checking.”

“Checking! Where in hell does he get off?”

“Man’s lonely, Frank.”

“I’ll lonely him . . .

Son-of-a-bitch’ll get us all killed, you know that?”

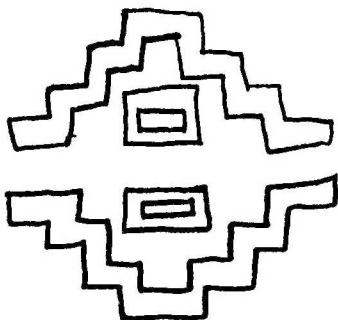
Hook and I both laugh,

And Hatalski walks away, shaking his head:

“Remember what I’ve said, now:

That Son-of-a-bitch will get us all killed.

You just wait.”



PATRON SAINT OF LOST GENERATIONS

San Antonio,
deadly city of heartless Texas,
 lay bare
the despair of pointless extension
past a spent prime.

 Your children
won't sustain you, old woman,
and you haven't the teeth
to claim returns
on your life's investments
The sun sucks you wrinkled,
but the merciless, punctual humidity
moistens your cracked lips just enough
to survive another blast furnace day,
all anger and illusion and
sweat-stained mirage.
Did you endure for just this? Were
you promised privileged departure from
the new tradition?

 Your children
flee to gentler climates - -
you taught them to improve
and they're clever, quick to learn.
Would you ask them to be loyal
too?
Tend your pecan trees,
 old woman,
perhaps your grandchildren will need
the shade,
and long
for the taste of sweet nuts.



Berry Fritz

Ricardo Sánchez

LETTER TO MY EX-TEXAS SANITY

new panaceas abound,
new promises of paradise,
new to me & oddly old
to others, Utah
sours dreams and it should
begin with a P for its
perversity and putismo . . .
been here over a week, damn,
but it seems forever . . .
Saltyville of a lakebury
30 September 1977

left you, Tejas,
over a week ago,
had to,
for work
is here and not there,
home
resides wherein one lives,
and i live (almost do)
in salt lake city,
it hurls its salty dust
at your soul's eyes,
burns its vapid senselessness
into the furrows
of your thoughts,
it urges you to give up
life, liberty, and the
real pursuit of selfdom,
clothes everything
with missionary zeal,
demands
your capitulation,
bicycles you to death,
and then intones
that heaven
merely is for those
who have renounced
all semblance of having been

salient/lively creatures
who lived to love
while loving to live,
ay, utah brutalizes
hope
with its spineless
and amorphous
gelatinous mentality,

perverse & anti-human,
your temple
manufactures
complacent/placid smiles
to keep all niggers out,
your westside of salt lake,
awash with fetid meskin smells,
it creaks and groans
with fear
that we might multiply,
your fear of loathsome Laman
defines the way you see us,
for Lamanities you think us,
a mass of swarthy people
who revel in their evil,
ay, brutah-putah-utah,
whose land is so majestic,
with deserts y montañas
and nature's pungency,
you fear
those who are darker
and claim to be so saintly,
enslaver of the frail
and demeter of the fragile,
your sacrosanctimonious
attempts at being holy
are ludicrous at best,
at worst imperialistic,
and ever missionizing.

you flail, hither-thither,
the differences you fear,
and though you feel superior
and smug in your behest,
you strive like hungered zealots
to make us look your best,

oh, poor and foolish bigots,
you have no need to fear us,
for you have nothing worthy
to send us on in quest,
you see
this land belongs
to all who wish to love it
and within it reside,
we'll be ourselves, ay, utah,
and celebrate our difference,
we'll look at you and smile
and continue on our way
to live within your valleys
while we project our name . . .

Tomás M. Calderón

THE BRYSON HOTEL

you sat there
old man
your voice ripped out
“they have stolen my tongue!”
you motioned with your hands
and pointed to the bloodless void inside your throat
you sat there
one shoulder lower than the other
“tired of pushing”
i thought
you wanted me to look away
“let me sit here and melt into the floor”
there was no pity in your eyes
old man
i fear you
i fear you for your loneliness
for your rebellious body
for your compassion
that said
“look the other way
i don't mind”

THE SILENCE OF EMPTY

Outside it is sunspring and pale images,

If ponies run
and antelope dance in the spring,
why do we inflict upon ourselves
pinpoint sufferings and deny the truth?

Haloed glow in the night skies
and lakes on the moon hiss and steam.

Yet we are lost in time, displaced.
We the delicate carriers of sacred
words, turn away when we meet the
face of god during sidewalk glancing.

Cries of warning come upon us,
the sleeping lakes of antiquity.
These cries pass, unheard.

Witness sunbirds in floating flight.
They swoon and glide.
We do what comes unnaturally.
We hide.





Naomi Lindstrom
untitled

THE RECENT SHIPMENT

a new busload comes in
seven strange faces

They strip,
spread open an ass
given white clothing
and a cell number

Where do they all come from
faces in from the night,
sea of cold numbers
ever multiplying
great robot mother
giving up in birth
tattered blood children
wild in their eyes - - -
wildness that knows no border
for free - - - is the moon wind
circling thru clouds
free - - - is the bird chants
of the inner wheel
ever spinning wheel
of the outer universe

They come in
parrots of varying colors,
beaks of different shapes
curious searching birds
they come
the great cage of prison
a pregnant woman
about to give birth
as the child
kicks
kicks against walls

They come in
vacuum sealed
the moon a black eye
scarring heaven,
faces in a wax museum
immortalized in crime,
the torch melting
on the statue of liberty,
the young woman's hand
turned skeleton.



Jesus Macías

UNTITLED

backyard fences
wish i had a backyard
i'd have a bbq
cook some hotdogs
get a couple of beers
on sunday afternoon
get loaded
getting ready for monday
ask some friends over
bullshit and remember
highschool pimple days
fart and cry
"golden oldies make
me cry" someone said
shit
backyard fences
hide nothing except
yourself
hate hotdogs
my last friend
died when i was 8

IN A POCATELLO LAUNDROMAT

by Y. W. Laadd

A yellow-whiskered lad found her
in a laundromat in Idaho. Said
"Hey, Lady, izzat your soul lighting up
the dark centers of your eyes?"

- Can't a woman get her washing done
in peace?

"Wait, waitaminute, Lady, I wanna- -"
- Got change for a dollar?

"Yeah. Here, Lady with soulful eyes.
Listen. I wanna be- -"

- Justasec. Let me get my washer going.

"Yeah, well. Hey, Lady, I wanna be
a writer."

- A rider?

"Yeah, a writer."

- A rider, huh? Like in rodeos?

"Naw, Lady.
Like, a writer, like, of books.
Oh, Lady, izzat soul in your smile?"

- You yellow-whiskered wise one,
you on the make or somethin'?

"Ah, hell, woman. Yeah.
Yeah, on the make.
Portrait of the artist as a young rake."

Between the sheets in his Smith-Corona
a Pocatello fellow
made her what she is today.

*Surreal
mood poem*

JANUARY, RAMONA, CALIFORNIA

the lake swirls.
winter gorges the pines.
a brown horse trots
on the far bank.
where was I when it lost
its rider over the rocks.
there is a ghost of
a woman floating on
the dark side of the water,
turning toward me.
her moans wash away,
barely reach the boulder
where I sit.

handfuls of wild carrots
grow in the mud.
the woman threw
the seeds long ago.
black lines, like snakes,
cross the surface.
a storm fumbles
miles to the north.
red cliffs crack behind me,
startling the horse
as it drinks.
I grip the boulder when
I spot the woman's head.
two drops of water prick my face.
hoofbeats hammer, then fade.

THE PACHUCO'S WEDDING

She was not very pretty
had eyebrows that met
she looked strange
in a wedding dress, pregnant;
her tattooed hand
holding a bouquet

her skinny pachuco boyfriend
dressed in a nice suit
only he could make
look like a zoot suit;
both of them standing in the back
of the church waiting for the priest

when we marched in to pray
for another special intention,
stared at them, so strange
to see them in church
and dressed like that
and on a weekday

It was they who looked at the floor
as if they were afraid of us--
they were in our barrio now



Adolfo Gustavo Martínez

EMETERIO

All my young life
I saw him
spend his life
walking
to and from the bar
(Sundays to the bootlegger's)

Every morning
in his big, black hat
like Hopalong's,
a pair of pressed overalls
once blue
and then grey and faded
(as his face)

a green khaki shirt
(his mother ironed)
always starched, buttoned
to his Adam's apple

that never worked
a word
out of his throat
unless it was a matter of wine

Drank only tokay,
many times muscatel
and many more pints of port

His hands, smooth as glass
never knew a woman, warm
and his, (of course,
had cupped his palms
countless around a bottle
of Virginia Dare,
her breasts)

Every evening
stumbled home, crushed
Cassiday hat and
coveralls wet,
full of wrinkles

the only smiles,
wounds,
he ever
wore.

UNTITLED

In the summertime
Grandmother would sit outside
in the evening, puffing
on her brown paper cigarrito

and tell me about the viruela epidemic
of her childhood, show me
three or four marks on her arm

explain their resemblance
to some constellation in the heavens
each star was a child in her family
her mother told her as a girl

Grandmother was the large star
a large pock mark
the one who survived



WHERE IN THE HELL WALDO, THE WINO

was talking one day about the time
his wife gave him \$5
to fill up the car
and how he used
that money to get drunk.

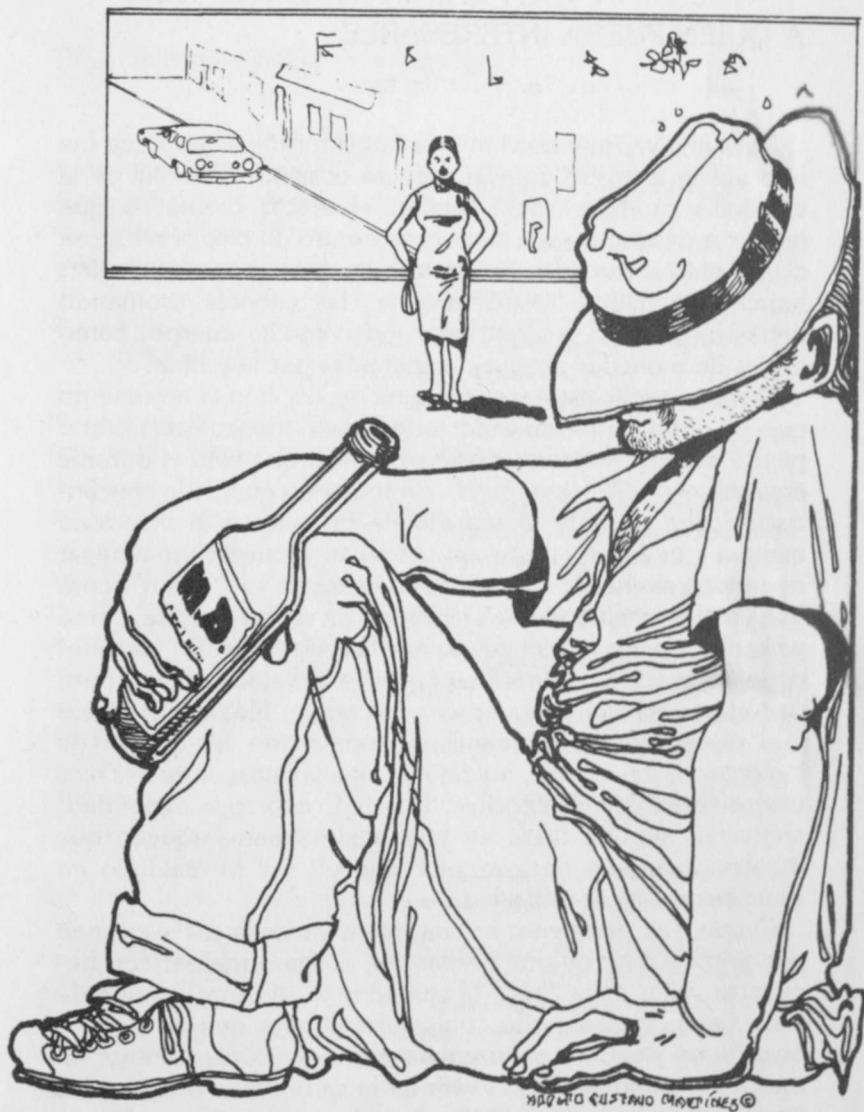
“You see,” he said,
“all I did was open the trunk
and disconnect that little wire
that’s hooked to the gas tank.
When it’s taken off
the needle on the dashboard
moves to Full and stays there.”

He drove to the gas station
put in \$1 worth of regular
then drove to the bar
and bought enough pints
of La Copita to stay drunk
for a week, drove home
and stayed drunk for a week.

His wife was so happy
when she saw that her Waldo
had used all the money
for gas instead of tokay.

And she was so pleased
with the brand of gas
he had put in.
“!Que barbaro,” she said,
the needle doesn’t move from Full!”

But she couldn’t understand
where in the Hell Waldo
got the money to get drunk
she checked his pockets twice
every night, her purse three times
and remained utterly puzzled
until she ran out of gas
and had to walk home
and demand where in the hell



Adolfo Gustavo Martínez

A QUIEN PUEDA INTERESARLE

La última vez que las vi mantenían la misma actitud que me hizo volver el rostro aquella primera ocasión. El cristal de la ventanilla produjo, seguramente, el efecto cromático que remitió a mis pupilas el color verde oscuro de piedra musgosa o de saurio escamado. Su postura también resultaba similar: hombros erguidos, rostro ausente, las cabezas asomando detrás de los arbustos que les cubrían medio cuerpo, como efigies de monedas antiguas manchadas por la pátina.

Quien escuche ésto opondrá a mi descripción el argumento que ya antes han empleado todos mis interlocutores: cómo puedo describir tan minuciosamente algo que sólo vi durante escasos segundos; esto, dicen, sin tomar en cuenta la concentración que requiere el manejo de un auto y la velocidad mínima a que se conduce en una recta. Es necesario agregar que todo esto ha sido considerado causa de mi "vision", cosa que yo al momento me he encargado de rebatir porque, como ya lo dije, no era la primera vez que las veía; más aún, después de la tercera vez, aminoré a propósito la velocidad y dispuse de toda mi atención para observarlas mejor. Mas es justo decir que el cristal de la ventanilla--y todavía no he cesado de lamentar mi descuido--, no dejó de interponerse entre mis ojos y el objeto de mi atención. Lo cual, con toda seguridad, tergiversó aunque fuera en una mínima parte aquello que miraba dotándolo de ese color que yo me he cuidado en describir con tanta prolijidad.

Quizás sea pertinente aclarar, para quienes me escuchan por primera vez, que mi trabajo me obliga a realizar con frecuencia viajes entre ésta y la ciudad más cercana. En uno de esos viajes, no recuerdo cuál, observé algo que en aquella ocasión no pasó de ser una mera contingencia de camino: un enorme camión yacía a la vera de la carretera con las ruedas hacia arriba, evidenciando demás, por los destrozos en la carrocería, lo violento del accidente. Pero no fue eso lo que más llamó mi atención, sino las tres mujeres sentadas escarmenando su cabello.

Translated by
Angela de Hoyos

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The last time I saw them they were in the very same position which had made me turn, that first time, to look again. The glass of the car window produced, no doubt, the chromatic effect that returned to my eyes the dark green color of mossy rock or scaly saurian. Their posture was also the same: shoulders erect, the face nonexistent, the heads peering out from behind the bushes which covered one half of their bodies, like efigies of old coins stained by patina.

Whoever hears my story may counter my description with the argument which has already been employed by all my interviewers: how can I describe so minutely what I saw only fleetingly; this, they say, not counting the concentration required to drive a car and the minimum speed necessary to carry it in a straight line. I must add that they've even thought I was just "seeing things," an idea which I have immediately rebutted because, as I have said, it was not the first time I had seen them and furthermore, after the third time, I purposely slowed down and concentrated my full attention so as to see them better. But it is only fair to say, --and I am still mourning my carelessness--, that the car window stood between my vision and the object of my attention. A fact which certainly distorted, if only minimally, what I saw, giving it that hue which I have taken care to describe at such length.

It may be pertinent to explain, to those who hear me for the first time, that my job requires me to make frequent trips between this and the nearby cities. On one of such trips, I don't recall which, I noticed what at that time was nothing more than a simple road-accident: a huge truck was lying on the curb of the highway with wheels skyward, amply proving, by the wreckage of the chassis, the violence of the crash. But that was not what most caught my attention: it was the three women who were sitting combing their hair.

Dos días después, regresé por el mismo camino; las tres mujeres permanecían en el mismo lugar. Junto a ellas, los deshechos del accidente pasado se diseminaban relumbrando como escamas de pescado. Pedazos de lámina y madera se desparramaban por los alrededores como los restos de un naufragio.

En aquella ocasión pensé que se trataba de mujeres que vivían de lo que la carretera pudiera darles, ya fueran hombres o mercancías. Las imaginé recogiendo los despojos de los accidentes a la vera del camino, o entegándose a los camioneros detrás de los arbustos, sobre la arena caliente del desierto.

Esta presunción hizo que durante algún tiempo dejara de preocuparme por ellas, ya que al contar con una razón que justificara su presencia en ese lugar, ésta última dejó de extrañarme.

Por algún tiempo no volví a pensar en las mujeres, dejé de hacer los preparativos que antes hacía para verlas al pasar. Sin embargo, la incidencia de percances en ese lugar, motivó que mi atención, no sé por qué mecanismo mental, recayera de nueva cuenta en ellas. Otra vez aminoré la velocidad al pasar por aquel paraje, y otra vez volví a mirarlas sentadas al sol, junto a un montón de hierros calcinados y de madera podrida.

Nunca he podido saber qué me llevó a hacer lo que hice; pero detuve el auto algunos metros después de haberlas pasado; ahí donde una pequeña colina podría resguardarme de sus miradas, lo abandoné. Desanduve la distancia que me separaba de ellas, y al poco rato, pude verlas: una larga permanencia bajo el sol había hecho de sus rostros máscaras de piedra. Me acerqué aún más ocultándome tras los matorrales que a su vez me ocultaban casi en su totalidad los cuerpos de las mujeres. Segundos después me encontré tan cerca de ellas que pude verlas sin que nada estorbara a mis ojos: sentadas en la arena gris (y digo sentadas por que la cola de saurio que surgía de sus caderas me impide emplear la palabra adecuada), aguardaban a los camioneros mientras el sol bruñía las escamas verdosas. Al notar mi presencia, escaparon al compás de vigorosos coletazos que las impulsaban a gran velocidad.

La última vez que las vi, me miraban ellas también desde un promontorio cercano; en sus ojos pude apreciar el brillo de una soledad espantosa.

Two days later I returned by the same road; the three women were still in the same place. Near them the remains of the past accident lay scattered, shining like fish scales. Pieces of metal and wood were strewn about the surroundings like the ruins of a shipwreck.

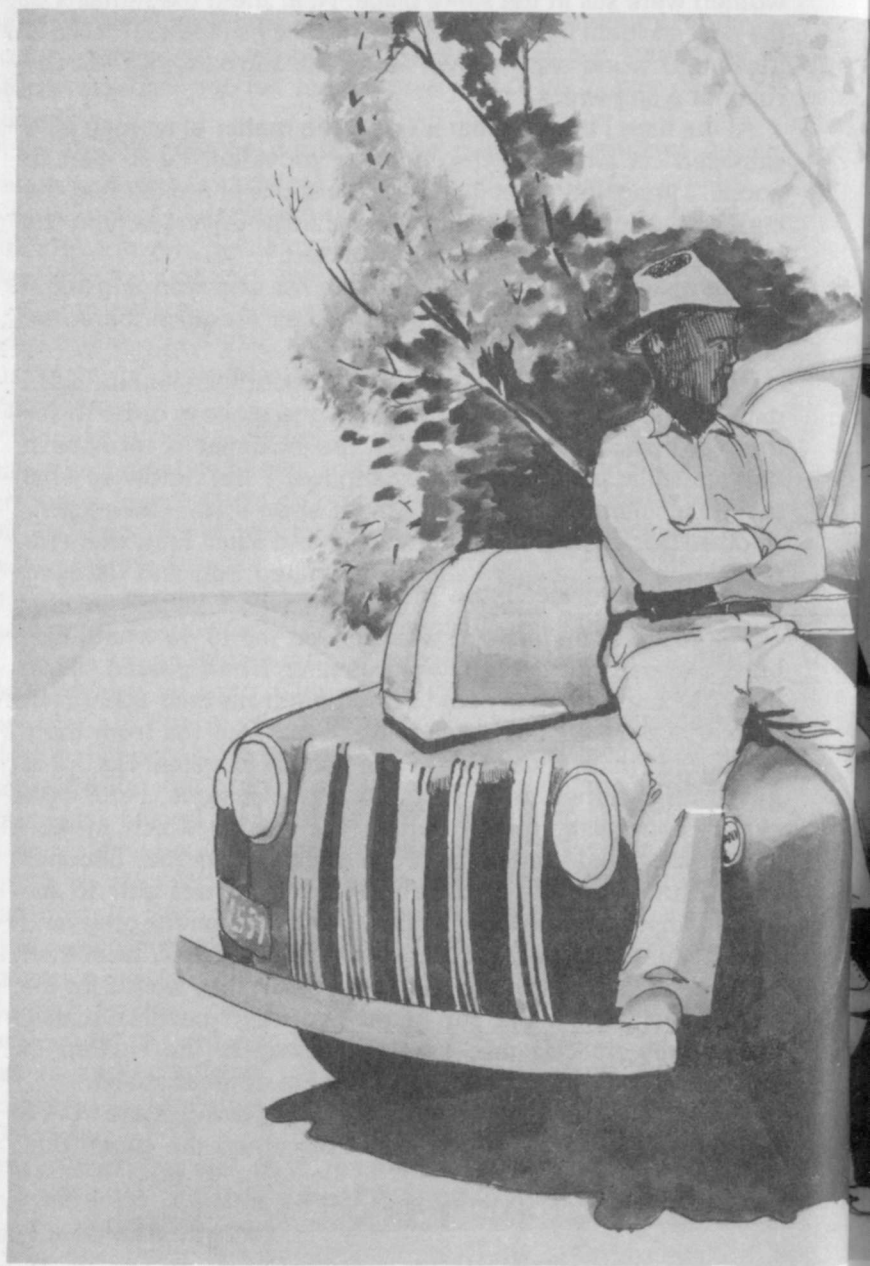
At the time I thought that it was just a matter of women who subsisted on whatever the highway provided, be it men or goods. I imagined them gathering the spoils of accidents at the curb of the road or submitting to the truck-drivers behind the bushes, upon the hot sand of the desert.

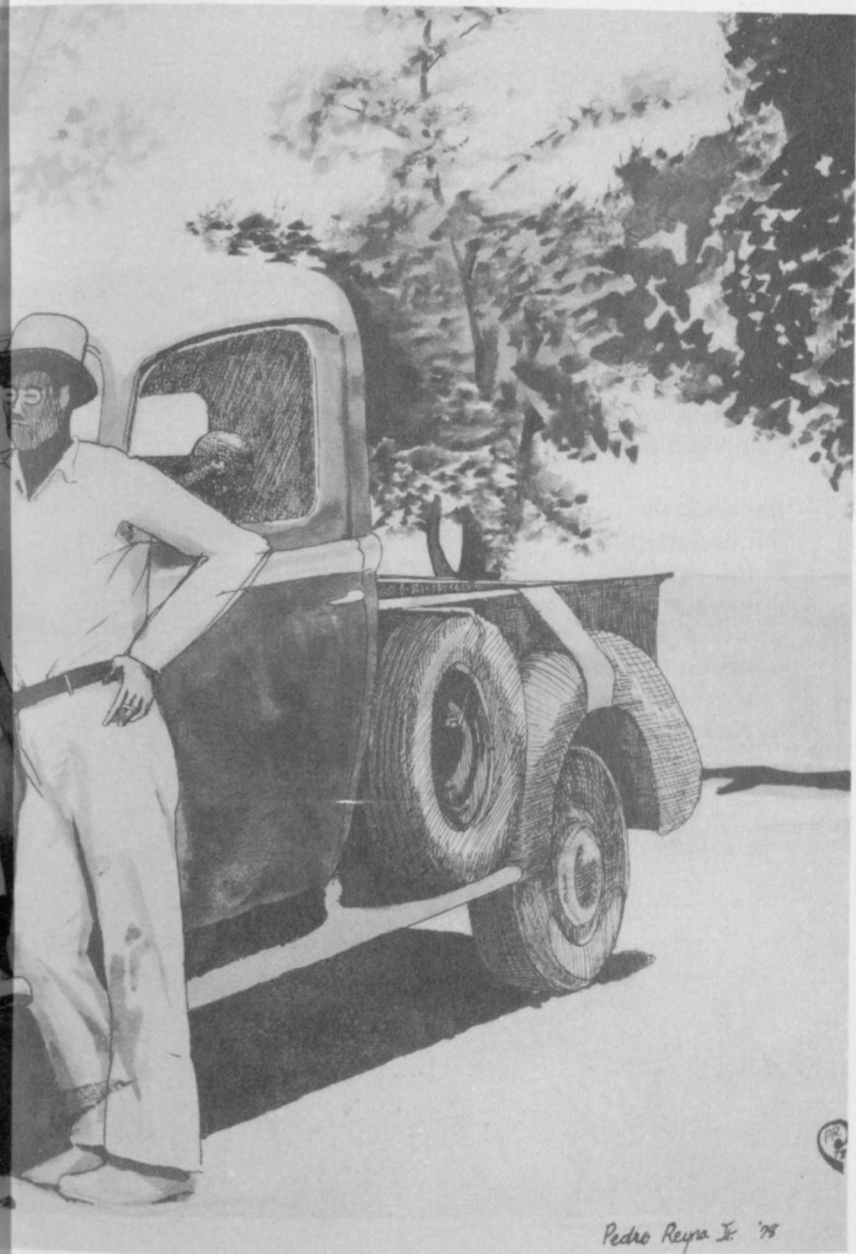
This assumption, for the time, made me stop worrying about them, since, given a reason to justify their presence there, the latter was no longer strange.

For some time I did not think again about the women, and I gave up the preparations I was wanting to make in order to see them as I passed by. Nonetheless, the incidence of mishaps in that particular place caused my attention, I don't know by what mental mechanism, to fall once more upon them. Once again, I slowed down while passing the spot, and again I saw them sitting in the sun, near a heap of calcinated iron and decayed wood.

I have never understood what moved me to do what I did, but I stopped the car a few yards after I had passed them; there, where a tiny hill could screen me from their eyes, I left the car. I retraced the distance that separated me from them and shortly after, I was able to see them: a constant life out in the sun had turned their faces into masks of stone. I came yet closer, concealing myself behind the thicket which in turn almost totally hid the bodies of the women from me. Seconds later, I found myself so close to them that I was able to see them with nothing obstructing my eyes: sitting on the grey sand (and I say 'sitting' because the saurian tail that grew from their hips impedes my using the adequate word), they waited for the truck-drivers while the sun burnished their greenish scales. When they noticed me, they flew away to the rhythm of vigorous tail whacks that propelled them at great speed.

The last time I saw them, they too were staring at me from a nearby promontory; in their eyes I discerned the gleam of a dreadful loneliness.





Pedro Reyna, Jr.
untitled

FARMWORKERS CHINGADERA

Oh! If ever
you saw a
perfect blue
wind whistle softly
past nodding
heads of wheatfields
as yellow as
a Vincent Van Gogh
fit of despair
painting the sun

travelling on
the backroads
in the rear of
a migrant pickup
you've seen the
unrealized promise
of the harvest
in Amerika

Ah-ie!



THE GETAWAY

Poor man!
All he ever
wanted was
a cup of
coffee without
the coffee
they caught
him, cup underarm,
just about to
make it
out the door

Carnival on South Sixth

skip

The lightning forks overhead,
two boys stand before the ride is over
but a voice-whip shoves them back
at the slow moment of thunder.

A man with an unbalanced head
and half-hanging mustache
like Florida on the map
frowns over a black tee-shirt pocket
stuffed with red tickets
stops the ride

and lifts the safety bar
with a single forearm snap.

The man in the cotton candy booth is smiling
nobody stops smiling in the electric,
the Arabian tents, everybody smokes.

Underneath the counters everyone is holding hands:
their fingers, long metal umbilical cords
on the storming summer South Tucson ground.

Wet, standing near the teddy bears
hung to die like tough-bearded men scratched
with steel laugh lines inherited like an appendix,
the boys wait for the Ferris wheel to leave its track
the night when everything will be free
because the owners are celebrating
their fifth anniversary of getting rich.

They watch in a corner the steel-nippled wonder
in a wet cotton tank top
giving change for a dollar in dimes only,
desire's envoy to the city.

In a snail arpeggio
the lights go off the rides
but South Tucson stays,
two boys standing in the rain.

Everything is closed. From the houses
more people come to stare at a thing asleep
from a distance, women pointing
and men in cowboy hats.

EPIPHANY

Slip, w i d e n and pause.

They begin like that,
spaces of uselessness.

Books opaque in the hands,
inking pools of inarticulate shadows
blotted by the pages' weave
into patternless uniformity
deeper than Rorschach nonsense.

I wait for possession by lapse.

Questions will surface later,
washed clean,

fit for a survivor's manual;

now,

the indelible pool drapes itself

capelike over the body,

infiltrates the flesh,

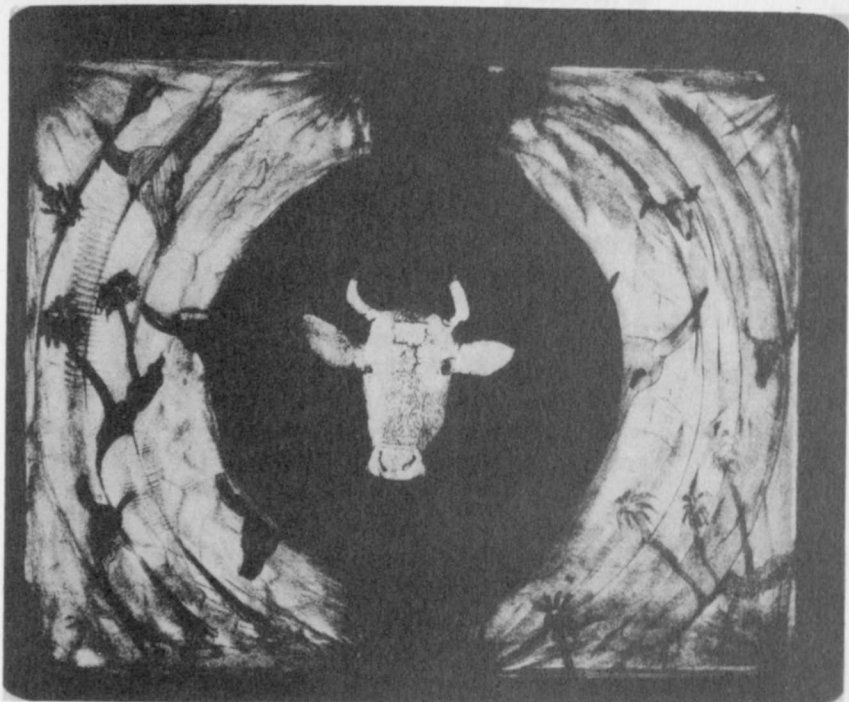
cracks the bone,

sucks the marrow

and locks.

Slip, w i d e n, g a p e

writing for understanding



Leroy V. Quintana

STERLING, COLORADO II

Mother, mother, early as the sun sweeping
vacuuming dusting washing dishes
washing windows washing clothes at sunset
every day day after day after day
dragging a large gunny sack
up and down the long long rows
of the potato fields of Colorado
and on Saturdays
in the back of a big truck
rides into Sterling
where they call her dirty
Mexican

THEOREM

Perhaps I should've listened
in Plane Geometry
(instead of reading poetry)
until I got caught
and learned an acute angle:
pretend

If I had listened perhaps
today I'd be able to figure out
what type of triangle I can be:
with one obtuse angle Chicano
and another a right angle, American

UNTITLED

Sister Concepta, Sister of Charity, taught Algebra,
but had no conception of me and very little charity.

There was no equation then, certainly none I knew,
that would make any sense of my mexican life to me.

To her I might've been this: If one term is +
and a similar term is -, the result is zero.

Example:

$$3ab - 3ab = 0$$

Reduced to lowest terms, she cancelled me out
of any of her equations of Algebra and Heaven.

To me she will always be a problem, as I suppose I was
to her, each with the term -c involved.

Her -c stood for less chicano,
mine for minus charity.

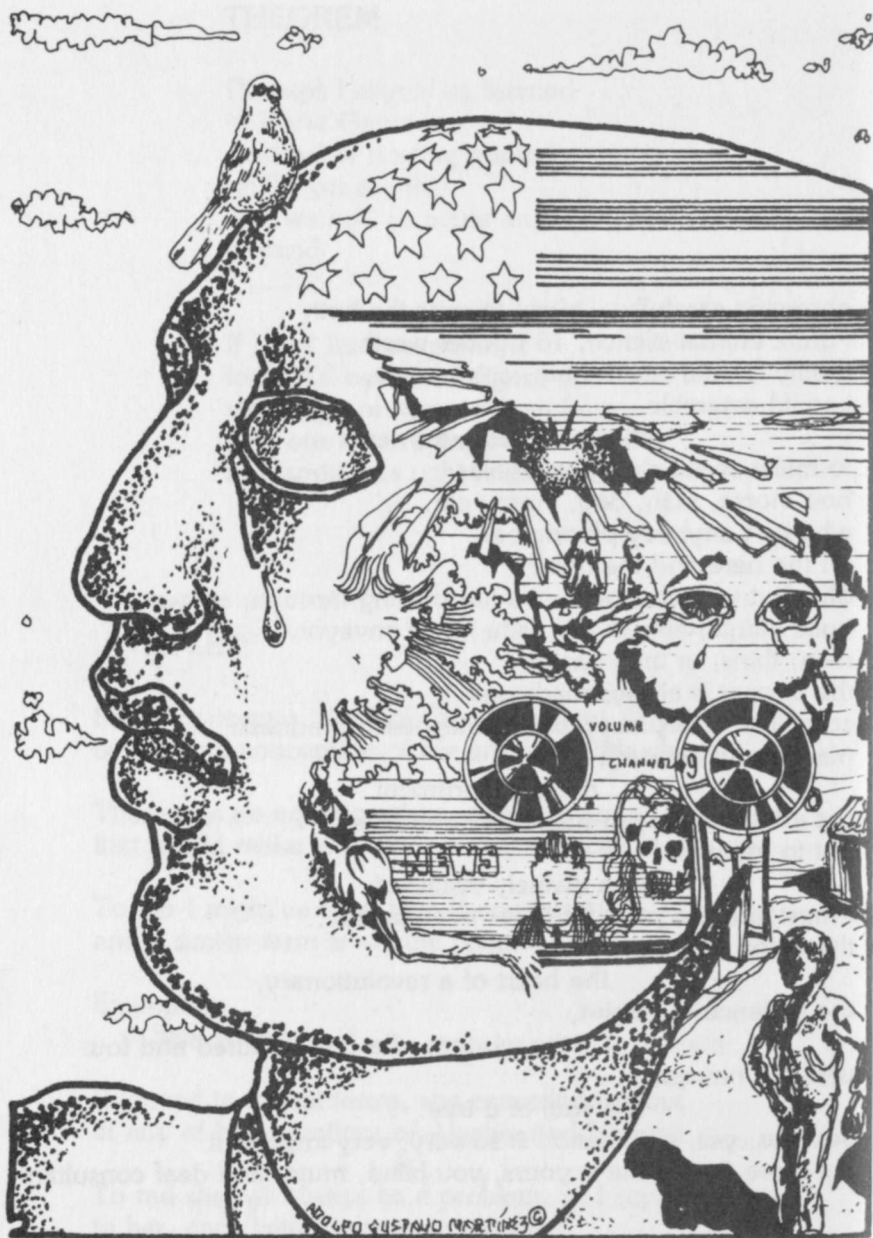
OPERATION WINE

observing carefully....afraid to miss the birth
i drink eternal silence, 16 ounces worth.
if only i could catch them, one by one,
i could assemble

 these needed intruments
to make social change possible.
hoe, horse, man, dog, insect, car. . .
why isn't anybody placing bets
on the here and the now?
oh, shut up. who cares. we are passing through, anyway,
quite comfortably in this wide time conveyor.
man, thins, or time passes.
the answer is always madness.
complete, utter, incurable, undiagnosed madness.
madness to overturn

 not a government
but a history of man-made governments,
not to mention

 those divinely instituted.
i must find the parts for these instruments...
the vision of a seer,
 the heart of a revolutionary,
the patience of a saint,
 the wisdom of a one hundred and four
year old navajo,
 the soul of a tree.
yes..yes..yes, my mission is so very, very important
but more than mine is yours, you blind, mute, and deaf consultant.



Adolfo Gustavo Martínez

FUTURE DREAM POEM

The sky is cracked like splintered glass,
the surf is pounding like a drum,
I am at the edge of eternity where the
fog is worn like a mourning shroud,
I am dreaming the future, I am dreaming
the present dead

I am in a room with half-dead bodies,
half-crazed minds with drooling mouths
and bashed in skulls oozing a yellow bile,
television sets are on with the news:
this is America without illusion, the
naked truth plays itself out before my eyes,
crying eyes in future shock

I am in a junk heap, a dumping ground for
lost souls

I want to go back to where I was before, I
run out screaming like a flying banshee but
I am frozen in my steps on the shadow streets,
a statue, a stone man with pigeons on my head
and bird shit on my face

Instants breathe and die, I am imprisoned in
a modern nightmare, the future is here, in the
distance the silos discharge their missiles, the
nuclear explosions turn my stone to dust as a
radiation enhanced wind blows me away

I join disembodied voices in outer space, we
can never return and live again, we can never
sleep and dream the future again

“PA QUE BAILABA ESA NOCHE . . .”

Por aquí donde he vivido, en un pequeño pueblo al sur de Estados Unidos siempre tenemos luz. De día siempre sale el sol; hay pocos días que no salga; será porque estamos en el desierto, llueve muy poco y por aquí no pasan las nubes de agua. En el invierno, aunque el sol pase sesgado por el lado del sur de todas maneras pasa brillante por su curva larga y baja; ilumina todo, aunque con menos fuerza que en el verano cuando se encarama más alto. Hay veces que pasa tan alto por los meses de julio y agosto que no lo alcanzo a ver a menos que me acueste boca arriba.

Los indios, no sé cuáles, pero los indios de por aquí llaman **zía** al sol. La luna también nos alumbra mucho. Ayer y hoy por la noche la he visto; para cuando baja el sol ya la luna está alta; es que le faltan algunos días para llenarse y ahora parece que está cortada por la mitad; lo alumbra todo de noche.

¿Cómo llamarán a la luna los indios que llaman **zía** al sol? Será porque al sol lo sentimos más porque ahí está cuando estamos despiertos, nos calienta y en aquellos dos meses hasta que nos quema si no encontramos una sombra. Y luego, pues, la luna la vemos de noche cuando dormimos.

La luna se ve clara, brillante, grande; porque con pocas nubes que la tapen la iluminación llega bastante bien. Creo que esto gusta a la gente.

Por aquí nos fijamos mucho en la luna y el sol, el día y la noche. Será porque el pueblo está en el desierto; aquí los elementos esos, con el viento y la sequedad son siempre importantes. La gente acepta estas cosas y otras más como lo más natural de la vida, y de la muerte.

Yo he vivido aquí algún tiempo; me gusta, la vida es buena, la gente es amable, es parlachina, bailadora y se conoce todo el mundo. En los bailes, la escuela y la iglesia se ven unos a otros, se saludan y sonrién... parece que no hay extraños. Algún forastero pronto se da cuenta del estilo de vida de por aquí.

Un muchacho de Califas llegó en su carrito una vez. Por aquel tiempo había mucha pobreza; la raza apenas ganaba para comer, pero nunca faltaba quién ayudara.

Translated by

Patricia De La Fuente

“WHY DID I DANCE THAT NIGHT . . .”

Around here where I live, in a small town in the South, we always have light. By day, the sun always comes out; there are few days it doesn't. Maybe because we're in the desert here, it rains very little and the storm clouds pass us by. In winter, even though the sun slants towards the South, it is still brilliant in its long, low curve. It illuminates everything, although less strongly than in summer when it climbs so high, around the months of July and August, that I can't see it unless I lie flat on my back.

The indians--I don't know which ones, but the indians around here call the sun *zia*. The moon also lights us up plenty. Last night, and again tonight, I saw it. By the time the sun goes down, the moon is already high; it's a few days short of full and looks as though it's cut in half. It lights up everything at night.

I wonder what the indians who call the sun *zia* call the moon? Could it be that we feel the sun more because there it is when we're awake; it warms us and in those two months it even burns us if we don't find shade. And then, of course, we see the moon at night when we sleep.

The moon appears clear, brilliant, big; the light shines through the few clouds that cover it. I think the people like that.

Around here we pay a good deal of attention to the sun and the moon, to day and night. Perhaps because the town is in the desert; here, those elements, together with the wind and the drought, are always important. People accept these things and others as the most natural part of life, and death.

I've lived here for quite a while. I like it; life is good, the people are friendly, talkative, they like to dance and everybody knows everybody else. They see one another at the dances, at school and in church; they greet each other and smile. . .there seem to be no strangers. Any outsider soon understands the life-style around here.

A boy from Califas came over one time in his car. In those days there was a lot of poverty; *la raza* hardly earned enough to eat but they were always ready to lend you a helping hand.

Pues este muchacho llegó con su Plymouth 50, lo acababa de pagar y vino a trabajar con la comisión del Río Grande. Ya le andaba porque lo conociera la gente, pues para tener amigos. Supo que los sábados hacían baile en Solano's, un salón que estaba localizado a orillas del río como a ocho millas al sur de la ciudad; ahí iba la gente de los pueblitos y ranchos a bailar y a tomar cerveza. No faltaba al baile la gente joven y alguna gente mayor que acompañaba a las muchachas. Pero aquí no todos se conocían porque había gente de todas partes; de vez en cuando hasta de El Paso venían a bailar.

En octubre del año pasado hubo baile como siempre en que Solano's, tocaban Los García, se puso bueno. A Pedro, el bato de Califas, se le ocurrió ir al baile, iba solo: de primero como que le quería dar vergüenza ir solo, no conociendo a nadie y nadie lo conocía excepto en el lugar donde trabajaba pero al fin se animó.

El sábado por la mañana lavó el carro, le dió brillo y lo limpió bien por dentro. Este bato esperaba algo grande. Para las ocho de la noche ya había gente en la barra, casi pura chavalada que se anticipaba a divertirse, el Pedro llegó también temprano; ay taba junto a la barra echándose una birra mirando despacio pa todos lados como buscando a quién conocer, pero pues no conocía a nadie, pero ya pa entonces ya se sentía más seguro porque la cervecita lo animó.

Tocó la música y comenzaban a salir a bailar, parece que todos se conocían. No se aguantaba cuando tocaban polkas porque son fáciles de bailar y uno se puede dar vuelo.

Eran como las diez y media y todavía no habían bailado más que los ojos. El Pedro no se animaba a sacar a nadie a bailar, tenía miedo de que la muchacha fuera novia de alguien y hubiera pleito. No aguantaba. Se hacía tarde, ya era hora de entrarle a bailar.

A un lado de la puerta de entrada estaba de pie, sola, una muchacha de cabello largo, negro. Raro; parece que estaba sola; el Pedro la vio por un instante pero luego creyó que la muchacha estaba esperando a alguien. Pero al rato volvió el Pedro a mirar para donde estaba, allá estaba todavía parada, vestida de blanco, cruzada de brazos, con el cabello negro bien peinado cayéndole por la espalda hasta la cintura. Nadie estaba con ella, no había salido a bailar; nomás taba ay parada viendo pa delante. Ahora sí se fijó más en ella aunque no le

Well, this boy arrived in his '50 Plymouth; he had just finished paying for it and came down to work for the Rio Grande Commission. He was working at getting known--to have some friends. He found out about the Saturday-night dances at Solano's, a hall situated on the river bank about eight miles south of town. People from the small towns and ranches went there to dance and drink beer. The young people never missed the dances and some of their elders also went to accompany the young girls. People came from all over; sometimes they even came from El Paso to dance, so that here not everybody knew each other.

In October last year there was a dance as usual at Solano's. Los Garcia provided the music and it got pretty good. Pedro, the guy from Califas, decided he would go but he was alone. At first it was almost as if he were ashamed to go alone, not knowing anyone and nobody knowing him except where he worked; but he finally got up the courage.

On Saturday morning he washed his car, polished it and cleaned it well inside. This guy was expecting something great. By around eight o'clock that night there were already people in the bar, mostly young kids getting an early start on the fun. Pedro also arrived early: there he was at the bar, downing a beer, looking around slowly as if searching for someone to recognize. Well, he didn't recognize anyone, but by then he felt more secure because the beer gave him courage.

The band played and people began to dance; apparently, they all knew one another. It was hard to sit still when they played polkas because they're easy to dance and one can really take off.

It must have been about ten thirty and as yet only his eyes had done any dancing. Pedro didn't dare ask anyone to dance; he was afraid there might be a fight if the girl happened to be someone's steady. He couldn't stand it. It was getting late and the time had come to get to dancing.

Beside the door leading into the hall, all on her own, stood a girl with long, black hair. Strange: she appeared to be all alone. Pedro saw her for a moment but imagined that the girl was waiting for somebody. A while later, Pedro looked over in her direction again. She was still standing there, dressed in white, arms crossed, her black, well-combed hair falling down her back to her waist. Nobody was with her and she hadn't been dancing; she just stood there, looking straight ahead. Now he did take a good look at her, though he couldn't see her eyes very well. He blinked hard, as if to clear his vision but nothing changed.

veía bien los ojos; parpadeó duro como para limpiárselos pero quedó todo igual.

Pidió otra cerveza como si así se arreglaran las cosas...tomando más. Había como cuarenta parejas ahora bailando una pieza de esas que se bailan despacio; "Ora sí," dijo con la cabeza, pero todavía no se animó a sacar a nadie, ya le andaba. Luego la ritmera empezó a tocar boleros mexicanos, desos, que se bailan de cuadrito y medio despacio. El bato puso la cerveza en la barra y sin pensarlo más tragó saliva y se echó a andar pa la puerta de entrada; ay taba todavía la chavala de vestido blanco que parecía medio transparentón.

El Pedro se acercó y con brillo bonito en los ojos, calor en el pecho y las manos le alargó la mano sin decir nada. Taba que le temblaban las corvas de pura emoción, desde que salió de Califas no había bailado ni estado cerca de una chavala. Muy sin nada la muchacha ahí mismo levantó el brazo izquierdo para luego pasar la mano en el hombro del Pedro. El le tomó la mano derecha con mucha suavidad y el brazo derecho por la cintura de la chavala.

El Pedro no hallaba qué decir. Se moría por empezar la conversación. La chavala de la falda a la rodilla bailaba muy bien, era livianita como una pluma, hasta parecía que no ponía los pies en el suelo, sino que más bien flotaba. No le había visto la cara todavía, no se atrevía a separarse un poquito para verle la cara porque sabía que si lo hacía estarían frente a frente, y pos luego luego le vería los ojos. No hallaba qué hacer el Pedro; pensó decirle: "Qué bonito bailas," "Hueles a yerbabuena," "Que bonita te ves." Y era cierto porque la chavala parece que acababa de salir de un monte de yerbas olorosas.

Al bailar así despacio cada paso contaba, los suyos que daba él, con cuidado para bailar bien. No arrastraba los pies, los movía con buen ritmo, casi deslizándolos por el piso; pero se cuidaba de no rozar la pista de baile, creía que no era ser caballeroso hacer ruido con los pasos. Ella, la desconocida, parece que hacía lo mismo. El daba un paso, y cuando ella daba el suyo primero se sentía el leve doblar de su rodilla, luego el paso también en silencio. El Pedro se fijó en eso.

Terminó la primera pieza que bailaron. Pero luego tocaron otra de las mismas. El ni se daba cuenta de qué piezas eran, nomás quería bailar correctamente y divertirse, pero también hacerlo bien para que ella quedara contenta. Andaban silen-

He ordered another beer, as if things could be settled that way... by drinking more. By now there were about forty couples dancing to one of those slow tunes. "This is it," he nodded to himself; yet he still didn't dare ask anyone--he was working up to it. Then the rhythm group began to play Mexican boleros, those that you dance to slowly and close together. The guy put his beer down on the bar and, without giving it another thought, swallowed hard and started walking towards the hall door. There she was still, the girl in the white dress that looked kind of transparent.

Pedro came up and, with a great shine in his eyes, a burning sensation in his chest and palms, he held out a hand without a word. His knees were shaking with raw emotion; since leaving Califas he hadn't danced with or even been near a girl. Without more ado, the girl raised her left arm and slid her hand over Pedro's shoulder. He took her right hand very gently and put his right arm around her waist.

Pedro couldn't find a thing to say. He was dying to start a conversation. The girl in the knee-length dress danced very well; she was as light as a feather, and rather than touch the floor with her feet, she seemed to float. He had not yet seen her face; he didn't dare draw apart a little to look at her because he knew that if he did, they would be face to face and, after all, later on he would get to see her eyes. He couldn't think what to do, this guy. He thought of saying: "How well you dance," "You smell of mint," "How nice you look." And this was true because the girl seemed to have just come from a grove of sweet-scented herbs.

When you dance slowly, like this, every step counts; his own he took with care in order to dance well. He didn't drag his feet; he moved them rhythmically, almost sliding them over the floor. But he was careful not to scrape the dance floor; he felt it was not good manners to make noises with one's feet. She--his unknown partner--seemed to be doing the same thing. He took a step and, when she took hers, he felt first the slight bending of her knee and then the step itself, also silent. Pedro noticed all of this.

Their first dance came to an end. But then the band played another of the same tunes. He didn't even recognize which tunes they were; he only wanted to dance correctly and enjoy himself and so that she would have a good time too. They were still silent. Nice going! Another dance followed, and

ciosos, ¡qué suave! Siguió otra pieza y el Pedro empezó a pensar qué iba a hacer cuando terminara la tanda de canciones que andaban bailando. “¿La llevo y la dejo donde estaba? ¿Busco una mesa para nosotros? ¿Me la llevo pa la barra donde he estado? No, eso no porque eso no se acostumbra, y a la mejor a sus papás no les gusta; sí pero parece que vino sola, o creo que vino sola. Toy bien tonto: ni sé lo que estoy diciendo. ¿Vino sola? ¿Pero no la ví con nadie. ¿Andará sola?”

El bato no tuvo tiempo de andar pensando más porque se acabó la pieza y como si ya lo hubiera decidido la encaminó al lado de la puerta de entrada donde la vio la primera vez. Por ahí había otra gente, también de pie porque el salón estaba muy lleno de gente. Pero parecía raro que aunque había otros ella parecía que estaba sola y cerca-cerca no había nadie. Se alejó de ella todavía sin verle la cara; pero cuando llegó a la barra, con otra cerveza llena en la mano izquierda volteó para verla y ahí estaba ella. Se fijó primero en la figura; la muchacha era delgada, de buena estatura, de piel morena clara, la cara ovalada y los ojos también ovalados y grandes, oscuros. Tenía zapatos de tacón mediano, blancos; las medias eran de seda con una rayita por detrás de la pierna. No le veía de la cara más que los ojos, ojos oscuros. La muchacha no lo vió que la observaba.

“¿Quién será?” Se preguntó. “Qué suerte de toparme con esta chavala. Le voy a ofrecer una cerveza.” Pero no tuvo tiempo de hacerlo. Los García empezaron de nuevo a tocar y sin pensarlo se dirigió de nuevo hacia ella. Ni tuvo tiempo de pedirle que si bailaba con él otra vez, porque cuando menos pensó ya estaba ella como levantando el brazo derecho para darle la mano y su brazo izquierdo ya se hacía arco para ponerlo sobre su hombro derecho. “Qué raro,” “Qué a todo dar.” “Ni sequiera me dio tiempo de que le pidiera la pieza.” Todo esto pensó a la vez y sin orden, como si no le funcionara bien la cabeza. “¿Taré pisto?” Pensó.

Se atrevió: “My name is Pete, soy de California.” Dijo al fin y todavía sin mirarle la cara de cerca. Quería decir más pero no sabía qué, ora sí se chivió un poco.

“Hace frío,” dijo la chavala, fue todo lo que dijo. Entonces en ese momento él sintió un frío raro que le corrió por la espalda de mero arriba pa abajo.

“¿Vives aquí cerca?” no se supo si sólo pensó decirlo o lo dijo, pero si hubo respuesta solo sintió la mano derecha de ella, fría, seca, en la suya.

Pedro began to wonder what he would do when the set of tunes they were dancing to came to an end. "I take her over and leave her where she was? I find a table for us? I take her with me to the bar where I was before? No, not that. It's not done, and maybe her parents won't like it. I'm just dumb...don't even know what I'm saying. Did she come by herself? I didn't see her with anyone. Is she alone?"

The guy didn't have time to do any more thinking because the music stopped and, as if it were already decided, he walked her over to the hall door where he had first seen her. Other people were standing around there because the hall was very crowded by now. But it seemed strange that although there were others around, she appeared to be alone and no one stood close to her at all. He walked away, still without having seen her face. When he reached the bar, however, and had another beer in his left hand, he turned to look at her, and there she was. First, he examined her figure; the girl was slender, fairly tall, with light brown skin, an oval face and large, dark, oval eyes. She wore white shoes with medium heels; her stockings were silk, with seams. He saw nothing of her face except the eyes, dark eyes. The girl didn't see him looking at her.

"Who can she be?" he asked himself. "What luck to run into this doll. I'm gonna offer her a beer." But he didn't get a chance to do so. Los Garcia started to play again and without thinking about it he made his way towards her once more. He didn't even have time to ask her if she would dance with him again. When he least expected it, she was already raising her right arm to give him her hand and her left arm was already arching up to go over his right shoulder. "How strange! What a good deal! Didn't even give me a chance to ask her!" Such were his disordered and simultaneous thoughts, as if he had taken leave of his senses. "Am I drunk?" he wondered.

He got up courage: "Me llamo Pedro, I'm from California," he said finally and still without looking her in the face too closely. He wanted to say more but couldn't think of anything and this embarrassed him.

"It's cold," the girl said; that was all she said. At the same moment, he felt an odd, cold sensation run up and down his spine.

"You live near here?" It wasn't clear if he only intended to say it or if he actually said it, but if there was a reply, all he felt was her right hand, cold and dry, in his own.

“Si quieres te presto mi chamarra pa que no tengas frío,” dijo con la voz bien rara como si esas fueran las únicas palabras que sabía...y se detuvo por un momento para quitarse la chamarra ahí mismo y ponérsela a ella sobre los hombros. Pero se acordó que andaban bailando, luego no supo que hacer, dejó la chamarra en paz y en su lugar mejor pensó acariciarle el cabello tan largo y bonito que le caía por la espalda, hasta retiró la mano derecha del talle de la chavala pero de nuevo no supo que hacer.

Siguieron bailando. Ya eran pasadas las doce de la noche. “Todas las personas de buena fe deben de estar en cama a las once de la noche,” pensó; eso lo había oído de un profesor en el colegio. Siguió pensando, pero en blanco.

“Cuando estés lista si quieres te llevo a tu casa; ay tengo el carro y te llevo a tu lugar, nomás me dices y te llevo cuando digas.” Ella no respondió.

En unos momentos terminó la música. Sin decir nada, ella se detuvo, le dió la espalda y alistó los brazos para que le pusiera la chamarra. Era una chamarra color mostaza. Se la puso y sin voltear ni nada empezó ella a caminar hacia la puerta de salida. El la siguió al lado pero un poquito detrás. Afuera ella seguía caminando sin hacer nada de ruido, se fué derechito al Plymouth 50, azul. Entró. El también entró por su lado y le dio pal pueblo.

Como sin querer y sin que nadie le dijera nada el Pedro le dio por una calle. Nomás iba. Nomás iba, pero ahora le dio más despacio pa no llegar tan luego y estar con ella un momento más, volvió la cara a la derecha para verla: el cabello largo, negro, lacio, le caía derecho para abajo cubriéndole la oreja; tenía perfil bonito y se veía como si alguien la estuviera alumbrando del otro lado de la cara para acá. Como cuando la luna está a medio crecer, la cara se le veía con esa claridad en la mitad, la otra mitad cubriéndola con la oscuridad de su bonito cabello.

“Aquí me dejas,” dijo sin más. Como el Pedro no sabía dónde vivía ella detuvo el 50 en medio de la calle, no había nada de tráfico a esa hora. Ella no esperó a que él le abriera la puerta, sola salió . . . y caminó media cuadra; él se le quedó viendo hasta que entró en una casa de adobe tipo mexicano, de esas que no tienen yarda enfrente.

Dio vuelta al coche y se fue a su apartamento. Durmió bien esa noche. Estaba bastante contento porque conoció a una chavala al fin. “A ver cuándo la veo otra vez,” se dijo.

Oblicuos pasaron los rayos del sol por encima de las montañas y casi paralelos con la tierra a orillas del pueblo.

"If you like, I'll lend you my sweater so you won't be cold," he said in an odd voice as though these were the only words he knew...and he stopped for a moment to take off his sweater right there and put it over her shoulders. Then he remembered they were dancing and this confused him again; he left the sweater alone and instead thought to caress her hair, so long and beautiful, hanging down her back. He even took his right hand from the girl's waist but then again, he didn't know what to do with it.

They went on dancing. It was now past midnight. "All people of good faith should be in bed by eleven o'clock," he thought; he had heard that from one of his college professors. He went on thinking, fruitlessly.

"When you're ready to go, I'll take you home if you like. My car's outside and I can give you a ride home. Just say the word and I'll take you whenever you say." She made no reply.

A few moments later, the music came to an end. Without a word, she stopped, turned around and held out her arms for him to put the sweater on. It was a mustard-colored sweater. He helped her into it and without even a backward glance, she started walking towards the exit. He followed beside her, one step behind. Outside, she still walked without making a sound; she went straight up to the blue '50 Plymouth and got in. He got in the driver's side and took off towards town.

As if by accident and without anyone saying a word, Pedro turned down a street. He just drove. He just drove, but now he slowed down a bit to delay their arrival and be with her a few moments longer. He turned his face to the right to look at her: the long hair, black, smooth, fell straight down and covered her ear. She had a lovely profile and it looked as though someone was illuminating it from the opposite side of her face. Like the moon when it is half full, half her face shone with that same clarity, while the other half was covered by the darkness of her beautiful hair.

"Leave me here," she said abruptly. As Pedro did not know where she lived, he stopped the Plymouth in the middle of the street; there was no traffic at that hour. She didn't wait for him to open the door for her; she got out alone and walked half a block. He sat watching her until she went into a Mexican-style adobe house, one of those with no yard in front.

He turned the car and drove back to his apartment. That night he slept well. He was pleased because finally he had met a girl. "Let's see when I meet her again," he said to himself.

The rays of the sun slanted across the tops of the mountains,

Todo está en silencio por la mañana, más en el domingo cuando no trabaja la gente. El Pedro despertó y se levantó tarde. El domingo es día de ir a misa aunque sea tarde, pero a misa. Se arregló; contento, todavía recordando el baile. Quiso volver a su recámara a recoger su chamarra pero no la halló. "La chavala de anoche se quedó con ella."

Era ya por la tarde del mismo día. "Voy a buscar a la chavala para recoger la chamarra y así la vuelvo a ver." No se esperó mucho. En el carrito azul se fue pa la calle donde dejó a la chavala anoche, se acordó vagamente por dónde quedaba. "Era una calle sin pavimentar; taba en el barrio mexicano." "Ya sé por donde." Entró en la calle despacio, quería recordar bien. "Aquí fue donde dí vuelta, más allá paré en medio de la calle donde la dejé; cómo a cuatro casas pa abajo la ví entrar en la casa, es aquella de pared azul claro."

Detuvo el coche con cuidado, estaba bien seguro que ahí era. Se bajó dejando la puerta del coche abierta, llegó a la casa azul, se acercó a la puerta y tocó levemente como no queriendo. Se abrió la puerta y apareció una señora como de sesenta a setenta años de edad.

"¿Qué desea?"

"¿Aquí vive una muchacha que estuvo en el baile en que Solano's anoche? Anduvimos bailando, hacía frío y le presté mi chamarra pero se le olvidó devolvérmela cuando la traje pa cá."

"¿Una muchacha dice usted?"

"Sí, fíjese, dispense pero ni sé cómo se llama."

"Aquí no vive ninguna muchacha, yo vivo sola; será en las otras casas, ay otras muchachas que bailan."

"No, creo que aquí llegó, no la traje hasta la puerta porque nos paramos allá a media cuadra y me dijo que allá la dejara, luego se vino sola caminando pa cá, la ví entrar aquí, en esta casa. Ahora sí me acuedo bien."

"No señor: aquí no vive ninguna muchacha."

"Pos era una chavala como de dieciocho años, blanquita; con ojos grandes y cabello largo negro."

"No señor aquí no vive esa muchacha. Aquí no vive naiden más que yo sola ahora."

"Traía un vestido blanco con falda circular, medias de seda con una raya negra por detrás de la pierna."

"Pos no señor, aquí ya no vive naiden joven. M'hija que tenía murió hace treinta años y ahora desde que se me fue ella

almost parallel with the land at the edge of town. Everything is silent in the morning, especially on a Sunday when people don't work. Pedro slept late. On Sundays one goes to mass, late perhaps, but one goes. He got ready, content, still remembering the dance. Returning to his bedroom to pick up his sweater, he couldn't find it. "The girl last night kept it."

That same afternoon: "I'll go and find the girl and pick up my sweater, that way I'll see her again." He didn't wait any longer. In the blue car, he drove to the street where he left the girl the night before; he remembered vaguely where it was. "It was an unpaved street, in the Mexican barrio. Now I know the way." He entered the street slowly; he wanted to remember exactly. "Here is where I turned around; over there I stopped in the middle of the street where I left her; about four houses down, I saw her go into a house, that one with the pale blue wall."

He stopped the car carefully, quite sure that this was the place. He got out, leaving the car door open, went over to the blue house, up to the door and rang lightly--as if against his will. The door opened and a woman of around sixty or seventy appeared.

"What can I do for you?"

"Is there a girl living here who went to the dance at Solano's last night? We were dancing and it was cold; I lent her my sweater but she forgot to return it to me when I brought her home."

"A girl, you say?"

"Yes. Sorry, but I don't even know her name."

"There's no girl living here; I live all alone. It must be in the other houses. There are other girls who dance."

"No, I think she came here. I didn't bring her to the door because we stopped up the block and she told me to leave her there. Then she walked over here by herself and I saw her go in here, into this house. Now I remember very well."

"No, sir, there's no girl living here."

"Well, she was a girl about eighteen, pale, with big eyes and long black hair."

"No, sir, that girl does not live here. Nobody lives here but me now."

"She wore a white dress with a full skirt, silk stockings with a black seam down the back."

"Well, sir, there's no girl living here now. A daughter of mine died thirty years ago and now that she is gone, and my husband too, I'm alone."

y luego mi marido toy sola.”

“Señora, me dispensa pero no estoy equivocado.” Sin decir palabra la señora, dejando la puerta abierta se dirigió hacia el interior de la sala. Al momento regresó con un retrato con marco ovalado, la imagen aunque un poco amarillenta se veía todavía con el contraste blanco y negro de los retratos viejos.

“Esta es mi única hija, la única que he tenido y que ya murió, en paz descanse.” Murmuró la anciana mostrando la fotografía de una muchacha de cara blanca, ojos muy oscuros y cabello negro largo.

El Pedro sintió que le habían echado una bola de hormigas en la cara cuando vio la foto pues era la misma facha de la muchacha con quien había bailado.

“Esa es,” dijo con la voz como que las palabras no querían salir.

“Pos esa es la foto de m’hija. Ta sepultada en el panteón de aquí y si quiere vamos pa allá y le digo dónde ta enterrada.”

El Pedro todavía taba bien tieso de miedo, parecía que taba hecho de piedra. Era sin duda alguna la misma cara de la muchacha con quien había bailado.

“Bueno, pues vamos.” Dijo como no queriendo. “Vamos en mi carro, yo la llevo, la llevo en el carro, si quiere.” Dijo pero ya taba bien descontrolado de miedo.

Llegaron frente a la puerta del panteón. Una cerca de alambre rodeaba toda la cuadra donde estaba enterrada tanta gente. La viejita lo encaminó pasando filas y filas de tumbas hasta que se detuvo a mirar alrededor como buscando la tumba de su hija. Al fin fijó la mirada en una tumba que parece que conocía.

“Ay ta es aquella de la cruz de fierro con adornos. la que tiene colgada la chamarra color mostaza.”

El Pedro no dijo nada, sólo pensó “Pa qué bailaba anoche . . .”





Adolfo Gustavo Martínez

"Forgive me, ma'am, but I know I'm not mistaken."

Without another word, the woman went back into the living-room, leaving the door open. In a moment, she was back with a picture in an oval frame. Although the image was a little yellowed, it was still recognizable in the black and white contrasts of old photographs.

"This is my only daughter, the only one I ever had, who is dead now, may she rest in peace," murmured the old woman, showing him the photograph of a girl with a pale face, very dark eyes and long, black hair.

When he looked at the photo, Pedro suddenly felt as though a mass of ants were crawling over his face; it was the same face of the girl he had danced with.

"That's her," he said, and the words sounded as if they didn't want to come out.

"Well, that's the photo of my daughter. She's buried in the cemetery here and if you like, we can go over there and I'll show you where she is."

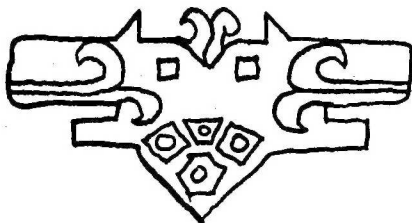
Pedro was still rigid with fright; he could have been made of stone. Without a doubt, it was the same face of the girl he had danced with.

"Okay, let's go," he said, as if against his will. "Let's go in my car. I'll take you...I'll take you in the car, if you like," he said, already incoherent with fear.

They arrived at the cemetery gate. A wire fence surrounded the whole block where so many people were buried. The old woman guided him past rows and rows of tombs until she stopped to look about her as if searching for her daughter's tomb. At last, her gaze settled on one she seemed to recognize.

"There it is, the one with the ornamental iron cross. The one with the mustard-colored sweater hanging on it."

Pedro didn't say a word; he only thought to himself: "Why did I dance last night...?"



COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Part of the system
Can no longer confront
Have to be tactful
So frustrating
 to compromise.

How far to go
Have to change tactics
Don't get co-opted
So frustrating
 on either side.

Part of me says
 kick the pinche gabacho's ass
the other part says
 commissioners can't do that

When you want
 justice and
 get just-them

When you want
 equality and
 get the sham

When you want
 freedom and
 don't get a damn
 god-damn
 god-damn

TURQUESA PERSIGNADA

para teresa
sabor a padrenuestro
gastado ya de tanto
pronunciarse

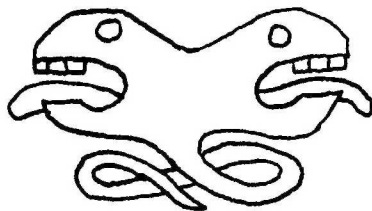
turquesa persignada

del huevo inexistente
se derrama
la sucesión interrumpida
de los seres

uno
eterno
agachado se cobija
de carpa azul
de suelo ardientemente
granulado

ulula una plegaria
la que mide
peña y firmamento
y los contiene
en la distancia

entre el alba y el ocaso



Translated by
Patricia De La Fuente

BLESSED MATRIX

**for teresa
taste of ourfather
worn out by so many
mouthings**

blessed matrix

**from the inexistent egg
the interrupted issue
of beings**

spills out

**one
eternal
crouching, covers itself
with blue awning
with fiery grained soil**

**howls a supplication
which measures
crag and firmament
containing them
in the distance**

between down and death

Ricardo Sánchez

FESTIVAL FRONTERIZO/POSTIZO:
UCSD, IMPERIAL VALLEY CAMPUS

back to Salt Lake City
from El Centro, Califaslum,
via Feniquera (phoenix)
cursory 5 hour lay-over
con raza estremeciente, on
Airwest flight 16, ando
un esqueira pisto, reflexo
un chingamadral de locuras . . .

11/20/77

no fué
un fiasco ni fracaso,
sólo
una agrupación
poorly organized,
some of the same faces
went through the same phases
of stale phrases,
poorly orchestrated noises,
ay, reverberated
blandness;
the wheel

otra vez
re-invented
pero sin gracia
por una mente dented,
sonriente
piensasentimientos
se mezclaron
con disfrases
of female impersonators--
la gran dama
JESSICA
mesmerized Torero

in Mexicali
while we awaited
the never-to-come
 undulations
of that famed,
 roseated
ruca de mexicali, fumes
of pisto & credulous turismo,
pero saúl huarachó
his solache stance
over doce peso burn,
josé armas desarmó
his audience,
varela-ibarra
en silencios elocuentes
protagonizó
realidades
 esculpidas
de lo esteril
 de calexico,
ay,
enrique y vicente anaya
re-crearon
amistades
mientras carlos
 mortonizó
al ambiente
con lo bello
de lo científico
de iris,
música
del teatro de la gente
engentizó
cantos xelinados
 y bellos,
alturista
 enturistó,
fué
un festejito
buscando
hábitos,

y se encontraron
entre lo seco
y desierto,
pos
se celebró
lo vital
con aguardiente,
yesca,
y un jodal
de anhelos,
pero aún
sin lo explosivo
de los desmadres
de nuestras realidades,

i mean,
we all kept
a jive/petulantly respectful
step or two away
from ruffling
each other's
sensitivity . . .
only a sly look or two
at one another's pretentious
ego
sufficed to make us feel
that we had perhaps almost
confronted our elastic tonterías



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