

12 noon the market is a landscaped world
of minatures
flattened in the shadowless, white heat of the day,
laid out in rectangular plots of colored plastic:
the tiny hills of tomato, chayote, manzana,
the esplanades of bunched herbs and funeral flowers,
stone slabs soaked in the blood of pigs,
the rich loam of powdered chilis,
nests of slivered papaya in plastic cups,
all skulked by dogs
searching the garbage like loitering ghosts
of rib and hunger
kicked again and again
by the fat, cruel feet of vendors
enchanted by their trinkets and gossip,
caught in the dizzy train of pesos
stretching back to the marionette clowns
in banks, offices and churches
their soap opera mistresses draped
in chains of gold
forever glancing at themselves in store windows
blind to the chiseled elegance
of the indian woman
watching from the dark door of her history.

3pm everyone has evaporated behind walls
and windows, leaving the clouds whisperless,
stranded in a lapis blaze
to carry the afternoon
from ocean to ocean
and shake copper shadows
from the mazes of trees.
along the highways, tiny shrines
of redundant crosses
with jars of wilted flowers
and photographs of the young dead
visited by dry winds and lizards.
the vultures, perched like medieval priests,
like black umbrellas,
solemnly, wickedly on naked tree limbs
watch the afternoon's paradox:
skeleton and flesh
while women pray tears
and walk the repeated steps
of a backland
filled with grass and mystery and lengthening shadow
bending toward a purple dusk.

6pm beneath a horizon of mango and burnt honey,
two boys, squatting like grasshoppers
in threadbare pants and sudden laughter,
shoot marbles at giant street puddles,
furrowed by the tires of rusted bicycles
exploded by grinding, thick metallic gears
of a second-class bus
clustered with heads and baskets
the lurid red of the dashboard
illuminating the windshield,
the transparent panorama of symbols:
the virgin of guadalupe,
the national flag,
and big-breasted blonde silhouette
decaled side by side
on the curve of the window
detached from each mesmerizing sweep of the wipers.
and on the outskirts of every pueblo,
hammered into the vast faces of barren rock,
the green-white-red stamp of PRI
hoodwinking the nation since 1929
with hollow phrases gliding like successive echoes
over the lives of the poor
and into the bank accounts of presidents.

9pm like a hook through indigo water
through white pebble stars
the moon moves
and all the unspoken words of the day
settle into darkness
as a silent unity of birds upon a tree.
a girl in the zocalo,
her hair combed perfectly
into the clasp of a silver barrett
waits anxiously for the footsteps
of her novio
to punctuate the stillness...
and carried home,
the child's cheek
wrapped in the love of a rebozo,
pressed to its mother's shoulder
walks slowly toward a room of candles.

12 midnight a rosary of women and men,
of aliens unregistered in the great computer games
of politics,
stream nameless across the border
across the strange line between despair and fantasy
into a nation with more televisions than toilets
abandoning gods drawn in stone
drawn on the fading temple walls
ascending once into the sun,
the snail,
the sky serpent,
the jaguar,
the mariposa,
the worshipped, whose hands dripped with rain,
seed, jewel, and sacrifice,
toward the dead, whose open mouths spilled with flowers
with memories spun in calendars
binding the infinite to the earth,
to the volcano which still yawns,
to the gestures of women,
to the fanned embers of tomorrow's fire.



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