

CLEARVIGIL IN SPRING

A Mayan Myth

An English Translation of

Miguel Ángel Asturias'

Clarivigilia Primavera

by

Robert W. Lebling

Copyright © 2009 by Robert W. Lebling

Translated with permission of ALLCA,
University of Paris X, Nanterre, France.

INTRODUCTION

Paul Valéry called Miguel Ángel Asturias' *Legends of Guatemala* (*Leyendas de Guatemala*) a collection of "history-dream-poems," and the same description applies to *Clearvigil in Spring* (*Clarivigilia Primavera*), a history-dream-poem in which Asturias—winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1967—evokes the creation of artists by the Maya gods, distancing himself entirely from the known texts. But these primitive artists are destroyed, according to this poem which in itself is a legend, by earthborn forces inimical to arts and magics. The earth is subjected to punishment by fire and water, and when centuries later it is reborn, the expression of artistic beauty is entrusted in painting to birds of beautiful plumage, in music and song to birds of prodigious throat, and in sculpture to rocky hills and stones shaped like animals. The Maya gods, observing that all of these things are beautiful but do not possess magic, once again create artists, or those entrusted with magic, and to keep them from being destroyed, place them in the four corners of the sky. But these artists spend their time flattering the gods and creating works for the taste and liking of the divinities, forgetting about man. As a result, for the second time the artists created by the gods stand at the brink of destruction. Heavenly forces pursue them and wound them, and from the wounded arts emerges humanized art, the art of all for all. In this poem-legend we encounter word plays, onomatopoeias and myths translated to epic form in a creation ever more American, more characteristic, more authentic, and unconnected to the literatures of Europe.

Translator's Note: This translation is based on Editorial Losada's second edition of *Clarivigilia Primavera* (Buenos Aires: 1965). Footnote quotations attributed to "MAA" are my translations of notes from another Asturias work, *Leyendas de Guatemala* (sixth edition, Buenos Aires: Losada, 1975), containing local information of value to the reader.

CONTENTS

In the Light of the Goldthinking-Stars.....	7
Punishment of Profundities.....	17
Yes, But No Magic.....	31
Navels of Sun and Precious Copals.....	35
Magicians-Men-Magicians.....	37
Hidden Crafts.....	43
The Celestial Hunters.....	47
The Hunt.....	51
Dates of Stone.....	63
Movingroot of the Flower of the Air.....	71
The Dance of the Chimeras.....	75

IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOLDTHINKING-STARS

THE NIGHT, NOTHINGNESS AND LIFE,
the Immense Widows,
and the Twohanded Tattooer of worlds
that **HE** created with his eyes
and tattooed with his sunflower stare,
created with his hands, one real and one dream,
created with his word, a tattoo of resounding saliva,
worlds that he, though blinded,
redeemed from the silence with the snail-curl of his ears
and from the luminous murk
with his extinguished constellation touch,
with his fingers bejeweled with numbers and hummingbirds.

The Night, Nothingness and Life,
the Immense Widows
in the light of the Goldthinking-stars,
Emissaries who lost their way in the nickel sky
without revealing their message
and the Twohanded Tattooer
blinded by the threadlike rain of eyes.

The rain scorched the whites of his eyes,
the quicklime corneas,
in the presence of those who bejewel the earth
with water tattoos,
tattoos in motion, navigable tattoos,
Fluvial Tattooers;
before those who pearl the fields with tearful dust,
Tattooers of the Dew;
before those who set out to tattoo the beaches
with snails, sponges and sargassos,

the raucous skeleton of the sea,
Oceanic Tattooers;
before those who steal from serpentariums
tattoos that shorten distance
and move away the near,
Tattooers of Roads;
before the Tattooers of the Dusk,
their hands with handfuls of sunset clouds...
Before the Tattooers of the Night,
their hands with amulets of fire...

The Night, Nothingness and Life,
those Immense Widows
in the light of the Goldthinking-stars,
Emissaries who lost their way in the nickel sky,
without revealing their message,
and the Twohanded Tattooer
with his hollow pupils,
craters of extinct volcanoes
in the cemetery of his corneas,
on the move — Blinded by Fresh Rain,
those Blinded by Fresh Rain see what they dream —
in all the white shadow his steps provided,
his countless feet moving beneath the tunic woven
with amnesia of silkworms,
the silver-dust cloak in the wind at his shoulders,
to keep from losing the thread of the tattoo
when crossing the shadowy world
where touch is demagnetized
and one must dodge, transformed into dream,
jaguars forged of fire,
blue turkeys forged of sky,
corals of coral vipers,
breathless jades,
women cut into islands,

masks pockmarked with rubies,
skulls with teeth encrusted with jadeites,
horoscopes of breeze
and cities of white copal¹,
until one emerges at respiration,
at respirations,
at scent,
at pollen,
at the calendar of ashes,
at the hailstorm of hieroglyphics...

Ceiba-tree² fingers
combed the cottony memory,
and from it fell dialects
with the roar of woodpecker rains
and all the sounds
of terrestrial words...
The words,
workers of the light...

The fingers combed
the memory of lake tresses,
from which fell lacustrine languages,
syllabic, tattooed with bubbles,
and all the sounds
of aquatic words...
The words,
workers of the light...

The fingers combed

¹ Copal is a hardened, aromatic resin, pale yellow to red in color, obtained from various tropical trees and burned as incense by the Maya.

² The kapok or silk-cotton tree. A tall tropical tree that produces large pods of silk cotton or kapok, used today to fill mattresses and pad furniture. Native to the lowlands of Central America, it is the most sacred tree of the Maya. Symbolically, it is a tree of life at the center of a conceptual space. It is called *yaxche* in Yucatec Maya.

the memory of sun tresses,
from which fell languages of astronomies
spoken throughout the stars
and of marimbas¹ with mirror keyboards
that pounded great elastic raindrops
into calendar dates festooned with hornpipes and drums,
and all the sounds
of celestial words...
The words,
workers of the light...

The Night, Nothingness and Life,
the Immense Widows,
the immense widowhood of the heavens
after each lightning flash
and the sobbing and weeping of the turtledove
for what the Emissaries kept secret,
a message of which only reflections remain,
tresses of the Goldthinking-stars
spread on the azure plates.

The sobbing and weeping of the turtledove
for a life without message,
life tattooed blindly
by the Twohanded Tattooer
who decanted, from one world to another,
living immensities,
universes,
dynasties of iguanas,
aquariums,
tails of comets,
floating gardens,
markets of words,
oils,

¹ Large xylophones, very popular in Guatemala.

stars,
fire beetles,
butterflies...

A Twohanded Tattooer
who, after peopling his blindness,
created with his touch,
created with his breath —
the sound from his face
colliding against his heart —
those who would be entrusted
with the raising of beings,
things and sounds of dream.

The ones entrusted:

Those of the songs soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of poetry,
clearvigilant, clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the stones soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of sculpture,
clearvigilant, clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the colors soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of painting,
clearvigilant, clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the darkness soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of gourdcarving,
clearvigilant, clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the feathers soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of the art of plumagery,
clearvigilant, clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the sounds soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of music,
clearvigilant, clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the metals soaking,
smelters, goldsmiths, gemsetters,
clearvigilant, clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the songs soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of poetry,
spewed mirror water from their lips
to see and make seen
things soaked as in dreams...
clearvigilant,
Clearsleeping, clearwaking.

Those of the stones soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of sculpture,
floated eyeless at the bottom of the azure jewel-case,
their touch exposed to the pecks of the light of the air,
clearwaking, clearvigilant, clearsleeping.

Those of the colors soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of painting,
swept away reality with feathered brooms
to clear a path for enigma,
clearwaking, clearvigilant, clearsleeping.

Those of the darkness soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of gourdcarving,
set loose the blade-smoke drifting
through the black-varnish¹ night,

¹ MAA uses the Guatemalan word *nije*: “Black varnish that the natives use to give the shine of lacquer to objects they use (*jicaras* [calabash cups], *guacales* [crates], etc.). It is an indigenous

clearwaking, clearvigilant, clearsleeping.

Those of the feathers soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of the art of plumagery,
restored the wing of the quetzal¹
to candescent flight
in the gemstone of the wind
and in the tufts of plume,
guardian of the temples,
clearwaking, clearvigilant, clearsleeping.

Those of the metals soaking,
smelters, goldsmiths, gemsetters,
mined gold from the light of the air,
silver from the lunar light,
gems from the water's light,
clearwaking, clearvigilant, clearsleeping.

Those of the sounds soaking,
clearvigilant shamans of music,
spoke for the sun,
the sun whose tongue the eclipses consumed,
they spoke for the sun
with the sound of stone,
marimba wood,
ocarina,
drum skin,
pierced reed,
fish scale,
tortoise,
rattles of the rattlesnake,

lacquer.”

¹ A spectacular bird of Central America, whose long green tail-feathers were highly prized by the ancient Maya. It is the bird symbol of Guatemala. Quetzal is a Mexican word; the Quiché Maya calls the bird *kukul*. MAA: “It is a most beautiful bird. In the Indian texts it is employed as the superlative of beauty.”

clearsleeping, clearvigilant, clearwaking.

But the word does not grasp,
the music does not enclose,
voice and sound soak the porous space
of the vast blue jug
and vanish through its pores.

Not so the fastening magics,
those that keep the tremor of the substances
in temples, altars and monuments
tattooed with warriors,
priests,
name days,
presences,
astronomic dancers,
and in the ceremonial robes
tattooed with butterfly wings,
and in the jewels tattooed with stars,
and in the bark of the amatl¹
tattooed with colored calligraphies
in equinoctial boil.

In calculation lies the substance of the star,
just as in these magic tattoos
of lines, forms and colors,
lies the substance of the Universe,
of the Universe visible
and immobile.
And for those cagers of creation,
the ones who raised beings,
things and sounds of dream,

¹ A wild fig tree of the genus *Ficus*. In pre-conquest times, the Nahuatl (and possibly other native peoples) made extensive use of the bark of these trees for the preparation of paper for records and correspondence.

the sketchers,
painters,
sculptors,
engravers,
goldsmiths,
gourdcutters
(so fine is the cutting edge of the flint
that it turns to thread in the varnish of the gourd cup),
plumists and weavers of huipils¹
with tendrils of silk measuring
fruitlike breasts and hips;
for these clearvigilant magicians
assisting the Twohanded Tattooer,
the earth,
the light,
the wind,
the sky,
the water,
the sun,
the air,
weep in the cage of the perforated night,
blindness without exit.

Canina,
the Eagle of the Rabid Dogs,
flung himself against the Twohanded Tattooer.
"Everything's eroded by your sketchers!"
— he cried, his frill rising in a circular fan,
his eyes nougats of glass,
his claws soaked with glacial sweat —
"Everything's eroded by your sketchers

¹ Blouses or shifts worn by Maya women, often richly woven or embroidered. MAA: "Sleeveless blouses of the Indians. It is a very colorful female garment. On the coarse fabric, embroidery in silks of living hues stylizes the most graceful primitive ornamental motifs: birds, deer, rabbits, etc. (Güipil or huipil, no difference.)"

or missing from the canvases of your mirror-painters!
If you weren't a blind chewer of shadows
you'd know the work of your artists!
I hate your gourdcutters, I hate them,
from the gourd in their hands come cups and platters
entangled in spiderweb sketches!
And your sculptors and stonecutters
who capture the laughter of the stones
in the light and shadow of the bas-relief!
Your goldsmiths and jewelers! They have gems
in place of fingertips,
so much precious stone passes through their hands!
Your potters, through them the clay tells lies!
Your plumists, their beautiful plumagery art
humanizes the swift wing!...
I hate everything your artists create
in the artificial light that is the night without tresses."

Then and there he destroyed him,
he destroyed them,
he shattered the Twohanded Tattooer,
he shattered the reality and the dream of the blind artists,
not the Eagle,
not the Eagle of the Rabid Dogs...
Someone else...
Someone overcame him with a claw...
...in the light of the Goldthinking-stars...

PUNISHMENT OF PROFUNDITIES

SOMEONE,
someone overcame him with a claw...

The Hunter of the Air?

Someone,
but not the Hunter of the Air.
Busy ears, busy hands,
where he puts his ear he puts his hand,
the Hunter of the Air...
Busy gorges, busy clouds,
where he puts the gorge he puts the clouds,
the Hunter of the Air.

Someone overcame him with a claw...
Hunter of the Air
is only the echo.

Someone existing,
corporeal.
Someone of unfired mud,
pupils of glazed water,
teeth painted blue,
shining cheekbones,
fingers of spiny cactus,
a mouth without words.

Someone prior to the word,
someone of unfired mud,
someone of stony clay,
his face a vessel with eyes,
and magic adornments of comet bones

on his ears, forearms,
waist, ankles.
His speech, the motion of his plumes.
A language of plumes of colors.

A tempestuous warrior,
face to face with his shield,
face to face with his arrows,
he speaks with the motion of his plumes:

"The Twohanded Tattooer
and those who helped him raise the worlds of dream,
perished at the hands of the one who sleeps beneath the acacias...
(...I sleep beneath the acacias...)."

"The Twohanded Tattooer
and those who helped him raise the worlds of dream,
perished in the claws of the one who howls
to bleed the silence of the night...
(...I howl to bleed the silence of the night...)."

"The Twohanded Tattooer
and those who helped him raise the worlds of dream,
in a soaking of blind water,
perished in the jaws of the one who shines
with his white solstice fangs...
(...I shine with my white solstice fangs...)."

Deaths, destructions,
fragmentations, mutilations...
Relics of staircases, braids of stone
painted fresh sky blue...
fragments of fretwork warped
with labyrinth-saliva thread...
Ceremonial plazas...
Talking masks

and alabaster rings
in the Ball Courts¹...
Dressing rooms where the trees undressed...
Walls with eyes of celestial copal...

Destructions, fragmentations, mutilated
paintings on a background of reddish tobacco.
Bonfires, tributes, trampling
of fruitful images of women...
Stag horn ashes
to enlarge their eyelids
with rainwater lashes
and put indigo distance beneath their eyes,
tiger pelts,
false fingernails,
necklaces of snake heads,
amulets of gold with no notion of their antiquity...

Destructions, fragmentations, mutilated
paintings on a background of a hailstorm of colors.
Cloaks, parasols, fans...
The flint knife
heated to the living red of the heart...
Amulets, blow guns,
vases of orgies
with drawings of intimate calisthenics
or scenes of golden banquets,

guests covered with pustules², eating silver sand

¹ Stone courts in which was played an important ritual ball game of the Maya. The game was called *pok-ta-pok* by the Yucatec Maya. The object was to pass the ball through a ring mounted in a wall.

² Nahuatl hieroglyphics portrayed some gods as covered with red pustules. Among the Quiché Maya, pustules were seen as a condition suffered by the physically inactive, and thus became a symbol for the wealthy.

with hands cramped with lunations...

Destructions, fragmentations, mutilated
paintings of vegetal ceremonies.
Trumpeters, musicians, dancers...
The foam petrified,
finally petrified in the bas-reliefs.
Circular altars,
coins for the buying and selling of stars.
Cities without time.
An entire city preserving a drop of water...
Destructions, fragmentations, mutilations...

And who but he
sleeps beneath the acacias,
truly, Hunter of the Air?

And who but he
howls to bleed the silence,
truly, Hunter of the Air?

And who but he
shines with his fangs,
truly, Hunter of the Air?

Who but he,
corporeal,
real,
unfired mud,
mouth without word,
a vessel with eyes,
shattered the Twohanded Tattooer
and those who raised
beings and things
in a soaking of dream water.

Who but he,
scalp and weapons,
shield and lance,
barely supported
by the vertebral snake of lightning
as he gets to his feet
and raises
his desert-island head,
a chieftain for centuries
of soldiers who deny life,
of soldiers who sow death
in my country forged of honey.

Hunter of the Air,
where he puts his hand he puts his ear,
where he puts the cloud he puts the gorge,
he rolled the aerolite silence
from one heaven to another
and erased
the world of the Twohanded Tattooer
and those who helped him raise
beings, things
and sounds of dream.

"We may be stripped
of our flesh,
of our musical bones,
of course, Hunter of the Air...
But not of our works,
images of our image,
gloves of our presence.
Towers, watch-stations,
truncated pyramids,
astronomic observatories,
spiral staircases
where the sunflowers of the sky
come whirling down..."

"We may be stripped
of our flesh,
of our musical bones,
but not of our songs,
alliances of light and air,
not of our chronicles,
alliances of color and time,
not of our works,
images of our image,

gloves of our presence..."

"I, memory with tears,
poetry is memory with tears..."

"I, memory with dream,
engraving is memory with dream..."

"I, memory with sun,
sculpture is memory with sun..."

"I, memory with light,
painting is memory with light..."

"I, memory of the sea,
music is memory of the sea..."

The treacherous Warrior
sets loose his magic speech.
His plumes speak.

"They perished in my hands,
they perished in my claws,
they perished in my jaws...
those who raised worlds,
those who raised worlds of dream,
those who raised worlds of dream
in a soaking of blind water,
shaman tattooers of the greatest deceptions
of sight and sound...

"They perished in my hands,
they perished in my claws,
they perished in my jaws...
I sleep beneath the acacias,
I howl to bleed the silence,
I shine with my fangs
and now I stand at war with the Eagles,
for having bested with my claw Canina,
the Eagle of the Rabid Dogs.

"I snatched his prey
but didn't find what I was seeking,
the real and the unreal of splendor, fire.
To possess light and not possess fire!
The orphanhood of the mirror.
I shiver, bathed in teeth,
my own, those of the shivering stars
and those of the beasts of my retinue,
tigers, pumas, tapirs, wild boars...

"I shiver, bathed in teeth
in my canopy of shivering reeds...
Brains of moon adhering to hairy nights...
Eyes with absent visions
pasted like decalcomanias
to the crystal of the pupils...
The dance of the hares' tails...
All the booty of magics,
of tattoos, of glowing bitumens and ices.
If only Talons of Flint would come. But where will he go,
where will Talons of Flint, my Surrogate, go,
the one who holds my place of command, in my absence.
If only my Surrogate would come
to tickle the stones, to make them laugh —
fire is the laughter of the stones —
to draw forth guffaws of gold...
But where will Talons of Flint walk,
on what molar of the ruminating sky,
on what tempest's arm, on what lightning bolt's tail,
on what cloud, what mist, what rock diaper..."

Talons of Flint
assembles his Surrogate image,
before setting loose his magic speech.

One hears what Surrogate asks.
One hears what Surrogate answers.

"If he who scrapes the fish-scales,
scrapes as he scrapes you, scrapes as he scrapes you,
he listens to the laughter of the sea;
if he who scrapes a dead man's bones, scrapes as he scrapes you
scrapes as he scrapes you, scrapes as he scrapes you,
he hears the solitary laughter of his ancestors;

and if one tries to tickle the tree
with honey-daubed hands,
delirious syrupy fruits laugh in the branches,
and if one tickles the water,
guffaws of hail descend,
scraping the stones with my talons, he scrapes as I scratch you,
scrapes as he scrapes you, scrapes as I scratch you,
scrapes as he scrapes you, fire will leap,
the laughter of the stones will leap, will sputter,
will scorch what is theirs and what is not...

"But which stone should I make laugh?
Which stone should I tickle?
The lodestone?
The rounded pebbles?
The pumice stone?

"Which stone should I make laugh?
Which stone should I tickle?
The basalts, the onyxes?
The profound diorites?
The sparkling quartzes?
The jadeites with their vegetal flesh?
The porphyries of glowing blood
and mineral respiration?

"Which stone should I make laugh?
Which stone should I tickle?

"My talons on the lodestone?
Magnet doesn't eat magnet...

"My talons on the pumice stone,
white river-skeleton bone?
My talons on the slabs

of the luxury friezes?

"Which stone should I tickle?
Which stone should I make laugh?

"I'll tickle the serpent stone.
I'll draw laughter from the stone
of the eclipse and the lightning flash..."
And from the serpent stone
and Talons of Flint,
he scrapes as I scratch you,
he scrapes as he scrapes you,
he scrapes as I scratch you,
he scrapes as he scrapes you,
he scrapes as he scrapes you,
up leapt the fire,
the laughter of the stones.

"The laughter of the stones?"
asked the Eagles,
lost in their blue deserts.
"Go steal it, Sparrow Hawk!
Go steal it, Hurricane¹ with Wings!
Go steal it so we may try it!"

The Sparrow Hawk left and returned
with sparks in his beak.

The Eagles tried
the laughter of the stones
and spat it out at once...
Bitter?... Brackish?...

¹ There was a Maya god Hurakán, from whom the word hurricane (Spanish: *huracán*) derives. MAA: "Giant of the winds, spirit of the sky, a lightning flash sometimes; he is one of the more important gods of Quiché [Maya] mythology."

Talons of Flint

tried to douse it with his coyote wail,
before Hurricane with Wings could steal it,
and he salted it with his tears.

And the laughter of the stones,
with a coyote's wail,
spat out by the Eagles,
salt, eclipse and lightning flash,
consumed the mirror-water skin
of the earth.

Woodlands and abandoned cities burned
on the bank of rivers that roasted
stones and embankments,
bleeding gums
and teeth of buttery ash
like the distance that the golden-smoke azuacan¹
brings on its wings from southern lands.
Butterflies of turpentine
flew from the trunks of the pines.
Cataracts of orchid sweat
rained from the arms of the ceiba trees.
Fire dust fell from the dry oaks,
boiling balsam from the liquidambars²
and to the perfume of tamarinds ablaze
was joined that of the cacao groves, a scent of chocolate,

¹ According to MAA, azuacans are “migratory kites [*milanos*] that cross the hemisphere in search of warm weather. They pass through in immense numbers and at great altitudes, so that they resemble clouds in the sky.”

² Commonly known as the sweet gum, this important timber tree is found in the mountains of southern Mexico, highlands of southern Belize and eastern Guatemala and Honduras. The tree produces storax, a fragrant balsam called *xochicotzo* by the ancient Mexicans and used in medicines and perfumes.

amid the little bone cracks of the sapodillas¹,
the rubber trees twisted in elastic columns,
the chicle trees dripping with milky hairs,
and the crackling conocastes²,
red blood of uprooted foliage,
and the sleeping white oaks³,
almost mineral,
and the fleshy mahoganies,
already butter from the touch of a constellation
that lost a foot in the conflagration of the sky
and now walked its leg of fire
in the conflagration of the land.

Whales gone astray in tropical seas,
phosphorescent, torrid flying seas,
playing vaqueros, they hurled jets of water
to lasso the tiger of the conflagration,
the tiger of squeaking rubies,
who recovered his comet-gone-mad ferocity
as he fell on the crystal hoop straps
of the blue vaqueros,
liquid lariats that held him,
paralyzed with surprise,
long enough to slow his escape,
his flight from the water-made-steam,
while the corsairs, floating islands with tiny eyes,
managed to rope him with new and more powerful
jets of water, slip-knot rings,
whose loops the tiger of squeaking rubies
pulled up among flames and stars,

¹ Called *chicozapote* in Central America. A large evergreen tree tapped since ancient times during the rainy season for its latex, which yields chicle gum.

² A large tropical American timber tree, commonly called *guanacaste*, Nahuatl for “ear-tree.”

³ Called *matiliguat* in Guatemala. Also known as the roble, its wood bears a superficial resemblance to oak. The tree grows to great height, inhabits a range from wet lowlands to dry mountain slopes from southern Mexico to Venezuela.

toward the constellation of the mirage,
the one that lost its foot, the constellation of distance,
and toward the army of blue lakes
parapeted in the mouths of the higher volcanoes,
lakes that before falling into fragments —
conquered, evaporated —
leapt
and, coiled on the tiger of rubies, galloped with him,
transformed into serpents of turquoise flames.

The earth was subjected
to a punishment of profundities.
After the conflagration, the invisible rains,
the soil overturned, the hurricane of mud,
the razors of the sun,
the chichicaste nettle¹ in the living flesh...
a punishment of profundities
for having made room
for the first barbarian, not the last,
for the first human beast,
for the first executioner
in my country forged of honey.

¹ A greenish-yellow spiny plant. It is prolific around the Guatemalan town of Chichicastenango (“the Place of the Nettles”), named in its honor.

YES, BUT NO MAGIC...

THE BIRDS FLY, DRIVEN MAD,
not knowing where to take themselves...

The bewildered winds
stumble upon the sea and unravel it...

There are trees moving.
New trees
carried by the waters.

Stones moving.
Reflections of future cities
carried by the waters.

There's no music?
Is that your complaint, Hunter of the Air?

The mockingbird itself is all of music.
Two hundred voices exist in a single throat.
Crystals, woods, metals and cords...
And the canyon wren of oboe timbre
and the double flutes, and the triple flutes
of troupials, woodpeckers, goldfinches, calandra larks,
and the clash of the hollow trunks,
and the water snail, and the drumbeat of the wind
in the great thunder-cotton ceibas...?

...music yes,
but no magic...

There's no poetry?
Is that your complaint, Hunter of the Air?

The hidden poetry, without words it sings.
It is the cactus flower, if the arrows see it,
the flower of the amatl, if the blind see it,
and the abstract flower, if the round-eyed zeros
see it... Three hundred thousand eyes
of round zeros... Three hundred thousand years...
You want more poetry, Hunter of the Air?
It sings in the sounds of the wind.
Winged pyrotechnics of parakeeteries...
Uproars, cries, shrieks and pauses
of astonishment... silences also resounding.
And the babble of frogs and monkeys...
Monkeys whistling syllables — help! —
through the monosyllables and onomatopoeias
of elastic tracks... seeds
of the infinite outcry, poetry...

...poetry yes
but no magic...

There's no painting?
Is that your complaint, Hunter of the Air?

The macaws, on which battle
colors that shout all colors,
greens newly green, sprung from greener greens,
and the red reds, the reddest reds of all the reds,
all the rainbow in violent struggle, intense, without truce,
clear amethysts and deep sapphires, white flashes of lightning,
purples, violets, lilacs, rosy hues...
And the motmots¹, on which battle

¹ Central America is generally regarded as the cradle of the motmot family; eight of the nine known species of this kingfisher relative are found there. This bird is known for its long tail and

blues that shout all blues,
blues of turkeys blue and still more blue,
blues of blue lakes,
And the great orioles¹, on which battle
fires that fly, all fires,
all the colors of fire in their plumes,
the flames, the red-hot coals, the suns of the ray.

And the blackbird, on which struggle
shadows that shriek, sorrows that battle,
all the blackness of morro-tree² honey,
the blackness all drunkenness of dreams
of extinguished fruit.

And the hummingbirds of wounded saffron
and the duck, a watersand elf with feathers
from sky-blue to gold... Do you want more painting,
Hunter of the Air?... The blood-jewel
of the red bird and the flesh-feather
of the rose herons... Do you want more painting,
Hunter of the Air?... The yellowspots,
moon-egg-yolk birds,
and the butterflies, lineage of orchids,
mosaics that fly... Do you want more painting,
Hunter of the Air?...

...painting yes,

serrated beak. MAA probably has in mind the Blue-diademed Motmot, the best known species, with its cobalt-blue colored crown, green body and black face, and distinctive, racquet-shaped tailfeathers.

¹ A troupial. MAA calls them *chorchas*: “The name for various birds of the genus *Icterus*. The most common *chorcha* is of yellow and black plumage, it sings with strength and a mellifluous voice.”

² The morro or calabash tree is widely cultivated in Central America for its large, gourd-like fruits, used locally for making cups, dishes and other containers; some are ornately carved and painted. The firm, tough timber is used for boat ribs, wheel hubs, firewood and charcoal.

but no magic...

There's no sculpture?
Is that your complaint, Hunter of the Air?

The crags, surfaces and water,
barely polished, but already soaking
in front of the sea that sculpts figures from fog,
fetishes of algae, monsters, snails,
sea horses, all in motion...
And the high faces of the cordilleras,
profiles, effigies, coins of stars...
Sculpture in stone, in sandbanks, clouds...

...sculpture yes,
but no magic...

And the gourdcutters who adorn the night
with tattoos of gold of all colors?
And the plume-cloud? The plumists speak to you...
And the jewel of the wind? The goldsmiths speak to you...
They speak cloud shapes to you, Hunter of the Air!
They speak jewels to you, Hunter of the Air!

NAVELS OF SUN AND PRECIOUS COPALS

THE LITTLE BONES OF THE ECHO
on the tongue of the Forgetful Emissary.

On the tongue of the Forgetful Emissary,
the message of the Goldthinking-star-gods.

"May the mist rise early,
fragrant with tamarind, poplar, suquinay¹,
may it spread its cloths over the words
and may the Four Magicians of the Sky be created
with navels of sun and precious copals.

"May they be of black maize,
maize coiled with sexes and snakes,
their hair, their pupils and their dreams.

"May they be of white maize,
maize coiled with sperm and the moon,
their teeth, the quicklime of their corneas,
their bones and their nails.

"And may their flesh be of yellow maize,
moistened in water sweet
with the night of the star
and skinned with quicklime
in blind boil,
the lime of the eyes
of the Twohanded Tattooer,
the one who was destroyed
along with his raisers of worlds of dream

¹ A member of the Composite family. MAA: "In the *Recordación Florida*, one reads that the bees that sip the juice of the flowers of this plant produce a most sweet honey."

by the man of mud
who in his turn was annihilated
by fire, the laughter of the stones."

And so was created
the Man-of-Four-Magics,
the one who wears bluegreen feathers
of quetzals and flowers covered with dew,
who illuminates and burns like resinous pine,
who sets things alight
in my country forged of honey.

All was visible, except for the moment
of healing the navels
with webs of tobacco smoke
and placing in their folds,
along with the copals of splendor
and dust of worn-out words,
the magic of the three halves.

By the magic of the three halves,
the half which holds things within
becomes magnetized by the sole presence
of the Man-of-the-Four-Magics,
issues from things and penetrates
the interior of that which completes it,
before restoring it, with an unknown half.

By the magic of the three halves,
there is a half that remains in things,
another that leaves and returns to things
and the unknown half, the one that magic adds.

MAGICIANS-MEN-MAGICIANS

MAGICIANS-MEN-MAGICIANS,
they appear in the House of the Five Roses,
where time is not a date but an arrow.
In the House of the Angles,
the house of the frothy drink of Spanish plum and agave juice¹,
the house of banquets that, according to the Chronicler,
used to conclude with pastries shaped like dovecotes
from which, when the crust,
gilt with amber toast, was cut,
live doves would emerge and take flight,
sprinkling sunflower sugar
on the laughter of the diners.

He of the Copal of Song is there
and beyond words.
It is not song by word,
but word by magic.
Promising in its prodigy.

He of the Copal of Color is there
and beyond birds of plumage.
It is not color by color,
but color by magic.
Promising is its prodigy.

He of the Copal of Form is there
and beyond the high seas and the wind.
It is not form by form,

¹ The Spanish plum, called *jocote* in Central America, is the fruit of *Spondias purpurea* of the Cashew family and is found throughout the tropics. Agave juice in Spanish is called *aguamiel* ("honey-water"). The sap of an agave plant called maguey (the American aloe, or century plant) is used to make pulque, a milky alcoholic beverage, first developed in pre-Columbian times and still drunk by Mexican Indians to this day.

but form by magic.
Promising is its prodigy.

He of the Copal of Sound is there
and beyond the cotton of trills.
It is not sound by sound,
but sound by magic.
Promising is its prodigy.

The sun will chew
in the navel of the Magician of Song,
an incense-burner with hot coals of words,
the copal of poetry.

The sun will chew
in the navel of the Magician of Color,
an incense-burner with coals of light,
the copal of painting.

The sun will chew
in the navel of the Magician of Form,
an incense-burner with volcano stones,
the copal of sculpture.

The sun will chew
in the navel of the Magician of Sound,
an incense-burner with acoustic coals,
the copal of music.

Sacred they are,
promising is their prodigy,
the four in a single body,
the four in a single man.

Sacred they are,

promising is their prodigy,
the four in a single body,
the four in a single man,
a prickly pear with four heads,
not round in form, but half moons
and faces of porous light, almost visible,
visible, retained in each half moon,
mysterious faces vacant in appearance
turning in all directions,
like sculptures moving
in the wind of intelligence.

Sacred they are,
promising is their prodigy
and if their presence is a challenge,
who will counter them, Hunter of the Air,
who will counter this Four-Times-Heaven
with eight arms and eight hands of palm trees
and the constellation of their nails
of moon husk
and razor edge,
a constellation of forty mirrors
on happily moving fingers.

Who will counter this Quadriheaven
with eyes invisible
but evident in the luminous dust cloud
of his four-half-moon-faces,
sustained by four necks of virile elegance,
eight shoulders of torrent stone,
eight legs of banana-grove trunk
that hold up the clusters of sacred organs
and eight feet, tongues with toes
for the language of the dance.

The four in a single body,
the four in a single man
who in order to move turns like a star
followed by the earth
which revolves like a sunflower
under his feet,
under his eight turning feet,
under his eight dancing feet.
The four in a single body,
the four in a single man
who in order to eat puts into motion
one hundred and twenty-eight teeth,
porcelain grindstones for maize,
and how does one sate his hunger
which begins in color
and continues in flavors...
he wants to devour the sun,
he wants to eat mountains,
he wants to eat conflagrations,
he wants to devour the sky...

And how does one sate his sense of smell
apparent at his eight nostrils,
and his touch of sidereal magnets,
and his elastic sea skin that, without breaking,
allows each one of the four
to go from his magic extremity
to the center of the earth
and return to his own corner of the heavens,
after passing the sun through the eye of corn,
at the moment when the pierced masks
of the calendrical statues
breathe the sacred resins of midday,
the mirrors of diaphanous quicksilver fuse
and the Magician of Color, located in the East,

hurries to color the tablets,
and the Magician of Form, located in the West,
embroiders stone with the near and far
of light and shade, in bas-reliefs,
and the Magician of the Word, located in the North,
weaves the song of the amanuensis of contemplations,
and the Magician of Sound, located in the South,
brings forth the melody of fervor and utensil.

HIDDEN CRAFTS

THE POETS, ANONYMOUS AMANUENSES, THE HEELS
of the Magician of Song in the house of the North,
carried their complaint to the petaled flower
of the ear of the Celestial Hunters:

"The motionless flight of poetry and its unfoldings
in ritual song, warrior dance, word play,
conversation of deified hearts, this is our secret.
To hear seedbeds of syllables sprout and transplant them
with salivations of the golden strophe,
this is our role as thinkers with music.
We know the pulse of the lashing rains
in the calendrical drawing and the colored, polychrome calligraphy
of symbols and astrological prophecies;
but, passed over by the Magician of Song,
we can't be more than wordcadavers,
our tongues perforated with metaphor arrows."

Onto what liana of silence do they fasten bells,
drops of water, fish scales, fragments of glass,
pieces of wood, fingernails of metal,
in tests of new resounding rains,
those who are the Invisible Back of the Visible Magician,
he of the Copal of Music, in his house of the South?
What canes, toasted over low flame, do they pierce
in search of the pathetic trill?
What stones polished with tobacco
do they use to iron the drum skins?
In what millennial liquor do they soak the ocarina,
the tortoise, the snail, the stone
for the keys of the marimbas?
Silent is the lament of anonymous musicians in the questions

that fly to the ear of the Celestial Hunters.

They walked in the house of the luminous cactus,
the painters, statues without feet,
only eyes, like the Magician of Color
in his house of the East... Anonymous and absent
they are, and this their lament at the ear of the Hunters,
those who entered and exited from the blues
of wood dye, from the bleeding achiotes¹,
from the divine purples robbed from crustaceans
of the Southern Sea, from the oily blacks,
the limestone whites, the ochres of mud,
the yellows, pollen or gold dust,
the greens of ground emeralds,
the ruddy lands,
the tawny guapinoles²...
Theirs is the secret of the porous woods,
of the tablets of hairless surface,
treated with honey, wax or serum,
and theirs is the secret of the flexible skins
and the terror-struck skins that stretched death...
Silent, anonymous, absent,
the luminous cactus in their pupils,
the lament in their painting...

And the stonecutters? The seas of their eyes
hold floes of stone. A chip always sails
in the eye of the stonecutter.
Who smooths the mass? Who converts it
to a needlelike stela? Who robs its weight with grooves?
They do, all is the work of their hands, and of that they complain.

¹ A shrub or small tree, 6 to 20 feet high, widely planted in tropical America because of the orange dye obtained from the seeds. MAA: "The seed has a fine powder that has multiple uses in medicine, dyeing and cooking. *Bija* (from the Carib *bija*, flesh-colored, red)..."

² Commonly called the locust tree in British America. A source of copal.

The forgotten back of the Sculptor Magician, they denounce their
anonymity
to the ear of the Celestial Hunters.

No, the light of the sky is not enough
in the hunt for the feather's down
and calm, slow, sedentary
— in coffers of crocodile hide,
ceremonial vestments ablaze,
testimony to the expense of their eyes —
the plumists speak to the Hunters,
united in their lament with the weavers of substances,
so many symbols, divinations, astral
wisdoms and calculations are warped in the fabrics,
united with the gourdcutters, fragrant with acid honey,
their hands ever dark with *nije* varnish,
and always wide awake, alive, alert
to the use of the pick in tattooing the calabash cups,
and with the goldsmiths, coaxers of gold,
and with the potters, those with the empty hands...
where do the vases go, the vessels, the jugs,
the kettles, earthen pitchers, beaters and glazed crockery?
To what lightning flash without destiny?
To what lips without kisses?
To what fire without flame?
What earth tremor jolts them?
What water sweats from their thirsty pores?

A dew of tears soaked the petaled flower
of the ear of the Celestial Hunters,
before the iguana of afternoon
could blister the clouds and the night could seek,
for polishing dreams, the pomades
kept in the vase of the essences.

THE CELESTIAL HUNTERS

"GOLDTHINKING-STARS! GOD-EYES!
Goldblazing goldquivering God-Eyes,
golddistant stars! God-Eyes!
This is our proclamation,
this is our challenge!

"We Celestial Hunters
hoist the banners of the black dew,
the sweat of crafts,
and we set out for the country
where there are more flowers than land,
broken is the pact with the butterfly
of lava wings,
broken are the jewels of the friendship
that in the heavens will continue
to celebrate its birthday.

"We set out on the hunt of Quadriheaven,
the Man of the Magics
the Man of the Four Magics,
the Man of the Four Navels of Fire,
burners of the four precious copals of life
— poetry, painting, music, sculpture —
for the exclusive delight of the eyes and ears
of the gods visible in the holes of the night.

"Face to face with his creators,
Let our challenge be spoken and our proclamation heard!

"We'll hunt Quadriheaven, who plays the tyrant in his abodes
located in the four petals of the celestial rose,
over those who are his heels, his back, his hands,

his shadows, his amanuenses, his speechcadavers,
his tributaries, without permitting — as it doesn't please
the godly Eyes and Ears — that they leave their confinement
and take the celebration of their craft into the public plazas.

"Face to face with his creators,
Let our challenge be spoken and our proclamation heard!

"We're heading for the country of mirrors,
the region where there are more flowers than land.
We're setting out to hunt Quadriheaven,
without knowing his name,
without knowing his dance,
without knowing his mask,
aware that the rivers of his blood
cannot be navigated by the barques of death.

"We're setting out to hunt
the Man of the Magics,
Four-Times-Heaven,
he who weeps volcanic lava
to obscure the black dew
of our banners,
the sweat of our crafts.

"Hunters to earth!"
was the cry
and down from the sky they came, in ships of plumes,
the Chieftain and his Horizon-Eagles.

The Chieftain of Hunters, Eagle of Trees,
he of the green tracks painted on the land,
tasting of green tracks that leave
trees as they go — the wind rises, and keeps
licking the leaves, gathering them, separating them,

whirling them round — green tracks of the Chieftain of Hunters,
Eagle of Trees,
a taloned eagle amid a tempest of green leaves,
his body a golden quince tree smeared with deer fat,
the shield on his arm tattooed with green serpents
and his quetzal-plume arrow pointed toward midday.

Four were the magics
and five the hunters.

Eagle of Sun Fireflies,
he of the yellow tracks painted on the land,
tasting of yellow tracks that leave
shooting stars as they go — the wind rises
and keeps licking flickering goldworks —
Hunter from the Four Hundred Hunter-Stars,
Eagle of Sun Fireflies,
yellow his honey locks on his shoulders,
beneath cascades of golden plumes,
of humid constellation his shield,
of light that fades and flares, the point of his arrows,
of his arrow that fades and flares, pointed toward the West.

Four were the magics
and five the hunters.

Eagle of Dreams,
he of the black tracks painted not on the land,
but beneath the ground, a Hunter who moves with his head
under the land, tasting of black tracks,
the wind rises and keeps licking the dust,
licking the black tracks of the missing,
Eagle of Dreams,
of dark breeze his plumes, of slate his shield,
of lava the point of his eyeless arrows,

of his blind arrow pointed toward midnight.
Four were the magics
and five the hunters.

Eagle of Fire,
he of the red tracks painted on the land
tasting of tracks of coral that leave
hearts as they go, the wind
lifts its tongue and keeps licking the blood
in slaughterhouses, battlefields, sacrificial altars,
Eagle of Fire,
his ears, vermilion butterflies in the conflagration of his plumage,
of unquenchable hot coals his shield, of flames his arrows,
his arrow of sun liquor pointed toward the East.

Four were the magics
and five the hunters.

Eagle of Clouds,
he of the white traces, half moons painted
on the land tasting of mists that move on feathered feet,
the wind lifts its tongue and licks the quicklime,
white his plumes, white his skin, white his teeth,
Eagle of Clouds,
corpulent and almost weightless, snowy his shield,
antarctic his bow and his polar arrow
pointed toward the moon.

Four were the magics
and five the hunters.

THE HUNT

"MY TRACKS ARE WATER EMERALDS,
I'm Chieftain of Hunters,
Chieftain of Arrowheavens
Am I,
Chief of Celestial Hunters,
my tracks are water emeralds!"

"Like the quetzal, you go on...

— I go on...

ah, if I'd stop!"

"Ay, if you'd stop,
the earth feeds on tracks,
life joined to death
in your sunwater-river-tracks...
tracks... tracks...
the earth feeds on tracks...
wings... wings...
the sky feeds on wings...!"

"My tracks, yellow flower pollen,
without my tracks there's nothing, nothing exists,
nothing turns,
that's who I am,
the one who turns,
my tracks are sunflowers that shine!"

"Like the sun, you go on...

— I go on...

ah, if I'd stop!"

"Ay, if you'd stop,

the earth feeds on tracks,
life joined to death
in your tracks of a string of reflections...
tracks... tracks...
the land feeds on tracks...
wings... wings...
the sky feeds on wings...!"

"I leave my tracks, black butterfly wings,
without my tracks nothing goes beyond life,
that's who I am,
the one who goes beyond life,
my tracks are flying obsidian wings!"

"Like the night, you go on...

— I go on...

ah, if I'd stop!"

"Ah, if you'd stop,
there's a necklace of eyes that watches us from the sky,
life joined to death
in your eye-necklace tracks...
tracks... tracks...
the earth feeds on tracks...
wings... wings...
the sky feeds on wings...!"

"Without my tracks, watermoons of moon,
the sea would die
and the one who smokes tobacco in eclipses
would lose his eyes in the smoke;
that's who I am,
the one who accompanies the sea in its tides
and the one who smokes tobacco in eclipses!"

"Like the moon, you go on...

— I go on...

ah, if I'd stop!"

"Ay, if you'd stop,
the earth feeds on tracks,
life joined to death
in your tracks of eclipses and tides...
tracks... tracks...
the earth feeds on tracks...
wings... wings...
the sky feeds on wings...!"

"Tiger of red-onion paces,
my tracks go from the heart to the sun;
that's who I am,
the track of throbbing blood
that spurts from the bonfire of the breasts
to the solar conflagration..."

"Like blood you go on...

— I go on...

ah, if I'd stop!"

"Ay, if you'd stop,
the earth feeds on tracks,
life joined to death
in your tracks of bloody feet...
tracks... tracks...
the earth feeds on tracks...
wings... wings...
the sky feeds on wings...!"

"Ah, if I'd stop...!"

"Ay, if you'd stop...!"

Like the quetzal I go on...
You go on like the sun...
Like the night I go on...
You go on like the moon...
Like blood I go on...
You go on like the quetzal...
Like the sun I go on...
You go on like the night...
Like the moon I go on...
You go on like blood...

"Ah, if I'd stop...!"
"Ay, if you'd stop...!"

The earth feeds on tracks of light-giving maize,
a single ear of maize and all the sun radiant
with quetzal wings that change the color of the sky,
a single quetzal and all the sky green,
with threads of rain, with threads of blood,
the earth feeds on blood...
life and death in the hunters' tracks...
tracks... tracks... life and death... tracks...
tracks... robin-red-breast-twilight tracks... tracks...
life and death... tracks... tracks...
yellowfaced-dawn tracks... tracks... tracks...
life and death... tracks... tracks...
heron-feather-jewel tracks... tracks...
life and death... tracks... tracks...
obsidian-dustcloud tracks... tracks... tracks...

"Ah, if you'd stop...!"
"Ay, if I'd stop...!"

"Ah, if you'd stop,

you'd see the tracks vanish,
the food of the earth,
in the mirror of a beast that devours them,
a beast that changes colors
according to the track it takes...!"

"Ah, if you'd stop...!"

"Ay, if I'd stop...!"

"Ah, if you'd stop
you'd see the beast that changes colors
according the track taken;
a mirror of bloody foam... if it steals the red track...
a mirror of dark foam... if it steals the black track...
a mirror of solar foam... if it steals the yellow track...
a mirror of lake foam... if it steals the green track...
a mirror of diamond foam... if it steals the white track...!"

"Ah, if I'd stop...!"

"Ay, if you'd stop...!"

Eagle of Trees
raises his Chieftain arrow
and harangues the hunters:

"Horizon Eagles!
Archers of the Sky!
Arrowheavens!
Plume wings on our heads!
Plume wings on our shoulders!
Plume wings on our arms!
Plume wings on our feet!
Cloud-Heads!
Mountain-Shoulders!
Horizon-Arms!
Wind-Feet!
Celestial Hunters of the lost tracks,
someone speaks in the house of the heartbeat,
someone shouts in the house of the heartbeat,
someone cries out in the house of the heartbeat,
someone warns of the danger
of the beast that steals our tracks,
lightning-flash skin that will turn the golden tracks
of the Yellow Archer to incendiary ash;
river-tributary skin that will turn my Green Archer tracks
to water reflection;
moon skin that will draw smoke
from the tracks of the White Eagle Hunter;
midnight skin that will blot out
the tracks of the Black Eagle Hunter;
battlefield skin
that will leave not an ash
of the tracks of the Red Eagle Hunter!"

...someone speaks, someone shouts,
 someone cries out in the house of the heartbeat...

Someone warns of the danger
of the stealer of tracks,
a small lizard with long legs,
prehensile tail and a lone immobile eye...

...someone speaks, someone shouts,
 someone cries out in the house of the heartbeat...

Someone warns of the danger
of the beast that lives without eating,
of the beast that changes colors
according to the track that it reflects,
a mirror of a tail, sharp claws
and a lone immobile eye...

...someone speaks, someone shouts,
 someone cries out in the house of the heartbeat...

Someone warns of the danger
of the mirror that drinks no water,
of the mirror that does not eat,
of the one that feeds on air,
of the beast with mirror skin
that catches fire,
bleeds itself,
turns green again,
denies the light,
dresses in snow,
according to the track it reflects,
sapphire-skin,
coral-skin,
jadeite-skin,

magnet-skin,
pearl-skin...

...someone speaks, someone shouts,
 someone cries out in the house of the heartbeat...

Eagle of Trees
raises his Chieftain arrow
and harangues the hunters:

"Quadriheaven, the Man-of-the-Magics,
Deceiving Mirror, Grand Rainbow,
devours our tracks...
What are the tracks, Eagle Hunters?
The house of the heartbeat may answer...
And thus, before the light it may be said,
before the ceibas, before the sparrow hawks,
if Deceiving Mirror, Great Rainbow,
devours our tracks, before the light it may be said,
before the horizons, he will not remember us,
he steals our absence..."

...someone speaks, someone shouts,
 someone cries out in the house of the heartbeat...

"If the rain of your arrows would stop him...!"

"If the rain of my arrows would stop him...!"

The most luminous of the hunters,
he of the flashing sun-fireflies,
hurls the first arrows,
he believes he has wounded the beast of changing colors
and runs to fetch the prey, but finds it only dazed
by the fade and flare of the eyes
of his firefly arrows.

"If the rain of my arrows would stop him...!"

"If the rain of your arrows would stop him...!"

Eagle of Fire comes up in a lightning bolt,
shouts, leaps, curls, launches
his arrows of flame, but he too fails
to hit the mark, deceived by the changing
colors of the fleeing beast.

"If the rain of your arrows would stop him...!"

"If the rain of my arrows would stop him...!"

Eagle of Clouds slips cautiously away,
he holds on his arrow's point the secret
of the transparent flint. If he wounds him
he will convert him to crystal and, once converted,
it will be enough to shatter him
to put an end to Quadriheaven
without spilling blood...

But Hunter of Dreams moves past him,
plumes of darkness, nocturnal bow,

arrow tipped with black slate.
He shoots and hits the mark,
into the white of the fixed eye
of the beast that bleeds from the cornea,
the only weak spot on his body,
the white of his eye in which colors sleep.
He pales... he fades... he bleeds...
ay, his rainbow blood,
the quicksilver of his iridescent mirror blood...
He trembles... he cringes...
Colors are his blood sugar...
He moves his prehensile tail... seeking...
to cling... but where...
to the tracks... to the clouds...
to the trees...
to the barkings of the pestering moon...
to the braided volcanoes,
to their braids of scorched lava...
to the resounding lightning bolts, dried leaves
through which the Hunter of Dreams comes bounding
to retrieve his dying prey, the wounded beast...

"It was... me... my arrow...!"

"It was... me... my arrow...!"

The cataclysm petrified the silence,
a stone for constructing eternities,
as the beast with mirror skin shatters
in the black gloved hands of the Hunter of Dreams,
and, converted to a tangle of liquid crystals,
it flees noiselessly from ravine to ravine,
leaving behind silent rainbowed cataracts,
falls of colored water,
iridescent-butterfly-rivers,
living-stone-rivers, garnet-twilight-rivers,

opal-rivers, pearl-rivers, lapis-lazuli-rivers,
liquefied-amethyst-rivers,
inspired-emerald-rivers,
liquid-gold-rivers,
glass-bead-rivers... rivers... rivers...
rivers that form a lake of mirror skin,
a lake that changes color every instant,
at every surge, at every stroke of light,
at every gust of wind...

Time stops
beneath the feet of the hunters who turn
in the heights of the cordillera,
not daring to descend to the lake
that changes colors...
they turn in the whirlwind of their sunflower breath...
turningskies... turningclouds... turningmountains...
they turn... they turn... not daring to descend to the lake...
they turn... they turn... they turn... not hunters... cloud shapes...
cloud shapes over the mountains...

DATES OF STONE

"IF THE CELESTIAL HUNTERS WOULD COME DOWN
and copy their red-cloud language in my mirrors,
smoke with me the golden tobacco
that falls from the flicker of the stars,
we'd speak the language of mirrors...
In place of words they'd sprinkle their images
in my waters. To copy an image is to understand it
and it's so easy to be understood with images,
without words, with thought transformed
into a wind-blast of colors..."

"If we Celestial Hunters would come down
and copy our red-cloud language in your mirrors,
smoke with you the golden tobacco
that falls from the flicker of the stars,
we'd speak the language of mirrors,
but the fish that with every movement
eludes the hooks that surround it,
some with four barbs,
already penetrates your ears,
your ears surrounded with circular waves,
hoops of crystal plumes,
and falls into the nets of your understanding
with our proclamation of war."

"The fish that with every word
must make thousands of moves
to elude the hooks
that surround it, some with four barbs,
already swims in my ears, a messenger of war,
in my ears surrounded with circular waves,
hoops of crystal plumes,

and so it would be better if the Celestial Hunters
approached my mirrors...

Then,

without endangering the fish surrounded by hooks,
we'd understand each other with images."

"Our word, our proclamation,
before the skies, before the earth,
let it be said, demands first the surrender
of Quadriheaven, he of the magic copals,
he who in the Four Knots of the Shawl
creates for the god-eyes,
only for the god-eyes,
and to the taste of the god-eyes,
devourers of sculpture and painting,
the visual arts of color and form,
and creates the auditives of sound and song
for the god-ears
only for the god-ears
and to the taste of the god-ears,
devourers of music and poetry,
to the detriment of condemned artists,
by not measuring their arts,
being, blind, deaf, mute, armless,
anonymous and absent...

"And so,
face to face with the banner of black dew,
the sweat of crafts,
the dates of stone set
in our proclamation of war
and the horizons captive — pumas and jaguars
accompany us — we descend like lightning bolts
with thunder-drum feet,
to demand of the lake

the surrender of Quadriheaven,
hidden in its waters of colors changing
like the mirror skin of the stealer of tracks
who, mortally wounded, escaped from the grasp
of the Nocturnal Celestial Hunter."

Storm of birds,
storm of clouds,
storm of arrows,
the outwitted hunter dances,
the Hunter of Dreams dances,
his crest adorned with heavenly bodies,
his darkness smoking with stars.

Storm of feathers,
storm of tracks,
storm of arrows,
the outwitted hunter dances,
the Hunter of Dreams dances
as he leads the hunters
down from the high mountains
to the sleeping blue dish.

Storm of birds,
storm of clouds,
storm of arrows,
storm of tracks,
the outwitted hunter dances,
the Hunter of Dreams dances,
his crest adorned with heavenly bodies
his darkness smoking with stars,
black black arrow
black black track
beside the Green-Green-Arrow-Chieftain,
green green tracks,

Hands-wings-antechambers-of-the-blue-gestures-sky-chieftains,
not far, in cloud-distance, from the Hunter of the South,
white white arrow
white white tracks,
followed by the tracks of blood
of the Hunter that sees the East,
red red arrow
red red tracks,
and in the rearguard the yellow Hunter
with his arrow pointed toward the West.

Storm of arrows,
storm of tracks,
storm that dances
along unsettled roads in the clouds,
between precipices of prickly-pear cotton,
groves of evergreen oaks¹, penumbras of hot tar,
mists of breathable milk,
flowers without roots, aquatic moss,
arroyos of water stuttering among the stones
and sweet-nostriled stags sniffing the silence
whipped by the eyelashes of the pines.

A storm that dances,
storm of arrows,
storm of feathers,
storm of tracks,
black, red, green, white, yellow...
seedbeds of flowers that go round the lake
without showing themselves to its mirrors,
the lake that sinks one skin and brings up another,
sinks its lake skin and brings up its sky skin,
sinks its sky skin and brings up its volcano skin,
sinks its volcano skin and brings up its sand skin,

¹ MAA calls them *encinales*.

sinks its sand skin and brings up its steel skin,
sinks its steel skin and brings up its charcoal skin.

A storm that dances,
storm of arrows,
storm of feathers,
storm of tracks
black, red, green, white, yellow...
a rainbow emitted on a hundred colored feet
toward the luminous mirror,
on a hundred feet of colors and substances,
clouds, suns, saps, chlorophylls,
vegetal milks, chocolate-tree blood,
networks of roots, nurseries of breathings,
sulfates, volcanic hot springs, little fig trees
greenish with calcined thorns,
ichintals and yuccas, ruminant tuberoses¹
with four stomachs or more, balsams, resins,
subterranean beehives, granules² of granite,
every wasp as dark as silver,
blow flies, butterflies, reptiles, bulrushes,
fishes, frogs, toads, snails in slime,
little snakes coated with water...
"In my mirrors you'll see yourself more luminous!"
said the lake to the Rainbow, a gigantic centipede
that approaches with steps of colors...
"In my mirrors you'll see yourself more luminous!"

"But one can't live upside down...,"
answered the Rainbow, a gigantic centipede
with the voice of the five hunters.

"And how do they live in my mirrors, the sky,

¹ Tuberous plant native to Mexico and known for its fragrant white flowers.

² The Spanish word here, *granitos*, is a play on words, because it also means "silkworm eggs."

the mountains, the willow trees, the volcanoes?"
pressed the lake, swaying back and forth.
"Upside down they live in my crystal entrails,
the sun, the moon, the bright stars,
and if you appear in my mirrors
you'll stop being what you were,
a painted centipede among the clouds,
a fiction of rain and sun,
and you'll be transformed into a serpent of splendor,
a serpent of plumes of colors
coiled at the bottom
of my fair spread waters."

"If I appeared in your mirrors,"
cried the Rainbow, "you'd change me
as you yourself changed, you sheller of emeralds,
ever happy because you're never the same
in the wave-surge of your calendars,
in your mirrors pierced with clocks of bubbles."

"Then go back to your dates of stone,"
shouted the lake, "you poor fragment of a rainbow,
painted centipede, fiction of rain and sun,
before the bright stars leap from my mirrors
and shatter your image with goldblazing pecks!"

Upside down in the unmoving lake,
the lofty curve of the sky transformed
into a hammock of flickering stars,
headfirst, the volcanoes, inverted pyramids,
the trees of weeping plumage,
all headfirst, except for the hunters,
the Archers of the Sky,
Horizon-Eagles who subtracted their image
from the mirror, the stealer of tracks,

the unmoving lake, without waves, without claws,
water of the dark motmot of the lowlands,
water of the blue macaw on the lucid banks,
water of the green parakeet in the shade of the willow trees,
water of the nickel duck or foam of dove
on the shores where the hunters lingered,
before the assault, their tracks in luminous fans
that transformed the lake,
refuge of the only artists,
into a mirror of peacock tail.

MOVINGROOT OF THE FLOWER OF THE AIR

MOVINGROOT OF THE FLOWER OF THE AIR,
what do the Hunters dream?

Eagle of Fire,
root of blood-tree¹ root,
red his tracks in the fan of tracks
that go round the lake, before the assault,
he dreams that he sets the lake afire (the most terrible
of nightmares, like augury: the water in flames),
to scorch Quadriheaven, the Man-of-the-Magics
who, transformed to a manikin of straw,
flees from the colored mirrors.

Movingroot of the Flower of the Air,
what do the Hunters dream?

Eagle of Dreams,
root of morro-tree root,
black his tracks in the fan of tracks
that go round the lake, before the assault,
he dreams that he wounds anew the magnetic eye,
lightly sweet, of the mirror-beast
stealer of tracks, prey that now wounded
escapes from his grasp and turns itself into a lake.

Movingroot of the Flower of the Air,
what do the Hunters dream?

Eagle of Clouds,

¹ The blood tree or *árbol de sangre* is a hardwood tree that ranges from Belize and Guatemala to Panama. The wood, when freshly cut, is pale brown, but it turns a dark red, often with a purplish hue. It is sometimes known as the banak tree.

root of milk-tree¹ root,
white his tracks in the fan of tracks
that go round the lake, before the assault,
he dreams that a storm of hail
puts Quadriheaven, the Man-of-the-Magics, to flight,
transformed into a doll of frost,
a doll with four heads, eight arms,
eight legs, eight feet...

Movingroot of the Flower of the Air,
what do the Hunters dream?

Eagle of Fireflies,
root of yellow mother-of-cacao² root,
yellow his tracks in the fan of tracks
that go round the lake, before the assault,
an arrow that fades and flares, pointed
toward the West, he dreams that from a lightning bolt
of sunflowers the Man-of-the-Magics leaps,
converted into an ear of yellow maize.
Movingroot of the Flower of the Air,
what do the Hunters dream?

Eagle of Trees,
root of green-country root,
green his tracks in the fan of tracks
that go round the lake, before the assault,
an arrow of command pointed toward midday,
he dreams that he wounds Quadriheaven,
that he wounds and snatches Quadriheaven, the idol
of the bundle that his entrails conceal,

¹ Probably a tallow tree. Called *leche de María* ("Mary's milk") in Belize.

² A short-boled tree, often less than 25 feet high, resembling an apple tree and common in Central America. They are planted as living fence posts, to shade and protect cacao plantations (hence the name). The leaves and roots are said to be poisonous to rats and mice.

an idol of transparent lava,
a god-eye formed by the rain.

THE DANCE OF THE CHIMERAS

"THIS OUR WORD, OUR VOICE,
our challenge, our manifesto!"

"The stars would not rise into the heavens
without being sculpted...
And who sculpts them?
I, sculptor of stars
in my House of the West..."

"Music is born heard, like the springs,
the waterfalls... There's no need of other ears...
the god-ears and my ears suffice...
It's born with little ears of crystal and foam
and is recreated by itself... Why bring it
to ears that wouldn't court it, as
I do, in my House of the South?"

"What ship is launched in the sea of subterranean
darkness without being painted, and who paints it,
who decorates the grottoes and caverns that row
in the depths beneath the earth,
but **I**...

 and the Nights
 would they rise
into the sky without being tattooed with gold?
And who dresses them in gourd-cup tattoos
but **I**...

 painter, engraver and gourdcutter
in my House of the East..."

"And the gods, despite their stony contexture,
their eyes that emit fire of volcanic phosphorus,

their lizards' teeth, their jaguars' claws,
their ocelots' hides, their nostrils,
where hummingbirds feign respiration,
and their hearts that require that life be recreated
with hearts, would they exist without me?
I nourish them with my songs and poems
in my House of the North..."

Thus they said, reunited on the blue dish,
He-sings-copal, he of the House of the North,
He-thunders-copal, he of the House of the South,
He-paints-copal, he of the House of the East,
He-sculpts-copal, he of the House of the West.

But the hunters were already dancing,
dancing and speaking:

"We hear your voice, your copal,
but just as the gods require food
from their creatures and wouldn't exist
if their creatures didn't feed them existence —
to exist is to feed the gods —
so painting requires food from the eyes
and wouldn't exist if the eyes didn't feed it,
only by seeing can you feed painting
and seeing isn't seeing with the pupils of the god-eyes alone
but seeing with the eyes of all those who see,
and poetry requires food from the ears,
and wouldn't exist if the ears didn't feed it,
only by hearing can you feed poetry,
and sculpture requires food from the eyes,
and wouldn't exist if the eyes didn't feed it,
only by looking can you feed sculpture,
and music requires food from the ears
and wouldn't exist if the ears didn't feed it,

only by hearing can you feed music
and hearing isn't hearing with the ears of the god-ears alone
but hearing with the ears of all those that hear..."

But already they were dancing,
dancing the dance of the arrows...

Nine turns around the Word
goes the Blood-Tracks-Archer...
Poetry pierced by red arrows...

Seven turns around the Sound
goes Cloud-Tracks-Archer...
Music pierced by heron-branch-arrows...

Thirteen turns around the Form
goes Shade-Tracks-Archer...
Sculpture pierced by arrows of darkness...

Four turns four around the Color
goes Sun-Tracks-Archer...
Painting pierced by yellow arrows...

Jingling vines
in the diadems of combat...

Voices, shouts, the shock of shields and the dizzying
come and go of fly-warriors multiplied
by the flow of battle, grasshopper-warriors,
fireball-warriors adorned with comet-fire plumes,
luminous reflection-warriors, broken to pieces in the water
of flickering fire, tongues of serpents,
papillary bubbles, a conflagration among the rushes, arrows
that the lake, wounded, fails to hurl...

aguayayay¹... wounded...

aguayayay... aguayayay
the wounded lake, unable to hurl its rushes
against the black-dew-arrow rain
of the Celestial Hunters...

aguayayay...
aguayayay...wave after wave wounded...
wave after wave pecked by the black dew
of the arrows green, white, red, black, yellow,
and wounded are its battling surf swells,
its liquid warriors
who set out to oppose their crystal-snail chests
against the hunters that dance,
after the dance of the arrows,
the dance of the chimeras...
... Aguayayay, wounded...

the lake wounded...

¹ An Asturias compound, combining *agua* (water) and a triple repetition of *ay* (an exclamation of pain, fear or dismay). Another Asturianism that follows shortly is *aguacamay*, which combines *agua* (water) and *guacamaya* (macaw) and perhaps *ay*. Other such compounds in this part of the poem are *melaguaj* and *melajuag*

wave
 after
 wave
 wounded...
 wave
 after
 wave
 pecked

 by
 arrows
 red
 black
 green
 white
 yellow

 green
 white
 red
 black
 yellow

 black
 red
 green
 white
 yellow

 aguayayay...
 aguayayay...
 melaguaj...
 melaguaj...

 the wind wounded...
 the wind also wounded...

 melajuag...
 melajuag...
 the wind wounded

and wounded are the trees covered with corpses
of fruits pierced by darts made from the beaks
of white macaws

hurled

from the bows

snowy eyebrows of the Hunter of the South

Eagle of Clouds

white his frill

white his crest

white his arrows

beaks of white macaws

ay-aguacamay

aguacamay

the wind wounded

melaguaj

melaguaj

wounded with feathers of fire macaws

frost macaws

that peck

fruits

flowers

leaves

nests...

ay-aguacamay...

aguacamay...

wounded is the wind

melaguaj

melaguaj

wounded is the lake

aguayayay

aguayayay

the lake of changing paintings

changing colors

changing lights

changing shadows

changing wave-surge
 beast with mirror skin
 arrowed again by the Hunter of Dreams
 who snatches up in his hands, gloved in black sunflowers,
 in place of darts, moon bells
 a sound that wounds
 a crash that kills hummingbirds
 (birdflybirdflybirdfly¹...
 the hummingbirds say as they fall)
 without disturbing the blood-drinking silence,
 that accompanies the Hunter Plumed in Red,
 he of the naseberry² skin,
 he of the vermilion ears.
 The chocolate liquor and fire dust
 inflame him and immortal is the victim
 that he intoxicates with death, using his arrows
 of fire macaw feathers
 ay-aguacamay-ay

 ay-aguacamay
 aguacamay of fire
 aguacamay
 and wounded is the lake
 aguayayay
 aguayayay
 by arrows of colors
 a rainbow storm
 a rainbow storm of colored arrows
 hurled from the bows of the Eagle-Horizon-Hunters.
 Their crests the color of their arrows,

¹ In the Caribbean and parts of Central America, “bird fly” (*pájaro mosca*) is another name for hummingbird (*colibrí*).

² The sapodilla plum, fruit of the sapodilla tree, yellow -brown or russet in color. Called *zapote* in Central America.

their tracks the color of their crests,
as are their plumage, their bucklers, their drums,
their collars, their jewels...

sharp-pointed arrows
and a plume of perfumed curls...
wounding without killing,
wounding, perfuming in the arrowed lake
the image of the Captive Quadriheaven

aguayayay
ay-aguayayay
the lake also captive
and with the lake the sky

ay-aguayayay
aguayayay
lake, sky and Quadriheaven captives of the mirror of the water,
bound hand and foot, at the very bottom, with chains
of subterranean rivers, flowing with sweet emeralds,
and on the surface, on **ISLANDS** of springtime verdure,
ISLANDS that float and disappear at the whim of the lake,
ISLANDS on which the Green Archer rests his feet,
Eagle of Trees,

Chieftain of the Hunters,
setting
his quetzal-
plume
arrow
on the bow
of his palpitation
and
hurling it
into the blue

blue

the
 through
 cends
 as-
 it
 as
 that
 an arrow
 de-
 scends
 through
 the
 mirror
 of
 the
 lake
 to wound Quadriheaven
 aguayayay
 aguayayay
 Quadriheaven wounded...
 wounded by the reflection
 of
 an
 arrow
 in the water
 ay-aguayayay
 aguayayay
 truly wounded,
 wounded by the reflection of an arrow
 that in tearing his flesh of transparent lava,
 disentangles copals, suns, navels, sounds, magics,
 foams, bubbles, words, tattoos, colors,
 macaws of frost, macaws of fire
 aguacamay-ay
 aguacamay

the wind
 the wind
 the wind
 melaguaj
 melaguaj
 the wind unraveled,
 disentangled are the foams,
 the navels, the suns, the copals, the magics,
 the cabalistic bubbles, the bubbles that were taken by
 the Goldthinking-star-gods
 to make the Man-of-the-Four-Magics,
 four heads, eight arms, eight eyes,
 eight hands, eight legs, four hearts,
 the man four times navel, four times virile,
 four times artist, painter, sculptor, musician, poet,
 the Man-of-the-Four-Magics-of-Heaven
 who in truth was of bubbles of maize water
 and all his art of bubbles,
 a flower that lived in his hands and beyond his hands
 the instant of all bubbles,
 of all the ephemeral species.
 Music of bubble holes, the melody of his reed.
 Music of bubbling emptiness,
 the tun-tun of the hollow logs.
 And chill music, the crash
 of the tiny globes of resounding air
 on the surface of the keys of the marimbas.
 And all his art of bubbles,
 a flower that lived in his hands and beyond his hands
 the instant of all bubbles,
 of all the ephemeral species.
 His poetry of blood bubbles, protected in the temples
 by the quetzalbites of the sacred tufts,
 rises from the boiling of the tropic of Cancer
 and opens flowers of syrup, breathers of honey,

to all that boils, to all that exists,
real or sketched by miniaturists
who cover with bubbling writing
skins and bone-colored barks.
And all his art of bubbles.
Walls painted with quetzals,
walls painted with serpents,
figures painted alive over the mortar
and treated afterward in the sweet gold of the atmosphere.
Temples of jaguars that swim among bubbles of stone,
calendrical ciphers, round bubbles
of the mathematics of constellations.
Elastic ball-players behind the rubber bubble
that crosses the solitary hoop of the pelota game,
an image fleeting and fugitive from his art of trills,
from his art of bubbles now wounded...

Worlds unfastened,
substances set free,
confines untied,
the four corners of the sky demagnetized,
flowers stripped of leaves,
birds shattered,
the rain shells its maize,
it captures the lake in prisons of thread
and delivers it to the triumphant Rainbow,
Sir Seven Times Precious,
the Rainbow who advances with the feet of the hunters,
without danger of falling, coiled like a serpent
with color plumes, into the mirrors
of the stealer of tracks, the lake
that, with Quadriheaven wounded, is covered with bubbles,
baubles¹ that hide

¹ MAA here uses the word *chalchihuitles*, an Indian word that means “stone crystal adornments and, by extension, all those trinkets that women wear on cords over their breasts.”

the remnants of his ephemeral arts.

Thus and only thus
could Quadriheaven be wounded
at midday,
with the reflection in the water
of an arrow shot
toward the sun.

Thus and only thus
could Quadriheaven be wounded,
vulnerable to the quetzal
that crosses the sapphire
toward the light.

Thus and only thus
could Quadriheaven be wounded,
vulnerable to the green
that crosses the blue
toward the yellow.

Thus and only thus
could Quadriheaven be wounded,
at midday,
in time with the kettledrums,
in the game-dance-of-the-arrows,
the dance of the chimeras.

"Here's my arrow, my yellow arrow,
the reflection of my arrow of light
that passes through the water toward the captive
Magician of Painting.
I wound him, without killing him,
only his drawing, his color I wound!"

"Here's my arrow, my white arrow,
the reflection of my lunar arrow
that passes through the water toward the captive
Magician of Music.
I wound him, without killing him,
only his sound, his harmony I wound!"

"Here's my arrow, my black arrow,
the reflection of my arrow of dream
that passes through the water toward the captive
Magician of Sculpture.
I wound him, without killing him,
only his contour, his form I wound!"

"Here's my arrow, my red arrow,
the reflection of my arrow of fire
that passes through the water toward the captive
Magician of Poetry.
I wound him without killing him,
only his song, his poem I wound!"

"And I,
Eagle of Trees,
Chieftain of Hunters,
launch my second green arrow
from these islands of springtime verdure,
to the dome of clouds that now covers the lake,
a dome of clouds constructed
by the Builders of cities!..."

"There it goes...
and the untouched Architecture is born,
a shelter for the arts wounded
by the arrows' reflection in the water,
in the chase of Quadriheaven,

idol of transparent lava,
who from year to year
at the onset of spring
will again be wounded, so that the arts,
the nourishment of the gods,
may remain among men
and fill the plazas
with musicians, painters, sculptors, poets,
engravers, plumists, gourdcutters,
acrobats, potters, carvers,
goldsmiths, flying dancers,
for from them comes the springtime dawn
of this country forged in honey!"

Paris, Summer, 1963.

Sinaia (Romania), Winter, 1964.

Venice, Naples, Milan, Rome, Genoa, 1964.

Completed in Genoa on July 13, 1964.