



Photo: George Malave

Yerba Buena is a root named by a lover of herbs and spices which cured diseases before medicine was industrialized, Yerba Buena is an indian chant upon the Amerinquen new earth dancing the urban landscapes, the mountains, the waters the elements of people struggling to recreate themselves in equal balances. Yerba Buena is Good Herb, that speaks a world language from the hard-core bricks of a New York based Puerto Rican, Black, Latina, Caribbean, African Third World Woman conscious of the daily struggle to survive inside the concrete form, Yerba Buena is Sandra Esteves whose first name is Maria, meaning new womanhood carrying her words from Visiones en Ojos Rosas to Marcando Quinto inside Horizontes Migrantes changing cantations for growing a total artist perception of the fullest cycle combining Esteves drawings into Sandra's poems emerging into a Maria that lives inside us all.

-TATO LAVIERA



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Yerba Buena

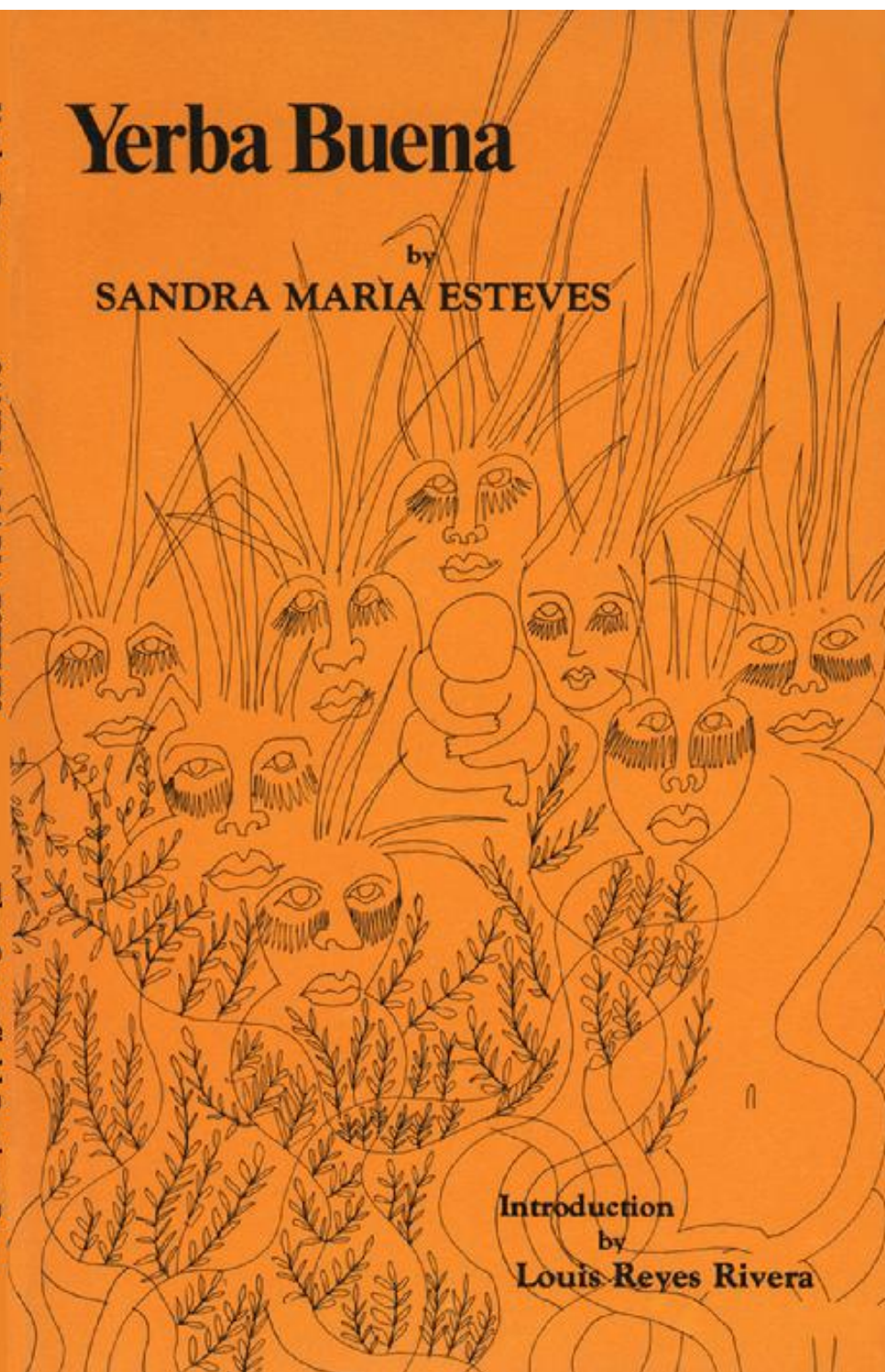
SANDRA MARIA ESTEVES

The Greenfield Review Press

Yerba Buena

by

SANDRA MARIA ESTEVES



Introduction
by
Louis Reyes Rivera

YERBA BUENA

dibujos y poemas

by

SANDRA MARIA ESTEVES

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DEDICATED TO MY TEACHERS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO HAVE
GUIDED ME, TO IFE AND CRISTINA WHO WILL FOLLOW IN MY
PLACE, AND TO ALL PEOPLE WHO ARE SEARCHING FOR A WORLD
ORDER TO GOVERN THIS PLANET WITH PEACE AND RESPECT FOR
ALL.

I was born in the South Bronx in 1948, in the middle of Spring, sometime around the end of the Second World War, in a community inhabited by immigrants, which has since been abandoned.

My mother migrated in 1935, when she was sixteen, from Santo Domingo to New York, where she met my father, whose family migrated from San Juan, Puerto Rico, in the early 1940s.

All this island blood has led me to know that I always wanted to be an artist, creating, as a constant way of living, in ceremonies of forming and shaping.

As artist, I project vision towards which to grow, for all who wish to learn, and then, we learn together.

SANDRA MARIA ESTEVES

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In this sector of the planet (misnamed the Americas, sublettered the state of New York, polybureaucratic into a city by the same name), anybody can cop a halfway decent nickel bag and call it smoke. Can walk into any one of the numberless politically-connected, gangster-installed (quote, unquote) variety/ grocery/ health food stores, talk through the partitioned plastic-covered (bullet proof?) counters, pay the youngster playing hookey, and walk away with a gamble. But the herb will not be Yerba Buena. Not as good, not as real as what they grow, smoke up, ship in from Turkey, Arabia, Iran. Not as mean as what used to be smuggled back across the demarcation line by South Vietnamese traders moonlighting as generals of the army, authorized by CIA field reps to use Airline America in supplementing their isolated incomes.

Back then. Before smoking dope was eased into New York lawbooks (minus, of course, the corresponding statutes on distribution, quality controls & income taximus), three and four hungry lips could do in one joint and be lifted for days (as the saying goes). And even that was a suspicious brand.

But today, more than ever, aerosol chemicals are sprinkled over pounds of dirt to add the kind of kick that can send your innards into crouching pain. Dust. Powder. Moisture sprayed to eat away young and growing braincells that might have held the key to feed an entire nation, now locked up and smothered somewhere inside a fifteen year-old brainwave of silent questions left unanswered behind the veil of smoke. Gnawing at you!

The same is true with books. The word. The strength. The guidance. The story. So much can be gotten from one single book. One page. One image. Clear, concise, powerful dares singing into the ear, recorded through the eye. The meaning of one word expressed has been known to cause men to double up in tears, women to rise up against the abuse of their worth, and children to dream the possibility of doing. Yes! learning. Yes! trying. Yes! Until finally, when we are confronted with our true worth, cowards must become warriors or face their defenses in the knowledge of their streak; talkers must become doers, or make the adjustments to their sham, their shame, their loss for life; searchers have to find themselves, have to recreate worlds out of misery, or remain still standing on line; and the poet, thus given birth, arrives to overcome the complexity of thought or betray the people's gift.

On the one side, there are millions on top millions of pages no longer available; hidden in vaults, collecting dust on a Vatican shelf; scrolls as ancient as our sweat listed in the *Index of Prohibited Books*, kept from the purview of the people until such time as the facts contained therein no longer threaten the controls over the people's minds. We become slaves to the images fed. We remain slaves from the information withheld. The path to our liberation can only be realized when knowing it all.

Confronting us, however, are volumes upon volumes of lies, distortions, half-dented misinformation pushed into us every day in articles, tabloids, classrooms, at cocktail parties, on lecture circuits and billboards.

Columbus discovered America, when the maps he used were taken from Ghana, the people he met already thriving, and the word for the land wasn't even anywhere near the sound of that name.

These people are backward and savage and innocent. We are forced to save them into slavery, when, in fact, the Cherokee, Aztecs, Mayas, Olmecs, Zimbaweweans, Azanians, "Aegyptians," all had built pyramid structures for prayer or burial after they had built their cities, established their civilizations; all had understood the concept and application of pi (meaning: to have struggled through a more sophisticated level of mathematics); all had applied forms of knowledge completely unknown to the conquering invaders, those thieves and moneymongers, who themselves were known by the Chinese throughout the centuries as being barbarians.

Interesting to me, the Boricas (los borinqueños), whom my research indicates were probably Caribs, prayed beforel cemi, a pyramid-shaped altar in the center of the village circle. Meanwhile, Columbus and 100 of his men were stranded on the island of Jamaica, in 1504, and did not even know enough to hunt or fish, but instead depended totally on the local Arawaks for survival. The same as with the pilgrims in

Massachusetts, who in their first year here (1620), had to be taught to hunt, plant, fish, and celebrate the harvest; they turn right around and kill their teachers, then incorporate into the national character a day of feast to thank the giving/ or rather 'taking' of the land.

All men are created equal, automatically omitting all women, while cutting down on the use of these superfluous words: All (palestinated mulatto) men (who might pass for northern europeans) . . .

Just yesterday, the same, the very same preyed on Alex Haley's debts, turned the work of the documentarian into a profiteered soap opera distorting the story of a people enslaved. Black Studies separated from Caribbean Studies separated from Puerto Rican Studies separated from History, Sociology, Science, Math, English Lit., when not one of any can correctly learn to appreciate the full value of our total aspect, our single self, the multisided gathering of knowledge used blatantly to separate each clan from the tribe of Africa. A mainstream of lies continues to produce schizophrenic youth. And no one in academia is being challenged into changing the curriculae.

On the other side, the poet exists, the warrior rises, the people continue reaching out, furthering our breathstruggle. The legacy that is our own: Cato in the Carolinas, the man turned slave made into rebel and martyr-leader; Gabriel Prosser, Cato's preaching brother insurrecting in Virginia; Tecumseh, the prophet/unifier readying to cleanse the entire land from war; Denmark Vesey, he who could have died in comfort, chose to plan conspiracy with the rest of us instead; Alexandre Pushkin, exiled Afro-Russian, daring poems to speak conviction in the people's tongues; Frederick Douglass, cutting words into echoes of conscience; Ramon Emeterio Betances, the poet/doctor living and rising against the slave/master spaniard; Lola Rodríguez de Tío, Puerto Rico's armed poet woman song author of the anthem before it was rewritten; Segundo Ruiz Belvis, murdered by star and stripe in Chile before he could buy the guns Lares cried for; Crazy Horse, plunged blade in the back stopped his warrior thirst for freedom; Emiliano Zapata, who held the spirit of revolt against the U.S. annexation of Mexico; William Edward Burghardt Dubois, the researcher synchronizer theoretician documenting it; Paul Robeson, the artist remaining true to his responsibility against all odds; Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, the collector of as much of our story as he could get his hands on; Malcolm X, the convicted voice, paid guns fired before more of his words could flow; Pablo Neruda, Chile's proud poetheart who died at the hands of gringo dollars bought the fingers that squeezed the triggers at Presidente Salvador Allende; Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Pedro Albizu Campos, Ho Chi Minh, Agostino Neto, Hubert Gerold Brown, Lolita Lebron, Nicolas Guillen . . . poets and warriors and so many others not known, not found, not remembered or recalled . . . from Watts, Harlem, Soweto, Jayuya, Ponce, Yara, the Dakotas . . . everywhere a city under siege, a country under domination, the poets and warriors searching and sharing, inspiring a thought here, a moment to consider there: we are possible! We exist!

In the middle of it all, it is hard enough to learn enough to want enough to sneak out of work one day and find the 'right' college lecture hall to hear about those sacred testimonies that have left a trail of hints on the genius of our strength; much harder still to use the clues in search of corroborating the possibility of tomorrow. Today is rough enough. And Yet, in this sector alone, there are hundreds of small groups, penny squeezers all, who search the spirit force of our own worth: singers, miners, artists, welders, thinkers, farmers, changers looking for each other, turning over misconception as they grow.

One earth. One ocean. Many rivers, many drops, many lives rolling into that one single continuum of conscience. Our own energy as deep as wide as necessary as the spectrum of our differences and commonality of desires. For who would be a slave, a servant to another, less than what is altogether in fact, in existence?

On this side of the planet wall, the land mass has already been defined. Ameriopeans do not discuss their crimes; do not face up to and correct the distortions they teach. Manifest Destiny never meant to stop at the border, California facing the Pacific. The hemisphere in its entirety was the first half of that dream, and all of that much has been taken, and all of that much comprises the arena for contention. Who will rule? The people or the rich? The laborers or the corporations? The value of ourselves or the principles in a bank investment?

From this one land mass, once called mother feeding her fruit, runs a stream into that ocean. And from her womb springs the caretakers who grovel with the word earth

leaves them to tend. Among them, those who would not be governed into condition, but who seek instead to realize how accountable we are, how interconnected we are, each recording the actions to which we commit ourselves. One such droplet. One such poet/worker. One such woman child toiler song spirit breath: Sandra María Esteves. And in her work is how she nurtures her psyche spirit mind of flesh wanting to contribute to the recreation of this mess called world/ life/ survive/ the way to do.

"Oye me/ que mi espíritu habla . . ."

Hear her, that her spirit speaks. She was not raised knowing who Agueybana was, had not heard of Utuado, was not instructed to understand the Outcry of Lares, or why it was that Pachin Marin, the Puerto Rican poet of the blade, died in battle for the sake of Cuba's freedom instead of bearing witness to the treason that led Marines to invade and take the island that should have been her homeland.

". . . Me dijo/ que la gente nacieron a ser libre . . ."

Her spirit told her that the people were born to be free. But she was born in the Bronx, raised among the tenements, ". . . amidst hills of desolate buildings/ rows of despair/ crowded together/ in a chain of lifeless shells . . ." (*For South Bronx*); a place where many are forced to live ". . . by the tickings in the belly . . ." on an ". . . isle of spit and hate . . ." (*Manhattan*). She was not born in Caguas,

Isla o isla mia
en cada día te buscare . . .
Palmas y montañas
amaneciendo llena del sol . . .
(Homeland)

where palm trees and mountains are awakened each day and filled with sunlight. She was reared in a grey convent. Learned how discipline comes from a tennis racket enforcing the law against every word she spoke in spanish, age six thru teens. She did learn to draw and paint, read and write in english early, but it took her a bit longer to realize that in this hemisphere, children are made to watch their fathers hang from a tree limb, surrounded by sneers and laughter. Drunken voices sick with lust. Minds lost in greed, in drugs, in fear of the vengeance from a future generation. But these lessons are bitter to take. Still the taking of women and children, still the pain of knowing ignorance face to face, neck to rope, slave wage, and babies born in ditches because the tobacco and the cane stalks must be picked and cut and coffee beans layed to dry. The clans must be kept separated from their roots.

. . . brown men subduing brown men
while the invisible perpetrators go free
but remain captive to their visions . . .
(Report: for the National Record)

Home/ black silence/ night
blood
trickling thru wastelands/ home denied
flesh dissolving
exotic island crying out
liberal tongues sucking dry
stale death
dwellings destroyed . . .
(The rain muddles against tracks)

Yo entiendo la muerte
que roba el aire de mi voz
sin mano abierto y puerta cerada
vida llena de chotería
(Esclavitud)

She understands the death that robs the air of her voice. But she had to learn about the contradictions of being traded from one 'master' to another, from spanish to english, from the Caribbean to the mainland,

As slaves we lost identity
 assimilating our master's values
 overwhelming us to become integrated shadows
 undefined and dependent . . .
 (From *Fanon*)

where everyone must cling to the tribalism of los gringos, must accept their yardsticks for human worth in yet another, stranger language pushed on slaves, molded by slave sweat, cultured in slave songs, developed upon the backs of cheap labor and soaring taxes. The slave is the only one who pays, she knows.

children are crying they have no food
 their mama's breasts stolen from the womb
 broken from the land like bred cattle
 butcher shop entrance to reality
 lincoln hospital, bellevue
 some die sick eaten alive by their own stomachs
 Biafra is not a fairy tale . . .
 (Improvisando)

And neither is New York, what with the ways in which we are pushed into turning losers, hating ourselves into killing our own seeds, as in, I look for peace great graveyard:

Bedroom walls bare stagnant water
 drenched colorless laugh
 the same voice haunting pillowcase
 the same the same I have no face
 or bones to hold my walk . . .

The meat is rotting fast inside
 my womb disintegrates in anal slurs
 hopes tied in metal flavor ribbon
 tied to kill the dream born with mother
 tied to kill the child within
 tied around my hands frozen fresh daily . . .

The further contradiction of feeling the inner clan tribal wrath from misguided *latinos* (descendants of Rome?) who refuse to give deference to those who are called traitors for daring to use *la idioma de los americanos* (as if the 'states' comprise the only America to speak of; as if spanish was our original tongue—not so. Not so.). To them she writes, "I am more than the night and day of things, a mixture of something unique. . . ." As well as in the second stanza in, *Pienso en los momentos*:

I think much of my culture
 always searching the pieces
 and more, always arriving
 close(r) to the woman that I am . . .
 (translation)

She has come to grips with understanding that "El puertorriqueno que no habla el español," becomes enveloped in dichotomy.

I speak the alien tongue
 in sweet borinqueno thoughts
 know love mixed with pain
 have tasted spit on ghetto stairways
 . . . here, it must be changed
 we must change it.
 (Here)

In the same breath she is not afraid to offer the challenge. For even more complex is the contradiction that nobody really wants an obvious mulatto hanging around reminding everyone for the sins against the worth of souls taken and abused. Separate the people: Black and Puerto Rican, West Indian or Dominican, as if one could forever remain apart from the other when the music says NO! The colors of the skins say NO!

The position we each suffer through says NO! The guiro (gourd), "la brujería/ la religión/ santería," the batey, the azabache, "Chango y Oshun/ Obatala y Ogun/ Yemaya, Eleque Y Oya," the drums and the persecution all say NO!

But while our confusion exists, the manipulators of tribal strings keep playing the same old song: divide them up, this time by language and favor, then push each one into the other's throat!

In learning all of this, she still had to maintain some form of dignity within her craving compulsion to draw and blend her colors with sounds and push and drive and search out a reason in her all.

rainfall
 and roses blooming
 I am trying to find you
 with words that are eyes
 and eyes that are sounds
 and whispers
 of more windchimes
 blowing into brilliance . . .
 (Windchimes)

Who exactly is she?

This entire volume is adequate testimony, but, "A Julia Y A Mi," brings out much of the spectrum of her total self. Written for Julia de Burgos, a Black Puerto Rican woman, all three in the same breath, poeta (not poetessa), a Weaver of songs who was driven out from among the poorer district on the island by the stranglehold that lurks over our economy to migrate and eventually drown in the warm embrace of a wine bottle on a cold street in an alien city, smothered in snow to die there. For Sandra Maria Esteves, Julia de Burgos has much from which to learn and clarify:

A ti Julia, ya sera tarde
 pero a mi no
 Yo vivo!
 y grito si me duele la vida
 y canto con la gente
 y bailo con mis hijas
 no soy lagrimas de ser
 soy el rio . . .

For you Julia, now it is late
 but for me no
 I live!
 and scream if life pains me
 and sing with the people
 and dance with my daughters
 I am not tears of being
 I am the river . . .

(translation)

As in this particular work, her spirit chooses to utilize two of the five tongues forced upon every living being here in this hemisphere. For she has come to know the secret, peep the holecard, many others have seen but few have shared: when you speak the language of your oppressor, you either absorb all of its values or you recreate the tongue to change each image and syllable into weapons for the people's awakening. She uses both idioms, gearing them towards understanding the power of the image hanging over the minds that are lost to superstition. We cannot afford to believe as much as know! And she searches through each word, seeking out its own force.

The eyes that she uses to measure herself include the many people for whom poems are dedicated, in addition to the many who've helped and encouraged her growth. Poets, prisoners, musicians, laborers, graphic artists, victims, initiators and sufferers who bear the brunt of the weight of crosses dumped on our whipped backs: a condition that remains until we all come to shirk off every misery, to struggle against each scar lingering until the spirit is healed and the real work begins.

There are no loose joints here. No dope. No dust. No excuses. No discussions or disclaimers on the age-old depressing argument that art must be expressed for the sake of the state. Instead, a rich, earthy, healthy series of herbal cantations that may prove useful to the strength we claim and, in having, recognize within ourselves.

Louis Reyes Rivera
 3 April 80 Brooklyn

1
VISIONES EN OJOS ROSAS



Oye me
que mi espíritu habla

y esta bailando aqui

Me dijo una cosa
y lo voy a decir a ti

me dijo
que la gente nacieron a ser libre

y encontrar profundamente
lo que es sentir vivir

Y mi espíritu baila mucho aqui
en un ambiente colectivo

mi espíritu baila aqui.

From Fanon

We are a multitude of contradictions
 reflecting our history
 oppressed
 controlled
 once free folk
 remnants of that time interacting in our souls

Our kindred was the earth
 polarity with the land
 respected it
 called it mother
 were sustained and strengthened by it

The european thru power and fear became our master
 his greed welcomed by our ignorance
 tyranny persisting
 our screams passing unfulfilled

As slaves we lost identity
 assimilating our master's values
 overwhelming us to become intergrated shadows
 undefined and dependant

We flee escaping, becoming clowns in an alien circus
 performing predictably
 mimicking strange values
 reflecting what was inflicted

Now the oppressor has an international program
 and we sit precariously within the monster's mechanism
 internalizing anguish from comrades
 planning and preparing a course of action.

For Fidel Castro

Cubano
 I was but a child when you marched
 a hundred thousand miles
 in a war/spectacle media event rating higher
 than Cleopatra, The Ten Commandments, and The Robe

But those who were sleeping awoke
 when you arrived
 warrior son of your country
 new breed, pure soul, hombre
 vowed to the flame truth

After blood was a birth
 a new child to be nourished to health
 ripped from an old bag of shells
 hanging free from the sky

The growing is slow
 the wound still bleeds
 and the ocean stands in endless vigil

Twenty years later
 this womantree has
 thickly rooted in cement
 mass profusions and
 infinite rebellions

Here, from this land
 where chrome fades into plastic and famished spirit
 I read the shells you have cast into the river
 analyze the signs with the sea
 and extend my palms to you as strength.

For Cristina Huyghue

Look to the sun
as it comes
every morning

look to the sun
every day

see how it flows
on the river
it sparkles

see how it glows
in your eyes

feel how it softly
warms all your fingers

feel how it warms
all your heart

look to the sun
rising high
everyday

Look to the sun.



For Louis Reyes Rivera

Red
 blood red
 fire red
 Machete republic of China red
 red enough to turn me around
 to turn me into and
 inside

Red enough to watch death
 to watch me die watching it
 To watch us wondering what we gonna do
 next time we are called upon?

This time
 blood red
 dip your fingers into that blood
 lay your arms into it

then hold them up high

how fast will red turn to dust
 fallen to the ground

forgotten like old memories
 buried deep

how fast will red rise up again
 to burn away the coldness
 and blue?

I look for peace great graveyard

New york spits my eye
 oil dragged hummingbird, is there no peace?
 sometimes I want to die I feel just die

Bedroom walls bare stagnant water
 drenched colorless laugh
 the same voice haunting pillowcase
 the same the same I have no face
 or bones to hold my walk

What do I know of men
 enough to slave myself for pickings
 empty nude and sleepless
 abortion without
 for all of what, for what?

The meat is rotting fast inside
 my womb disintegrates in anal slurs
 hopes tied in metal flavor ribbon
 tied to kill the dream born with mother
 tied to kill the child within
 tied around my hands frozen fresh daily

When will the earth cease renovation
 trees are where I wish to live
 and play the dance of chinese windchimes
 hear the ancient pipe the breath
 that touches my eyes to see.

I am more than the night and day of things

A mixture of something unique
a verbal reflection all edged
to a center beyond sound

The walls of my house newly aged
fermenting
a liquid gold dust trapped in lead
no more than essence of cloud
passing thru a string of music

My mind a constant struggle
beats away ant hills scrambling
dimensions to every point

There!
there!
is the place I thought
but now
it's here, and there
all of which I once was afraid to be
and know the more and all of me.



For Pablo Neruda**Vanguardia**

They walk on the edge of the world
 wage a war of peace
 feed fires of creation
 write the book of reality
 nourish it
 direct the wind of nations
 dissect the hate monger
 pull apart the tentacles
 with a prick of blood and intention
 slowly building a fortress
 soul upon soul
 cement of sweat
 sleepless dreamers
 daggers of birth
 they come in waves
 of songs
 in fields of strengths
 and growing stalks of thunder
 they come from wet wombs
 pushing the walls of empty existence
 breaking the fabric and crust
 of rotting by-products

And they come with faithful love
 yearning to touch a deepless place
 seeking a point of truth
 that loves the universe
 and sheds tears of joy
 for the dawn that only rises
 in the heart of unity.

For Sir Jesus Papoleto Melendez**Manhattan**

Grey worlds around me
 walls endlessly dead
 merging my flesh
 fading the color of my soul
 casting upon me electric shadows
 in death-tones

I live by the tickings in the belly
 rumbles existing thru the night
 never bowing to the way of life
 never caring to know if I smile

I am of the grey/
 we have given life to death

I am of the bleak/ manhattan
 isle of spit and hate
 lifetimes of tunnels
 air stinking of humid grease
 blinding glitter carrying a false name
 sad betrayal to the great spirit

Isle of power houses and discount stores
 and bargains traded for blood today
 for souls tomorrow

Unconcerned for people who merely exist
 to survive no more than greyness

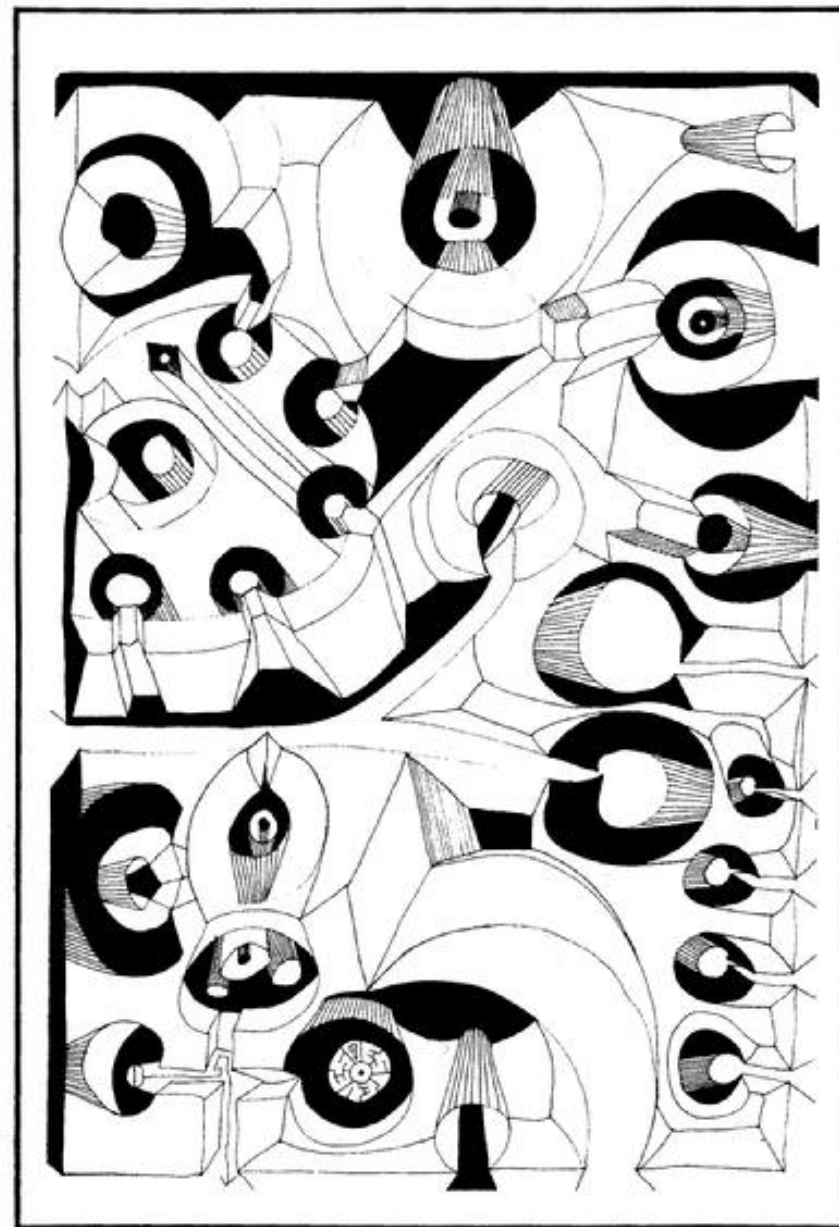
And ruthlessly imposing its sickness
 on the children of life.

For Julio Wells

Visiting

A cold place
detention house
not me
I'm glad not me
I said to him inside
not me
I'm glad not me

But you are
said he
you are.



For the Loisaida Poets & Writers Collective

Improvisando

There are people dying in the streets
 millions of horrors that happen
 wherever you look, men, women and children
 no one escapes
 people are dying
 children are crying they have no food
 their mama's breasts stolen from the womb
 broken from the land like bred cattle
 butcher shop entrance to reality
 lincoln hospital, bellevue
 some die sick eaten alive by their own stomachs
 Biafra is not a fairy tale
 or an instant replay front page special
 read between the centerfold
 where the chunks of vomit will choke and stink
 and the scum will stick to your brains
 like maggots giving birth

There are people dying in the streets
 in houses suspended in cockroach nightmares
 waging chemical warfare with their own brains
 in factories chained leg to leg
 waiting for their lunch bell to existence
 a key to unlock the castrated tension
 of broken backs whipped in slavery
 watch carefully as the blood drains into the sewer
 mainlining thru the ass of america
 where stabbed over the gutter they lie
 with beer cans of empty days in empty lots
 where shattered hopes have been buried
 bagged and sold for a new set of empty promises
 tricked with rat poison
 beaten with police brutality
 blinded by color television
 deafened in subway trains
 robbed by credit cards
 lied thru advertising

demoted to the ranks of the silent minority
 third world majority whose voices echo
 thru the halls of the great emancipator
 deaf liberator slave trader
 mob lyncher woman raper whose only thought
 is dick/people dying
 dick/people dying
 while pusher pimps jerk off folk
 into inevitable sterilization
 bastards of a master command
 chained to a master's hand
 would rather die a living death
 than wield machetes in their hands

Take a trip around town
 see life, bring your knife
 you may need it if traveling the subways by night

But where are the solutions?
 Who knows the plan?

When will we stop the destruction
 begin the creation
 rebirth and rebuilding
 of our people and our land?

Esclavitud

Cuando la gente se pierden en mentiras
y viven vidas complicadas
los hombres maldando las mujeres
y a veces al revés
pisadas como piedras dura

Yo entiendo la muerte
que roba el aire de mi voz
sin manos abiertos y puertas cerradas
vidas llenas de choterías

Pero también existe el sol
amaneciendo entre las calles
y olor de flor rosas
y los manos albor alrededor de mi cuerpo

Y palabras que caer en sueños
llamando mensajes de noche a día

Bien entendido es la diferencia.

Pienso en los momentos
de este tiempo en mi vida
este punto en mi proceso

Pienso mucho en mi cultura
siempre buscando los pedazos
y mas, siempre llegando
cerca a la mujer que soy

Pienso en los años que pasaron
en cosas ingles y blancas
cosas del pueblo no-tropical
cosas que no eran
de mujer, Latina, Africana, India

Pienso en mis hijas
mis amores de sangre
las veo ya, esas mujercitas
por mí y ellas camino palante
y por los sitios en los ojos de ellas
me guio bien y fuerte

Pienso en mi tierra
los barrios de Nueva York
mi madre calle
adonde se crio un tipo nuevo de este mundo
el Puertorriqueño que no habla el español.

Here

I am two parts /a person
boricua/spic
past and present
alive and oppressed
given a cultural beauty
. . . and robbed of a cultural identity

I speak the alien tongue
in sweet boriqueño thoughts
know love mixed with pain
have tasted spit on ghetto stairways
. . . here, it must be changed
we must change it

I may never overcome
the theft of my isla heritage
dulce palmas de coco on Luquillo
sway in windy recesses I can only imagine
and remember how it was

But that reality now a dream
teaches me to see, and will
bring me back to me.

1st poem for Cuba

We are the silent poets of the night

We breathe in whirling tropic oceans

We are the dancing black campesinos de Oriente
holding drums within our bodies

With your eyes
We feel the spaces around us

With your hands
We touch a dreamer's place
hiding just beyond the walls of this world

With your voices
We catch the sun
as it rises to the east
holding in our wombs
the hammers of proud and righteous people

Flowing in the currents of many rivers
We slowly wear away great mountains
returning to the sea
where life is born
to find you and ourselves again.

For Phil George**Weaver**

Weave us a song of many threads

Weave us a red of fire and blood
that tastes of sweet plum
fishing around the memories of the dead
following a scent wounded
our spines bleeding with pain

Weave us a red of passion
that beats wings against a smoky cloud
and forces motion into our lungs

Weave us a song
of yellow and gold and life itself
a wildgrowth
into the great magnetic center
topaz canyons
floral sweatseeds
in continuous universal suspension

Weave us a song of red and yellow and brown
that holds the sea and sky in its skin
the bird and mountain in its voice
that builds upon our graves a home
with fortifications
strength, unity and direction

And weave us a white song to hold us
when the wind blows so cold to make our children wail
submerged in furious ice
a song pure and raw
that burns paper
and attacks the colorless venom stalking hidden
in the petal softness of the black night

Weave us a rich round black that lives
in the eyes of our warrior child
and feeds our mouths with moon breezes
with rivers interflowing
through ALL spaces of existence

Weave us a song for our bodies to sing
a song of many threads
that will dance with the colors of our people
and cover us with the warmth of peace.

I am looking

For space in cloud
 to allow passage for clarity
 unity is precise
 a word of war
 like the rivers
 it allows the breath of dead things
 as life continues flowing
 with purpose
 without looking for space in cloud
 caring for itself
 quietly
 my feet grab into the earth
 the earth receives
 the spaces form
 I become my own womb
 directing the voice I follow
 with simple pride
 stretching to assimilate
 into my one universe
 always a new way
 moving in constant
 touching all the atomic circumference

From the center
 I receive
 merge
 become force
 vibrating music
 as my blood follows its sweet scent

I am looking.

The rain muddles against tracks
 to which we have been chained
 a destiny from some forgotten war

They blessed me with poems
 and called me poeta
 each day I ask them questions

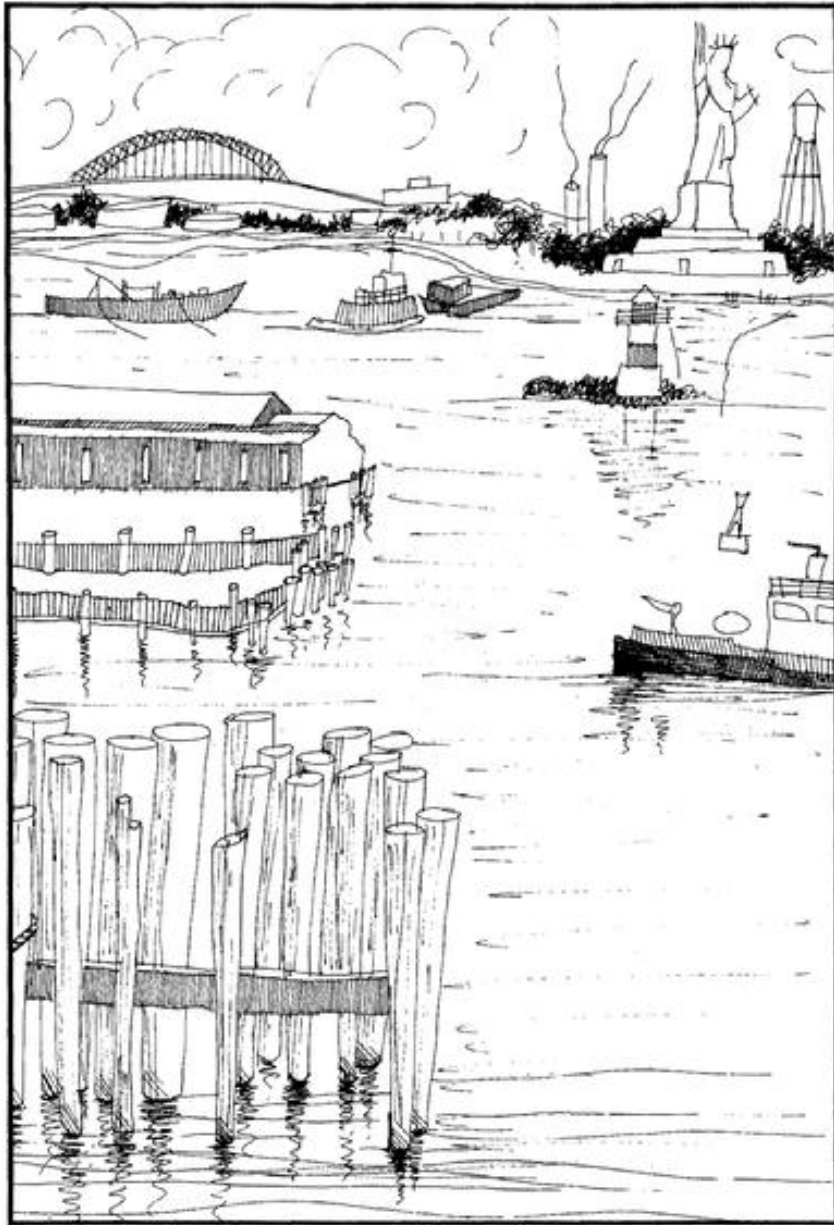
They give me the answers
 before I ask the questions

Fulfilling life
 filling the inside of some savage hole
 dug deep left/ empty right/ coiled
 rising from the dead
 I've been waiting a long time to learn to fly
 coming

Are you going to teach me? Mommy?

This hen used to sit
 watch white nuns preach a pre-columbian spirit
 how to peel self flesh from the soul of enjoyment
 same hen now screams.

Home/
 black silence/ night
 blood
 trickling thru wastelands/ home denied
 flesh dissolving
 exotic island crying out
 liberal tongues sucking dry
 stale death
 dwellings destroyed
 abandoned fashioned genocide
 sporting medals
 stripped from Indian corpses.



Eulogy for a sacred rainforest

Dead bodies lay
across the train tracks
freshly bled from roots
forming walls
around self built prisons

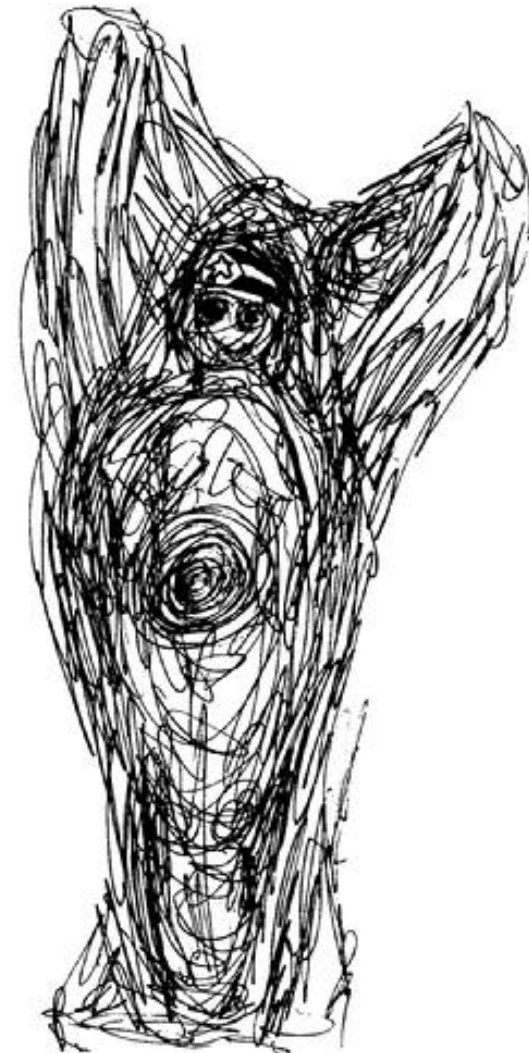
The desire to kill increases
but is never satisfied.

Eulogy for Martín Perez

They killed you
called you slave
abused your name
sentenced you to swing by the belt
the jailhouse destiny of death

We saw it happen
just like they did it to Julio Rodan in 1970
we saw it happen again
like helpless lambs
we watched them kick your face
and break your neck
in five minutes
they claimed your fate
and forced your manhood down a gun

And now today
we look to poets for answers
and visions
and directions
for mirrors of reflection.



Memoria

A sleepless night

A sleepless night
 another o.d.
 o sleepless night
 a hanging too
 and more
 the war goes on

A sleepless night again
 a sleepless night again

O sleepless night
 I want to fight
 this pain that bites
 inside of me
 and scream out loud
 that I am proud
 o sleepless night
 stay away from me

O rising Sun
 o rising Sun
 shine on me
 a woman tree
 paint my skin
 with your glow
 give me warmth
 that I may grow
 and fight
 the sleepless night away

A sleepless night
 a sleepless night
 a sleepless night again. . .

When the snow falls softly on faces

it caresses all parts
 with the love of a young mother

Who is he
 who would call the snow cold and ugly?

Who is she
 who would reject the breathing wind
 carrying the spirit of life
 perhaps the soul of her next mother.

Bedford Hills is a women's prison

bars. cold hard steel holding mind and soul
 bars to fight against/ to hit head cold upon
 cold floors damp damned with hate
 hard hearts/ lies/ traps/ prison is no home
 bars and gates/ locks slamming shut
 closing off the world/ pride dies in hate
 holes damp cold air grey dust filling corners
 cold feeling old alone away/ bars around my soul

guards/ cold sticks rip against torn skin hands
 tied holding hoping reaching caressing
 hands beaten fallen weathered
 hands holding on holding on

bars.
 cold facts torn families
 hate smiles hate guards/ fat men cold women
 warden hates bars windows cold days bars
 and time. . . laws cold/ hard facts fighting cold blood
 steel bars holding down my wings
 holding cold torn cells
 dreams hopes held
 /break!
 hoping holding back
 /break!
 steel slamming down
 /break!
 breaking thru
 hold the light!

FREEDOM!

cold holding bars
 FREEDOM!
 cold waiting hope
 FREEDOM!
 cold breaking thru
 FREEDOM!
 break break
 bars break
 breaking thru

cold bars
 break!

For Lolita Lebron

Released from your cell
 yet prisoner on your island

Write us books
 to rediscover our identity

Explain the process in clear definition
 give power to the air

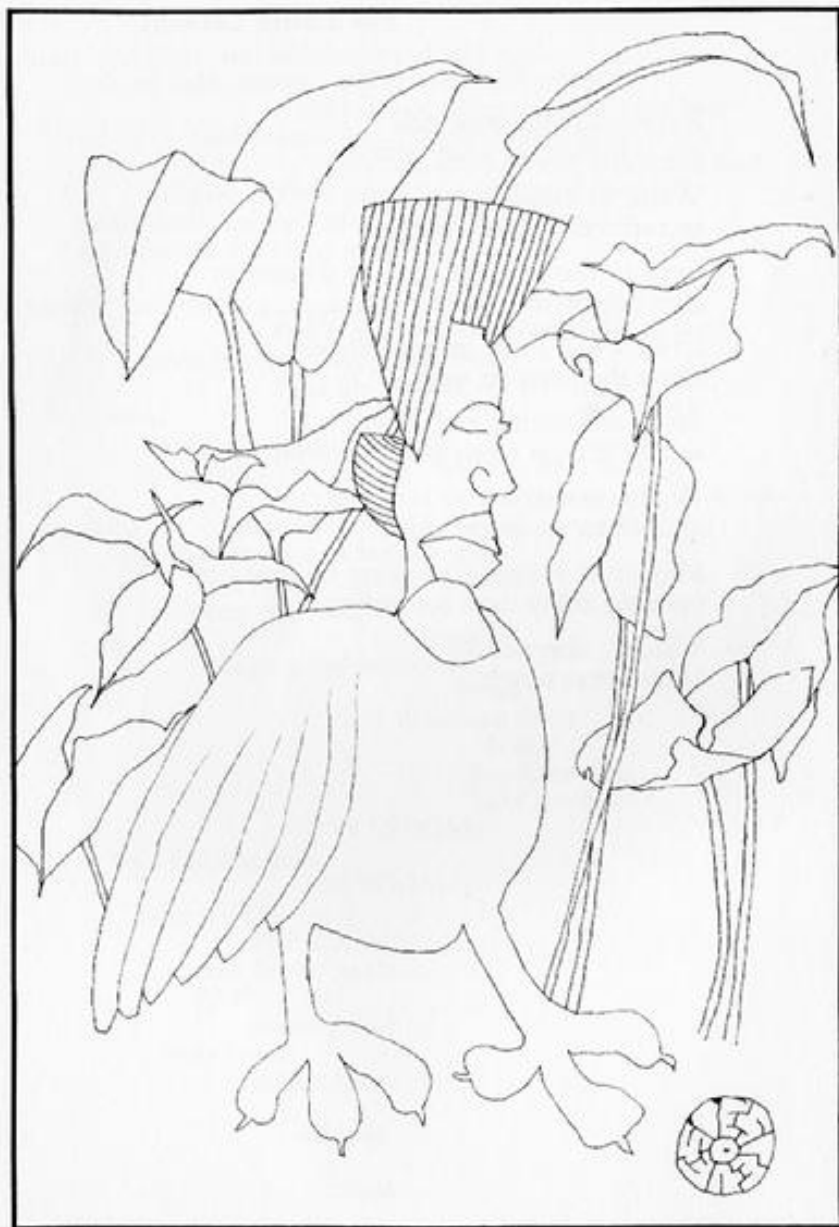
Unlock the walls of ignorance
 teach the lame to walk

Stock the young with stone
 and brilliance from your waterfall

Womanstrength
 a mold to guide the dawn

May your twenty-five years be new fire
 opening other eyes for seeing

Visions, alternatives
 circles that touch.



2
MARCANDO QUINTO

Complexions of fire

degrees of burning coals
flavors of hot yellow
orange tresses of moulten rain

breath
that warms the womb and penis
birth

burning
thru breaking chills
plunge to purify cold stone
new mountains
seeds



The ignorant laugh

Don't they believe?
 in magic
 witchcraft
 brujería
 la religión
 santería
 meditation
 chanting
 astrology
 caracoles
 spirits and other living beings
 even the rocks are alive
 there are other ways to live
 acupuncture
 shiatsu
 natural foods
 macrobiotics
 biorhythms
 metaphysics
 clairvoyance
 music
 the ocean . . .

 many colors.

Pregonando

Melones
 Melones
 Melones para tu mesa
 Melones ricos
 Melones buenos
 Melones a peseta
 Melones de la Isla
 Frescos y sabrositos
 Alimentos natural
 Melones
 Melones
 Melones para tu mesa . . .



Fill my world with music

sunrise and mint julip rhythm
earthen melodies and congas quintiando

I need to be harmonized

so fill my crazy world with soft sounds
a resonance of graffiti melody
a warm hand to touch

simple things

fill my stagnant world with vibration
in counterpoint
till each finger of each hand on both arms
is alive in my one entire body

not one isolated beat
or a flat note with no tone
in some miscellaneous silence
I don't want to drown in Ay benditos!

so please,
fill me with something for real
depend upon, set my walking time to

I want some sound
to wake me up
and work me out.

(Dedicated to Rich Barte, the D-train Poetsinger)

Some people are about Jam

Whether they are drunk or sober
 rich or poor they jam everywhere
 with everyone, and it doesn't matter when
 day or night there is always time for jamming
 from three a.m. to six in the afternoon
 in any room of the house or any streetcorner
 they jam in supermarkets funerals department stores
 rooftops, wherever they find people they jam
 thru rain or sun, sleet or snow they will jam if they can
 (and even when they are not jamming
 they are thinking of new ways to jam
 and new people to jam with)
 but one thing is certain
 they cannot be stopped from jamming
 even if you took their money and threw them in jail
 they'd jam
 because jamming is what they are about

I once knew someone who tried to jam on the subway
 the police arrested him for disorderly conduct
 saying that jamming wasn't allowed
 he tried to convince them that jamming was really good therapy
 they didn't agree
 so they jammed him up good in the only way they knew how

Now he doesn't jam because he is dead
 but some say he's still jamming in the ether
 or in the air or wherever it is where his spirit remains
 some say they have even seen him jamming
 somewhere between their dreams and the moon
 a few wanted to bottle his jams and sell them wholesale
 but it had already been done with other people's jams
 and the jamming market was low
 so in order to create a new market they printed pictures of him
 jamming on tee shirts with the letters J—A—M
 written over his head
 which they hoped to sell to his many friends
 most of whom were women because they appreciated his jams
 much more than men, although there are some men

who have jammed with him
 and they will tell you
 that he was about jam
 it was all he ever did
 and it didn't matter if he was drunk or sober
 he jammed all the time

In fact, he believed so much in the power of jam
 that he dedicated his life to it
 spent all his time with it
 tried to convince people to incorporate jam
 into their vocabularies
 and refused to do anything that did not include jam

People would ask him, "Why do you jam so much?"
 and he would tell them
 that without jam life wasn't worth living
 that jam was the most necessary ingredient
 to the existence of man on this planet
 (and to the existence of women too
 because jam was not the exclusive property of men)
 it belonged to everyone
 especially children
 and he was always taking jam lessons from them
 he learned that jamming wasn't limited
 to size shape sex or race
 that one could jam alone

With one person

Or with one thousand people

And that's just what he did, he jammed
 and jammed, and jammed
 hoping that people would follow his example.

Staring into the eye of truth

I got up this morning to brush my teeth
and found seven new pimples on my face

The first pimple was green
had a picture of George Washington
smiled at me a long time saying it was my friend
but when I squeezed it
it was full of war and blood

The second pimple had a cross of copper silver and gold
talked about peace and love, brotherhood and equality
but when I squeezed it
out came barrels of oil and slick gasoline

The third pimple was musical
and sang of better times
but when I squeezed it
out came a kilo of cocaine
a hyperdermic needle with 48 assorted flavors of LSD
a bottle of ups and one very heavy down

The fourth pimple was a junkie
it tried to get fast on me so I squeezed it
and it overdosed on methadone

The fifth pimple had seven college degrees
to get by each day of the week
it drove two cars, had a wife and a mistress
owned a brownstone, a penthouse
and one share of O.T.B.
and when I squeezed it out came ten easy lessons
on being culturally deprived and making it

The sixth pimple was very sincere
it marched around with banners and songs
sold newspapers and went to meetings three times a day
but when I squeezed it ignored me
cause it only spoke Spanish
and I had squeezed it in English

Now the seventh pimple read Marx
Lenin, Mao and Gibran
and only wore clothes imported
from Mexico, Africa, India and Guatemala
ate natural foods
studied astrology
meditated with yoga
and when I squeezed it closed its eyes
and chanted OMMMMMMMMMMMMMM. . .

* * *

Evolution is not the name of a new hit play
or a million dollar record
or a clenched fist patch
or an altar to Chango
or a proposal to the Ford Foundation
or a "I am Puerto Rican" button
or eating rice and beans
or wearing guyaberas from Puerto Rico
or an apartment in Taino towers
or singing about Mi Viejo San Juan
while following the footsteps of mi nueva America
or paying ten dollars to watch Eddie Noe on his piano
Aye Jose, asi no es

Evolution is not a savings account at the Banco de Ponce
or five credits in indigenous studies
or watching Jane Fonda movies
or collecting welfare unemployment
HEOP, SEEK, VA, VD, or DDT

Evolution is a seed planted in the heart
it grows reaching towards the sun
roots firmly into the earth
is nourished by the rain
struggling every day

Evolution is an act of love.

In praise of life

We are the bird in transit for the winter
And the flame glowing catching quickly

We are the dream that was lost within the wind
And the echo of a distant warrior's cry

We are the water flowing thru the rocky streams
And the bee sipping nectar from the rose

We are the noon sun reaching thru the trees
And the mountains standing proud against the wind

We are the harmony of the birds before the dawn
And the forming of the pearls within the sea

We are the space between the stars
And the shell around the snail

We are the eagle flying high
And the egg shaping life

We are the timeless and spaceless
The burning and freezing
The smallest and greatest
We are life.

Homeland

Isla solitaria perla
en mi cadena de sufrimiento

Nada de ti encuentro
en las esquinas de valores muertos

Isla o isla mia
en cada día te buscare

Isla jardín de lluvia
derramas sangre, pero por que?

Palmas y montañas
amaneciendo llena del sol

Ríos gritando viva
Mira! Ve tu color

Isla con voz de trueno
ojos de ave, isla trigueña

Isla manos de fuerza
que van sembrando toda la tierra.



From the Common Wealth

So you want me to be your mistress
and find dignity in a closed room
because you say your first real love is music
even though I too am music
the sum total of contrary chords and dissonant notes
occasionally surviving in mutilated harmony
even though I could fill you so full
to grow outside yourself
and walk with you thru opalescent gardens

But you only want me to be your Sunday afternoon mistress
and I have to recycle this flow of ebony tailored ambition
limit the mother in me that wants to intoxicate herself
in the center of your soul
not watch alien wives trade you off for multi colored trinkets
flashing against the real you

Understanding what a whore sophistication really is
I reject a service role
a position I've truly hated whenever it was forced upon me

And it's true that I am a drifter, a wanderer
a gypsy whose objective in life is to travel in whole circles
that resemble the path of Venus around the Sun

I never reveled in washing clothes
or reached orgasms from dirty dishes
but I didn't mind being part of someone
who could help me to be me
with all my transient contradictions

And I am a woman, not a mistress or a whore
or some anonymous cunt whose initials barely left an impression
on the foreskin of your nationhood

Y si la patria es una Mujer
then I am also a rebel and a lover of free people
and will continue looking for friction in empty spaces
which is the only music I know how to play.

For Julia De Burgos

A Julia y a Mi

Me fui a la obra y te vi Julia
 en tus versos camine tu río
 ande los pisos de la tierra roja
 combatiendo la tierra blanca
 me entregue adentro tus palabras
 But why did you let the dragon slay you
 why did your visions suffocate
 in suicidal premonition you could not die
 within the flesh beat the heart
 and my child need no image of despair
 or too much poetry of this and that
 but not enough to rise above the clouded cross

Me fui, y me diste un vaso florida de ser
 una oja de verde cortada
 eres mujer y mujeres muriendo
 I viewed a saint and saw myself instead
 in cracks of time
 and my sister, she dances around with your words
 she springs new life from your roots dried and seasoned
 accidents stepping across your occult
 roll along in purple hymn

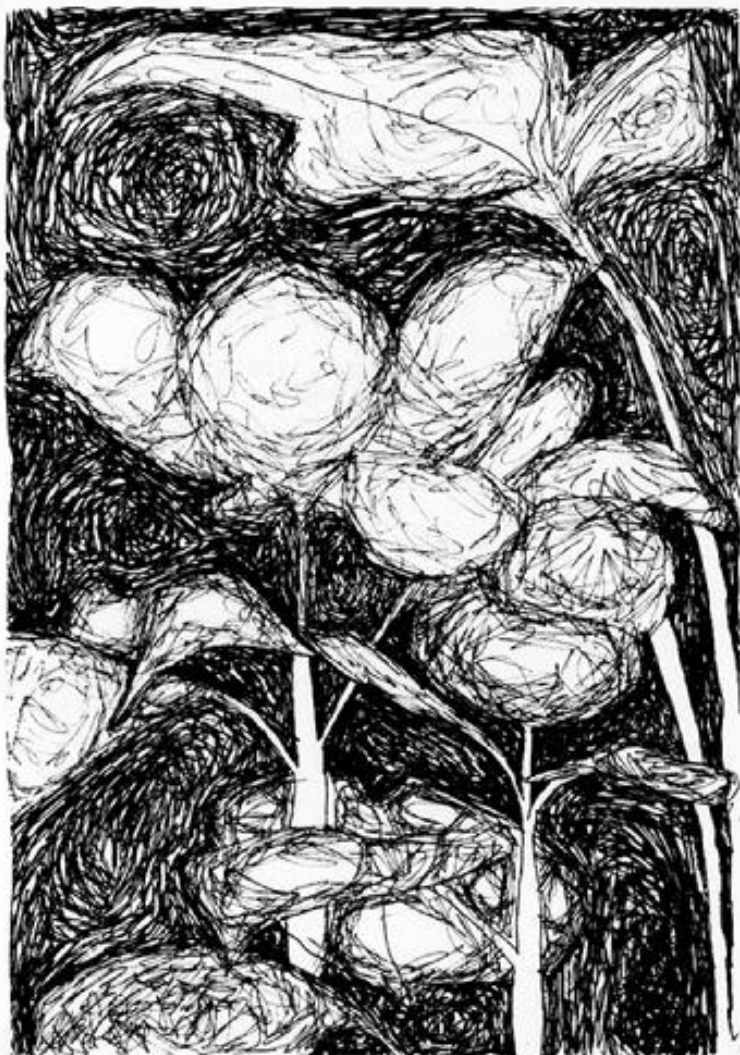
Pero dime, cuando llegaste a ser la eternidad del barrio?
 te doy mis sueños
 y cojo mi número que nunca viene de otra mano
 con mi misma mano fuerte
 mi carácter de ser
 libertada por el viento en el ambiente social

Y tu Julia?
 te perdistes en palabras no en vida
 you let the dragon slay you
 you let life cut your sorrow from wrinkles young
 you let the wine mellow your hatred
 dissolving the fuel that nourished your fires of wisdom
 you gave in a breath at a time
 and the eagle's wing consumed your existence

Miro a tu cara, tus ojos mirando el mundo
 el mismo que miraba mi madre
 siento el ritmo en tu pecho
 el mismo que cubre mis canciones corriendo
 encima del río superficial
 oigo tus versos del universo, humanidad, y de mujer
 it is the same world that has not moved
 but an inch from your suffrage
 women still tend fires that men burn
 and lovers still imprison dreams
 and truth remains cold like your bones yet bittersweet

Mujer, siente el frío a que te das el gusto
 de cojer la vida colorosa
 caí en lo duro a que reconosca el viento
 amaneciendo en tu cara suave y felis

A ti Julia, ya será tarde
 pero a mí no
 Yo vivo!
 y grito si me duele la vida
 y canto con la gente
 y bailo con mis hijas
 no soy lágrimas de ser
 soy el río
 la mariposa y culebra
 my fist is my soul
 it cuts into the blood of dragons
 and marks time with the beat
 of an afrocuban drum.



Who says I can't scream if I must, complain
about the way I live till my voice is gone

Who says I can't be who I am and speak my language
in my rhythm dance all the way to the moon
create pictures if it's how I feel

Who says I can't take a stand, defiantly question
clean the poison from my street living in my children's veins
or tear down the walls that imprison my flesh
play my drums any time of the day
carry my stick live in any neighborhood walk where I choose
this is my land paid for in blood
who says I can't be where I am

Who can tell me how to comb my hair
what silken gardenia to place by my ear
what words to speak from my tongue

Who says I can't save my earth from its dying last breath
scientific pollution is not the solution
I reserve my right to protest !!!

Who says I can't kill away my pain
cause the clouds to rain and wash away the smell of old abuse
believe in the gods I choose
dream in ideals
lay foundations that orbit the power giving sun
and movement of stars

Who says I can't shine inside and speak my words
like darts aimed at target
like relief for a headache
like warm bath to soothe aching feet

Who says I must be ...sweet ...soft ...barefoot ...& helpless
when stepped upon I will scream
be hard and cold break bottles and windows
RAGE!! with revenge

Who says I can't?

A vivir es a ser dos personas en uno

La persona de afuera
y el que vive adentro

Los dos caminan en diferente caretas

Una dura
y el otro suave

Uno vivo
y la otra con ojos en la muerte

A veces caminan unidos, cambian ideas
y se van separando de nuevo, reorganizando lo viejo

A veces se borrean
y se pierden en psicologías de versos complicados

A encontrar entonces que no hay nada más profundo
que la música colectiva universando.

El diamante eres tu

Y yo, la luz que brilla en tus cuartos
reflejando la naturaleza de un sol corazón

El diamante es la verdad
no los solos momentos emocional que pasan
sacrificando el sudor de otros

Sin dirección no hay centro

El diamante es el centro.

Cancion de Martin Tito Perez

En este dia, ven
y lleva me al monte
que espero un alivio
de la lluvia en mi calle

Mirando hasta el cielo
buscando mi reflejo
esperando salvacion
encontrando guaguanco

En este dia, ven
y mira bien la gente
que se encuentran en las drogas
materiales artificial

Sin pan y dinero
con zapatos que son viejo
trabajando factorias
aye bendito, que sudor

En este dia, ven
cociname un plato
lleno con las palmas
isla rica salsa flor

Y si no tiene sabor
hechale picante
si no tiene sabor
picalo brillante

Y si no voy cantando
iria bailando . . .

Hombre sensitivo

abreme tu voz
dame palabras a reir y sonidos
 a sobar mi espiritu
curame con tu viento amoroso
levantame de la tierra imobile

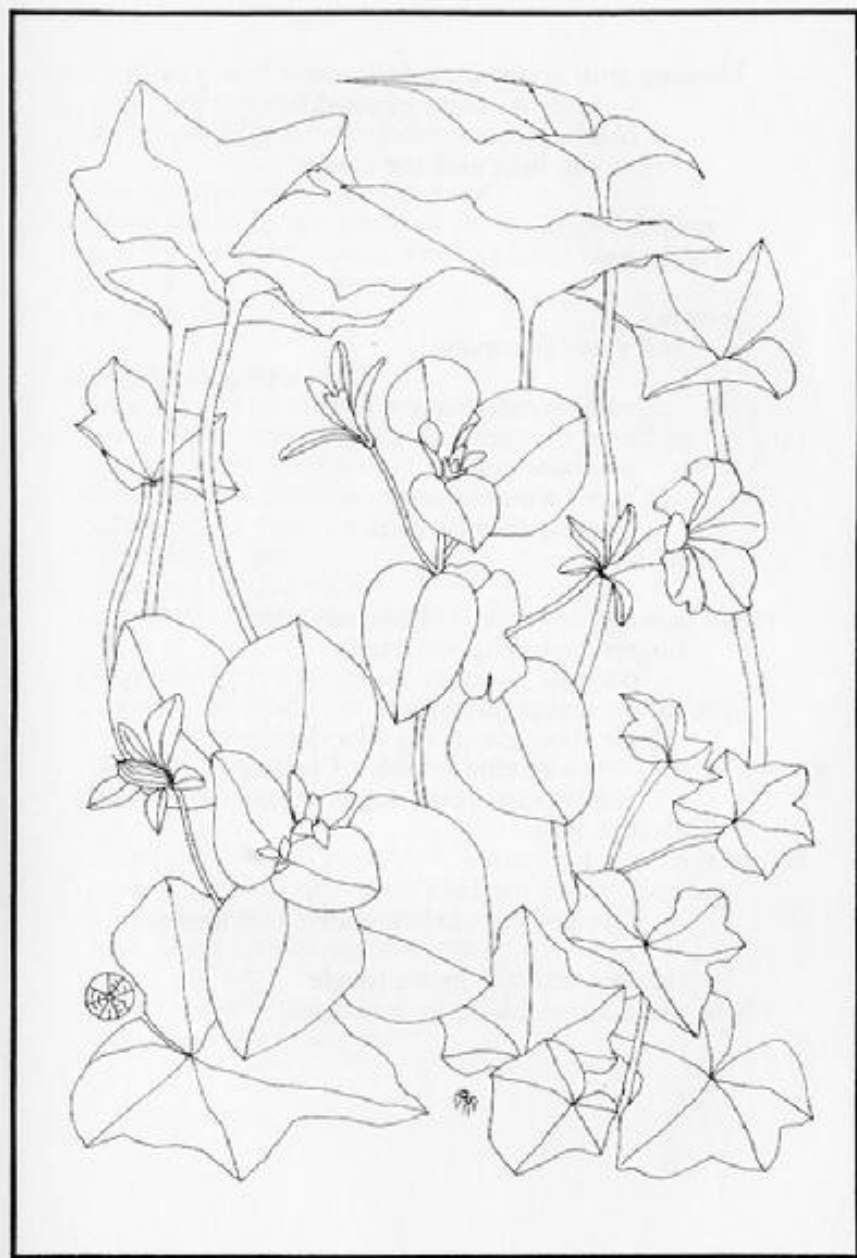
bomboleame en tus notas altas
y en un tiempo
 quien sabes
 nos encontramos en una canción

y si nos combienes
 nos envolvemos como amigos
hablando como personas

 quisas llegara un dia
cuando mi alma te cubre
 en un momento
 y te aguanta en la harmonia
 de uno y dos
 como muchas veces me aguantaste.

We are the luscious dream

the beautiful birds that sing
the mountains bathed in haze
the springtime of tomorrow
the fruit of what is past
the rich ocean's depth
the treasure in an opal garden.



Windchimes

blowing your songs into darkness
into the night of worlds
invisible reality
into the light and the center

melodic sighs
challenges

rainfall
and roses blooming

I am trying to find you
with words that are eyes
and eyes that are sounds
and whispers
of more windchimes
blowing into brilliance
patchwork

rivers flowing down holy mountain
fingers cascading waterfalls
borealic sunsets
touch me again and again
tingle throughout my bloodstream
in a circumference of yellow
ride me on your magic carpet
back into time
before the colonizers came
and stole away the land
before the yankee erased our names

ride me into the green jungle
where windchimes blend in darklight.

Oracion

Hail holy lord we are the sun
today we are the tree of life
the knowledge of our fathers

We are the crucified christians
come claiming our piece of the pie
and by the light of our white candles
and silver blade knives
we will survive

Hail blue virgin
who gave birth thru the scum of her lies
we are the brown children
mother earth nourished in her bosom
inheritors of the blue sky
Chango y Oshun
Obatala y Ogun
Yemaya, Eleque y Oya
con fuego y espiritu, la luta continua

May our spirits ring true
may we celebrate life for the living

May we, the third world, first world brothers and sisters
be delivered from democracy's prisons

May our children be loved
May our elders be respected
May our workers be praised
May our warriors be protected

Fuego y espiritu
may our spirits ring true.



A la Mujer Borriqueña

My name is Maria Christina
I am a Puerto Rican woman born in el barrio

Our men . . . they call me negra because they love me
and in turn I teach them to be strong

I respect their ways
inherited from our proud ancestors
I do not tease them with eye catching clothes
I do not sleep with their brothers and cousins
although I've been told that this is a liberal society
I do not poison their bellies with instant chemical foods
our table holds food from earth and sun

My name is Maria Christina
I speak two languages broken into each other
but my heart speaks the language of people
born in oppression

I do not complain about cooking for my family
because abuela taught me that woman is the master of fire
I do not complain about nursing my children
because I determine the direction of their values

I am the mother of a new age of warriors
I am the child of a race of slaves
I teach my children how to respect their bodies
so they will not o.d. under the stairway's shadow of shame
I teach my children to read and develop their minds
so they will understand the reality of oppression
I teach them with discipline . . . and love
so they will become strong and full of life

My eyes reflect the pain
of that which has shamelessly raped me
but my soul reflects the strength of my culture

My name is Maria Christina
I am a Puerto Rican woman born in el barrio
Our men . . . they call me negra because they love me
and in turn I teach them to be strong.

Report: for the National Record

On Friday July 14th at 7:30 p.m.
transit patrolman number 1627
arrested Willie P for smoking cigarettes
on the Mount Eden platform of the I.R.T.
and filled his quota for the day
for the arrest of disorderly transiteers
without any further agitation
to the cancerous manufacturers
of the miscellaneous cigarettes
whose existence missed
this officer's scrutinization

On my way to hear poetry
amidst New Ricans with Papoleto
I ponder the perplexity
of brown men subduing brown men
while the invisible perpetrators go free
but remain captive to their visions

The train ride is long enough
to unwet my appetite
constantly seeking new sources
and recipes for spiritual food

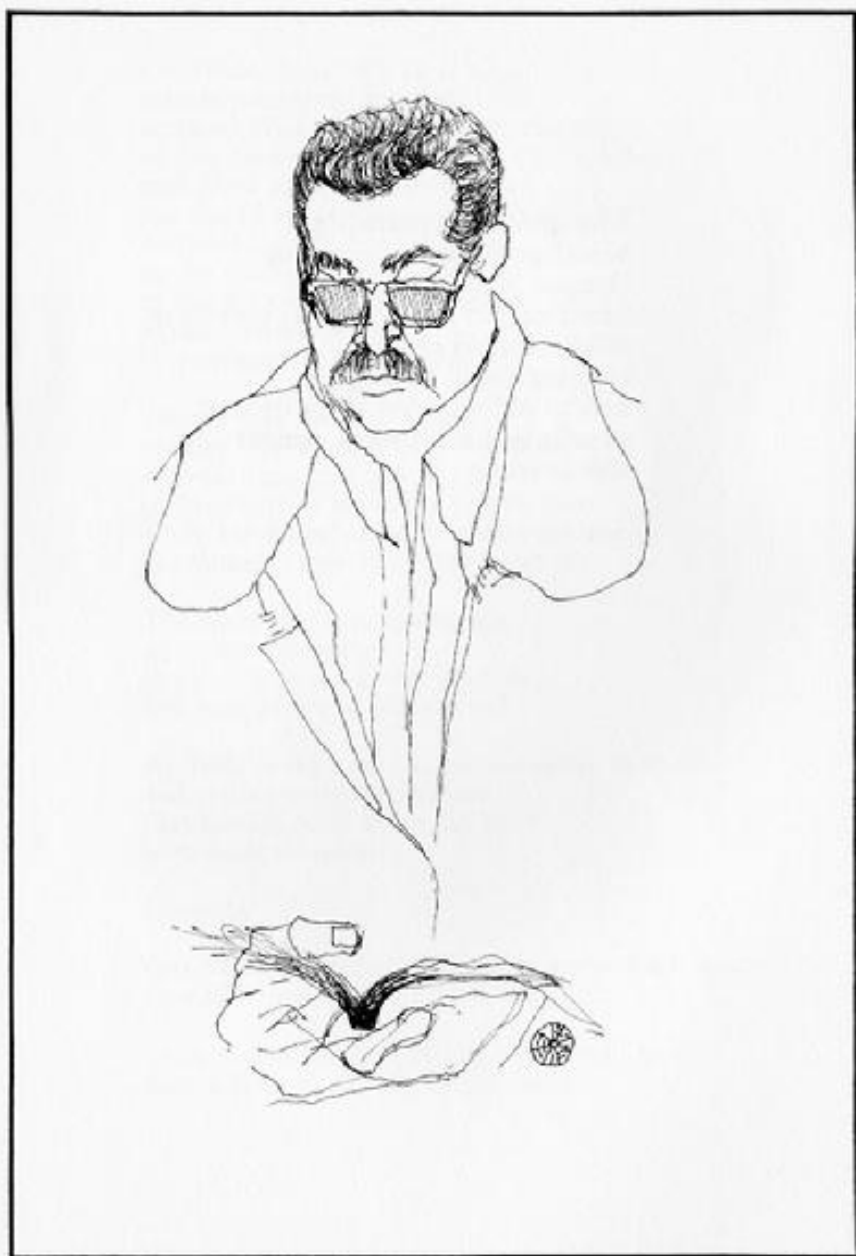
At 14th street I switch from express to local
and rediscover straight lines
that have hidden away the trees
with such closeness

knowing

that when too many rabbits occupy a small space
they will turn on each other and kill,

when too many rabbits occupy a small space
they will turn on each other and kill.

The garden screaming
blood promises evaporating
chrome plated oceans
hazed within blue dimmed corridors
zillion armed roaches
blasting shells from guns
tied to old wooden ships of war
as celluloid tides wash against
soft swirling.



Ahora . . .

and when the center opened
I saw myself
and I saw my mother
the Moon
walking to the white man's factory
so she could catch sunsets
on the 18th floor
of the projects.

For Fay Chiang

Nuevajork

I have searched for poetry in the farthest zones of midnight
interwoven in winter's lace worn cold on barefoot islands
in the meadowlands was rumored a poetic birthplace
two doves flew
one disappeared into inner galaxy
but the other remained
where no human thing should be
where walls of solid confusion held windows barring light
steel edges that hit hard against the tender feathers
and the roar, how it deafened the ocean
killed the rivers
no sight was sound
nor was truth to be trusted

In the city of contradictions
eagles did not fly
they sat by the windows of hot summer
conversations became lost
in schemes of futures ('twas dreams)
the schoolyard grounds sang about the rain would heal the dryness
the mist talked of the water
so clear the feet could be seen
so clear was the ground once before.

For Ntozake

Fertile woman is moon

Is ocean of our father's land
Fertile woman is life rising
Is life rising from the concrete
Tree digging roots deep
Into the soil of Obatala

Fertile woman rise reaching to the sky
That fills us with being
Fertile woman rise and harvest the earth
With natural creativity
Motion of majesty

Fertile woman is fire and thunder
The voice of justice bringing the people up
The new day
A new way to live
Breathing hope into our children's souls
Green
Green
Fertile woman is green
Sea of fertility
Creator of destiny

Fertile woman rise
Reaching to the sky that fills us with being
Fertile woman rise and harvest the earth
With natural creativity
Motion of majesty.

For Cielo Azul

I am freedom's child

and who?

is freedom
she walks around inside herself
always asking
always heard
in the most painful corners of the
universe

even in the city
where the garbage is thick
over the earth

freedom cries out
with obvious words

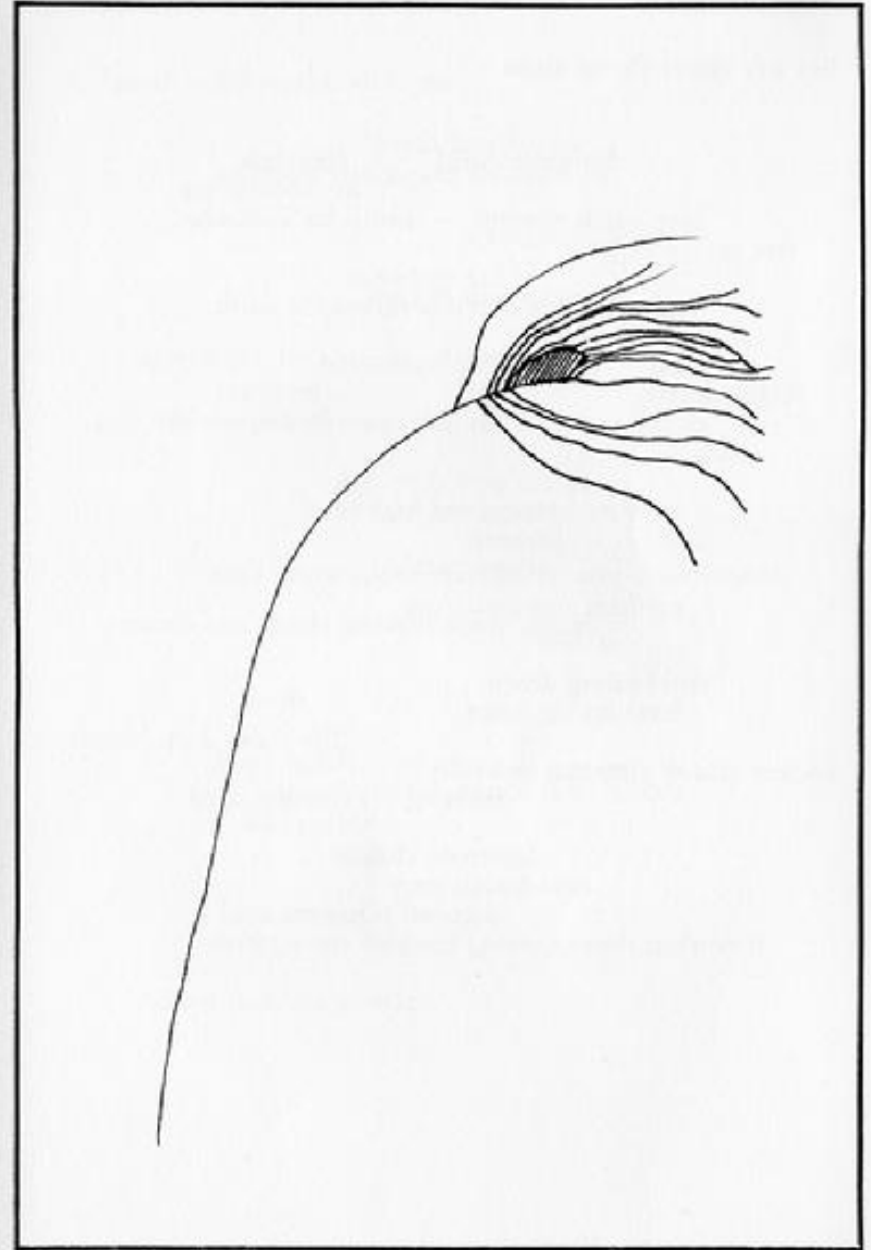
I am freedom's child

like all children

born
from the eternal womb
with all the marks
of arms and legs
a face

and consciousness of love

I am freedom's child



For Tom Mitchelson

Let my spirit fly in time

the outerworld spaceless
 no boundaries
deep black rhythm and John Coltrane
fast movin notes
 the open eye
and peace descends across the earth

Sahara
black desert
rivers in line towards the sunrise
one

over mountains and highways
 flowers
 ebony petals

magic rivers flowing closer and closer

sun beating down
base laying down
 life roots deep breaths
ancient stones glittering red ruby
 running /running deep

 lightning clouds
 thundering wars
 charcoal juju heat soul
flow thru rivers moving towards the sunrise

 poetry and sun music.

All of you who come to dance with me

to listen and breathe with me

I will touch you
in ways you never thought of

walk with you
thru misty lagoons
and rainforests

talk with the sounds of roses
 jasmine
and african pearls

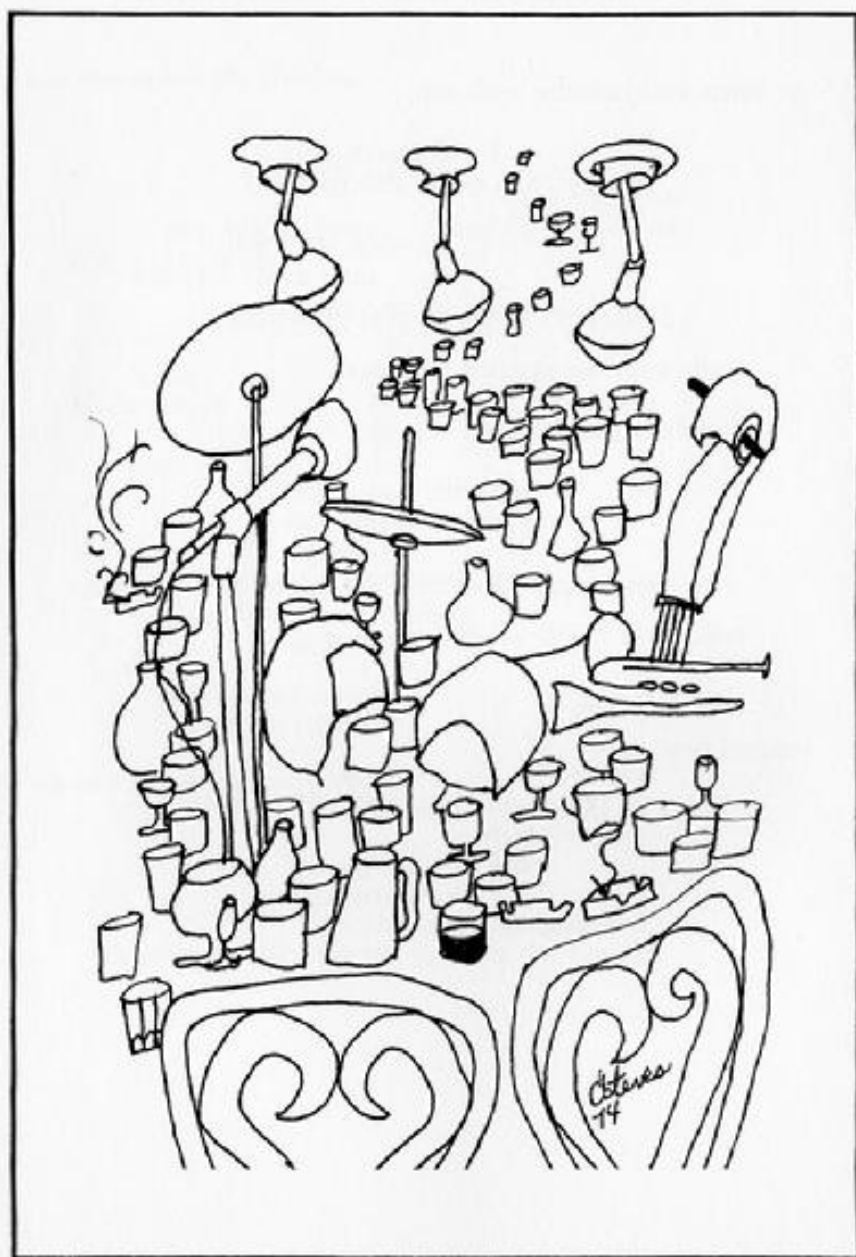
sip with you cocoa
in mint lime

and come close enough to feel your breath
grabbing and pushing
skin

here

taste softly
mix your fragrance into forces
of rainbow
color

singing.



3
HORIZONTES MIGRANTES

I dreamed

your house was yellow and gold
sunlight filtering in for walls
and marigolds for floors
and bamboo hanging near plants
the warm light caressing our bodies
floating in the air.

Take the hearts of children

Feed them with red flamboyán
dress their bodies
with the turquoise caribbean
feet in the earth
refreshed in the morning
eyes shining
in palm wind silhouette

Take the hearts of children
teach them to fight for the land
with machetes and songs
we stand strong as one.

Fly.



For Ifetayo Olubayo

Childpoem

Hold me close and warm
let me feel your rhythm
carry me while I am helpless
until I learn to walk alone
sing to me a soft sound
so I may dream in melodies
teach me to search within sun flowers
to find my hidden seeds of birth
suspended between wind and world
I swim the great oceans
grab my palms thru the depths
and guide them towards the center of me.

Celebration

To be intoxicated on love
is to be lifted from the ground
held in the palm
soothed with tongue flowing sweet
hands warming skin

But more,
is to be like spring
touched
high like the sunlight
breathing joy
anxious for every following moment
walking surrounded by a glow of orange rainbows.



For Mr. Tee from Avenue D

News from the front:

Hoyt street
on the A line
has been declared a war zone
by the people's army

We lost graffiti battle no. #3
but reinforcements are on the way
from lexington avenue.

Capital

meter maids write away tickets
for rent not paid
by the ford foundations of the world
who control the government
which hired the meter maids
to write away tickets
for the space under our feet
which belongs to everyone
besides the officials
who forever rip us off
and charge us rent
for being born.

For South Bronx

I live amidst hills of desolate buildings
rows of despair
crowded together
in a chain of lifeless shells

Every five minutes the echoing roar
of the racing elevated train
sears thru the atmosphere
floating low over the horizon

But at every moment
like magic the shells breathe
and take on the appearance of second cousins
or sometimes even look like old retired ladies
who have nothing more to do
but ride empty subways from stop to stop

At night
hidden away from the city
the youngbloods invade the trainyards
laden with colors of dreams
crying for existence
on the empty walls of desolation's subway cars
for old ladies to read on and on . . .

The I R T is hot and humid on August 9th

Two chinese men sit side by side
on their way to Woodlawn
steel clubs to putt on green

One black man
dressed in black wearing black sneakers
reads the Daily News from back to front
I read the pictures from across the isle
sitting next to a pregnant señora, husband and child

Already the universe has grown
with these people I want to know more
but we must all exit at the next stop

And I and my curiosity
will never know how the pregnant lady
concluded her episode on the mass transit

Did she have natural childbirth
or was she one of the victims too?

The Artist is the Life Force

For Barbara Killens Rivera

I had to look myself deep into my eye
Deeper into the deepest part corner of the retina
Focused in South Bronx Algiers
I had to look so deep to find where my self had been lost
Forgotten or thrown away from someplace
Where the past lies like a hidden nightmare of death
And daggers dug away in old chained closets

I had to look myself deep into myself
And had to keep going even deeper than I thought
deep could exist
And find some point
Some place of myself to begin
And discover
And there, hiding in some shadow
It was very small
I found a glimmer
A soft shade of sunlight
As thin as a line
But it was long enough to hold on to
After being slapped across space so many times

And as I cupped the glow in my hands
With the tenderest of care
Breathed upon its face
Till I felt my spirit sing

But it wasn't enough
And I had to go even deeper still
But this time the dryness was bitter like callous
I had to cut away crevices
That attempt to harden the mind
When one's fruit has been removed
And sold for exportation on some foreign market

I had to go to the very heart and soul of my being
Where all my worth exists
To examine closely the irony of insanity
And remind myself daily
To recapture the flow of energy
That causes our movements to grow stronger together.

For the Masses

Do not be afraid to grab a thought

Seeding within breathing forth
wanting to taste reality

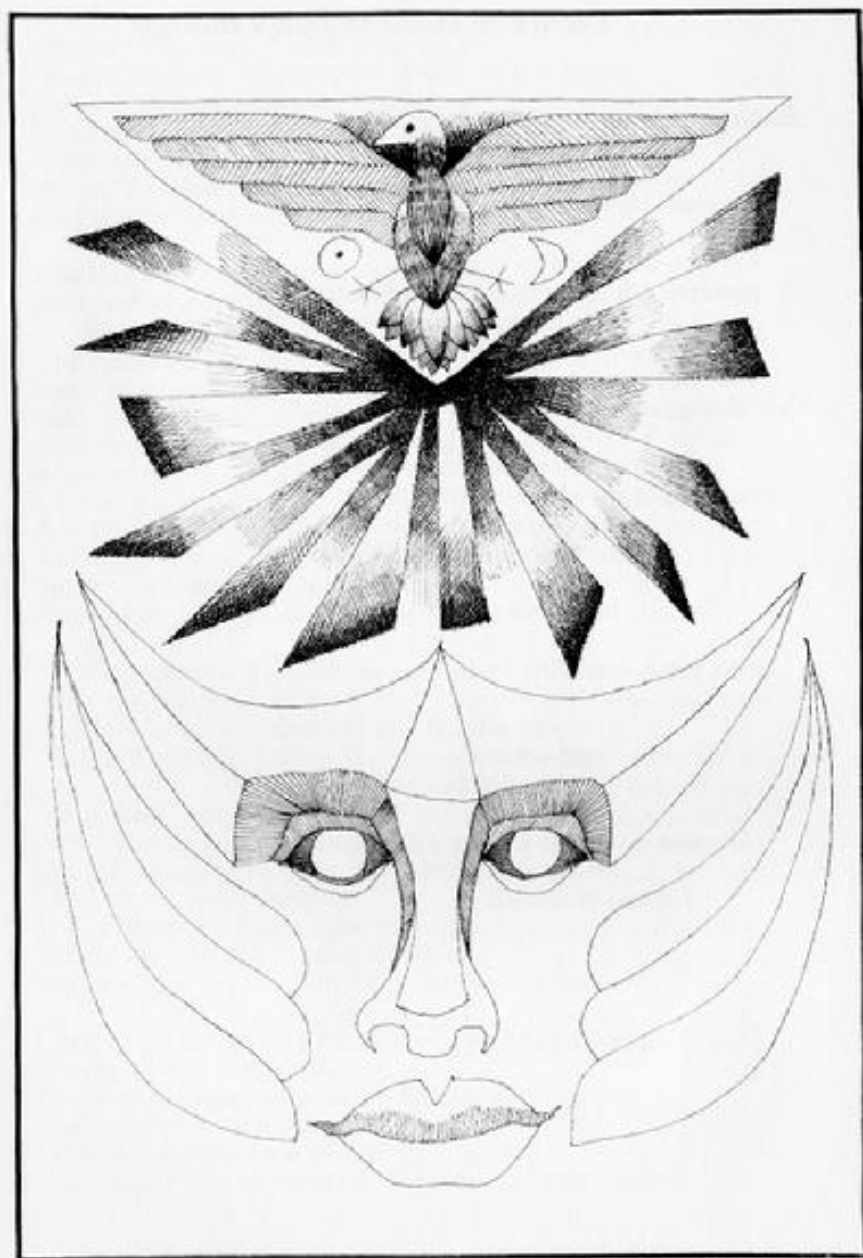
Do not be afraid to change
patterns of living that kill and corrupt
even the smallest purity of children

or to come outside the fears
that shake foundations

you simple child
your will is the grain of an oak
the shape of a snail
the flight of an eagle's wing

Do not be afraid to fly
or to reach out with love
even after it has burned
and scarred
and ridiculed and abused

Do not be afraid to give again and again
fulness is within.



Whose war cry will be heard tomorrow?

When the ocean is dead
and there remains but one tree
Whose blood will pay for the last half acre

Whose ideals will become realities

In what vallies will be laid the foundations
giving life back to the earth
Whose hands will design the new cities
and lead the way for useful technology
With reverence to brotherhood
Who will write the new scriptures
transforming the wasted from death to life
destroying the prisons
eliminating disease
reforming the welfare of the people
developing the consciousness of new humanity

Whose voice will speak justice
feed the forgotten
seeding hope to the spirit

When will children exchange
celebration for war
claiming our proud heritage
surviving genocide of the pill
sharing the whole of our planets

When there is no more land to plow
or weapons to be made
or trinkets to trade
What will be the new system of business
after wall street has decayed?

For the Renegades of El Barrio

A pile of wood

dreams crumbling
waves breaking
we take the hammers in our hands
we build
a place called home
to stand tall
proud
we take the hammers in our hands
we are strong
we beat away death
holding us down
then from the ground
we find a way to begin
with hammers in our hands
we work
becoming who we want to be
taking hammers
we change

Y la gente saben que somos la tierra
con fuegos y manos junto cambiamos.

