

## **The Wild West: Mae Sot, Thailand**

## **The Gates of Sunset**

the gates of sunset  
close early  
this time of year  
slipping down  
among the thunder  
the day star  
bows out quietly  
hoping  
like a weary shopkeeper  
to close down  
before another customer  
stops by  
to purchase the last  
few rays of light

## Dragon Fruit Fences

If good fences  
Make good neighbors  
Then dragon fruit fences  
Make the best of neighbors

Every frontier, every Wild West  
Is closed up by fences  
(Eventually)  
And ones made of cactus  
Tend to stick a bit sharper  
Unless they're tasty too

Like us *farang*, us foreigners,  
Transported to Thailand,  
The dragon fruit fences also  
Hail from the Americas  
Where once and now  
They're called *pitaya*

But such foreign fruits  
Don't have to fail or wither  
Under a strange sun; instead  
They bloom and bear brilliant  
Fruit of many colors—  
*Roja, blanca, amarilla*—  
And grow on cement-pole fences  
That tame the rowdy hinterlands

And also bring together  
Unfamiliar faces  
To share a (juicy) bite to eat  
Of something rich and strange  
From a foreign cactus  
That made itself  
At home on a fence

## **Thunderset**

As clouds gather in the West  
The silent forked flashes begin  
Their ghosts  
Rumbling up from the river  
Upsetting the branches bathed  
In golden light from the star  
Slipping below the horizon  
So slowly so silently  
It normally winks out  
Engulfed by an unmoving horizon  
Succeeded by seas of imitators  
But sometimes the mute twilight  
Sets in a storm  
Thundering into darkness

## **Rooted in Heaven**

In the beginning  
The paddy is a barren pool  
Empty and still.  
Only the spirit hovers  
Over the face of the deep,  
The vault of heaven  
The only reflection in the water.  
And then one by one,  
Sheaf by sheaf  
Is planted in the skies  
As below, so above;  
The expanse spotted  
By neat, regular rows  
Sown in the still mirror  
Of the firmament,  
There to sprout, to grow, to push  
Down into the dark mud and  
Up into the heavy skies  
Until the end of days  
When the rice is reaped  
From the still sky-waters  
Of lofty paradise  
And returned to earth.

## **Banana Forest Light**

There's a soft, strange  
Glow on the floor  
Of a banana forest:  
Green-dappled, sun-speckled  
Rays slip through mist  
Sending shards of gold dancing,  
Shadowed by spiders and snail slime,  
And all is  
Haunted by the dying elders  
Decaying at the roots  
Silent, still  
Save for the whisper  
Of leaves drinking  
The rotting darkness  
Up into the fruits of light.