

## SUMMER CAMP

Charcoal fingers smelling  
of the burning earth like the summer dirt of Vermont:  
a lonely Puertorican's 6 hr drive to tralala.  
learning Beatle's songs and white girls' hair,  
long wet yellow ropes trailing shampoo.  
little did i know that cover girls waltzed  
around the red-clay tennis courts of the morning.  
the wet, moist-smelling clay near the breakfast syrup  
that hung in the air 'round the dining hall,  
where on rainy nights, after cancellations,  
*Princess Bride* movies and carols o' testicles would play.  
"do yer ears hang low, Joshua?  
can you tie `em in a knot can you tie `em in a bow?"  
and where freckled faces were found buried in books.  
i silently memorized the titles, saying i will read those too.  
i bought them all once on 86th and lex.  
never read them: Tom Wolfe and *Fried Green Tomatoes*.  
they loved books.  
i was just infatuated with the heft of them.  
but east Harlem didnt care about all that.

East Harlem, 3rd *barrio* of my soul,  
where Christina Gonzalez would shriek, "he's so white!"  
i was wholly incandescent. a pale cherubin  
caught staring at her full mouth.  
this 7th grade and i knew its sensuality, its possibilities.

Fall Rain.

Nostalgia weeps over me as  
 I realize this  
 Perfect moment,  
 Too,  
 Is swept up in  
 The sodden trespasses of memory.

Philly Fresco

Your skin is like the blue chalky layer  
 between the stucco and that brick facade.  
 I scale the plane for a taste. my fingers  
 dragging across your spine picking up residue

blue,

very loose, yet never fully falling away.  
 regenerate the dust that my hands kick up.  
 but! for the slowest brief moment, I smell  
 the coconut oil base in the crevices,

forming a traction, impeding my fingertips.  
 Moisture-rich, fecund hope is seeded there:  
 Dust, oil, and water  
 waiting, waiting, for the sun

For the sun to inject life on your  
 patient garden of perfectly sculptured rubble.

NOLA & the Falsetto Vortex

I.

N'awlins fast, but on a slow grind she comes.

In out, out in where under a rock and as close to nowhere  
is a place just at the water line and above monday's fog  
was the night where chasing street fights and firewater imbibing  
was our thang. Seeking French grates and *balcóns* to sang under

Canta, baby, croon! where a broken wing is on the mend,  
and vacillations between anger and sadness won't stang.

II.

A dud was an edible bought and sold in the Quarter.

PAH! Been had. But not by what I wanted, or whom.

So taketaketake are words spoken unto me, but  
instead eateateat from free-box under a hot spotlight.

99¢ chicken wings fried so deep that the gristle has a pop 'n' a smack.

O, sweet salt oil soothe my bones and water my joints so I can  
runrunrun faster than forever to meet her where she lay.

NIGHTS OF NY, 1992

## IN A MITCHEL-LAMA CALLED LAKEVIEW

Why are the ones,  
those blessed beyond,  
singed by the sons?

Weeds are burned on a project lawn.

A seized heart leaps  
into her throat.  
Certain things stab deep.

On resurfaced tears they float.

Strange desires, ma,  
careen down these streets.  
Shedding that liar, huh?

The bold MCs on molten beats.

I always wanted that fire, son;  
The one torn from me on Broadway.  
A true flame from the pyre, some

death became you that day.

Ma, we drank the 4th oz. of booze  
and I'm bangin' hard on a uterus wall  
And you cry loud for you cannot use

this silent riot's breath. Not at all.