





Ana-Maria speaks up in the back of my head:

"We're all the bastards of the Spanish,  
all of us with Spanish surnames."

She tried to think of Indio surnames.

"I am Indio!"

Your skin peels today, but it doesn't hurt.

Only Spanish skin burns.

And I remember Indian women silently serving their men  
and I wonder how my taste for handsome Spaniards  
is culturally determined.

They fought for seven hundred years  
before they came over  
started your fight  
for a name,  
your women dyeing their hair the color of maize.

In Spain the Revolution  
killed her newlyweds, and the dead  
were left to bury their dead.  
When Marti failed here,  
Spain's bastards  
                  turned  
on each other leaving  
your Indio grandparents  
burying their woven language.

You speak only Spanish,  
and of course English,  
like every Pocho hustling  
Chicano pride in Mexican streets.

It's your turn Herbert:  
Go to Spain  
Tell her:  
I am your bastard.  
Now is the time for Spain  
                                  to listen  
to her bastards.

You are Indio but you cannot throw away  
that part of you which needs you most.

III. Guanajuato

Have I made you my tour guide?  
You're new to the city  
yourself wandering through the streets.  
A picturesque maze,  
one cannot get lost,  
the city's too small.

This is the time of mixed messages,  
the article I read  
asks feminists to  
draw the line.

Here, together, we  
sip coffee and dissolving  
lines begin to touch  
as we become  
better acquainted.

Children look up  
stop playing long enough to guide you.  
Their grandparents turn  
to tell us you're  
on the wrong track.

My handsome guide,  
towards the evening, tired,  
legs hurting,  
we sit down, discuss  
your future, mine and  
subtly  
the present.

We speak of sisters,  
yours, the nineteen kids  
your mother bore like a good Catholic.  
She still takes the girls  
to Mass, and you tell me,  
it's their business.

Standing in the torch  
of the Pipilo we find  
the time of mixed messages.  
You say we should go dancing, it's  
good for the soul, a little  
harmless fun before Sunday.  
We look down into the city  
as we walk  
                  to the sky,  
booby-trapped sentences  
tearing at the fabric  
of smiling tourist interest.

I should not lose you in this maze.  
And yet I want you  
to taste some of my life  
in this world so familiarly yours.

IV. B.C. - D.F. -- Visiting Friends in Mexico City

You come for the late-comer,  
punctually whisk me away  
into a city in the midst  
of daily re-definition and  
joke about the Plague  
God decided to hand your land.  
Her People.

They say the world grew jealous  
of Mexico, God  
had to even out the score,  
and he's working at it, still,  
my train was late,  
my glasses got stolen,  
your car was robbed last month.

We chat in French,  
the day after you tell me  
your English sister-in-law  
doesn't know what she's talking about,  
complaining daily about her  
underdeveloped life, saying  
you're partial.

Your sister-in-law may not believe  
in God, but she agrees with him:  
Everything would be perfect in Mexico  
without Mexicans, there'd be a plan for  
the traffic,  
air,  
water,  
enough, perhaps, for another green Jerusalem.

To me you explain: "Oui, c'est vrai,  
je me vois Mexicaine!" So we compare  
beauty, culture, your proud past,  
I tell you about Indios and you  
glance at your maid  
pouring dark coffee into our cups,  
ask: "Tu trouve ca beau?"

A child still I heard  
about the perfection of Moussolini's  
trains, how for once,  
they ran on time,  
no thieves snatching purses  
from unlucky tourists, how  
there was order  
alongside the terror.

Here I suppose you got a raw deal:  
Your car disappeared  
with the same ease  
as the ninety-thousand Americans  
that stood in the way  
of a safe America.  
And picking your way through  
the various factions of the North,  
you can only fall back on yourselves,  
a people cursed to soothe  
our jealous world.

V. One month after arrival -- To Zeus

1.

I was five years old when we reached Crete.  
Our island paradise had no electricity.  
In the center  
of the petrol lamp  
a flame rose each night,  
fragile, hot,  
sometimes it would break the glass.

*One month after arriving  
I could almost make my way  
to the center of town.  
It's easy, really,  
to sleep at different times  
Everything is so tiring.*

*Every day, spring showers  
hone the roads, marigolds  
brush against the mud  
It is a green country  
in October.*

In April the meadows came alive.  
From your cave, from  
snow-glazed mountains  
giving birth to a sea of poppies  
you'd come to distend  
the wool that kept me warm  
Replace it with your hands  
your breath a white cloud  
hanging over the White Mountains  
south of Chania.

*A strange fall  
lures me into a sandy grove  
the heat is thick  
with papayas hanging  
like green pumpkins  
from patches in the sky.*

Cloudy-white  
waves splash my legs  
drag rives of mud beneath my feet  
enclose my body as I float  
out to sea.

Once you know the point  
at which a wave breaks,  
you dive for its center  
feel its power graze your feet.

*Two months after arriving  
fevered memories mix  
little differences the houses all  
remind me of each other  
black grids grip glass  
my aching feet cool the red tiles*  
*climb the wall I*  
*press my head against  
the white stucco crossed  
by a thousand fissures  
skein catching me as I fall*  
*silent.*

Warmed by desert winds  
the island yields its  
fruit, my lover's eyes  
gaze over the shape  
of the future judge,  
and drying, Crete  
begins to sing.

*I don't know  
where these crickets hide  
they fill each  
night with memories I  
cannot tell  
which will be more important  
cannot judge yet,  
One month later,  
when the mangoes in the garden  
ripen.*

*They get stolen,  
like the peaches  
barely yielding to our mouths  
ripped from the trees  
I found one half-eaten  
in the piles of rotting leaves,  
Green and foreign like all  
this land, this city touching,  
encircling me.*

