

SAMPLER

*I'd ask you to join me by the
Río Bravo and weep...*

SAMPLER

Jorge Humberto Chávez

*I'd ask you to join me by
the Río Bravo and weep
but you should know
neither river nor tears
remain*

translated from Spanish
by Lawrence Schimel

Shearsman Books
with Vaso Roto Ediciones

First published in the United Kingdom in 2017 by
Shearsman Books
50 Westons Hill Drive
Emersons Green
BRISTOL
BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-515-1

Translations copyright © Lawrence Schimel, 2017.

Original poems copyright

© 2013, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, Mexico City.

© 2013, Instituto Cultural de Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes, Ags., Mexico.

D.R. © 2013, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City.

The right of Jorge Humberto Chávez to be identified as the author
of this work, and of Lawrence Schimel to be identified as its translator,
has been asserted by them in accordance with the
Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume was originally published in Spanish by the
Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City, Instituto Cultural de Aguascalientes,
Aguascalientes, Ags., Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Mexico City and
Conaculta (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Mexico City.

This translation is published by arrangement with
Vaso Roto Ediciones, Monterrey & Madrid.

SAMPLER

SAMPLER

Credits in order of appearance:

Jorge H.: Journalist. Dallas, TX.

Natalia: Nutritionist. Juarez City.

Deimy: College Student in El Paso, TX.

Rosy: Student and housewife in San Luis Potosí.

SAMPLER

SAMPLER

1.

CHRONICLES

SAMPLER

SAMPLER

Satan

105 pins have stopped the flow of your naked petals five-year old
butterfly of the Bravo del Norte river

like a ship in the middle of the light advancing the afternoon toward
the flank of the western hills you would play there on the sidewalk

while your mother and the neighbor from across the street made much
to do of the inanities that fill our lives

the sun sets the cars roll across the unpaved street and the crepuscular
air bears the whisperings of the evil God like chords

to the ears of the woman who sees you playing every day in front of
her house and your mother gets up and says I'll be back

and will never see you again

the woman approaches and takes your hand and with you crosses the
dust raised by the automobiles

you reach the miserable dwelling where the voice of God insists
stick a pin in her and another

and another pin until reaching 105 of them in order to halt that voice
and the sun winds up entering beneath the hills

and the dust from the cars settles over the world

Chronicle of My Ghosts

my father had the wise idea of taking refuge in a hospital
and dying on the same day

that the people voted for the new government
and he never managed to see

how they began falling like flies
first those from the other side of the city

then those from the adjacent colonia later acquaintances
then the neighbors

and finally the sunset gave us the death of a friend
and of a brother

and the city like a hunted animal and the motorists who move
quickly quickly watching from the corners of their eyes the driver
next to them who watches in the rear view mirror the driver behind

while the police the judge and the thief come to an agreement saying
now it's your turn and then yours and the beast began to lose the
sheen of its coat and later its skin

just look at you now you've become a small animal

with its eyes in the sockets of its children

wandering blind and heartless through the cities

SAMPLER

The Man in White Shorts Makes Me Think of My Father

For Miguel Ángel Chávez Díaz de León

María de la Luz used to knit the morning sun and turn it into a big tray of *pan dulce* in the center of the table of my boyhood with my siblings

Saturday was for washing grandfather's truck a blue '55 Chevrolet
Saturday itching to flee from God on Sunday morning

the young recruits from Fort Bliss with their long sedans saying good-bye to their girls as if they were going for a stroll into the line of fire

the border like a splendid animal sprawled out on the grass cultivated with its flank shining with reflected light

I remember cleaning the windshield and seeing him peer around the far corner carrying a small box in his hands

I remember saying in a high voice Mamá someone's coming I think that man's my father and it sure was

he had been arrested the day before in Denver while having lunch at the mattress factory on Stuart Street

and he begged to retrieve the box from his locker because in it were our Christmas cards and some photos

I remember this like some Paradisiacal etching because war and deportation were something else of course

now driving down the avenue I pump the brakes because that man in
white shorts

is just sprawled there with a gunshot that has gouged out a small
bloodless hole in his left cheek

while I'm on my way to see you

SAMPLER

Another Chronicle

On October 6th of the year of his death, Armando El Choco told us
at a party that they had come looking for him

and they found him a month later one morning while he was warming
up the motor of his car before taking his daughters to school

in 1967 we went to the Río Bravo to wash the neighborhood cars first
Chato's then Bogar's and finally Huarache Veloz's

in 1990 the police went to the Río Bravo to pick up the young girls
who waited on the shore to cross over to El Paso

in the year 2010 the river now almost parched an immigration officer
and 13-year-old Sergio Adrián fought the boy with a stone in his hand
and the agent with a revolver

that same year at a corner store in the Salvácar neighborhood the clerk
refused to hand over protection money and received a bullet in the
face

and 17 of his neighbors were hunted down one by one as they
celebrated winning a game of touch football

oh young son of Cadmus I know you'd rather be elsewhere but today
you are here sang old Ovid

and you a woman they dragged from home and threatened to kill your
husband if you didn't get in for your last car ride

I'd ask you to join me by the Rio Bravo and weep but you should
know there's no longer any river there and nor are there tears

SAMPLER

Seven Postcards from the End of the World

1. The word *pickup* on a hill is like an altar with its purple backdrop of clouds wounded by the evening sun
2. Fear is the name of the avenue that stretches full of lights and without any cars one Saturday at ten p.m. on the northern border
3. That young girl on the verge of a roundabout who stops drivers and tells them take me wherever you wish for 200 pesos has no first or last name
4. Dirt yard with a pile of large round rocks in the background and a woman beneath the moon braiding the ghost girl's hair
5. Rayón street neighbors playing *lotería* by the light of the lamppost singing the names of El Diablo and La Muerte announcing the years when they'll come
6. A couple arguing about the chairs and lamps in their house while on the sidewalk out front their neighbor is dying with four shots to the chest
7. Delia admiring her naked body in the wardrobe mirror without realizing that a visiting 6-year-old boy is on the sofa
- 7.1. And he takes note of her splendorous beauty to put it before your eyes
- 7.2. 40 years later