

SAMPLER

In the Empire of Chimeras

ALSO BY MARTIN ANDERSON

POETRY

The Kneeling Room *
The Ash Circle *
Heard Lanes
Dried Flowers
Swamp Fever
The Stillness of Gardens
Black Confetti
Belonging *
Snow. Selected Poems 1981–2011 *
Interlocutors of Paradise
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SAMPLER

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The Hoplite Journals (complete in one volume) *

The Hoplite Journals I-XXIX *
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In the Empire of Chimeras

Martin Anderson

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(*this address not for correspondence*)

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These poems, a substantial number under different titles, were first published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1999, in the collection *Black Confetti*. All have been revised. Many extensively. In their revised form they articulate and bring into greater clarity and relief that original focus and vision which animated them.

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“In the circle beginning and end are the same.”

—Heraclitus

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De las Islas e Indios

In sea wind their basilicas rot.
Their porticos crumble. The courtyards
of their lichened mansions thicken.
In our dark faces they stained the pale lineage
of their blood. Up long alluvial shores
of the coast they entered, through a
humid half-light of mosquitoes and dust,
scabbards interleaved with prayer.
Over their wide piazzas vespers rang:
we practiced writing the names they gave us
in a language not ours. In the warm seas
of our archipelago we stood, looking west
ward. Upon sweating abutment
and plinth, across hot esplanades, a red dusk
moved. Slowly. The *guayabana* ripened,
year in year out. On each pensile
stem, tilted *escritura*, the angel
of fecundity stood, blowing, blowing.
Until, with *bayabas*, it was restored.

Flight

(IM N.V.M. Gonzalez)

Within this cooling swathe of light, the earth's unwrapped.
A rush of wind on a white wing.
Ascending, out of the path of something
hard and true, something immeasurably dense and rich,
into what? Beneath us, San Fernando glares
under a tropical noon, clearly laid out rooftops and walls, a grid
of streets transfixed; sharded light lifts up from them.
On one side, the sea's wrinkled integument,
brilliant strip of calcined sand; far out
umber of coral, water bruised to a deeper tint
of itself. On the other, as we tilt, following us,
narrating our journey, the high green of the Cordillera
lush in drifting cloud, pines gripping
in cold wind off each ridge, a silent geography
where water pours thousands of feet through air without a sound.
You look down, upon a road of moving palms.
A tricycle weaving through its cloud of dust.
A carinderia. A clump of banban. The land: spread out
beneath you. Caught there, in the stubborn terrain
of the senses, it had burned day after day, year after
year since you left, or did not leave; fashioning a voice
in which it might co-exist with that image of itself
you had taken with you and were impatient to reclaim.

A House on Remedios Street

Where the gutter flows with a viscid white suspension,
through the long hot shadows of the evening.
Above steps, the oily penumbra of a lamp is thrown
outwards. A brackish emanation floats among the flower
pots, the ghostly breath of a dried out mangrove
in gardens, lingers, wet upon the arms, the
impress of a dying osculation. A streak of fragrance
where the hairpins dropped, is gathered now,
on the curbside's quiet, where the cambered dark runs
into the trees, small airborne fires, *ignes fatui*,
hover. And small boys, following them, leaping
to cup that luminous particle in their hands.
Across the broken sidewalk, comes the soft rapid flutter
of a fan, followed by its shadow, and the long
inhaled breath of an ageing matrona at the top
of the steps, smoking a cigarette, lost in contemplation.