Newsboy

You are looking at the cameraeyes steady under your tweed cap, knickered legs spread wide, an adolescent Colossus astride the corner of Fifth and Flower in downtown L.A.

It is 1917; Lafayette knows we're "Over There."
The sheaf of papers under your arm tells of battles and the truncated lives of men, boys scarcely older than you.
Too young for this war you will be too old for the next.

On your right hip
a smart leather money satchel.
These are hard times
and you pay the beat cop
to protect you from street gangs.
But that won't protect you
from the cop's bullying demands
for more,
so your mother will come
and take what you've earned
before you run out of this
edition.

Your choirboy smile belies your street-smarts, that you are a third-grade dropout, a truant whose earnings add to his family's coffers. I, your omniscient daughter, know you will soon go to a small desert town you've never heard of and in a language you do not know become a merchant of boots and blue jeans.

You will marry and take your bride to live in that place which she will begin to hate. But what is that to me? I am your youngest child impatient to be born, greedy and eager to have that smile for me alone.

– Marilyn Wallner





When lightning strikes upon the rainbow

There are moments when the storm clouds return to engulf me in its maelstrom, the uncertainty and its fears like a sinister fog shroud the light that at one time guided me through opaqueness of the cave and its tunnels that from right to left bounced like a ball off the field of life, I turn my sight not knowing if I'm coming or going, feeling that my steps have already left their tracks along the path that my borrowed optimism recognizes from the instinct that for years guided me.

Remembering my beloved, my soulmate, Carolina Mancuso

—David Rodgers

Cuando el relámpago pega sobre el arcoíris

Hay momentos en que las nubes de la tempestad vuelven a envolverme en su remolino, la incertidumbre y sus miedos como niebla tenebrosa ocultan la luz que en un tiempo fue mi guía dentro lo opaco de la cueva y sus túneles que a diestra y siniestra rebotaba como pelota fuera de la cancha de la vida, giro mi mirada sin saber si voy o vengo, sintiendo que mis pasos ya han dejado sus huellas por la vereda que mi optimismo prestado reconoce por el instinto que por años me guió.

Recordando a mi amada compañera del alma, Carolina Mancuso

—David Rodgers

Elvira Elva Montemayor - PRESENTE!



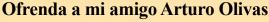
It seems That we were just on the phone Before suddenly you were gone. On our daily talks Somehow I could see your face Your smile Sense your childlike happiness I can't bear to erase your number from my phone.

I wish I had told you more often That you are the reason I am who I am today. You didn't finish high school You became the daycare our mother Could not afford You fed our younger sister and me Took our little hands As you walked us to school You brought us balloons and popcorn On Friday nights Made us smile and be hopeful For a moment erase our poverty I can't bear to erase your number from my phone.

Quien va cuidar a Elva, hija? Our mother said to me Just days before she transitioned. I assured her I would. I pray I did enough. I was with you As you tried to overcome the traumas Of a father's abandonment As you almost left us twice before As you survived COVID In a virus-ridden nursing home I can't bear to erase your number from my phone.

Somehow we never really did this In our childhood days Never really said three simple words I became determined to say to you When mom passed away. They became the words Which now ended all of our calls. The last words I said to you Were not hesitantly uttered Very comfortably I simply said I love you. I will never erase your number from my phone

-Laura Rendón, her sister



I was not expecting the news today. I knew you were fighting hard, but still... I was not expecting the news today.

So, now you join the pantheon of past friends Now friends Forever friends Gone friends Who knows?

I remember when we were young, I remember you, I remember us, I remember That is all I can do.

Rest, peacefully, amigo I will remain here, for now, unsettled.

—Dennis Medina





Midnight's Milky Way

It is dark of night that lets us see our galactic light. It takes the depths of sorrow to enrich the heights of joy. It is the cruelty of injustice that drives our hunger for liberation.

What can we call this polarity in conflict? And what can we do once we name it? A dilemma:

To grab by its horns and wrestle it into our becoming. We call it life.

Tom Keene and Muse www.tomkeenesmuse.com