

## Preface

This is the third volume of *Corresponding Voices*, a collection of poems by different poets to be understood individually and in their interactions. It follows our previous volumes, and together they constitute a continuous meaningful text, with relatively loosely defined borders, where translation and dialogue with other poets occupies a central role.

Thus, the five collections of poetry in this volume could be read in themselves and in correspondence with the other texts without losing their individual differences. "Correspondence" falls short of "identity;" it also falls short of "truth," for in poetry there is no essential truth, no basic identity.

The troublesome notion of *self*, be it referred to individuals or cultures, still haunts our (Western) consciousness; in an age of identity fever Michel Foucault bravely defined self or identity as an ongoing discourse of communication among cultures and people. Foucault has chosen systems of representations, rules of construction, words rather than facts. What this basically means is that poetry cannot evoke associations of this or that, of the world of what Yuri Lotman called "periphery," that is, of the world at the fringe, the world of others, if it isn't first and foremost an act of language.

Culture presupposes what in Lotman is described as the assemblage of collective memory. Using that same notion of periphery, culture can be viewed as oriented towards precise borders, precise limits, or, as what was the predominant experience of the Baroque- and by this I mean Shakespeare, Cervantes, Velázquez, among others – an experience which finally shifts the center of gravity from the individualized self to the multiple selves that comprise it ... “The Baroque is the negation of a way of conceiving perception (Sonnet 46: *mine eye and heart are at mortal war*). To the demand of a single center and the univocal point of view- the frontal vision of the Renaissance- the Baroque responds with the unstable structure, the deformed perspective, the frame within the frame, all of which were celebrated in the cosmogonies of the Eternal Return (there is a ring of mountains in Hindu cosmology called World-non World, where whatever is not the world, and the world, eventually meet).\*

Yet, be it Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* or Neruda’s *Residencia en la tierra*, poetry finds its true voice by an act of contagion, fecundation by otherness - infection according to Rimbaud- that forces and forges meaning in all what it touches. It is consecration of the high and the low, of what is vivid and derisive, the obscure and the luminous- all which tradition or costumes separates in poetry finds its own right, it’s own light. And this by the simple act of coexisting in the white page.

\* Pedro Cuperman, *American Baroque*, The Holly Solomon Gallery, New York December 1988.