

2020-01-01

Burning

Nicolas Cooper
University of Texas at El Paso

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utep.edu/open_etd



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cooper, Nicolas, "Burning" (2020). *Open Access Theses & Dissertations*. 3069.
https://scholarworks.utep.edu/open_etd/3069

This is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.

BURNING

NICOLAS COOPER

Master's Program in Creative Writing

APPROVED:

Tim Z. Hernandez, M.F.A., Chair

Nelson Cardenas, Ph.D.

Judith Fourzan, Ph.D.

Stephen Crites, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

BURNING

by

NICOLAS COOPER, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Department of Creative Writing

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2020

Table of Contents

Project.....	vi
Poetics & Assessment.....	vii
Framework.....	ix
Works Cited.....	xviii
i am.....	1
prodigy.....	2
holy weather.....	3
pollution shines bright in the summer rain of ciudad mexico.....	4
glimpsed.....	5
oda al sol.....	6
ouroboros (part i)	8
sediment.....	9
the passive man.....	10
nigredo	11
guero.....	12
aloe.....	13
the lovers.....	14
américa smog and the dry rio grande.....	15
duende.....	17
to have game.....	18

oasis / mirage.....	19
still waiting.....	20
oración.....	21
aguas.....	22
phantoms.....	24
july.....	25
dreams bled gold.....	26
suns.....	27
electrical storm / alluvium.....	28
the space in between.....	29
crazy dumb saint of the mind.....	30
ladder to the sun.....	31
alpha male.....	32
xeriscaping.....	33
indigo.....	34
ouroboros (part ii)	35
ocean.....	36
culture.....	37
roads.....	38
fruit.....	39
watercolors.....	41
prisons.....	42
scarab.....	43
baptism.....	44

correspondences.....	45
as above so below.....	46
a billionaire’s night.....	47
morningstar.....	48
stones.....	49
oils.....	50
crossed wires in the mind sky.....	51
rain dance.....	53
how to keep calm in a storm.....	54
amorillo.....	55
fuegos artificiales.....	56
ouroboros (part iii)	57
summer rain.....	58
espíritu.....	59
a zen flame.....	60
Curriculum Vita.....	61

Project

Burning is about occult magic, the Catholic eye, the mind jewel, and the color of my skin under the summer sun. It is about my meditations in the shade under desert trees and the visions I had there about access, love, and social class. *Burning* is the flaming desire inside of me for success and recognition, and yet at the same time homage to the Zen Buddhist precepts of non-attachment and acceptance. It is my thirsting for the lost américa's touch somewhere between endless sands and yellow-painted concrete, about my parallel aspirations for poetic duende and alpha male status. *Burning* is about polarities, about changing and being changed by the fire, and about the vagueness of identity and progression. *Burning* is a dream haze brought on by cold lofts and the odor of spray paint drying. *Burning* is the sound of a young man laughing at himself for reaching out like Jesus in the desert when all he has around him is xeriscaping. Most importantly, *Burning* is a book of poetry.

Poetry is both an object and an experience and in many cases the poet chooses the form of poetry specifically in refutation to theory or academic explanation, not because of it. This is a challenge in forming a critical preface to the work. Nevertheless, I will utilize forms as best I can to explain my process in writing this text.

In my summation, poetry is language crafted with the goal of subverting typical values of logical flow and expectation inherent in prose and theory; it represents a field of freedom and risk-taking based largely on play with semantic connections and conceptualism. This effort is intended to balance with the rigorous theoretical study I have completed in my graduate program, which is quite a challenging task to carry out. Edward Hirsch summarized this approach well in *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*: "Poetry is a form of necessary speech. . . . I have sought to restore the aura of sacred practice that accompanies true poetic creation, to honor both the rational and the irrational elements of poetry. I would restore the burden of the mystery. I would illuminate an

experience that takes us to the very heart of being.” My poetic focus rests on this mystery and on the challenge of balancing the irrational with some level of rationality.

Poetry tends to resist analysis, as much like visual art the meaning is included entirely within the object itself – in its visceral experience. In this sense, explaining poetry is like explaining an abstract painting; one gets a lot more out of its experience than they do out of its analysis. However, one must always explain their artistic choices in an academic setting, and luckily a number of artists and writers have also described their process in less than logical terms; these individuals, including Kerouac, Lorca, and Huidobro serve as the theoretical inspiration for my collection of poetry. In crafting its critical background, I will use theory that resists theory – that which focuses on the unique and inexplicable role of the poet in the absurd and abstract world around him.

Poetics & Assessment

Burning is an exercise in the juxtaposition of abstraction and specificity. Words are linked to concepts and concepts are linked to images. Much of the time this connection is influenced by cultural conditioning embedded in the greater social environment. Rules for communication and for art are based upon expectation and norms, whether this environment is US popular culture or the academic establishment of literature and poetic criticism. My desire in this project is to subvert expectations and introduce new semantic connections between words, concepts, and image. Specifically, I aim to re-contextualize the desert as a new abstract concept, creating new association between concepts like desert/sand/erosion and abstract imagery. I want to put alien concepts like borders, yucca trees, oil paint, and digital information all together side-by-side, as these elements are the true expression of my own reality. In many ways, the soul is also a desert and an ecosystem, and I believe that all poetry should be rooted in soul. As a result, the poetic wanderings into experimental abstraction present in *Burning* are fundamentally rooted in heart and traditional poetic values, while still maintaining an experimental or abstract sensibility.

Modern poetry concerns itself largely with the capabilities words and language have, independent of the expected constraints of the traditional necessities of storytelling and even at times syntax. Contemporary poets are concerned with using language to reach beyond its direct meaning and into a sublime or esoteric feel. Few critics have written about this explicitly, but it can be seen uniformly across nearly any contemporary collection of poetry; words are put together sometimes in sections that make little coherent sense. This is an attempt to reach forward into the vast field of the unexplainable, and is accepted as par on course for any contemporary poetry. As an abstract artist, I aim to take this sense of abstraction and apply it conceptually over the length of the book, using intuition as my guide for creation. Throwing a splatter of paint on a canvas is a parallel process for throwing verses on a page and many poems concern this exact creative process, whether in literal or metaphorical ways.

There is a point where intuition verges on magic. Seldom discussed in the academic world, magic is really a language of symbols meant to resonate with the subconscious mind: the intuitive mind. Magic is an ancient framework for thought and manifestation meant to override the conscious brain, and thus reach deeper into a place of more imagination and wonder. As such, magic is a fundamental driver for my poetic process. For many poets, the overlapping space between language, image, and religion mirrors the magical, archetypal landscape expounded upon in occult texts such as *The Kybalion*. As above, so below; all is mind. There are correspondences between all things and there are underlying principles between seemingly different fields of existence. Similarly, the poet creates the world around him using his own mind, and utilizes the word to create it. Magic guides the hand in mysterious and unexpected ways, and likewise it also guides my poetic process and lifestyle. In Vicente Huidobro's "Arte Poetica" he describes the poet as a "little God," and that they should witness how "all things under the Sun live:"

Viven todas las cosas bajo el Sol.
El Poeta es un pequeño Dios.

This is a core tenet of my approach: to embody Creator energy through imagination, beauty, and lived experiences. One becomes godlike creating his own world, and also learning all things around him under the sun. This metaphor of “under the sun” even becomes literal, with my focus on the effects of sunlight on my physical body throughout *Burning*. I, too, am one of the many things underneath the sun, and I am burned by its light and by its power.

These poems fluctuate between real, lived experiences and abstract mythological visions, exploring the metaphysical portals that exist in all the small moments of life. My aim is to milk the impossible beauty out of these experiences and transfigure their nature into metaphysical states. As the brain dreams at night, pieces of the lived day re-arrange themselves in the mind in order for the subconscious to make sense of all the information one receives while awake. Similarly, I use images and concepts from my lived experiences as fuel for dreamlike imaginings, and ultimately for godlike, magical creations, including the creation and implementation of my own linguistic logic. This creation of impossible or metaphysical situations becomes an exercising of divine power, showcasing the poetic imagination which Huidobro describes in his philosophy.

Framework

In terms of thematic focus, Federico Garcia Lorca’s exploration of duende also comprises a fundamental basis for the emotional background of *Burning*. In Lorca’s “Theory and Play of The *Duende*” he details to great extent the nature of duende as a driver for poetic theory and creation. In my view, duende is clearly a magical force. This is evidenced by how Lorca tends to explain duende in mysterious and oblique ways, describing its effect much more than he describes its cause. Its mystery is inherently magical, as it bypasses the conscious mind and goes straight to the unconscious place where only alchemists can access. The most direct description of duende in this text is when he refers to great flamenco singer Manuel Torre’s statement that “all that has dark sounds has duende.” He differentiates it from the Muse and from the angels of inspiration as a more accessible

and giving force, stating that true duende “shakes the voice and body of the dancer, a real, poetic escape from this world.” Lorca states that any culture can summon duende, but that it remains the home spirit of Spanish art and poetry. In the great Andaluz tradition, beyond knowledge of form and craft a great poet also must have this deep and penetrating sense of a duende; an unpredictable and chthonic intensity driving the force of their creation. Lorca goes on to state that this is something a poet either has or doesn’t have, and it is not something that can be learned. Indeed, its evanescence is fundamental to its nature; Lorca states that “there are neither maps nor disciplines to help us find the duende.” The road of a poet has no maps, which is both frustrating and liberating. There are no maps in the endless desert, either.

This question of having or not having duende underlies my work as an artist and as a poet. Do I have any magic in my words? I would certainly like to. The poems in *Burning* are not about a confident assertion and demonstration of duende, but rather about the deep uncertainty about having it or not. These poems are centered around the struggle of a young poet to develop in both an artistic and masculine sense. Whereas I would wish to summon the drive of duende, I find myself unable to grasp the level of undeniable dark power typical of a great poet. At this level in my development I have only uncertainty and wavering confidence in my abilities. Instead of hiding this, I have chosen to utilize it as a creative resource and point of contact with the reader and, perhaps even as a beacon to attract the duende here for both of us. I believe that this narrative of a young poet looking for genius to happen and not finding it anywhere can in and of itself be an engaging basis for a book.

This sense of expectation and disappointment reveals itself right from the outset of *Burning*, in the poem “prodigy”:

i am not the prodigy
and i am angry for it
i watched my formative
years walk me by

a pale sentry half-awake
and
aimless
fearing long hours of vision
inhibition
and the impoliteness
of masculine drive
so now
i am not the chosen one
gifted with genius and poetry
i am only a man
making his way through life
with a slow stubborn heart
and blessedly naive hands

This poem outlines both the thematic core and the emotional context for this project. It situates the poetic voice in a sense of frustration and uncertainty about native artistic ability, but it also ends with a determination to overcome this uncertainty in its final lines:

i will use them to
enter the house of art
even if i have to burn down
the door
to get in

In moments like this, the reader gets a sense of a darker and more powerful chthonic desire that underlies the book, especially given the face of the speaker's grandiose yearning. Here, this grandiosity stems from the powerful force of the will. According to an occultist like Crowley, magic is quite literally the power to use one's will to change the reality around them. In this case, I want to change reality in order to summon duende and become a great poet. This is where the magic comes into play; I use conscious seeds to push my subconscious into harvesting beautiful artistic fruit. However, it always feels like I'm waiting for fruit to come, and it may never actually grow where I expect it to. This motif becomes explicit in poems like "fruit."

Separate from its conceptual and theoretical context, *Burning* also inhabits an important geographical and cultural locus. The poems are largely set in my native US-Mexico borderland, with occasional lapses into other geographical locations. The Chihuahuan desert represents a microcosm

of various social and environmental phenomena directly affecting the contemporary world as well as serving as a mytho-archetypal landscape for wandering and discovery. Issues like dryness and flooding are inherent to the landscape while also being representative of a personal, metaphorical artistic struggle for cleanliness and flowing freedom. These environmental symbols are also evocative of a variety of contemporary social issues, including race, immigration and climate change. The goal of this collection is primarily one of personal and magical focus, but situating it in a social and environmental context assists in attaining a sense of richness and veracity. In today's climate, poetry needs to have at least a passing nod to social issues, and speaking about the borderland would be nearly impossible to do without bringing in the social issues so inherent to the border experience. As such, the desert is highly important as being both the stage for this magical drama as well as for being a living entity which interacts with, educates, and nourishes the poetic speaker.

The poems in *Burning* explore the complexities of identity as well as how they affect the narrative worldview of the speaker and his socio-political reality. This can be seen quite literally in the references to the burning and tanning of skin in poems like “guero” and “oda al sol.” I obsess about the way my body interacts with the desert, how it becomes eroded, strengthened, and burnt by the elements. I think about how the darker my skin gets the more my race appears to change, and as a biracial individual I become the personification of the area around me, the “rupture” or the “herida abierta” of friction that Gloria Anzaldua describes in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. I am that which is in-between. The difference, however, is that I have significant blood of the white man in me, that blood of the conqueror that Anzaldua resists. I am the enemy and I am not the enemy, this being a deep struggle in my self-expression. I slide back and forth along the scale of whiteness depending on the situation, as well as on how much the pagan sun chooses to bless me. As such, the poetry in this project also takes advantage of the magical landscape of aridity to incorporate the concept of the body as a contested space, as a literal personification of historical

conflict. My work draws from many different fountains, but ultimately, I cannot identify wholly with any one.

In terms of the actual writing, Jack Kerouac serves as a primary inspiration for *Burning*, most notably in jazz chaos – abstract sections and in the wild, alcohol-laced haze of memory detailed in numerous poems. Likewise, his fascination with the idea of Zen in this context is also present in my work. His experimental essay "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" was a great resource in building my approach. In the essay he recommends resists structure and even syntax, encouraging the poet to “be crazy dumb saint of the mind” and “struggle to sketch the flow that already exists intact in mind.” He states that you are a genius all of the time, and to follow your intuition.

His word choice and ordering of thoughts is jarring and abstract, which gives me a creative and modernistic linguistic foundation to build on for *Burning*. He lays out a long list of rules, encouraging the would-be writer to go crazy: “composing wild, undisciplined, pure, coming in from under, crazier the better.” Sections of *Burning* are outright and abstract and disorderly, and I have enjoyed placing them side-by-side with more coherent poems to create a stimulating pastiche of language, constantly moving back and forth through various states of cognition and semantic connection. This is how I have achieved a balance between the rational and the irrational.

Kerouac was revolutionary in developing much of this approach, and I am deeply indebted to him as a poet and as an artist. He represents a freedom in writing that has encouraged me to loosen my grasp on the written word and to let it fly free. In these moments of freedom I come closest to using magic to summon greatness and creation. Kerouac says to “remove literary, grammatical and syntactical inhibition,” and in doing so one can reach much more deeply into expression of truth. He goes on to recommend:

Not "selectivity" of expression but following free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought, swimming in sea of English with no discipline

other than rhythms of rhetorical exhalation and expostulated statement, like a fist coming down on a table with each complete utterance, bang!

This challenge to preconceived order helps to better harness the “jewel center of interest” of the mind, which is itself a radical, abstract, and fundamentally magical image. As both a multimedia artist and a poet, these are concepts that figure deeply into my approach and development; form is useful, but it is also liberating to remove the inhibition of rules and go straight for abstract conceptual development. Again, this freedom to think and express oneself without conscious thought is a fundamental basis for magical thinking, which is key to the soul of *Burning*.

Ultimately, burning cannot last forever. Feverish poems of desire, anger, and transcendence have to give way to something else, as the fuel which burns inside of a young man cannot run indefinitely. I gave quite a bit of thought to what development might look like in this book of poetry, and in doing so I had to consider what development meant in my own psyche. In many religious and occult traditions, burning represents purification. Many young men burn to prove something, and that is the mentality that the poetic voice embodies throughout the book. Near the end of *Burning*, however, a shift has to happen for the speaker. The proving and the fever give way to another state of mind.

In alchemy, fire burns away impurities. As a whole, alchemy is a process whereby the alchemist transforms his personal character by transforming substances outside of himself. The burning in these poems is not solely that of a self-indulgent masculine vanity; instead, it serves to clean out the mind of the poetic speaker. This book then becomes about letting go. This can be seen in one of the final poems, “a zen flame”:

i feel zen sometimes
when the mind is quiet
when the violence inside
stops
when the chaos of my thinking
my judging of the moment

of where i am
of where i'm not
dissolves
into water
then i laugh
at all the burning
and my mind closes its eyes
my finger pointing
upward

The mentality has changed remarkably by this point from that burning desire and anger contained in early poems like “prodigy” and “guero” into a more relaxed acceptance of who I am as a man and as a poet. Being the poetic voice, I no longer have to prove anything: I just have to be. I “dissolve” into the moment and into who I am without any type of conceptual judgement. The magical and religious motifs continue, but the tone of the book has changed considerably by this point, indicating a catharsis of release and peace influenced by the wisdom of Zen and other esoteric teachings.

Going hand-in-hand with these magical motifs is the inclusion of mythological figures. A primary figure in *Burning* is the mindsnake Ouroboros; that creature as big as the world who forever eats his own tail. He becomes a metaphor for my mind. My own plague is overthinking, and part of the poetic development in this project learning to leave the “prison” of conceptual thought and taming the snake in my own head. This itself is Zen. (Ironically, this analytical mind is also the driving force that allows me to write a critical preface like this one, but I digress.)

The figure of Ouroboros shows up early in the book and he returns a few times. Instead of wrestling him I learn how to calm him down and treat him like a loyal pet, as he surrounds my life no matter what I do:

ouroboros the mindsnake
frames my life
like king solomon's seal
the serpent seals all things
and i will no longer cut him
for his knowledge

today i stroke his brass scales
and gaze calmly into his
wild bloodshot pupils
allowing him to rest here
alongside me

The mind exists no matter what; it is a great servant but a terrible master. The young poet does not have to eat his own mind, judging the shortcomings of himself or the situations surrounding him; he needs only accept the state of things in order to live clearly and without the deafening gnaw of Ouroboros on his own tail. Point the mind towards a problem, and then let it rest before it creates an imaginary one.

Returning to form, the choice of all lowercase letters comes from my sensibilities as a designer. This manuscript has transformed radically throughout its development, and the original drafts resembled an art magazine more than any book of poetry. I have since reframed the material considerably. *Burning* has eschewed its original focus of wild and colorful art image, but the consistency and beauty of lowercase letters still provides some element of stylistic design to this project. Indeed, the brevity of many poems combined with the usage of lowercase letters is a definite stylistic nod to a popular wave of minimalism in contemporary mainstream poetry that can be clearly identified by any visually-minded individual.

Millennial poets like Rupi Kaur have set a precedent for this type of poetic form, and in an attempt to capture the emotional minimalist zeitgeist of the modern era and I, too, have crafted many poems to match this particular aesthetic. Ever since the release of the seminal *Milk and Honey*, a trend towards micro-poems has established itself as the dominant style of contemporary commercial poetry. I believe that the simplicity of the form allows me to write about esoteric and religious themes in a much more accessible light. To wax philosophically about my lofty and surreal ideas in epic form would be far too confusing and grandiose, even for me. I learned this firsthand from workshopping early, more literary versions of a number of these poems. They were nigh

incomprehensible, and as such I learned to fuse complex metaphysical imagery with economic simplicity.

Fusion in all of its forms attracts me, and as such fusing the (often maligned) simplicity of 21st century commercial poetry with the chaos of Kerouac and the mythological world-building of Blake creates a symbolic landscape that can be accessed even by casual poetry fans. All throughout William Blake's work, he fused religious and mythological figures together with his own personally created myths. In some sense, this is also part of my approach to *Burning*. Nearly every poem has some kind of mythological reference in it, but throughout the poems I combine multiple frameworks and traditions together. *Burning* draws from Hispanic Catholicism, Zen Buddhism, Norse mythology, Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, and magic, all while combining various characters together in my own myths. In this sense the collection is decidedly Blake-influenced. Most importantly, I obsess over the metaphor of Ouroboros, an archetypal figure present in several different religious traditions. I present him in a new light, as the mindsnake and world-eater, which is not a typical depiction of that character.

In bringing all of these different traditions together, my world-building can easily become quite complex and difficult to understand. As experimental as I hope to be, I never want to the poetry to become opaque to the point of confusion. As a result, in numerous sections I have tried my best to simplify the poems into their basic essence. For example, "ouroboros – part ii" is only three lines long. I broke up more complex, longer poems with easier micro-poems in order to re-engage the average reader with simplicity after strange and surreal sections. The brain really needs a break from craziness. This is largely my intention; to create a collection that appeals to the literati as much as it might appeal to the average reader, but to include a mysticism and surrealism that would normally be reserved for more high-brow fare.

This is not to deny the thematic or functional complexity of *Burning*, however. I do realize that the chaos of duende, artistic struggle, and Ouroboros is downright crazy and esoteric to even the most open-minded of readers. These poems are totally crazy, and I actually want to highlight the madness as the main point of attraction for them. My world-building is not completely consistent or logical, and neither is my mind, the microcosm of this journey. The rich absurdity of the world inside and out of my mind is actually quite beautiful, when approached from the correct point of view. Instead of fighting it, through this grueling writing process I have learned to embrace it as a potential for personal genius. This can be seen in the mind-bending piece “crossed wires in the mind sky.” The poem ends with the following lines:

whatever thoughts
that choose to cross the borders of meaning
are blessed and beautiful
in their wanderings
despite how senseless they might sound
to someone else
and no matter how close they might reach
to madness
or senselessness
or art

This is my vulnerability: an overwhelming fear of being crazy, a fear of my own mind. The way I learn to overcome this, through the course of the book, is to simply accept my madness as a beautiful and necessary thing. Once I do this, the thoughts are no longer crazy. I stop judging them.

Intertwined amongst the artistic struggle and the meditations on identity are poems about that which brings man most immediately to the present: love. As much as I thirst for art, I also thirst for love, quite literally in poems like “aguas.” Maybe at points where water touches my lips, I finally reach duende, if only for a moment. Indeed, the motif of water in the desert is deeply connected to the consummation or the desire for love. The craving for the female essence provides brief reprieve from my burning, much as a pool of water in the desert would offer release to the man traveling through endless sand dunes.

In terms of form, another very important influence is Pablo Neruda, most specifically in his *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*. Commonly published bilingually in the United States, this hugely influential text has been of great inspiration to my poetic process. Neruda's unabashed Romanticism coupled with his magical/surreal South American background is a direct source of inspiration for *Burning*, particularly in the water-themed poems. In the desert, the coming of rain signifies life, abundance, and fertility, but also flooding, disorientation, and danger. Likewise, these poems focus on my own sexual development and encounters with women, often taking the water-bearer archetype. Neruda's intensity and approach to poetry is evident particularly within my Spanish-language poems, which appear occasionally throughout this collection.

When I reflect on relationships or loss, I begin to reach outside of myself, whether generally in poems like "glimpsed" or more specifically in poems like "pollution shines bright over ciudad mexico." The vast majority of *Burning* is about myself and what it's like to be in my own mind, but in these sections I begin to feel outside of myself and into others. This itself is another way to cool the burning, as the burning is ultimately the overheating of my thoughts and my brain. This is perhaps the direction I will take with my next text, once I have learned to better control my own mind and thereby live outside of it.

As the book nears its conclusion, I focus less on the intensity of desire, love, or hate, and instead I come to terms with sparkling but short-lived illusions, the nature of my art, and the cyclical nature of life itself. Here, the philosophy turns from occult Christianity into a Zen state of mind, which offers a turn from the first parts of the book. By putting all these mindsets in *Burning*, I hope to not prioritize one level of experience over the others, but instead to show the important nature of each part of the journey. Burning in the sun, bathing in water, and looking up to the sky are all equally important acts. A man must develop and he must take a multi-disciplinary approach to life in

philosophical, religious, and artistic terms. These poems reject an old sense of fear I once had about multiple identities, and they represent the necessity of that multiplicity in the coming era.

Burning contains interludes about love, relationships, and longing in order to break up the religious yearnings and mind chaos. As such, the theme of poems varies in a cycle between all these concepts, all while maintaining similar imagery and the environment/stage of the desert. As a poet, I try to examine the physical landscape around me and understand it in as many parts of my own life as I can. There are many lessons to be learned from one's environment, and *Burning* is my attempt to glean them beautifully, with my shining mind-jewel guiding the process. I hope that you enjoy it.

Works Cited

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 2012.
- Atkinson, William Walker (Three Initiates). *The Kybalion*. Penguin, 2011.
- Blake, William. *The Complete Illuminated Books*. Thames & Hudson, 2001.
- Hirsch, Edward. *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*. Mariner Books, 1999.
- Huidobro, Vicente. *Poesía y Poética, 1911-1948*. Alianza Editorial, 2007.
- Kaur, Rupi. *Milk and Honey*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2015.
- Kerouac, Jack. *You're a Genius All the Time: Belief and Technique for Modern Prose*. Chronicle Books, 2009.
- Lorca, Federico Garcia. *In Search of Duende*. New Directions, 2010.
- Neruda, Pablo. *Veinte Poemas de Amor y Una Canción Desesperada*. Plaza y Janes, 2002.

i am

i thirst

i thirst

i thirst

i thirst

i thirst

therefore i am

prodigy

i am not the prodigy
and i am angry for it
i never had picasso's
heavy father
nor his myopic eye
for art rupture
bulls and whores
i watched my formative
years walk me by
a pale sentry half-awake
and
aimless
fearing long hours of vision
inhibition
and the impoliteness
of masculine drive
so now
i am not the chosen one
gifted with genius and poetry
i am only a man
making his way through life
with a slow stubborn heart
and blessedly naive hands

i will use them to
enter the house of art
even if i have to burn down
the door
to get in

holy weather

it keeps getting hotter
each and every year
i leave the window open at
night so i can breathe
in creosote and petrichor
but the summers continue
to blacken and i always
wake up dryer than
when i fell asleep the
chihuahuan monsoon
doesn't come anymore

last night i awoke
to the smell of ash
in my eyes burning
it smelled holy
like church and
i was afraid my building
was on fire so i
ran out to the rooftop
and saw skyscraper
lights reflected off a cloud of
smoke billowing over the border
wall and knew something
was burning on the other side

whatever it was
i breathed it in
all night long

**pollution shines bright in the summer rain
over ciudad mexico**

it was raining over polanco
moistening the smog clouds
to shine bright and vivifying
on the horizon line we were
standing on — the high-rise
a music producer was renting out
to my lover; we smoked cigarettes
and laughed into the deafening night
air, the trains passing below us blaring
through the yawning sin of carso, with the
august wind and up into the un-breaking
watery haze that filled canals once;
the crook in her lips
pointed to a lightning burst
coming out like a finger
in the black far-off clouds
at first i was afraid
that she had fallen out of love with
me for someone with an access
that i didn't
have
but after
tepid burning expensive
free mezcal slipped down
my throat a while i felt
all right and staring out
over this distorted cloud
of a world before me i knew
that i was a man tonight and that
no matter what happened afterwards
surely, surely
surely i would never die

glimpsed

love is a scratch on the seat of the subway car
a flash of intimacy on the rude surface of the exterior
a searing glance before the groping of foreign hands
strangers all grasping for a place in the world
trying to claim a hold anywhere and each tracking
mud they brought with them into a newly shared vessel

in the sea of strangers
in all the transit
and in all of the noise
a glimpse between lovers
reaching inside each other
touching fingers on the standing pole

oda al sol

sol,
me tomas
me quemas
y me enseñas ser hombre
te encuentro cuando escondo
de la luz pesada de la luna
y la espada larga de la noche
cuando voy corriendo
sobre las piedras
y los hierbajos
floreciendo
en el calor

veas como mi nariz
angular
está dorado
por tu toca
y como el mapa de mis venas
bomba sangre
hasta mis hombros
flexionando y sometiendo
en homenaje
a ti

siento la luz de tu mirada
en mi cuerpo y en mi pelo
se acercan en tono
como amantes lejanas
que quieren unirse

siempre me obligas
merecerlo
pagando las
quemaduras
para broncearme
mientras
los lagartijos
navegan las arenas
entre mis pies
como los barcos
entrando a rodas

sol,
quiero que la gente
me vean así
como una escultura de cobre
como si yo perteneciera
al desierto y a la frontera
y a tu pueblo elegido

quemaste mi padre
con el cáncer
porque pasaba demasiados días
nadando en tus rayas sin miedo
y sin melanina
pero yo tengo la sangre mestiza
y mi piel tiene bastante
sustancia
para recibirte

lámpara del día,
luz cruel y vivificante,
entre el ardor
y la garganta seca
te agradezco
en rodillas
porque
me has bendecido
con la piel bronceada
un regalo inestimable
en la ciudad del sol

ouroboros (part i)

ouroboros
the mindsnake
and world eater
swallows himself
gnaws his tail
so loudly
that i cannot think
i cannot be
i cannot do
i cannot become
my mind eats itself
endlessly

man was thrown from eden
not by god
but by the snake
the curse of slithering
in his mind forever more
is knowledge
this is the leaving of paradise

sediment

paint cracks like mud dried
by sun on the tessellating
desert floor i bought the
cheap can of pigment so
i could cover more canvas
and it's been cold in the loft
so the bubbles dry out way
too quick with an extreme
texture i can't get away from
the moisture gets sucked out
like a bloody nose by the air
when you crane your head
back to stare into the clouds
and start choking on it

the ground stains crimson
and after the harsh wind blows
erosion leaves a little purple
blot where your life force
fell out of you

the passive man

the passive man
receives nothing in life
except for that
which the wind brings his way

these same winds blow him over
for he has not learned
how to stand in them

nigredo

over christ on the cross
the romans nailed
i n r i

to the romans it meant
iesus nazarenus rex iudaeorum
'jesus the nazarene, king of jews'

to the hebrews it meant
iammim nour rouahh iabescheh
"fire, land, water and air"

to the rosicrucians it meant
igne natura renovatur integra
"by the fire nature renews"

burned and blackened
by the touch of fire
the flame removing all impurities
this is nigredo
the first stage of alchemy
the dark night of the soul
a cleansing to find
the philosopher's stone

i wonder how much
i had hanging off me
that was only dying
shedding my weight
i look in the mirror
and try to remember
which pieces are gone
and which used to be
me

where did they go

guero

my father's fathers
look like they killed indians and my
mother's fathers looked like the indians
they must have killed and now i look
neither white nor indigenous.
just vague.
i spent many barechested days
inviting blessings from the sun
hoping it would burn different blood
into me
but
the more my skin browned the
more it highlighted the
sharpness of my aryan nose.
I always hated
looking like the enemy
and the only one that ever
understood was a roughneck
turned businessman from dallas
who asked me if I was spaniard.
i told him
who i was: what i came from.
shaking his head he looked down
into his glass and apologized
it must be hard not having anyone
to belong to
because i sure as shit
wasn't from his world
either

aloe

where am i in this desert
between the hours of waiting
or in the sand beneath my feet
a memory held in the skin that
passed through dunes over yucca flowers
and pointed aloe stinging me in the moonlight
before i stroked its ribs and extracted
its nectar to massage all over my arms
feeling the soothing waves that took me home
again
take me home
again
and soothe the cracking skin
covering me

the lovers

adam looks over at eve
expectant with his will
granting her his virile seed
eve accepts it lovingly
and fruit ripens on the tree behind her
eve does not return adam's gaze
instead she stares up at the father
hovering in the sky above them
he is looking down on both

i send seeds deep down into my other place
so that they may bear rich ripened fruit
on my trees of eden and
under god's knowing gaze
i stare at her
until she makes it manifest
and hope it's the seeds i planted
and not someone else's
that slipped into my subconscious
when I wasn't looking
gestating everything that i believe
and create

américa smog and the dry rio grande

the sky is stained a sick yellow
by the smog and the hazes
over américa
they've torn down the smokestack
but the sands blow over air
pulled through her erosion

the salt runs down my lips and
i can taste it from the sweating
the heat never stops and the sand
burns my eyes. mooses never got out
of this desert and never parted this
red sea. this river. or this bridge over
evaporated waters. once this was
green; driving downhill I saw it from the
sloping mountaintop ghetto and far away through
purple atmosphere i saw the shape of the valley
pushed open by the mighty rio grande and i could
feel how the thirsty conquerors must have rejoiced
at this beautiful pass north through the mountains.
i thirst looking at it too because it is no longer
green the way it was in 1925 paintings; this was all
marshland a hundred years ago and animals crawled
over trees and foliage
everywhere

once the women bathed here
alongside the swimming animals
but eventually
they dammed the river
built an iron wall alongside it
and paved over the valley with
cement and yellow painted floodlight
watchposts warning that to cross the line
into fertile ground to plant a thing
living or vibrant now guarantees a bullet
to the head and the floating of your
body on the last trickle that still
flows over the concrete riverbed
and doing so will leave you dry and ever-
thirsting over what was once the mighty rio grande

américa slips over the rocks
and the impoverished blankets
the poor sleep on
are so colorful
to her

duende

my heart is scorched inside me
like the burning in my throat
and i look from where i'm standing
but i know it's all i wrote
and i try to start the singing
but for the burning in my throat

and all i want is duende
but all i hear is noise
and all i want is duende
but all i hear is noise

to have game

there is always
a game underway
and only the losers
deny that it exists
because they're busy losing it
you have to love the game
because you are playing it
no matter what you do
if you resent it
reject it
and stand on a higher ground
you are still playing it
and have just lost

my hope is to win the game
with a little piece of soul left in my pocket
so maybe i'll be able to feel god's breath running
over its tiny folds when it's all said and done

oasis / mirage

walking towards
the waters
is sometimes
just an illusion
made by the desert
a mirage reflecting
the blue sky in
pools of nothing
in the wake of seeing all
things become clearer
and one learns
that there is no oasis
in this desert

one has to follow
the trails made
through channels
and through valleys
because here a body
of water is never out
in the open
it would evaporate
immediately if
one could see it
too easily

still waiting

will you ever come to me?
will you ever make me great?
will you every take hold of my throat
scorch it from your spirit
push my head back and
make me sing lorca's beautiful song
do i have to sit in darkness counting the days
until you visit my shoulder like a lost angel
and tear me apart
so i can put myself
back together again
more beautifully
will you come
would i want you even if i did

oración

si tu cuerpo es un templo
déjame
orar
a los pasos

aguas

quisiera beber de tus aguas
para que me pudieras llenar
todo el vacío que tengo
y todo el vacío que soy
para que repostes a mis aljibes
con tus aguas fragantes
y para calmar a mi alma
con tu fluidez instante

quisiera beber de tus aguas
para que pudieras vencer a mi sequía
con cada gota y cada corriente
cada momento en tu bosque caliente
despertando a mi ribera seca
con toda tu humedad
porque muchos
quieren el cáliz
pero niegan a las aguas
que dicen
tomad

quiero beber de tus ríos sangrientos
tu voz en los vientos
tu temblor en mi pensamiento
aún tengo mis manos rojas
teñidas por una tormenta violenta
mojadas por la boca de tu rosa
y coloradas por los umbrales de tu ser

con tus amores arrepentidos
el ritmo áspero en tus respiros
las preguntas tienes
en todos tus alaridos
sigue el flujo

la lumbre de tu padre
que dijiste que tengo yo
solo puedo saciar
en el río mismo
que él mismo creyó

porque más que nada,
quiero beber de tus aguas
porque yo me voy a quemar

porque siempre se muere
un hombre que no puede

amar

phantoms

the phantoms
of the river
valley float
up over the
the mountain
side climbing
its sheer face
to rise through
the door to the
sky: into heaven
but they fall
short and back
down to earth
held down by
the violent
echoes of their
lives. the doors
of perception
open only when
resonated

july

today was july
the eighth
the sun seared a hole
in the sky so hot that
the colors all changed
i threw my body into the valley
tired limbs chasing a restless soul
my back was burning and my
throat was dry
i pushed out a jagged prayer thanking
god for the dirt still in my throat
and the air still in my lungs
i made the sign of the cross with each hand
once with the right because that is the
hand christ used to climb into heaven
and once with the left because that
is the hand for sinners

dreams bled gold

dripping dripping

falling from the sky
the dreams of people
embarrassed of dreaming
of having their heads
so far in the clouds so they
ripped them out violently
and their dreams bled gold
ambrosia
from the rupture

golden lifeblood
rains down all around me
from on high
blesses my forehead

suns

yesterday a man told me about darkness
about inevitable entropy
the only real thing he said
i tell you, suns exist!
i've seen them!
the spots on my skin
attest to it

electrical storm / alluvium

streams lead only to where gravity
strives to take them
coursing through sand, stone,
and the heavy dust of erosion

if i lay in the middle of a dry arroyo
as an electrical storm started
then the walls cut into the earth would
push the flood all around me but
i would not float peacefully over the waters
instead i would drag
beneath the currents eyes
only glimpsing violet flashes
that bleed through the rushing
darkness in the same hues of purple
that glare through the sky in the last
whispers of the summer sunset turning
night black time now the same hues turn
brilliant and blinding by the lightning that
cracked out the deluge that would throw
me against the rocks and the trees rooted
strong enough in the soil to withstand the
violence of inundation.

the soil that was dry and firm yesterday
the soil that will be dry and firm tomorrow
the soil that remains firm even after the
electrical storm has made it bright
even after i've flowed over it
and dissolved into water
becoming alluvium

the space in between

a tenuous connection
is all we have these days
i want to crawl across it
but in doing so
i would break it entirely
so i'll stay here
and let it grow somehow

crazy dumbsaint of the mind

be a crazy dumbsaint of the mind
kerouac said, go wild &
run your thoughts like water across
the mindjewel deep inside your head
stroke it lovingly with the best craziest words
and let freedom fly across the mindsky
he said i'd rather be poor than fat and
they can't every bring you down cause god
is pooh bear don't you know?
i see his catholic eyes in the clouds zen
looking down on me all wild-like
some kind of crazy white godhead
i wouldn't have to be ashamed of walking under
i want to be a mystic like he was once
making love to this sensitive world
the way he did before he drained out his soul
into
a sack of wine, vomited up all his beauty
running wretched stupid mirror
ugly & became a red-faced hungry ghost
dead on his fat back before fifty
i want to be a mystic like he was once
mind like wine and shining gems
but i want to be one with my soul
and my liver
still intact

ladder to the sun

hide the ladder
that you climbed up
to reach the top
the one you used
to climb the sun
then everyone will think
you are a genius sent by god
to make wondrous things happen
it was never just luck
or brute effort
or the wind at your back –
just so
it was destiny
and the magic
that we all crave

alpha male

christ!
please make me an alpha male of me

kyrie eleison
kyrie eleison
kyrie eleison
christe eleison

they don't love me for my beautiful dreams

kyrie eleison
kyrie eleison
christe eleison

sangre bendecida de cristo
bendíceme con las muchachas
be with me always
and cover my eyes with color

because they only love when i walk through life
without caring what anyone thinks of me
so christ son of god
make me walk taller
and without thought
while i dream up beautiful things for you

i'll put my teeth toward the sun

xeriscaping

i reached out for bendicion
my knees on the stones
i brought a blanket
and hoped maria
would paint herself on it
but the city lights
encroaching the mountain
were far too close
for an apparition
so i laughed at the blank fabric
i brought to the xeriscaping

indigo

today's pigment is indigo
but it smells like the black one
and the dark gray one
and the navy blue one too
it smells sweet like the dirt after the rain
but sharp and toxic like the desert bugs
i used to step on – their exoskeletons
crushed beneath my feet and excreted
death scent into the air. the black beetles'
cousins must have been the scarabs, the holiest
of all life to the egyptians; the blessed insects
who crawled out of the sands and the shit
and into the chest cavities of kings and laymen alike.
they emerged as beacons of the underworld to man –
a reminder that justice would weigh your heart against
a feather in the end and that magic could make life appear
out the chest of death – vida springing from a void.
for this they were revered despite how they dragged
their stomachs along the bottom of the earth and below
the feet of royalty; their scarab-cousins grow everywhere in
the mexican desert and the farther south you go the more
they darken into rich infinite blueness. they breed them and crush
up millions in factories to make the paint i got streaming down this brush
right now just like when frenchmen would go down to cairo in the eighteenth
century sack a few tombs and pulverize ceremonial corpses into a one-of-a-kind
earthy hue; they put it into tubes in europe and called it "mummy brown"
eventually the locals started digging up any old body and calling it a mummy
and now on the side of my canvas i can smell a thousand scarabs' holy bodies
pureed too

like a real artist

i just want to feel clean

but all these scents

still stain me

ouroboros (part ii)

ouroboros
is gnawing his tail again
my head is eating my head

ocean

she is an ocean
the curls of her hair
come down to my mouth
and drown me
before she pulls
back again so
i can breathe

i have to fight to keep
my head above water

she is an ocean
and my mind is a hurricane
i have to stay in the
eye and move it towards land
or it will only

keep growing
and growing
and growing
and growing
and growing

culture

i consume information
like mores thirsting in the desert
i wear culture
like a cloak about me

the wind screeches like fire
around the curve of the mountainside
so i need the heaviest of cloaks
to block the screeching

roads

two roads diverged
in a mesquite wood
i left the path
and ran through the
trees
as fast as i
could
until i no longer
remembered
my name
or the path i
started
walking
on
to begin
with

fruit

once an aquifer flowed beneath me
my tree grew tall
and strong
rooted deep
in the underground
stream

i would sit
beneath my tree
and drink
the cool water
that i pulled
out of the well
rooting myself
alongside it

the tree gave me shade
in the desert
and grew so big
that one day
it sucked
the last drops
out of the well
leaving the ground
cracked
and arid

its leaves fell off
and the tree turned
hard as a stone
forcing me
to find another source
of moisture

i wandered the dryness
and saw deer
and beetles
and hares
but could find nowhere
to drink
i followed them
to the cactus spines
where they ate fruit
off of the bushes

i took a piece
still covered in spines
and tore it open
feeling its red wet flesh
open in my hands

there was no water around
and the bush pushed out this fruit
still pointy like its strange circles

and i realized
that the cactus tree
like all the animals around me
needed very little water to survive

and with the fruit dripping in my hands
i rejoiced
at finding freedom
from the dryness
and from the watertable
all around me
and all at once

watercolors

green and blue
softly bleeding
into one another
with depth
a turquoise sky
touching a red pillar
perfect in the corner and
creating balance
with a crest

abstract
yet vocal
a better composition
than any i've painted this year

the strokes came
from a smaller hand
fibers dripping from the cup
and spilling onto the tile floor

i painted it while squatting
the way a child does
when he's four years old

prisons

conceptual thinking
is a prison
duende
is a prison
non-thought
is bliss
i lie down
and write
the best lines
summon the best magic
when i let all the objects
of the world
go

i am a beggar
sitting on a box of gold
i am the formless
that comes into form
i am the space between
i am
not

scarab

for all their dragging
beetles and roaches
jump into the pistil of the flora
covered in yellow wet seed
and pollenate everything around them

without the wretched insects
that survive on waste and carrion
and drag themselves along the ground
like snakes of the earth
not one red rose
would bloom in the desert

i need to learn to drag my own belly
on the dirty ground
and pollenate

baptism

give me your hands
and run them across
my face

like the streams of rivers
stretching across my
closed eyes

a blessing
from open hands
turned runnels
long liquid
that heals me
in bright light
and waters

correspondences

the veins of your gentle hands
are like tributaries flowing
out the ancient river
they started from

you want to hide them
from everyone
for fear of their coarseness
over your skin
but what joy there is
in watching them flow
and feeling your heartbeat
through them

as above so below

as above so below
the way up high
is here down low

as above so below
hear the word
and then you'll know

as above so below
being high
is being low

as above so below
you know it's something
that i already know

and the trees are blooming all across
your fingers
and the sun is burning red
behind your eyes
and the time it takes
to know where this is going
is held inside the hand of where
you've been

your love
and your hate
are the same thing
in a mirror

your love
and your hate
are the same thing
when you're clearer

a billionaire's night

an explosion of mind's eye lights
over the city skies
charles was a billionaire
with unlimited access
women and consumption
his leg strapped steel
with a brace to stop the
twisting he got from falling down
mountainside skis - he tightened it
every five minutes to set his leg between
puffs of nitrous oxide - it was "contra-additive"
he assured us all including the model he flew out
from the ukraine and I made damn sure not to
look at her for too long; the table bill came out to
two grand and he paid it easily between
trips to the bathroom and when we stood
at the top of his hotel room gazing across
starry borderland lights i slammed the aged brandy
in my hand, made a cheery goodbye to my friends
for the night and thought about the thirty five dollars
i would make from my dayjob a few hours later
and from the paintings i sold to break even
in order to buy more canvas

morningstar

i wonder if you can tell
just by feeling
if you are on the ground
or on a higher floor

i can tell
when i'm dreaming
high up in the air

because i wake up
falling
from heaven

stones

there are vast cities that once were
deep in the memory of time and dust
and they are lost to us forever
when they tore down sumeria
the conquerors took the old stones
to build the new city of babylon
half of the histories were razed
and rearranged to create new cities
the soul of the old people was extinguished
but pieces of their body were refashioned
into the new empires of the world
in my dreams i see how many stones fell from babel
how much silver was raped from cuzco
and how the pieces formed the culture
around me

oils

when i first painted with oils
i treated them as acrylic
not knowing they stayed wet
and malleable for days
sometimes weeks
i didn't know their bond
was so strong that it
takes turpentine to break
i left a mark and put my
brush beneath water
but instead of washing away
the white pigment clouded
off and stained everything
my hands
my arms
my face
all smothered by the paint
and all throughout the house
everything i touched
became stained too
my brush was caked stiff
and my hands retained
a subtle hue of titanium
for days

you were the same
i touched you
and tried to treat you
like all the others
you stained me
and when i tried to
wash you out
you wouldn't leave
and everywhere i went
i left handprints
the color of you
everyone knowing
where i had been

crossed wires in the mind sky

once my mind was a great ocean and my thoughts were swimmers that knew
no end and no beginning and crossed from dayrise until nightfall in arcs that
could not be measured.

now they wait timidly at the edge of somewhere they're not allowed to be

I thought about how the mind is an open canvas
and when clouds leave streaks across its face
what was an open and boundless field
becomes segmented
into strange amorphous provinces.
and how thoughts no longer run fluidly
like oil slipping across water
but instead stop at imagined thresholds.
pieces of the sky
become disconnected from one another
until separation becomes
normal

a thought from one end of the sky ocean
hesitates to mingle with another
for fear of mixing currents
for fear of not belonging
and for fear of crossing wires
and not making sense
so they never touch one another and
the thought dissipates
before it

to right the wrongs, with my open hand I have to
cross the face of the waters and demonstrate that clouds
are only water vapor and that the ocean like a great canvas
knows no distinctions from one side to another

for all sides
are really just one side
of
its great and endless body
and the hand can never be lost
for having been placed over the lips
or for reaching up
and stretching
deep into the sky
until the arms drain
and tingle with numbness
dissipating into vast spheres

above me
and that whatever thoughts
that choose to cross the borders of meaning
are blessed and beautiful
in their wanderings
despite how senseless they might sound
to someone else
and no matter how close they might reach
to madness
or senselessness
or art

rain dance

the well was empty. where were the blue mornings
i had been waiting for for so long? perhaps i had
missed them when i was asleep, as the beautiful
blue crisp dew in the morning air only lasts until eight
in the morning, before the sun cuts it all away.
maybe i had been following the wrong trails that only
led down winding roads to asphalt and concrete, where
water could never accumulate blocked by the crude
barriers to the earth. maybe i had hid from the water
i craved so much, because in spring the only rains that
come come thrown around by awful winds that pull the
plants out of the ground and shake windows that make my
head numb with the ache of uncertainty. maybe i didn't climb
up onto the fragile roof and look hard enough into the night sky
to beckon the rains to come down from heaven and maybe even
when they did i had no bowl to catch them, or i didn't drink when
i should have or maybe i tried to draw moisture from stones or maybe
the springs that bear water to a man yield water only to his strengths and
i arrived with no courage at all or maybe by my own faults i stayed blind
and closed my eyes when waters were right in front of me or maybe they
were not sweet enough or clean enough for me to want to drink from or
maybe i spent too much time walking towards watery mirages just so i could
end up in another dry valley because in some way i wanted the illusion of an oasis
more than i wanted the reality of the creeks that leak wet trails into the mud where
i have to drink alongside the lizards perhaps i'm only hibernating in a cave even though
the time of winter never even came at all yes maybe i've spent all of this time lying still
when the sky has wanted me to dance in veneration to loosen the pressure that holds
all things in stasis and only through movement one can breathe strength through his belly
against the body of the sky to heal her, now torn open by the heat and the pollution and the
heart-break yes the sky needs me to move for her to loosen and to take out the knots of her
giant back with my centered joy my centered joy my centered joy my centered joy my centered joy

how to keep calm in a storm

1. close your eyes
2. let the river flow
3. breathe in rain clouds
4. and the wet petrichor
then
5. dissolve completely
and
6. become water yourself

amorillo

I remember heartache
and aerosol
your perfume
mixed with the spray paint
the fall air
and the dizziness
of nostalgia

fuegos artificiales

vi dos luces
reluciendo
en el cielo
el pasado y el presente,
brillantes en la oscuridad,
señales de amores y
recuerdos
quemándose
como fuegos artificiales

sentí mi corazón quebrar
en ver las ráfagas
de mis ilusiones
dejar rastros
azules a través de las
esferas celestiales

pero cómo
me regocijé
al ver la noche
florecer de luz

ouroboros (part iii)

ouroboros the mindsnake
frames my life
like king solomon's seal
the serpent seals all things
and i will no longer cut him
for his knowledge
today i stroke his brass scales
and gaze calmly into his
wild bloodshot pupils
allowing him to rest here
alongside me

summer rain

lightfast in the rain
i am
where the sun still
emerges
reaching through
overcast skies
even in a downpour

i sun-bathe in
the rays and
the swells that
washed out
colors so bright
they make my
eyes hurt
seeking shade
amongst the sheets
of rain
about me
cloudburst on a summer's day
where the penetrating gaze of the
peerless sun
refuses to look away
from his creation
his stare
burns my skin
whilst the rain cools it

espíritu

en tus brazos dulces sueño
en el espíritu que me diste
cuando me quemaba yo
aun debajo de las lluvias

a zen flame

i feel zen sometimes
when the mind is quiet
when the violence inside
stops
when the chaos of my thinking
my judging of the moment
of where i am
of where i'm not
dissolves
into water
then i laugh
at all the burning
the useless, purifying burning
and the seed of my charred mind
closes its eyes
and points a new finger
upward

Curriculum Vita

Nicolas Cooper is a multimedia artist and poet from the El Paso borderland. His work bridges the relationship between abstraction and meaning, exploring the space of projection, imagination, and thought. His work explores the visceral reality of the borderland seen through abstraction and surrealism of the Catholic eye and the color of his skin under the summer sun. He draws inspiration from contemporary art and the mysticism of the desert.

He received his Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and Spanish from The University of New Mexico and studied with the University of Texas at El Paso's groundbreaking bilingual Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. He has taught students writing at the university level. He has also traveled across the world, including studying at the Centro de Lenguas Modernas in Granada, Spain and completing the ancient Camino de Santiago.