

**To Be Alive In This City  
For Burque**

of magnetic undercurrents, magenta,  
watermelon spilled light over the valley  
of saltbush and scrub, wind-whipped seasonal cruising of the tarmac,  
jellyfish electric lowriders, Belair beauties  
hydraulic horsepower of the V-8.

is to be alive and sucking in an arid  
cold-desert air, lung-heat, and the surprise  
party of the springtime wet monsoon,  
sudden water dotting the brown earth.

is to be alive like an old ocean is alive,  
ancient shell, sleepy volcano, pumice  
of the heart.

The city says to me and I hear her:

*Believe in medicina and in  
the brujeria of the moon.*

How she vibrates above  
our thick-skinned skulls, sickle  
cell, flat-white or golden-globule.

Leave your offering  
at the altar of the foothill.  
Take some dirt with you, wash your feet, forehead,  
nape and neck with its grit, sand, and silt.

To be alive in this city means:

*Repent  
Pray  
Protest  
Love  
Sweat*

Covet the neon greens,

black of night, white-hot  
star-riddled streakiness,  
smeared colores de agua  
of this brawling city,

night-time pusher and dealer,  
empty-pocket bars and eight-balls,  
sacred sex-workers and cigarette-smashed  
*suenos*, hopeful bus rides  
winding up and around  
the hip bone  
of downtown

then off, off, off you go  
into the North Valley  
of no snowfall.

*Covet*

*Crawl*

*Crouch*

*Coo*

To be alive in this city is to be alone.

Alone and bald and naked  
as the day you were born,  
swathed in a glowing,  
sinful, sacred and  
slithering phosphorescent light.

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