

Jose Garcia Villa

● Biography

Jose Garcia Villa (1908-1997) was born in Manila, Philippines. A legendary poet, editor and fiction writer, he was a seminal influence on many poets in the Philippines. He lived in America for over fifty years and was the recipient of numerous awards including a Guggenheim, Rockefeller and Bollingen fellowships. An associate editor at *New Directions* from 1949 to 1951, his published works in the United States include a collection of fiction, *Footnote to Youth*, and poetry collections, *Have Come, Am Here* and *Selected Poems and New*.

The Anchored Angel

And, lay, he, down, the, golden, father,
(Genesis', fist, all, gentle, now)
Between, the, Wall, of, China, and,
The, tiger, tree (his, centuries, his,
Aerials, of, light) . . .
Anchored, entire, angel!
He, in, his, estate, miracle, and, living, dew,
His, fuses, gold, his, cobalts, love,
And, in, his, eyepits,
O, under, the, liontelling, sun—
The, zeta, truth—the, swift, red, Christ.

The, red-thighed, distancer, swift, saint,
Who, made, the, flower, principle,
The, sun, the, hermit's, seizures,
And, all, the, saults, zigzags, and,
Sanskrit, of, love.

Verb-verb, noun-noun:
Light's, latticer, the, angel, in, the, spiderweb:
By, whose, espials, from, the, silk, sky,
From, his, spiritual, ropes,
With, fatherest, fingers, lets, down,
Manfathers, the, gold, declension, of, the, soul.

Crown, Christ's, kindle, Christ! or, any, he,
Who, builds, his, staircase, fire—
And, lays, his, bones, in, ascending,
Fever. Verb-verb, king's-spike—who, propels,
In, riddles! Six-turbined,
Deadlock, prince. And, noun,
Of, all, nouns: inventor, of, great, eyes: seesawing,
Genesis', unfissured, spy: His, own, Arabian,
His, love-flecked, eye!

The, ball, of, birth, the selfwit, bud,
So, birthrights, lanced, I, hurl, my bloodbear, Light.

And, watch, again, Genesis', phosphor, as,
Blood, admires, a, man. Lightstruck,
Lightstruck, into, the, mastertask,
No, hideout, fox, he, wheels, his, grave, of,
Burning, and, threads, his,
Triggers, into, flower: laired,
In, the, light's, black, branches: the, food, of,
Light, and, light's, own, rocking, milk.
But, so, soon, a prince,
So, soon, a, homecoming, love,
Nativity, climbs, him, by, the, Word's, three, kings.

—Or, there, ahead, of, love, vault, back,
And, sew, the, sky, where, it, cracked!
And, reared, in, the, Christ, for, night,
Lie, down, sweet, by, the, betrayer, tree.
To-fro, angel! Hiving, verb!
First-lover-and-last-lover, grammatiq:
Where, rise, the, equitable, stars, the, roses, of, the, zodiac,
And, rear, the, eucalypt, towns, of, love:
—Anchored, Entire, Angel:
Through, whose, huge, disalced, arable, love,
Bloodblazes, oh, Christ's, gentle, egg: His, terrific, sperm.

From *Have Come, Am Here*

26

Silence is Thought converging
Unprecipitate, like
Dancer on tight wire balancing,
Transitive, budlike,

Till—her act finished—in
One lovely jump skips
She to the floor, bending
To make her bows, dips

Herself in bright applause—
Then silence is
No more. Now it is the rose
Called Speech.

34

Take a very straight line, Fermin, if you want to die.
The line at the middle of fire, that is.
So that it is perpendicular, central.

Die illuminist, Fermin, rising and particular.
Cohere at the electric center of death.
Ascend the incandescent rope and throw

Your tenderness to me below. If they call you buffoon,
Fermin, I have violins to drown them out—
But you have a Confrontation to make.

36

Be beautiful, noble, like the antique ant,
Who bore the storms as he bore the sun,
Wearing neither gown nor helmet,
Though he was archbishop and soldier:
Wore only his own flesh.

Salute characters with gracious dignity:
Though what these are is left to
Your own terms. Exact: the universe is
Not so small but these will be found
Somewhere. Exact: they will be found.

Speak with great moderation: but think
With great fierceness, burning passion:
Though what the ant thought
No annals reveal, nor his descendants
Break the seal.

Trace the tracelessness of the ant,
Every ant has reached this perfection.
As he comes, so he goes,
Flowing as water flows,
Essential but secret like a rose.

Nyabongo's Project

One of the strangest projects is
That of Dr. Akiki Nyabongo, an
East Indian prince residing in
Brooklyn. Ebito's historian, a handsome
Liquid-eyed man of forty-two, is a prince
By virtue of
Being a son of the late

Kyebambe, King of Toro, a state
In Uganda, and a doctor by
Virtue of a Ph.D. at Oxford. He
Was born in Kabarole, Toro's capital,
In the shadow of the Ruwenzori Moun-
tains, sometimes
Known as the Mountains

Of the Moon. Dr. Nyabongo is
Preparing a book about Ebitto
Or Flower Language, a symbolic
Method of communication among his compatriots,
Involving the use of flowers, leaves,

Grass, seeds, twigs,
Clay, beads, animal hair and

Stones. He is engaged in setting
Down detailed scientific descriptions of plants which he
Will then key to their messages in Rutoro
And English. A typical one: "Akaisabi-
sabi, or Asparagus puberulus. A much-branched,
Climbing shrub. Branches long,
Flexuose, terete; branches long,
Spreading . . ." means "You are the
Puberulus that grows at the side of the road
And grasps the bark cloth of every
Passerby, and
I will grasp at your love."

(Collage. From an item in "Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker*, Jan. 26, 1952.)

The Bird

A little bird that is thirsty:
One takes it away from
The verge of death: its little heart
Beats increasingly

Against the warm, trembling hand,
Like the last wave of
A gigantic sea whose shore you are.
And you know suddenly,

With this little creature that
Is recovering, that