



The Roots of A Thousand Embraces: Dialogues

Juan Felipe Herrera

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"Juan Felipe Herrera's writing fuses wide-ranging experimentalism with reflections on Mexican-American identity . . ."—*The New York Times*

In forty cantos, the poet explores the metaphysical relationship between Frida Kahlo, her art, her broken body, and cross-border consciousness. First published in 1994, this early work—his sixth book—reveals a deep sense of longing for all to be made whole again in spite of fractures—physical, metaphorical, cultural—bestowed by the world.

From "Prologue: A Second Body":

Think on the time it takes a scar to heal,

*a river to rise — an old woman to regain the tumbling
powers of her busted arms — a young woman (calling
herself Frida) to re-structure her shattered vertebrae, to
be caught up with a body-cast, a second body which she
inhabits — for the rest of her life; this is precious to me,
that is all.*

*She painted herself somewhere in-between Mexico and
the United States — in the open space of the jaws; between
the mandibles of the jaguar and the nuclear turbine.*

*It is the healing of this metaphysical fracture too (which
may invoke further breakage) that concerns me.*

Juan Felipe Herrera was raised in a farm-working family in the San Joaquin Valley. A graduate of UCLA, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and Stanford University, he has written numerous books. Herrera's awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the PEN USA Award. Former Poet Laureate of California and now United States Poet Laureate, he lives in Fresno.

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John Negrón:

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