## Chronicle of Lima by Antonio Cisneros

"To allay the doubt that grows tempestuously, remember me, Hermelinda, remember me."

("Hermelinda," popular Peruvian song)

Here are recorded my birth and marriage, the death of grandfather Cisneros and grandfather Campoy.

Here too is recorded the best of my works, a boy and beautiful.

All the roofs and monuments remember my battles against the King of the Dwarfs and the dogs in their fashion celebrate the memory of my remorse.

I was also

fed up with the base wines and without a trace of shame or modesty was master of the Ceremony of the Frying.

Oh city

maintained by the skulls and customs of kings who were the dullest and ugliest of their time.

What was lost or gained between these waters? I try to remember the names of the heroes, of the great traitors. Remember me, Hermelinda, remember me.

The mornings are a little colder,
but you'll never be certain of the seasons
—it's almost three centuries since they chopped down the woods
and the fields were destroyed by fire.

The sea's close, Hermelinda, but you can never be sure of its rough waters, its presence save for the rust on the windows,

the broken masts, immobile wheels and the brick-red air.

But the sea's very close

and the horizon extended and suave.

Think of the world

as a half-sphere—half-an-orange, for example—on 4 elephants, on the 4 columns of Vulcan,

and the rest is fog.

A white furry veil protects you from the open sky.

You should see

4 19th century houses,

9 churches from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries,

for 21/2 soles, a catacomb too

where nobles bishops and lords—their wives and children—shed their hides

The Franciscans

inspired by some chapel in Rome—so the guide'll tell you—converted the tough ribs into dahlias, daisies and forget-me-nots—remember, Hermelinda—the shinbones and skulls into Florentine arches.

(And the jungle of cars, a sexless snake of no known species beneath the red traffic-lights)

There's also a river.

Ask about it, and they'll tell you that this year it's dried up. Praise its potential waters, have faith in them.

On the sandy hills

barbarians from the south and east have built

a camp that's bigger than the whole city, and they have other gods.

(Arrange some convenient alliance.)

This air—they'll tell you—

turns everything red and ruins most things after the briefest contact.

Thus your desires and efforts

will become a rusty needle

before their hair or head have emerged.

And this mutation—remember, Hermelinda—doesn't depend upon anyone's will.

The sea revolves in channels of air, the sea revolves, it is the air.

You cannot see it.

But I was at the quayside in Barranco
picking out round flat pebbles to skim across the water.
I had a girl with slim legs. And a job.
And this memory, pliant as a pontoon-bridge, anchors me
to the things I've done
and the infinite number of things left undone,
to my good or bad luck, to things I've neglected.

To what was lost or gained between

these waters.

Remember, Hermelinda, remember me.

