

From *Jacobo the Turko*, a work-in-progress

Registration Open (2014)

INSCRIPCION ABIERTA PROGRAMA DE WORK AND TRAVEL A ESTADOS UNIDOS

*Work in the USA During the Summer Months!
Improve your English!
Gain Work Experience!
Meet people from all over the world!*

Program for university or post-secondary students to work in the USA during summer vacation. Call 2-250-7144 to sign up for an informational session on Saturday, February 7, 13h00 at Escuela Politecnica Nacional, Ladron de Guevera E11-253, Quito.

Requirements:

- *Very good English*
- *Regular post-secondary or university student*
- *Up to 28 years of age*
- *Available to travel to the United States from June to September of 2005.*

“Registration Open” taped
upon the tapia* of my mother’s birth-house wall between
a window on Peguche and my pealing scheme of Levittown, USA:
houses like rectangular beads woven
in the tapestry of my dreams.
Indio, Turko, or mono,
I soak in my Lebanese father’s medicinal pools in Baños
or bathe in womb waters braiding this town with
aqueducts, cascades, riverlets, and birthing stains in moonlight.
Hello Paccha, says moon: you are earth.
Hello Jacobo, you are your father’s bastard.

The midwives hung my mama Paccha in a blanket, rolled
her back and forth like a top,
strapped her arms to eucalyptus rafters in the old way,
let hers and the earth’s energy draw
me down ‘til I, like myriad kin, microbial
to mammal, was born
in an ocean of blood, shit, earth,
and my mother’s micro biome. Moonbeams,
she says, parted the clouds concealing Imbabura, poured
a blue prism through this window cut
in tapia, and—right here—gave me light.
A week later Paccha brought me
to my father, my un-named face
doubtless stained

with breast-milk poo.

He did love me, right from *Colegio Americano*
to *Pontifica Universidad Católica*,
School of Tongues, *Inglés*.

Requirements: *Muy buen inglés*

Yes, sir; I am the man!

Good-bye trousers white and ponchos blue,
embroidered blouses and blue wool skirts,

Mamacita's gold glass beads and wristlets coral incarnadine.

Good-bye, house of Mother Earth.

Hello, American Dream.

*Tapial: technique of constructing walls with clayey soil compacted in a buttressed frame. Called *tapia* in Latin America.

Falling Burning Drowning II: Our Lady of the Holy Waters, Save Me (2014)

1.

In Baños, Ecuador,
a silvery waterfall springs from the flanks
of smoldering Volcan Tunguragua,
divides into a rosary of mineral pools
clogged with tourists and pilgrims
(inmates of my father's spa),
and empties with a host of other waters
into the thundering Pastaza
as it courses brown and boiling
down the mountains to the Mariñon that becomes the Amazon.

In Baños,
is a church,
the Basilica de Nuestra Senora del Rosario de Agua Santa,
with murals,
of Our Lady's miracles,
painted in the Italian style by *Indios*.
(Or at least I believe a world, a town, a church, murals, and *Indios*
exist beyond this box of pain;
I cannot know.)

A man's car tumbles off the narrow road,
barely a path, high above the Rio Pastaza,
flinging him loose
to plummet before the tapestry of orchids
and bromeliads that drape the ledge.

He calls, “*¡Nuestra Señora de Agua Santa, salvame!*” And instantly,
 opening the blue sky in a lacy oval, Our Lady
 with a glance commands the epiphyte tendrils
 to lasso his ankle at the last impending second
 and yank him from the unforgiving boulders along the riverbank
 like some

Yankee

bungee-

jumper.

Or when the whole town of Baños is shrouded in falling ash
 and pounded by burning stones
 vomited by angry Tunguragua,
 until the infallible prayer of townsfolk,
 “*¡Nuestra Señora de Agua Santa, salvame!*”
 clears the blackened sky,
 and the final pebbles
 fecklessly pelt the ground like dropping goat turds
 as Our Lady smiles upon her grateful flock.

Or the woven bridge suspended mountain to mountain
unravels,
 and a dozen homeward travelers grasping the handlines
 cry ecstatically, “*¡Nuestra Señora de Agua Santa, salvame!*”
 And Our Lady steels the threads of that
one
last
unsevered twine
 until her children safely gain the nearer shore.

She does not hear me now,
 falling, burning, drowning.

2.

Mamacita, save me.
 Dear little mother, earth, spring,
 Paccha, Otavalo nation,
 for Paccha, Shyri queen,
 Mother of Inca Atahuallpa,
 Huayna Capac’s bivouac-ripened Ecuador son,
 who vanquished court-loving brother Huascar,
 was betrayed by Pizarro *conquistador*,
 imprisoned in a box like mine,
 promised burial so christened Francisco
 Juan Bautista de Atavalivia (Otavalo,

once letters licked by many tongues),
garroted, and burned.
Paccha, my father's domestic,
salvame.

The Big City (2015)

For dreams of French cuisine, roasted *cui*, come
the weary, sick, and bored to Baños. They heal
in Papa's springs, bungee-jump, succumb to
disco, or for Mary's glance they pray.
Mama seldom from the ledger books will stray
except when Tungurahua's ash and stone
guts the town. Then in Peguche will stay
the two of us, she for things small, the bone
of the familiar, memory, baking bread alone.

For other dreams, other hungers, go I.
Having snatched some bits of English, French, Dutch,
and Deutch from the dreadlocked gringos who fly
like free birds you can't cha-a-a-ange—
I'll flee Peguche until my feet touch
Quito, crumpled against Pichincha, acquire
schooling at Catolica, for Olga Fische
work, and, surrounding me with razor wire,
at the Consulate de los U.S.A. inquire.

Catching Chickens (2014)

"Any of you speak English?"
Said to the leftover and hopeless Mexicans and me,
waiting for work, baked by day
and stale by nightfall like Buffalo wings and pizzas
I'd made all summer in Rehoboth on a J-1 Visa.
The Russian stole my passport, pay, and ticket home,
and there I was, hungry, but now Our Lady saved the day.

My English overflowed with accents
I'd taken with the tips—collegiate beach bum, grandma, six-pack Joe:
"Yes, sir; I am the man."
"Yes, you are." And I was in

the van, on the floor, propping myself with palms in slick straw
about the boots of four blacks already aboard.
"You like chicken?" the boss man asked.

“You bet I do.” And the black men laughed.

Like a lone star in the manurey firmament that was
 the warehouse, a single light bulb shown
 on thousands of white chickens across a sea of dark dirt; they
 roiled softly like expiring foam,
 clucking mild reproaches at our approach.
 A giant goose-necked machine with
 a face of rubber snakes sat menacingly by:
 the automated chicken catcher, side-lined for repairs.
 We
 would catch the chickens.

Mamacita, in the mornings under misted Imbabura,
 would slip her padded hands beneath the hen,
 cradle it sweetly while cooing Quichua words of love, hide
 with one hand its eyes from her little act of shame, grasp and
 like a chain whip of shoulder, elbow, wrist, and
 neck—ah,
 halal is not so merciful.

“Let’s work, José.” One waded into the chicken surf
 to hook two-three-four-five pairs of chicken legs between his knuckles,
 fling them like feather dusters into a wire shelf, shake them
 to the rear and re-load. It looked easy.

The chickens, too surprised to be un-docile to my comrades,
 fought me like gamecocks, leapt
 accusing from the sticking shelves,
 and left them empty when the fork lift came. “Put
 some ass into it, José. We ain’t gonna carry you.”
 Behind is always twice the work; ahead, you pass the bottle.
 When I finally got a sip it filled
 the pores of my thirsty bones with grace.
 “Thanks. My name’s Jacobo.”
 “Call me Pea Patch, José.”
 “Work here always?”
 “Naw, we’re scabs. Union in? Get an Auto-Catch chicken catcher.
 Auto-catcher break? Hire scabs and wetbacks.
 That’s why they call America
 the land of opportunity.”
 And that was true, since the boss man fed me
 cheese and mayo sandwiches and
 offered me a job cutting wings from chickens,
 which Pea Patch would not do: “Shit,
 my people did this shit fo’ fo’ hundred years.
 Your turn, now, José.”

Had Our Lady, who had lifted me
 from the river of misfortune, now dropped me
 in the mountain's fire?

**October 2003: Colonel Lawrence A. Wells, US Army 10th Special Forces Group,
 Reads the Business Skinny on Iraq (2014)**

The reconstruction and humanitarian aid efforts in Iraq are being administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through grants and contracts. USAID chose to limit competition for the first eight reconstruction contracts awarded. This was done so that the agency could be ready to provide rapid response to any necessary assistance and services required in the event of war, without complicating diplomatic efforts to prevent war that were being undertaken during the procurement process.

“Business Opportunities in Post War Iraq,” By Michael R. Charness, Charmaine A. Howson, and Frank A. Verrastro, Vinson & Elkins LLP, September 30, 2003

Christmas is coming and mission accomplished.
 Task Force Viking
 faked the Turks and trained the Kurds
 without me. Zapped eighteen of our own.

Without a wound, my arm's gone gimp,
 and I've been grounded.

Still, there's beaucoup doings in Madrid:
 International Donors' Conference on Reconstruction.
 Chance for chickenshit Frogs to snag some sloppy seconds
 after chicken-hawk Cheney's Haliburton.
 Hmm.

USAID grants and contracts:

International Resources Group: \$7.12 million, technical expertise (chicken feed).
 Bechtel, \$680 million (that ain't chicken feed): rehabilitation, power generation.
 Kellogg Brown & Root (Cheney again): \$7 billion
 (\$7 billion!),
 oil field services
 (No shit).

Iraq: I woulda said no, if not for my oath,
 and, anyway, looks like they're leaving Osama for me, fucking dog.
 Whole world dreams of USA and this jack-off wants to kill us all.
 Kid in Ecuador snotted the windows to see an American Jeep,
 and the oil guy made him cry.

Oil guys'll make the Iraqi's cry.

We all will.