

NICHOLAS REINER

ALCHEMY

Under my dirt brown skin
lives the conqueror, his nose
aquiline like his sword,
lives the conquered, hair
just above his ears & gold in his hands,
lives the god of the sun, lives the sun
alchemizing a people,
mashing white and brown
to burnt corn sheathed in paprika, cotija
& mayonesa (now on a street
in Los Angeles or an avenida in D.F.),
lives the joy echoes of the raza de bronce,
& in my brown brain
the language of the conquerors
clanks, incomplete,
while the tongues
of the plundered, centuries
away & irretrievable,
leave remnants in the Americas
like ash inherited from burning coals.

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HELIUM BALLOON

Benny Lopez jumps off the Xerox building
and the sadness carries Benny upward.

The people on the sidewalk below look up
as they carry their sadness inward

as they watch a young man fly
across the blemished city sky

like a coronation
like an anointing

like a helium balloon
that appears smaller

and smaller to the people's
hungry eyes as it's carried

farther skyward
reaching 2000 meters

before it begins to leak air
emptying as it descends

to a clearing
hundreds of kilometers away.