

BERGE, Carol - Alba Nemesis (The China Poems, 1969 - 1978),
Amalgamated Sensitivity Publications, Albuquerque, NM, 1979.

The China Poems seem to be a cycle, because they comprise a period of nine years, from 1969 to 1978. Carol Berge portrays the Chinese world in the States, the shock of two cultures the encounter of East and West, of dark and bright. mystery and clarity. East and West are painted as Siamese twins, Chang and Eng, as a unit, "connected by more than flesh." Although a unit, the twins are individuals, with an individual life. The world here is seen as a unit, there are differences, there are East and West, but there is also a common denominator which connects differences - halves - which can be called the human condition.

The Chinese immigrants, in their condition of newcomers, suffer the process of an unavoidable adaptation, the common conflict of strangers in an extraneous homeland. "Chinese murmuring Buddhist liturgies carelessly translated from Latin versions of the same repressive history."

There is a loss of identity and individuality, an alienation of culture. "O Chinese men forgetting I Ching at the football game", and the inevitable entrance in a technical world. "Chinese men behind the asses of white bathroom-faggots."

Although they lose something of their peculiarity, they remain Chinese, different, strange, like "Scar tissue in the West Coast Twilight."

Carol Berge's style is interesting. It is characterized by an apparent carelessness with the form. This lack of formality sometimes, makes the understanding difficult, but on the other hand the reader has to think. It becomes, therefore, an adventure, a fascinating discovery.

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