



From the Other Side of Night/Del otro lado de la noche: New and Selected Poems (Camino del Sol)

Francisco X. Alarcón

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On the other side of night, Francisco Alarcón is waiting.

One of Chicano literature's premier poets, Alarcón has brought his luminous images to the page in such acclaimed volumes as *Sonnets to Madness and Other Misfortunes* and *Snake Poems*. Now he has assembled the best of his work from fifteen years, along with fourteen new poems, in a book that distills his magical sense of reality into a cup brimming with passion.

Raised in Guadalajara and now living in the San Francisco Bay area, Alarcón sees that " 'Mexican' / is not / a noun / or an / adjective / 'Mexican' / is a life / long / low-paying / job." Participating in a poetic tradition that goes back to the mystic Spanish poets of the sixteenth century, he brings us sonnets infused with romance and tenderness—and shorter poems that are direct and hard-hitting commentaries on American society, as he cries out for "a more godlike god," one "who spends nights / in houses / of ill repute / and gets up late / on Saturdays."

Alarcón invokes both the mysteries of Mesoamerica and the "otherness" of his gay identity. "My skin is dark / as the night / in this country / of noontime," he writes, "but my soul / is even darker / from all the light / I carry inside." In lyrical poems open to wide interpretation, he transcends ethnic concerns to address social, sexual, and historical issues of concern to all Americans. The fourteen new poems in *From the Other Side of Night* offer startling new commentaries on life and love, sex and AIDS.

Shifting effortlessly between English and Spanish—and even Nahuatl—Alarcón demonstrates the gift of language that has earned him both a wide readership and the admiration of fellow poets. With this book, he invites new readers to meet him where the darkness is palpable and the soul burns bright.

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