

Ernesto Cardenal

ROOM 5600

They had a happy childhood on the banks of the Hudson
on a 3500-acre estate

with 11 mansions and 8 swimming pools
and 1500 servants

and a great house of toys

but when they grew up they moved into Room 5600
(actually the 55th and 56th floors of the tallest skyscraper
at Rockefeller Center)

where hundreds and hundreds of foundations and corporations
are managed like

—what truly is—

a single *fortune*.

Dependent on Room 5600 the millionaires in Venezuela
private enterprise in Brazil

and you and I.

First there were ads in newspapers and on radios

in Latin America

coming from that Room 5600

(“a formative education for the young Rockefellers
in the vulnerabilities of the press”)

all the programs involving the press divided into 2 categories
“economic warfare” and “psychological warfare”

using news to make, explained Nelson to the Senate,
the same thing the military makes.

And Room 5600 used to have secret “observers”

(kind of the first offspring of the present CIA)
providing information about owners, editorial politics,
personal opinions . . . even the least little reporter,
from which came their “propaganda analysis,” dossiers
systematically organized on Latin-American public opinion.

So in Room 5600

they learned the basics
of handling the news.

“They soon discovered that *news*
doesn’t stem from facts

but from interest groups.” And so that was how
the news about Latin America (edited in Washington)

with economic incentives and economic pressures
reached Latin America from Room 5600
together with slick editorials, telephotos, flashes, “exclusive”
feature stories

(and Walt Disney for the movies)
until 80% of the world news for Latin America
(originating in Washington)
was tightly controlled and monitored in New York
by Room 5600,
and so all the businesses in Latin America

(and its misery)

are linked to that Room 5600.

An operation that just required enough money
from Room 5600.

Our minds, our passions.

The thoughts of the lady who runs a boardinghouse.

The man walking some lonely beach.

A silhouette of lovers kissing in the moonlight

(influenced more by Room 5600 than by the moon)

Whatever Octavio Paz or Pablo Antonio Cuadra think.

Whether you say rose or say Russia

Room 5600 influences that.

Our perceptions conditioned by Room 5600.

And thousands of Latin American journalists

invited by Room 5600

to Miami Beach where everything is fake, even the sea is fake,
a servile sea in front of your hotel.

And so

NICARAGUA A TOTALITARIAN COUNTRY
THE SANDINISTAS ARE PERSECUTING THE CHURCH
MISKITOS MASSACRED
TERRORISTS . . .

That's why, American journalists, *La Prensa* is censored.

Monopoly of what the public reads, hears, sees
as they fill the air with carbon monoxide, mercury, lead.

As for the press:

“Silence was imposed on the poor”

Thanks to Nelson. To David, the younger one,
Chase Manhattan Bank

—“tied to almost every important business in the world”—
right in Room 5600

where the whole huge and scattered fortune
is only one fortune, there in one single Office.

With as many public-relations people in Room 5600
as they had servants in their childhood.

So their image changed from criminals to philanthropists.

About whom, it is said, they did
everything, as with oil, with American politics,
except refining it.

Corporations growing like a carcinoma.

And because of Room 5600

the holy family set up in garbage dumps.

Children playing by streams loaded with shit

because of their monopolies.

Their monopolies that are getting fat on malnutrition.

Monopolies raising the price of the planet,

bread and wine,

joys, medicines, *The Divine Comedy*.

Manhattan from offshore looking like a sacred mountain

and the seemingly heavenly skyscrapers raised
by the profiteering
in one of them:

Room 5600, its lights Luciferian.
The shining waters of Lake Erie without fish
because of its sewers, the ones from Room 5600.

Ducks drenched with oil.
Poison wind over deserts and dead rivers.
Contaminating the species with radioactive iodine

Room 5600.
Manufacturing chocolates or napalm, it's the same to them.
And they manufacture *facts*.

At dusk you see from your car, above sulfurous bogs
the flickering fires of the oil refineries like Purgatory
and above them like a city in Oz
the glass skyscrapers lit up

Wall Street and Rockefeller Center
with its Room 5600.
Every secretary of state since Dean Acheson
that is, ever since I was 25 years old
has worked for a Rockefeller organization.

“Do you remember those new companies
coveted on the Stock Exchange like nubile girls?”
Their orgies with voluptuous and smiling bonuses
in Room 5600.

“Does Rembrandt pay dividends?”

And the dividends from the Vietnam War.

The profits from ESSO high as the stratosphere.
1 gallon of gas that cost the planet to produce it
1 million dollars . . .

And Venezuela sold its oil for trinkets.

Twelve-year-old girls up for sale in the Northeast.

The cassava bread sour.

Sterilization of women in the Amazon.

Monopoly even of life itself.

The millions flowing to them as if in pipelines

owners of lands banks industries human beings
as if in pipelines from where the oilfields are huge
and the leases dirt-cheap.

They flooded New York with “moral bonds”

(that is, phony bonds)

Hence New York’s bankruptcy

due to the billions in “moral bonds” from Room 5600.

Terrifying nations with cruel stories.

Its bat-like shadow over the culture, the academies.

All the weight of the presses on us.

Subjected to the whims of their stock companies.

That’s why, Daniel Berrigan, Nicaragua’s boys are fighting.

Whether milk or poison

the product doesn’t matter

bread or napalm

the product doesn't matter.

David for instance had lunch with a Mr. Carter on Wall Street
and after lunch

he picked him to be President of the United States.

They continued their happy childhood
in Room 5600.

JONATHAN COHEN



City Lights



City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology

Edited by
Lawrence Ferlinghetti



CITY LIGHTS BOOKS
San Francisco

