



Max, the son of Ivan Arguëlles, with his mother, Marilla.

Ivan Arguëlles

MAX : A SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHY

taken from the womb what was the gift ?
I saw light and sparklers and heard
the boom of motor traffic out the window

cities came and cities went the biggest
where I lived knowing chalk and cement
bridges that seemed to fly and stores
filled with all the christmases in the world
glitter this and twinkle that basements
escalators subway trains and libraries
once I even went to see the Taj Mahal
and rode an elephant and slept in a bus
that zigzagged through the Himalayas
later on something happened a sore
in my mouth and fever and convulsions
what they call a coma a big red hiatus
between consciousness and chaos
as if an airplane had taken me and
swirling in a planet of clouds dropped
me down on a slope by a large water
where I lay for a long time suffering
little but a headache the size of ink
to walk again I learned a bit and
to ride a horse listening to the wind
people immersed me in warm pools
and set me on a blue three wheeled bike
what a wonder the world was streaming
frontwards and back at the same time
half of what I understood was a language
missing most of its meaning or echoes
frequent and distant in the kaleidoscope
of my hearing until the convulsions returned
reversing my ability to conjecture light
for years that were a matter of days
or maybe weeks I kept on shifting slow
and at times falling too into strange holes
dark and impressions of endless nights
often winding up in hospital beds and
the machines blinking or bonking bright
like sirens moaning and crying to sleep
why I couldn't manage to get out of bed
without help to dress and wash and use
my left hand and so much else lopsided
to maintain my balance was good and to
actually stand and greet the new machine
music was wonderful to touch and sound
ringing like bells and to sing voicelessly
was my talent and I offered everyone
a handshake and joy even when I was
sliding off the cliff into a numerable abyss

into ways of consciousness that stuttered
OK it wasn't easy coming into the new
century with tubes and things that fastened
my shadow to electrodes pegged in the wall
I forgot how food tasted and my breath
became relentlessly out of rhythm
the ones I loved remained steadfast
and put me to bed and woke me up
tirelessly whether light or dark whenever
sometimes and suddenly the ambulances
came and took me back to crowded rooms
blinking and bonking and unconscious
for long periods dreaming I was a micronaut
in my plastic toy sailing the galaxies
trying with less success to stay awake
to breathe to keep up the heart's pace
until one day *this* day I ran into a wall
and all the noise and sparkling shimmer
stopped

Ivan Arguëlles is a widely published Mexican-American poet, whose works include *"That" Goddess*; *Madonna Septet*; *Comedy*, *Divine*, *The*; *Fiat Lux*; and *Orphic Cantos*. A retired librarian, he has resided in Berkeley, California, for the past thirty-nine years.