

Ray Charles at the Copa

He stands in shadow, waiting to go on,
Alone inside his mind as mother care
Sits aching in his muscles. Spotlights flare,
The trumpets call his name, his frown is gone.

He hovers at the piano, reaches out
And like a woman it is one with him,
Rippling in his rhythms. Spotlights dim.
He hunches down into his edging shout.

He strains for every wound on every skin
Until they open out along his flesh,
Ripe and sparkling. The ripped pieces mesh
Into a mouth that sucks the darkness in.

He moans and rocks, the piano rocks and screams,
Soul flares its fingers and the body dreams.

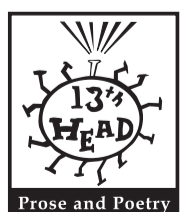
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Michael Palma has published *The Egg Shape* (1972), *Antibodies* (1997), and *A Fortune in Gold* (2000), and, on the Internet, *The Ghost of Congress Street: Selected Poems* (<http://newformalistpress.com/palma.pdf>). He has translated award-winning volumes of Guido Gozzano and Diego Valeri, and translations of nine other modern Italian poets, as well as a fully rhymed version of Dante's *Inferno* (2002). He edited *New Italian Poets* with Dana Gioia and a volume of translations from Luciano Erba with Alfredo de Palchi. He lives in Vermont, USA.



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