

GRACE NICHOLS

Shostakovich (Tate Gallery)

for Aubrey Williams, Guyanese artist

Springing from the heart
of your own dynamics,
the painting explodes—
apocalyptic as Shostakovich,
musical bars booming through
time and space like comets.
But behind the sensuous beauty,
your rhythmic symmetry
impales like a knife, Aubrey.
A South American anxiety,
born of the Aztec priest,
obsidian dagger poised above the breast.
Born of the conquistador,
cruel glory of the bible and the sword.
Quetzalcoatl—burning burning
in his house of coral,
house of gold.