

**AL YOUNG AT EIGHTY (2019):  
ORPHEUS FROM DETROIT**

we all, men & women  
have to live the story  
we all, men & women  
know the hermetic descent  
the loss  
the magic of music  
to restore  
and then to lose again  
when the music fails  
we all watch  
as the figure of death  
comes forward  
to take the beloved  
you came from detroit  
with the radio in your ears  
like cocteau's orpheus  
and your guitar  
and no money  
and raided california  
like a conqueror.  
brilliance knows no bounds  
words sing in the west,  
as they sang before,  
love is the guide  
but it brings us  
even in california  
to the edge of the shadows  
Orpheus from Detroit  
city boy  
in the place of poppies  
and asphodels—  
poet  
in the land of the dead  
and of the living dead  
and the living.

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VISITING, AL YOUNG AT 80, 2019

Went with Sangye to see Al in Concord, California. Went with Sangye to congratulate my old friend on his eightieth birthday. Talked of many things. Al listened, occasionally commented. Michael smiled, answered, talked of Bob Kaufman's son, Parker. Was he homeless now? Talked

of Thelonious. Talked of Al's pilgrimage to the West. Talked of life in the rehab center. Remembered all the wonderful talks with Al. That poem he read me the last time we telephoned. *Send me a copy*. Done. Talked of the life that was everywhere in the room and is always everywhere whenever I see Al, even flat on his back, even able to speak only in a whisper. "Are you ok?" I asked at one point, and he said, softly, "Yeh, I'm ok." The music of the man, even in rehab, even in Concord, California. "He's getting so particular," said Michael. Spirit manifesting in his eyes, in his moving, impatient fingers. *Get well fast!*

Al Young (May 31, 1939-April 17, 2021). *In memoriam*.

