The First Fabulous Four

Above Antigua in a cloudless sky
The mute volcano Agua lifts its peace,
Its look of flooded terraces for rice
Without the fact of either. Passion vines,
Small holdings--squatters'--thick with maize (a land
Reform in place at forty-five degrees).

On red horizons farther, thunder loud
As other thunders, lightning shaft for shaft
And cloud created darkly of itself,
The live volcano Fuego burns in storm.

Distrust peace. Agua is the killer. How?
In centuries of dormancy, a lake
Formed in the crater; rains and hurricane
Collapsed the crater wall. It was a cold
Fast-forward of a lava flow, a bit
Pompeii and a bit Atlantis, end
Of world and falling sky, as if reversal
Showed the elements for what they are.
They are a broad continuum of death,
And each can call another to its aid.
The gravity of Earth arms all the air;
Add fire to water to corrupt a tribe.
When God created Man out of the clay
He gave him allies: arson, whisky, flight…