

Maria Sabina

When Maria Sabina died,
someone twisted the neck
of a rooster and laid it
by her side. On the fourth
day, not the third or the fifth,
its spirit rose up and crowed,
calling her soul to depart,
to start its journey
to the Dead Land
feeding on squash seeds,
greens and fruit along the way.

Someone lit a candle at her feet.
And on the fifth, not the fourth day
or the sixth, her soul rose
and folded a palm cross
in her right hand
as it lay on her breast.

She followed the rooster,
dressed not in feathers
on the wings of a songbird,
but naked, without shoes,
through cow fields and cold streams.
She was neither thirsty nor hungry.
On that day, in a single moment
of the moon, she felt fresh.

after *The Mythology of Mexico and Central America*.
John Bierhorst. New York, William Morrow.