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Hummingbirds, Drive-bys, y vuelos a lo olvidado

Leonel Torres

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*Hummingbirds,
Drive-bys, y
vuelos a lo olvidado*

By Leonel Torres
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Second Reader: Molly McGlennen

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Statement of Poetics.....	7
Espejos.....	12
He.....	13
Traffic Lights.....	14
Let the Boys Run.....	16
Ignite Blue Lights.....	18
Pa' Mis Nanas y Tatas.....	19
Lenguas en camino.....	21
15 secrets I've kept from myself.....	24
Hit it Into Submission.....	25
Nana Cata.....	27
Nana Cata en español.....	29
Desquitate.....	31
To My Brother's Father I Never Knew: Alfonso Ramirez Sr.....	33
DFW and Turchi in the Limelight?.....	35
Untitled.....	42
Rewind.....	44
A Letter to the Privileged.....	45
The Madhatter's Curse.....	47
Silence.....	50
Take Steps.....	52
Wars.....	57
Vuelos a lo olvidado.....	59
Hay que volar no?	61

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This is for my family; my mother, Rosario Magaña, my father, Leonel Torres Palencia Sr., my cousin/brother, Jonathan Magaña, my brother, Alfonso Ramirez Jr., and his

father, Alfonso Ramirez Sr., for your loss, I came into existence and am where I'm at today. I love you all.

What is fleeting? Why am I flying away never to look at myself in the eye and admit I am good enough? What do I say?

Mirrors¹ provide a way to see our selves everyday. They create this double-consciousness, or at least their construction makes us believe that. I believe that these mirrors offer a space to reflect, to manipulate the mirror. I demand a breaking of these mirrors as well. *Hummingbirds, Drive-bys and vuelos a lo olvidado* chooses to resist mirroring, homogeneity, and notions of assimilation. Through bilingual texts, (some translated, others not), the collection demands a space of transgression. It welcomes conversations and asks to be challenged. It hopes to find a loss in languages and reveals, what Gloria Anzaldua would call, a Borderlands identity.² The meshing and translating of languages speaks to a space of loss, but of versatility, (a struggling one though). I want to enter and be the Borderlands through this collection. This collection serves as a springboard towards honesty, vulnerability and a welcoming. Through that welcoming, I would like to push people to understand struggles of marginalized identities and understand the privileges that we all enact in everyday life.

One of the major ways we enact our privileges is through performance. The way we represent ourselves to people creates an image that helps and/or hurts opportunities for mobility. Although we manifest our intersectional identities in our everyday interactions, we also can prioritize *how* we portray them. In particular, slam poetry performances can act this way. Our everyday experiences must be told through the oral tradition and the growth of this genre of literature and drama is nearing problems of what

¹ "A Crystal Glass for Christian Women, Containing a Most Excellent Discourse of the Christian Life and Godly Death of Mistress Katherine Stubbes" by Philip Stubbes in *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England* edited by Joan Larsen Klein

² *La Frontera/Borderlands* by Gloria Anzaldua

that representation can mean. By that, I would like to focus on two forms of embodiment: experiential embodiment and representational embodiment. Experiential embodiment is how we embody our self, our experiences, and who we are. Representational embodiment is how we portray or take a persona of certain identities. While slam has maintained its intent on honesty and the self, they can be used to represent, to essentialize and create a trajectory for performance and poetry. If people want to engage slam poetry, often times, but not all the time, they are pushed to mimic a style that will gain them some sort of social, and eventually, economic capital through these performances. I want us to, each and every day, challenge ourselves and ask ourselves about the honesty that we portray and our intentions. I hope that everyone in the poetry movement is looking to empower themselves and others to become great writers of resistance.

When I think becoming a writer of resistance I have a desire to be different, to be unique, and maybe that isn't the best route. As a Latino, specifically mexicano, male from Inglewood, California, I do not embody what a typical mexicano born and raised in L.A. is like. Like Ramón H. Rivera-Servera would argue, we are against the “homogenizing and often normative assumptions of a Latina/o public but does not do away with the potential of latinidad as an intersectional category that might bring diverse groups together under a shared, if partial, ethnic imaginary.”³ This ethnic imaginary is the mirror that is reflected upon us, the method in which people identify [queer] people of color, marginalize [queer] people of color. We as Latin@s walk the intersections of race where the mestiza is born. In addition, Rivera-Servera poses that performances can be a way that we can reclaim the spaces where we don't belong, but are meant to be a part of.

³ *Performing Queer Latinidad* by Ramón H. Rivera-Servera (P. 17)

He continues on to claim that home, hope, utopia and friction emerge as the contours of a collective affectivity towards “being” rather than “becoming” a [queer] Latin@ community (4). By this, I also pose, through this collection, and hope to reiterate this idea of active *futurity* that Juana Maria Rodriguez⁴ has posed in her works. We connect futurity and hope in active ways that demand justice, demand humanity from those that attempt to take it away from us. People of color embody resistance by existence and elevate it when doing critical performances that address issues of race, gender sexuality, class and so on. In this collection, by no means is representative of all these great writers of color, but is a production from their influences and inspiration. All the footnotes will consist of critical books, essays and collections of poetry that have inspired me to write this collection and challenge myself to be better.

I hope that we can be more aware of that and challenge ourselves, love ourselves, *be* ourselves even when we perform. I hope this collection can provide a space to engage critically, but lovingly in our future endeavors of activism, resistance and empowerment. In particular, I would like to emphasize a line from Virginia Grise’s play, *blu*, “Stop fightin’ /Stop frontin’ /Just be.”⁵ I want to see what it means to center and decenter one’s self in one of the, (potentially), most vulnerable, honest, and creative spaces I have ever participated in. By decentering, I mean being able to relate the personal into the political and have it be representational of an empowering identity and space for resistance. I would like to see how that understanding within resistance could allow me to become a better ally and a better activist within a marginalized identity group. *Hummingbirds*,

⁴ *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* by Juana María Rodríguez

⁵ *blu* by Virginia Grise

Drive-bys y vuelos a lo olvidado is focused around metaphor elaborated and extended in Grise's play, *blu*, and Natalie Diaz's, *When My Brother was an Aztec*⁶. The illustrate and extend the myth of Huitzilopochtli, the hummingbird warrior. He was born into war as we people of color are born into, but never realize, possibly, until it's too late. For me, it was a war my parents never wanted me to see or address at home, but then I saw it when I flew from Los Angeles to Poughkeepsie. It was a *vuelo a lo olvidado*, a flight to the forgotten, where there was so much I left behind. I harken back at some amazing words Virginia Grise said on a visit to Vassar's campus where she believed that time is not linear but that she would like to think of the past not being static and that the present is her [body], as an anchor between the past and future. We cannot only think linearly, but strive to transcend those notions and transgress our own borders of understanding time, our self, and others as writers of resistance. By this resistance I'd also like to touch upon the works of Ana Castillo⁷ and Amiri Baraka⁸.

These two authors allowed me to understand myself as a participant in this country, but also a foreigner in this country. Amiri Baraka is a writer that needs no introduction because his works speak for themselves. He is a writer that dares to talk shit, speak against the Standard American English language and call out white supremacy for its actions, inactions, and intentions for change, a false hope. Baraka dared to call out the nation when very few people would, and felt the repercussions for it. His language is the language of the self, of resistance, and of personal power. Baraka is master of his language and was and continues to move people. I strive to be better each and every day

⁶ *When My Brother was an Aztec* by Natalie Diaz

⁷ *I Ask the Impossible* by Ana Castillo

⁸ *Somebody Blew Up America* by Amiri Baraka

for myself and for who I represent. This collection isn't meant to get attention but demand it, be known for the reality that surrounds it and seek to grow from it. I want my language to exist and persist to be the storyteller I always want to be.

In Castillo's poetry, I saw how she could easily transition from Spanish to English en un modo que yo nunca pude hacerlo. I couldn't do it. I was a writer raised in two languages, but only supported in one. However, that support was only what the school and parents demanded of me for me to become a rich man. English became my native tongue while Spanish was dragged along only because my parents could not speak English well. I do not blame my parents, but I am now in a space that's neither here nor there, not American or Mexican. I write poems that directly translate words because each and every day I must live by Google Translate's closest translation for words in both English and Spanish to get through a conversation with my mother and father. I need the translations to understand both of the languages that I do not grasp fully. I am on the margins of language and live in the crevices of Spanglish, questioned about my competence in English and not being able to hold up a conversation in Spanish with my Mexican family. I always try to do better, to be better. This collection aspires to be an attempt at love, teaching, understanding, anger, vulnerability and honesty. Ana Castillo teaches me to be confident in myself and do the impossible even if I may not be able to achieve it. I will love myself and I will love you in the largest capacity that is in my heart. Don't let the mirrors reflect who you are, but let them help you *understand* who you are. Just be.

I hope you enjoy this collection!

Espejos

When writers become storytellers, mirrors appear.
Espejos con reflejos.
They reflect a truth in silence, a truth in perspective.
Una alternativa.
Mirrors don't tell us what to do,
They tell us what we *could* do.
So let us reflect.

Let the words rain on mirrors.
Deja que las palabras lluevan en espejos
Sin ni un reflejo bueno.
Let the looking glass reflect false promises.
Let water drip down to distort images.
No me dejes ver.
Let the writer break the mirrors.
Quebralos.
Resist the false promises
And let American Dreams fade away.
Porque aqui, no somos americanos, solo ancianos.
Let chaos exist, as we insist to resist
And persist to reflect narratives de un nuevo mundo
Narratives of the self and others, una alternativa
Let it speak to each other
Because history has no words for silence,
Absence, ausencia

Absence is a sign of death in false promises.
We were never meant to refuse false promises.

Let mirrors fade in and out.
Deja que yo entre y salga, mi voz en mi espalda
Say what they say, it is without
Clear progress that we again see mirrors
And deny our own promises.
Promises to ourselves that we will change ourselves
Take ourselves
Have faith in ourselves
Be confident in ourselves
Be our self.
On that hour, that self must be you.

He is not a storyteller.
He is not a common man.
He is not yet the best he could hope for
But he is a boy not yet turned man.
He is hopeful for the future,
And smiles throughout each day that
He is reminded that there is
And always has been a home for him.
He fights lovingly.
He fights and sometimes doesn't understand.
He tries to understand
Only to fall face-first into
some truths and many lies.
He aspires and tries to never quit
Because it's never only about him.
He keeps his problems secret.
He dares to walk on his own.
He struggles.
He survives.
He learns to live.
He lives to learn.
He goes to college...
Far away... very far away.
He is challenged by others.
He keeps to himself.
He reflects.
He finds out how to challenge them back.
He wins...in his own way.
He is proud.
He finds his passion.
He finds it's really hard
to survive fiscally with it.
He doesn't care.
He keeps going.
He stops.
He doesn't understand.
He cries.
He doesn't know what to do.
He talks.
He listens.
He lets it all in.
He digests.
He understands...somewhat
He keeps going.

He doesn't know where,
But he knows
He is going in the right direction.
He loves.
He aspires.
He continues.
He learns and knows
He will never stop.
He realizes
He was a story waiting to be told.

Traffic Lights

There are no witnesses
but the stoplights.
The caressing winds never
Leave.
They are there to find the hummingbird
Left alone
Under the streetlight,
Hovering.
Stoplights and streetlights quiver
At what seems right
But it never seems right
To ever say a truth that's so right.

Let the wings flutter.
Float.
Let beak seek flower
And be lost,
Stare into docile eyes
Left bare,
Left open,
Opening
Is to come to that stoplight
When you're on that spotlight
And never be able to say what's right,
Because that traffic light knows,
Stopping, going and slowing down
Leaves the wings to flutter away,
Recognize that you are never home.
Alone.

Let the boys run

Let the boys run
Let the boys run on hollow streets
Waiting to skip a beat
On every beating
they got and gave.
Let the boys run from shooting streets
With bodies layed
 on concrete
Let the boys run
Let the boys run from eyes that want to look
 away, but
 Are hypnotized.
Let the boys linger on brown flesh
Turned pale.
Let the boys no longer run
forward,
 Never want them to look
back
Let the shaking boys made men
Be hungry for bravery
 in bullets left on
 concrete.
Let the boys run from backs breaking to make sons
Stop shaking from the hovering helicopters,
Lights cast on their shadows that lurk in every street corner
Waiting
To put their hands up.
 Don't shoot
The young boys who had no ride home,
Parents,
absent,
backs breaking
To give them more.
See the blue uniform and never feel safe.
Let the boys be in the hovering helicopters.
Boys were never meant to fly,
Never meant to cry on hollow streets.
Let lost boys come from arms that pull
Away brown bodies from windows facing red-soaked streets,
Tattered dreams.
Let the boys come from families who push little brother
To run away from fists on face, face on concrete.

Let the boys run from broken families,
Yet never want to be alone.
Boys should never be alone.
Let the boys walk in shadows,
Clenched fists as they pass every street corner.
Let the shaking take you away,
Let the boys stop.
Lead the boys into submission.
Believe there will be friction.
Let the boys not forget,
Let the boys never leave behind
These tattered streets.
Let the boys remind themselves they are free.
Let the boys run.

Ignite Blue Lights

Blue lights
On candles waiting,
To ignite flames
Falling off of feathers
Phased out of existence.

Candlelight brings
Stars and memory
Processing in candid spite.
Light scatters in mouths
Declared oceans.
Descend into crevices,
Crack into wax.

The Candelabrum holds
Harbingers of haunting.
Hurry the fire into ignition.
Let it melt.
Let it mold.
Tears,
Turn to disguise.
Fears,
Turn to home.
Hold me for a second,
Let me fall,
See the light,
Let the waves carry you
Let them sail you into blue light.

Pa' Mis Nanas y Tatas

Days go by
Months, years and I still don't know
What brings me to tears
It is a ticking time bomb waiting to fall on deafless ears
Only waiting to listen to their own story.

It seems that today one can only find your past on *Ancestry.com*
If it's left bloody by the hands of white men
Who didn't want to understand and feared what equality felt like.
It's only in a place where they flee
And leave scars in hearts
That are ignored more and more
After each generation passes by,
How our ancestors could never forget the blood
But continue to remain silenced about their stories.
It has come to this day that I choose
Not to forget but struggle to remember.

On these days I always want to ask my grandparents
With Alzheimers
Ages 67, 82, 85
About their youth
Left blurred with what I could have
Known in a past churned in their minds' broken tears.
Broken and lost memories of a language never dead
But fading.
I grow to live and struggle to not fade away.
Your blood and my tears are never enough
To swallow in your life
And breathe it into myself.

Everyday I want to view my past in an open pasture
To take in the natural
And unnatural nightmares
That shape who you are
From setting up a little shop
On a mountaintop
To shooting down hawks who preyed
On your chickens and crops
From living in a tiny brick shack
To seeing your daughters leave
Never knowing if they'd ever come back.

I want to know the stories
Of Sinaloa and Michoacan
Of Estacion Obispo and the pueblo
On La Huacana's mountaintop.
I want to know the barren plain.
Silos, fields, factories and dirt roads.
I want to know the green wild hills.
Snakes, scorpions, hawks, panthers and homes.
I want to remember who you were
And what made you who you are.

I want you
To be my grandparents
To look at me
And know that my tears will never forget
Every time you love me,
When you explode with great memories
Of grandkids that will never stop remembering
Will never stop fighting
In a war that tries
to
forget
you.

Lenguas en camino

What does it mean to be a writer?

Let languages tell stories

Of voices silenced,

Redacted and reformed.

Deja que entren nuestras vocales

Con cada sentido

Cada acento que trae mi voz

Al momento de silencio

This silence,

this speech,

this language

Lengua,

Tongue,

Maquina que

no

Deja de ensamblar my voice.

Let mi voz be a box packaged neatly

Labeled

“English only”

but let *Hecho en México* be in it’s center.

Have it shipped to:

California

With parts from Sinaloa and Michoacán,

Where English-only

Batteries are

Not included.

Raise me in

Inglewood

and Lennox

Twelve years of no assembly required.

See a student in black collared t-shirts and khaki pants

No words, but the “right” ones

My voice is self-assembled, pushed

away

from native and colonial

Where Spanish becomes my family’s tongue

Lost in a nation departed of its former lenguas.

Nahuatl, Purepecha, Yaqui, Otomí Mixtec, Zapotec, Huastec, Yucatec Maya, Tzeltal
Maya, Tzotzil Maya

Y yo,
Perdido

Now in the U.S.,
In this space where novelas become teachers
Where little brother's shows, my shows, are replaced
by Reading Rainbow and Sesame Street
Where alphabets are necessary and books a luxury.

I was raised in a household of only Spanish speakers
But was put in a bubble of English
As every letter, word and book constructed by PBS
Broadcasted itself onto me
As fascination arose from my parents.
They were proud that I spoke
and learned English so quickly
that they forgot that I was dropping pieces of Spanish to the ground.
They saw a pocho in me that was inevitable,
How visits to Sinaloa and Michoacan showed me that I was
tongue-tied
In two languages.
En los Estados Unidos I am articulate for a mexicano
And in Estacion Obispo, Pueblos Unidos, La Huacana soy gabacho,
Lengua mocha y sin trabajo.
Estoy perdido en mi propia casa.
Por que aqui,
No hay modo de hablar,
Nomás aprender.

Take every drink of English
And dehydrate the Spanish out of your larynx
Let your voice box struggle.
Tell yourself,
Hablo español mocho
Por que soy americano
Hablo mocho por que soy mexicano
en lugar anciano.
Dime pocho por que no soy de rancho
Dime que hable Castellano.
Bring back Spanish to my tongue
but remind me of the colonizer's presence.
Let me reappropriate this language.
Let me write.
Let me be bilingual without

being asked twice about my competence as a writer.

Let me struggle.

Let me be a writer.

Let me be a poet.

Let people tell me I'm not good enough

Without telling me I'm not.

Let me tell stories.

Let me be a writer.

Let me struggle.

Let me resist.

Let me learn.

Let me survive.

15 secrets I've kept from myself

1. The first time a woman I liked said Hi to me, my fly was down.
2. The second time, never happened.
3. There are days when relationships are all I think about. They hold on through my family and remind me of absence, when wives become 15 years old and babies appear in bellies where there's no where else to go. A México with nothing left
4. My brother is the oldest in my family to have a child. He was 22 when my nephew was born. The youngest is 15.
5. The most memorable moment when I came up to a woman and told her how I felt, she giggled from a distance.
6. I never spoke to a woman with that confidence again.
7. I always tell myself I'm good enough, but it isn't my time. Lovers and madmen don't walk the same path.
8. When I was born, I almost weighed 12 pounds, just a big healthy baby, but my parents always tell me I need to lose weight. That that's how you will get a person to love you. That's what you need from a man: slender and strong, attractive and not. That we are entitled to partners, to women.
9. I believed them.
10. I believed that a woman would fill the absence. May increase my chances. May pick up the fragments.
11. The next time I saw someone I fell in love with, I walked away. Threw the pieces away.
12. Everyday I tell myself I'm not good enough, talk about how I hate how my cactus hair cuts in every direction but down, and remind myself of how large I am and who I have become. Am I a man?
13. Sometimes the devil's number reminds me of what I'm not. I just want someone I don't need. A person to show off rather than a person to show love. To be a "man."
14. I was never alone.
15. My name is Leonel Torres Magaña Jr.; I weigh 250 pounds, [give or take]. I am quirky and proud. I am a poet, large and in charge. I am happy to be with friends, without the absence. I sometimes don't tell myself that I am loved enough. That I love myself enough. That the people around me make my day. You, absence, were never here. You are what I believe I walk away from everyday. And I never look back.

Hit it Into Submission

A five-year old girl is in love with me,
And the drive to Yogurtland was...
awkward.

A five year-old girl is in love with me because I let her do whatever she wants.
Whether it is keep her company when she has nightmares, to letting her put toothpaste on
my toothbrush or play princess with her while we watch Frozen or Tinkerbell...
Three times,
in a row.
I let her do anything she wants, I let myself go.
And my interactions grow.
They grow from the smallest stem of a child and lets the raindrops fall on me to tell me
My whole life I had been choosing to be submissive, and I ask myself, "Who am I?":

I am quiet
In classrooms where my truth does not lie
Where pens become mightier than the sword-I mean [the spoken] word.
Where words cannot suffice when my mind circles around to silence and listens.

I am passive
I let people say whatever they want
And let it stick to me like ooze, try to slough it off with understanding.
Try to rinse it off with love, but it's never enough.

I am caring
I don't yell even if I am picked on by the biggest asshole in the universe
In high school, the closest I got to knocking someone out was pushing into a stumble
expecting a knockout punch from me.
I am non-violent,
Because I fell into the [w]hole sticks & stones metaphor
and let it be my mantra in 4th grade.
I let it guide me into docility
I let myself let myself go.

I am submissive.
I let every inner demon I've ever had grow into the words I believe to be the silent
listeners.
The wise men who know when to speak,
Treat themselves, discipline themselves to be good-natured.
Because the only time I got into a fight I made my cousin bleed and couldn't take it back.
Let the wise men settle and see that submission is resistance.
Submit to resist.

Resist to understand.
Understand to reflect.
Reflect to become.

I became father-figure.
On the first day I met this little girl,
She attached her arms around me
To embrace a lost figure she didn't understand.
I gave her the love I had always been waiting to give to every person in my existence.
I chose to submit to let my inner demons become the wise men they sought to be.
This hit into submission,
This love to listen
This community I was missin'
This concealed condition
Allows me to love, love 'til hearts break,
Where I'm not the only one whose heart aches
To understand why I let myself go.

A five-year old girl is in love with me,
it took *her* to tell *me* that I choose to be this way.

A five-year old girl is in love with me,
And the awkwardness silenced me.
It let me go.
It let me grow.
She let me thrive in a world where I was always pushed to let my inner demons out.
She let me know,
I could survive without them.

Nana Cata

I am buried
Beneath your fingertips,
Holding out hands
To the hours and minutes
I remember.

A clock is in your face,
And I yell when you ask
For the time.
You walk away
To cry in a room
With illiterate thoughts.

You worked
Your hands in the soil until
They cried
For a coat of armor
That hardened those baby-soft hands
You once called yours,
Mis manos de licenciado.
Mis manos sin cayos y con una delicaz,
Que me atrae al trabajo.

I was just fifteen
When you had your first
Stroke, grandma.
You slept right next to me.
That night made my world stop.
It was a night that never faded away.

I feared losing you,
You who loved me
Even when I didn't love you back.

Nana
You are the grandmother I didn't deserve,
Cocinas mi chorizo con papa
Even when my parents
Say not to.
Nana Cata,
I never knew that nana meant nanny
And that your name wasn't that.

You were not
Catalina Salazar Sanchez to me.
You are Nana Cata
Nana Cata, Nana Cata, Nana Cata!
You had your second stroke
That same night
At 2:04am.

Tepatitlán, Jalisco, México
We were hours away
From home
And were confused.
My brother and I
Were at a quinceañera afterwards,
Only told not to worry,
As I held hands with the woman of the hour
Always thinking.

And you grandma, you grandma
Your babble, baby-like
And innocent
Put me in a daze
Because you were at my bedside.
I thought you had died
Twice,
But you came back
With a somber stare
That is getting into my eyes,
Making me realize,
Nana Cata
Tus manos, igual de suave y chicas
Mis manos de licenciado fueron engendrados por tu amor
Tus manos ahora son las mías.

Nana Cata (en español)

Estoy enterrado
En las yemas de tus dedos
Sosteniendo las manos
Sobre las horas y minutos
Que recuerdo.

Un reloj esta de frente de tu rostro.
Te grito cuando me preguntas
Por la hora.
Tú, te alejas
Hasta un cuarto a llorar
Con pensamientos iletrados.

Tú trabajaste
Tus manos en la tierra
Hasta que lloraron
Por un abrigo de coraza
Que endurece esas manos suaves
Que fueron tuyas.
Mis manos de licenciado.
Mis manos sin cayos y con una delicaz,
Que me atrae al trabajo.

Solo tuve quince años
Cuando tuviste
tu primer infarto abuela.
Dormiste al lado de mi.
Esa noche nunca termino.
Fue una noche que nunca se desapareció.

Temí perderte
Tú que me amaste
Aunque no te amé de vuelta.

Nana
Tu eres la abuela que no merecí,
Cocinas mi chorizo con papa
Aun que mis padres
Decían que no lo hicieras.
Nana Cata,
Nunca supe que nana significaba niñera
Y que tu nombre no era eso.

Tu no fuiste
Catalina Salazar Sanchez para mi.
Tu eres Nana Cata.
Nana Cata, Nana Cata, Nana Cata!
Tuviste tu segundo infarto esa misma noche
Cuatro minutos después de las dos de la mañana.

Tepatitlán, Jalisco, México
Estábamos lejos de casa
Y sin palabras.
Mi hermano y yo
Estuvimos en una quinceañera,
Solo dicho que no nos preocuparemos,
Mientras sostenía las manos de la mujer de la hora,
Pensando en ti.

Y tu abuela, tu abuelita
Tú balbuceo, de bebé
Y inocente
Me puso perplejo,
Por que tú estuviste a mi lado.
Pensé que moriste
Dos veces,
Pero regresaste
Con esos ojos tristes
Que penetran mis ojos,
Haciéndome realizar,
Nana Cata
Tus manos, igual de suave y chicas
Mis manos de licenciado fueron engendrados por tu amor
Tus manos ahora son las mías.

Desquitate

Desquitate de todo humor,
De todo calor,
Que entra tu corazón.
Rid of yourself of these demons
These angels
These monsters inside that don't
Let you choose
To live.
Rid yourself of this taste for blood
This taste for desire
Because my desire is much less
Appreciated when it is not mine.

I have never had a day when I could
Say I never yell at my mom
Uncontrollably.
In high school, I gave her plates of
I don't give a fuck
And you are tearing my life apart
When lives were already torn into
A fragment of the family I thought was happy
All this time
And all this time you coped
With the whips
I gave you with
Every disrespectful word I spoke.
I never spoke genuinely in the ways
I love you
The ways I know, you know,
I always have loved you.
Y ahora se que desquitarme
Es un control de mis pasiones
Y tus emociones dejandome vivir en tu reposo.
Let me live on to understand
That your love's labors are not lost
To my heart,
Letting go the world
Of men who care less about their mothers than
What the next great action movie is.

I have had days when I don't understand my mother

And her love for God,
Struggling to understand the tears
That cry rivers into her sons' souls
Believing that angels are at our footsteps
And demons are in our lives constantly.
My mother,
She gave my brother and I
Saint statues to repel evil visitors
From stepping into our new homes
And I believe her.
I believe her not because
Evil people lurk at our footsteps
But because I make mistakes
And understand that I want to be better.
To be human
To be a son.

*Porque siendo hijo no es solamente
Ser bueno.
Siendo hijo es entender a nuestra madre
Aprender desquitarnos con ella sin lastimarla
Y saber que nunca nos dejará.*

To My Brother's Father I Never Knew: Alfonso Ramirez Sr.

I am staring at the sky, knowing that you are watching over us.
And even though you are not my father,
I feel my brother's longing for you.
It has been years since we last spoke of you.
And I never minded my mother's conversations of you
I believed you were only connected to my brother,
But we are both juniors of seniors,
Where our love makes the earth tremble for you to rise,
Gave us peace.

You were the chef that cooks my mother's memories.
You left a sweet taste of your life in my mother's womb,
And my brother just sleeps calmly,
Breaths in and out the curiosity
Of your own life.

There was a day when you, my mother and her family
Rode on down to Mexico,
Along the one-lane mountainside
And on your left were crosses buried in the deep.
You drove on,
To the Valley of Death,
Into a boulder.
You avoided hurting others,
Skid the danger away from people you didn't know
And you were the one that walked into heaven.
Even though you were the only one with safety's buckle
Even though you were a great man
Even though you would have been a great father
And after that crash, my mother had no memories.

She lost you.
And my brother never knew you.
I exist because Death strolled by.
My mother birthed me years later
And kept me safe through and through.
And you became something greater for us.

My brother,
He persists
To strive for a life

That he insists,
Is better than he expected

Alfonso Ramirez Jr.
He has a son.
And I cannot stand the child's curiosity
Because that is still in my brother,
Looking into your heart
He will never forget your image

The image that he sees, I see
My hopes that you are smiling
At the boys that came after you
And I am here holding myself to my brother's chest,
Knowing our futures will be in your history.

I hope you, Alfonso Ramirez Sr.
Are proud with what is left of you
We created a path where you will never be forgotten
You, Alfonso Ramirez Sr. were the end of a beautiful beginning
That made us a family.

DFW and Turchi in the Limelight?

Abstract: A critique of David Foster Wallace's Authority and American Usage and Peter Turchi's Maps of the Imagination, reimagining/challenging Standard Written English through poetry that focuses on language, modes of persuasion, identity, and the importance of a writer's involvement in their text. This is a narrative of a marginalized writer looking for home through writing.

These following poems are intended to tell a story and argue for inclusion in authorship and rhetoric amongst a majority straight white community of academia. The poems tackle David Foster Wallace's *Authority and American Usage*, which discusses what is Standard Written or "White" English, (SWE). He discusses how SWE is successful writing and that it is the only way writers will be able to considered great writers in academia. I am reluctant to agree, but I still choose to challenge that standard and rewrite one that is fair to all [marginalized] communities that do not have access to the tools to write in this exact manner. The poems also tackle Peter Turchi's *Maps of the Imagination*, which tells us to take risks in writing, but does not move outside of the western ideology of writing while also omitting the writing of many authors of color. Through the poetry, I want challenge, criticize and tell a story of how marginalized groups need to get their voice heard while not compromising/negotiating their own personal identity, (avoid whitewashing). Also, the poetry tells a story of privilege because it always exists and never fades away.

DFW and Turchi in the Limelight?

There once were men
Who chose to pick and prod
And spare little time to relax
And work on writing.
They chose to dedicate their lives to successful writing.
Their names were David Foster Wallace and Peter Turchi.

In countless hours, Authority
Breaks us down and
Never lets go of the American
Way of life. The Usage
Of logic over consciousness
Rationalization over reception, perception.
In countless journeys, we make Maps
About fallen comrades, stories told of
Black/Latin@ men and women in the
Hopes of creating some Imagination,
Some hope to be heard.

I come here to ask,
Where have all of our lives fallen?
Where do our experiences lie?
Where can identity participate in our conversation?
Not as a piece of evidence or data
To whirl arguments in a rhetorical wind of wizardry,
But to be an essential part,
A piece of humanity,
To understand struggles of violence picked and prodded
With pens
Praising
Privilege over
Struggle.

We have to understand maps,
Not as they are, but as they used to be,
What they have done to what they will do.
Take risks
Venture into the unknown
Find omission in white
Spaces and
Blanks white men
Left for the marginalized to fill.

Create maps and take responsibility
For new land we claim as ours.
Omit and be aware
Omit and be aware
Experience

has
been
left
downstairs

Has been left
downstairs
For too long,
Far too long.
Take experiences out of
silence
and let it scream to the world

I AM HERE,
I AM NOT ALONE.

I'M HERE. LET YOUR COMFORT GO.
I'M HERE TO CHALLENGE,
GET READY, TO REAP WHAT YOU SOW.

I,
Leonel Torres Magaña Jr.
Swear on behalf of
myself
and
no
one
else
That I am a struggling
straight
Latino
cis-gendered male
Failing
to understand
completely, (or something close to that),
identities outside
myself.
I am
privileged
with

power
painted on fingertips of
opportunity
And take
pride in
poetry
telling stories of
broken promises,
Broken lives, in
a broken nation.

I, Vassar student
I, seeking to tell my story
You, trying to tell me
I can't
I, cannot hear you
I, will listen to those who believe
Those, who believe in rewriting history
Those, who reimagine what our future could be
And you, should
stop
trying to silence
us.
You, listen.
I, will speak.
Consider the P.O.C.
Consider the Parents Of Children of color
The Pueblo of Obscured Champions
Consider who you are not.

Look at skin
Look at parents
Hear the wealth
Listen to the words you don't say
Look at your community
Where are you safe?
Never,
is my answer.
But I always tell myself I am.
It is a lie I tell to myself too often.
You, rely too much on logic
And I, too much on emotions to ever
Let myself go.

Today, writing poetry has become
my life

My passion, mi vicio,
Por que yo estoy adicto
Al movimiento del
ritmo
Del rima
De nuestro clima
Del momento que tengo encima
El saber que hay varios que no me van a entender.
Let me go,
Let me let you into my life
Because we and I have so much more to offer
Than you think.

Logic says that fact is based on what's there

So what's there?

I see a desk full of
magazines of
poetry,
books &
notes

I see the efforts of a kid
flying across one nation, one land mass,
ready to share
his love for poetry.

I see a boy struggling
to understand what it means to be a man.

I see a book, *Maps of the Imagination*

Told to take risks,
To never fear the unknown.

Take maps and make maps
Leave us all in a state of relapse
Ready to relax and become great writers,
Mapping our own imagination.

But wait, maps were enforced by colonials
Preserving their right as imperials,
Never connecting the land to their souls

And leave us all
Set apart by imaginary lines,
Creating a new divide
Arbitrarily applied lines
That don't let me decide
What side

I can be on.
Map my imagination
Turchi, leave me with frustration

Drop names like bombs
Only comb in white spaces
That keep me thinking of traces
Of authors like Morrison,
Finney,
Grise,
Baraka,
Baldwin,
Ellison,
Diaz
And so many more
Left out
In a white writers' world
Attempting to forget it ever was unveiled.

Take me away.
Take me to a new world
Where I'm not in constant
War to defend my writing
My style
My way of life
So different from yours
So different from what I adore
And let me take all the ignorance,
Splice the privilege
away,
let
it
trickle
down
into
nothingness.
Let us all keep from compartmentalizing
What doesn't need a compartment
to be in
To be isolated
To be pushed away,
Stared at from a distance,
Let it all go.
Let your logic,
our experience,
my words
Become ours
now.
Let us look back

and always remember,
There's always more work to do.
Let us look back and say
We never began our existence with slavery
We never colonized people, took land, took families
Or brought coffins.
We remember what was left of a
former world,
And that this world will always
check
each other
Never let us fall
Never give us silence
Only give us what's priceless.
Become a family, a community
Left on fingertips, ready to move
And ready to do better.

Untitled

When I was young,
My mother had always taught me that
However fucked up a person can be to you,
You can show them you're compassionate
And eventually
they will understand.
This is why you see me in
silence rather than anger.
I have been raised to be calm and tame
In a world where silence
illustrates fear and subordination.

I can't handle dying winds
As it speaks words
Of wars that have never ended.
I stand on hollow graves
Seeing those who have died before me
Roll over in fear of what is to come.

In unspoken times,
I have brought myself to believe
I can make change in peers left unmarked
In oppression's sex, race and class
In my ability to speak while I understand
And understand while I reflect.

And I reflect and ask myself,
Why do I feel uncomfortable with anger that has its reasons?
Why does passion seem like anger?
And it all seems to me that our love is bent on frustrations
That knock over our composure enough to take care of business
And our business of being passionate is
rooted
in
the frustrations of our lives,
Told to survive
But never to love
And I know how romantic that
sounds
But what my brother has
taught me,

Is that you'll do anything for love
And a family is what gives us that love.

My brother, he has a wife, a one-year old
And married at 21.
Last week I bought his boy a LEGO Duplo Toddler
Build and Pull Along block set.
And in these days I see how fast our lives go,
How early
a new beginning
can occur
Without notice and
without
a clear future.

I come to a moment in time where I had a friend
Who fell tired of this tension between oppressed and oppressor
And how lives become much bigger than they are
And are corrupted or formed to fight against the power
Rather than just talk.
I never got to talking with my family until I left them
For a college on the opposite side of the country
That actually brought me closer than
I ever imagined
of being with them.

Now, I know my youth was never a waste of time
But a development of the time that
Manifests a body
in which I can understand you,
So let me understand who you are
And let the winds whisper a peaceful melody.

Rewind:

Reinscribe relished rallies.
Remember the rowdy rendering
Reeking of saliva sin
Burning my skin
Let the rattle rest

Read raspberry run on a rush,
A ruse.
It's a sham shard.

Let the shuffle scrap.
Leave radical limbs to loiter behind.
Leave little lines to lick to remind
Us to relive the relish in rewind
To, again, reinscribe rackets in really roaring raptures
Shot in shit, shivering lips for street sounds' sake in sin.

Let it satisfy
Let it reify
Let it ratify

The rowdy relish rallies that
Let us again, rewind
To remind us in rattling unrest to never resign
That we are still here

A letter to the privileged (white people):

Sometimes I get tired of those days
When we spread so much hate that it
Scares us half to death.
In bodies that are vessels to entities of oppression
Don't feel alarmed to be hated
Don't ever think you are intrinsically flawed
Because the oppressed hates the oppressor
Not as an individual,
But as an entity that manifests in you
You may have never stepped across explicit factions of violence
You may never even felt like you've oppressed someone
But you did, you have, and will do so for an extended amount of time
Now you have to understand that violence upon the oppressed
Has existed as reality.
It leaves cuts, bruises and scars that will never fade
Even centuries from now
Memories will exist
And families will persist
To continue to tell their story
As much as I will with my children
I embody oppressed and oppressor
Where silence breeds
And my past speaks in a melody
only understood by the people I face.
I am a heterosexual cis-male
I am mexicano americano
I am Chicano
And that breeds in sexism and power and influence
In my own community.
I am in between the lines
And on the margins.
I am oppressed and oppressor
I try to understand
That this world is not only mine.
This world is not only what I've been raised to see.
I have privilege and power,
I know that and I see,
That I am able to walk through, tolerate, survive and talk.
Interact.
I am blessed,
I am thankful.

You ought to be too,
But face the music because hate comes everywhere
And I lived on streets
where I once believed
the biggest threat was someone like me
with a gun
But I saw that the threat was not on the streets.
It was the white men in suits, not those in hoods
Because hoods hide fear and those in suits
Have no fear to look you down eye to eye
Paper to pen,
Only to keep you down with no remorse.
And now you, you tell me
That our language is violent.
It is the language that we've always wanted show
The one we never thought of bringing to the table
But you made us.
You brought us here
And our interactions bring in hate,
But a hate with a history
That is still being written
And I don't know where to begin.
I am too frustrated to speak and you are too offended to talk
And we ask ourselves what more is there?
How much more will you give up?
All I ask in the end is for you to
Start listening
Start reflecting
Start understanding our pain.
Come.
Listen.
Ask.
I am ready to speak.

The Madhatter's Curse

I crawl through the mighty arches of death
Straddling the sexual desires of each individual
And cry for pleasure.
The cracked teapot of despair leaks tears of blood.

To the world I constantly struggle in:
I glide through the obscure abyss.
The sky collides with the land.
The most living becomes the most dead.
The skeletal forms of life become carnal forms of death.
The infrastructure of the falling bridge comes back together.
The craving for what kills us reproduces our own idealistic nature of insanity.

Yells, screeches and cries,
Hawks, eagles, and the skies.
The problem is that skies do not cry through the land.
They yelp and scream through the thunderous claps of being.
A being that grows big and small,
To the minutest pleasure to the greatest desire.

Daggers and spikes fall into each film of our existence
The liars of man and woman
They create countless and boundless forms of nature
Different shapes that cause the mind to crumple,
Shrivel,
Leave the cerebral membrane
Oblivious.
Holes within infinite grace,
Infinite power,
It stares you down into the Underworld.
The most life-giving road to the AWESome Heaven.

A little boy stares down this fissure
Of doom and eternal hope
And he,
with we,
is confined to this one final destiny.
The life of being mortal,
The immortality of the individual.

We believe we create

We lie that we ruin
The sick happiness fills man's eyes
With a somber blindness
That makes life so opaque
And death so clear.
You take to a place of paradox
Where worlds collide,
My existence divides.
This subsistence we need
The deadness that we want
The hunger for change,
Our satisfaction for consistency
The anger that lies within.
It is only without that pleasure I exist.

And I die.

Where our love has become desire
And hate becomes disgust.
The river runs,
And the land stops to breathe...

It speaks pure silence.
Where the man is born,
The woman is dead
The jabberwocky shall be reborn,
And Hades does not deal with such desires

The boy stands in the darkness,
Unnatural life in the uncommon style.
This is when he meets with one,
He becomes one and all.
He stares away the mundane,
And the interesting becomes part of his blindness.
He sees no evil and captivates the good.
He makes nonsense create sense,
And our sense becomes nonsense.
We become the Cheshire being,
The feline nature we can no longer persist.

Why love has become the archangel of my creation!
The destruction of us all.
Deliver us from Evil.
Where greed and deceit remains
The deep and rightful passage of the Destroyer of all but nothing
The lawless and superficial is adored

The true passion's within,
The Mad hatter that truly is,
The god forgiven lies those falsely were

Musical talents
They are the failures of silence
The insanity within
The rationalization without
The war entrenching in my favor
The violent intrinsic nature I artificially spawn
And a disadvantage that love creates as it becomes sex
The dreadful desires of the clean and stoic nature
For there cannot be a single pinch of this mistaken ground
Where the skies are black and the land is white
The blues are violet and the greens are human
The red is water and the purple is fire
Higher
Higher in a hole of despair
Reaching for the pinnacles of ecstasy where there is no *Other*.
I finally collapse to the faint noise of silence.

Darkness ensues and all is well,
For the light has come
And I have left
The Godless desire and compromise
Where I find very few answers
Where souls roam,
no purpose.
The Mad hatter continues to live.
There is nothing left.
Through the immense conjuring of my weakness,
The world becomes numb and bare

And I explode,
Without my true nature.

Silence

The stars remain in the stage lights
The moon and sun kiss
brick walls with torn supermarket posters rot.
the fence becomes a jail cell and the stage is set.

In between moments of stage and intimacy
With dim lights,
White fades away,
you just might
share the story of worlds colliding
Experiences combining
To reflect
On my back.
Take picture after picture
And let the moments settle in.
Refract the moment.

Let it bounce back and change directions
Let sounds enter with affection.
Let every word rush in, settle in, and break.

Let the stage and you become one.
Watch, as you become the spotlight.
It doesn't seem right
But it's so right.
You, stepping on stage,
Only a representation of hollow streets,
Lost beats looking for a beating
Of boys in men's clothing,
No, boys in men's boasting
Of men never leaving their childhood,
Only pushed out.

And here you are,
On stage, a representation of

bricks

falling,

posters, rotting and young boys robbing

Never to know that they were robbed
before they laid base in the womb,
before they could call it their home.

Let the moon and sun kiss,
Leave space for the womb
Let children embody both sun and moon
Let the stage fill the gap.
Let the stars shine on jail cells,
The stage is set.
It is time for stories to be heard and told.

Take Steps

Take 4 steps

Look down and see your boots,
Brown etches and scars of a job not worth cutting through.
You wear USA shirts with holes and a blue bandana over your head.

Take 20 steps and wait by the roadside.

Wait,

take 3 steps upward into the bus and sit.

Take 20 steps in place, impatient of the impending desert of joblessness.

Take 3 steps out and arrive at the assembly line.

Take no steps.

Just stand.

Sort through tomato after tomato

Cucumber after cucumber

Potato after potato

Know that these will never be yours

Know that you throw away the decaying memories

Of the fruits of your labor,

The pesticidal potential pursed in hands pressed against your skin.

Allow them to give you life.

Take 3 steps into the bus and sit

Go home with one rotting potato

Slough off the rotten and cook dinner.

Let the estufa work for one more day.

Let your children be fed for one more day.

Let your roof made of lamina shelter you for one more day.

Run out of pesos and let the weight of it worry you for one more day.

Let the pesos in your jewelry box wait for one more day.

Take 10 steps,

collapse,

And sleep,

for one more day.

For one more day, repeat the process.

Take 50 steps that day.

Keep your steps to yourself.

Take 50 steps for every mistake you have made.

Take 50 steps until your boots fly off your feet,

Pleading that it can't take one more day.

You agree.

Go home.

Take 25 steps in a circle, back and forth,
Discuss with your partner,
Argue with your partner,
Yell at your partner,
Cry with your partner.
Embrace your partner,
for one more day.

Let each cheap brick that falls from your home
Tell you that one more day will be enough.
One more day and you will take 50 steps out of this home
And not know if you'll ever come back.
Ya me voy
Is all you can say.
Kiss your children goodbye.
Let them cry.
Don't cry.
Let your hands tell stories you never got to tell them.
Let your *manos de trabajador* bury memories into their hearts and minds.
Let them never forget.

Take 150 steps to the nearest city
Find coyotes that will take you across borders
Take you across *territorios* you never thought you'd leave.
Leave borders of civil war and a destruction you never wanted.
Let that civil war follow you.
Let flight be your motivation.
Let your family be your motivation.
Let *los estados unidos* be what you dream
Un estado unido
En un país vencido.

Take 20 steps forward to learn about the railroad tracks.
Let 20 steps not be enough for the people behind you.
Take 10 steps back and reach your hand out to help a fellow traveler come aboard.
Take 5 steps forward and sit on the running train.
Take 137 steps across the top of the freight train over 5 days.
Remember the 50 steps you took at home.
They were never enough.
Keep taking steps.
Never lose count.

Cross *cuatro estados*
Jalisco, the land of green,

The birthplace of Santo Toribio Romo
Santo que me bendiga este camino.
Sinaloa, the wrath of a cartel que no olvida,
Que no deja en paz al poblano.
See as you pass the railroad tracks,
how peaceful destruction inhabits a town
separated by railroad tracks,
How beautiful can it be to be safe but in danger at any moment.
Watch as humanos rezan a Malverde,
Besan a Malverde,
Crían a sus hijos con tanto amor y traen tanta destrucción
En nombre de sus niños,
en nombre de su lucha por la supervivencia.
Never forget how states and towns never get left in peace.
Pass Sonora,
A state formerly owned by the Yaqui natives,
Only to be left in memories through statues and plaques,
A México lost in translation
Una indígena to represent a whole nation.
You never forget.
You arrive at Baja California,
A Lower California,
A subordinate California,
Only becoming more and more similar to a rotting version of Upper California
Left to políticos to siphon the life and finances of the state.
Smell the shit pipes
Smell carne like
Smells are not safe here.
Be careful of what you eat, but enjoy every bite of it.
Remember home.

Remember that you are counting steps.
You have traveled over 930 miles, about 5 million steps.
Thank God you didn't take all those steps alone.
Take 20 steps to a coyote in Tijuana
The land where north and south meet
The dirt at your feet
Not so different where lines meet to keep you away from what you dream.
You don't know what it means,
Besides food for your family.
Take 7 steps onto a truck.
Buy 2 quezadillas.
Let it last you 3 days.
Take two steps back,
Away from dying child
Waiting for hunger to join in

and let La Santa Muerte creep in from the shadows.
Push the scythe away,
Let the skeletons become flesh.
Give the child one quesadilla.
Let one quesadilla last you three days.
The truck stops.
Take 17 steps outward,
See the sun shine on broken backs
Fighting for mended memories and revival.
Gaze upon the green hills,
Take two steps back,
A coyote yells,
Andale! Corre!
Run.
Sprint.
Too many steps to count.
165 steps down a hill,
Take 10 steps over the 6-foot fence,
Get barbed wire stuck onto your clothes.
Take them off,
Leave the USA shirt behind.
Take one step towards American soil,
One foot and arm still holding onto México
And see that the dirt isn't so different.
Take no steps.
Watch as DEA, ICE and Border Patrol are called the migra.
Let them fuse into one enemy.
Watch as you see the nation burning,
The house at your bedside yearning,
For you,
Realize that home was made this way by gabachos in war.
Let the steps take you back,
Take you to broken memories.
Five million and six hundred sixty six steps.
It's what got you here.
Five million and six hundred sixty six steps
You took away from family,
From the laminas and rotten potatoes
To the sorting, to the 50 steps you took everyday to work.
Gaze upon America, upon the lines made into borders
Upon the México that used to be
Look back at your children,
Look back at their smiles with dirt-covered faces
Wash the pain away from their eyes.
Do not let them live your childhood.
Glance back at the flag hanging above you in memory of a dream deferred,

A dream unanswered,
A dream shatters.
Take no steps.
Let the agents crowd you,
break free.
Live with me.
Take one step forward to survive.
Take steps to keep yourself alive,
For one more day.

Wars

We drive there every year
In the light of day
Passing the *parselas* of maize
The green John Deere *trilladoras*
Collect a good day's worth
But when the camouflage approaches,
It all goes dark.
The war ensues as the drug lords flee.

Bodies fall into an abyss
An endless hole within the eyes of hell
The red eyes of a heartless man
A drug lord with a hollow center.
He refuses to breathe the cool air of life,
Yet he protects his *Estacion Obispo*
With all of his might

He brings himself
Into the world,
Into my life,
A discreet family
Traveling back and forth,
Border to state
State to border,
Escaping every chance
At a mistake
Giving a daughter
An opportunity
To attend a university,
And make her life
Proper to thine own strife.

Who knows
Where they have been

No bullets to spare
For any molecule of oxygen
This man, fights with men
Just like him
Trading blood for drugs
Enticing many
To follow in his footsteps across the railroad tracks.

Even though the heartless man
Does not touch me
He coerces me to see
That I'm on a battlefield
With all those I love
Holding AK's,
Staring at the dead.
I shoot the eyes of reason
And leave ignorance behind,
Wounded
Crying for the gash on his leg,
Thankful that he is left alive.

He lives to crowd humans' minds
Another day
Feeding off all those
Who come in contact.
Ignorance is the heartless man
That seizes his day to control
Everyday haunts my memories:
Past, present and future.
The fear of the heartless man consumes me

We drive there every year
In the light of day
Passing the *parselas* of maize
And we fail to see the
Dead, damaged and vulnerable

Vuelos a lo olvidado

Por qué no hay ni un momento que no dejo lo olvidado?
Yo quiero volar al cielo y olvidar este momento.
No hay modo de platicar,
No hay modo de hacerlos entender la herida abierta.
No hay modo de invitarlos sin hacerme daño.

Let them enter,
understand the herida
La herida que sangra con experiencias de familia,
De sangre liviana.
Soy de sangre liviana
Tan liviana que me quiere elevar a otro mundo.
I am light in blood, but heavy in words
Words that never fade away,
Words that never want to live in silence
Leave in silence
Breathe in silence
They want to flee,
From,
silence.

Silence is what's bred
on a farm not too far away from the dirt roads,
the open pastures.
Silence breeds and understands the void
The missing from one
The resistance by others.
My silence has no friend,
but desires to exist no more.

Let the blood trickle down onto my navel
And accept the herida
Let the open wound be a welcoming.
Welcome the times and fight the crimes
Trying to live in this colorblind sublime.
Let the herida teach you,
Let it breathe its sorrow and neglect.
Let the sangre lift you,
Let it steal you from home
And let you realize you never left home,
But that you never were at home.

Leave home alone...

The herida is a place of welcoming,
it is a place of dead bodies,
flesh feathering fingers from prodding
observation and exploitation
Do not let the herida bleed more than it has to.
Let sangre liviana lift you.

Let it welcome visitors,
But protect itself from becoming a prisoner,
Another dead body on this open wound.
Don't let the corpses pile up,
Don't let the herida be left alone.
The herida that I live in,
Breathe in,
Fight in,
See in,
And be.

All I wanted was a vuelo to the olvidado,
Una búsqueda de lo que he dejado,
Un reconocimiento del pasado,
Que nunca vamos a dejar abandonado.

Hay que volar no?

I am so privileged and honored to finish this collection. It has been a struggle between vulnerability and awareness of my own privilege in this writing space. I took risks and this collection has taught me that there's only more work to be done. I have brought pieces, new and old, into a collection that works to be better, to get better and learn. It continually tells me that I need to work to an activist and a performer that pushes beyond the limits and writes for myself because that is what makes a revolutionary writer exist. The anger and love that exists in these pieces makes me want to continually love and to continually give.

This collection has been about me and the people who surround me. I speak through them and hopefully to them so I may begin a better future with them. My desires are to love, to teach, to care and to inspire. This collection has helped me do so and I hope at least one poem you can take along with you, in your pocket and look back at the circumstances and see how much you've grown and how we've all grown. We must not leave the forgotten. We must not leave our people behind. We must build together and create a better community. We need to do better, to be better.

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