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Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

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Collection of Poetry: Literacy, Bridge a Dream, The Border to Me

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Literacy

Literacy

“Please don’t tell anyone

My husband beats me...

I am undocumented, I don’t speak English...

And my child, el pobrecito, thinks he’s the only one who can defend me

He thinks he’s the man of the house...”

His eyes get lost on the spotless white wall,

Wondering if his dad got home...

Yelling in that cursed language his mom can’t understand,

Language becomes a violent beast coming out of his dad’s mouth.

A monster that smells like alcohol and burnt tires,

Feels like broken glass, blood... and fear,

And he ain’t there to stop it.

What if his mom is calling him for help... in Spanish?

And he’s there instead,

Encased amongst all this English and them four pristine white walls,

“What are these letters good for if they won’t save my mom...” he thinks.

A teacher tells him

That he should learn how to read in English...

He then could teach his mom,

And one day, she could defend herself from the beast.

He devours below-his-grade-level books.

Each letter: a weapon.

Each word: a shield.

And he begins to believe that through knowledge, he could save her.

Every time he writes a word

He imagines himself as a victorious warrior,

The beast is tamed,

And his mom will one day be safe.

Yesterday, he smuggled words inside his old, torn backpack,

Stole a fruit cup and the entire alphabet, taking them home.

“Here, ama, this is for you!

One day, you’ll talk so much English, you’ll be free.”

Bridge a Dream

A shadow we become in the midst of promise and peril.

A tingling voice fed by the imaginary monster of hope and prosperity.

They sell us a dream from which constant rude and lethargic awakenings auction us to the highest bidder.

We are political bargaining chips, fillers, collateral, surplus aims, and aspirations.

We are worth our blood but never true citizenship, but what does citizenship mean when our siblings are murdered with no consequence?

Quickly, some of us fantasize about trading fences and walls for humanity.

Ignoring that the very potion that will hold those borders together is our flesh and the dreams of our children.

I always hoped for more out of this narrative, some sort of comedic relief or an alternative ending. But I'm just sitting here in this never-ending opera with horrible singing and beer.

II.

Aquí, behind this rock I call my safe voice, I stay rooting for you. I just don't have it in me. The more crumbs we get, the closer we are to the cake, but if you get the bakery, I promise you I'll be your cashier, plus I love cheesecake.

Waiting games... I don't recall the last time you looked at me. Can you stamp me, please?
Something within me still longs to be free, and I don't know what to do.

Fear of repatriation, when there's really no country for you, you nationless, culturally ambiguous neoliberal residue.

One day, they will ask me to speak. I will walk slowly towards the podium as people await to hear what I have to say. They imagine I'll sing an anthology of resilience, but instead I'll just say, "ya pa' que!"

The Border to Me

The border to me is constant anguish,
A big pause button,
Often in dreams, I dream of Mexico as my lover
And he waits for me,
And waits.
The border to me is my grandma's rosary,
She said she'd hold on until I could go back,
Until she couldn't.
I recently found out that for years she'd scold my cousins for using my table games. "He's coming back,
and he'll ask for them..."
And she'd save them in her old, rusty closet.
The border to me is a big pause button,
I often dream of going back,
Who will I be then, when I hit play?
Who will I speak with to recover my grandmother's prayers?
To collect 12 years of unclaimed hugs,
All the wrinkles and gray hairs I missed in her hair,
And every step, I couldn't walk by her.
But one day I will cross back,
In the middle of songs and candles, I will conjure her spirit,
And I will look in the back of that old closet
Where she saved my table games
And there I will find her love
And her songs, her advice, her songs,
And the little pieces she left for me, hidden for me,
When she envisioned the day
That this pause would be over.