FLORICANTO
EN
MICAYAN

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I leave my Polk District apartment and drive through the tunnel under Russian Hill on Broadway, where the sidewalks are covered with ants in Brooks Bros. clothing, computers with simple black brief cases, fancy umbrellas in hand, wearing good old slick loafers to get you down to Montgomery Street, the richest street on the West Coast. I cast a glance or two at the giant pictures of zoftig girls with silicone boobs, Carol Doda and The Persian Lamb who chained herself to the Golden Gate Bridge rather than leave her husband—all coming at me from the fronts of tourist traps, Topless Joints with fat Filipino barkers dragging in the customers out for a score or at least a hard-on. . . .

I speak as a historian, a recorder of events with a sour stomach. I have no love for memories of the past. Ginsberg and those coffee houses with hungry-looking guitar players never did mean shit to me. They never took their drinking seriously. And the fact of the matter is that they got what was coming to them. It’s their tough luck if they ran out and got on the road with bums like Kerouac, then came back a few years later with their hair longer and fucking marijuana up their asses, shouting Love and Peace and Pot. And still broke as ever.
O

huele a orejones
higos y a noviembre
mayo 1978

la brújula apunta
rumbo a hojarasca
noroeste seco olor cebolla
ciruela pasa
chilecolgado desde el marco de la puerta
y arena en remolino
virador de sol
noche despoblada
de colores que se van
cambiándose de casa
desde nube
hasta brasa que relumbra entre cenizas
y en austero recóndito zaguán
un pinche ruco teporocho
mastic ya de nieve
temblorina
y el abrigo lanudo que le cuelga a los tobillos
FRANCISCO X. ALARCÓN

DIALECTICA

para el mundo
no somos nada
pero aquí juntos
tú y yo
somos el mundo

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The U.S.-Mexican border is an open wound where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.

We are the holy relics,
The scattered bones of a saint,
The best loved bones of Spain.
We seek each other.
Me acuerdo que haciendo pucheros, salí yo de mi Santo Hogar a pasar trabajos... fíjate nomas, alma mía de tu alma... a cuidar de un rebaño de borregas por un amigo de la familia, mi padrino, quien la plebe —güeno yo jui, perdóneme padrino... Dios lo tenga en la gloria— por sobrenombre le tenían puesto Antonio Largo.

Como éramos tan pobrecitos, la pasábamos con greve. Hasta salí descalzo del chante al jale. Pero antes de salir del nido en rumbo de las Tuzas, con mis pantaloncitos rotos y descosidos en las nalgas, cachetes caspudos y ojos llorosos, me acerqué a mi madre querida. La miré con sus argollas lucientes e inocentes y la abracé juertemente. Quién iba a pensar... güeno... asina es la vida.
White, from white Mictlan, south, to Xopan, to Tenochtitlan,
"Nosotros descendimos hasta el río impasible, nosotros de piel roja, buscando la señal: una isla en las montañas, en las nubes claras de águilas, la serpiente despeñada, el nopal antípoda.
A una isla mixtitlan, a la isla mixtitlan, dimos el nombre Isla Xochitepec."
From Aztlán, the word made motion, tentli, yollotl, yolotia,
to eagle, to snake, to cactus, each black.
What good were books if people insisted on being so mean? And what good was studying if no one gave you any credit for knowing anything? She knew she could learn anything she set her mind to. She knew she could get all the good grades she wanted to, just by concentrating.
el día que regreses
jugaré con tu pelo
mientras leas mi último poema,
y ligeramente besaré
las yemas de los dedos
de tu mano derecha,
sin pensar que es la misma
que ahora detiene una pluma
y va dibujando mil cartas
Ese!
Ruega por nosotros
Jefito de Chuy
Ruega por nosotros
Bato de Aquella
Ruega por nosotros
Bato Loco
Ruega por nosotros
Bato Escuadra
Ruega por nosotros
Bato Alivianado
Ruega por nosotros
Bato butí suave
Ruega por nosotros
Bato que se manda
Ruega por nosotros
Bato que se avienta
Ruega por nosotros
Cuate de mi tierra
Ruega por nosotros
Cuate de mi barrio
Ruega por nosotros
Carnis de Carnales
Ruega por nosotros
Cholo de San Anto
Ruega por nosotros
Cholo del Chuko
Ruega por nosotros
Cholo de Sacra
Ruega por nosotros
Cholo de Los
Ruega por nosotros
Cholo de Sanjó
Ruega por nosotros
De los aracles
Libranos, Señor
De los gabas
Libranos, Señor
De la migra
Libranos, Señor
De los tecatos
Libranos, Señor
De lo gacho
Libranos, Señor
De la jura
Libranos, Señor
De los vendidos
Libranos, Señor

Pinto de mi cora
Libranos, Señor
Talón de mi cora
Libranos, Señor
Jecalero de mi cora
Libranos, Señor
Jefe de la Divina Tónica
Libranos, Señor
Compa y Camarada
Libranos, Señor
Padrino del divino bolo
Libranos, Señor
Bato de mi raza
Libranos, Señor

Amén y Con Safos

José Antonio Burciaga

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i’m the barnacle on your conch shell

i scream, i hate you

Cihuacoatl

i really meant to kiss you goodbye
i didn’t know my teeth would sink thru your cheek

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UNSCALED FORTRESS is a story about you, the Reader. Based on actual events, this narrative takes you to that era and introduces you to the actors who actually were involved in the making of history. In this fictional adventure you will meet characters, who could have perhaps existed and participated—who having existed, might have helped alter the course of history in that particular region.
The Sphinx of this our age is gentle-formed and sweet

Not only in her woman’s face and breast, for she

Is all Eve’s daughter to her feet.

Whatever there may be of lioness

Is energy;

Whatever wings, a hovering loveliness

Heedless of need for leaning hard on pedestal of stone.
In the high Sierras
Night comes quickly;
The tall Pines
And the
Taller Mountains
Sing to me:

Solitude can be
The greatest company!

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Cinco días
es poco tiempo
para compartir con nosotros
tu gran amor de grabador

Oh maestro del buril
dador de la línea exacta
autor de textura que canta

en cambio
nosotros ya grabamos
en nuestras mentes
tu bosque que duerme
que abraza
tu taller de maravillas
donde sueña la imagen profunda
para despertar en tu mano
la obra
Diosdada

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stupid america, see that chicano
with a big knife
in his steady hand
he doesn't want to knife you
he wants to sit on a bench
and carve christ figures
but you won't let him.
stupid america, hear that chicano
shouting curses on the street
he is a poet
without paper and pencil
and since he cannot write
he will explode.
stupid america, remember that chicanito
flunking math and english
he is the picasso
of your western states
but he will die
with one thousand masterpieces
hanging only from his mind
Our family library began in that shop. My mother bought a paperback novel called *The Countess with the Black Gloves* and for me my first book, *The Tales of Uncle Tonche*, who seemed to have lived everywhere and knew all sorts of people, including, as I found to my delight Pipila. Tio Tonche added some details about his singlehanded attack on the Spanish fortress that Don Salvador had omitted. When I mentioned these details at school my classmates allowed me some modest recognition as an historian.

Ernesto Galarza, *Barrio Boy*
Pete was huddled up in a corner of the foxhole, a tablet of writing paper stained with melted snow, sweat and mud resting on his lap. He was writing a letter home. Yank wondered what he was writing. Was he telling mama what a hard day her pobrecito—her poor little boy had had? Was he describing all that noise and smoke and flame, the cracked bones and the lacerated faces and extremities and the punctured flesh, the blood welling up and spilling over the jagged rims of the wounds? Was he writing about the still, pale corpses from which no blood was flowing? Or did he merely scribble some vapid nonsense about how different the weather in Germany was from that of sunny New Mexico and about how nourishing the food was, although it could not quite compare with mama's cooking?
My voiceflower
Here are your five songs
My birdflower
Tree humming through the night
Eyes rimmed with lashes
Giving birth to the rain’s dark hands
Here is your body beside me
Your sweat like moonlight’s snails
My bleeding-rainbow flower
My whitestoneflower
Your lover travels through your dream to find you
Singing
Child of flowers
Sweet one that you are, my own:
Here
This is where I am
I am here

Mi flor de voces
Tienes cinco canciones
Mi flor de pájaros
Tu arbol zumbando la noche
Mi flor de pestañas
Dando nacer a las manos oscuras de la lluvia
Mi flor de cuerpo desnudo
Tu sudor los caracoles de la luz de luna
Mi flor de arcoírises que sangran
Mi flor de piedras blancas
Tu amante camina a través de tu sueño, buscándote
Te está cantando, mi niña de flores
Mi niña, mi niña de flores
Estoy aquí, estoy aquí, estoy aquí

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cuando le pongo agua tibia
a la piedra imán
 tienes las venas
de las manos
 como los cielos azules de corea
cuando limpio con algodón
la piedra imán
 3 cuervos se pelean
 en la galería
cuando le saco filo al azadón
con la piedra imán
la boca del estómago
 se hace una mándala
cuando le doy de comer arroz y frijol
a la piedra imán
llemo tu corazón con besos calientes

CECILIO

GARCÍA-

CAMARILLO

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I am Joaquin
Lost in a world of confusion,
Caught up in a whirl of a gringo society,
Confused by the rules,
Scorned by attitudes,
Suppressed by manipulations,
And destroyed by modern society.

My fathers have lost the economic battle and won the struggle of cultural survival.
And now!
I must choose
Between the paradox of Victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger
Or
to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis, sterilization of the soul and a full stomach.

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A photograph of Mama Chona and her grandson Miguel Angel—Miguel Chico or Mickie to his family—hovers above his head on the study wall beside the glass doors that open out into the garden. When Miguel Chico sits at his desk, he glances up at it occasionally without noticing it, looking through it rather than at it. It was taken in the early years of World War II by an old Mexican photographer who wandered up and down the border town’s main street on the American side. No one knows how it found its way back to them, for Miguel Chico’s grandmother never spoke to strangers. She and the child are walking hand in hand. Mama Chona is wearing a black ankle-length dress with a white lace collar and he is in a short-sleeved light-colored summer suit with short pants. In the middle of the Street life around them, they are looking straight ahead, intensely preoccupied, almost worried. They seem in a great hurry.
El retorno
Paráfrasis de una poesía de D. H. Lawrence

En el oeste
más allá del fulgor
de la caída del sol
en el silencio
donde nacen las aguas
donde los vientos se levantan
en paz duermo yo
Quetzalcóatl

El sol
ventana abierta
a la cueva ojo oscuro
al lugar
donde nacen las aguas
donde los vientos se levantan

En las aguas
en las aguas del más allá
de nuevo me levanto
para ver una estrella que cae
y sentir sobre el rostro

el aliento
el aliento que dice ¡anda!
y he aquí
que ya vengo

la estrella que cae
se esfuma, se muere
la oigo cantar como pájaro
herido

Me llamo Ojo sin centro
soy hijo de Coyolxauhqui
vuelvo a Aztlán

Mi madre, la Luna
es oscura
Oh maestro Quetzalcóatl
deten a NaNauatzin
átalo con sombras
mientras paso
mientras llego
a mi casa
a Aztlán

Luis Leal

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Durante dos horas me investigaron y yo les relaté toda la historia de nuestra lucha por la tierra, el contenido del Tratado de Guadalupe, el robo de nuestras tierras y la razón de ser de la caravana. Todo lo pusieron por escrito y luego me pidieron que lo firmara. No había allí nada secreto, y quería que ellos también conocieran la triste historia de los mexicanos abandonados en los Estados Unidos. Como a las dos horas, vino un personaje que a mí me pareció muy presumido. Me leyó partes de algún Código y luego predicó por 15 minutos.
ODE TO LOS LIBROTraficantes

You carry books as you roll along in your caravan through Texas, New Mexico, and on to Arizona. You are the most dangerous caravan in America.

Once your ancestors crossed the Rio Grande, their bodies wet from the swirling water, the sweat running down their backs. Now you carry wet books in your caravan, books dripping with wisdom. You are the most dangerous caravan in America.

You scatter books in underground libraries along the highways of the Southwest. You are lighting the fires of imagination in young minds of all cultures along your route. You are the most dangerous caravan in America.

Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Las Cruces, 'Burque, and on to Tucson where the San Patricios await you! Irishmen who fought for Mexicanos in the Mexican American War now hover like a ghost army of justice over your caravan to remind all people to learn, to share, to love books like members of your own family.

Inquisitors of Arizona, beware. You are not welcome anywhere. A caravan of librotraficantes is rolling intellectual thunder your way. It is the most dangerous caravan in America on a mission to bring illegal wet books to your students so they may see the world through eyes clear, intelligent, and free.

Inquisitors of Arizona, you lock up books. Inquisitors of Arizona, you invade the classroom. Inquisitors of Arizona, you bully young students. Inquisitors of Arizona, you missed the news: Inquisitors went out of style centuries ago.

Books have been, are, always will be illegal aliens, illegal immigrants, undocumented ideas to light up the visions that make us human.

Inquisitors of Arizona and elsewhere: First you ban cultures. Then you ban books. Then you stoke the ovens to burn the books. Then you stoke the ovens to burn the people who love the books. But not this time.

Librotraficantes you are the most dangerous caravan in America the most dangerous caravan in America the most dangerous caravan in America

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When I first received your file, the first reports showed a man not unlike myself. Your file grew thicker each day and with each report, I saw a different facet of your personality, and there were photographs. I have the elaborate physical changes you went through to conceal your travels. I received extended reports on all of your contacts throughout South America.
Mistakes as perfect as the sudden veer on the freeway, when the car brakes sink and metal and flesh embrace in dance are even now being inked in the newspapers, their measurements cut in the black blood of print.
Su corazón de poeta anhelante del misterio que no se alcanza, contemplaba en el páramo la evidencia que no se revela a la conciencia,
No se me duerman señores
póngame mucha atención
y escuchen todos mis versos
me salen del corazón
i am limping again
across the huge cracks
in the concrete city
i call home. it's wet,
rain falling for days,
car fumes turning purple
in the night.
light bouncing
off puddles created
by a boy's
despair
as he kicks it
with his friends
in front of the shop-and-go
by radio park, on the corner
of Clinton and first streets,
where they killed louie,
where lion puts his mark
in beautiful graffiti growling
in reds and yellows
as you drive by the bus
stop and telephone poles
and fences or whatever else
he can tag his hope on.
Allá North of Norte lies Mexicantown!
And just to the South--simón! Al sur--
Just across the Detroit River is Canada--
“Acá, nada!” But that one is Valdez’s
Line. Yet, the irony is sweet, even somehow
Grotesque--how a meandering river calls
The shots and deconstructs the boundaries--
South of the border, down Canada, güey!
Y en el barrio La Casa De La Unidad
Lives life and they’re dead serious alzando
Altars in that humorous Chicano way
That by its virtue fits right into the
Mix of Indios, Sava Truchas, Nicas,
Borinquéns and even a Polaco or two Y
Hasta ‘renchans como en Fresno’n an
Arab desde Lebanon long ago--now from
Mexicantown, yastoon stone Spaniard
Dishishanized, Q-bo!--el Manolo de Sevilla--
Could’a ridden with Villa the way he has
Assumed--been consumed--by Mexica lore
And could have been en los campos de Albisu
The way he talks ‘bout and embraces Boricua
Ways and tolerates con ganas al Tato and the
Neoricans and turns that whole John Wayne
State of affairs al revez!

But meanwhile back to the magical gloom of
Motown with its sense of Oakland and Stockton
Califas Noir--You should visit Cleveland, they
told me, now that’s devastation--But over in
Mexicantown Urban decay is bloomin’ The Ollin
has come Full circle--the north is to the south!
The core of survival--Qué curada!
And so how did it come to be? Why we
Had gone so far North we wound up facing
South and the wetbacks were pouring in
From Ontario! How, indeed? Well, blame
For one the need for jales, cameo--and ol’
Michigan Central--la estación del deepo which
Was, after all, the end of the line and there
Before us, prone to miracles as we are, stood
The Holy Trinity waiting to be liberated from
The Irish y con el tiempo y un ganchito La
Santiísimna Trinidad began preparing us for
Such Gava things as the great depression,
Diego and Freida, deportations and await orders
From Tata Cardenas, who, incidently, had just
Booted out the foreign industrialists del Terre,
So gear up for hard times, Raza! Formen sus
comiteses y sus honorificas--preparense, Tata
said.
And so, enflorosio la fé, la cultura y las fiestas--
Y hoy en día Chicano murals liberate old Cadillac
Plants--Simón, that far north, er, south...

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No ha caído en tierra infértil
la semilla que sembraste
y que regada está con sangre;
lo que echaste tú a los mares
sobre las inquietas aguas
llegará a la playa un día.
Whether you carry a gun, a peace sign, a law book, a medical bag or a book of God, if your mind is closed, your ashes are still not going to be better than mine.
Fito admired the fact that she had read so many books and had educated herself beyond anyone he knew in the barrio. Not with schooling, although she had graduated from high school. What Fito saw in her as a form of education that was a kind of madness. The reading of too many books had grown into a madness, and that madness had grown wings. These wings took her to places she dared not go before. She visited libraries, museums, and free concerts by herself.

It was a slab the size of a writing tablet. Miguel knew what he had to do. He raised himself and made his way gingerly to the middle of the maze where the objects were. He took one jar and handed it to Felipe; then he took the other two jars and gave them to Diego and Sergio. He then picked up the slab and handed it to Lalo who took it with great care. Then, Miguel walked back to where the other boys sat holding the objects with one hand.
Siempre venía vendiendo sus poemas. Se le acababan casi para el primer día porque en los poemas se encontraban los nombres de la gente del pueblo. Y cuando los leía en voz alta era algo emocionante y serio. Recuerdo que una vez le dijo a la raza que leyeran los poemas en voz alta porque la voz era la semilla del amor en la oscuridad.

Please support this initiative (a USPS stamp honoring Rivera) at facebook.com/tomasriverastamp

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Bemal Diaz gives their colors and the names of the most outstanding. Two were of the famed Valenzuela breed of Spain. There were El Harriero, the Driver; Motilla, Little Tuft; El Romo, the Roman Nosed One; La Rabona, the Rat-tailed One (she was the 'good gray mare' of Velasquez de Leon). La Rabona was probably an appaloosa because the rat, or stub tail, is a characteristic of that type of horse, and prevails on the appaloosa from Tierra del Fuego through South America, Mexico and western United States to Canada. Diaz called her a gray; but there are many shades of gray and some of the appaloosas are a mottled color which closely approaches, or is, gray. The 'blunt old soldier' says of La Rabona, 'when the battle was going against the Spaniards and the men were weakening, Velasquez de Leon would appear on his good gray mare, and the men would take courage.
It was many years ago, about as far south in Texas as you can get, right on the edge of the Rio Grande River. I had gone there from California to do fieldwork for my degree in anthropology. At first, one of my professors did not want me to go. It was to be a study of a small community comprised of people of Mexican ancestry, and the professor said that I could not be objective because I was born in Mexico. I would be too involved, he said, and I would not be scientific. To this I replied that if it were true that one could not study one’s own people, then virtually all sociologists in the United States, as well as all historians of American history, should be dismissed immediately. He said that was different. I went to Texas anyway.
Just as Nacho lay down to read a book in his new house, along came the hungry wolf, José.

He looked in the window and said, “Nacho, Nacho, let me come in.”

And Nacho replied, “No way, José! I won’t let you come in – not by the hairs on my chinny-chin-chin.”

[Image of a book cover]
...and in the shape of death
the poem eats at her belly,
asking where do we die
and where do we sleep
now that fantasy has been
buried so skillfully.
THE ART FORM OF OUR SLUMS
MORE MEANINGFUL & SIGNIFICANT THAN ITS APPEARANCE IS FINEST
HIEROGLYPHICS.

VIAJE / TRIP
raúl r. salinas

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and you would die, my father,
before my next release,
ever to hold a book of mine
y junté colores pa’ escribirles
una poesía bien pintada
Fuí al río y junté su voz: ritmos y sonidos
que a la poesía le dan vida.
Sali al sol de la mañana y junté el calor
pa’ hacerles una poesía calurosa…

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The sun was glowing a fierce fiery red. Marta faced it solemnly as if in prayer. She closed her eyes to see the sun through her eyelids and concentrated on its positive energy to create, to nurture, to restore life to a frozen earth. She made time stand still for her as she communicated with the lifegiver. Then, opening her eyes, the first thing she looked upon was a sand painting, one that hadn’t been disarranged. It was a painting of the sun, its rays striking a symbol for a plant, one for an animal, and one for a man. The old man wasn’t watching when she lifted a pebble of sand from the outside of the painting and dropped it in its center.
I kept the poems in a Pee-Chee folder. Three poems written on college rule paper 'cause that way they looked longer. One of them I wrote in math lab, the other in the quad during my lunch hour and the third one I wrote when Paul R. broke up with me and I had nothing else to do that Friday night. Okay, so I wasn't no Jewel and my parents worked too hard to keep me from living in any ol' van, but I was pretty proud of the poems.
en lugar de sueños
solamente
nos quedan pesadillas.
dime carnal
dónde están
aquellos revolucionarios
Tu-Fu, al caminar junto a un río congelado, en la flor de la edad, se perdió en la belleza de los cerezos, del mundo silencioso de la noche, de los luceros inescrutos. No sé si haya escrito un poema al llegar a casa, versos de plenitud, de furiosa claridad.
Vierte la vena y la esencia en mi verso abierto y vacío.
Convierte mi verbo en vida nueva,
y en sueño vivido y despierto.
a slippage of legs
through the cracked edges
to nourish the mind
of the poet who wonders
the awkwardness
of his existence.
Mamá, do you know what happens to me when I read? All those hours that I sit, as you sometimes say, ‘ruining my eyes’? If I do ruin them, it would be worth it, for I do not need eyes where I go then. I travel, Mamá. I travel all over the world, and sometimes out of this whole universe, and I go back in time and again forward. I do not know I am here, and I do not care. I am always thinking of you and my father except when I read. Nothing is important to me then, and I even forget that I am going to die sometime.
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