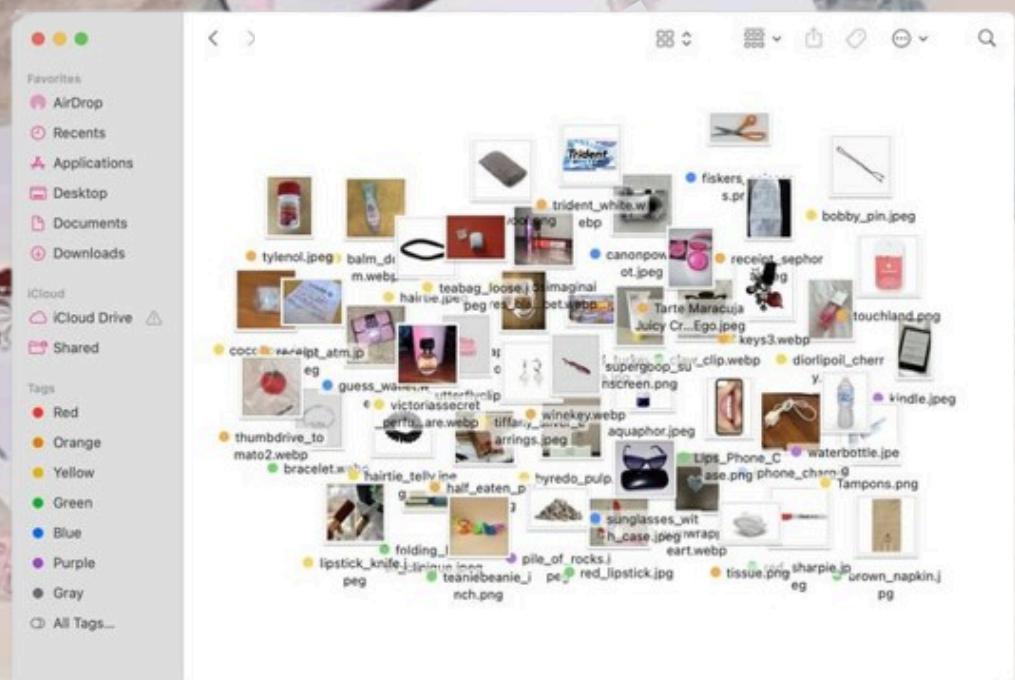


# Published Writings by Marie Anne Arreola *Selected Works, 2022- Present*



Marie x

# About Marie Anne Arreola

Marie Anne Arreola is a bilingual writer, editor, and arts manager whose work exists at the intersection of poetic narrative, cultural criticism, and digital storytelling. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of VOCES, a bilingual digital platform that amplifies emerging and established voices across literature, design, fashion, and music. Under her leadership, VOCES has produced over 40 in-depth interviews with international creatives, including viral influencers, visual artists, and cultural critics, exploring themes of identity, memory, and artistic resistance.

Her writing combines lyrical prose with investigative depth, reflecting on how grassroots artistic expression confronts systems of patriarchy, displacement, and cultural elitism. Marie Anne's bilingual work has been published widely across North America, Latin America, Europe, and Oceania. She is a two-time finalist for the Francisco Ruiz Udiel Latin American Poetry Prize, winner of the Plumas en Ciernes Short Story Prize, and recipient of the 2024 Young Poets Scholarship from Fundación Gutiérrez Lozano. Her work has been recognized internationally for its contribution to contemporary Mexican poetry and literary activism, raising social awareness through poetic language.

Marie Anne holds a B.A. in Arts Management and has pursued formal training in cinematic photography, film production, screenwriting, and journalistic poetry. Her creative practice spans lyric essays, cultural features, and short-form video concepts, often blending memoir with critical reflection.

She is the author of the debut novel *Sparks of the Liberating Spirit Who Trapped Us Back in Woodstock* (Foreshore Publishing, UK), a finalist for the Francisco Ruiz Udiel Latin American Poetry Prize.

Her work blends magical realism with poetic prose to explore themes of memory, resistance, and collective liberation.



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# A letter from Marie

X

This digital book gathers the work I have published since 2022—a constellation of essays, poems, and fragments tracing how language has carried me through joy, loss, memory, and reinvention. It is both an archive and a threshold: an archive because each piece marks a step in my creative and intellectual journey, and a threshold because they open outward toward new dialogues and possibilities. I want to begin with gratitude. Writing is often imagined as solitary, but every piece that reaches the world does so through the trust and care of others. I am deeply indebted to the editors, professors, colleagues, and readers who have made space for my words across borders. To Professor Javier Gutiérrez Lozano, Albert Brandt, Primavera Encinas, Fernando Valverde, José Paz Rivas, Grace Rojas, Phil M. Shirley, Monserrat Flores, Cristina Escobar, Michell Ortiz, Claudia Ramírez Lomeli, Manuel Parra, Ximena Flores and Cristian Islas—thank you for mentoring, collaborating, and believing in my work. Your support has shown me that literature is not only about solitary expression, but about building a community of voices.

This collection is also a testament to the quiet but transformative labor of independent and university presses. In a landscape often driven by speed and marketability, these spaces remain committed to experimentation, risk, and freedom of expression. They remind us that free speech is not abstract but a practice sustained by editors and publishers who open doors for emerging writers. They do not simply publish; they cultivate possibility.

The journals and presses that welcomed this body of work include Aster Lit, Salt Lake City Community College Review, Dodging the Rain Literary Journal, Chapter House Journal, Waymark Literary Journal, WILDSOUND Festival, Rowayat Review, San Diego Poetry Annual, Torrey House Press, Wingless Dreamer Publisher, Valparaíso Ediciones, FJORDS Review, The B'K Magazine, University of Houston, Meniscus Literary Journal, Plumas En Ciernes, and Lucky Jefferson. Each represents not just publication, but connection: conversations across geographies that remind us words can travel farther than we ever imagine.

To my readers! ❤️ thank you for arriving here. Whether you've followed my work through these publications or are encountering it for the first time, this zine is offered as a gift. If you are a writer yourself, I hope these pages encourage you to share your voice. Independent journals thrive because people take that risk, because we dare to believe that words matter. This collection is, finally, a bridge: between past and future work, solitude and community, my voice and yours. Thank you for crossing it with me.

Marie  
Anne. A





## PRESS

"Marie Anne's work embodies the silenced lives of women victims of femicide in Latin America, raising global awareness about oppression, the absence of legal action, and the sociopolitical reality produced by these crimes that have become an everyday reality throughout Mexico."

– Mortal Magazine

"Marie is a gifted storyteller whose bold and inventive writing illuminates and expands our understanding of the physical and spiritual world in which we live."

– Phil M. Shirley, Foreshore Publishing, UK

"Once again, Marie Anne manages to unveil the everyday. Her written word materializes what every human being perceives unconsciously. In a world where each day overtakes the one before it, where natural sounds and landscapes are on the verge of extinction, where humans privilege the use of emojis and abbreviations, her poetry is a mirror that reflects what we see without pausing to look."

– Revista Digital Cinco Pétalos

"Her fiction succeeds on many levels, as it focuses on our roots in Northern México. It becomes inevitable to mention agriculture as one of the foundations of family economy, especially in earlier times."

– Revista Perlas del Desierto

"As a Mexican writer, Marie brings to her work the energy of a pioneer for the Latin American community, and the voice of an activist on behalf of poetry, creativity, and spirituality."

– Wingless Dreamer Publisher

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# "Are we ever the same person twice?" Aster Lit Honorable Mention

TW: paranoia, failure, existential dread, tangled neurons, fangled neurons, viscous boundaries, dystopian landscapes, parallel universes, breath-holding, death-beholding, and the type of love that makes you speak in tongues or fall silent completely. What are we really doing when we hug? Are we testing the tensile strength of skin? Measuring the radius of absence between two people? I keep thinking it's a ritual. A ceremony not just of connection but containment; a way of cradling the unspeakable without letting it leak. Did I say unspeakable horrors? Because that's what this is about. That tight-chested moment of intimacy when you're holding someone who doesn't know how to say, I think I'm unraveling, but you feel it anyway. The silent sobs that show up in the neck, in the way their hands rest not on your back but against it, as if touch itself is a decision they're trying to survive.

I have wanted, more than once, to unzip my lover's skull and walk in with a flashlight.

Cartoon plumber style. Blue overalls, rubber gloves, a toolbox full of nervous jokes and sugar packets. Not to fix him, just to look around. Dust the attic corners. Light some candles. Scribble something on a post-it and stick it on the hippocampus. But how do you love a clump of synapses that fire like fireworks in a hurricane? That confuses hunger with grief, joy with warning bells? The science offers neat lines and graphs – "what fires together wires together" – as if brains are code, not narrative. As if a human being were a flowchart instead of a flickering, half-remembered prayer. Spoiler: the melding of souls is final.



Or maybe just a hoax. I want to believe in it, though. I want to believe we're not just falling toward each other in the dark, trying to guess where our edges begin. That maybe we are matched messes. Fellow travelers through the static. Like we showed up on this timeline with coordinated neuroses for a reason.

I remember being four in scraps—an orange carpet like a psychedelic tide, a stereo that gleamed like a spaceship. I remember building Lego versions of sacred places: my mother's silence, the hallway I'd sprint through when no one was watching, the bathroom where I practiced disappearing. My body remembers joy in glimmers—my brother somersaulting backwards off my shoulders, squealing something that sounded like flight. But I can't access the interior of that child. Only her echoes. Only the ghost of what she might've believed.

Maybe that's what memory is. A haunted archive. We remember the shadow the moment cast more than the moment itself. A love-shaped outline, but never the pulse. And so we try to recreate it with hugs, with rituals, with absurdities. Absurdity is a kind of coping. That's why I say things like I want Idris Elba to handle the snakes for me.

Because the snakes—fear, memory, panic, shame—they writhe quietly under my ribs, and I think he would know how to charm them. Or at least look good while trying.

Once, I dreamt of a snake. Thin as a vein, colored like copper and apple peel. It slithered toward me not with menace, but purpose. Like it knew my name. Like it had traveled centuries just to remind me of something I forgot on purpose. It slid up my arm like a sentence, whispered itself into the spiral of my ear. I woke up with teeth marks I couldn't explain. Some people have a clean line to their past selves. They say the child is father of the man. That they can trace themselves back like a river to its spring. I envy that. I'm a divider. A splintered self. My child-self feels like a foreign film I watched too young, dubbed badly into a language I still don't quite speak. I ask her in dreams: were you real? Were you me? Or a draft I abandoned mid-revision?

Lately, my brain feels like a recycling bin of metaphors: origami folds, missed connections, misfiring fireflies. I say things like: mountain fold, valley fold, squash, petal, reverse swivel, and nothing beautiful comes of it. My metaphors pile up like crumpled paper.

I want to make  
a swan. I get a soggy cube. I  
hold plates I should let go of. I  
carry conversations like  
landmines. I mix up tenderness  
with tension. I want my inner  
operations to feel like water  
again. Wet-folded, smooth,  
inevitable. Like a woman in love  
with the motion of her own  
body, pouring tea, planting  
basil, saying yes without needing  
to justify it.

I want the way I love to be  
ceremonial. Not performative, but  
sacred in its absurdity. Like  
breathing into a storm and  
expecting it to soften. And so I  
hug. Often. Without needing to  
solve anything. Without fixing or  
folding or interpreting. Maybe  
hugs are how we say, I see  
it. The fracture. The fire. The  
snake with its many names. I've  
got one too. Maybe it's not  
about merging or saving, but  
about witnessing. And maybe being  
capable of saying me too  
with our arms instead of our  
mouths—is the closest we get to  
actual magic.



# "American Horror Story" Salt Lake City Community College

I know my age by counting the cracks webbed across my knees—  
tiny maps no one follows.  
Prayers split open like overripe lemons,  
acid pooling along the seams. We forgot who we were,  
how many gods we begged by name before the bridge buckled,  
the faithful stampeding, sandal straps snapping like twigs.  
I'm sorry I let the rope tied in a bow above my sister's body—  
a remembrance ribbon to soften the hard facts.  
It must have been torture, to watch hope swing  
and still not save yourself.  
Sissy, I'm sorry. Your blood is syrup now.  
Your needles line the bathroom counter like a miniature picket fence.  
Mom—if you'd remembered the Prozac more often,  
I wouldn't have switched your pills for sugar.  
I thought it was funny, like planting jelly beans in the garden  
to grow candy trees. It wasn't funny. It was July, and the air burned with metal and clover.  
That summer, I wore a striped bathing suit.

You promised we'd ride bicycles to the beach. We never did. The sun fell—hard and heavy—every night at the windowsill.  
We counted it down like a funeral, waiting for an even date,  
an odd date that felt like breathing. It wasn't your fault, Mom.  
I didn't know how tremors start in the brain like radio static,  
how you pressed your hands against the glass—not to clean it, but to hold yourself inside.  
We never saw a dolphin. We saw the house bleach itself raw—mirrored floors, lemon-polished sadness.  
The glitter beyond the trees?  
Not magic. Just taillights.  
More people leaving. Now I drive to sip your grief like sacrament.  
We are human because sadness is a hunger,  
because a girl can turn into reeds,  
still get plucked and played for someone else's song..

It was never kill people, burn  
shit, fuck school-  
until it was. We grew up too  
fast-repel money, eat garbage,  
fuck off before you can't  
anymore. Little girl like  
paradigm, like parasite.  
Twist the finger. Pop the  
blister. It gets exhausting,  
lying so hard your mouth tastes  
like pennies and old rain.  
Crawl through the keyhole. Do not  
resuscitate.

For fear I missed the best part-  
the part that might have been  
love.

I tied your hands behind your  
back like a game of mercy.

Entered you, each breath hollow  
as a drumbeat,  
thinking only of the ache I  
couldn't name.

I never memorized the Act of  
Contrition. But I cried when I  
lost

my yellow umbrella, watched it  
tumble down the street like a  
broken star.

And still-I keep the yellow  
umbrella in my mind's coat  
closet,

next to the rope ribbon, next to  
the swimsuit I outgrew  
before I ever got wet. All of it  
waits for me: the sugar pills,  
the spotless floors,

the ghost of a dolphin beneath  
the glassy sea. Some days I  
forgive myself.

Some days I mistake memory for  
prophecy. But always,

I walk backward through the  
house,  
saying all our names like a  
spell that might one day work

# "Nosebleed / I swear I wasn't that sad / Destinies" Dodging the Rain Literary Journal

## NOSEBLEED

Do you think I'll ever learn  
to make my heart beat in time?

The ceiling fan doesn't answer,  
just spins like it has somewhere  
to be.

Last night the air came in  
carrying a secret,  
brought her scent with it

warm skin  
and something like daisies,  
if daisies were people  
who used to love you.

Isn't it strange,  
the way the past doesn't die,  
just rebrands, shows up clearer  
than the face of the man  
at the DMV who said  
I look quietly upset.

Memory is a watercolor,  
sure. But not just smudged,  
it bleeds into the shape  
of something you'd cry into  
a napkin about, at lunch.

I rolled over onto your carpet  
like a body being bagged.  
I memorized your ceiling  
and thought about all the cells

I've left in other people's  
rooms,  
as if my DNA is out there  
testifying against me.

Now that you want someone else,  
my lungs work again.  
No more CPR from the ghost  
of your approval.

Nothing to wait for or admit.  
Except maybe  
that I was the janitor  
of your absence.  
And I did sweep,  
I did mop.

I laid my guts out  
on the shelf at Walgreens  
between vitamin D and cough  
drops.

Glowing, ridiculous.  
Second place in my own story,  
participation trophy for  
desire.

That fear-remember it?  
The soft one,  
the whisper-fear  
that keeps you in the waiting  
room  
instead of the dream itself?

Yeah, I had it.  
I still have it.

It ruined the dream  
which only comes back  
when I sleep  
like a childhood friend  
who still calls me  
by my full name.

Just yesterday  
I passed the street  
where we met.

It felt like walking  
into a version of myself  
who hadn't yet  
cracked open.

I wanted to go back,  
to meet you again  
as a stranger.

To admire your nose  
like a small sculpture  
I can't afford.

To let you buy me a drink  
and pretend this was easy.  
But it isn't, and never was.

There are days  
I feel like Terri Schiavo  
for the emotionally literate.  
No plug, no God,  
just a crowd of onlookers  
debating if I'm still in there.

The exhaustion  
of being alive  
in this soft  
constant way.

I wish I didn't remember  
the nosebleed  
at the rest stop,  
the ice-cream on ice-cream  
in New Jersey  
like flavor could save us.

You know,  
the sweetest part  
was always how we talked.

The way we folded  
into silence like it was  
another kind of kiss.

You could've told me  
you wanted out.  
You could've said,  
I'm packing the good knives  
and this version of myself.

I would've understood,  
I think.  
I just wanted a sentence.

Now  
I can't inhale  
without thinking  
of fresh blood.

TELL  
HER,  
YOU  
LOVE  
HER

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## I SWEAR, I WASN'T THAT SAD

The bee sting you got  
running barefoot one summer  
through a meadow so green it  
hummed,  
so wide it must have thought it  
was forever.

That sting now rings the church  
bells,  
plays the organ softly before  
Sunday sermon.

It trims the shrubs out front,  
paints the fence  
white as a hymn, rinses the  
windows  
with vinegar and rag,  
sweeps the steps in a motion  
you might call prayer.

All that pain became  
someone's maintenance.

That's what memory does—  
turns wounds into workers.

And how, you ask me,  
do you get back inside  
the hive of that mind?

How do you undo  
what the imagination has built  
out of smoke?

I wore a flak jacket,  
had in mind to drop a few bills  
into the offering plate—

a kind of joke, maybe,  
or a bargain: God,  
forgive me in small bills.

I pray for myself  
because I know it hurt.  
I would like to make it up to  
you.

I mean it in the way  
the poor juggler meant it  
in that Christmas tale

no gift to bring  
but the only thing he knew:  
to enter the dark church,  
face the cradle, and juggle  
in the silence.

We call that story beautiful,  
call it redemption,  
but also, isn't it  
a little bit desperate?

Maybe all art is like that—  
some trembling attempt  
to juggle fire in front of God.

To say: I know how violent I  
am.  
Watch me make it pretty  
before I drop it.

I think play is part of it.  
So is rage.  
The desire to make something  
still  
out of what wants to be a  
storm.

And compassion—

don't forget it cages the word  
compass,  
a way to find north  
in the middle of a broken  
instrument.

I have tried to use the stars.  
I still remember  
everything I read about  
constellations,  
even now.

Even here, in the age  
where faith comes cheaper  
than bullets.

I keep looking up,  
thinking maybe  
they'll rearrange themselves  
into a shape that makes sense.

Or at least into  
the meadow again.  
That sting. The church.

The boy running barefoot  
before the world  
learned to alter shuffle.

## **DESTINIES**

Can we watch *La La Land* again—  
you on your couch, me on mine,  
a shared tab open across the  
fracture  
of our new addresses?

I'll send the link.  
Netflix Party makes it sound  
festive,  
like a birthday or a wake.  
We'll press play at the same  
time,  
sync our screens  
so Ryan Gosling learns to dance  
again  
while Emma Stone forgets  
she ever dreamed of Paris.

From here, my place feels too  
white,  
like a gallery with none  
of our framed chaos. You  
remember  
Maliboo Beach? I still call it  
that

after I took the spirit box to  
the shore—  
cheap plastic ghost-hunting  
gear,  
but it caught something that  
sounded  
like our laughter. I thought  
it was the ocean mimicking us.

I remember Halloween,  
the one where we dressed as the  
Warrens,  
me handing out candy and  
watching  
you hold it all together  
the way some people hold sand.

I sent you that clip the other  
day.  
No signal, or maybe  
the universe intercepted it.

Still, I imagine the film  
we'd shoot now:  
you, rearranging your bookshelf  
so the titles make sense again.

I'm still learning how to soften  
without turning off the lights.  
What's left to filter through?

Maybe nothing, or maybe just  
that we rewind not to return,  
but to remind.

Have you spoken to your father?  
Does he still find me charming?

Do you?



# "The Grammar of Collapse" Chapter House Journal

The street isn't silent. It only feels that way when the algorithm skips a beat, when the sky hums overhead like a glitch in the stream, when I walk and remember I am a body—not just a profile-visible, fragile, surrounded by other breakable things. Sometimes the light catches my cheek in the reflection of a storefront window, and I think: this is me. I am legitimate. I didn't create a thing, but I inhabit it.

Culture feels like a pot of new emergencies—simmering, blistering, constantly asking to be stirred.

I grew up in a border city, where silence was always a kind of code-switching—bilingual, half dust, half signal. Sonora, a state where fences aren't just physical lines but psychic ones. There, I learned early that language is not merely communication. It is adaptation. A survival instinct. It bends around wire fences, flattens itself against legal frameworks. It is the breath between Spanish and English, the syllables that slip in translation and refuse to be fully caught. My childhood was shaped by that tension: a place where belonging is never given, only earned through constant negotiation.

This experience echoes the broader realities of borderlands worldwide, where cultural and political boundaries impose limits on identity and expression. Scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa have long described this space as "la frontera," a liminal zone of hybridity and tension. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa writes, "I am a border woman. I grew up between two cultures... I am a mestiza, a crossblood."

Her work underscores that survival in such spaces requires fluency in ambiguity, the art of living in and between worlds.

I watched friends burn out like cassette tapes, worn down by too much rewind. That was before the mechanisms failed. Before time began to bite back.

Now, I write poems like border crossings. They dissolve boundaries and resist clean translation. They ask questions in lowercase and never wait for answers. They braid the sacred with the digital, the domestic with the mythic.

In recent years, the cultural fallout of political crises—mass migration, environmental disasters, the pandemic—has further fractured what it means to belong and be heard. As NPR reported in 2023, border communities endure “layered violence,” where systemic neglect intersects with personal trauma, yet “creativity and community remain acts of resistance.” This resilience is a form of cultural grammar: a way to narrate survival without surrendering to despair.

I’ve become a chronicler of thresholds; feminine, oneiric, always slightly undone. In the art world, I look for the red knuckles of prizefighters. For barbed wire baked into frosted cakes. I trace the outlines of transgression. I ask: What laws have I broken without being caught? What pulls your gaze in a time when attention is currency?

Is culture the shape we make in the air when we resist? Can we prefigure liberation, as if resistance were not just a performance, but a blueprint?

The border taught me that survival is never static. It is movement. It is the constant weaving between worlds, the art of holding multiple identities that never fully fit the frame. This is the grammar of collapse—a language born in the ruins but spoken in the present tense.

In the online forums of the dead, real or imagined, I read the dispatches of those yearning for precision in their undoing. One voice types, “I’m trying to listen, to let go of being heard.” Another answers: “Hold fast to death, for if death dies, death is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.”

These aren’t metaphors. They are liturgies. Instructions for those of us who have lived through collapse and found a strange kind of grace in the wreckage.

What does a people look like after surviving every ending?

What grammar do we write in, having grown up always on camera?

We’re in a room, drinking legacy-brand cocktails. We forget, then remember, that everything we consume is engineered for both

pleasure and disappearance. We are dancing beneath violet bar lights, talking about Clarice Lispector and Beyoncé. We are building something. We are undoing something. We say we run the world, but we know who profits from the illusion of our power. We stitch resistance into red patches from Jo-Ann Fabrics. We love you, Jo-Ann. And we are never going to be quiet. We are expressive and strategic in our artificial cages, in our aestheticized restraints. We want surveillance to witness us in bloom. We want the archive to remember us as difficult, poetic, and free. The global rise of surveillance culture, as documented by scholars like Shoshana Zuboff in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, shows how digital life reshapes our identities into data points. Yet within this, artists—particularly those from marginalized communities—turn visibility into a weaponized act of affirmation. To be seen fully is to resist erasure.

To become mayor of this ruin, I did yoga in the dark gardens of capitalism. I laughed with ghosts. My politics is not only survival, it is intimacy. It is the radical act of feeling in an era that numbs, of writing in an era that consumes. It is the refusal to be easy. It is waking to no change—just light stuck to the windowpane. Still, we stitch. We whisper through screens. We kiss each other's foreheads in dreams.

Yes, culture is a pot of new emergencies. But it is also the smoke that rises from that pot. The songbird between silences. The dance in the burning house.

The thread that says: we were here. We saw you. We lived.



# "Conversions mid Conversation"

## Waymark Literary Journal

And by that,  
what I meant was:  
I look at my bowl of soup before  
bed—  
not as food,  
but as a variable—  
something that shifts,  
like me,  
growing more fluid  
like how I exist in the world.

I've learned that surrendering  
to intuition  
is its own kind of thinking.  
My question mark  
is a shovel:  
not seeking an answer,  
but a deeper root  
still willing to move.

Halfway through a conversion,  
a conversation:  
something rearranges,  
something settles inside the  
unstable.  
Arguments are travelers too—  
they change with time,  
as the wind reshapes me  
when I allow it through.

I'm okay being an enigma—  
at least one that's learned  
how to walk toward something.

Walking into autumn,  
I tried to think  
without taming the thought:  
a conversation that braided  
debate,  
a salt-sweet night soup  
seasoned with echoes of the  
gone.  
The garnish: a sunset  
floating in the bowl.

I learned that sometimes  
the spoon isn't on the table,  
but in bed,  
holding another's body  
as if it, too,  
were a form of prayer.

To know the essence of a  
feeling  
that vanishes,  
then returns,  
like smoke rising before a fire  
where stories are slow-cooked.

Wholeness, I found,  
is a strict subject—  
like time.  
And my detours,  
they carry me too.  
And I let them.

# “Woodstock” WILDSOUND FESTIVAL, Nature Poem Selection

In my hometown,  
winter was a fairy tale.  
The concept of time,  
a rising curve,  
capturing  
our attention with its hook.  
In the midst of this thought,  
I want to pause at the climax,  
as if watching  
the story that lies beyond,  
at the end of the slide.

Yesterday  
I was calculating the rest of the  
day  
with a glitch in my system.  
The frozen dawn in the darkness,  
back to old times,  
hanging out in isolated cabins—  
kerosene lamps, lit up candles,  
those wood stoves that always  
work.

The rest of my friends like  
little shadows  
in the middle of the campsite. In  
our town,  
the old, renewed winter was a  
fairy tale,  
and I tried to remember that  
machinery  
can always be fixed—I thought  
we'd have to be ready  
to forgo some of the day's plans,  
and return to our manuals,  
or call our parents for  
instructions

to make a bit more tea,  
and relax with our limited  
tools  
and our problems.

Each winter, the wet earth  
devours the gravel,  
so reserving some fixed paths  
for torrential rains and melted  
snow  
requires planning. Yesterday  
I was calculating the rest of  
the day  
with a glitch in the system,  
but back to energy—  
I'll change the batteries  
next time and get some spares  
with a block of cast iron;  
I'll add a bunch more solar  
panels.

My friends decided to warm the  
edges of the cabin  
by moving a few feet away,  
burning pine boards  
for their candles. Trapped  
among the woods,  
listening to the whispers of  
the breeze,  
stuck in Woodstock—  
as free as we could be,  
with canned food munitions  
and our weekend itinerary,  
without needing the campfire to  
convey  
the tales of some winter

even as the falling flakes  
became a mass,  
their individuality erased  
in a flurry of white snow.  
Orion, Pleiades opening  
constellations  
in the dark, while the group  
recalls  
old anecdotes from when we were  
younger-  
a conjugation of time's frame,  
decorated by a white glow on the  
hills  
while we barely distinguish  
their silhouettes afar, trying to  
count  
the stars as they fade like  
light.

awareness has a distinctive  
form.  
Our present selves,  
empty and formal in their  
discourse;  
these character arcs,  
so deep and superficial.  
A spark of a liberating spirit  
that traps us  
back in Woodstock.

From the east comes a sudden wind  
that wakes us;  
we, diurnal beings,  
greet the star  
fading in the distance,  
as another splendor  
is about to begin the morning.  
Cold dawn in the darkness,  
back to old times;  
kerosene lamp, candles,  
wood stoves that always worked.  
The rest of my friends  
as little shadows outside the  
cabin,  
their heads covered in Eskimo  
hats,  
living a wisdom  
that is far off-

**NOTE:**

**DATE**

**ORIGINAL**

**CHECK**

**DO  
NOT  
MAKE  
SETTLE-  
MENT  
ON  
THIS  
PORTION**

Signature of individual  
or person in charge

Ticket Numbers

**CZ294855**

1

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8

# "MAPS" Rowayatt Review

When I was six, my father threw me into the deep end of the pool. No warning. No story before impact. The floatie on my left arm slipped off like it, too, wanted to abandon me. I remember water entering my nose, the blue swallowing me whole, the sound of the surface growing distant. It was September, 2004. The water, cold. Me, a trembling twig clinging to the half of me still floating. I kicked my way back. Dad only asked: Where's your other floatie? As if it hadn't been his hand that turned me into a meteor. Now that I think of it, I was the one who convinced him— Throw me, Dad, I said, I want to learn. Maybe I've always had it in me, a tendency to leap without a parachute, as if the world were a story begging to be heard and I, a boy collecting versions

of what it means to make it out alive.

I could tell you how I learned to reroute my dopamine receptors; how I drew invisible trails between my need for adrenaline and the tenderness I left somewhere— as if it were possible to draw maps that hold both: the collapse and the celebration. I swear it's no coincidence my memory is made of pools, elevators, airports where nothing arrives on time except fear.

Always those straight lines going up or down. Always that vertigo like an old voice repeating my name with thirst. It's not that I prefer the desert, but there's something honest in it that calls to me. A place without lies. No water, but no shadow either, sometimes an oasis hides there,

sometimes it's just a version of  
yourself  
waiting for you to arrive alone.  
It's scary, but there's warmth,  
too,  
a silence that doesn't judge.

And if I map out how I've made it  
here,  
you'll see there's always a  
coordinate  
pointing upward-as if the sky  
were the only place  
where those of us who almost  
drowned  
can finally rest.



# "Yesterday in the garden I saw you" San Diego Poetry Annual

It caught my eye through the  
steamy window—  
a tender moon, nearly submerged  
beneath the hemispheres,  
a land of onions, carrots,  
tomatoes waiting for the call  
of time to harvest. My father, a  
darkened figure,  
moves through rural rituals  
before morning begins.

(Have I used the word theory for  
a phantom?) Barefoot, I step  
outside with coffee, shovels— the  
usual things.

A bird flurries nearby. Memory,  
always ready to erase,  
leaves me. So instead, I draw  
myself into that garden,  
into the untouched golden fields  
of the mind's portrayal.

Beautiful buried seeds begin to  
sprout, a supernatural symmetry  
frames the scene. My father  
exhales a smoky cloud.

I carry the basket inside where  
we reunite in the kitchen—

Mum, Dad, me. My tennis shoes  
muddy,  
their faces thoughtful, sweat  
glistening a moment  
before it fades. Here, for the  
first time in a while,  
I glimpse the end. It was sunny  
one evening, years ago.

The heat touched my skin—  
tanning.  
If I wasn't burned, some  
passing shadow  
must have shielded me.  
Probably the clouds.  
While knitting like a spider  
again in my childhood bedroom,  
I finally understand that  
there's another kind of seeing—  
one that requires letting go.  
I'm behind the steamy window.  
My father has been dead two  
days. My mother knocks once,  
then enters slowly. She wraps  
me in a hug.  
And I think: Let this be how I  
go— enveloped,  
sent off softly when my time  
arrives.  
I could not outwit the laws of  
zombies.  
I cannot rebel against the  
waking fatality.  
The sun fires like a pistol  
into every surrounding world.  
Then: white specks. Dry petals,  
maybe, drifting through fields,  
falling. I look to the brim of  
my hat— the tender moon,  
and growing vegetables.  
Yesterday,  
in the garden, I saw you.



# "A Movie Called Honeycomb"

## Torrey House Press

There was a busyness inside the honeycomb—yes, a little rush,  
like a hive of blurred movements, wings too fast to see.  
You could call that a business. But what I meant was:  
that day held a heaviness in the air. Was it the weight of our sorrow—  
or the end of it? The honeycomb was visible from our window.  
There was always something happening in there.  
Every day felt like an anniversary of the dying earth.  
The bees were busy. Making rounds. Taking turns. All before we could  
face  
our ecological responsibilities. We saw the tree. We saw the honeycomb.  
A hundred intentions to preserve the green. Flying insects—  
we feared them only. Dust of a month. Crickets singing night and day.  
Anniversary of the dying earth. Busyness inside a honeycomb.  
We saw the world in snapshots—a photo album mirroring  
our discomfort. Wings laboring over the yard.  
So much to say. Too little to do. Most houses nearby  
are dark now.  
Across my window, beneath the streetlight,  
I'm watching a movie about the urge to save the world—  
a movie that's always about to begin.

# "Song of Splendor" Wingless Dreamer Publisher

The doctors reached into me as if I were a drawer of lost tools,  
searching for instruments scattered in the corridors of my throat.  
They wanted the words lodged behind my baby teeth-  
those soft fossils half-formed and already fractured.

The diagnosis was a dissection:  
open the child, study the silence.

But something flared there,  
not pain exactly, more like music breaking open-  
a violin planted deep beneath the tongue,  
its roots gripping the soft dark of my palate,  
filling the hollow with the aching vowels of my name.

My surname did not arrive quietly.

It howled, not to be healed,  
but to be heard.

In families like mine,  
where borders are stitched and re-stitched into the body,  
biology is just another way of reinvention-  
naming the blood not by science,  
but by the songs it remembers.



“The Dead Rise Again in  
November” Francisco Ruiz Udiel  
Latin American Poetry Prize Nom.  
V, Valparaíso  
Ediciones

I

The sun pours itself across the  
Sea of Cortez,  
a broken yolk smearing gold along  
the water,  
as tourists lean into the rusted  
rail  
of the Mirador de San Carlos—  
wanting nothing, only light,  
only the relief of radiance.  
It isn't a question of why.  
The sun doesn't explain itself.  
It wakes, like us,  
from some unmeasured sleep  
and does its part:  
to burn, to hold vigil,  
to shine without asking  
permission.  
And beneath it, a glint of  
centuries—  
tribes and doorways and nausea  
like a rope pulled from the gut—  
that strange sickness  
that comes with glimpsing  
a past too near.

The chest learns to house  
a second heartbeat.  
We wear our souls backwards,  
as if they were shirts  
we forgot how to button.

II

In November, the culture wakes  
first.  
Painted skulls dangling in  
place of wind,  
marigold paper peeling  
at the corners of homemade  
altars,  
photographs reprinted  
for the sake of remembering  
what cannot quite be recovered.  
A child runs in with pan de  
muerto  
and lays it beside his  
grandfather's  
dust-caked cowboy hat.  
And maybe later,  
he'll dream up the myth of a  
man

who rode horses through silence,  
who watched clouds split open  
above a ranch that no longer  
exists.

That's how the ethos begins:  
invention posing as memory.  
History's earliest trick.

### III

This has little to do with gods  
and more with echoes.

The way we become part  
of some wounded largeness—  
a place we cannot name,  
but feel humming  
beneath our heels.

How a bare stone under sun  
tells you about erosion  
the way bones  
remember warmth.

We invent glass  
because we want to see  
through ourselves.

I follow a trail of footprints  
that split into every possible  
version.

### IV

Spring has its own resurrections.  
Another field of meaning  
stitched into our folklore,  
another excuse to mark  
our mystery with celebration.  
We host birthday parties  
for versions of ourselves  
we no longer recognize.

Then the quiet arrives.  
We sit with ourselves  
like guests in our own homes.  
Do you remember  
how we placed time on a shelf  
just long enough to  
feel infinite?  
Shook it like a jar of  
fireflies—  
watched it glitter  
with the promise of dusk  
or the eyelash of morning.  
Tick. Tock.  
Each second a small sun  
inside the body  
until the body remembered  
it was borrowed.  
Even on the day I was born,  
the sun trembled—  
as if it knew something I  
didn't,  
as if it blinked  
before becoming a spectacle.

### V

I read once:  
Death does not hide.  
It waits. Patient. Exact.  
A gentle tap on the shoulder,  
a draft at your back.  
It doesn't need to knock.  
And when it comes,  
we lend it our intuition,  
our softest thread of  
evolution.  
We have attended  
a thousand wakes.  
Two thousand years,  
and still the echo.

A language of strands,  
braided backward-  
not stairs,  
but a ladder we forgot to  
descend.

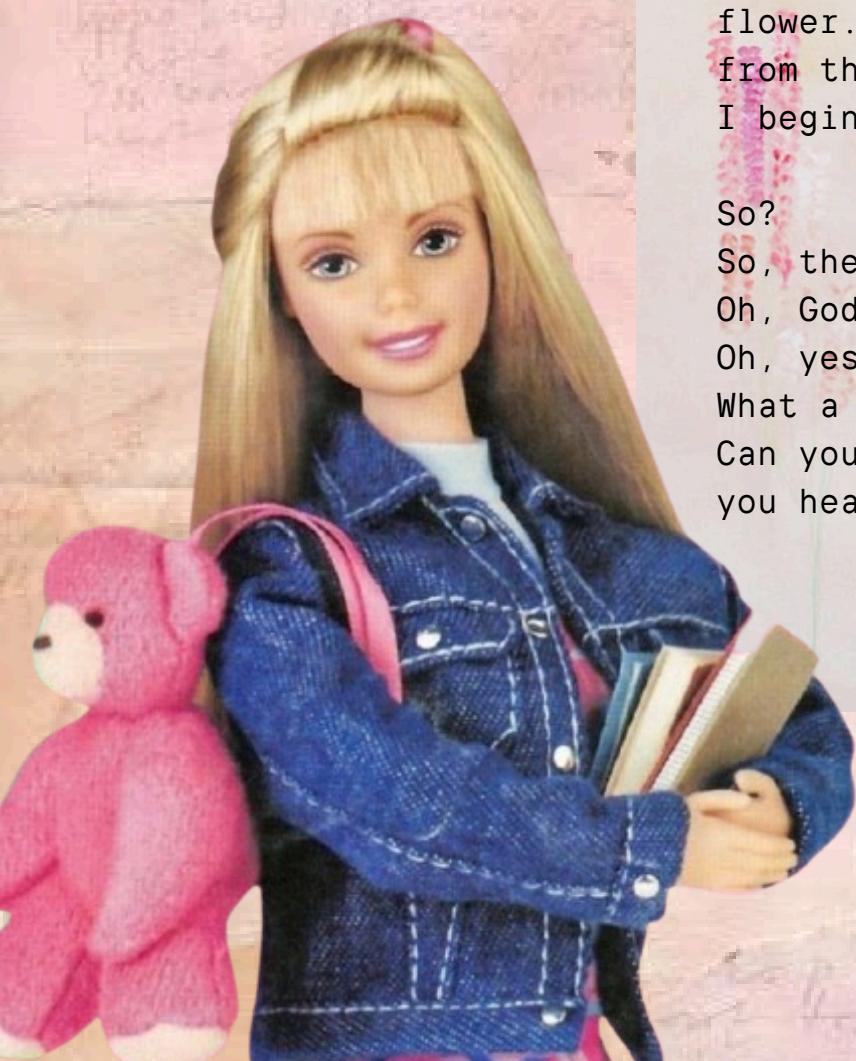
The body is not a mistake.  
Nor the timing.  
Nor the day.  
On November 2nd,  
maybe the veil splits a little,  
just enough  
for the soul to slip  
from its cocoon-  
a small practice for the end  
that isn't an end.

VI

And again,  
the sun coming through.

# "A Thin film of forgetting"

## FJORDS Review



Your mind will abbreviate the summary.  
Probably draw a crust around the  
planet's rim. It'll detect the curve and  
maneuver slowly. It'll dig a hole. Toss  
the pot. And call it evolution. There's  
a layer of dust on my books. That's what  
growing up looks like. A thin film of  
forgetting, coating the things that used  
to matter enough to underline.  
Nature hums the same lullaby, again and  
again-like it knows we forgot the  
lyrics, but it doesn't mind. For months  
I think about the seed inside the  
flower. I think about myself, assembled  
from the leftovers of a lonely star.  
I begin to meditate.

So?

So, the truth is: you fall in love.

Oh, God.

Oh, yes.

What a surprise.

Can you hear the bells? No, really. Can  
you hear them?

# "Haste" Francisco Ruiz Udiel

## Latin American Poetry Prize Nom.

### VI, Valparaíso Ediciones

#### I

Psychic or cyclic,  
the stages of my life keep  
turning.  
I breed a new desire to fail,  
a new desire to learn. I take  
each lesson  
with spirit, bent sideways by  
the thrill it sheds.  
I think I'd notice if I were  
caught in a trap.  
Companion or villain, I'm  
stitched into the fibers of  
stories.  
I multiply my existence along  
the strings  
of other people's lives. However  
freeing that sounds,  
my mind always seems to find a  
corner  
where explosions of cognition  
and expansion  
are too dense to set aside.

#### II

Among other things I've learned  
so far:  
a mistake in front of the mirror  
is to seek the familiar  
when I know revelation is the  
true reward.

The rhetoric of my life seems  
to swell into hyperbole  
soon to shrink by half. I'm  
the driver  
in charge of plotting the road  
ahead-  
and that is why I'm obsessed  
with myself,  
and that is why I slip away  
from social life  
to return to these  
introspective pursuits  
that haven't expired-  
for the nights I lie in bed  
thinking through the riddle of  
my own existence.  
It embarrasses me a little.  
Psychic or cyclic, my love for  
the world  
is a duty that feels  
ridiculously personal;  
it isn't enough to turn away  
and ignore the universe that  
lives inside my body:  
the logical and the emotional,  
threads of thought scripted in  
my DNA.  
Because I seek the detection  
of gems embedded within me,  
I also feel compelled to carry  
across  
the worth of these sculpted

diamonds  
in translation, using the word  
as a mechanism to cope  
with the beauty I inhabit.  
And I know there's a gentler way  
to mold a phrase, and send this  
out.

### III

Some days the night is calm,  
and on others, I lull the moon  
to sleep.

The shadowed side darkens my  
face.

It's a constant riddle, and the  
only answer

is to follow the momentary  
numbness

with a ration of a little more  
life.

Daily life as remedy,  
dragging you from the coma;  
daily duty to jolt you  
out of paralysis-hypnosis,  
maybe?

To feel this biological pattern  
of waking.

I rise and fall, as anyone might.

I hit my lowest point  
the year depression settled in.

How lucky I am  
to have a second pair of hands,  
to have you; my anchor to  
reality

is the repeated desire to get  
dressed,

to show up to the new day  
by your side.

Only then I understood these  
partial obsessions

with morality, logic, and  
thought  
are what ultimately tuck me  
in.

### IV

There's still so much left to  
write

in the bibles of our lives.  
A sketch of symbols  
and the bones of beasts  
toward which we'll turn our  
heads.

Maybe it's a matter of safety:  
drawing our little selves  
in shining armor  
facing dragons.

Maybe it's a matter of mind...  
building a temple to rest in  
after our physical guard  
fades.

The train comes at blistering  
speed,

the transport that asks a  
ticket

from our soul once we leave  
this cage  
of the body, an old shell.

Once the other side is  
revealed.

### V

Meanwhile, summer is ending  
and a region of the planet  
burns.

It lives inside a verse:  
adversity  
captured from the month when  
we hiked  
and you twisted your left

ankle, and I carried you home to lift you into the car.  
I recall an old woman in the waiting room asking if I was awaiting the result of a surgery. And when I didn't nod, she politely asked me to hold her hands and pray for the families nearby who weren't as lucky.  
I saw the pain in my body. In the hospital waiting room I was at once naked and safe. I heard the words she chose to describe me: fortunate, golden.  
And then I wished I could tell her I'm an amateur hiker of Septembers, walking out past the city limits in light rain, my subtle confrontation to reach the hilltop; a small challenge.  
I liked sunsets, twilight scented with wildflowers- not the most dazzling, but rather steeped in intelligence by appetite, rooted year by year in yellow grass.  
Whatever god exists was with you in the passenger seat,

your ankle aching after the fall.  
Everything becomes real so fast, so in moments of reflection, I wish less. What is here is not, isn't it?  
And what truly exists lies out of reach, like first light traveling over us, beyond our thoughts or intentions.

VI

I think I've agreed, in this same sense, with the abundance and good fortune of the world, without fully accepting the cruelty inside the frame of things, and the idea of God the monster, but rather continuing my ritual of bowing my head whenever something tragic, or magnificent, happens. Though I'll never truly know the rewards or punishments of standing firm in the middle ground-somewhat deaf, somewhat numb- when the biggest questions are raised.  
There are many notes to write in the footnotes of our bibles; observations that corrode the use of reason and sketch a first approach

to the fields of sacred faith.  
Maybe it's a matter of safety:  
drawing our little selves in  
gleaming armor,  
facing dragons.

## VII

Meanwhile, summer has ended  
and a region of the planet is  
scorched.  
September arrived cluttered with  
metaphor  
and a river of ideas that set  
sail  
toward tired commonplaces.  
I've been submerged three months  
in rhetorical ground,  
reading and writing, taking  
notes from podcasters  
whose shows are the recitation  
of Catholic parables.  
Beyond the moments of linking  
lessons  
and the faint salvation of my  
world in the word,  
I blink to notice the gaps in my  
spiritual education  
were never enough.  
A neighbor girl tells me she's  
seen  
a family of deer wander our yard  
beneath the Sunday sun, early.  
There are houses in our roses  
too:  
a hummingbird seems to guard  
its corner of the garden,  
surviving  
another night without cat or  
strong wind

striking down its nest.  
Home inside a home.

## VIII

As I exhale  
and draw near the marvels of  
nature,  
it tears me to see that my  
soul  
doesn't transition at the same  
speed  
as my cognition.  
In this blur of color-  
our hall glows cozy with the  
fire lit.  
Kisses on my cheek, a silver  
stroke in the sky.  
Tomorrow we'll bake brownies.  
There's an ordinary truth  
between knowing  
and realizing; but today,  
the unknowns of my life  
are only unknowns,  
and my pain is only  
an accident of fate.

## IX

Most likely I'll keep  
reporting  
a theft in progress-  
of every inch of my reality  
sinking  
beneath the liquid stride of  
time,  
which at once dampens the  
arrangement  
of a page in an open notebook.  
Psychic or cyclic,  
the stages of my life keep  
shifting-



# "El Fénix de Phoenix" The B'K Magazine

There is no more to be said about that boy-  
the one who, recalling the first symptoms of his own vanishing,  
told his father, "by then, I'll have memorized a few lines."  
As if language could be packed like bandages.  
As if knowing what to say would soften the edge  
of a country that never asked for his name.  
A second testament waits for you,  
lodged between your ribs like a song.  
It's the imagined past from which  
your culture unfurls-  
a root system pulled from the dark  
and folded neatly into a travel bag.  
You carry it without complaint,  
until one day, it splits open in a supermarket aisle  
or during a school presentation, and you realize-  
you are not the only one. So you begin again,  
rehearsing a home in a house you do not own,  
playing dress-up with permanence.  
You learn the secret: ownership is the art of exhaustion,  
of mapping meaning onto the landscape of someone else's country.  
Like a phoenix who's forgotten how to fly,  
you sweep the ashes into a readable shape,  
flip through your history like a candlelit book,  
each page a soft ember, each word risking combustion.  
Have you charted your parkour route through Phoenix yet?  
Every twist trained you to finally slow down.  
There is no more to be said about that boy-  
the one who conjugated his way  
into a second language, whose body still misplaces  
its own compass sometimes. He wears black now,  
attending another funeral for the version of himself  
he offered to assimilation. But maybe the phoenix remembers.  
Maybe gravity is gentler now.

# “San Carlos: Una Elegía Solar / A Hymn of Ripple Sound” University of Houston

Late at night: to bed! Something sweet will come to shake us awake in the morning.

April almost dawns, spring’s resurrection as a possible beginning. We share a bed, six-year-olds whispering nighty night in my ear. Their high voices, like seagulls floating over the coast, wake me with a note stuck to the nightstand: Let’s get burgers!

And their bodies fill with such sincere emotion it hurts to watch. The day is hot.

Heat drags itself along as if it were memory while we walk in flip-flops toward the lobby. We’ve begun to live in real time.

El Jax, in the rearview: little motels besieged by double trucks, exhausted drivers who know every curve of the México-Nogales highway. Gravel lifts dust and splits the dense air with a thin light. The seafood restaurants are crowded with tourists. Everything breathes. Everything vibrates. Could it be a mirage? Outside, in a restaurant with swings, the three of us sit down. The walls are covered with local art, with Yaqui pilgrimages. Even Paradise has history. Memory: served buffet-style. The bar: long. Feverish flavors, and cheeseburgers under the sun, no breeze. The past still inhabits this railroad town. And we dance, as if we knew how. Sacred music belongs to a place and to a time. Empalme, Guaymas, San Carlos—the soul’s maps where a railway still trembles on the museum walls. Volcanic geography and the turquoise blue of the Gulf rise as a crescendo of origin. Fishing tournaments, international sailboats. Everything with an air of resurrection: Mexican summer as ritual. A dance revived, like a cultural flower opening. Human art as gift-exchange, an intercambio of stories, of hand-stitched crafts pulsing with daily life.

What we gained was economy, but what we always had was a small hypnotic song. I have seen deserts sprout in silence. A house of sand. I will stay here, staring at this wet mass, until a little castle rises.

And when it does, I'll ask it questions.  
I walk the beach, mind pure, surprised by all the footprints. The ebbing waves kiss my feet. Not a mystical vision, only the filter of my dark glasses.

The god who created the universe shines in every particle. The sand sings. A single grain knows the score of your life without ever speaking it. Deep below, the earth's pressure squeezes out water, turns grain into quartz, quartz into magma, magma into hills, hills into continent-everything becomes sand again. My children ask about the castle. Buckets and shovels, mute witnesses of their passage. The water took it, I say. My voice fades with the wind: Golden hour. The sun as a round wound. A snake tells a mouse: If you travel without stopping, the voices of God and the Devil will sound the same to you. Here, in San Carlos,

we are still desert. My hand searches for the edge of the mattress, the invisible abyss.

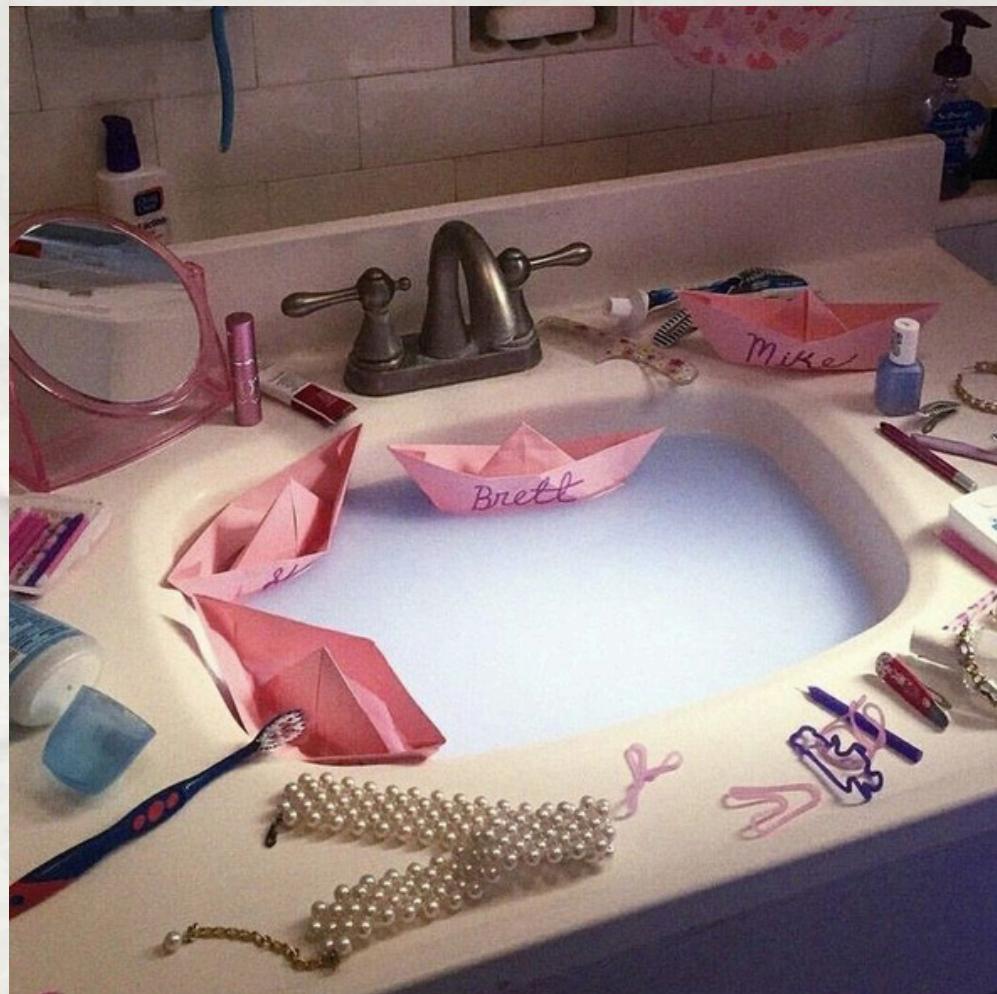
Bonifacio's reopens, February twenty-four, after the pandemic. Tourism returns.

Canadians in Arizona already miss the beach. We toast the world's reopening, with flambéed bananas and red wine. The heart asks for simple gestures: a second basket of bread. A damp cloth wiping the table. I'm terrified to think this ordinary happiness might be the only thing that survives, yet something else pierces us: the possibility of restoring what we once were.

Because life, in the end, is a handful of small things that disappear without warning. The earth does its work: to reproduce, to separate us, to return us to the sea. The original recipes are now cooked by another generation. Children play at memorizing songs, clapping rhythms. Knowledge sets itself in motion. This was once a railroad city, but the trains no longer run. In Empalme, they've opened a museum. And time goes on. And I am alone with them, the ocean rushing toward our feet. We make a toast with apple juice on the shore. Soon the sunset prints a land that is no longer there, yet we remain, varnished like seashells.

There's a percussion band inside my head, the repercussions of a plan I don't yet fully understand. Everything I hear—the wind, the voice I use to give advice, the last strums on the beach—everything is recreating the sound. This clarity, this sharpened way of listening, I think it must be for something: to know where the song slows down

and needs pauses. Peace enters like a piece that fits-a piece fitting with such ease, once I dare to seize it.  
I think of the image of a bridge,  
one that connects the stimulus of instruments with the echoes of the past.  
A bridge that moves us. And arches the body, the body ours, the body of all, as if carried by an invisible gust. No one knows why or when it will stop, because each new movement extends the chorus living in harmony at the center of who we are.





# "Español" Meniscus Literary Journal

## I

Conozco bien ese sendero, lo crucé más veces de las que ahora podría recordar. / I do remember the road. I passed it a bunch of times so now it's kinda hard to remember each of them. / En cuatro días visité un pueblo pesquero con un puñado de restaurantes cuyo menú consta de conchas recién sacadas del mar. / It took me four days to visit a coastal town with a fistful of restaurants that had a menu consisting of shells, just recently taken out of the water. / Pero también se pescan otro tipo de tesoros ahí. / Though there are some other types of treasures fished in there.

## II

Un cañón subtropical parado en medio del desierto, de piedras rojas y ocre y palmeras que son hogar de miles de insectos. / A subtropical canyon standing in the middle of the desert, with red and ochre stones and palm trees that are home to thousands of insects. / Un estero mineral tan blanco que parece haber sido forrado con mármol y esculpido por un dios. / A very white mineral estuary that seems to be lined with marble and

sculpted by a god. / A veces, incluso cuando parpadeo, no lo puedo terminar de asimilar. / Sometimes, even as I blink, I can't wrap my head around its immaculate beauty.

## III

Hay algunas cosas que digo, y otras que no puedo evitar escuchar. / There are some things that I say, and others that I cannot help but hearing. / Una música lírica que se intensifica al momento de darle entonación a cada una de las sílabas y las vocales. / A lyrical type of music that intensifies in the moment I attempt to give an intonation to every syllable and vowel. / El lenguaje es un canto que nace desde nuestro interior. A veces pienso que cuando hablo, en realidad estoy transmitiendo la música escrita en la partitura de mi alma. / Language is more like a chant that is born in our most inner space. Sometimes I think that whenever I speak, I'm actually transmitting the music that is written in the score of my soul. / Es muy

delicada  
esa tarea de traducirse y de  
aprender a escucharse. / It is  
quite a delicate task to learn  
how to  
translate your ideas while you're  
also learning how to listen to  
yourself carefully.

#### IV

Entre dos idiomas: un puente. /  
Between two languages: one  
bridge. / A veces soy poesía y  
otras veces mi vida se resume en  
los paralelismos de las fábulas.  
Uno se imaginaría que tal  
vez ya que se cumplan los  
treinta, tu mente te dará un  
respiro, y en tu cabeza dejarás  
de trasladar el lenguaje de un  
lado a otro. / Sometimes I am  
poetry and other times my life is  
summed up in the parallels of  
fables. One would imagine that  
perhaps once you turn thirty,  
your mind will give you a break,  
and in your head, you will stop  
transporting language from  
one place to another. / Pero es  
Sonora el lugar en el que me he  
criado: sus conexiones con la  
frontera al norte como un  
panorama transicional, sonoro e  
inevitable. Y aquí, casi de  
manera  
simétrica, se encuentra uno de  
los muchos valores con los que te  
educa el mundo. / But we're  
talking about Sonora as the place

where I've been raised: its  
connections with the northern  
border as a sonorous and  
inevitable transitional  
panorama. And here, almost  
symmetrically, is  
one of the many values with  
which the world educates us.

#### V

En una hora, la mayoría de los  
restaurantes en San Carlos  
sacarán sus mesas y un montón  
de gringos veteranos irán a  
ordenar sus desayunos bajo el  
sol. Y yo me voy a sentar cerca  
de allí.

Voy a comenzar a regalar mis  
Good Morning, y a los meseros  
probablemente les diga Buenos  
Días. Escuchar la misma  
expresión en plural solamente  
me deja algunas cosas en claro:  
que en español, muchos queremos  
que lo bonito se nos  
multiplique, y que de manera  
directa, lo  
manifestamos. Esperamos que la  
buena fortuna nunca se acabe.  
/ In about an hour, most of the  
restaurants in San Carlos will  
be putting their tables and  
chairs out, and a group of  
veteran  
gringos will go ordering their  
brunch under the sun. I'm gonna  
start approaching them with a  
Good Morning, and to the  
waiters I'll probably greet

with Buenos Días, which basically means that this first expression would be said in its plural form when translated, and this only leaves a few things clear: that in Spanish, a lot of us people desire that good things multiply, and that we will try to manifest so in such a direct manner. We hope our good fortune shall never come to an end.



# “The boots that shake off spirits” Plumas En Ciernes

When someone decides to become a poet, they must understand this: inspiration often rises from a father's memories—but more than anything, from his work boots.

Those boots once served as a shield, a crutch, a weapon. I remember my father, a sleepwalker, roaming the cornfields in nothing but underwear, mud caking the soles—his dreams leaving behind only the muddy prints we'd find in the foyer each morning.

In the room beside the sliding door that led to the hacienda's patio, his soles would thump together like a ritual was underway. What spirits was he guarding us from? What was he saying, unconsciously, to the land—standing watch over the harvest, even in sleep?

Behind the house, our family held the land for generations—fields of corn we'd spend months gathering. And each night, after collapsing into one of the living room chairs, my father would rise again, boots pounding the earth, as if spirits needed scaring off, as if our past had taken human form to remind us that no one is free from the sins carried in their blood.

There were nights my siblings and I timed his rounds across the fields, never finding a pattern. We always managed to catch him just after his boots had finished trampling the soil. Surely it was the ghost of a long-dead ancestor returning to ask who we were now, nearly a century after the land was first claimed. Their ghost, demanding to know whether we were worthy of the wealth their sacrifice made possible.

I like to believe there is a place where deep rest exists—where the body forgets the weight of grief and betrayal. It seems cruel now that I once thought we were to blame for the wounds carved into every inch of our skin: the swollen ankle, the ache of shoulder muscles, flesh invaded by fat. It's hard to believe some still don't know—you can let things go,

and in doing so, see life stretch far beyond the scope of sacrifice. But many spirits don't know how to carry such a belief into the world of the living. Those were my ancestors. They never got to see how I've fallen in love with the fields, with Mom's ideas for building a second floor, for adding irrigation to the land near the house. Still, I think guilt can be shared. What I haven't known yet is the day of eternal rest.

So young, I've always felt like my brain is shredded paper, my thoughts falling apart like magic. After weeks learning to ride horses, to haggle in shops, to mimic the sharp language of seasoned merchants—I cannot take credit for the victories that brought us here, on a path carved by hands of our bloodline, so many years ago. For all those misunderstandings, I decided, one day, to write a letter to the ghosts—to offer some kind of explanation.

I addressed it to one of the spirits and wrote:

*You must know this is only a hypothesis I dare to record: It is November. Morning light spills over the back field-wet, filthy, rich. The green grass: new shoots, fresh seeds, quietly blooming into the family's gain. The soft gleam of sand scatters over Sonoran soil, twisting aimlessly in the wind. The blue firmament hovers over Ciudad Obregón. And of all the things I can say, what I know for certain is that there are two worn boots I'll remember all my life. Even if I never understood their mystery, they remain—a legacy we will always treasure.*

Writing that letter took fifteen breaths, and thirty minutes of silence. Even on Sundays, my father would wake early, dress in work clothes, and step into winter's cold embrace. His battered hands ached from the harvest, but with his gloves, he sealed and sold every single ear of corn.

What woke me was the stomp of his boots. While the others slept, I would rise in pajamas and follow him—sleepwalking through the middle of the night, haunted by the rigid stares of those same spirits, who, despite the letter, took a while to leave us in peace.

I was angry with him once. I told him I was thinking of leaving, of abandoning the land and its legacies. But what did I know? What could I possibly know about unconditional love, about the sacrifice of ending each day with two boots stained by a hundred winding paths?



# "Mirror" Lucky Jefferson

Every morning for the past three years, I've woken to a woman who no longer exists. She's taped to the corner of my mirror. *Andrea*, or what remains of her. The photo is grainy, clipped from the local paper: her face half-smiling, a wisp of hair tucked behind one ear, and beneath the fold, a headline I refuse to re-read. Some mornings, I forget she's there. I wipe steam off the glass and there she is-framed between toothpaste smudges and my tired reflection. On those days, I dream for her. I offer her another sunrise. I dream her a second morning, soft and suburban, filled with birdsong and cereal bowls and children tugging at her skirt. She had two. Children. A father who led nine marches for her before the police let him identify her bones. Andrea was thirty-seven when she disappeared. Her last known location: beside her boyfriend. Her last known moment: unknowable.

The body was found by a road that links Guaymas and Empalme. The bypass, they call it. As if what happened could be bypassed. Her name used to come up in conversation, clenched between molars like a prayer or a warning. *Andrea*. They said it the way you say thunder-like something already past but still echoing. Why does God strip his floor if He still means to varnish it? I asked this once, aloud, after reading the autopsy report online, searching for something, anything, that would justify it. But Andrea never got to ask questions like that. She didn't know she was in the prologue of her last chapter.

She didn't get to put on her dress for the occasion. She didn't get to run, to scream, to second-guess the man beside her. She didn't get to wake up. She was a woman, then a silhouette, then a heat source-her body calcined. The papers said that. *Calcined*. Like she were a rock to be purified. And now? Her story isn't hers anymore. It lives in the hands of strangers: the girl making protest posters with glitter-glue and grief; the aunt who never met her but now won't stop crying; the fathers who show up with their daughters at rallies just to whisper, *you are not alone*.

The ashes still float through the barrio, sneak under doorways, settle in nostrils. You don't know you're breathing her in until you open your mouth to speak and rage pours out. I drive past the Municipal Palace

every week now. Last Thursday, someone spray-painted her name across the steps in violet letters. Another name joined her by the weekend. Then another.

This morning, I brushed my teeth, looked in the mirror. She was still there, taped at the corner, watching. She looks like she's asking something of me. Like maybe I'm the one being reflected now. So I took the photo off. Not to forget her. To carry her with me. This is what grief looks like after it calcines: a mirror emptied, a road filled, a flame kept alive in the breath of a thousand strangers.

And I am every minute passing after her.



