

Writing Reconciliation

I'm not stating explicitly that I am Latino,
because I am not exactly Latino. Instead I'll say
meeting my father awoke a nation inside me
and my tongue began forming his Spanish. I'll say
making *patacones* is a spiritual experience—
a prayer. And the browning sizzling disks—
an answer. I'll say I write: about warm
wool socks because of Neruda; about my wife
and sleeping baby because of William Carlos Williams.

I wanted to say that an author should write
from place. Wanted to unroll a map,
point to a star, and say this is the place
I write from. But how do I stick a star over
all the state of Utah? How do I make the five points
touch Orem, Ecuador, the Panama Canal, and Mount Timpanogos?
How do I stretch place from Uinta Forest aspen groves,
to wetlands of Utah Lake filled with reeds and Blue Heron,
to the shifting locks and rising water of the Gatún Lake,
to the long dried up
Lake Bonneville?

I wanted to mix my manifesto
with a creed. Hold up the standard of Mormons.
But somewhere I lost my fear of Other. In some canyon
I misplaced prejudice.
Now I want to put on my white shirt and tie,
go door-to-door, knock on *wickiups*,
wait for ghosts to answer, and say I'm sorry
for the hate my people showed you.
I want to dig up graves of the Fremont and Nuche,
hold their skeletons in my arms and wail apologies.
But what repentance would that bring?
I've tried turning my back completely, but I haven't lost my love
for the poems about Jesus. Still see the beauty
in His body and blood.

Perhaps here I should mention mythology.
Maybe more people should write about mountains.
Or should more people write about lakes?
Perhaps here I can lift the sleeping woman
off Mount Timpanogos. Take her hand
and lead her down to Utah Lake. Watch her
undress, shrugging off the clothes of the summit,

and dive into the lake. I'd plunge in after her
and we'd turn back time, until the water was clear again,
until Bonneville Cutthroat schools swam between our legs.

I will stick up for broken things. I say nothing
can ever fully be broken, it's just a new half waiting
for us to come make it whole again.

I'll write half poems: wait for your tongue
to come give them rhythm.

Offer up my half prayers: stay on my knees
till I form callouses waiting on you to come
claim amen. Write half English:

descanso mientras aprendes cómo completarlo.

I write half community, and wander through farmer's markets
until you come share a peach with me—let the juices
drip on our skin. I'll stand on street corners puckering
till you hand over some love. I'll get naked
and wade into the lake, shout until the sleeping woman
comes down for a dip. I'll keep knocking on *wickiups*,
sticking stars on maps, and let my saliva dissolve
the salt from my fresh *patacones*.

I'll tattoo *Soy mitad* in black ink on my body,
while all these words await an answer.