

PAPI PICHÓN IS ROCK DOVE

Please forgive the disrespect,
as our faces are never clean enough
for your viewing
nor can our bodies
escape your blinking.

The appreciation for the copiousness
of your coo, that consistent
traveling trill is your manifest
mastery in language through sound.

One of our many wishes as we are
but human unable to fly among you,
so you walk by us with bobbing neck
teaching a working tongue.

In what language are you speaking this time
prone en la esquina de un roca
from all over the world

statuesque in feather
bird in bird's importance
chiseled into a forever.

For every echo between your beak
there is
an uninterpreted alphabet,

a way to read
the answers we continue searching
in the sands of your feet—

¿De dónde vienes?

¿Quién es tu creador?

PAPI PICHÓN IMAGINES HIMSELF A MASTERPIECE

What is it to not work the fields like my people
did? How they gathered the decapitation of plants

into bushels with malicious scythes. Upon dipping
my head in a world of hay I could discover

the sun, appreciation in the artform of nourishment.
My working hands would evolve from rakes

to spoons. I would dine on four courses of picked
fruit and baked bread, know the real taste of

a simple pear and the real estate of producing
and consuming. Mostly, I envy the man who lies

exhausted under a tree waiting for his day to be
over, for he doesn't know his own greatness like

Papi didn't know his greatness packing linen in
a dimly lit factory. To feed on the wheats of labor

is to know something I once did in another life
time. To have eaten where I worked, laughed,

and slept is life in browned skin that attracts my
spirit's asylum despite these softened palms. So

what am I to do when I pass a bale of dried grass
and I know I am but a hayneedle among the fodder?

PAPI PICHÓN SHADOWBOXES WITH HIS LEGACY

I'm every youth that pummels your campo's wise guy,
calling each jab a gift to place bets and riff on the dimes

of every bird beneath me. My legacy consists of fists
clenched tight, to wallop and maim, to ball up the

shamelessness boiled into a twisted spine. Boxing,
a sacrificial sport by design, breath and wind conceived

in the sancocho brine of a Trinidad, Rosario, Camacho, Cotto,
Ortiz, Olivera, Rivera, Montañez, Torres, Vasquez, Gomez,

and you. Every one of my swings is a comida del pobre
story to swallow in this fighting game where any kid

in a high school bathroom can flap his wings, make a scene,
and throw hands against another like the generations of bodies

before him. In the cockpits of backyards, clubs, or back alleys
of clubs, they're here, with their opponent against the ropes.

Morphed into urinal or dumpster, clobbering and swinging
until one hears that inner viejo say, *hit 'em with the bolo* and then,

it cuts quick like sugarcane. Through the art of a fist-to-chin
connection, I demonstrate how human can make human blood

trickle down slow, gushing aloe. Each time, swollen appendages
make mountains of blueprints with spit and bone skin graphed

on another man's fists to be worn as a flag. In these moments,
I begin to question where those hands have been but who am I

to wait for sacks of daggers to speak a double-edged legacy
when every bob and weave comes with the wind of a whisper.

PAPI PICHÓN NAVIGATES AN EASTERLY WAVE

When hurricanes
start from a kick of dust
what does that make us
if not a God for releasing
breath escaped from our mouths
untraceable above 30 degrees
momentarily capable
of sinking whole cities

PAPI PICHÓN DANCES WITH MARIA

Make her spin with your
scratches. Continue

to hit congas at the front of
the entrance at *El Coquí*.

Say nightshade in her hands,
say she can provide me no aid.

In Jersey, Nueva York, Puerto
Rico— this dancer floods cities

in the threnody of her hips.
Her movements in circles

on hands and knees, men
growing and toppling

like banana trees. We dare
be caught in her eye.

To be hostage to her Juracán
sweeping fear in every man's heart.

Let her continue to cut the air
of this dancefloor with her hips

in a whirlwind of movements
that will leave this place ravaged.

DIMITRI REYES

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