

Cross Cultural Dialogue

Do you sit, Honduran, among the rocks
above the muddy boundary river and watch,
beyond its meager flow, the grandsons
of paramilitary trainers who taught
those who patrolled your neighborhoods
and claimed the crops of your father's parents?

Do you hear me answer in my untamed Spanish
or does your norte' ear notice no such sound?
Why are your crews along the bank armed
with equipment for careful calculation
lining out the track for paneled walls that speak
only the violent language of keep out?

Bordering on Lines from Neruda

“Man kills it with paper and with hate,
smothers it in a rug of the everyday, shreds it
among the hostile barbed-wire clothes.” *

We choose in this strict and tensioned season
to clothe our housekeepers and fruit pickers
in undergarments woven of barbed wire.
Discomfort you know discourages planning
and conversation beyond pained complaint.

We excuse this unofficial, well-hidden practice
with celebrations of patriotic virtue
and the essential demands of law and order
often proclaiming our compassion for all
and demanding others respect their freedom.

- From *The Heights of Macchu Picchu*, section 2
in the translation by David Young.

Beyond the Wall

When they say they're praying about their decision
They've already decided.

Mark Jarman, "Don't Get Your Hopes Up"

Not that my camel could not thread the needle's eye
but every needle within my reach eyeless.
No matter the sharpest point, every project
I imagined aborted before it began.
Cloth, plain or patterned, in my hands, showed no stitch,
no mending nor decorative borders,
and leaders I petitioned for useful tools
answered with prayerful words but empty hands,
narrowed eyes watching from inside the city's gate.

Live P. D.

Martin L. K. Johnson, Booker Bonham,
Javier Suarez and Pete Valenzuela
wearing baggy, drawstring denim trousers
over union suits fading to grey
and cheap plastic flip flops, standard issue
for a sheriff's department inmate,
stand three late afternoon hours along
the drive dropping to basement holding cells
beneath the new county office building.
Three Saturday evening hours to mark
the time their fifth crew member, Julian
had before the hearse brought him up that drive.

Masks and Manipulations

We've fashioned funnels for employees, structured systems designed to distribute the sparse flow allowed to seep through our excess and sprinkle precise support on their need. We recalibrate when necessary our practices limiting effective efforts to construct a less restrictive flow of resources to those essential to creating and conveying the goods.

We've devised titles to disguise their status and designed lapel pins and bright banners declaring them Heroes, brought brass bands to welcome their arrivals and published praise filled profiles on company sites. We have not increased our funnel's flow beyond temporary necessity.