



English Studies in Latin America

Three Poems in Prose

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Three Poems in Prose

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¹ Lana Bella has a diverse work of poetry and fiction anthologized, published and forthcoming with over ninety journals, including a chapbook with Crisis Chronicles Press (2015), Aureorean Poetry, Chiron Review, Contrary Magazine, elsewhere, Poetry Quarterly, and Featured Artist with Quail Bell Magazine, among others. She also lives bi-continentally, in the US and the coastal town of Nha Trang, Vietnam, where she is wife of a novelist, and mother of two frolicsome imps.

RU

English is my day-to-day language that I barely understand. Vietnamese, the tongue of my mother's land is the one in sleepwalking, I dream of home. It lets me put into spoken sounds of the old city's dampness and grime, cigarette smoke warms through my father's accented syllables trailing his terrain of speech. I sit cross-legged at the bottom of the staircase, humming *Ru*, a quiet folk lullaby that my mother often sang me to sleep, its front-gate welcoming, moon-lit courtyard trickles earthward inseted words "*au a o*", which are a bit tricky for a foreign tongue to emulate. Somewhere in the foyer, a handmade paper lamp rouses to waking beams of gold, turns bright my breaths which are a million rustic wisps born from flour and rice grains, where water buffaloes still tromp the dense paddy fields. Out where the fish pond, lemon grass thistle and root lotus spill entrails into the water, more pink than green, more flowers than leaves. I surrender my voice to the breeze knowing it would land on the lisle, like a minstrel who's set aside the old way of storytelling with ink and quill, I pour my words into a sonant river straying across soft tongue and hard teeth, echoing the homage of jasmine tea percolating over porcelain china cup, topped with fluid ricochets of the Mekong riverboat's paddle wheels cutting through the waning gas light. But like a theater host shushing her enthusiastic audience at the final curtain calls, I emerge behind the veil of dark, discovering the stage is empty and the play needs to be rewritten, over and over. "Hello", calls a familiar voice from the other side of morning fog, "home is space between every letter, home is sounds between silence, so someday, maybe you'll come back to visit." My voice releases into its voice box, silhouette holds a cauldron of understanding, simmers in history.

SMALL AND SMALLER

Inside her cupped hands sprouts a small universe.
Inside this universe, another one lays smaller. It is
not a bird that takes root, nor a mouse, rather a
sharp question that presses its lips against moist
skin, where ink notes leak into alphabets, incise
through tiny beads of perspiration. Words churn
this way and that, but they could not know, taking
a turn back, to which their clusters of deformity
would be the weight she would never regain. Instead,
now they lay soft and yielding, and even if they were
to step out off her hands, the air would grab hold of
their whiskers-like-wings and carry them towards
the edge of the unknown. So they will stagnate where
deep whimpering drifts by in the universe, write up
new letters as it has done before when she opens one
hand and closes the other.

RABBIT EARS

The rabbit ears of earth become audible,
it is the receiving,
the receiving that wakes up the sleeping roots
and the foresight of light--
one senses a nearing of vibrations
that are a trace fainter than cracked clay,
but dark,
and loose like seedlings,
which quivers over tall blades of grass,
forcing blooms to breathe out from their hermitage--
nearby,
a trail of fire-ants move frenziedly through pockets of dirt,
struggling to keep steady an assembly line,
as they tunnel down beneath the soil
whose dry mouth lays agape.
What meteoric are universal rhythms
and close-up view as life
turns the lenses of curiosity on itself.
And this understanding,
however brimful and brief,
is fragile as it falls apart with the wings of dust.