

# VI

## *El Retorno*

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*te amaré, te amaré si estoy muerto  
te amaré al día siguiente además  
te amaré, te amaré como siento  
te amaré con adiós, con jamás*

—Silvio Rodríguez, "*Te Amaré Y Después*"

I will love you, love you even if I die,  
I will love you the next day as well,  
I will love you, love you as I feel,  
I will love you with good-bye and never again.

—translated by Rina Benmayor and Juan Flores

*Arriba mi gente*

(para Tirsa Quiñones who wrote the music  
and Cherríe Moraga who sang it)

Chorus: *Arriba mi gente,  
toda gente arriba.  
In spirit as one,  
all people arising  
Toda la gente junta  
en busca del Mundo Zurdo  
en busca del Mundo Zurdo*

*Un pueblo de almas afines  
encenderemos los campos  
con una llamarada morada—  
la lumbre del Mundo Zurdo.*

## Chorus

*Ya no, sin fe, mi gente |  
camino entre ilusiones | repeat  
de muebles, perro, cielo  
sin libro, letra. Herida.*

*Y con mi gente |  
andando mi vida | repeat  
voy dando mi mensaje.*

*Mi gente, despierta, |  
limpia la Madre Tierra. | repeat  
Y entre la llama púrpura |  
allí renaceremos |  
allí renaceremos. | repeat*

## Chorus

*Hijas de la Chingada,  
born of the violated india,  
guerrilleras divinas—  
mujeres de fuego ardiente  
que dan luz a la noche oscura  
dan lumbre al Mundo Zurdo*

## Chorus

*¡Volveremos!  
Prenderemos la guerra de bien adentro  
con esa luz del alma.  
En esta noche Zurda |  
renacerá el Espíritu | repeat  
de nuestra Tierra.*

*Retornará nuestra antigua fe  
y levantará el campo.  
Arriba, despierten, mi gente |  
a liberar los pueblos. | repeat*

In spirit as one  
all people arising.

*En esta noche Zurda, mi vida,  
mirar, nuestras trescientas luces  
y ver la llamarada morada |  
la lumbre del Mundo Zurdo. | repeat*

## Chorus

*Levantémonos, Raza  
mujeres de séptimo rayo  
que ya llegamos y aquí estamos.  
Arriba, despierta mi gente  
a liberar los pueblos |  
Arriba mi gente, despierta. | repeat*

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### To live in the Borderlands means you

are neither *hispana india negra española*  
*ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata*, half-breed  
 caught in the crossfire between camps  
 while carrying all five races on your back  
 not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing  
 that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,  
 is no longer speaking to you,  
 that *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*,  
 that denying the Anglo inside you  
 is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

*Cuando vives en la frontera*  
 people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,  
 you're a *burra*, *buey*, scapegoat,  
 forerunner of a new race,  
 half and half—both woman and man, neither—  
 a new gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to  
 put *chile* in the borscht,  
 eat whole wheat *tortillas*,  
 speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;  
 be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints;

Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to  
 resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,  
 the pull of the gun barrel,  
 the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands  
 you are the battleground  
 where enemies are kin to each other;  
 you are at home, a stranger,  
 the border disputes have been settled  
 the volley of shots have shattered the truce  
 you are wounded, lost in action  
 dead, fighting back;

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To live in the Borderlands means  
 the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off  
 your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart  
 pound you pinch you roll you out  
 smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive the Borderlands  
 you must live *sin fronteras*  
 be a crossroads.

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*gabacha*—a Chicano term for a white woman  
*rajetas*—literally, "split," that is, having betrayed your word  
*burra*—donkey  
*buey*—oxen  
*sin fronteras*—without borders

*Canción de la diosa de la noche*  
(for Randy Conner)

I am a vine  
creeping down the moon.  
I have no keeper.

I fall into this world.  
The Mother, catching me in her net,  
entangles me in human flesh.

I wander on a path  
come to the patio of a ruined temple.  
Flutes lure me to a fire.  
A litany fondles my hip  
horns pin me to the ground.  
To cast out the brute,  
I shake earth, air, fire, and water  
in the lunar sistrum.  
I devour the roses of Isis.

I pass  
through the gate,  
come to the path on the left,  
past the wellspring  
beside the gnarled cypress.

At the crossroads  
where her spirit shocks  
she comes sweeping  
through the night,  
spirits and hounds  
baying behind her.  
Her wings keep me warm.  
Three jackals  
watch with me.

I am the gate  
demons and vanquished gods invade  
then pass into this world to get to you.

I do not want to keep to myself,  
but none see the brand on my forehead  
save you and the few who can look me in the face.  
I pass unseen, my shawl wrapped around me.  
Choosing to walk alone, I return to myself.

Daily, the present menaces,  
Splinters fly from my eyes,  
pricking liars and fools.  
Thorns and thistles grow in my hair  
drawing the blood  
of you who embrace me.

I am mad  
but I choose this madness.  
The godhead is unstrung.  
He has a grudge against me and all flesh.  
He rejects the dark within the flame.  
As for me, I renounce my kinship  
with the whole and all its parts,  
renounce my fealty to nature.

A black cock crows three times.  
Casting no shadow,  
I wake from drunkenness  
holding my own hand.  
Cloaked in panther skin,  
I sound the maddening cymbals.

I slip my knots and garments,  
utter the first no.  
It begins where it ends.

Memory  
ignites like kindling  
the time when I filled the sky.  
Parting brought death.  
Now, I drum on the carcass of the world  
creating crises to recall my name.  
The filth you relegate to Satan,

I absorb. I convert.  
 When I dance it burgeons out  
     as song.

I seek *la diosa*  
 darkly awesome.  
 In love with my own kind,  
 I know you and inspire you.  
 All others flee from me.

I buff the old scratches from bone.  
 With flint knife, cut in our marks.  
 I keep the moon from bleeding  
 and the sun from turning black.  
 But water drains from the earth.

Terror seizes me.  
 Death's warm hand on me.  
 Night, unfurl your wings  
 and your long hair over me.  
 Bring your breast  
 to my mouth and never wean me.

With chant I break the spell,  
 disperse the watchers from the gates.  
 Wake the sleepers.  
 With my fist I rive  
 a hole in the wall:

the winds rush in,  
 I am the gate no longer.  
 You are the gate.

The deep below, the deep above.  
 The waters overflow.

It begins where it ends,  
 I descend into black earth,  
 dark primordial slime,  
 no longer repellent to me,

nor confining.  
 The four winds  
 fire welds splinter with splinter.  
 I find my kindred spirits.

The moon eclipses the sun.  
*La diosa* lifts us.  
 We don the feathered mantle  
 and charge our fate.

*No se raje, chicanita*  
(para Missy Anzaldúa)

*No se raje mi prietita,  
apriétese la faja aguántese.  
Su linaje es antiguísimo,  
sus raíces como las de los mesquites,  
bien plantadas, horadando bajo tierra  
a esa corriente, el alma de tierra madre—  
tu origen.*

*Sí m'ijita, su gente se creó en los ranchos  
aquí en el Valle cerquita del río Grande  
en la mera frontera.  
en el tiempo antes de los gabachos  
cuando Tejas era México  
De los primeros vaqueros descendiste  
allá en los Vergeles, en Jesús María—tierra Dávila  
Mujeres fuertísimas te crearon:  
tu mamá, mi hermana, mi madre, y yo.*

*Y sí, nos han quitado las tierras.  
Ya no nos queda ni el camposanto  
donde enterraron a Don Urbano, tu vis-visabuelo.  
Tiempos duros como pastura los cargamos  
derechitas caminamos.*

*Pero nunca nos quitarán ese orgullo  
de ser mexicana-Chicana-tejana  
ni el espíritu indio.  
Y cuando los gringos se acaban—  
mira como se matan unos a los otros—  
aquí vamos a parecer  
con los horned toads y los lagartijos  
survivors del First Fire Age, el Quinto Sol.*

*Quizá muriéndonos de hambre como siempre  
pero una nueva especie  
piel entre negra y bronce*

*segunda pestaña bajo la primera  
con el poder de mirar al sol ojos desnudos.  
Y vivas, m'ijita, retevivas.*

*Sí, se me hace que en unos cuantos años o siglos  
la Raza se levantará, lengua intacta  
cargando lo mejor de todas las culturas.  
Esa víbora dormida, la rebeldía, saltará.  
Como cuero viejo caerá la esclavitud  
de obedecer, de callar, de aceptar.  
Como víbora relampagueando nos moveremos, mujercita.  
¡Ya verás!*

Don't Give In, *Chicanita*  
(para Missy Anzaldúa)

Don't give in *mi prietita*  
tighten your belt, endure.  
Your lineage is ancient,  
your roots like those of the mesquite  
firmly planted, digging underground  
toward that current, the soul of *tierra madre*—  
your origin.

Yes, *m'ijita*, your people were raised *en los ranchos*  
here in the Valley near the Rio Grande  
you descended from the first cowboy, the *vaquero*,  
right smack in the border  
in the age before the Gringo when Texas was Mexico  
over *en los ranches los Vergeles y Jesús María*—  
Dávila land.

Strong women reared you:  
my sister, your mom, my mother and I.

And yes, they've taken our lands.  
Not even the cemetery is ours now  
where they buried Don Urbano  
your great-great-grandfather.  
Hard times like fodder we carry  
with curved backs we walk.

But they will never take that pride  
of being *mexicana-Chicana-tejana*  
nor our Indian woman's spirit.  
And when the Gringos are gone—  
see how they kill one another—  
here we'll still be like the horned toad and the lizard  
relics of an earlier age  
survivors of the First Fire Age—*el Quinto Sol*.

Perhaps we'll be dying of hunger as usual  
but we'll be members of a new species  
skin tone between black and bronze

second eyelid under the first  
with the power to look at the sun through naked eyes.  
And alive *m'ijita*, very much alive.

Yes, in a few years or centuries  
*la Raza* will rise up, tongue intact  
carrying the best of all the cultures.  
That sleeping serpent,  
rebellion-(r)evolution, will spring up.  
Like old skin will fall the slave ways of  
obedience, acceptance, silence.  
Like serpent lightning we'll move, little woman.  
You'll see.

—translated from the Spanish by the author