

A Condensation of Maps

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Roberto Carcache Flores

A Dink Press Chapbook

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Introduction

One of the pleasures of running a (small) poetry press is the chance to see talent before it is publically recognized. Larger presses generally pass on young, emerging poets because they haven't spent years building up a reputation among magazines, which is understandable- you can't run a successful business if nobody knows what you're selling. I wanted Dink Press to be different though, and so far it has been. When we started planning the business we decided that we didn't want to be rich. Instead we wanted to use what resources we have to promote the craft of poetry, supporting the emerging writers who are struggling to get their work recognized. We are in the game for the sake of good poetry being written and read.

Roberto Carcache Flores is not just a good poet, he is a great one, and young, too. He reminds me of a surrealist Williams, or perhaps Lorca. The majority of submissions we receive come from American poets, writing in American language. He is from El Salvador, and maybe that's the source of freshness in his poems. No matter what it is, *A Condensation of Maps* is fresh, modern, relevant, and somehow classic. No poem (or collection for that matter) is perfect. Every poet has room to grow, and he is going to grow into a driving force in modern poetry. I am very honored to be able to publish this, his first collection, and am very much looking forward to his future- I hope it grows beyond Dink, and I'm sure it will. Wherever his career takes him it will be far.

-Kristopher D. Taylor
Founder/Editor Dink Press
2/9/15, Goldsboro, NC

A Condensation of Maps

El Tunco

This is where
you slipped
from a coconut palm,
right after
you scratched
its leaves
with a dollar coin,
hoping to find
some answers
or enough money
for a new smartphone
with a touch screen,
unlimited texting,
and a ringtone
that echoed
the ocean's snores,
without the scent
of its salty dreams.

This is the place
the space between
your toes has been
longing for
every time you
went to sleep,
even in the
dustiest of sheets
to a playlist
with songs
about blue skies,
aged rums,
and a violet sun
going down
on the sea
until it
got dark.

Friends in Rio Sapo

The passing clouds
are reflected on
the water's surface,
like white lily pads
in a heated
swimming pool,
my feet feel
the rocky cliff's
sharpness,
an albatross
glides through
surrounding
mango groves.

The opening
of a tuna can
and a bag of raisins
gathers some
stray dogs
around me,
their noses
grown tired
of corn meal
and the occasional
drum stick.

The frogs
begin to undress
the night's
silence
with the
innocence
of their
early croaks,
all along
the moonlit
river bank.

Leaving Perquín

You heard rumors
from a local
radio transmission
of sneezing
palm trees,
allergic to the ashes
the wind blew,
bullets inside
sacks of black beans,
and men who believed
in the freedom
of land.

Remember how
you crossed
the green hill crests
with a steel wool kite
tied around your ankles,
while frantically chasing
the scent of an underground fire
you thought long gone?

You walked through
the trails of Perquín
with nothing but your toes,
while softly humming
I've been here before.

The Needle Tip

Left early
in the morning
through a
dimly lit funnel,
listened to desert
field recordings,
chewed on ancient
clock needles,
wrote mental
farewells to friends,
and waited for
a different day
to burn those
desperate poems
at their very
words.

Nyack Blues

He stands above
the vacant parking lot,
minivans, and
battered coupes,
have come and gone,
leaving only
the echo
of his buzz.

The shadows
of cocktail dresses,
rolled up sleeves,
silky scarves,
and armpit stains
have slow danced away,
held up close
by autumn's breeze.

He listens to how
indifferently
the night swallows
gagging sounds,
concrete splashes,
and yawns of
sleepy fruit flies
looking for
a late night snack.

He's kept
track of time,
how it ticks
to the clicks
of pointy heels,
revolving doors,
cell phone calls,
packed taxi cabs,
and all things closed.

X said O got caught
hawk watching
in a vacant spider web.

O said X should
run wild among
the most silent of does.

X forgot to wipe
the grains of sand
from the pillow covers.

O forgot to check
if the green grapes
were seedless.

O thought X heard
giggles whenever
the bath bubbles popped.

X thought O heard
a single hiccup while
showering in the dark.

X waited, ear pressed
to the window
listening for crows.

O waited for
the thawing of pines
and X to arrive.

The Fordham Sentinel

Have you checked your bed
for all your fallen pens?
Did the blue stains
on your sheets
leave bite marks
the following morning?

Did you itch until ink
dripped from your
thighs to your knees,
across the landscapes
of your legs leaving
your argyle socks all wet?

Did you ask for
a giant hourglass
filled with fireflies
just to keep track
of your most
feverish dreams?

Did you wake up in tears,
found them all
sleeping inside
and let out a sigh
thinking of how
you've lost sight
of the shadows
and flickers of time?

April

An angel
loosens her hair
while crossing
a highway
of whispers
and loose ends,
reminded
of someone
with each
passing
headlight

She still
answers to
the Moon
like anyone
who's been
stranded,
spit glimmers
as it slides
below her
eyes

Someday has
a nice ring,
like a car
pulling over,
cool air
blasting
from inside,
one more night
screams
within a
sigh

Dinner (for one)

The numbing ebb
of headlights,
superimposed
metal tables,
fried chicken platters,
hair net traffic
-stuck in place-
like closing credits
on repeat.

X,

I hope
the wind
is kind,
flowing
through
your creases,
even where
it hurts.

I hope
it treats you
like its
favorite feather,
while still
giving you
the freedom
you deserve.

I hope your
inner strings
no longer feel
overwrought,
tightened
by the past,
impervious
to touch.

I hope they've
blossomed
into ivy
or can flutter
to make
music.

- O

()

First you
fly, dip, land;
scarred,
town names
across
your back,
or something
of the kind.

You look up
sometimes,
like there's
another room
feather free
in the wind
where you
sleep.

It's the
evening pills
swallowed
in spit and the
morning heat
when you
truly realize:

Treatment

If I could
I'd be your
therapist,
playing
smooth jazz
through
the morning,
one eye
on the clock,
another in
your folder.

I'd browse
through
all those cries
you scribbled
using watercolors
while waiting
for a ring,
to usher
you inside.

My hands
would shake
in yours
like swarms
of moths
around a
lamp shade
until you
grab a seat,
and look me
in the eye.

Dinner (for two)

The glow
of your sighs
paints clear
streaks in
my wineglass
like strings
from a
dying glacier
stranded
on a crimson
sea.

Even in
your eyes
I must shiver,
imprisoned,
bare,
yet free
to roam
in an intricate
garden where
the sun never sets,
remaining
fixed, golden.

The Moon's
darkness
keeps us
in proximity,
a bridge
made of shadows
built through
our silence,
knowing
full well
our steaks
are now
cold.

O,

I don't want
to find you
sitting in
an empty pier
doing your best
to invert
the horizon,
with bait
tied to your
undone laces,
both legs
swinging
to the same
old tune.

- X

Borders Left Behind

Imagine
stamping
a black seal
on a feather
every time
an eagle soars
too far from
its nest
or questioning
a vulture's
motives for its
incessant travel.

The only borders
we should cross
lie across
the eyes
of two
strangers,
even as
we travel
on this bus,
your head
on my shoulder.

Recent Itineraries

An empty airport lobby,
turbines sigh about
the vastness of the skies,
each trip longer
than the last,
yet we still wonder
where it starts.

Perhaps we are defined
by our hollowness,
carrying the echoes
of distance, joy
and contemplation,
heavier than sea shells
yet subject to
the aimlessness of tides.

Promenade

To be reborn
into concrete,
cobblestones
or brick,
carrying
the name
of a mother's
favorite saint.

Every day
the Sun
would set, I'd
lie withered
by a shore,
stretching out
my wings
from inside
such stones.

Margaret Island

A moment
to hold, like
squeezing
a leaf until
it turns white,
while sitting
in silence
as strangers
run past
me.

The echoes
of footsteps,
drowned in
the Danube's
humming,
I sigh to
its tune
until
no one
is around.

Postcards from Empty Trains

I

Only our silence remains
safely hidden, gone

This profound sense of dusk
lights each step home.

Each memory sails apart
in spite of our calls:

“I thought
we did nothing.”

II

Youth, a brisk walk
through an empty park
side by side.

Fear, the resolve
to say no.

Hope, an echo
or name?

Home

An intangible distance
measured in starts,
each day spent adrift
whistling past time,
---forget, renew, unpack,
let go of the sighs,----
all is now still
it's rather nice,
living in a letter.

Epilogue (Saint Sivar's Horizon)

I grew
a white beard,
waged war
on the Sun,
found glory
in retreat
climbed onto
your old
windowsill
and left it
at that,
for nothing
can stop the
condensation
of maps.

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