

# The Weight of Silence

By Divya Rajan

Your scarf spoke nine tongues.  
I failed to know the purpose, seek the language  
of splinters, shards, lazy salsas.  
I thought the skies bowed to you even  
as they turned mauve. Awe  
filled my lungs, I breathed.  
Shards slow danced, I felt your smile.  
It smelt of something else.  
You're ducking shadows traded with liquid limelight.

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"You were born to silence", sang whispers  
of the one who bore me for ten crescent milk moons.  
And so I breathed in the silence  
of the damp Oaxacan earth,  
the silence of nopals, moriche, cacao fields,  
the silence of achiotes as they painted my soul  
and I yearned for harvest;  
the silence by the creek  
after cowbirds flocked to nests,  
silence in the pauses of a distant merengue,  
silence in the nook of an ancient  
pottery tavern where gods were made  
by hands.  
Silence...

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I felt the cold of asbestos.  
Much after, as I shuddered  
on a sore bit of land  
that reeked of sewage, puddles  
of worm-infested waters  
inching into my mouth, slower than a drip, I dreamt  
of barbed wires, nine unspoken red fire fangs, fumes  
from a neighbor maquiladora. I even dreamt  
of the kneader I was meant to be. My heart  
felt the weight of silence.

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*Divya Rajan's work has been published in Poetic Chicago Anthology, Apparatus, Read This, Danse Macabre, and The Times of India. She has been a recipient of a Pushcart Prize nomination and currently lives in Chicago.*

*The above poem is an ekphrastic work inspired by artist Judithe Hernández's work titled, The Border, exhibited at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago in 2009.*