A Return to My Nativist Land

It is a dark-clothed fluorescence,
outside 3-footed stairways,
In torso-sized tables,
sleeveless old men slam dominos. In half-toothed grin,
fiddling wit’ straw hats strings. *Una balasera de español*
 riddling the pavement.
Ten dollar radio crackles a tipsy *bachata*.

It is a shirtless boy, stuffing his finger to
corners of his mouth. Kinky hair peek-a-boos his face,
mother watches nearby. I kneel to greet his eyes,
an abrupt brown, like *el mestizaje*.

It is a world,
underneath his eyelash.
As it peels open, he
stares at the labyrinths of documents
tucked ‘neath my arms.
His voice
softly beating against my chest,
chanting,
“*Qué Esperas?”*

I

*Why was I Picked and Groomed by America as its Token Curator?*

There is a house in ruins.
Fenced, a relic *nacido ayer*.
Borrowed existence past overdue.
Militant gauze,
    ceaseless forsake of rugged-faced gods,
banging against its iron mesh,

And
I, in observatories of privilege 
The Americanization of a spic
    Theorize, essay, posit.
The way a drunkard miscalculates
a doorstep.

Studying its archaeology, dicta in unwashed *comales*.
Wrought archway, empty *bodegas*,
Chuy’s *última cena*. Arrested for trespassing
Tar-carpeted streetlights,
moon still laughin’,
   Imprisoned,
‘hind a squad car. y America,
   illiterate to her own hatred,
before sunrise,
   tailored his baseball cap
for a burglar’s disguise.
   Shot between the eyes.

   Shrugging her shoulders, she hiccupped,
   “Must’ve committed suicide.”

*La gente* trade-in the 2-job hustle,
congest the public square
-- the lungs of democracy --
for a vigil march.
Richochets and unrequited moans. Dialectic of
the wretched,
*El Grito de Dolores* - resurrected
Tears forged by injustice n’ gas.
Sliding a *rosario*
   chanting, “the first shall be last”
And suddenly,
we appear human.
We can cry.

I walk across this house’s hallways,
   steeped in mythology:
beaten-in folklore, trodden nursery rhymes.
Stained glass bleeding ‘gainst
   a stolen sunlight.
Oiled portraits of
pale-faced Presidents,    a God that’s white.
Golden chandeliers; the violence as career

At the ceiling, not naked skylight,
but Renaissance,
a nostalgia that excludes.
Genesis slept with genocide and conceived a culture.
*donde* ‘I’ is, am, irrelevant.
And yet,
   Under its pillars-- the chiseled torso and blue-eyed--
lies Black Atlas,
chanting His own requiem.
This sanctuary of ignorance,
Fanon trembles from his lips, “is
a world of statues, of leisure
a world cocksure of itself.
a Hell dentro nuestros brazos.

Were it not for ferocious watchdogs, guarding it.
A labyrinth, secular psalms.
Men dressed in crisp business,
before Kafka’s Law.”

I step out,

todo norteado,

remembering where I began.

A freeway-exit
stands,
between the frozen sea,
within us
and the New Man.

Y por el camino,
I dreamt of palm-sized mangoes; the
culture of a jagged sidewalk; of clothes drying on
a front porch,
ever worn out.

Instead,

At the end of the hallway,
I pry my lips against the fence,
Shaken, to ese himno
That I no longer recognize.

Groping for
mi niñez,

Outside a scanty church
An aging tricycle rests,
The tassels ripped, stickers filed off.
Time’s strewn ‘cross the lot.
The Earth urn-ed its letters
in caution tape.
World its footnote, punctuated by
the illusion of movement.

Pero ya te digo.
Passing by the door,
an old man *me saluda*. Air of a fallen pastor, slouched against a crackling radiator. He counts his change, chuckling,

“*Young man, young man*  
*Yo arm’s too short*  
*To box with God…*”

Inside, an orgy to forget.  
Mass is high, and the  
Icarian rituals, I no longer perform.  
Liquor-laced melodies, --words anesthetic--  
seeking to transcend the wage-labored sun.  
Bodies either exhaust,  
swerve to temptation. Worshippin’ broads  
with the fattest chest.  
Or  
worse,  
nothing…

It’s been 20 years,  
this *paisa* Odyssey. This  
*Muséo del Otro*,  
Hidden in plain sight. To this  
Striptease of our humanism. To this  
White House that exists, because they,  
I  
mean,  
we.  
I  
mean  
they.  
I mean  
we -  
don’t!

Behind the crucifix, a terra-cotta throne, where  
a barefooted queen sits.  
Black Rose cocked to her hair.  
Poised, in a dress bathed in gold,  
she rises.

i kneel,  
gazing at the roaring *cerros*,  
the jungle deafens to her hand.  
*Los siglos* ingrained in stone.
I speak tell me,
O’ Muse, reina de todo,
dipped in marigold,

. Te lo suplico,

Why was I
picked and groomed by America
as its token curator?