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Nativity: For Two Salvadoran Women, 1986-1987

Demetria Marinez

Your eyes, large as Canada, welcome
this stranger.
We meet in a Juarez train station
where you sat hours,
your offspring blooming in you
like cactus fruit,
dresses stained where breasts leak,
panties in purses tagged
Hecho en El Salvador.
Your belts, like equators,
mark north from south,
borders I cannot cross
for I am a North American reporter,
pen and notebook, the tools
of my tribe, distance us
though in any other era I might
press a stethoscope to your wombs,
hear the symphony of the unborn,
finger forth infants to light,
wipe afterbirth, cut cords.
You tell me, *It is impossible*
to raise a child in that country."
Sister, I am no saint.
Just a woman who happens
to be a reporter,
a reporter who happens
to be a woman,
squat in a forest, peeing
on pine needles, watching you
vomit morning sickness,
a sickness infinite
as the war in El Salvador,
a sickness my pen and notebook
will not ease.
Tell me, Por que estan aqui?(accent over a and i)
how did you cross over?

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In my country we sing
of a baby in a manger,
finance death squads,
how to write of this shame,
of the children you chose to save?
It is impossible to raise a child
in that country.
A North American reporter,
I smile, you tell me you are due
in December, we nod,
knowing what women know.
I shut my notebook,
watch your car rock
through the Gila Wilderness.
A canoe hangs over the windshield
like the beak of an eagle
as babies turn in your wombs,
summoned to Bele (accent mark over e)n to be born.