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## What the Body Remembers; In a Doorway

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## What the Body Remembers; In a Doorway

### Cover Page Footnote

This article is from an earlier iteration of *Diálogo* which had the subtitle "A Bilingual Journal." The publication is now titled "Diálogo: An Interdisciplinary Studies Journal."





## WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS

By Ann Folwell Stanford

Through an arch of massed Cieba trees  
blue mountains stretch away to where husbands  
and sons slept before the shelling began. Escape  
was as pointless as catching water in a net.  
Our children's bodies?  
Flung like rag dolls in the street.

And the sky so blue it blocked our breath.

Now instead of war,  
Earth shakes us over and over,  
splits itself like a loaf of bread,  
flings mountains against villages,  
roars up through concrete slabs,  
our lives sucked dry as marrowbones.

Look here. A boulder shattered my front yard,  
the walls of my house crumpled fine as *harina*.  
My child's bed, snapped like straw.

In the *alberge*, thousands of tents  
burn in Salvadoran sun. 500 families  
share one kitchen pitched in mud.  
We sleep on mud, peel crusted mud  
from our children's faces, curse  
and bless the steamy rains  
as we pound corn for tortillas,  
stare into the distance  
where tents sit like little boats.

In one of them, though, something like mercy.  
Clelia, whose slumped body appears dead,  
has not been shot today, has not been tortured, not raped,  
hasn't watched her house fall today.

Today she gives herself to her neighbor's hands.  
Like a delicate sonata, the woman's fingers  
play over Clelia's skin. She strokes  
trapped memory of outraged muscles:  
blood in the streets, blood on the face,  
orchids under her skin,  
a soldier's gun, a husband's fist.

Sinew and heart open in Clelia  
like delicate blossoms as touch  
unlocks the body's nightmare.  
History's wound speaks secrets,  
a glossalalia of doves,  
grief fluttering through fingers  
of the healer's wounded hands.

## IN A DOORWAY

By Ann Folwell Stanford

At the foot of Guazapa, high in the mountains of El Salvador,  
Lake Suchitlán spreads its storied fingers among pines  
and yellow butterflies that ride the air like dancers.

Up here one can look down on hawks as they soar  
over treetops, can see flame trees' red umbrellas  
punctuating soft hills with exclamation.

In a doorway, a child of five stands barefoot, half in shadow,  
half in light, on a threshold of stucco and wood.  
He is soft against the harsh geometrics of his space.

Behind him a slit of dark, night's remnant,  
as day yawns and opens its relucant gate,  
pouring light on the still exhausted world.

Caught between dark and light, inside and out,  
he doesn't move. Quiet, he watches day  
unfold before him like an empty hand.

Too young to have seen war, he has eaten  
from its plate of rotting leftovers, has watched its claw  
continue to rake across souls of brothers, aunts.

The child's body has sensed rage's tight fist,  
little bombs he cannot defuse, has heard them  
explode over and over in voices of bitter men.

He has also known earth's treachery, has seen  
a massive serpent heave and swell beneath the street,  
crack it open, bring down walls, shatter glass.

But it is his mother's sorrow that follows him  
everywhere, a bundle of sticks tied to his back.  
He carries her silence as though it were half the sky.

In dreams, he sees his mother slough her sadness  
like an old dress, open her arms and, with him, soar  
above flame trees, beyond the light of Suchitlán.