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Glittery Poetics: Joteando en San Antonio, Tejas

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Repository Citation

Urquijo-Ruiz, R.E. (2013). Glittery poetics: Joteando en San Antonio, Tejas. Foreword to *When the glitter fades: Poems by Dino Foxx* (pp. vii-xi). San Francisco, CA: Kórima Press.

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FOREWORD

by Rita Urquijo-Ruiz, Ph.D.

GLITTERY POETICS: JOTEANDO EN SAN ANTONIO, TEJAS

I struggle to “talk” from the wound’s gash, make sense of the deaths and destruction, and pull the pieces of my life back together. I yearn to pass on to the next generation the spiritual activism I’ve inherited from my cultures.

—Gloria E. Anzaldúa

“Let us be the healing of the wound”

The poetry of Dino Foxx is not for the saintly (*gente persignada*) or faint of heart. Still, anyone who is courageous enough to read it, or better yet, witness it when he performs it, will feel the transformation while, at his invitation, entering into the poet’s home, *barrio*, body, heart, and soul. As the master of these geographic and cultural spaces, Dino will guide us through the painful, but also through the sweet, parts of these terrains. He will challenge and encourage us while sharing his most intimate regions as we witness every blow, every beso, every punch, every *deseo*, every cut, every *sonrisa*, every insult, every *abrazo*, every bite, every *cuento*.

As witnesses, we must trust but also participate in Dino’s rituals; beholding is not enough. Not with the artist sharing so much of himself that touches us *profundamente* while “reflecting” our own struggles. He survives hunger (in body and soul), abuse (of many types), and *des-amor* (from family and lovers) in order to create and nurture a proud, irrepressible,

loving, xicano-tejano-joto artista and activista. Dino is a true “artista,” as Martha Gonzalez and others, call all artists who practice activism and inspire their communities through/with their art and vision.

But where is home for this poet? What place(s) could possibly influence his creation? Given the geographic location of Texas, the proximity of this enormous state to Mexico as well as to the U.S. south, it is no coincidence that it is here, more precisely in San Antonio’s West Side, where Dino was born and became the sparkling, shimmering, glittery Joto of now. But the glitter didn’t always stick. It took him many years and tears to ready himself for the world. His poetry, as well as his performance work, shines in the true fashion of (t)his community that appropriately encourages its members to go forth and do well by shouting “Dale Shine!!” And Dino fiercely does!

The brilliance of this collection exists in the Joto-Poeta being a *sinvergüenza* shamelessly exposing himself and his familial environment in order to heal and to create a new reality, a new family that will accept and love the Xicano Joto in all his splendor. Therefore, Dino introduces us to his mama’s life, hands, comforting food, teachings, vanity, wit y ganas inmensas to survive; to his tías’ laughter and chisme at his grandma’s kitchen table; to his first sexual, playful, s/m encounter with his little primo; to his desire for male bodies that remind him of his tíos; to his absent, abusive, biological father but also his hard-working, undocumented, monolingual Spanish-speaking, responsible, loving Daddy who adopted his family; to good and bad lovers; to great and painful fucking; to sweet and bitter experiences; to fun and harsh nights out; to linguistic maromas and grammatically incorrect love-making, to fitting in and feeling alienated.

The book is divided into five sections entitled *High-Kicks & Handcuffs*, *Untitled Childhood*, *Broken Spanish*, *Fool’s Paradise*, and *Chasing Scars Away*.

The title poem of the first section places us at a huge queer bar with overpriced, weak drinks by cute bartenders, where divas that have the privilege can skip to the front of the line; these are memories of drunken, fun nights seducing men, as the poet attempts to dance in chanclas like a back up dancer and falling on his ass; and later on, the arrest where the "SAPD squad car 7334 drove away / With [his] heart and [his] life in the backseat." In the same section, the poem "Not Xicano Enough," criticizes the community's exigencies of cultural and ethnic identity by presenting a litany of details about a traditional, heteronormative Chicana/o life in San Antonio, as the author hopes to incorporate his childhood memories into the national imaginary. "Exotic" highlights a relationship with a closeted "heteroflexible" man and the poet refusing to teach him about being openly queer: "I don't wanna be your exotic, homoerotic, / Man-whore, boy toy fantasy."

In "Untitled Childhood," the poem that also titles the second section, we see two boys, cousins, kissing each other but also pretending to fight like their parents, exhibiting the violence they have learned from their families. "All in the Family" highlights an irrepressible aunt who serves as a role model to the poet by being single and independent. "Daddy" pays homage to a hard-working, undocumented, loving man who adopts the poet's broken family. Section three contains "Sleep Sounds" a poem with the sweetest of images:

Now, bedtime is when I explore
Your beautiful body, kneading
The stress away with love. It is the series
Of besitos that I leave across your back
And the goose bumps rising on your flesh

In the title poem in section four, "Fool's Paradise," there's an attempt to ignore the failure of a broken relationship by still sleeping and loving each other foolishly even after being broken up more than a year. But this section also contains "A Fucking Poem" that simply states:

I want you to fuck a good poem out of me.
Not a poem about animalistic, lust but
Candles lit, soft music playing kind of lovemaking.
The kind I have never been comfortable enough
To experience while sober.

I want you to lick the insecurity off of my skin.
Insecurity from years of being told fat is ugly
And from guys who treated my body like
Something that wasn't worth worshipping.

The whole collection closes with "Dos Poetas Locos," about the type of man who inspires poetry for the author:

I was saving this poem for you.
I hid it in my entire being and lived it
Before I could capture it on paper to
Give to you as a gift of thanks. A thank
You for the uncontrollable laughter,
The tears, the history, the food, the
Drink, the movement, the sweat, and the
Arte that we let our souls create
In a time where many find it hard
To catch a single glimpse of light.

I was saving this poem for you.
Now, it is yours forever.

This poem is the perfect ending to this book given that as readers, we also become owners of Dino Foxx's experiences and poetry by the time we arrive at the culmination of this, his most loving and powerful gift. May those who have the audacity to accompany him throughout his journey, share their privilege with others who will receive an opportunity and a fearless camino of survival and triumph.

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San Antonio, TX
May 24, 2013