

By David Dominguez

My red pickup choked on burnt oil
as I drove down Highway 99.
In wind-tattered garbage bags
I had packed my whole life:
two pairs of jeans, a few T-shirts,
an a pair of work boots.
My truck needed work, and through
the blue smoke rising from under the hood,
I saw almond orchards, plums,
and raisins spread out on paper trays,
and acres of Mendota cotton my mother picked as a child.

My mother crawled through the furrows
and plucked cotton balls that filled
the burlap sack she dragged,
shoulder-slung, through dried-up bolls,
husks, weevils, dirt clods,
and dust that filled the air with thirst.
But when she grew tired,
she slept on her mother's burlap,
stuffed thick as a mattress,
and Grandma dragged her over the land
where time was told by the setting sun. . . .

History cried out to me from the earth,
in the scream of starling flight,
and pounded at the hulls of seeds to be set free.
History licked the asphalt with rubber,
sighed in the windows of abandoned barns,
slumped in the wind-blasted palms,
groaned in the heat, and whispered its soft curses.
I wanted my own history—not the earth's,
nor the history of blood, nor of memory,
and not the job founded for me at Galdini Sausage.
I sought my own—a new bruise to throb hard
as the asphalt that pounded the chassis of my truck.

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