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## Continental Divide(s)

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## Continental Divide(s)

I talk about my mother, and her mother,  
and so many mothers before that,  
barely swimming across borders,  
drowning after their feet touched ground,  
“My mother, she no like this *countrie*,”  
and I cry along with Cather’s Antonia,  
her frozen father left behind with the animals,  
the men who must hack away at his frozen blood.

“My mother, she no want this *countrie*,” \*  
and there is my mother talking to her mother  
in a whisper, “this country is *merda*,”  
“this country is shit,”  
and yet here we are,  
turning into motherless drifters,  
creating nothing out of dollar bills,  
and no one stops running.  
They never tell you that before you leave.

When I cross the Continental Divide, the air shifts  
and my body must adjust to sudden gusts of wind,  
I am no longer in one country or another,  
for a moment I lose control and then it is over,  
an old man stands by the highway divider,  
waving his hand at me,  
and I wave back without thinking.

We have to learn to talk to ghosts  
when we cross from one continent to another.  
I did not learn that from my mother or her mother,  
they found a spot  
and stayed there, unwilling to move.  
They had done enough traveling  
for so many lifetimes, leaving behind  
bodies, voices, and smells of that place,  
that place that told them who they were;  
now they say every car trip is just too long.

Driving away from the Valley of the Fires,  
we ask only for forgiveness out here,  
buried scars in the old Oscura Mountains,  
I am surprised to see cows bending their heads,  
cacti flowers trembling in the wind,

none of that should be here at ground zero,  
not after what we have done.

I give you this invitation to follow us,  
down another road, moving beyond the  
borders of your own skin,  
do not look to us for answers,  
we only hold a stick  
to poke at what  
might destroy us all.

Carmela Delia Lanza