i. remember: only slow Spanish, italicize your mother tongue, keep it *gringo* friendly. make sure every tenth word is in *castellano*. but only the nouns, only words like *paloma, cielo, alma*, because this is an exercise in pursuing the exotic. because verbs are movement and movement is change. because we have been colonized and we must now serve as the colonizers. because your mouth has only learned the taste of powdered *chicha morada*.

ii. Please Check All That Apply:

- [ ] White (not Hispanic)
- [ ] Hispanic (not white)
- [ ] Multi-Racial
- [ ] Latino
- [ ] Latinx
- [ ] Spanish / Latin-American / Chicano (the things white people call you)
- [ ] Mestizo: *una mezcla de vergüenza*
- [ ] Criollo, portraited as San Martín with epaulettes and aviators
- [ ] Indio—Super Cholo armed with chullo
- [ ] Runakuna, Inca, Manqu Qhapaq wielding tapac-ya'uri, un tumi mojado con sangre

iii. If you tell them you are Peruvian:

members of the silent generation will not hide their surprise

women of a certain age will mention Benjamin Bratt

your peers will joke about the decade-old pan flute episode of South Park

and your otherness will swaddle you like q’ipirina

holding you to a body you refuse to understand
iv. I say él nacío en el Perú and just imagine if your blood pumped in the passive voice and your tongue felt like a rusted spade troweling the fallow earth of a forgotten andén—a word I have to look up to remember. I say al lado de mi padre because my heart is a chirimoya lazing in my throat the flesh of which is pitted with veneno. I say mitad, nunca ambos.

quinto. your first word is pato not dad or mom and years later José will call you this and you will know why these sounds touched your lips first, why sword is just one letter from words and both doble filo. not dad or mom when you speak this truth, this knowing pain that echoes, trace the vowels that opened your throat swallowing a memory removed from time still living as bi—
in fourth grade, after reading your name aloud, a substitute teacher says “you don’t look Hispanic, you look good” and her words scythe the air and deflate your pulmones and you know then that all it takes is the ten letters of your apellido to invalidate your personhood and this pain becomes a punchline to an anecdote you bandy about at parties to let your audience know that you are pasteurized, your difference homogenized in the act of performance, an amusing acknowledgement of your asimilación and passing privilege that turns everything you hated about yourself into a wink and a tip of the hat, oppressing yourself before anyone else can, and you wear this pain with so much estilo that you forget that it is the tears of the moon and not just silver, that you are Peruano, not just conquered.

Como se dice: I grew up embarrassed of my father’s accent and ashamed of my embarrassment? I can code-switch, just not with my people? How do you say: quiero ser Túpac Amaru pero soy Yanqui? How do you say: nunca he visto Ayacucho, nunca he leído La Ciudad y los Perros? ¿Por qué soy tan ajeno a mis primos? ¿Por qué mi abuelo se olvidó de mí? ¿Por qué soy desconocido a mi gente? ¿Y cómo puedo saber si el alma es costa o desierto o montañas o selva? ¿De dónde viene este dolor? ¿Quién es el dios del miasma? ¿Y quién es el dios de las aguas que nada en mercurio y arsenico? ¿Piqtaq kay unu? ¿Ima yus chay? ¿Ima yaya chay? ¿Por qué no puedo pronunciar este grito?

Because, I don’t know how to say who I am porque, es más fácil para mí hablar en inglés porque, even now, todavía quiero esconderme en artificios o chistes o habilidades porque, pienso que si uso the second person nadie va a saber quien es ‘tú’ porque, tengo miedo de mi reflejo porque, no puedo soñar en español porque, mi corazón está ensartado encima del fuego porque, mi corazón es la ladera y el arcoíris de Vinicunca porque, mi corazón es un q’iswa chaka suspendido entre dos mundos porque, no tengo una lengua materna porque, no tengo una tierra natal porque, soy un hombre sin nacionalidad porque, allí soy de aquí and here, I am from there because, I am the white paint on the ficus trees in Barranco because, my back is a stooped cordillera holding the weight of the world because, I learned to lie in English and never looked back.
I learned that my culture is something foreign to be consumed and enjoyed. Something for W.S. Merwin or Mark Strand to translate. Something for Hiram Bingham to “discover.” Some entheogenic brew to be greedily chugged and then vomited. And I have learned that I am la mancha. That I am the canchita stuck in your teeth. El escupitajo de una llama que se negó a moverse. I am what stayed. I am littoral, liminal, the interstice between floor and ceiling. En mis sueños estoy susurrando: *Saksaywamanpi pukuy-pukucha, Imallamanta qampis waqanki?* In my dreams soy un halcón jaspeado, un idioma perdido, sangre y movimiento. Soñé que yo era la encarnación de Don Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, que este poema era La Segunda Nueva Crónica, y esta es mi maldición—la idea de que puedo ser salvado through the power of words, that this fealty could buy more than my treachery. I dreamed I was more than just an amanuensis scribbling in the margins. I dreamed of being white and not white and when I woke neither was true. I woke to the light of el sendero luminoso, the sprawl of los pueblos jóvenes, the cant of Fujimoristas breaking como las olas en la orilla del Callao. En mis sueños Ines dijo: Fujimurimantaqa mastaqa yachani toledopin. Desperté y era un campesino, mis manos eran tierra y marga, mi aliento—humo y nube que ennegrece al sol. Desperté en la noche, en otro país, otro lenguaje. Nací fantasma, una blanca sombra, mis desnudas raicillas muriendo sin agua. Llevo el rostro de ayer, las ambiciones olvidadas de mi padre—las plumas debajo de la jaula. As a child I remember celebrating el veintiocho de Julio with an Inka Kola that seemed never-ending. I remember the slip of fingertips on the banana leaves that cradle the tamal; the stain of achiote like the sun through closed eyelid. I remember the billowing pride of the escudo de armas before I grew into a cornucopia spilling potatoes onto an unfamiliar escutcheon. Before I grew into my fear, before my fear became self-hatred and my memory became erasure. Look: I was a mountain that quaked into a boulder. I was a boulder that rolled over oceans to be hewn by my own cowardice. Look—this is my shame: I made myself a thing unlike I am and lived as this. I faceted my faces. I scourged my verdant flesh. I dispossessed myself of ancestry. I ran. Corrí hasta perderme. Y estoy perdido en todo menos en sueños. Porque cuando sueño soy un niño cantando: *Qaqa sikipi ch’innicha hallwa, Qhachqa rumicha amparuchaykuq, Amparuchayki tukurqukuptin, Ñuqam mamayuq, Őuqam*
taytayuq, y estoy charlando con Ines, toqueteando los flequillos de su chal, admirando el fieltro de su bombín. No es inocencia lo que he perdido, es algo peor. Un conocimiento. Una manera de ser. La sensación de estar completo. Es como si hubiera un hueco en mi garganta o en mi corazón o en el ojo de mi alma. Me conozco a mí mismo como un ala rota revoloteando en el aire, algo roto que quiere volar. Pero quiero volar. Chinkasqan kashani. Pero quiero volver. Chinkasqan purishani. But I am trying to find the way back.

chunka kaq. O Inca Sol, how do I translate gamonalismo when it is a yoke I have created for myself? How do I translate the contours of a fricative hugging my teeth before exiting my mouth? How do I translate this agglutinating pain? When I was born I cried in three languages. Listen: these tears spill in the vulgate for mine is a history of empire defeated by empire. Mine is a bloodline miscegenated by the triumph of love over war. If you listen closely you will hear no weeping, just the ring of a name echoing through time.

O daylight, whose gaze cast the first poets as toponymists, we praise you because place has a meaning. Ayacucho—it means repository of corpses, the place of cadavers. This is where I am from. This is where Pachamama holds me to her breast, where machulaypa machulan drew breath. This is a land where the rulers were poets, where our poems were songs and language was spoken, never written. This is home, or rather, this is my translation of the home I never knew. There are words that cannot be translated. And if they could be translated I wouldn’t know which language is mine. My language is a language of disloyal vowels, of Rs that refused to roll. My language has always been a choice between what lives and dies.

O father Pacha Kutiy Inqa Yupanki, you speak two languages but speak this in runasimi. Tell us your name means world overturner, transformer, one who returns earth unto earth. Sing us your hymn to translate as prayer to translate as poem. Sing us a song, because we have been told so much about what is lost in translation but never enough about what is projected onto words whose meaning we have forgotten. O father Pachacútec, tell me this is not a choice, not a translation; tell me this is transformation—my hymn, my song of myself. Place me on this altar of lodestone and point the way home:
Hailli Chunka

Oración Por Todos Los Yngas


Himno Diez

Oración Por Todos Los Incas

¡O Sol! Padre de luz que dijiste que haya cuzzos y tambos; sean vencedores y despojadores estos tus hijos de todas las gentes; adórote para que sean dichosos si somos estos incas tus hijos y no sean vencidos ni despojados sino siempre sean vencedores, pues para esto hiciste.

Prayer For All Inca

O daylight! Sun of Inca, my father who says: “Let there be Cuzco and Tambo, let them rule let them be conquerors!” Orderer, Creator, we praise you. Let us be happy and free; let us not succumb, let us not be dispossessed, but instead let us reign, let us conquer. For this you have made us, for this you have placed us here.

chunka hoqniyoq kaq.

If they ask me what I am I will say: I am no longer running but my heart still beats in the rhythm of chasqui; my feet still pound the earth; I am the shared melody of aocket whispering up from la ceja de selva. If they ask me what I am I will tell them I am the b- eads of a quipu that can’t be deciphered. Les diré que yo soy un lugar en la lengua donde tierra y mar se conocen, la leche de tigre, algo que quema adentro; que yo soy el pie derecho de Teófilo Cubillas, descalzo, pateando el globo crucífero dentro de las mallas. If they ask me what I am I will tell them I am a slather of ají panca, the forgotten kiss of rocoto, the sunshine of ají amarillo bursting on your palate. Tell them my bisabuela’s name means pain. Tell them my grandfather learned love was interchangeable with abuse. Tell them I’m the product of rape, that I am the son of a deserter on the wrong side of a war for independence. That I come from bastards who shared everything but a last name. Tell them in Spanish we spell family s-e-c-r-e-t-o-s. That Ángel killed the puma that ate his dog. That mi bisabuelo was the last one to speak Quechua y runasimita yachashani. Rikchaspa rimakuy ama puñuqinaqa. Estoy despierto. Mi nombre deletrea conquistador, cobarde, misbegotten, and unwanted. Me llamo David Jooz Villaverde-Soldevilla Sanchez-Kell. I am wayñu hymn of harp and quena and siku. I am crunch of bone under chaska chiqui. I am the sword through Pizarro’s throat, the cross he painted in his own blood as he lay dying. I am andesite, igneous— a stone of twelve angles. I need no mortar, no temblor will move me.
chunka iskayniyoq kaq.

I have been told so many ways
to say goodbye that I have forgotten
what I am supposed to be
saying goodbye to

mi padre me dijo:

*nada ni nadie puede impedir que sufras,*

*que los agujas avancen en el reloj,*

*que decidas por ti, que te equivoques,*

*que crezcas, y que un día me digas adiós*

y Walt Whitman me dijó:

*Me voy, no sé adonde,*

*ni a qué fortuna o si alguna vez te volveré a ver,*

*así pues, adiós mi Fantasia*

e Ines me dijo:

*huq kutikama y tupananchiskama*

*no son sólo kacharparkunapas*

*pero otras palabras*

*para munakuy*

But this is not a goodbye,
I do not talk of beginning or end.
This is about becoming,
poco a poco, pisi pisimanta.

Because my father said:

*no es que no vuelva*

*porque me he olvidado—*

*es que perdí*

*el camino de regreso*

I will not say goodbye
because I have not forgotten.
I know what I have lost.
I am finding the way back.