flesh to bone. ire'ne lara silva, San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2013. h/bk 172 pp. ISBN 978-1-879960-88-6. Price $14.95.

"There was no one else. No one to weave bone to flesh to blood, breath to life to blood. No one who could see what I saw, the streams of currents of golden light arcing inside their flesh, their bone. No hands but mine that pull out the rewoven skeins of their fragile spirits. I gather their dry bones together, breathe the flesh back until everything is illuminated" (130).

Appearing in the titular story, "la huesera, or, flesh to bone," these phrases tell of a mystical process of spinning tales, of an author who possesses the singular ability to speak the lives of others in her unique role of creating life from remains. In *flesh to bone*, ire'ne lara silva does exactly this as she conjures spirits, magic, and memories and molds them into the nine tales that makeup her stunning collection of short stories. A Chicana writer living in Austin, Texas, lara silva is a Cantomundo Inaugural Fellow, the 2014 Recipient of the Alfredo Cisneros del Moral Foundation Award, a Fiction Finalist for AROHO's 2013 Gift of Freedom Award, the 2008 recipient of the Gloria Anzalduá Milagro Award, and a Macondo Workshop member. Her first collection of short stories, *flesh to bone* (2013) received the 2013 Premio Aztlán and Second Place for the 2014 NACCS Tejas Foco Award in Fiction. Named the May 2014 Book of the Month for the National Latino Book Club/Las Comadres, it was also a finalist for ForeWard Review's Book of the Year Award in Multicultural Fiction. This collection's prose is as poetic as it is evocative, filling its pages with intensely emotional stories, striking a balance of beauty, monsters, and violence that captivates the reader in both terror and empathy.

silva's writing is strikingly textured as she draws upon the senses, asking us to smell, touch, see, hear, and feel through the text as she evokes silence and sound, light and dark, desire and pain. Although written in English, a sprinkling of Spanish and Nahuatl words remind us of the multicultural past into which her work reaches. The first story in the collection, "hunger/hambre/mayantli" presents the arrival of Adrian in the lives of Luisa and her brother Luis. Adrian, though, is no regular stranger-he has died years before and returns as a ghost. Nor are Luisa and Luis ordinary siblings. Misunderstood by their mother and different from those

in the "normal" world, Luisa tastes words and lyrically threads sounds and languages together while Luis reads the world with his eyes, focused so intently on sight that he often finds himself deafened to sound. Playing with this, silva writes the body's presence through the sensory: fingers covered in hot wax explore numbed touch, the tongue tastes slivers of glass, a dead boy's words burn and wriggle underneath skin. All three characters find themselves with the help of each other as the body is felt and explored through the senses. Haunting and tender, this story's characters explore how to feed hunger in many forms.

In addition to provoking our senses, silva's words draw upon myths to awaken nightmarish creatures and magical encounters that instill both fear and healing. In "hiding place," a child huddles in a closet, afraid of both her mother's boyfriend and the cucuy, a sort of bogeyman-equivalent in Hispanic and Lusophone cultures, that lurk outside. The following tale writes the legend of the llorona as a grieving, misunderstood mother wandering through time. A young woman scorned by love and life realizes her true form through brujeria as she transfigures into an owl in story "teocolotl." silva writes bodies. Some fall apart into piles of flesh and blood while others glow with pale copper or turquoise light. Some bones are etched with the glyphs of life while others are remains of murders. And at the center of all of these stories are women. silva's characters often hurt in their solitude, distanced from fathers or lovers and straining to reconcile relationships with mothers and themselves. In "duérmete" the main character "bear[s] weight against her bruises," fighting to begin her life again after years of domestic abuse and rape (66). She finds some solace in the cleansing of an old woman's bones, peace in the realization that scars can add to perfection. The woman in "desembocada / the mouth of the river" discovers spiritual healing in the blue light of the Virgen de Guadalupe, another at the roots of the huisache tree and, in one case, a woman eases her pain with a violent revenge.

Intense intimacy imbues each story as silva wounds us with the sorrows of her narrators. They lose the lives growing inside of them in waves of blood, a brother and his lover are victims of heartbreaking crimes of violence and hate, and families suffocate to death in train cars as they immigrate to the US, and a daughter struggles to care for a dying father she resents. At the end of "la huesera, or, flesh to bone" silva dedicates the text to "the women of Juarez, for women everywhere" (136). Maite narrates

her disappearance from the border city, her body tom apart and left in the desert, her spirit healing herself and weaving countless others “like stars tossed in the sky” back to their bodies, themselves. And thus, through stories of rape, torture, domestic violence, and death, the frightfulness of the supernatural creatures and ghosts highlight the altogether more terrifying horrors of reality. In these stories, the scariest monsters are often human.

In *bones to flesh,* ire’ne lara silva finds beauty in grief and breathes life into the remains of destruction. She writes of the terrifying beasts, supernatural and human, and of the terrors that grate us from within as well as from without. These nine short stories connect through interwoven themes of women and their families, absence, death, solitude, and loss. Physical pain pulses through bodies as spirits wander, searching for freedom hitherto unfound within the flesh. Many pages are painful, some horrifically gory, others oddly freeing, but all are captivatingly beautiful as silva weaves bone and flesh with her words.

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