



With the River on Our Face (Camino del Sol)

Emmy Pérez

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Emmy Pérez's poetry collection *With the River on Our Face* flows through the Southwest and the Texas borderlands to the river's mouth in the Rio Grande Valley/El Valle. The poems celebrate the land, communities, and ecology of the borderlands through lyric and narrative utterances, auditory and visual texture, chant, and litany that merge and diverge like the iconic river in this long-awaited collection.

Pérez reveals the strengths and nuances of a universe where no word is "foreign." Her fast-moving, evocative words illuminate the prayers, gasps, touches, and gritos born of everyday discoveries and events. Multiple forms of reference enrich the poems in the form of mantra: ecologist's field notes, geopolitical and ecofeminist observations, wildlife catalogs, trivia, and vigil chants.

"What is it to love / within viewing distance of night / vision goggles and guns?" is a question central to many of these poems.

The collection creates a poetic confluence of the personal, political, and global forces affecting border lives. Whether alluding to El Valle as a place where toxins now cross borders more easily than people or wildlife, or to increased militarization, immigrant seizures, and twenty-first-century wall-building, Pérez's voice is intimate and urgent. She laments, "We cannot tattoo roses / On the wall / Can't tattoo Gloria Anzaldúa's roses / On the wall"; yet, she also reaffirms Anzaldúa's notions of hope through resilience and *conocimiento*.

With the River on Our Face drips deep like water, turning into *amistad*—an inquisition into human relationships with planet and self.

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