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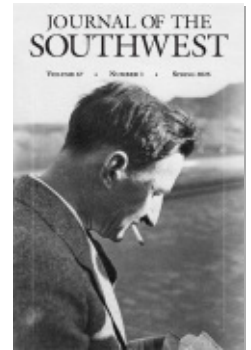
## The mesquites on the banks of the river

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ire'ne lara silva

**the mesquites on the banks of the river**

*for Emmy Perez*

the mesquites on the banks of the river

don't know if the soil

their roots are clenching belongs to mexico or to the united states

the earth doesn't know how to read maps it doesn't fall  
away from itself

dark soil pushing away dark soil  
suddenly rendered other

a day a year a century more the  
earth doesn't recognize black lines drawn on paper

the sky  
isn't split in two the wind doesn't shy away from metal bars or  
man-made walls

the mesquites on the banks of the river

sway soft and green sway  
to the same wind on both sides of the river

the poet  
said it wasn't enough to dream of a future world without borders  
the poet said to make it real we must move in the world as  
if there were no borders

two decades later we park the  
car by the river and listen to the green mesquites whispering on a  
wintry morning

all this time i thought the work  
was erasing imaginary lines

all this time i thought the words  
were important words like liberation and freedom and kinship and  
struggle

but the mesquites on the banks of the river

whispered to me  
said

*begin here   like us                      move in the wind           like us sink  
 your roots deep deep   like us                      hold this in your body  
                  like us                      your spirit must be free           hold this  
 knowing closer than you hold your name  
 be the earth   be the wind   be the sky           be the river that  
 recognizes no division                      that concedes no ground           that  
 surrenders no sovereignty     remember*

said the mesquites on the banks of the river ❖

*ire'ne lara silva*, 2023 Texas State Poet Laureate, is the author of five poetry collections, most recently, *the eaters of flower*; a comic book, *VENDAVAL*; and two short story collections, *flesh to bone* and *the light of your body* (forthcoming, Arte Público Press).