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ode to the orange tree

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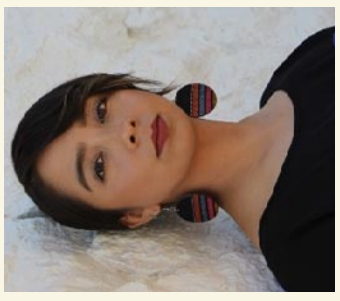
Karla Cordero is a Chicana poet and educator raised along the borderlands of Calexico, CA. Her poems have appeared in Oprah Magazine, NPR, Academy of American Poets,, The Break Beat Poets Volume 4. LatiNEXT Anthology, among other publications. Karla is the author of *How To Pull Apart The Earth* (NOT A CULT.) a 2019 San Diego Book Award winner and awarding-winning finalist for the 2019 International Latino Book Award and the 2019 International Book Award. She currently serves as a professor of creative writing and composition at MiraCosta College . You can follow her work @karlaflaka13



it's noon & the hot breath of summer weighs down the trees
swollen with citrus. the branches holding their children for days & days
until ready for picking & becoming an ornament in a bowl or peeled back
for my appetite's pleasure—for i, who did not birth such hard-made
sugar & peel also witness my sister's belly become a globe, a small city,
a food bank, a playground, a bed for a seed growing inside her
to morph into a somebody with toes & teeth & oh to think
a small beating heart, a hidden blossom in the branch of her body
for nine months—two-hundred-seventy-three days. to think of such
balance without spilling over until a child spills out. today i feed
the trees horse shit & hose water—a prayer for good harvest. & i praise
my sister & her heavy, serve her fresh squeezed OJ & nachos to
feed the wild of carvings so i too can help make a someone through
the marriage of sweet & salty. & i imagine years from now, my niece
all legs & walk, will tear fruit from the tree, the one unprepared to showcase
its flavor. how she will bite the rind & her mouth will pucker in july—
just in time to teach her how fruit will shape shift in size, change its color
to kindness, & ripen so we can peel & slice & chew its tender meat.
& even after the trees watch our tiny violence of gratitude, still, they will grow
heavy again & again & again & my niece will know the sacrifice,
the labor it takes to keep her fed & full.