NORTEADA

En busca de un Nuevo Norte

Cocoon Portals and the Negotiation of Space

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The battle of the Butterfly and the Moth.

Both are in the final cycle of a four-stage life that begins with the egg, passes through the caterpillar, transforms in the chrysalis stage, and ends with the adult stage, imago.

What makes an acceptable lepidoptera?

It is believed the butterfly evolved from the moth; the daytime moths. They both are important pollinators, but the moth is considered a nuisance that one is meant to get rid of, while the butterfly is beautiful and displayed. Even though both their needs and functions are quite similar they are pitted against one another, one despised, one accepted.

The moth is camouflaged and moves in the night so as to remain unnoticed. They live in the shadows and evolve to appear less palatable to their predators. During the Industrial Revolution they morphed from white to black within the span of 30 years to fully adapt to their soot-filled surroundings.

“De que me sirve el dinero
Si estoy como prisionero
Dentro de esta gran nación
Cuando me acuerdo hasta lloro
Aunque la jaula sea de oro
No deja de ser prisión”

- Los Tigres del Norte

“Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half-dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, at through the confines of the ‘normal’.”

- Gloria Anzaldua

ACT 2

Nuestra comunidad has been pitted against one another as well, y los indocumentados are portrayed as moths to eradicate, devalued, and seen as a nuisance. Y el resto aceptado como mariposas siempre con que se ajusten perpetuamente a las normal sociales, prove they are not like the moths, and stay silent. Tanto la polilla como la mariposa, just be grateful and don’t cause a stir.

The moths are the prohibited, rejected, and neglected that remain vulnerable and existing as outlaws for surviving. They use their bodies and lives to morph into the soot, smog, pesticide, chemical, pollutant filled surroundings. But they remain devalued, existing in the sombras, and cultivating toda una existencia en la oscuridad.

ACT 1

Muchos de nosotros, hijos de inmigrantes, exist in the third culture cultivated by the border, defined not by our crossing of the border but by its crossing of us, over and over. La frontera, with its demand for dismemberment, innovation, fluidity, code switching, and self-identification, leaves us norteadas in Nepantla. Somos skillful linguists and traductores, adictas al trabajo, by-products of escape tactics, and encargadas with carrying unrealized dreams. As this border creep se avanza a través de nosotros generacionalmente, we mutate.

“Soy una tortuga donde quiera que vaya llevo a casa en mi espalda.”

- Gloria Anzaldua

Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, 1983

The symbiotic relationship between the turtle and butterfly through lachryphagy, where the butterfly gathers nutrients through drinking the tears of the turtle, brings us to an abandoned turtle shell, our site of exploration. Our turtle friend has long since passed, leaving behind an empty shell that’s become developed and inhabited.

En nuestro análisis de border, to borderland, we arrive at border creep. Border creep, o la fluencia de la frontera, perpetua la tierra fronteriza mas alla y se convierte en una experiencia encarnada.

It is borne carried on one’s back, pero despues de tanto generational trauma, it mutates, y se lleva en las venas. La experiencia de neapantla, borderland, ni de aqui ni de alla se convierte en un embodied experience.

We see the section cut of the shell acquired and mutated with generations of habitation, becoming an intertwined assemblage, home to the moth and butterfly.

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Como muchas de nosotras, las moths me criaron para ser una butterfly, perfectly curated and displayed, destinada a salvar la raza. I made it into the room, me sente a la mesa. Pero no te dicen que tienes que cortar todo tipo de partes de ti misma para entrar, and once you’re in, estas atrapada. “No mija, tienes que seguirle, a hecharle ganas.” This is the golden seat, this is what they sacrificed for. But the inside is death. Mi cuerpo y mi mente estan destrozados. Im pissed and im tired. Esta maldita rueda de ratas keeps turning and its keepers are pumping me full of sugar water. Siguen coordinando peleas con las moths, y yo tengo que ser mejor y diferente, but definitely not too different, just enough to be displayed and exhibited. Y luego todavia me abandonan a mi Muerte, y destruyen mi hogar. Y no puedo regresar con las moths because im being dramatic, ingrata, mal creada. I have it so much easier, after all, soy una mariposa. Solo necesito orar, todos tememos que soportar cosas difíceles.

No good with the butterflies, no good with the moths. Fuck this north. Chinga ese norte. I need a portal.

Both butterfly and moth are overworked to remain concealed and survive. Some are placed in sanctuaries and others can conceal themselves through their surroundings. But their lives remain in constant risk due to habitat loss, climate change, development, predators, and pesticides.

A la mariposa le dicen, no te aguites, just follow the rules, don’t be loud, don’t call attention. Estudia, estudia, estudia. Se les pide que esten a la altura de unsustainable excellence, los migrantes ‘buenos’ o ‘seguros’ o ‘adequados’, the monarch butterfly, sin darse cuenta que la mariposa esta atada a a puppet string. Todo lo que tienes que hacer is get a seat at the table. Pero no ven el verdadero costo de ese asiento y los terrores de esa mesa. Constantemente se les exige a dulle their color (in whatever shade it might present itself) para adaptarse mejor and fit in. El Norte ha sido un scam y for those of us que nos encontramos in its golden gates, se nos ha pedido que abandonemos demasiado. Para convertirse en la mariposa estadounidense, tienes que dejar todo atras, abandonando nuestra familia, idioma, y cultura at the door, at the cage, at the ditch, para mejorar la raza.

“Is this too much reality? It is, yes. No one is watching, saving, extending a hand or taking a little demonic blame. If we are adults and past the age of having our parents come running when we cry, our only help is ourselves and one another. Yes, this is far too much reality. No wonder we need aliens. No wonder we’re so good at creating aliens. No wonder we’re so often project alienness onto one another...”

- Octavia Butler


Though their colorful beauty is displayed in sanctuaries and paraded for an experience, the butterfly also camouflages and assimilates to better blend in. Over time they adapt to hide their vibrancy through crypsis, a process of color modification to protect from predators.

ACT 2

ACT 3
Might the formerly abandoned cocoon offer an opportunity to escape this reality. Just as the cocoon provided what the caterpillar needed for transformation, it provides what the moth and butterfly need for a new metamorphosis, a portal. The cocoon emerges as a portal to offer moments of collective lepidoptera relief, healing, and cohabitation. The portals offer temporary places for new imagination. Temporary places for dreaming of a new reality, where survival is no longer the driving force, and the moth and butterfly can thrive. But these portals remain ephemeral and fleeting, exposed to the elements and susceptible to destruction. They cannot last and only offer brief mitigation.

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“What feeling crazy for thinking we were under attack, watching my neighbors disappear and then going to school and watching the nightly news and watching award shows and seeing no mention, I felt crazy watching the white supremacist state slowly kill my father and break my family apart. I would invariably tell everyone that there was no such thing as the American Dream but then some all-star immigrants around who had done things ‘the right way’ preached a different story and Americans ate that up. It made me feel crazy, I also am crazy. Pero ¿qué? My diagnoses are borderline personality disorder, major depression, anxiety, and OCD. (I love diagnoses. Gives you the ability to read about yourself.) Researchers have shown that the flooding of stress hormones resulting from a traumatic separation from your parents at a young age kills off so many dendrites and neurons in the brain that it results in permanent psychological and physical changes. One psychiatrist I went to told me that my brain looked like a tree without branches.

So I just think about all the children who have been separated from their parents, and there’s a lot of us, past and present, and some under more traumatic circumstances than others. Like those who are in internment camps right now, and I just imagine us as an army of mutants. We’ve all been touched by this monster, and our brains are forever changed, and we all have trees without branches in there, and what will become of us? Who will take care of us?”

— Karla Cornejo Villavicencio
The Undocumented Americans, 2020

How we capture the portal.

Cocoon portals translated into totemic objects, can be used to extract and cement their particularities. In doing so one can affix and tether the life of this experience. These objects provide the opportunity for inspiration and speculative fiction. And its qualities of connection, framing, and spillage can be adapted to reconceptualize space making practices.

The cocoon y el mutante
Como lo hemos hecho antes, encontramos formas de sostenernos mientras existimos en esta realidad.

But can we imagine a world in which both butterfly and moth are not just surviving with fleeting moments of relief to sustain, but where they can thrive?

Y donde no es uno contra el otro, sino que vive la armonía de la fluididad. In defiance to both the butterfly and the moth, para escapar de este perpetuo estado de peligro, emerge el mutante, ambos/y, y ninguno. Exisitendo tanto en el día como en la noche, tanto en la luz como en las sombras.

Ni de aquí, ni de alla, both from here and from there.
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El mutante necesita un nuevo hogar, un nuevo norte. This north isn’t working. It’s too caught up and we’re all just playing tetris tratando de reformar las mismas piezas en diferentes configuraciones, pero siempre son las mismas jodidas piezas. Y seguimos alimentados con esta agua azucarada que has us hoping to end up with something new.

These fleeting cocoon portals abren paso en momentos de presión, ruptura, resistencia y desafío para diez de nueva de nutrients. We see glimpses of a nueva imaginacion solo para que se disipe, muy pocos y demasiados separados, siempre en riesgo de colonizacion and gentrification.

Es difícil para mi imaginar y sonar que podria ser un mutante thriving in whatever new place the portal lets me briefly see. La vida de mariposas y polillas es todo lo que he conocido. Es como que mi cerebro ya no tiene esa función for dreaming and imagining anymore. Actually, es más como si hubiera sido condicionado para sonar e imaginar de una manera muy especifica.

De trabajar hasta la muerte para una vida mejor. To work myself to death into a better life.

Pero quiero una nueva imaginacion, y un nuevo sueno. Quiero la alegria, healing, collectivity and ancestry, boundaries, el descanso, la dulzura, self-compassion, expression, empathy, y la conexion con la naturaleza y los elementos. What we experience briefly and exists beyond these cocoon portals.

And for a new imagination to be nurtured, the estructura de la vieja tiene que ser expuesta and desaprendida. Derribando uno por uno sus cimientos y raíces para que podamos ver claramente what the portal is calling our attention to.

So we can nourish a new imagination and dream a new dream, the old one has to be torn down.

Rasquachismo: a theory developed by Chicano scholar Tomás Ybarra-Frausto to describe “an underdog perspective, a view from below” in working-class Chicano communities which uses elements of “hybridization, juxtaposition, and integration” as a means of empowerment and resistance.

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