



A Bell Made of Stones

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Poetry. Pacific Islander Studies. Queer Studies. "Lehua M. Taitano was born on Guahan (Guam), the largest of the Marianas Islands, to a Chamorro mother and a Euro-American father. When Taitano was four years old, her family migrated to the Appalachia mountains of North Carolina. Since that time, she has lived in many different places on the continental United States. The poetry in Taitano's first collection, entitled *A BELL MADE OF STONES*, attempts to reconstruct the foundations of home through story, fragments, echo, and type. Chamorro people, indigenous to the Marianas archipelago in the region of Pacific known as Micronesia, once built their houses atop rows of 'latte, ' a two-tiered stone structure composed of a pillar and a capstone. The shape of the latte resembles a bell. These poems experiment with typographic representation and juxtaposition; in addition to the visual impact of these poems, Taitano bravely asks what it means to live a hyphenated, diasporic existence at the 'intersections of half-ness.' With the typewriter as her canoe, Taitano chants homeward 'for the flightless, to stretch roots, for the husk of things set adrift.' Lehua Taitano's unforgettable poetry joins a new wave of Chamorro and Pacific literature. In *A BELL MADE OF STONES*, she bravely navigates the currents of mixed-race indigenous identity, transoceanic migration, and queer sexuality through a series of experimental (and lyrical) typographic poems. With the typewriter as her canoe, Taitano chants homeward 'for the flightless, to stretch roots, for the husk of things set adrift.'" Craig Santos Perez" "The journey through *A BELL MADE OF STONES* shifts us from empathetic observers to experiential participants. We are forced to engage with the unsettling disconnection and stress of locating a coherent voice and a culturally legible identity/identities in the fragments of loss and daily misrecognitions created by distance, diaspora and resistance to performing so-called hetero-normativity. Evoked instead of told, the poetry evolves into an installation that is beyond words, bearing witness to the stigma of enunciating through disconnected discourses. There is a surprisingly elegant, dignified aesthetic to the collapsed, repressed text that bares the raw marks of scarcely audible attempts at making meaning. While we are invited to find the lament left on the page, left with the palpable sense of what is missing and/or mistranslated. What is left to savor are the sparse, poignant leftovers stringing together separate stories of mother, sisters, lover and other. But more than anything, we are left with the sense that the fragments are more (and less) than (and may never add up to) the sum of their parts." Karlo Mila" *A BELL MADE OF STONES* is a synaesthetic kaleidoscope where we listen to 'sheen' and 'husk' and 'rope, ' where the canoe can sing, and where what seems solid might 'settle as through a sieve.' Taitano's poems her 'stampings' pile-up lyrical language into gorgeous collisions of type. Yet, as 'visual evidence of the echo, ' the poems also gesture to what is not there, such as 'the surfacing and submergence of islands of sound' made by a typewriter. As poet-guide, Taitano shows her reader how the map of her every day contains assumptions and aspersions cast by others, reminding us that she is 'with and without explanation.' These are poems where a hyphen can be both a 'perforation' and a 'stitch.' Be patient. Wait out assumptions. Ready oneself for revelation." Kaia Sand" Lehua Taitano's *A BELL MADE OF STONES* formulates in its 'tethered tautly' poems the truth of her birth and the necessity of her aesthetic address. Rich with protest, these poems map the 'story of [your] blood.' These are 'heroic feats' that endure with clairvoyant strength and keep asking if there is 'anything truer than truth.' These poems keep replying, going beyond 'the bareness of lament.' This is a fierce and brilliant collection of poems chock-full of issued utterances, elliptical enjambments, cross-outs, and elision all of which persevere in constructing an apt orchestration between the tongue's experiment and typewriter's keys. Prageeta Sharma"

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