

CHRISTOPHER MARTINEZ

Gentrify This

We ate the street signs. We ate the ghetto bird spotlighting us when we were devouring midnight, out front, and drinking the *champagne of beers*.

The devil came and asked Roy and me if we wanted to buy a washer at three a.m. at the front gate of this house.

The family dogs never ran away when maybe they should have, ate what we ate.

My grandfather's ghost stomps his boots when he walks from the den to the front window of this house.

Once, Rene asked: *Why people think this is a bad neighborhood? Ain't shit happening.*

Fool, it's only us at three in the morning. I tell him: look at the night fool. How the stars choke on light pollution, how they shimmer less.

I see more people jogging now, don't look like *us*; they go to bed early.

My *tío* saw a thunderbird woosh over the tree line, right over this house.

We ate here before there were sidewalks.

I caught the puff of Marlboro Reds the first Thanksgiving after Grandpa stopped smoking forever and no one was around and neither was he in the dining room of this house.

Here, we understood how to carry the night sky and still survive long enough to see someone else want to take it away.

If you can't hear the Thunderbirds
or the dogs who wouldn't leave,
What makes you think you can carry the places
we've held up?

I fell into a cactus bush and came out a new person at this house.
I swear this side of the kingdom feels infinite and ours.

CHRISTOPHER MARTINEZ is a writer and spoken-word poet from San Antonio, Texas. He earned an MA/MFA degree in Creative Writing, Literature & Social Justice at Our Lady of the Lake University. His work has appeared in *The Huffington Post Latino Voices*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, and *Pilgrimage Press*.

