I’d ask you to join me by the Río Bravo and weep…
Jorge Humberto Chávez

I'd ask you to join me by
the Río Bravo and weep
but you should know
neither river nor tears
remain

translated from Spanish
by Lawrence Schimel

Shearsman Books
with Vaso Roto Ediciones
SAMPLER
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1.

CHRONICLES

SAMPLER
SAMPLER
Satan

105 pins have stopped the flow of your naked petals five-year old butterfly of the Bravo del Norte river

like a ship in the middle of the light advancing the afternoon toward the flank of the western hills you would play there on the sidewalk

while your mother and the neighbor from across the street made much to do of the inanities that fill our lives

the sun sets the cars roll across the unpaved street and the crepuscular air bears the whisperings of the evil God like chords

to the ears of the woman who sees you playing every day in front of her house and your mother gets up and says I’ll be back

and will never see you again

the woman approaches and takes your hand and with you crosses the dust raised by the automobiles

you reach the miserable dwelling where the voice of God insists stick a pin in her and another

and another pin until reaching 105 of them in order to halt that voice and the sun winds up entering beneath the hills

and the dust from the cars settles over the world
Chronicle of My Ghosts

my father had the wise idea of taking refuge in a hospital

and dying on the same day

that the people voted for the new government

and he never managed to see

how they began falling like flies,

first those from the other side of the city

then those from the adjacent colonia later acquaintances

then the neighbors

and finally the sunset gave us the death of a friend

and of a brother

and the city like a hunted animal and the motorists who move quickly quickly watching from the corners of their eyes the driver next to them who watches in the rear view mirror the driver behind
while the police the judge and the thief come to an agreement saying
now it’s your turn and then yours and the beast began to lose the
sheen of its coat and later its skin

just look at you now you’ve become a small animal

with its eyes in the sockets of its children

wandering blind and heartless through the cities
For Miguel Ángel Chávez Díaz de León

María de la Luz used to knit the morning sun and turn it into a big tray of *pan dulce* in the center of the table of my boyhood with my siblings. Saturday was for washing grandfather’s truck, a blue ’55 Chevrolet. Saturday itching to flee from God on Sunday morning. The young recruits from Fort Bliss, with their long sedans saying goodbye to their girls as if they were going for a stroll into the line of fire. The border like a splendid animal sprawled out on the grass cultivated with its flank shining with reflected light.

I remember cleaning the windshield and seeing him peer around the far corner carrying a small box in his hands. I remember saying in a high voice Mamá someone’s coming I think that man’s my father and it sure was. He had been arrested the day before in Denver while having lunch at the mattress factory on Stuart Street. And he begged to retrieve the box from his locker because in it were our Christmas cards and some photos. I remember this like some Paradisiacal etching because war and deportation were something else of course.
now driving down the avenue I pump the brakes because that man in white shorts

is just sprawled there with a gunshot that has gouged out a small bloodless hole in his left cheek

while I’m on my way to see you
Another Chronicle

On October 6th of the year of his death, Armando El Choco told us at a party that they had come looking for him and they found him a month later one morning while he was warming up the motor of his car before taking his daughters to school.

In 1967 we went to the Río Bravo to wash the neighborhood cars first Chato’s then Bogar’s and finally Huarache Veloz’s.

In 1990 the police went to the Río Bravo to pick up the young girls who waited on the shore to cross over to El Paso.

In the year 2010 the river now almost parched an immigration officer and 13-year-old Sergio Adrián fought the boy with a stone in his hand and the agent with a revolver.

That same year at a corner store in the Salvácar neighborhood the clerk refused to hand over protection money and received a bullet in the face.

And 17 of his neighbors were hunted down one by one as they celebrated winning a game of touch football.

Oh young son of Cadmus I know you’d rather be elsewhere but today you are here sang old Ovid.

And you a woman they dragged from home and threatened to kill your husband if you didn’t get in for your last car ride.
I’d ask you to join me by the Rio Bravo and weep but you should know there’s no longer any river there and nor are there tears
Seven Postcards from the End of the World

1. The word *pickup* on a hill is like an altar with its purple backdrop of clouds wounded by the evening sun.

2. Fear is the name of the avenue that stretches full of lights and without any cars one Saturday at ten p.m. on the northern border.

3. That young girl on the verge of a roundabout who stops drivers and tells them take me wherever you wish for 200 pesos has no first or last name.

4. Dirt yard with a pile of large round rocks in the background and a woman beneath the moon braiding the ghost girl’s hair.

5. Rayón street neighbors playing *lotería* by the light of the lamppost singing the names of El Diablo and La Muerte announcing the years when they’ll come.

6. A couple arguing about the chairs and lamps in their house while on the sidewalk out front their neighbor is dying with four shots to the chest.

7. Delia admiring her naked body in the wardrobe mirror without realizing that a visiting 6-year-old boy is on the sofa.

7.1. And he takes note of her splendorous beauty to put it before your eyes.

7.2. 40 years later.