

*Esteban Rodríguez*

## ODE TO A TEXAS PORCH

Rain-starved. Sun-warped.  
Porous and unsteady.  
You moan when the wind  
proselytizes hints of another season:  
spring, winter, front yard barbecues,  
holidays ripe with decorations.  
Potted plants line your splintered  
edges. Rusted nails peek  
from your rotted crevices.  
And yet, despite your crooked  
columns, your sunken steps,  
the whole of you refusing  
to believe in gravity's tenets,  
you're an altar for my father's  
work boots, for my mother's  
huaraches, for Sunday morning  
shadows armed with Spanish verses,  
pamphlets. Evenings, I claim  
your corners, sit and gaze  
at the darkness you breathe,  
feel it graze the ashen bottoms  
of my feet, and as it seeps across  
the yard, burrows beneath  
patches of parched Bermuda grass,  
a pack of strays—scarred with mange,  
haloed with fleas—begins  
squeezing between your fractured  
cinder blocks, the way I squeeze  
when a ball wanders off,  
and I must squirm after it,  
crawl into a space filled

with broken pipes, shattered  
glass, toy trucks and mangled  
plastic bags, and, if deep enough,  
matted hide and bones,  
as though these creatures knew,  
when they knew the time  
had come, the earth would offer  
no other place to go.