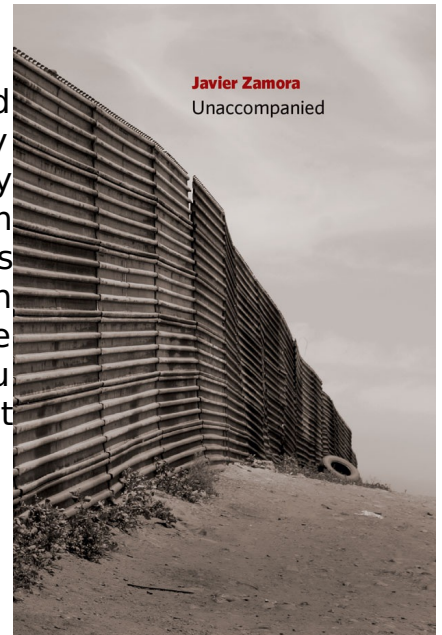


Poet's Viewpoint: Let Me Try Again

Posted by [Dan Fecht](#) / 29 Sep 2017

So, what is it really like to cross the border into the United States? Poet Javier Zamora shares his poem *Let Me Try Again* from his collection *Unaccompanied*, so that we may have a passenger seat opportunity to ride along with him through his memory vehicles. His poetic recollections speak in a concise manner that ambushes you with moments of shimmering eagerness; like hoping for the home team to win. Reading this poem will have you wishing you couldve witnessed it, but much happier that you are reading it instead.



Let Me Try Again

I could bore you with the sunset, the way water tasted
after so many days without it,
the trees,
the breed of dogs, but I cant say
there were forty people
when we found the ranch with the thin white man,
his dogs,
and his shotgun.

Until this 5 a.m. I couldnt remember
there were only five,
or seven people

Wed separated by the paloverdes.
We, meaning:
four people. Not forty.
The rest
I dont know.
They werent there
when the thin white man

let us drink from a hose
while pointing his shotgun.
In pocho Spanish he told us
si correr perros atacar.

When La Migra arrived, an officer
who probably called himself Hispanic at best,

not Mejjicano like we called him, said
buenas noches
and gave us pan dulce y chocolate.

Procedure says he shouldve taken us
back to the station,

checked our fingerprints,
etctera.

He mustve remembered his family
over the border,

or the border coming over them,
because he drove us to the border

and told us
next time, rest at least five days,

He knew we would try again
and again,
like everyone does.

Javier Zamora: The inspiration for "Let Me Try Again," came from my real life experience of crossing the border. It took me three tries to cross. This poem speaks about the first attempt, when we ran out of water. Had we not found water, I wouldn't be here. This is a reality many immigrants face when crossing the border (after crossing a wall). The desert is the one that kills us.



DC: What can we take with us from this poem?

I hope you see the humanity of immigrants and the immigration officer who did not detain and jail us, he felt compassion. Also, that a wall cannot stop someone who is afraid to return home. They will keep trying again and again.

DC: How did crafting this poem work for you?

JZ: This poem is perhaps the oldest poem in the book. I've been trying to write it since I began writing when I was 18. Maybe because of the trauma, the memory of being so close to death, kept me from saying it right, or thinking I've said it right. I revise and revise until I'm happy. Then revise again. I published this poem in the *Kenyon Review*, and kept revising it for the book. It's hard to let go of something that is so personal. Publishing the book has finally stopped my obsession with revision. I want to honor the immigrants that were with me.

DC: An important thing you have learned in life which you would like to share:

JZ: Writing down what has occurred to me, in my first 27 years, has been a healing process. I'm a big believer that if there is something bothering you, something you feel like you can't tell anyone, write it down. You don't have to publish in order to feel the power of pushing the ink out of you.

Credit: Javier Zamora, "Let Me Try Again" from *Unaccompanied*. Originally in [The Kenyon Review](#) (July-August 2016). Copyright © 2016 by Javier Zamora. Used with the permission of The Permissions Company, Inc., on behalf of Copper Canyon Press, www.coppercanyonpress.org. All rights reserved.