

The Book of Wanderers

Reyes Ramirez

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Everyone is looking for something in Reyes Ramirez's story collection *The Book of Wanderers*.

Across ten stories, each focal character is a wanderer in their own way. Some are searching for connection, as in "Ni Sabes, Tomás de la Paz." Others are searching for forgiveness and redemption, as in "Xitali Zaragoza, Curandera" and "Lilia." Still others are determined to find justice for themselves, their descendants, and others, as in "Ximena DeLuna v. The New Mars Territory," which is written as a legal request for declaratory judgment and injunction. It lays out the early life of Mars's first child, their eligibility for education, and the discriminatory practices undertaken by the government to deny the child their education.

In every other story, the language is peppered with a blend of Spanish and English that is easy to slip into, and is never translated. This technique is equal parts inviting and alienating. "Ximena DeLuna v. The New Mars Territory" is the only story to be written entirely in English, and formal English at that. Authoritative and accessible, it leaves no room for misunderstandings or misinterpretations; it lays out a cogent, logical case for the cessation of all discriminatory education practices.

The real issues present in this story are echoed in other stories, too, in particular in "An Adventure of Xuxa, La Última." In a postapocalyptic world overrun by the living dead, there are still those who believe that white superiority is ordained by the heavens, and that it must be maintained through any means necessary. With care and empathy, on Earth or another planet, the collection provides commentary on personal and social issues that is resonant.

The Book of Wanderers is a powerful short story collection that is as devastating as it is hopeful.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (March / April 2022)

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