**Why Do We Keep from Singing?**

Amy Marques

*Vem, vamos embora*

*Que esperar não é saber*

*Quem sabe faz a hora*

*Não espera acontecer*

~ Geraldo Vandré

We forget how our fathers begged us not to argue with the neighbor’s children because officers’ children, even low-ranking officers’ children, must be appeased by those whose fathers have no rank at all and we must remember that justice and intelligence are no match for nom-de-guerres and accusations that needn’t be proved.

We forget that we bought banned music at festivals where singers were marched off stages in handcuffs and how we hid the records under oversized jackets, steps carefully unrushed on our way to catch a bus, counting the seconds until we arrived home. Safe.

We forget how we sheltered books that had been banned and buried and burned. How we mouthed the words to each other; throats dried out by the knowledge that speakers could be hunted and captured. Questioned.

We forget that we parroted ideas we didn’t believe in because to be called subversive was to be threatened with imprisonment, beating, torture. Disappearance.

We forget that, years later, in philosophy class, we would unwittingly tap our pencils to the sound of our instructor’s soft-spoken lectures and watch as he crumbled into the fetal position. He was sorry, he was sorry, he was sorry. He thought he had forgotten the interrogations. The foot taps echoing after each question. The beatings. The pain.

We forget how we learned to fear the colors of the flag while those who spent their days in salons listening only to the official news, painting their hair yellow and their nails red, could ignore what they chose not to see with their own eyes and, thus, firmly believe that prosperity reigned.

We forget why our parents feared knowledge, innovation, color, song, dialogue, revolution. The thinking of thoughts was for artists on tight ropes balancing secrecy with sarcasm, nuance with suggestion. Exile.

We forget how there was always a new student, a new teacher, a new neighbor. How family was tight and newcomers dangerous and sleepovers and dinner parties were snake pits of informants.

We forget the meaning of the words of songs we weren’t taught. The ones we only heard in whispers.

We forget that we were taught to forget.