

2024-05-01

**My Little Poetic/prose Book Of Words, Sayings, And Stories In
Broken Spanish And A Little Bit Of German / Mi Libro Chiquito De
Poética / Prosa De Palabras, Dichos, Y Historias Español
Fracturado Y Un Poquetito Alemán**

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MY LITTLE POETIC/PROSE BOOK OF WORDS, SAYINGS, AND STORIES IN BROKEN
SPANISH AND A LITTLE BIT OF GERMAN / MI LIBRO CHIQUITO DE POÉTICA /
PROSA DE PALABRAS, DICHOS, Y HISTORIAS ESPAÑOL FRACTURADO Y UN
POQUETITO ALEMÁN

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POQUETITO ALEMÁN

By

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Department of Creative Writing
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
May 2024

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Jonathan Taylor and Sarah Thompson for the wonderful job they did in providing me with feedback. I took into consideration all their comments. Their comments aligned with Dr. Powers, and I really took a deeper look into my Spanish/English translations on whether I should have them or not. I found a happy medium for all of it. I also went back and looked at the rest of the class's comments and made sure that I did not miss any of the details that were pointed out to me the first time around.

As far as modeling after any author, I tried to think about how Claudia Rankine spoke in *Citizen* when she wrote her prose, as well as Sara Uribe's prose writing in *Antigona Gonzales*. Both have a very simple language style that comes across strong when making points. Also, they both rely on personal stories. In addition, I thought about Ilya Kaminski in *Deaf Republic*, for he added a prose and titling style that allowed me to be creative, as well as aware of using similes. Gabrielle's sample of her "Creative Experiments – Kind of Performance Objects I've been," was my inspiration for my own creative experiment that I wrote on page 29.

As far as my writing went, I kind of understood what I wanted from the outset of my master's in fine arts, and I wrote in that manner. The inspiring professors were J.D. Pluecker, Andrea Cote Botero, Sylvia Aguilar, Nelson Cardenas, and Tim Hernandez. I especially would like to thank my committee for all their help and encouragement which are as follows: UTEP Associate Professor of Creative Writing and Chair of Committee, Andrea Cote Botero; UTEP Assistant Professor of Creative Writing, Sylvia Aguilar; and IU East Professor of English / Director and Advisor of Women's and Gender Studies, Edwina Helton.

Preface Defense:

My Little Poetic-Prose Book / Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética-Prosa

Sharon A. Lucero

Professor Cote Botero

Preface – My Defense

16 April 2024

For the purpose of this preface, the title of my book, *My Little Poetic-Prose Book of Words, Sayings, and Stories in Broken Spanish and a little bit of German / Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética-Prosa de Palabras, Dichos, y Historia en Español Fracturado y un poquetito Alemán*, will be shortened when it is referred to in this preface as *My Little Poetic-Prose Book / Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética-Prosa*. As it stands, I wish to write my preface over the half of me that exists and the other half that does not exist in this world of mine – the part of me that is silenced at times. This preface will address the power of being able to be half and half in an unjustifiable world. Thus, I will bring in the dictionary, Google translate, and my family, as well as my own thoughts and words. This preface and thesis will speak to my life and my work that is written in both English and broken Spanish, and it will speak to the injustices that I have experienced as a half-breed of the United States as well. I wish to utilize the assistance of many writers on the topic of writing in two languages speaking in translation, and the power or lack of power of being able to write and translate in their indigenous languages that they should know but do not at times. Translation is art and speaking in different or broken languages is art, but it is silenced at times. Hence, I am culturally adept according to the places I have inhabited and the people I have had the fortune of meeting when living in two different languages. My thesis book explores the idea of the so-called grammatical "error" as a creative expression of mixed linguistic identity and as a way of decolonizing the limits imposed by official uses of the language. This book, *My*

Little Poetic-Prose Book / Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética-Prosa, represents a bicultural experience that is expressed through the intersection of languages, exploring how to express an identity that does not conform to the limits of a single language or format, using a series of formal tools such as self-translation, the representation of orality, the dynamics of error, and the mixing of genres.

To begin with, one of the tools is the mixing of genres, and this is how *My Little Poetic-Prose Book / Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética-Prosa* is written. Many pieces of my work follow some type of metrical structure which makes it poetry such as “The Time I Felt Enjoyment as a Latina / El Momento en Que Sentí Placer Como Una Latina” (37), “El Mercado Lindo” (38), “Bliss” (58), and the “Manicure / Manicura” (100) are some examples of my poetry. Since my work sometimes incorporates Spanish, the incorporation of Spanish gives my poetry a lyrical effect. Then, some of my work is written in prose which follows a basic grammatical structure. However, there is a tendency to write my prose using figurative language, which helps give it that poetry/prose feel. Examples of my prose are “La Carta de mi Abuelito” / My Grandfather’s Cart” (44), “School Culture / Cultura Escolar” (51), “This Place / Este Lugar” (73), and “Language / Idioma” (78). Another area that I touch on is stories such as “Una Noche at ‘Mustang Sally’s Nightclub’” (68), “Our Last Supper Photo” (89), and “The Boy and His Jefito” (95). Still, I have other types of writing in a list form that do not conform to poetry, prose, or story. They are just lists and one of them is “Creative Experiment – Kinds of Performance Objects I’ve Been” (61) and “Palabras y Dichos” (81). In essence, *My Little Poetic-Prose Book / Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética-Prosa* is a hybrid book of many genres.

As I begin this journey, I wish to incorporate Sandra Cisneros, the writer of *The House on Mango Street*, “Only Daughter, *The Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*, as well as

poetry. Cisneros is extremely proud of her biculturalism and her bilingualism and was “quoted by Robin Ganz as saying that she is grateful to have ‘twice as many words to pick from ... two ways of looking at the world’ (“Sandra Cisneros”). Cisneros explains that she is able to write her story, and “the stories of those around her” (“Sandra Cisneros”). As far as Cisneros, her novel, *The House on Mango Street*, has been translated into 20 languages, and it is read in many universities and schools around the world. It is a coming-of-age story that I have read as well, and I experimented with this coming-of-age genre when I wrote “School Culture / Cultura Escolar,” “The Culture of an Education,” “Bliss,” and “Creative Experiment – Kinds of Performance Objects I’ve Been.” As I wrote those pieces, I tried to depict the times about the racism in junior high, about the mistreatment of adults in piano lessons and by my ROTC teacher, and about the social injustices I experienced as a girl growing up in the young world I lived in. Also, having as many words to pick from is quite impressive, and I can somewhat relate to that, but I also choose to write in English and sprinkle Spanish in my work as I do in speaking the language. This is the orality of my work since I speak English, and every once in a while, I will incorporate Spanish into the words I speak. When I was four, I did not know that I had the knowledge that I had that many more words to speak, speaking Spanish to my mother, and speaking English to my father.

However, as I got older, speaking Spanish was not an option. It was slowly becoming knowledge that I hid in the back of my mind. While I am not fluent in Spanish, I was bilingual before the age of four as depicted in the story “A Divided Home / Una Casa Divida,” and I could be considered a young translator going between my mother and father. However, English became my learnt language, and Spanish is the language that I diced up wrongly and sometimes I spoke it simply well. Once I entertain ideas of how idioms or any other forms of speaking and

writing translate, I am taken aback on how figurative forms of speaking and writing come across, particularly when it is put into permanent ink, especially when my mom of Mexican descent tells me her sayings in Spanish, which she translates for me, sometimes telling me “there is no exact translation for this, Sharon, but this is what it means.” She has said this to me so many times when explaining sayings passed down to her, that it is ingrained in my mind when thinking about how to speak or translate into Spanish.

All in all, this becomes very personal for me. What is incredible about me is that I can read Spanish, but I do not always know what I am reading. I can somewhat speak Spanish, but I understand more than I can speak. I can feel the Mexican traditions and the culture, especially the day of the dead, which I have been to one event in Mexico, piñatas on birthdays just about every year except when children were too old, and understand the importance of the Virgen de Guadalupe who appeared to a farmer. However, I am not fluent in Spanish, and no matter how well I speak or teach English, I still live in a half-n-half world that does not see me as fluent in English and cannot see me as anything else except Other. This is what it means to live in my world of languages, to exist as an English and Spanish individual, as a Chicana, as a half-breed. Thus, translation is quite an endeavor for me, but I have learned from the masters how translation is an art with errors, as well as self-translation.

In the conflicting story of “Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei,” Eliot Weinberger shares the many ways that a Chinese four-line poem that is 1200 hundred years old is translated by various authors from differing backgrounds such as in English, Spanish, French, and even current Chinese. It is a poem by Wang Wei, who is known as a painter, calligrapher, and a master poet in an “age of masters, the Tang Dynasty” (3). Weinberger discusses its many translations that writers have attempted to come close to the original poem of Wei, trying to

emulate the poem's simplicity and uniqueness. However, Weinberger clarifies the act of translating when he wrote, "The point is that translation is more than a leap from dictionary to dictionary; it is a reimagining of the poem" (43). Weinberger believes that every act of translation is an act of translation into the reader's intellectual and emotional life. The act of self-translation for me is the way in which I compose a text in one language, English, and then translate it into another, Spanish, adapting my work to a wider readership. As far as the meaning of self-translation, the Oxford Bibliographies offers a common meaning as follows: "As a literary phenomenon, self-translation (formerly 'auto-translation') involves an author translating their own literary work into another language and text" ("Self-Translation"). In this manner, I am reaching into the intellectual and emotional life of the reader as a self-translator.

Continuing the discussion further, Co-writer Octavio Paz adds that his translation of the Wang Wei poem was the only Spanish one that was used in all the translations mentioned in Weinberger's discussion. On another note, Weinberger explains it is bad when one hears the translator and not the poet. According to Weinberger, "In its way a spiritual exercise, translation is dependent on the dissolution of the translator's ego: an absolute humility toward the text. A bad translation is the insistent voice of the translator—that is, when one sees no poet and hears only the translator speaking" (17). One who translates should feel humility towards the text. The translator must dissolve his ego to translate without the insistent voice of the translator. As such, it is evident to understand more of Weinberger's approach to the act of translation, and as such translation is an art. A poem read in different languages becomes a poem of constant change. If I am to self-translate, I should be conscious of my own abilities to self-translate, and I should be humble enough to understand that I need to lose my ego about self-translation and write the translation so as not to lose the poet in me. For instance, I may believe that I am

writing in Spanish, when I could indeed be writing in broken Spanish. It is rare for me to speak in Spanglish unless I hear a word that was used by my husband that is a mixture of Spanish and English such as brekas for brakes instead of using the word frenos for brakes.

And as such, I have done so in the most humiliating manner when I wrote my little stories in the best way possible from my memory on pages 9 -18. Though I self-translated what I remembered, I did so as a half-breed and did so as someone sharing the “intellectual and emotional” side of my life. For instance, I wrote in “La Carta de mi Abuelito” / My Grandfather’s cart:

No hay un tiempo mas cerca de mi corazon, pegado en mi corazon que el tiempo con mi abuelito en la plaza cerca de la casa de mis abuelitos. (14)

There is no time closer to my heart, stuck in my heart than the time with my grandfather in the square near the house of my grandparents. (15)

As such, I dissolved my ego, and let the poetic/prose side of me come out. I did not let the side of me as a translator allow the English side of me to take over but instead wrote from my heart in Spanish, making sure that my writing in both languages was as close to each other as I could get. I am conscious of my writing, and I expect myself to lose the fear of self-translating without losing the poet in me.

However, in *This Little Art* by Kate Briggs’s, ideas about the outcome of translation are what isn’t right about translation in order to explain what Briggs sees when translation is done right. Briggs explains,

In this, sense, literary translation, as a labour of changing words, and changing the orders of words, is always and from the outset wrong: its wrongness is a way of indirectly stressing and restressing the rightness of the original words in their right and original

order. Translation operates, then, as a kind of vital test: an ever-renewable demonstration of the literary value of the novel in German. Which is one way of saying that literature, that quality we call the literary, simply cannot do without translation as a means of repeatedly reaffirming it (and when the words of a translation matter in turn, when we feel, in a translation, that it must indeed be these necessary words in the necessary order, the translation has become literature too). (Chapter: Don't Do Translations, 37)

This is profound when she states translation in the end becomes literature too, literature that reaffirms the original literature in its form, in its language. The experience people receive from reading literature that is translated is otherworldly.

What is ironic about Kate Briggs is the idea at first that translation is not always recognized as a good idea to do as suggested by her professor (*This Little Art*, Chapter: Don't Do Translations, 49). However, Briggs determines for herself that translation is necessary, helping people reach other cultures, to read other books that would otherwise be out of their hands (52). Translation provides people with the ability to read the literatures that they do not and cannot read because the literary work is in other languages. For Briggs, there is an excitement in translating a work. It is in the adventuring of translating that Briggs cannot tell anyone where she is going with translation until she is in the middle of it – in the concrete task of writing it in her own language.

Subsequently, I was impressed with the scenes that seeing Briggs accepting the “bilingual scene” and realizing she is expected “to go with it.” (16, 19). Learning from Briggs, translation is between the translator, the writer of the original, and the reader of the text that was translated. It is an abstract idea that exists in the world of translation that a writer can follow in trying to translate from Spanish to English and vice-versa. Thus, I find that Briggs lends herself to the

idea of translation as art, seeing how what has been translated is literature as well. I feel I fit in that realm with my self-translations from pages 9-18. Though her languages were French, German, and English, my languages are English and Spanish, which I would like to also see other people being able to reach my culture due to my self-translation. It is a necessary thing as Briggs stated.

At this point, I cannot help but bring in Brent Armendinger, author of *Street Gloss*, a book that challenges the idea of writing in a manner that does not replicate anyone. At the outset of the book, Brent Armendinger explains that he created a set of procedures to follow the poems of five contemporary Argentinian writers – Alejandro Mendez, Mercedes Roffe, Fabian Casas, Nestor Perlongher, and Diana Bellessi – into the Buenos Aires city streets beginning his project in 2011. Additionally, Armendinger speaks of a friend born in Buenos Aires, Constanza Svidler who described the city as “a palimpsest, ‘a somaticizing city, [where] urban spaces display the symptoms of trauma in their incorporation within quotidian life over time’” (Preface 1-2). Thus, the writing of Armendinger resembles him making a palimpsest of himself in order to address his relationship with Argentina’s language, history, and geography.

To begin this project, Armendinger roughly translated without help. He processed everything according to the poem, and he walked the number of blocks for the words he could not translate according to the line number. He spoke with strangers about the words, wrote down “raw descriptions” of the physical surroundings and his own “emotional impressions” (Preface 9). He physically collaged the notes into poetic definitions. The writer tends to change what he is tasked with and where the writer takes it. Armendinger demonstrates what it is like to write after those who have written in a different language than his own. He allows himself to bury his thoughts in the way he was spoken to when asking for definitions. The poems that he was trying

to translate were given away to strangers for him to retain the benefit of receiving the stranger's cooperation in helping him translate the poems of those authors. Sometimes, he geared his troubles through artwork, sometimes through the gestures of others describing what they were trying to say, whether they bent down to show him or pointing to a rectangle of marble.

Armendinger writes, "An older man walks by and I ask him what it means. He points to the flat rectangle of marble, chipped in the left hand corner, at the entry of a door. How can a door about to be written or erased be the same thing as graffiti?" (30). His idea of collecting and noting all of this is demonstrated in his poetry, and his poetry is an attempt to understand his attempt "to walk along someone else's vocabulary" (12), which is dynamic, seen through his prose / poetic writing.

Hence, Armendinger explains that his translations were never meant to be replicas of the authors' work that he writes about, and that is where I take a stand about self-translation. I am not here to replicate anyone's work but self-translate in an artistic manner, a manner which I have learned to artistically display through pictures and my own poetry / prose writing. While I may not speak fluently, my broken Spanish comes across as self-explanatory to many and not so many. Brent Armendinger gives me the okay to write my Spanish as I am able to write it, but more importantly, even if I cannot write every line in Spanish, I can write the part that I feel good about writing in Spanish.

While I self-translate some parts in poetry into Spanish, I write what is comfortable to me in English and some parts in Spanish and most of the time it has to do with a place where I feel like writing in Spanish in some parts of the poem, a place where I can feel the culture as I did when I walked the streets on the frontera when my family first entered into Juarez. For instance,

“El Mercado Lindo” is a poem about walking those streets of Juarez on the frontera, and I wrote it in English and Spanish. It just touches me in both languages as follows:

un molcajete, stone rock
and bowl to go for grinding
aguacates y mas

Fanta orange soda
a case crossed la frontera
ese día.

It is not that I do not want to write entirely in Spanish, but it is how I anticipate talking in both languages, so I write as such. This is the orality of two languages. If this is how I talk at times in broken Spanish and half English, I am not replicating anyone’s words. I may not have walked several blocks according to the lines of poetry, but I walked in the mercado, saw all of the cactus fruit served on a stick, tasted the limonado from the street, ate the dulce de calabaza, and saw “el pescado, from tail to head, / acostado en frente de me” (7). And, I wrote the descriptions according to how the visions inspired me to create it in my writing. As such, I collected and noted what I saw en “El Mercado Lindo.”

Accordingly, Armendinger’s ideas took me to another level in the sense that while I may self-translate, I truly never will know another’s intentions but can only produce an outcome from the experience of self-translation. From Armendinger’s crafty flaneur style of translation by walking the paths of authors (12) to Gabrielle Civil’s performance that brought depth to Beauge-Rosier’s text that she was translating French on the spot to in *Kitchen Table Translations* by Madhu Kaza (39), or the idea that neocolonies still created an elitist language as seen in *Translation is a Mode= Translation is an Anti-neocolonial Mode* by Don Mee Choi (5), as well as Zahra Patterson’s Chronology that demonstrated that translation uncovers those silenced voices in various genres and formats throughout her book – all called me out of my comfort

zone, the zone that kept me silent at times because of the shame I felt for knowing another language, being bicultural.

Though I have heard, repeated, and explained over and over again, I was silenced at four years of age. My mother explained to me that I was embarrassed to speak Spanish again after being scolded at preschool for speaking Spanish to my dolls during playtime. Mrs. Hart was the culprit, and I was unjustly treated for speaking in another language. I was bilingual before kindergarten, but I knew who to speak to in English and who to speak to in Spanish. Thus, speaking to my dolls in Spanish was proper to me, except to the teacher. In “A Divided Home / Una Casa Dividida” (5), I explain the injustice that was called mainstreaming, and yet there was another injustice - *not knowing enough*.

In my prose, I experienced what it was like to not know enough Spanish and forced into a fight. I was only in seventh grade when this happened. This particular situation took me to the other side of prejudice in my prose “School Culture / Cultura Escolar,” and I experienced it because I was a half-breed, spoke broken Spanish, but looked part Mexican. I was told I did not speak Spanish and that I was “una guera que no serva para nada, una pendeja” (a white girl that served no purpose, an idiot). This is the part of me that is uncomfortable in speaking about, that I feel disquieted about.

For me, especially when I read Antena’s Manifestos, I understood uncomfortable when I first read about it. However, I have the need to define it in order to understand terminology used in new ways. Thus, I have to define manifesto as follows: “Manifesto – a public declaration of policy and aims, especially one issued before an election by a political party or candidate. ‘a manifesto for gay liberation’” (“Manifesto”). I pulled the word aims as decidedly one that conveys the manifesto regarding uncomfortable aesthetic work. However, learning from the

manifesto, there is more than one aim of uncomfortable aesthetic work in this piece of writing, *A Manifesto for Discomfortable Aesthetic Work* by Antena, which targets so much. I especially relate to what follows “Discomfortable aesthetic work is necessary” (3). What follows is that it states:

. . . if we are to imagine and begin to build a new world. Art is more than graphics to accompany our slogans. Poetry can imagine new possibilities within language. Poetry and other non-conforming forms of writing can create discomfort, manifest expressions of our distress and dysfunction in the context of unjust structures. Our work is made of attempts and failures and further attempts: we will learn to think, dream, and imagine differently and it will not be easy. Our work is ongoing. (3)

Discomfortable aesthetic work allows me to write about what I might be afraid to write about. This type of writing allows me to bring to the surface what I have been forced to push down, silence what is different. In return for tackling uncomfortable aesthetic work, I can produce work that does not fit into a structure or breaks a structure, freeing my inner self, freeing what has been repressed due to social norms. What I found through Antena’s work was all the reasons to speak out about indifferences that society judges Others by. Hence, I speak out about not being allowed to speak Spanish, not knowing enough Spanish, and not knowing what to think when people misjudge me, and my poetry/prose writing allows me to write about the social injustices I experienced as a little girl, in my school years, and into my older years, injustices that speak to being different, being Other. So, I tell stories of these injustices that inhabited most of my life at different times in my life. There were times when I thought it was over, but then something else happened to change my ease in living comfortably, without worrying about who I was. It is never over.

In the after math of all the readings, I found self-translation to be everything and anything. I understand from my book, “*My Little Poetic/Prose Book.../Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética / Prosa...*” that I wrote in English and Spanish how my words can be unsilenced if my work is opened up, shared. I understand that from Armendinger’s *Street Gloss* how translation unsilences those who want to be read, need to be read, thus the Operating Systems Glossarium in *Street Gloss* explains:

Unsilenced Texts series was established in early 2016 in an effort to recover silenced voices outside and beyond the canon, seeking out and publishing both contemporary translations and little or un-known out of print texts, in particular those under siege by restrictive regimes and silencing practices in their home (or adoptive) countries. We are committed to producing dual-language versions whenever possible. (Glossarium:

Unsilenced Texts)

Hence the following saying is important about these documents as put forth by The Operating System as follows:

”WE WERE HERE, WE EXISTED, WE HAVE A DIFFERENT STORY.”

It was these words in Week 5 of my spring semester of 2022, all of the authors’ works, and Professor Pluecker’s meeting with me on May 2 that recommended that I read Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* that allowed me to speak about what I knew, understood, and should not be ashamed of. I felt close to Anzaldúa’s work enough to allow me to release and to try a different route to my project back then and now. In addition to the contributions to thought, it felt as if a running theme of social injustice and differences kept me on my toes about my work through this project, through Anzaldúa’s words. It forced me to think about how cultures clash, and Anzaldúa opened that part of me when she wrote:

In fact, the Borderlands are physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (Preface, 1).

It is in this manner did Anzaldúa's words make me realize that it is not just about languages, but the space cultures share in close vicinity. It is impossible to not notice differences, and yet, it is possible to live with those differences.

Ironically, Anzaldúa speaks about being a border woman, someone who "grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory) . . . It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions" (Preface, 1) Anzaldúa deals with the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican Border in *Borderlands*, a book that speaks to Anzaldúa's existence in the world she strives to survive in speaking a mixture of languages. Anzaldúa writes as follows:

There at the juncture of cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized: they die and are born. Presently this infant language, this bastard language, Chicano Spanish, is not approved by any society. (Preface, 2)

Anzaldúa deals with keeping her identity intact amongst all these differences, especially her language, a language that is not recognized because it is a mixture of languages. Being Mestiza, Anzaldúa speaks of the mixture of Spanish and Indian heritage that she is part of, and how she is an alien in the Anglo culture.

As it stands, I too feel as if I am an alien in the white man's culture, especially after living in the U.S. as a citizen all my life to the point when a teacher assumed my background. In my poem "Language / Idioma," a blond-haired, blue-eyed teacher said that it must have been

hard for me to learn English and that I spoke so well after telling her that I was an English major at IU East. What? What in the world just happened? She explained that it must have been hard for me to learn English in a Spanish-speaking home. Let me remind everyone that I have not said anything to this woman to give her the impression that I came out of a Spanish-speaking home. This was during a Parent/Teacher Conference, and I spoke English to this woman. Maybe my 5'2" status gave me away, or my dark brown hair, and dark brown eyes? I am not sure, but her assumption about my growing up was off key. I ended up telling the woman "And you are educated culturally?" (46). I explained further to the woman that I spoke English since I first learned to speak. The blush on her face was all I could take after explaining to her that I was not fluent in Spanish. This happened at the Richmond High School, here in Richmond, Indiana, where all my children attended. Though there was no yelling, I calmly walked away from this white woman who racially provoked a conversation that did not need to happen. And, she teaches Spanish, and I need not mention her name. This was embarrassing for me and for her.

Additionally, Anzaldúa reminds the reader of how the United States took the land from Mexico. Anzaldúa writes, "In 1846, the U.S. incited Mexico to war. U. S. troops invaded and occupied Mexico, forcing her to give up almost half of her nation, what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California." It is this history that I am always reminded by my mother in my poem, "The History not in Your Books, Mija" (34-35), where she explains that "They took / one district / 17 states / California / Nevada / Arizona / New Mexico / Texas / Colorado / and more, three territories, El Chamizal / Alamo / and one more" (34). My mother further explained that the Mexicans no longer can enter without papers and history is told from the white man's side only but the Mexican people are still here everywhere in the lands that the

U.S. took. This aligns with Anzaldúa's history and all that she brings to the surface about Mexico and the United States.

Plus, not only is Anzaldúa caught up in the dangerous and difficult situation of the migrants who cross the border to work in the United States, but she is also caught up in this fight to be Chicana and speak the Chicano Spanish. This brings to the surface inequities and elitist ideas such as in Antena's Manifestos, Zahra Patterson's *Chronology*, and Don Mee Choi's *Translation is a Mode* as examples.

For instance, in Don Mee Choi's *Translation is a Mode = Translation is an Anti-neocolonial Mode*, Colonization of Korea in the author's words, in Don Mee Choi's words, was written as "neocolonial fratricide." According to Choi, being at war, technically, means the Korean forces are under the control of the US military, and thus, the Korean population is under US military control. This is the neocolony that Choi comes from, and she is speaking of the Korean War that lasted between 1950-1953. Choi's involvement in The International Women's Network Against Militarism has led her to translate and interpret for those Korean women's poetry, which is a political act, since they are women who have survived military violence and sexual exploitation.

For Choi, there was a power takeover by a dominant language, and thus, the mother tongue was lost. She explains that her connection with the Network helps her to understand that the lives of many from places like Okinawa, Japan, South Korea, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and those in the U.S. were interconnected by histories of imperialism, colonialism, and militarism, "and by increasing economic interdependence" (18). She feels she speaks "as a twin" (3) because of her connection with English and Korean words that were part of her neocolonial connection to the U.S.

Consequently, the overpowering country wreaks havoc on the language, history, and religious beliefs to the point that the indigenous people have to assimilate in order to survive. I now can accept that I am from two different backgrounds that do not allow me to collide happily. This helped me understand the act of mainstreaming as a socially radical idea that did not allow for languages to cross. I understand the act of mainstreaming due to my own experience when I was in pre-school, when I was four, where I was told I could not speak Spanish in school at all, even if I was playing with my dolls, which I was doing at the time. I never spoke to the English-speaking people in Spanish. I knew the difference, but the pre-school teacher, Mrs. Hart, could not see that I did not speak Spanish to people like her that did not speak.

Moving along, in *Chronology*, Zahra Patterson intertwines many styles of writing in the first chapter titled “maqakonako” – letters, footnotes, block quotes, glossary, as well as a 4 x 5-1/2 inch, lightweight type card inserted between pages 14-15, with a picture of a young dark-skinned girl surrounded by English words and a list of translations following each English word or phrase. For example, the phrase “Being neat and tidy” is translated twice as follows: Ukuba linono Kanye nokuzithanda; and Ho ba makgethe le ho hlweka. Another example of an English translated word is “brush” as follows: ibhulashi; borashe; ibhrashi; boraše; borsel: and, poratšhe. By utilizing varying stylistic forms and genres of writing, Patterson’s work evolves from the outset as a work of art in translation itself. This is where language is similar for the fact that certain words mean something other than what the Spanish word means at times, or words put together create some type of saying.

In regards to Patterson’s list of words, I too have a list. In “Palabras y Dichos,” I explain many words that mean something as I learned them. Words that were shared amongst family were not always as they were understood such as the word my husband called me in an

affectionate manner when he said cabronsita (49). I heard dumbass since I understood at the time for it to mean that until my husband wholeheartedly explained the affectionate side. Then, there is the one that we have become acclimated to – por pendejo(a) (50), (meaning for stupidity). Of course, there is the more common phrase that states, *Pansa llena, corazón contenta* (Full belly, happy heart). However, I did not mention multiple names for one word, which is possible.

Dissecting Patterson's work pushed me to understand the power of translation in writing, removing the traditional idea of translation as an exact transformation from the original, as if there were an equal sign between the original language and the translation, which there is not. In addition, *Chronology* offers me an understanding of my broken Spanish and an avenue in which I can write it in. As far as *Chronology* is concerned, it is the many ways in which Patterson communicates that interest me, especially when she speaks through various medium of communication in order to explain how injustices and differences can be explained through writing.

Furthermore, I can speak about the various mediums that I write in as well through poetry, prose, and stories. Most of all, I can speak about the day I was interviewed at First Bank Richmond in the downtown area, when I politely removed myself from the interview because I was told "You really are not our type to work in our office," but the lady originally started the conversation off with, "Wow, you have a lot of hair!" (43). This tacky mannered woman did not handle differences very well, nor was I ever greeted with a hello. Hair was the object of this meeting, and my hair represented something to the women that they could not compete with. Then, as mentioned before, there was the time I was told by a teacher in a parent-teacher conference, after I told her I was an English major, that it must have been hard for me to learn

English, the assumption being that I spoke Spanish first. It is these types of ignorant statements that do not allow for acceptance. So, I hear Patterson, and I hear where I am going with my writing when I speak about the issues of differences, injustices, and language. I too have many types of writing in my thesis packet, and I also have pictures of the people in my life that intersect with the English and Spanish languages.

In a view of translation and how it operates in the lives of people, *Kitchen Table Translation*, Madhu Kaza is interested in the intelligence of the writers and how “they open up problems and possibilities for literary translation.” She asked herself what it meant to live with this untranslatability that is a silence between languages and herself, and that sets up my entire book of translation in moderation, which it speaks from areas of personal, cultural, and political prose and poetry. For Kaza, translation is an intimate act and an “act of hospitality” (17), and she writes that translation is not about assimilation to the dominant language.

This book features mostly people of color, but it is seen by Kaza as in terms of difference, not necessarily by diversity. It is as if those translators have crossed borders, have migrated, or have decolonized in order to translate. Being a translator is an act of generosity shared amongst others, and as such, letting the others into their world as “a gesture of solidarity” (17). For Kaza, when she was young felt an illegitimacy to be an American and a part of her “stopped at the border” (12) – her language and her culture. The world she lived in was not hospitable to her.

Thus, this idea reminds me to welcome differences, others’ cultures, others’ worlds into my world of writing and understanding of translation and self-translation as an act of hospitality. I understand translation, or self-translation,” is not something that I grew up with, because as Kaza would say, “something went quiet” (12) in me when I was in preschool, where I learned

that I could not assimilate wholly since I had to entirely leave the Spanish language and culture behind at four.

As far as translation goes, Kaza reminds us of previously mentioned Don Mee Choi as well as mentioning anew Gabrielle Civil in her book *Kitchen Table Translation*. In Madhu's book, Choi is mentioned as translating the poems "Lord No" and "A Lullaby" by Kim Hyesoon (63) from the Korean language. According to Kaza, "Don Mee Choi presents translation as one response to U.S. imperialism and the pain of migration" (15). This coincides with Choi's discussion about neocolonialism when I mentioned above in Choi's section that she speaks as a twin because of her connection with English and Korean words that were part of her neocolonial connection to the U.S. In addition, Kaza writes about Gabrielle Civil who ". . . connect translation directly to family history. . . Civil's performance score not only amplifies translation errors but also uses moments of failure to contest the strictures of translation in the academy" (15). Gabrielle Civil performed "whisper (the index of suns)" translating Jacqueline Beauge-Rosier's neglected 1966 masterpiece *A vol d'ombre*" (39), and it is written in *Kitchen Table Translation*. In Kaza's book, Civil speaks of translation with errors:

The work wallows in errors –from literal French / English mistakes, to the call-outs of my mistakes by others, to actual misnaming of my mother's birthplace. (My mother would like everyone to know: she was born in Gadsden, Alabama, not Selma.) This is part of what makes the text interesting today. To err, to wander, is part of the translator's path, her guilt and revelation. (39)

Civil believes that translation is an act of hospitality with all its errors and predicaments.

Accordingly, Kaza speaks of how "second generation, diasporic and indigenous writers who speak (or partly speak) an ancestral language at home might find the discourse of master fraught,

especially when access to a language has been lost through historical violence and dislocation” (15). It is through this hospitality that the host as well will have to be “changed by the encounter” (17).

What I enjoyed most was how translation, or self-translation, can have many errors, and it is okay according to Gabriel Civil and Kaza as well as they both agree that it is an act of hospitality with all of its errors. It is not ironic that Kaza further explains how second-generation writers who speak or partly speak find it to be a stressful situation, as I do sometimes. It is at those times that I forget accents or use language that is slang in Spanish, and if I use slang in English, that only complicates the self-translation. In the book, *Swallow the Fish: a memoir in performance art*, Gabrielle Civil’s ability to intertwine varying genres of text that narrate her growth as a performing artist. While I have not ventured into this area of performance art, it is another manner in which to discuss differences. The discussion of body and space have commonalities and appear to be an experiment and a practice to become conscious of one’s body and surroundings. Additionally, when Civil was writing mail art with Madhu, Civil explains about performance art that “Whether handwritten, typewritten, word processed, or collaged, art training letters are exercises of the body (materialized in language, sent across space)” (62). Civil is also somewhat challenging the idea as a performing artist that some can get away with doing certain things due to the color of their skin, speaking of Karen Finley who peed into a bucket on stage, which Civil found this shocking but was covetous of her.

Thus, Civil’s work here is a combination of performance art that combines the body and the spirit and her writing in a poetically-prose-essay-performance kind of writing. Her work speaks of how a black woman performs before all those people watching. She writes in her essays the truth about her work, and how she might have felt if she had undressed in front of all

those people. She speaks of it as the “miraculous appearance” if she were to disrobe (135).

However, her work is not only eye-opening, but also the work of a black feminist who bares all to everyone in this book through her performances, combined with anecdotes and meditations, poetry and prose.

Because of this, Civil was influenced to take the challenge of performing uninhibited, which I find that Civil is challenging racial discrimination in the performing arts, which I am as well by following her ideas, especially from page 186 – Kinds of Performing Objects I’ve Been. As for an example of my own work, Gabrielle Civil provided me with a writing project that I enjoyed accomplishing. On page 186, Civil writes a piece on “Kinds of Performance Objects I’ve Been.” Hence, I took up this project and wrote my piece, which I found to speak to topics that I was not sure I should talk about, but I did. I found that writing about my experiences opened me up like unraveling a gift that was not meant to be open, shut closed with so much Scotch tape. I felt shame mentioning some of my experiences, but at the same time it was the first time I had ever spoken about these items out loud on paper. Hence, performance objects that I have been made sense, and though 98 percent of it did not need self-translation, there were a few words that were written in Spanish. In my example of Civil’s work, I believe that what I have written is challenging the ideas of being a girl growing up in my Caucasian/Spanish world. For example, I wrote about some tough times that I experienced as a young girl as follows:

16. Took piano lessons, and eventually the piano moves from the living room to one of the back rooms. Do you want me to teach you a move to protect you? If I teach it to you, you have to be able to stop me. No thank you. Stopped taking piano lessons. (30)

This is an example of how I projected myself for the first time. I had never spoken about what had happened at that time, but this project gave me the leeway to do so. I also wrote about my

my sisters and my attempt to help my father stop smoking as well as about the time I won queen as a senior in high school.

39. I won! In twelfth grade, I was taken into the office by JROTC Instructor, “You only won by a point, so don’t let it go to your head. You will work with Laura, since she is the runner-up. You’re excused.” That feeling of winning left. I was nominated to be the ROTC Queen. (32)

These are just a couple of examples that I was able to write about that were areas that I felt inhibited to talk about. However, Civil’s example of “Kinds of Performing Objects I’ve Been” helped me to let go of my fear to release some of these occurrences that I felt were hard to talk about. I felt silenced by many of these events, even embarrassed.

Therefore, I follow the idea in *Repetition Nineteen* of Maria de la Torre when she writes, “But right under the slang she feigned being fluent in, there was another vernacular that would slacken her tongue, leading to the embarrassment of saying the right thing wrongly or the wrong thing flat-out” (74). From this, I ignorantly am reminded that while I might be trying to self-translate with a dictionary, or Google Translator, or another translation method, I understand there is the idea of having expressions in another language that formal translation cannot translate due to it being slang, street talk, or sayings that I will not know exist unless I speak to an indigenous person. Thus, Maria de la Torre’s comments, “Poetry often manifests radical departures from normative syntax, lexicon, and utterance such that its interpretation, an integral part of the translation process, involves surmising authorial intentions, the thinking goes on” (75). Thus, in translation, can the authorial intent be lost by the one translating? I think so, since the inner workings of the author’s mind departs from formal forms of the language itself at times.

However, I feel it can be an artistic extension of the original work as expressed in *Street Gloss* by Brent Armendinger, “It is impossible to walk another’s path, especially in a different language, without changing where it takes you” (12). I suppose that in this book I have gone so far as to exaggerate this, to make it clear that my self-translations were never intended to be “replicas” (Armendinger, Preface, 4). While I am not sure Armendinger’s intention, I feel a sense of respect for the original author’s work and his or her intention. This is also a reminder of Briggs and Weinberger’s version of how translation is seen as another form of art in “*This Little Art*” and in “19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei.”

If Google Translate is not familiar with an idiom, a saying from my mom, will GT translate correctly with the author’s intention in mind, especially if a word has different meanings? Maria de la Torre explains, “For starters, GT’s most egregious bias, applying to any translation of poetry, is that it expects everything not only to have been said before, but to be locatable on the internet, therefore making it ill-suited to render inventive, novel poetic utterances into another language” (81). How much harder is it for me to self-translate if I am relying on GT? I find myself to not only be reliant but vulnerable to criticism by the original author or the indigenous speaker of the language and culture. Yet, I continue to try to speak and write with all of my wrongdoings, and as de la Torre states, “leading to the embarrassment of saying the right thing wrongly or the wrong thing flat-out” (74). My creative work will be jeopardized by the fact that meaning might be skewed by GT. As clarified by de la Torre, “GT’s output is inventive in that it cannot simply replicate existing discourse ad nauseam, but invariably mangles I, and in doing so, introduces a generative swerve” (83). Thus, my best artistic attempt at translation will be a translation by others in an attempt to understand my interpretation.

In the wake of Latinas, Julia Alvarez is a distinct Latina writer who writes in both English and Spanish about the Dominican Republic, the country she lived in for the first ten years of her life. As far as how Alvarez feels about writing in both languages, she “feels empowered by the notion of populations and cultures around the world mixing, and because of this, identifies as a ‘Citizen of the World’” (“Julia Alvarez”). Amongst many genres that she has written, Alvarez wrote *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* and *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Many of the issues that Alvarez has written about involve “immigration, assimilation, and identity” (“Julia Alvarez”).

As the final point, identity as an American/Latina has been the issue that I have had to deal with all my life thus far, and I believe it is not going to change. My husband as well receives some backlash along with me. In my poems, “Service / Servicio,” “Where Are We Going? / A Dónde Vamos?,” and “A Privilege / Un Privilegio,” we have been mistreated in a restaurant by not receiving service, mistaken for not being permanent residents of the United States, and quietly looked upon as people who dare to vote. These are examples of feeling the discrimination of being Other, of feeling the ignorance of other people’s reactions to us.

As for my identity, it is clearly of many cultures as I explain at the very beginning of my thesis in “The Diversity of My Roots.” I am Caucasian from my father, and as such, I have learned English. As far as the German side of my dad’s family which is his mother, at one time, I spoke a bit of German in Germany when my father was stationed in Germany. I learned some German in school and some German in the street with German friends. As far as French on my father’s dad’s side, I took a class in school, but it ended there. Then there is Spanish from my mom’s side, and I not only have learned it at home, but I have taken classes in high school and college as well. I am still not fluent, even with all the novellas I watched with my mother. To

this day, I do not know what the mental block is all about, except that I believe that it has to do with the fact that “some second generation, diasporic and indigenous writers who speak (or partly speak) an ancestral language at home might find the discourse of mastery fraught, especially when access to a language has been lost through historical violence and dislocation” as written by Madhu Kaza (15). I have lost that part within me that speaks naturally. This is the state of my orality.

As for the next five poems that I would like to speak to at this time are the poem / prose that I wrote in Spanish and English starting on pages 9-18. These poems were written from my very head in Spanish. I did not use Google translate, a dictionary, my mom, or my husband. My verbs are not necessarily correct and my vocabulary is limited. I wrote this in Dr. Pluecker’s class as one of my final creative experiments for my final project. It was an attempt to flush out my Spanish that I had in me in the Spring of 2022, which I actually enjoyed doing this. However, this took me not only hours to do but days to complete. I ended up writing about memories that I had of my Mexican grandparents in Mexico and of my mom in El Paso, Texas.

One of the courses I took in the summer had to do with writing fiction with Sylvia Aguilar. She took me in the right direction, but I ended up writing more truth than fiction. However, Professor Aguilar inspired me to write more dramatically when I wrote “Una Noche at ‘Mustang Sally’s Nightclub.’” While I wrote it after her class, I remember her distinctly telling us about details and how they matter. I wrote that piece with more heart and detail than I had ever written. Her class gave me the push to write me in-depth than I had ever written before. It was a short story that I understood to be within the limits of a short story, which is about 1,000 to 10,000 words. It was only about 1,216 words, which means it barely made it over 1,000 words to be considered a short story.

However, Dr. Hernandez took me in another direction with Eco-Poetry. I wrote a poem that took me hours upon hours to write. I used Google translate, a dictionary, and my mom and husband for the translation of words into Spanish. The shape of my poem was experimental, and I wanted to emulate what was written from pages 503 to 512 in Jack Collom's *Red Car Goes By*. Since we were invited to write an *abecedarian* poem, I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to try a different format that narrows down thoughts, and I liked the idea of a vanishing poem. For me, this was a work in progress, and words and phrases were changed so many times in the process while thinking of line length and the next letter. I even walked away many times for lunch and a breather and later dinner. Thus, I feel as if I need to revisit the words themselves and listen to its rhythm as a way of editing and revising the piece.

Last but not least, I took the time to write a poem in Dr. Cote Botero's class for my Final Project in the summer of 2023. It was of a time when I was a little girl and remembered being free – free from judgment and free from being laughed at for not being able to speak Spanish. I recalled having such a wonderful time in Spain, but the most important part was the walk in the plaza area with the pigeons surrounding me, and I was laughing at their dancing movements as they searched for food. It was the time I felt enjoyment as a Latina and walked as a half breed. I have attached more than this to be reviewed for my Thesis Project, but not everything could be included for discussion such as “El Mercado Lindo” or “The Interview.” I am more than willing to share my thoughts on all of my poems, but I believe I have included more than the limit for this Thesis Project.

In addition, I wish to address the authors that I have included that I believe are worth taking examples from their writing style. First Sara Uribe in *Antígona Gonzalez* is a great example of poetry written in a prose style. Uribe is repetitive in a unique way. *In Antígona*

González, Sara Uribe's prose moves her audience through a deep emotional appeal to understand the heinous activity occurring in Mexico in general, but focusing on a town named Tamaulipas, Mexico. At the outset, the lyrical sound of repeating words draw the reader in when Uribe speaks in general about possibly finding the body someone may be looking for when she writes:

Contarlos a todos.

Nombrarlos a todos para decir: este cuerpo podría ser el mío.

El cuerpo de uno del los míos. (6)

Count them all.

Name them all so as to say: this body could be mine.

The body of one of my own. (7)

Not only does the repetition at the start of sentences create that mourning lyrical feeling, the need for bodies to appear penetrates the reader's visual mindset as Uribe continues to describe the need for bodies that disappeared to appear whether dead or alive.

Another author that is worth taking notice of is Claudia Rankine's work, *Citizen*. It is in Claudia Rankine's use of everyday language that makes her words so familiar to the reader, which is something I wish to emulate in my Thesis. Not only does Rankine build up the description and images of the snippet she is speaking through, but Rankine addresses the audience, for the most part, with the familiar second person. Rankine includes the audience in the microaggression moments by asking questions of the audience through this second person. We do not have to go far to feel these quotidian microaggression moments. Chester M. Pierce from the Harvard University coined the term microaggression in 1970 "to describe insults and dismissals which he regularly witnessed non-black Americans inflicting on African Americans" (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). The term has grown to include any socially marginalized groups

that receive these denigrating messages. This is Rankine's power as she drives home her message with everyday language, and yet she dismisses what is right in her face. This is applicable to all races that experience this type of insult.

Another author, Ilya Kaminsky's *Deaf Republic*, he titles his work throughout with progression in mind. Kaminsky frames his story around Sonya, Alfonso, and Anushka in the first part of the play, and frames the second part of the play around Galya and Anushka – Sonya and Alfonso's child. Kaminsky tells a story of how a few people that stand out lived and maybe died in this war. The titles of his prose poems give each piece direction. I also could not help but notice Kaminsky's use of similes to manifest what the citizens were being put through mentally and emotionally. With his use of similes and metaphors, Kaminsky also captured my attention to the horror that was going on in this town. This is something I wish to pay attention to as I progress with my work, the use of figurative language to add to my work.

Finally, in Joan Didion's "The Year of Magical Thinking," Didion is in a world of nonacceptance. Joan Didion writes about her husband's passing as it happened, as she planned the funeral, as her daughter was in septic shock. This all occurred so fast that Didion started to believe that there was a possibility that her husband may come back, though he was not. Both of them died. This is a one-woman play that Didion wrote based on her memoir. Didion's idea of magical thinking occurred when she thought that if she was alone, he might come back. She feels she is playing along with her nephew Tony when he wants to help make the arrangements, when she needs to give away his shoes but doesn't as if he were coming back, then the fact that Quintana, her daughter, could stay alive creates the possibility that John could come back. Didion explains all of this in a repetitive/poetic manner in which she captures all of the moments that occur to her in that magical year when she lost both her husband and her daughter.

It is a great example of how someone who went through a grievous time writes a short adaptation of a play / prose / poetry, which is influential to me as a method of writing. She captures feelings and movement through her words, her repeated words, in such a way that I want to be able to do so as well. I want to be able to capture my feelings and movement in my own prose and poetry as Didion had, which Didion is an amazing writer.

In conclusion, this book, “*My Little Poetic-Prose Book / Mi Libro Chiquito de Poética-Prosa*,” represented a bicultural experience that is expressed through the intersection of languages, exploring how to express an identity that does not conform to the limits of a single language or format, using a series of formal tools such as self-translation, the representation of orality, the dynamics of error, and the mixing of genres. Self-translation and translation is art and speaking in different or broken languages is art, but it is silenced at times. This preface has addressed the power of being able to be half and half in an unjustifiable world. Thus, I am culturally adept according to the places I have inhabited and the people I have had the fortune of meeting when living in two different languages. Using the writers of translation to defend my thesis is empowering, considering they spoke of differences and social injustices, as well as political ramifications. They permitted me to speak about the difficult topics that complicated my dual language world. It is possible to speak about the injustices I have brought out in my poetry/prose, but having others that have experienced what I have brings out my original story in a more appealing manner.

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My Little Poetic/Prose Book
of Words, Sayings, and Stories
in Broken Spanish and a little bit of German

*Mi Libro Chiquito de
Poética / Prosa
de Palabras, Dichos, y Historias
en Español Fracturado y un poquetito Alemán*



What am I made from?

De qué estoy hecha?

The Diversity of My Roots

My Mom's Side

I was born in El Paso, Tx., in the William Beaumont Hospital as Sharon Ann Parish. Lucero is my married name. Gabriela Torres, was born in San Juan of Guadalupe, Durango, Mexico in the year 1942. My mother is fortunately alive today November 5, 2023.) My mother's mom, my grandmother, was born in New Mexico, Durango, Mexico. She died when she was 86. My grandmother married my grandfather in San Juan de Guadalupe, Durango, Mexico. My mother's dad, my grandfather, Enrique Torres, was born in Oregano, Durango, Mexico. He died at 87 years old. They called the town Oregano because there the oregano grew wild.

My Dad's Side

My Dad, Robert George Parish, was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin in the year 1939 on New Year's Eve. He died at 79 years old in the year 2019 but wished he could have lived until he was around 90 years old. He told my mom this when he was in the hospital. My dad died of cancer. When my dad was young, he used to tell me how he would pick apples from the front yards of other houses and run away so fast, even though they had a green apple tree in their backyard on 388 N. Brooke St., Fond du Lac, Wi. My dad's father, Frank Parish, I've been told was born in Ontario, Canada, and is French-Canadian. My Dad's mother, my grandmother, Katerina (Koleman) Parish, was born in Germany. In 1974, we had a family reunion. There were mostly German descent family members at the Lakeside Park on Oven Island where we had the reunion.

In Addition...My husband

As for my current husband of 33 years, he was born in El Paso, Tx. only because the cost was less at the time to be born in Texas than Las Cruces, New Mexico. He says it sucks (#\$@%)! He wanted to be born a full New Mexican.

La Diversidad de Mis Raíces

El Lado de mi Madre

Nací en El Paso, Tx., en el hospital de William Beaumont como Sharon Ann Parish. Lucero es mi nombre de casada. Mi Mamá, Gabriela (Torres) Parish, nació en San Juan de Guadalupe, Durango, Mexico en el año 1942. Mi mama afortunadamente esta viva hoy, 5 de Noviembre de 2023. La mamá de mi madre, mi abuela, Francisca (Marteneli al Daco) Torres, nació en Nuevo Mexico, Durango, Mexico. Murió cuando tenía 86 años. Mi abuela se caso con mi abuelo en San Juan de Guadalupe, Durango, Mexico. El papa de mi madre, mi abuelo, Enrique Torres, nació en El Oregano, Durango, Mexico. Murió a los 87 años. Llamaron así al pueblo de Orégano porque allí el orégano se volvió salvaje.

El Lado de mi Padre

My Dad, Robert George Parish, was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin in the year 1939 on New Year's Eve. He died at 79 years old in the year 2019 but wished he could have lived until he was around 90 years old. He told my mom this when he was in the hospital. My dad died of cancer. When my dad was young, he used to tell me how he would pick apples from the front yards of other houses and run away so fast, even though they had a green apple tree in their backyard on 388 N. Brooke St., Fon du Lac, Wi. My dad's father, Frank Parish, I've been told was born in Ontario, Canada, and is French-Canadian. Die Mutter meines Vaters, meine Großmutter, Katharina (Koleman) Parish, was born in Germany. In 1974, we had a family reunion. There were mostly German descent family members at the Lakeside Park on Oven Island where we had the reunion.

Tambien . . . Mi Esposo

En cuanto a mi esposo actual marido de 33 años, nació en El Paso, Tx. solo porque el costo en ese momento era menor por nacer en Texas que en Las Cruces, New Mexico. Él dice que vale madre! Quería nacer como un Nuevo Mexicano completo.

A Divided Home / Una Casa Dividida

Bilingual before kindergarten, my mom would say to me, “Dile a tu papa si quiere un taza de café,” and I would run to my father and ask him if he wanted a cup of coffee. My father said yes, and I ran back to my mom and said “Si, mama! I knew I spoke English to my father. Spanish to my mom. However, I did not understand why the teacher was so mad at me until my mother explained to me later. I had been playing with the little dolls at school by myself during playtime and did not understand why the teacher yelled at me. She scolded, walked back and forth, and this was not to be. My mom told me that I spoke Spanish to my dolls. Mrs. Hart told my mother I was not to speak any Spanish at school at all, not one word. En mi pequeña mente, ni una palabra! Everyone stared at me unblinking. Though I spoke English to everyone else, including Mrs. Hart, I should not speak Spanish at all, and Mrs. Hart told my mom that she was not to speak Spanish to me, only English at home. When I cried, my mom tried to console me, holding me tight, but it did not help. From that day forward, I was afraid, afraid of being yelled at, afraid to speak Spanish, and I shut up, severed my bilingual mind by not speaking Spanish at all. I was only four in preschool. They called this mainstreaming.

The Time I Felt Enjoyment as a Latina / El Momento en Que Sentí Placer Como Una Latina

Away from the
U.S., never felt
more at home
as I did in Spain,
usando ropa que me
hablaba en un
mundo latino,
delighted in
the birds on the
cobblestone
ground,
disfruté de las
bailarinas de
flamenco,
gladly accepted
the mounded
pound cake from
one of the bakeries,
y miraba con horror
las corridas de toros,
in the Spanish
world.



El Mercado Lindo

andavamos aya
en Juarez, the other side
of la frontera of El Paso

mi padre, el gringo de Wisconsin
mi madre, la Mexicana de Piedras Negras
y très hijas, mixed

caminamos con todos

tunas from the cactus fruit
served on a stick
amarillo, rojo, blanco

un molcajete, stone rock
and bowl to go for grinding
aguacates y mas

Fanta orange soda
a case crossed la frontera
ese día.

limonada from the street
scooped from the glass jar
un nicle, perhaps slang, pero . . .

cana de azucar, sugar cane
begging - por favor, please,
thank you, gracias

jarros, clay pots and pans
para hacer tortillas,
arroz, frijolitos, mole

dulce de camote sweet potato candy
pulled out of a glass case,
una vetrina, my mom says

dulce de calabaza pumpkin candy
baked, dipped in miel
soft on a napkin

ponchos, a blanket with a slit
tres para las hijas
y dos para mis padres

Y ya, we have arrived.
el restaurante que ya no
recuerdo el nombre.

el pescado, from tail to head,
acostado en frente de mi
arriva de mi plato

hojos amplio
el mesero smiling
encouraging me

buen provecho,
eat, comaselo,
mis padres nos dicen

hmmmmmmmmmmmm
delicioso, mouth-watering
podemos volver otro día?

Mis Recuerdos

Yo voy a decir mis memorias en Español como yo recuerdo, pero no voy a usar un diccionario, ni mi madre, ni mi esposo, ni Google Translate. Tengo miedo hacer esto pero voy a decir como puedo. Mis verbos son malos y no tengo muchas palabras en mi vocabulario, y tambien como mis palabras terminar con “a” o “o” no son correctos. Quiero practicar, y you creo que la gente que van a leer van a poner nervioso com mis palabras, con mi forma. Van a decir “Por que esta mujer no usan un libro de Español?” Bueno, voy a empezar con mis recuerdos . . .

My Memories

I'm going to tell my memoirs in Spanish as I remember, but I'm not going to use a dictionary, nor my mother, nor my husband, nor Google Translate. I'm afraid to do this but I'm going to say how I can. My verbs are bad and I don't have many words in my vocabulary, and also as my words ending with "a" or "o" are not correct. I want to practice, and I think people who are going to read are going to be nervous with my words, with my form. They're going to say, "Why doesn't this woman use a Spanish book?" Well, I'm going to start with my memories . . .

El Señor de la Noche

Cuando mi familia fuimos a visitar mis abuelitos y la familia en Mexico, hay una noche en Piedras Negras cuando todos estamos dormiendo, pero hay unas personas que no estaban familia. Yo despierto, y en la cocina estaba mis abuelitos, mi mama, y un señor – todos sentaban en la mesa - platicando y comiendo. El hombre yo no conocerlo. Mi abuelita Francesca esta cocinando y mireme que yo en la puerta mirando todo que esta pasando en la cocina. “Ven a comer chiquita” y me pusa un plato de frijoles y arroz en frente de mi. Todos estaban feliz hablando a las uno en la mañana. Yo no mas miran a todos, oyendo todo los histories. Mi abuelito puso un huevo en un vaso de Coca-Cola y dale vuelta con una cucharra. El dice que esta hacienda ponche, bebir de champions. La gente habla hasta dos y media, y cuando esta tiempo a salir, el hombre se fui en la calle con ropa y paquetas de comida. Mi abuelita y mi mama hacen todo pa que el hombre no estaba sufriendo. Todos dan Bendigas.

The Man of the Night

When my family went to visit my grandparents and family in Mexico, there is a night in Piedras Negras when we are all sleeping, but there are some people who were not family. I woke up, and in the kitchen were my grandparents, my mom, and a gentleman – they all sat at the table – talking and eating. The man I do not know. My grandmother Francesca is cooking and look at me at the door looking at everything that is happening in the kitchen. "Come eat little girl" and put a plate of beans and rice in front of me. Everyone was happy talking at one o'clock in the morning. I just look at everyone, hearing all the histories. My grandfather put an egg in a glass of Coca-Cola and mixed it with a teaspoon. He says he's making punch, drink of champions. They talk until two thirty, and when it was time to go, the man went into the street with clothes and packets of food. My grandmother and my mother do everything so that the man was not suffering. All give blessings.

La Carta de mi Abuelito



No hay un tiempo mas cerca de mi corazon, pegado en mi corazon que el tiempo con mi abuelito en la plaza cerca de la casa de mis abuelitos. Yo camino al lado de mi abuelito y el camina atraz de la carta – el pushe con los manos viejos pero con fuerza. El sol estaba cocinando la gente, incluso nosotros. Pero nosotros tenemos sombreros. Mi abuelita y mi mama no los dejaron que nosotros ir a la plaza sin sombreros. Hace diez minutos y estamos en la plaza. Mi abuelito parque abajo de un arbol flaquito pero no tenemos el sol como tenemos cuando

andamos a la plaza. Mi Abuelito y yo venden agua de melon y de fresas y de limones y otras frutas. Cuando todo ya cabaron, todo el tiempo mi abuelito tiene fruta abajo de la carta para el y yo. Sentamos en la plaza, y todo mi fortuna esta en momentos así.

My Grandfather's Cart

There is no time closer to my heart, stuck in my heart than the time with my grandfather in the square near the house of my grandparents. I walk next to my grandfather and he walks behind the cart – he pushed with old hands but with strength. The sun was cooking people, including us. But we have hats, and my grandmother and my mother did not let us go to the square without hats. It took ten minutes, and we are in the square. My grandfather parks under a skinny tree but we do not have the sun as we have when we walk to the square. My grandfather and I sell melon and strawberry water and lemons and other fruits. When everything is finished, all this time my grandfather has fruit below the cart for him and me. We sit in the square, and all my fortune is at times like this.

Los Inmigrantes que Pasen Por Aqui

Estamos en frente de la casa limpiando la yarda y estamos quitando verde cosas dentro de los piedras. Miramos que un señor, un poco viejo, esta pasando en frente de la casa de nosotros, la casa en Leo, El Paso, TX. Tiene sed y pregunta a mi mamá si tiene agua, y no le hace si ella tiene miedo. Inmediatamente, mi mamá viene con una botella de agua y pregunta al señor si tiene hambre. Mi mamá dile al señor que venga y sientese a comer en la mesa. El señor dice que cuando terminar, quiere ayudar a nosotros con la yarda. Mi mamá dile bueno, pero ella también pregunta si necesita algo. Mi mamá se fui pa dentro de la casa, y cuando nosotros y el señor terminamos con el trabajo, mi mamá salio con unos paquetas de burritos, botellas de agua, un abrigo para la noche, y mas ropa. Ella lo puso el ropa en uno de los paquetas de escuela que ya no usamos. Y yo miro a mi mamá como mi abuelita – son iguales en la corazón, y recuerdo la noche de la señor que nosotros también no conocerlos y viene en la casa y come como es la familia de Dios. Otra vez como un tiempo pasado, todos dan Bendigas y que dile a señor que valla con Dios. No es el última vez que mi mamá hace esto para la gente que pasen por aquí.

The Immigrants Who Pass Through Here

We are in front of the house cleaning the yard and we are removing green things inside the stones. We look at a man, a little old, passing in front of our house, the house on Leo, El Paso, TX. He is thirsty and asks my mom if she has water, and she doesn't have to if she's scared. Immediately, my mom comes with a bottle of aqua and asks the lady man if he is hungry. My mom told the man to come and sit down to eat at the table. The man says that when he finishes, he wants to help us with the yard. My mom says good, but she also asks if he needs anything. My mom went inside the house, and when we and the gentleman finished work, my mom came out with some packets of burritos, bottles of water, a coat for the night, and more clothes. She put the clothes on one of the school packs we no longer wear. And I look at my mother as my grandmother – they are equal in heart, and remember the night of the man who we also did not know him and comes into the house and eats as is the family of God. Again as in a time passed, everyone gives Blessings and tells him to go with God. It's not the last time my mom does this for people who pass through here.

Los Limpiadoras para Ventanas

Estoy esperando que la luz cambia a verde y hay mucho trafico, cuando tres niños empieza limpiar la ventana de los carros - tres niños. Empieza sin promesa que la gente van a dar dinero. Pero, you tengo cambio cuando yo necessito salir de I-10 y pasa por la izquierda aqui en la calle Lee Trevino y siempre estaban los niños. Yo darlos dinero todo el tiempo. Un dia yo quiero preguntar cuantos anos tienen los tres, por que todo el tiempo los niños estaban aqui en la tarde. El niño dice que el tiene diez años, mi hermana once, y mi primo diez. Yo quiero preguntar mas, pero la luz ya cambio a verde. Qué lamentable. Un dia, los ninos nunca estaban alli otra vez.

Window Cleaners

I'm waiting for the light to turn green and there's a lot of traffic, when three kids start cleaning the car windows - three kids. It starts with no promise that people will give money. But, I have change when I need to get off I-10 and pass on the left here on Lee Trevino Street and there were always these children. I give them money all the time. One day I wanted to ask how old were the three, because all the time the children were here in the afternoon. The boy says he is ten, my sister eleven, and my cousin ten. I want to ask more, but the light has already changed to green. How unfortunate. One day, the kids were never there again.

How Do I Exist?

Cómo Exista?

School Culture / Cultura Escolar

Seventh grade at Ross Middle School seemed perfect until I became familiar with the culture at the start of school. Pushed against the lockers, four Mexican / American girls became my nightmare. “Tu no hablas español; tu es una guera que no serva para nada, una pendeja” said the girl in the middle, and she nailed me with a slap to the face. The teacher down the hall saw this girl’s brutal behavior and yelled toward the girls. They ran. The teacher asked me if I was okay. Sure I was. No I did not know their names. I did not know them at all, nor understood why they approached me in the manner they did. The teacher explained that they were a gang of girls that thought they were badder than they looked, and they picked out girls that looked Mexican / American but did not speak their language to make her life miserable. They were part of a group called La Raza. Next day, the same girls, the same name-calling, but a different scenario. Pushed once more against the lockers, I swung first saying, “No soy tu perro al que puedes patear,” which were the words my mom taught me overnight. The girls scattered after I hit the middle one in the face. I never saw them again, and I wondered why they had chosen me. How they knew I did not speak Spanish fluently. What gave me away? Of course! One of them was in my Spanish class. I switched classes. After that, I had someone who was from our Ft. Bliss group of kids walk with me to my locker. She was an African American girl. She was my best friend, Charlene.

The Culture of an Education

Maryland: I was only four in preschool when I experienced the idea of mainstreaming *language*, of removing *difference* from the *dominant* culture. My mother came to school and was told by my preschool teacher that I was not allowed to speak in Spanish to my dolls when I was playing, only English at school. Baumholder, Germany: You look Jewish - that brown curly hair and that noooooose (laughing) ... no I am Catholic, broke my nose. Slap! Push!! Pull!!! After school *bitch*. After school - Punch! The other two picked up their friend. Baumholder, Germany: We learned how to call names and curse in German, *dummkopf*, *scheisse* with the neighboring German children. I learned the name of my favorite dessert in German, *apfelstreusel* and introduced to *Haribo Goldbären* gummy bears. Ross School, El Paso, TX: Seventh grade brought out the truth about how I could not speak Spanish *fluently*, only broken *bits* and

pieces, to the girls who were the real deal, the *Chicanas* with the *fists* and *kicks* who laughed saying, *esta estúpida*, or *pinche culera*. The day came to fight back, *chingasos*. Ross School, El Paso, TX: eighth grade: the *Chicanos* grabbed the black boy, our friend from the *Base* and were going to rack him against monkey bars. The bus driver yelling as we unloaded from the bus in time to keep them, the *Chicanos*, from doing it twice. Fighting in the dusty playground, the *Base* kids and *Chicanos*. Ironically, the *Base* kids were different races, including Mexican - American mixed. Austin High School, El Paso, Tx.: Drill Team Meet, running to busses while rocks were thrown at all school busses, students, teachers, drill team instructors, bus drivers as *La Raza* climbed over the walls after spotting rivals and yelling. One was wounded and dropped off at hospital. Austin High School, El Paso, TX: My friend from the *Base* started dating a gang leader, but he or I could not protect her. They *caught* her in the bathroom. I walked in to see my *blond* friend on the

ground being *kicked* and her hair pulled and called a *puta*. I grabbed the first *Chicana* and face first into the sink and the other one went into the corner of the bathroom door. We ran out, away from *La Raza*. She moved to Florida broken - hearted.

My Brown Hair is Curly and in every stage of my life,

every moment in time,

I can relate what is
going on to how I wear my hair.

It is not about how nice it looks

but it is about how I identify
myself, my mood,

or the tone I will use that day.

I have very little control of its behavior.

Mi cabello castaño es rizado y en cada stage of my life,

en cada momento,

puedo relate to que
está pasando con how I wear my hair.

It is not about how nice it looks

sino de como me
identifico, my mood,

o el tono que usaré ese dia.

I have very little control de su

comportamiento.

Mi cabello castaño es rizado y en cada etapa de mi vida,

en cada momento,

puedo relacionar lo

que está pasando con la forma

en que uso mi cabello.

No se trata de lo

bonito que se vea

sino de cómo me identifico,

mi estado de ánimo o el tono

que usaré ese día.

Tengo muy poco

control de su comportamiento.

Call of Duty

an Army E7 shipped off to Korea for a year,
stationed in Camp Casey, a military base
in Dongducheon,
40 miles north of Seoul,
training Korean soldiers, so
one day U.S. troops could give it back,
so the Others could run it.

left his wife and three girls behind, but
called on that Autovon for 20 -30 minutes,
once a week, maybe every two weeks,
or whenever he could, so many called
he looked for mail from her on certain days,
the days they all gathered to hear
if their names were called.

one time he called to tell her he got
the package that flew 6500+ miles from
El Paso she had sent with

chocolate chip cookies & sugar
soft circus candy
Charms Blow Pops
Tootsie rolls
El Paso Times
Wrigley's gum
they even ate
the popcorn
used for packaging
and read the
newspaper crinkled
around the gifts.

and each time they talked
she could hear tears
as she relayed to him
passenger window fell inside
the panel of the red Chevy
took care of it through the insurance.

it snowed then froze pipes

the house flooded, drenched
family pics, old comic books,
took care of it by talking to the General's wife.

two drunk GIs came by her housing,
knocked on door, yelling, "Anna open the
door!" don't open she yells to girls,
took care of it by calling MPs.

do you know your cat, sleeps in your shoes?

"I'm okay. . . Me too."
"Miss you . . . Miss you too."
"Love you . . . Love you too."
"Next month I'll be home for 30 days."
"Yes, next month."
He swallows hard.

click . . .

Cuando mis padres
colgaron
el telefono,
mi mama y
las tres niñas
llora y llora
por que
el marido de
mi madre y
nuestro padre
esta lejos
de nosotros y
estaba en
Corea y
no sabiamos
cuando el venia
por que
el ejercito
podia darle
una extensión
por más tiempo,
Que lastima.

Bliss

It towered over her, the archaic structure in all its glory,
a Spanish tower to the right and its wings,
como una hacienda pero con paderes altas –
sin la ayuda.
a pretty school struggling to pacify the incoming.
She swallows the tension of registration day,
surrounded, however,
by a few comforting numbers.
She viewed the boy with the baggy pants
the gangster walk,
the Doberman,
and again, she saw the boy's stare that turned her head slightly,
hoping he did not notice her rejection.
She maneuvered an about face,
following her homies, entering her last school.
Those of Bliss would be her solitude,
so she bumped in closer to them,
not daring to test what she knew existed.
Peripheral looks only.

But, the war started that day.
He, one of their group,
crossed the street to join them,
interrupting the parade of low-riders,
and they forgot not, days later.
En serio . . . pedestrians first, no matter color or race?
Then another chained dog passes,
dragging another boy on the sidewalk,
the sidewalk that the last soldier marched on.
How many have gone by, she wondered,
and this time she is bravado,
scanning the horizon.
Another soldier passes, and she sees.
Each boy soldier was different but the same,
had the same walk,
the same fixed look,
and always un perro.
Those without dogs were in the parking lot,
those who were watching with the fixed stares,
their heads leaning a degree to the side
and a degree up.

And, the same routine our first day,

and the second,
and the boy soldiers carried and looked for the lamb,
surrounding him,
but she and her friends appeared,
the unarmed boys and girls of Bliss,
then and every day, walking together,
for weeks together in twos, threes,
staving off the inevitable show of weakness.
And the war continued . . .
as the girl soldiers snatched another,
pressing her cheek to the cold tile,
and she came seconds later;
it was only seconds,
only seconds,
seconds,
and she saw as they tore at her like vultures,
while she grabbed one,
introducing the face of the first
to the white sink,
and the second yanked her mane,
but she nailed the soldier's wrist with deep anger,
kicking wildly with an inner curse,
y los corbades se fue corriendo, llorando,
y no volvieron.
And she asked her friend why she left,
but her friend could not hold it any longer,
taking off, and
they found her -
alone.
Thus, student life struggled for days -
minds checked out,
tormented.
Finally, relief, and
uniforms patrolled.

She did not ask to come here.
She could not leave.
She had no say.
She was starting over.
Outside the confines of solidarity once again,
amongst a diverse group, a group of colors, of races...
fighting for that 4-wall stimulation.
How did they pick her out?
What mark did she and her friends carry?
What resentment weighed in the warriors' hearts?
Those of her group who spoke the language were not safe.

Those of her group who had half the blood were worse.
Total difference was the ultimate sacrifice.
They knew who she and her friends were,
though Bliss wore the sleeves of diversity.

Bliss was the group from the base,
from the other rival school,
the school she had been bussed to the year before.
She and her friends dared to walk in their hallways,
drive on their turf.
And, they lost soldiers to the other rival school,
and their soldiers estaban sufriendo ahora.
And no one thought of the children,
the teenagers.
The Sun City officials had moved the colored lines,
the lines that once kept the peace,
the lines that now dispersed the vulnerable.
The children,
teenagers,
left to fight for the actions of them,
fighting with weaponry that did not belong
en los manos de niños
against the “at risk” Bliss and others.

Creative Experiment – Kinds of Performance Objects I’ve Been the one I chose to do as a creative experiment was the following: Write your own “Kinds of Performance Objects I’ve Been” based on Civil’s work (which was based on Piper’s work) on page 186 of *Swallow the Fish*.

1. Fond du lac, Wisconsin – Before we went to Germany to be with my dad, my mother and I stayed with my grandparents. My grandfather took the stroller with me in it and took me to his favorite Pub, sat me on the pool table, fed me chips, and showed me off to his friends. I was cute with electrified hair, while my mom, my grandmother, aunts, and uncles looked for us everywhere. Found me eating chips.

2. Baltimore, Maryland – Dile a tu papa si quiere un taza de café – Dad, do you want a cup of coffee – Sure – Si mama. I am four.

3. Baltimore Maryland – Preschool teacher caught me talking in Spanish on the playground while I played by myself, lectured me, called my mom in for a conference, told me that I needed to learn English – Mom states I am bilingual – teacher says that Spanish is not permitted to speak at school. I was embarrassed and stopped speaking Spanish as I knew it.

4. I remember singing on stage with other kids, “All I want for Christmas (is my two front teeth), and I actually enjoyed it in third grade.

5. Baumholder, Germany – Playing marbles was my favorite thing to do at recess. I won the girl’s marble honorably, but she jumped on me and started hitting me, saying give it back, which she already had it in her hands when she was hitting me. It was a fair game.

6. Baumholder, Germany - Fifth grade teacher read *The Hobbit* out loud, and as told, I drew an image of a horse that caught her attention. I ended up helping draw the mural with other students for the play. She was kind, and students got to take turns bringing home the rabbit, then she had guinea pigs Buffy and Squeaky who we took turns taking them home too, but she gave them away at the end of the year. My parents said yes, and she gave them to me. She also sat with different students for lunch, me included.

7. I am tripped on the stairs by two bigger girls, but a teacher saw it and took us to the principal. The girls were mad and stopped me after school. They stopped me from getting in the car, I told them to move, and the middle girl hit me in the arm, so I

slapped her in the face and was about to slap the other girl. My mom came out of the car and was shocked. Though they started it, I still got in trouble.

8. Sixth grade races – Lost the 400 because I started too fast. Probably not race again is my mindset.

9. My first piano teacher was German, Fraulein is how I called her. She gave me her piano to practice on, so that I could continue piano lessons.

10. Start seventh grade at Ross school, El Paso, pushed against lockers surprisingly by a girl from a gang – te estoy hablando, Puta, que tienes, no hablas Español – not fluently – walks away laughing. Next day, same girl, same push – and pushed back – surprised and comes after me with two friends, but teacher intervenes. Principal's office. Next day, same girl, no push, no name – mean look.

11. Who wears white pants to school? Started my cycle, and a male friend, Bobby, from the Ft. Bliss Post walks up behind me and wraps his sweatshirt around me. How embarrassing. Went to the bathroom and changed into gym clothes.

12. Raised my hand to ask a question as instructed. Did he not see me? I am not done lecturing! Need help. A big fat F on my social studies test, and I studied as hard as I could.

13. We were living off post because my dad went to Korea, and at the time, the army did not allow dependents to stay on post. Had to go to Parkland Middle School.

14. Mis abuelitos Torres came to visit from Piedras Negras. I sat on the porch steps eating sardines and jalapenos on a francesito con mi abuelito, trying to speak the Spanish I lost so many years ago. He says to me, nescitas practicar. In his younger years, he used to work on a ship that went from Mexico to Portugal and back before he worked for the Post Office in Mexico.

15. Ran on the track during gym the 400 and 800 in eighth grade, I never looked back. Did not care who was in front of me or behind me. Just ran my race, and I won sometimes. No, sorry but I do not want to join the track team, coach.

16. Took piano lessons, and eventually the piano moves from the living room to one of the back rooms. Do you want me to teach you a move to protect you? If I teach it to you, you have to be able to stop me. No thank you. Stopped taking piano lessons.

17. Learned a little sign language with our English teacher at Parkland.

18. My Grandpa Parish in Wisconsin who spoiled Bobby's girls died in 1975.
19. I was sitting at the bowling alley where my father worked when I was thirteen eating a cheeseburger and fries. A young man in an Army uniform sat down with me and said are you here by yourself? You are too pretty to be by yourself. - I am thirteen, my dad is at the counter, and I will introduce you to him and tell him what you think of me. He left me there by myself.
20. Started JROTC in ninth grade and back at Ross school because my Dad is back from Korea – I actually liked the uniform. I felt special.
21. Entered ninth grade composition classroom – left it knowing a stringent way of writing compositions – five-paragraphs, last line of introductory paragraph is thesis statement, and first line of concluding paragraph is restatement of thesis – only three supporting paragraphs with a topic sentence for each.
22. Though I usually make good grades, I started making straight As.
23. I could not keep dates, facts, and names straight in history class. My youngest sister helped me memorize everything.
24. Started high school at Burgess High School, and still joined JROTC.
25. Started going to the teen club on Fort Bliss, where young people were supervised – dancing, pool table, foosball, cards, and even dance contests. Snacks could be bought.
26. Helped with house chores on Saturday, but my sisters would give me a hard time – made fun of me, said I was too bossy. But, we did our chores.
27. Rode my bike to Loretto Academy for driver's education.
28. Went to the teen club at Biggs Field, and when it was time to go, my mom offered Renee and her friend a ride home, but they said no – walked home without anyone knowing, were picked up and taken to the desert, raped, Renee was shot in the head, and her friend played dead. She testified in court against the arrested suspects. Renee had to go through therapy for the damage to her brain and functioning parts of her body, even talking. She improved.
29. Redistricted – Ft. Bliss kids not going back to Burgess. I am going to lose all of those friends I made.

30. Going to Austin High School – gangs circling the grounds with their dogs on registration day.
31. Loved going to Chico's Tacos on Dyer St. during lunch with my friends.
32. Joined choir, and I test as a second soprano and sing an Italian song for competition.
33. My friend Fuzzy dated a gang leader at school, goes to bathroom, and I meet her there to find two gang members hitting her – I grabbed one of the girls by the hair and slammed her head on the sink, and then turned on the other girl. We ran out. Fuzzy is not a fighter. She was a slender blonde and naive. Her family moved to Florida.
34. Memorized social studies answers in eleventh grade – accused of cheating by the teacher who was also a coach, told I had to take the test again without my book bag near my desk, had to sit in front of teacher's desk, use pen only. Okay. He gave me the test again after school next day with the questions in a different order – took the test, with nothing around me, sitting in front of him, and he graded the test, gave me my paper back, and said I could leave. A+ - left with waiting friend for drill team practice. Glad she waited for me in the hall.
35. Drill team practice, I left purse on wall, stole all my personal stuff including promise ring. Didn't marry him anyways.
36. I won! My junior year I was the JROTC Junior Princess for ROTC. Congratulations from everyone. I was so embarrassed.
37. My sisters and I flushed my dad's cigarettes down the toilet, so he would stop smoking. It was not a good idea. What were you thinking? Had to pay him back, and since I was the oldest and worked at Church's Chicken on Dyer St, I paid him for all of us.
38. Loved teen club so much that I was picked to be the next president of the teen club.
39. I won! In twelfth grade, I was taken into office by JROTC Instructor, "You only won by a point, so don't let it go to your head. You will work with Laura, since she is the runner-up. You're excused." That feeling of winning left. I was nominated to be the ROTC Queen.
40. Visit a home for the elderly with my church and was humbled by their need for visitors who play bingo and cards. Visited again, and again, and again.

41. Earned all of my credits early, so I do not have to go to the second semester. I am also seventeen when I go to commencement.

42. My SAT scores say that I am extremely strong in math in comparison to my English score.

The History not in Your Books, Mija

They took one district,

17 states —

California,

Nevada,

Arizona,

New Mexico,

Texas,

Colorado

and more,

three territories —

El Chamizal,

Alamo,

and one more,

She can't

remember

but the

Mexican

*and Americans
were supposed
to share
El Chamizal
but the Mexicans
no longer can
enter without papers
and history
is told from
the White man's
side only
but the Mexican
people are still
here everywhere
in the lands
that the
U.S. took.*

*And to this day, she still tells me this information again and again to
remind me that history has different perspectives.*

What Was I Made For Now?

Para Qué Fui Hecha Ahora?

Una Noche at “Mustang Sally’s Nightclub”

That night Michael and his sister Evelina bounced about on the full-sized bed giggling out mommy, mom, mommy, mom, and more mommies and moms. Throwing myself into an exorcist move of the body, I whisked around from the dresser mirror and became the tickle monster with one eye not lined yet with black eyeliner and lacking black mascara, and the other dark and lush, truly a rabid-looking creature to youngsters.

Again! Michael screamed in his soon-to-be six-year-old voice while Evelina’s dimples deepened with delight from the depths of a soon-to-be five-year-old, both bouncing up and down, sideways, or wherever their heads tilted their bodies. They were 15 months apart – Irish Twins, though they were not even close to being Irish. So, it continued for the next half hour while I breathed new life into my 24 year-old face with Color Girl products, and Maybelline mascara, staying away from Revlon, Estee Lauder and L’Oreal which were out of my budget. I looked in the mirror satisfied with my visual only to smear my mascara too soon after just applying it due to squeezing my eyelashes together while tickling and laughing because of the two little scoundrels continuing their game relentlessly. I returned to the mirror for repairs, only to hear my own mother yell from the other room that I would be late.

Quiet.

Stillness.

Michael and Evelina sat at the edge of the bed now waiting.

Again, I would miss tonight's bubble baths, brushing teeth and spitting more than half the bluish toothpaste out, bedtime stories, hugs and kisses that never end with just one or two or three, and prayers.

Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should not wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. I love mommy and daddy, grandpas and grandmas, and all our family. Amen.

I would miss them, and they, well they want to come with me to work.

“We can come because there is light outside,” says Michael.

“No, I work late, but I will see you when you wake up.”

I hug them at the edge of the crumpled up bed, hug and kiss, hug and kiss, then a tighter hug and kiss, squeeze me mommy, hug and kiss, hug and kiss, and eventually we were walking towards my mother in the kitchen, where she invited them to eat some cut-up Red Delicious apples. I left them smiling and talking with my mom, who smiled back at me.

“Be careful, Sharon,” and she hugs me goodbye and says *no te apures por los ninos*.

“I won’t mom. You two listen to grandma and go to bed when grandma says to go to bed.”

“Okay” crunch and another “Okay” crunch, crunch, crunch, their little chipmunk mouths devouring the juicy mazanas.

And, I leave at 3:20 pm to clock in on time for the 4 o’clock Happy Hour at Mustang Sally’s. Traffic can be unpredictable, since I travel on Highway 54, or Gateway Blvd. S. exiting onto Fred Wilson, which curves into Airport Rd. then left on Airway Blvd., veering to the right on Airway Blvd., then right onto Montana Ave. It’s a good 15 minutes driving the speed limit, but it is nothing when I am occupied by “I Wanna Dance with Somebody” by Whitney Houston, Madonna’s “Who’s That Girl,” Prince’s “U Got The Look,” or George Michael’s “I want your Sex.” I can jam to “Walk Like an Egyptian” by the Bangles as well on the way, and I am there. I head through the drive-thru of Jack in the Box to order two crispy egg rolls before I cross the

street to the nightclub. I cannot eat from the buffet at Mustang's; it gets old, smells the same, and no – no more.

No thank you.

Besides, I inhale them before I arrive in the parking lot of my work, and nobody knows I betrayed our lovely menu. I arrive in time to see my bartender Susan entering with me. She and I work so well together that I do not want to work on the nights she is not there.

“Hi Susan. Ready?”

“Hi, I am ready for another night of howlers. Are you?”

“Yes, but this time . . .”

“This time you yell for me or Gus or someone near you, you hear?”

“Yes, I hear you.”

Last night, Thursday, we had more people than usual for a Thursday during Happy Hour. I was serving in a different section next to the dance floor, when I walked by a man in dress pants and a white shirt, with his suit jacket on the back of the chair, sitting in one of the high stools. He called me over to order a Budweiser. I turned to walk away, and I felt what I had thought was a brush of air across my butt. I kept walking, flushed and embarrassed, and not knowing if it was what I thought.

Did he touch my butt?

Did I imagine that quick hand?

The artful swiftness of something practiced left me walking forward, too shy to look back but disturbed enough to talk to Susan about it. I did not look back, but Susan had no trouble looking around me at the man she knew well.

“Jerry did it,” Susan said to me. “Take him his beer, but tell John about it first.”

Susan had quickly called over John, and she quickly explained what Jerry had done.

“I will take care of it,” John told us. He stayed back while I took Jerry his beer, but I could feel the stares behind me as I strolled over to where Jerry sat. He reached into his pocket for a five, and I gave his change, but not before he put his arm around me and started to pull me closer. I felt someone pull Jerry’s hand off me, and I stepped back. I was instructed to give the customer his money back and take the beer back to Susan. John escorted the not-so-gentleman dressed in a gray suit to the door where Gus, our manager stood. They took his name and told him he was no longer welcomed there.

I was happy he was removed from the club, but I feared he might return, so when I left, I had to leave with an escort according to the rules of the club when someone touches a waitress inappropriately. I later found out that the man was reported to the police.

I joined Susan now at my regular section. It was four steps up from the main floor, and since the bar circles around, open to everyone on all sides, orders were taken from the waitresses from the cash register areas. Sure, someone could order from Susan directly, but not usually.

We closed at two and were out by 2:45 am. I woke up to four little feet sticking out above my outstretched body on the couch where I lay. They had breakfast between their fingers, watching cartoons, *Scooby-Doo*, *Where Are You*, giggling and laughing, as if the night had never been broken up by my work. I just lay there content to have those two wiggling figures, content to sit on top of me, while I slept some more.

The Short Stint

My boss at Keptel Southwest told me one afternoon something, three months into my job, and this something was all I could hear over and over again, even after I went home. He told me to come into his office after everyone was getting ready to leave. He casually explained that I had to go with him to New Jersey.

“What?”

I knew I had to go to the border the day we had to witness how the dogs were trained to uncover drugs in the products we received from Mexico.

I had to go to the plant in Mexico to meet some of the factory workers and plant managers.

“New Jersey. . .” his words haphazardly reached my ears. “No sir, I can’t. I have a family, a husband, and I was never told I had to travel with you to another state.”

“It is in your best interest that you do this with me for the company” his words rolled off his tongue, stinging the air that arrived at my ears.

“I was never told I had to do such a thing with you when I was hired.”

“It will do you good to get away for a week.” He smiled at me, stared at me with those dark brown eyes, looking me over once, twice, penetrating my comfort zone.

“I’m sorry, but I will not go with you anywhere.”

“Your job rides on the fact that you need to go with me to New Jersey on company business. It’s in your best interest.”

And, I understood.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t, and I won’t.”

“Then, I will have to let you go.”

It was a little after 5 pm.

I sat there for a moment and shuddered. Then, I said, “I will go then.”

He stood up, rolled his eyes when looking at me, and said, “Your choice.”

With that, I left.

When my husband picked me up, I explained what had happened, and I had to hold my husband back from going inside and telling off my boss. All I heard on our way home was a choice of words from my husband, “Pinche culero, tiene mucho nervio!” So much more came from his mouth - so much more.

This Place / Este Lugar

My husband, I, and our three kids – Michael (13), JD (13), and Evelina (12) – we all moved to Indiana in 1994. We are a brady bunch family. Oscar had JD, and I had Michael and Evelina, but Michael was the oldest by three months, and Evelina was the youngest by a year. We traveled with our pets: four full grown dogs – the chow, the mother of two chow-mixed-cocker spaniel dogs, and one cocker spaniel; two full grown cats and three kittens; two goldfish; and two parakeets.

Y lloré el primer año que estuvimos aquí en este lugar. Quería volver a mi casa. Hogar donde las montañas están detrás de nosotros y el desierto era tu patio trasero. Y la comida? Donde esta el restaurante Chico's Tacos? Yo quiero sopapillas! Este lugar, ESTE lugar, ESTE LUGAR – esto no es casa, esta no es mi casa. Este lugar no me serve para mi.

A Drive / Una Vuelta

After one month in Indiana,
we took a drive
on I-70 into Ohio
to be pulled over by a cop
who I saw clearly look into
our custom van at my Mexican
husband only to have
my husband tell me to
remain calm and quiet while
the cop said, “you stepped
on the white line, oh you’re eating,”
he says jokingly, and asked is this
your van and my husband said
yes it is but then the cop
came to my side, hung over my
door, while looking further
into our van then
left to call another cop
and dog cop to search
for drugs in case we were
smuggling in a brand
new van but we were
clean so we turned around
and decided to not take
the drive.

The Interview / La Entrevista

I went to an interview recommended by the vice-president of our bank, First Bank Richmond, where we purchased our house when we first arrived in town. I showed up wearing a skirt and jacket for the occasion purchased from the Goodwill. It was actually very pretty. However, overdressed was I. Three ladies came into the room where I sat at the elongated table. They all smiled like they really hated me. The lady in charge started off with “Wow, you have a lot of hair!” My hair was in a bun for this meeting, but I could see why they thought I had a lot of hair, considering all three had thin coats topping their heads. It was not a question, so I did not answer but smiled. Then the woman proceeded to talk, “You really are not our type to work in our office.” I politely said, “Excuse me” and proceeded to lift myself out of my chair. The lady asked me, “Where are you going?” I responded with, “You just told me I was not your type, so I am leaving. Have a good day ladies.” All three dropped their mouths open like a heavy weight hung on their bottom lip and looked at me as if I had done something, ummmmm, outrageous. As I continued my stride, the women were mumbling and jumbling, but I could not hear them. Outside, I saw the sunshine and soaked it up. Gracias a Dios no seguí sentada.

What's in a Word? / Qué hay en una Palabra?

Waitressed at
Ponderosa Steakhouse,
when behind me
there was a group
yelling for someone.

They continued to call
for someone.
continued to yell for
someone.
over, and over,
laughing all the
while.

I kept waiting on
my tables,
taking drink orders,
picking up plates,
and greeting customers.

then the whistle,
the whistle,
a long whistle.

looking up,
everyone looking up,

pointing at me,
waving me over.

“Hey...Maria,
come here,
we’ve been waiting
for you.”

Language / Idioma

Proud parent at the Parent/Teacher Conferences until I ran into the Spanish teacher. This blonde haired / blue eyed lady asked me what I did, and I told her I was attending IU East and that I was a English major. It must have been hard for you to learn English she directed at me and then proceeded to tell me that I speak so well. No it was not, why I responded. Having to speak Spanish at home and then learn English is hard she said. So you think I speak Spanish fluently? English was one of my first languages I told her and continued with And you are educated culturally? I guess my appearance spoke loudly to her – dark brown hair, dark brown eyes, 5’2” – Spanish type for sure. Still, the assumption was unspoken.

Service / Servicio

My husband and I went to this restaurant in Richmond called Main Street Diner. It was not our first time, but it would be our last. We sat at the counter on the stools, not expecting to be served right away because that is the way it was in this restaurant. However, this day was different. We waited, and waited, and waited. The lady behind the counter served the white gentleman to the right of us and took his order. Then, the lady went even further to the right of the man that showed up after the white gentleman to the right of us did who had showed up after us as well. Then, the white waiter woman stood behind the counter taking his order as well. However, the woman then served the man to the left side of us and took his order. We sat there waiting for the woman to ask us for our drinks next, but she left us and went to serve the woman and man that showed up after the man did to the left of us after the man did further down to the right of us after the man to the right of us did. My husband told me, "Vamanos!" The lady stopped in front of us and said, "I was getting to you!" and my husband said, "Sure!" and my husband turned and said to me, "Let's go, we are not welcomed here." We never looked back at anyone's reaction. My husband does not speak Spanish to anyone because he does not want people to not understand him. He was clear that day to the woman.

Where Are We Going? A Dónde Vamos?

My husband came home and told me a story about one of his drivers. My husband told his truck driver that he was going on vacation to New Mexico. His driver then asked him how long does it take you to get back. My husband said what do you mean? The driver then said to him that it must be hard to come back across to the United States. My husband paused, but then responded with, "New Mexico is a state in the United States. I have no problem coming back, since I am in the United States, and I am an American." My husband then said to me, "La gente simplemente no entiende y no concocen sus estados." (People simply do not understand and do not know their states.)

I thought about this for a few days and wondered if people could be that ignorant, but then I had the same question come back to me when I told a friend we were going to New Mexico. Nora asked if it was hard for us to go across and come back to the United States. Yo no lo podía creer!

Palabras y Dichos

My mom would warn me about boys with words of wisdom such as *Cuida tu gallina que mi gallo anda suelto* (Take care of your hen because my rooster is on the loose.). She wanted me to know that was exactly what she would do.

As I grew up, my mom would tell me what her grandmother Petra Aldaco Martineli, would tell her *que un árbol que crece torsido nunca su rama endereza y se hace naturalesa* (A tree that grows crooked never straightens its branch and becomes natural). My mom told this to me many times, and would explain that her grandma would say that to her about children that would continue to get into trouble would have a hard time straightening out.

When I first met my husband in 1988, he threw a word at me, *Cabronsita*, and all I heard was *Cabron* (dumbass), remembering what it meant in school before I met him – a fighting word. His addition of “sita” needed explaining. He explained that he meant it affectionately. Really?

My husband’s father would always tell my husband when he was young, *Bañados, resudados, y cortados de pelo, siempre Dios se los lleva a cielo* (Bathed, sweaty, and haircut, God always takes them to heaven). For the longest time, he did not know why he said this, but when he was older, he did.

Whether in my mom’s house or my husband’s house, we both heard these words many times, *Pansa llena, corazón contenta* (Full belly, happy heart). While searching Google though, *pansa* was substituted with *barriga* and *vientre* and *contenta* with *feliz*. I like it the way we grew up knowing.

Also because of grandma, my mom would always tell me *el que nunca tiene y llega a tener loco se quiere volver* (he who never has and comes to have wants to go crazy). In other words, someone who suddenly has something shouldn’t go crazy when they have it. She would follow with *guarda tu dinero* (save your money).

After my father passed in January of 2019, my husband and I spent a lot of time helping my mother. We were going to Walmart, and she asked us to

pick up tortillas de *panocha*. We both looked at my mom with mouths wide open, and she looked at us like what is wrong with you two. Finally, we explained that the word meant a woman's private part, and she said otherwise. It did not mean that, and she said it meant wheat – she wanted us to buy wheat tortillas. I wondered if living in El Paso and Mesilla too long skewed our thoughts, since she had actually lived in Piedras Negras before marrying my Dad, and she spoke proper and was a teacher in Mexico.

Whenever I say something that is a little off, perhaps even silly, my husband will tell me sometimes, *México ven por tu gente* (Mexico come for your people.). He might even add the word *pronto* (promptly; quickly). He was also a little dramatic about it by dragging out the word *Méééé...xiiii...co*.

Depending on who he was talking to, my husband would tell our children when they did something really stupid, *por pendejo* (a) (for stupidity or for being stupid). After a bit, all he would have to say after a while was “*Por. .*” and they would finish it with *pendejo* (a). However, it was never meant as hurtful, and he could be hugging them because whatever happened might have physically hurt. It was meant to soften the moment.

Death by Economy: Business Obituary

Muerte por Economía: Obituario de Negocios

La vida en este pueblo estaba creciendo
así fue la historia en 1994.

Richmond, the town with a Depot District
and timeless jazz, three colleges,
the town that borders Ohio, which
drivers named the communist state.
Drivers heading east delayed their
journey, delayed entering
that buckeye state, swerved onto
the off ramp of 156A
for a break at Cracker Barrel
or the Walmart parking lot -
perhaps reaching their destination.

Destino, Richmond, In!
Extra, extra, read all about it!
está creciendo nos dijeron
arriving in 1994, 39675
according to the Census Bureau,
a Google Search told us.
Left jobs, exit schools,
bye friends, hello friends,
enter schools, found jobs.
Start over.

Poof! Aluminum plant disappears in 1997,
Swayne, Robinson, and Company,
a family business of iron and
aluminum casting – bankruptcy
stated in a Wikipedia search,
not reliable, search again.

Poof! The largest plant, Visteon
Corp, a Ford Co., located in
Connersville, largest employer
of many folks from many towns,
Wayne County and more,
closed 2007, releasing the final 900,
writes Tom Murphy of the Associated Press,
reported in Manufacturing Press,
or [https://www.manufacturing.net/
operations/news/13060823/visteon-closing-
indiana-autoparts-plant-900-to-lose-jobs](https://www.manufacturing.net/operations/news/13060823/visteon-closing-indiana-autoparts-plant-900-to-lose-jobs).
Student reduction – all surrounding schools,
including place of employment,
Hagerstown Jr.-Sr. H. S.,
30 minutes from home.
loss of students, loss of taxes.

Poof! Sears evacuated in 2013 as reported in the
Pal-Item, the local newspaper stated on its
online site [https://www.pal-item.com/story/
news/local/2018/12/10/richmond-mall-owner-](https://www.pal-item.com/story/news/local/2018/12/10/richmond-mall-owner-)

final-stages-deal-new-tenant-sears-space
/2262691002/.

A large mall loss and

Uno de nuestros hijos trabajó allí un poco,
un tipo de llantas en el area de la bahia en 2001.

No more Craftsman sighs husband,
no more appliance sales, last bought
Kenmore Conventional oven.

Poof! Trinity Christian Gifts and Books
sold in 2016, sold and rebought and
suddenly closed one day.

Have pictures framed by
them, a family business

Joe and Marcie Chamness since 1973,
then Amy Holliday bought it reports
Millicent Martin Emery

<https://www.pal-item.com/story/>

money/2016/02/21/new-owner-buys
-gift-book-store/80524524/

then gone from 4623 National Rd E,
Richmond, In. Those framed pictures
line one side of our 40 and an
eighth inch hallway, the hallway
where someone first enters.

Poof! Jason Truit writes about Hastings Entertainment
closing in 2016 sited at <https://www.pal-item.com>.

com/story/money/business/2016/07/21/
hastings-stores-closing-including-
richmonds/87382744/.

Not mentioned - MALL closures:

Poof! Garfield's Restaurant & Pub, ate here

Poof! The Ice Cream Parlor, a regular

Poof! Rogers Jewelers, bigger wedding rings

Poof! Hallmark Store, everyday nostalgia

Poof! Bookstore, never missed if in mall

Poof! Kay's Jewelers, never bought

Poof! Kmart closed on the west side of town

in November of 2019. Long gone are

los días de compras antes

antes de recoger a los nietos,

no más conejitos baratos

no más libros para colear de dólares,

atrás quedaron los trajes de diez dólares,

no mas ofertas especiales de luz azu,

un hábito roto.

Poof! Joy Ann's Cake Shop in old downtown of

Richmond shut its doors - conveyed

once again by Jason Truitt

in the Palladium-Item sited in

<https://www.pal-item.com/story/news/>

local/2019/04/18/downtown-icon-joy-

ann-cake-shop-close-good-
saturday/3510203002/

El lugar donde nos sentamos,
los nietos y yo,
en el banco
a tomar leche
comer un donut
estás desocupado

La ciudad esta creciendo.
2017, Census Bureau shows
35,455 population and
está creciendo.
Only 4,220 less,
possibly minus 2.



For All It's Worth...Family
Por Todo Lo Que Vale...Familia

Our Last Supper Photo

It would not exist if I had not asked, as I always do, the waiter to take a picture of our family as it existed then on that New Hampshire evening. It matters, the date that is, since it was the night before Thanksgiving, Wednesday, Nov. 21, 2018. The restaurant in the photo is one that my sisters insisted that we go to, that we have to try the food, that we would like it. Puerto Vallarta Mexican Grill did not disappoint. Still, the table was a mess, not necessarily that posed, cleaned up, fresh feeling kind of photograph with everyone in attire that is fitting for those family photos like that one I remember taking as a teenager at that photo studio in Dillard's in El Paso, TX. Instead, our clothing is comfortable and reflective of the weather's crisp cold. As the night waned, everyone had indulged into a position of relaxation imposed upon us by the abundance of food consumed.

Everyone was just picking here and there, since the food sat in front of us, which is not noticeable because of the lack of forward motion that reaches for another chip to dip in the guacamole, as well as the return of the dipped chip to one's mouth. Everyone will feast again on Thanksgiving despite the evidence of indulgence in this photo. While there is a warm hue in this photograph that is comforting to the eye, the atmosphere that night was a quiet content that we were able to gather as the nucleus we once were with our father being the oldest at 78, ready to turn 79 on New Year's Eve, and our mother being 76. What is not

detected is that my mother still works and owns her own beauty shop in New York, my sister is a Special Education Teacher/ Case Manager in New Hampshire, her husband works for the City of New Hampshire, I am an English / Journalism adjunct at Indiana University East and at Ivy Tech Community College, my husband runs his own business as a Transportation Sales Agent in the trucking industry, my dad is retired from the Army and retired again as an Electrical foreman from the South Nassau Communities Hospital in New York, and my youngest sister is a Nurse in New Hampshire.

What is also not mentioned in this photo is that I am the oldest. What is not seen is the hardship of not being able to visit each other due to distances and work. This picture does not account for the distance my husband and I traveled from Richmond, Indiana, to Long Beach, New York, rested in between, then drove to New Hampshire to gather for this 2018 turkey day. We were late in arriving due to the incorrect information I was telling my husband that night given to me by my phone's GPS. However, the restaurant was about a six-minute drive from my sister's house, so we freshened up, waited to be seated, and the rest is history as I have recounted. The photo was taken at 5:33 pm that evening, which I would not have known if not for this wonderfully equipped iPhone that logs the time of photos but did not point us in the right direction earlier that day. Our last supper photo is a reminder of many last suppers.

For in this photo, we had known since September of 2018 that our dad had Stage IV Cancer and fought that battle until he passed on January 23, 2019. The mass and funeral were held on January 28, 2019, which was my husband's fifty-ninth birthday. The following day on January 29, my husband headed to the hospital due to a kidney stone, staying overnight in the same hospital that my dad worked in and passed away in. Luckily, my husband passed it the next day, an hour before surgery. So, this supper is a reminder of many passing moments. It is a reminder of the many photos taken at Thanksgiving, at New Year's Eve, at my father's wake, and at the Calverton National Cemetery. It is also a reminder of the many suppers that will exist without him. This photo turned into four canvases, but I had to Photoshop the glare on my sister's glasses before I could share it.

Those four canvases exist in Indiana, New Hampshire, and New York, and the photo is etched into my mind, especially since a Christmas tree stands to the right, reminding me, us, of all the holidays we will celebrate without my father saying "Bah Humbug," as was his habit to tease. With the holidays upon us, it is ironic that we will not celebrate due to COVID 19 as we did in the photo taken by our waiter at 5:33 pm at Puerto Vallarte Mexican Grill restaurant on Wednesday, Nov. 21, 2018. Travel is discouraged during the holidays by the experts, and we are all separated by an enemy that knows no boundaries. Yet, we can reminisce about our last supper together through a photograph that has become a wonderful

memory and a reminder of what is missing in our lives, never to return. As we live today in this pandemic with the loss of our normal everyday activities, normalcy also takes flight when one loses a family member. We restructured. Normalcy took on a new façade, leaving the photograph to be the only witness of another time when more than six could gather. This was truly our very last supper together, nuestra última cena . . .



juntos.

A Privilege Un Privilegio

first time in the
courthouse
that day, the day
we stood in line
waiting,
waiting our turn
in a conservative state,
a conservative state of mind.

we stood as
Americans
state of mind,
an American state of mind.
we stood amongst
many not like us,
however,
siendo brondeador,
pelo oscuro, y
ojos cafés.

finally, the only
friendly facades
gave us a ticket.
si tan solo no nos
hubiésemos,

no nos perdimos
las otras veces en
la iglesia,
con las señoras y
señores mayores,
much kinder people.

before our turn,
the crowd was silent,
if eyes could have forced us
but we were resolute
to take advantage
of our time on the 26th
on the Tuesday next after
the first Monday in
the month, November.

Ese día, nosotros votamos y tomamos
Fotos en las medias y la casa.



Esta historia es una que necesitas leer.
Es una historia para los libros
y yo escribirlo por que tienes Español
que yo escribí sin ayuda de mi mama
y mi esposo. Es una historia de la verdad.
Lo escuché muchas veces – muchisimas, y
es una historia de mi memoria.
-Sharon A. Lucero-

The Boy and his Jefito

He talked about the boy who could not sit still, telling his captivated audience that everywhere the boy went, he had to be involved with whatever he saw was going on around him. He had to know, to figure out what was happening in front of him, throw himself into the mix, and how the boy always wanted to be with his father.

Being a contract worker in business for himself, his father woke his son up early, and together they would head out to the fields in the work truck to load gunny sacks with onions onto the flatbed of the truck. Roughly 500 hundred sacks would be collected most days, and so many times his father told his son “No, Oscar, no te puedes bajar de la troca. Te puedes lastimar.”

“Pero, el nino se movia en el asiento, como que tenia pulgas en los pantalones” his father would explain.

While his father drove the truck slowly along, the workers collected the gunny sacks of onions and placed them on the bed of the truck. He was constantly looking in the mirror on the driver’s side. His father knew where his son was when he heard the door slam. He had jumped out and was helping place onions onto the flatbed. His father could not stop until they had reached the end of that row. When they arrived, his father would say to Oscar, “No te puedes bajar de la

troca. No puedes levantar las cebollas que se calleron del costal de los cargadores y ponerlas en la plataforma del camion. Estas muy cercas de las llantas de camion. Me da miedo que te trampe.” They would start again down the next row, and before his father knew it, the squirming boy threw himself off the running board and onto the dirt, slamming the door behind him. He didn’t even make it halfway down the field this time. He became the youngest worker at five.

Staying at home with his sisters and mom? No way! “Por favor, Papa! Dejame ir con tigo” as the boy followed him around after a dinner of his mom’s famous rolled tacos, shredded cheese on top and frijolitos. “Yo quiero trabajar con tigo! Por favor Papa!”

“Te voy a levantar temprano en la mañana para que vengas con migo!”

“Te quiero mucho papa. Gracias papa.”

They were up in the morning early, around 5 am when it was still dark. After his dad finished his bowl of oatmeal, they were on their way to the field, and the boy slept all the way. The boy was too tired to eat, so his mom gave him some pan dulce to eat when he was ready. They were driving up the first row as he finished the pan de huevo and drank his milk. He sat in his seat as he promised his dad. The boy wanted to help like he told his dad the night before though and started to move. Then he felt the handle and pushed down, pushing the door behind him when he stepped onto the runner of the truck. He jumped off the truck with his hands in the air.

“Hay cabron!” One of the cargadores said. “Mira este nino! Se bajo de la troca!”

“Ándale Oscar, mirame, asi!” and he tossed the onion onto the truck and another said, “No, asi Oscar,” and he threw it underhanded. The cargadores were

chuckling as they watched him carefully place the fallen onions onto the flatbed. But, the onions did not roll back.

“Watchate, eres buen trabajador!” and they laughed some more at his smallness and bragged about the good little worker Daniel’s son was.

His father then talked about the boy who drove without a license at thirteen. That same work truck broke down on the side of the road one day, and they had to leave it right where it was until the next day.

They were on their way back from Canutillo with a load of onions, and their truck broke down. His father took the tire off the rim with help from his son, and they got a ride to town to get his father’s pickup. They took the tire to fix it and then drove to the spot where they had left the truck. The truck they drove back in had a camper, so they spent the night there until the morning. Early in the morning, his father put the tire on the rim, and told his son, “Tienes que manejar la troca, y yo tengo que manejar el camion.” As they were coming up to Stahmann farms, there was a roadblock, and when his father pulled forward, he told the state policemen that they might as well give him a ticket because his son was driving the truck behind him. He explained, “The truck I am in broke down last night, and we had to leave it on the side of the road.” One of the state policemen came up to the other and said, “That’s right, I saw that truck on the side of the road last night.” The first state policeman said, “Go ahead.” His father drove forward and saw that they stopped Oscar.” Later, his son told him that they asked how old he was, and he said thirteen. One of the cops told him to hurry up and catch up with his father. Oscar told me he was nervous, but he put it in drive as soon as they told him to catch up to his father. His father doesn’t remember when he learned to drive, but that was the first time he drove on an open road.

The night before and thirty miles from home, the truck's lugnuts came loose and messed up the rim. Knowing they would have a hard time changing it as the sun was starting to go down, they had to quickly remove the lug nuts and the wheel, and someone pulled over to take them into town. Did they just hitch a ride? Yes, and after hearing his dad's story, Oscar's mom sent them out with some burritos. El Jefito said they could not sit and eat and leave the truck alone, unprotected, so they left with blankets and pillows for the back of the truck with the camper shell and a bag of mom's cookies and refilled drinks. They stopped at a big truck store, bought the parts they needed, and left for Canutillo. When they arrived, my dad sat with him on the tailgate, talking about the events of the day.

"Que curioso que estamos asi juntos en lado de la carretera, comiendo galletas con agua. Que bueno hijo tenemos, que buen trabajador te has hecho." He paused then "Ya vamanos a dormir." His dad gave Oscar a hug and kissed him on the cheek. "Manana, vas a manejar la trocke como manejas en el rancho. No te apures; todo va estar bien. Buenas noches, mijo."

"Te quiero mucho papa!" and the boy laid there, his eyes blurring as he thought about what his dad said. His heart was calm after some time, and he turned and peered out the camper shell window at all the nightlights, the big dipper in sight.

In the morning, he was fired up to be driving on the road behind his dad. But, he could see them coming up, the blue and red lights, a road block, and Oscar could see his dad talking. The boy's body stiffened as he approached the state policemen. His heart stopped as he looked at them.

How old are you?"

"Thirteen sir."

"Hurry up and catch up with your dad."

“Yes sir.” and he had it in drive as quick as he said to catch up with his dad.

He stopped then as he looked at his three grown children, his wife, grandchildren, and many others sitting and standing around his father’s table listening to the story that Oscar told – that his father told so many times to us all these years. Oscar said, “I am sixty-two years old, and I still can’t sit still, Dad.” He bowed his head as he looked at the picture of his dad sitting on the passenger side of the truck, a boy standing next to his dad and two of the cargadores standing next to the boy on the other side of him – all three shirtless. The boy was ten then. All four wore a brown tan collected while working on the field – a laborer’s rite of passage. Oscar closed his eyes, so he could see his 93-year-old dad again in his mind, saying, “Jefito, que Dios te Bendiga.” Then, they left for his father’s funeral.



The Manicure / La Manicura

The sun showered through the window,
dispersing those little dust things in the narrow
beam of light. It was a good day, though
she lay there with her hands folded over her chest,
and it was a day of good, a day of silent gossip.
My mom sat on the left side, and I was on the right.
Sandy smiled at both of us, and as I took her
weakened hand, she laughed a small silent type of laugh
while looking down at her beautifully long fingers,
a gift from God. I started the manicure that she awaited.
I cleaned her right hand with a hot, aloe-smelling,
soothing cloth, and she closed her eyes for a moment
as the warmth wrapped her up in glory. I clipped, swayed
the nail file back and forth, back and forth, then used an
orange stick to clean under her nails, while listening
to my mom and Sandy talk so softly that it almost hurt
my ears to stretch and listen. They were right there, but
I am not a professional to give someone a manicure and
hear what is being said. They spoke about
what to wear for the funeral, her funeral, Sandy's funeral,
and I could hardly bare the quiet talk. Sandy said "I like
the dress, the one that is long, with satin – cottony - the
multicolored one" and my mom said "I know which one."
My mother's eyes were moist and my sister held my
mom's hand with the other loose hand that I had not yet
started on. My mind fell into another world, thinking
about what we assumed was going to come so

much later, what was going to hopefully last a little longer.

I continued on the right hand,

clipped,

swayed the nail file back and forth,

back and forth,

then used the orange stick.

A soft “Ouch” came out of my sister’s mouth,

and I looked up to see Sandy smiling at me, saying

I had gone too deep on that one. I said “I’m sorry” but

she laughed and asked where was I but I could not say.

I laughed with her and squeezed her hand with the hot,

aloe-smelling, soothing cloth and Sandy once again

experienced a glorified warmth and let out a hmmmmmmm,

she laid there with her eyes closed, her bohemian

head wrap covering her few sprigs of hair, the sun

shining down on the top of her head.

Mi hermana menor, hermana linda, por qué

tuvo que pasar? Tan joven a los 57 años. Mis

recuerdos de ti son como si estuvieras aqui

hoy y te estoy haciendo una

manicura. Dios lo bendiga, Sandy.



-----Additional Types of Poems/Prose-----

Villanelle: Our Last Café Dear

(for my mother and father)

Brown and blue eyes share inner thoughts and fear

That September day at seven a. m.

Folgers drip, drip, drip our last café dear.

Peel back the skin and life disappear,

Stage four is comfortably setting within.

R6. Brown and blue eyes share inner thoughts and fear.

Clint Eastwood smoke will no longer appear,

Only novelas now sound in her hem.

Folgers drip, drip, drip our last café dear.

No young soul be burdened or forced to hear,

Yet he, she watched, hair fallen, shaved by them.

Brown and blue eyes share inner thoughts and fear.

Curled up on the couch, one lost lonely tear,

He laid his hand on her uneven feme.

Folgers drip, drip, drip our last café dear.

“I’m dying, I’m dying” he calls out severe,

Hand in hand, mom gently holds onto him.

Brown and blue eyes share inner thoughts and fear.

Folgers drip, drip, drip our last café dear.

Un tiempo pasado . . . en Inglés . . .

The Burnt Wick

shell-pink,
turquoise blue,
lime-green
flowers adorn white box.
opening it,
the pink lining is
scrumptiously smooth,
oval mirror upright
remains unbroken
and attached to the
pinkalicious liner.

lifting the n h s
candle surrounded
by crepe paper where
white solid candle slid
into the hole holding
with a burnt wick from
cuatro décadas y siete
when lit candle
with a smooth
grooves running vertically
pointed down another
path of another life
as the candle unveils

J R O T C teen.

handbook of yesterday

whispering unconsciously

those words of yesteryear slip into time when the expert shooter award comes into view and lips spit out the name of an

A1 semiautomatic rifle

was shot for

the expert shooter –

a metallic award,

black nameplate

with a last name,

bars of ribbons,

rank,

drill team pin

left right left right left right

and her head

sways to the beat,

moving in tempo

until

TEAM HALT!

parade rest and

straight backs

salute the captain.

feelings of what if . . .

what if

What if she had taken the path to Roswell with a scholarship in hand?

What if she had taken the scholarship and lived among all those men?

What if she had lived among all those men and became a statistic?

What if she had joined all those statistics of raped women among all those men?

What if she had become one of them?

What if . . .

did someone hear
those tense thoughts?
vulgar irrational thinking
that slipped onto her
flushed face,
into her moist brown eyes,
leaving guilt
to rise triumphant?

she loves her family
what is she thinking?

shuffling memories back in,
drill team pin, rank, bars of ribbons, nameplate, expert shooter, handbook,
then the dove white candle
with smooth
grooves running
vertically up to
the burnt wick.

**En Nueva York, donde ahora
mi mama vive sola,
todavía me encanta caminar
por la playa y coleccionar
conchas marinas.**

-Sharon A. Lucero-

Long Beach Collector in New York

Walking onto the boardwalk
and taking the three turns down
to the beach for whole shells
under the clouded moonlight,
as barges rest at sea,

still shadows gathered sit in chairs
pointed towards a dark low tide

Those who share the cool of the night
are reminded of the waves with its
thrashing against sand and rock
carry the lengthening light from the moon,
guiding a path on seawater to ships

walking straightens out having reached the
shoreline's edge where search for whole begins

Prizes from the undertow appear and
disappear—finding the complete
scallop or whelk or quahog clam outer
shell is not easily done after life
left its smoother inside—

a slimy substance once inhabited or
mussels inside once anchored to rocks

But, a whole deserted quahog shell
wedged between the rocks is pulled
out and honored by the hands of a
seashell collector—an indispensable
treasure.

composed of calcium and an itty bit of protein
the tiniest exoskeleton captures the eye

In the hands of the daughter who
never stops visiting, and the husband

who does not mind carrying her
miniscule or grandest finds

he watches her explore, bending towards
the sand for a possible spiral remain

broken it is, so many tossed around—
shapes distorted; crabs lie in pieces

The sea is relentless to all walk of life
and the sign to not climb the jetties
pointed out by the other turns the
hunters away: they make plans to
return—the morning next

to hunt for the heart of a seashell collector



Mask Up! / Enmascarar

On our way up to Ruidoso, NM, we stopped at a restaurant in Tularosa, only to be reminded to wear our masks. We had them on.



En nuestro camino hacia Ruidoso, nos detuvimos en un restaurante en Tularosa, solo para que nos recordaran que usáramos nuestras máscaras. Los teníamos puestos.

Eco-Poetic Poem in English and Spanish
(This is my fun poem!)

Settled!

ann walks arboretum trails while morning dew rests, siempre sola en abril,
bothered by no one who passes her by rarely, no mas los arboles bonitas,
cadence is quick, causing her to pant, her peripheral sighting, una cierva,
doe in flight trailed by scurrying fawn, forest friends revealed, en el día,
equally frightened, ann pauses to watch the white tails vanish, un eco,
follows as a woodpecker chisels a hole, eating all insects, felizmente,
gathering her wits, continues her fast-paced walk, mira la geografía,
hardy ferns line both sides, visitor stay on human path, habitantes,
inhabit off the humanesque trails, ann passes, sentirse ignorante,
just because she never saw fern sentinels, un momento jurásico,
keeping on path, she glances behind once, parece un kilómetro,
leaving behind what she had formerly missed, empezó a llover,
moving her rapidly though trees provided cover, como madre,
not noticing someone run up behind with umbrella, el novio,
omar who had woke up late seeing ann had left, observado,
people running, taking cover, but it changed, casi un pizca,
quickly, while he had gotten somewhat wet, sucedió qué,
right after he arrived, she turned and twisted, el rodilla,
slowly lands on the gravel, causing pain, sufriemiento,
thanks to seeing him land on one knee, no sabias tu?
under many stars it is not, look about, vas a unificar,
visiting an arboretum, squirrels watching, vas a ver,
with both on knees facing one another, orale wey,
x's&o's all the way-naturaleza mira los o's y x's,
yet you are oblivious that birds fly above, y ya!
zales ring fell, carried off by a magpie, zanja.

Curriculum Vitae

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As I mentioned at the beginning, I understood what I wanted from my master's experience at the onset of starting this MFA online program, and I wrote in that manner. I feel fortunate to have learned from the wonderful team of professors that helped me reach my goal. Writing this thesis took the entire time I spent writing at the University of Texas at El Paso in the online MFA program, so while I am pleased with what I have, I also understand the hard work it took to create something this ginormous, which is big to me. There have been many painstaking long nights that surround this thesis, as well as many satisfying moments. For this thesis not only involved me in releasing many epic times in my life, but it allowed me to talk about the injustices I faced as an individual being half Caucasian and half Latina, which I took much from both sides. Yet, I was not treated fairly when in the company of others at times. As of now though, I can honestly say that I am proud to be a UTEP miner wishing to graduate with an MFA.

Additionally, I can say I am proud of my past as well. To begin with, I have a Bachelor of Science in English Education from IU East, a Computer Endorsement from IU East, a Master of Arts in Journalism from Ball State University, a Certificate in Online Teaching from IU East, a Graduate Certificate in Composition Studies from IU East, and Master of Arts in English from IU East.