

## EDITORS' COMMENTARY

### Saying and Doing, Editing and Writing

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**Editing**, they say, is like herding cats. The cliché amuses me because of its absurdity and its partial truth. Writers, whether academic or not, work alone. We are solitary creatures. Our writing is *ours*—an extension of our very selves. So much is on the line when we hit “send.” What is at stake, then, when “our very selves” isn’t singular? In the context of *Chicana/Latina Studies*, so much more is on the line than our individual egos. We know that this journal is the articulation of a community of mujeres committed to our collective good. The registers in which we voice that commitment are varied: scholarly and creative, collective and idiosyncratic.

As I look back at the work I’ve done over the past six issues I’m honored that I have been able to contribute to a print community that is vital to the articulation and sustenance of Chicana and Latina feminism. Alongside the explosion of digital culture and social media, print culture remains a significant and dynamic means of interweaving the critical and the creative modes of imagination and knowing central to MALCS. Following previous editors, I’m pleased that I’ve been able to pair established with emerging writers, as in the matching of Monica Palacios’s screenplay, *Memory is in the Heart* with Karen Anzoategui’s one-woman show, *Ser: L.A vs B.A.*—a yoking that spotlights questions of home and generational connections and separations (Fall 2013). I am particularly proud of the ways in which I’ve been able to articulate my editorial vision, which enlaces critical and creative writing around questions of how and why we are driven to do work that

matters. More recently the kind of capacious vision that Gloria Cuádriz, C. Alejandra Elenes, and I wrought in our cowritten Editorial Statement, “Troubling Borders” brings into being an understanding of our voices and visions that is greater than the sum of its parts. It literally helps us see and hear why a gloriously sweaty poem like Juana María Rodríguez’s “Brujería: A Queer Karaoke Remix” is just as necessary to our freedom as Estrella Torrez’s essay “Translating Chicana Testimonios into Pedagogy for a White Midwestern Classroom” (Spring 2015).

My collaborations (2012-14) with my coeditor, Josie Méndez-Negrete taught me about the power of this kind of community building, through writing and thinking together about the overall contents of the journal, and how critical and creative writing speak to each other, and how visual art enters that conversation to tell our stories in a collective mode. Our co-written editorial statements are a testament to the dynamic nature of our conversations, and I am grateful for the mentoring, friendship, and the beautiful result of our hard work together.

My work over the past year has shifted to center on the creative writing elements of the journal, rather than thinking through the contents of each issue in its entirety. My esteemed colleagues at the helm of the journal, C. Alejandra Elenes and Gloria Cuádriz now share the co-editorship, and my recent work with them reflects their concentration on institutional sustainability for the journal, as well as their editorial vision. Last Spring’s collaboratively written essay would be our last. This change in aperture has meant a change in my own editorial practices (if not my desire to have all of us talking to each other all of the time) and in my understanding of collaborative work. My vista is more focused, and while I sense a shift in the way that our mission statement has been articulated in the journal—away

from the deliberate staging of conversation between critical and creative work—I have no doubt that the mutability and flexibility of the journal’s form is necessary in order to adapt and sustain itself as an institution of our collective vision and voices. I have every confidence that under Gloria and Alejandra’s leadership, the journal will continue to grow in fruitful and necessary ways.

In the final issue in which I have served as creative writing editor, I am proud to bring together two pieces of short prose that reflect moments of transition: Marcela Fuentes’s “A Serenade for Chago” and Angie Chabram’s “El Puente.” The former is an elliptical narrative in English, while the latter is a letter in Spanish. However, both are centered on a child’s relationship with their parents, as well as a longing for home and belonging, tradition and freedom.

Chabram’s fictional letter from a young woman to her mother contemplates the challenges and contradictions of a young Chicana as she struggles to fulfill the roles of wife and student. On the one hand, she longs for the unity of family life, and on the other, she articulates an intense alienation in her married life. Lest we assume that this is an immigrant story because it is in Spanish, Chabram drops in one detail that troubles this assumption: the narrator fondly remembers the family home “en el valle de San Gabriel,” a community located just to the east of Los Angeles. And yet, the gulf between the narrator’s sense of home and self, formed in dialogue with her mother, and the realities of being a working-class married Chicana in graduate school feels like another country.

Fuentes’s story moves up and down a young man’s life as he buries his father, Chago. Moving between the moment of the funeral procession in 1963 and various points in Vicente’s life (ages 7, 12, 13), Fuentes deftly weaves together

key moments of conflict and loss that shape Vicente's life with his mother and father. The recursive timeline that structures the story mimics memory and the formation of Vicente's subjectivity in all its intimacy with his mother and father. The story opens at the start of the charro procession and the mariachi funeral serenade, as Vicente considers the past and the present, shot through with moments of loss and physical pain that structures his parents' lives. This movement between the worlds inhabited by his mother and father are encapsulated in two phrases that repeat and compete with one another. He seems torn between his father's instruction that he "be kind to Mami" and presumably honor her wishes to Americanize, and Vicente's own assertion that he belongs to the rancho and therefore to the charro tradition—that he is "from San Carlos too."

Compellingly, neither Fuentes nor Chabram offers us a simple resolution. Fuentes leaves us with a hope for kindness, and Chabram ends with a deceptively simple saying, "Del dicho al hecho hay un gran trecho." The work, then, remains, and will remain. And I am grateful to have been a part of it.