

EDITORS' COMMENTARY

My House is Falling Down. Help!

Patricia Marina Trujillo with Bernadette Trujillo Ellis

“Tu pared está cayendo.”

I asked the *mayordomo* (water manager) of the mutual domestic water association to come and check my water line at my house in El Guache, NM. My yard was wet. Wet wet, like it had rained or snowed, but we're in the middle of one of New Mexico's driest winters. It made no sense, so I called for help. I thought it had to be a leak in my connection to the community water.

“Huh?”

“Mira allá,” he points with his lip, “Jita, your wall is falling.”

Sure enough, as I walked closer to the northwest corner of my house I see that the almost century-old adobe is swollen and has pushed out the stucco plaster. It's injured; I touch the corner of one of the exposed mud bricks and it crumbles in my hand. I ask the *mayordomo* what to do.

“You'll need to fix it, *yo creo.*”

As I type this commentary, the *casita* that I live in—my grandma Lola's house—is falling down. A years-long slow leak held silently in the walls until it recently split open. Talk about an Anzaldúan universal message! Don't worry, thanks to the miracles of supportive family, community and house

insurance, it will all be ok. But at first it was scary. All I could think was, “I broke my grandma’s house! I broke my grandma’s house!”

As I read the submissions for this volume’s creative writing section, I realized that my literary and literal lives were crashing together with purpose. That happens sometimes. When I think about my grandma’s house, all the lives that were lived there, and the voices that continue to dwell with me, they were all in Spanish. Yet, my Spanish has never been as fluent as my grandma’s or my mom’s. I am of this house, and it’s Spanish, but one of my walls is falling.

While we’ve been working on the house for the last few weeks, men from northern New Mexico have mostly staffed the job. They talk to me, but mostly to my Mom, in a beautiful mish-mash of Spanish and English. As they knock down adobes, they share stories of the houses they’ve built, how my generation doesn’t know how to work with adobe anymore, and they’ve got jokes. I visit on lunch hours and breaks, while my mom supports me by supervising the work throughout the day. We laugh with the guys as they one-up each other in storytelling and carrilla. We still can’t decide who they are trying to impress, but it is always a fun linguistic dance.

My mom shares with me, “Eee, I love how they talk de antes. It’s . . . it’s so juicy.”

And I lament that I am not that kind of juicy talker (to my mom, at least). And I lament that because of linguistic terrorism in her educational experiences, my mom opted to teach her children English first, and then we were welcome to any Spanish we caught on to. She shared with me that she misses talking “like home,” and yet, here I live in the home where she was literally born.

This creative writing section brings together two authors who produced work primarily in Spanish. As creative writing editor of a Chicana, Latina, and indigenous women's publication, I am committed to bringing in work from our complex language homes. What this meant is that, as when I saw the big puddle in front yard, I knew I needed help. But language help is a special kind of vulnerable, especially for Chicana feminists. Luckily the super *mujeres* in my life are never too far away, and I'm related to many of them.

My sister, Bernadette Trujillo Ellis, has been a dual-language, gifted and talented, language arts teacher at Washington Middle School for over a decade. She recently became their instructional coach and works through the lens of intersectionality and ethnic studies to revise curriculum. She and I talk literature a whole lot, share resources, and I knew she would be willing to sit with me in confidence and with confidence. We read the poems included in this section aloud, and we dug in deep going line by line. We paused and discussed meaning. We worked at it, and she helped me rebuild a little bit. I am very thankful to her for her help, and I am always floored by her deep and abiding love for literature.

The poems in this section speak to the urgency of Spanish language creative writing, to providing space for the comforts and provocations only found there. It rubs against English, at times raw and other times in luxury, but always in the context of continuing to discover our own true voices.

In Miryam Espinosa Dulanto's poem, "Un día cualquiera" we read a juxtaposition in the tension between sustaining idealistic consciousness and the entropy of the day to day. Our daily functions, the lies we tell ourselves, and even our body's needs can at times be a distraction to "the work" of consciousness building and social justice. The poem reflects the

contradictions embedded in the life of the mind, what it means to find tools in books, writing, research, and social justice. Simultaneously, these tools that are supposed to help can become a distraction and we can possibly get lost in them. What does it mean to get caught up in the routine—in both meanings, the routine of the mundane and the performative routine of academia? Ultimately, we are left with the profound reflection on the human condition that it is hard, but necessary, to sustain consciousness.

Lilian Cibils invites us to appreciate the “cadencia maternal” in her work; the sparse language of her poems invites the reader to reflect on the natural world, the instinctual patterns of our experiences, and our relationships between the two. Cibils plays with image words, she invites us to consider the complex understanding to be found “en las voces/ que no caben/ en este espacio.” But in her poems, she makes space for these voices, building bridges between languages.

As it turns out, the water issue at my house wasn't about the connection to community water, rather just some faulty plumbing. It is being addressed. And the north wall of my home is being rebuilt adobe by adobe. I didn't break my grandma's house after all. And I realized, with thanks to my sister, that all homes—even linguistic ones—are always in the process of being fixed, yo creo.

***The Journal of Chicana/Latina Studies* desea aprovechar esta oportunidad para solicitar trabajos creativos escritos en español y/o lenguas indígenas para las próximas ediciones de la revista.**

***The Journal of Chicana/Latina Studies* would like to take this opportunity to invite creative writing submissions in Spanish and/or indigenous languages for upcoming sections.**