

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

### La ultima y nos vamos

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**For the last** couple of months, I've been living in a constant state of *susto* having left the comfort of my hometown college dream job for a new opportunity at my state's higher education department. I'd like to report that this kind of promotion is easy, that becoming a deputy secretary comes naturally. It does not. It's been a big transition, epic, much like the ones we take when we challenge ourselves to put pen to paper, to craft the story, and then entrust our writing to editors for publication. There is a vulnerability to opening up to a new challenge, to the way we and our writing inevitably change in the process. It's exciting and terrifying. And much like I am learning in my new job, it is growth.

That is how I am writing this last section of my five-year term as Creative Writing Editor for the *Chicana/Latina Studies* journal: muy excited y asustada. This has been a real season for me of letting go and renewing, but in doing so, creating space for myself and for others. It has been an honor to serve in the role of Creative Writing Editor, to be the one trusted with holding and caring for the stories, essays, and poems. As caregiver, I've done my best but have also made mistakes. I promise I always learned from them. I will miss the company of the new writing and the opportunity to work with authors from around the country. Change is hard, but I recognize that a soul loss is often a soul gain.

Significantly, I will miss the company of my sister editors, Dr. Sonya M. Alemán and Dr. Larissa Mercado-López, who are two of the most brilliant

women I've had the privilege to "jam" with; these mujeres are open and supportive in ways that stretch the universe and time. What I have learned as part of our editorial colectiva is that living a feminist editorial practice is just that, a practice. One that I got better at as I worked with and developed in conversation with Sonya and Larissa, but one that is constantly shifting shape. Thank you both, and as Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson reflected in her final editor's commentary as the Creative Writing Editor, "We know that this journal is the articulation of a community of mujeres committed to our collective good" (178). It's an honor to be a part of this very special lineage and the greater organization of MALCS.

In this final issue that I am serving as Creative Writing Editor, I am honored to share the work of two women who are also addressing the growth that follows loss. The first essay in this section is an abridged version of a longer essay. "Of Birds and Butterflies: The Continuity of Life after the Death of a Sibling" by Christina Urrea Ayala-Alcantar allows us to time travel with the author to experience what Chicana author, Pat Mora calls the "pastpresent," a specifically Chicana time tense that allows us to acknowledge and have our ancestors with us as we continue to move forward through time. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the author in a way that brought the loss of her brother in 2009 to the present moment. Interlacing recently written passages from 2020 and 2021 with an essay she wrote in 2012, Ayala-Alcantar invites the reader to experience the ways in which grief rebounds and revisits us. "Of Birds and Butterflies" is a generous, spiritual, and emotionally complex reflection on grief. By leaving it all out on the page, Ayala-Alcantar, demonstrates why we need more pieces that show us the tender realities of navigating our lives after soul loss.

The short story, "Caperucita Roja" by Désirée Zamorano, follows and connects us to another form of loss through the genre of a suspenseful

Chicana noir. (Or, wait! Is it a fairy tale?) The protagonist Valeria, the accidental red head, cannot find her grandmother and takes charge driving through southern California to assure that her grandma is safe. But this landscape is not safe: a serial killer is on the loose and Valeria must question the very nature of safety and loss in the process. This version of a well-known fairy tale is an important revisioning of classic characters we will recognize even though they have been recast in this short story that bends the tale into an important contemporary reflection on good and evil. Zamorano is to be celebrated for her unique blending of genre; by marrying mystery with a Chicana/x/Latina/x feminist revision of a common fairy tale, she creates a powerful perspective on modern day villains.

In Chicana fashion, this is a long *bueno* bye, but I'm getting to my metaphorical *trago*. I am proud to have worked with all the *mujeres/xs* in the last ten volumes to co-create a significant body of Chicana/x, Latina/x, Afrolatina/x, and Indigena/x literature. I want to amplify the women who challenged genre, who embraced speculative fiction, who illustrated their truths. I want to dance all night long with the authors of all the sensuous fiction: short-story sci-fi, children's literature, and all forms of pulsating poetry. From the groups of writers who participated in our Summer Creative Writing Workshops, to authors who worked through the revision process, I've enjoyed every minute of it and look forward to seeing the creative writing section continue to grow into the multi-faceted pleasure party for women of color that we all want and need.

I'll end (but for reals this time...) with a quote from Octavia Butler's *Earthseed: The Books of the Living*. Please raise your glasses, your coffee mugs and join me in a toast: "All that you touch you change. All that

you change changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change” (3). ¡Salud!

### **References**

Butler, Octavia. 2019. *The Parable of the Sower*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

Rodriguez y Gibson, Eliza. (2016). “Editor’s Commentary: Say and Doing, Editing and Writing.” *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* 15(2): 178-181.