

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

Injury, Healing, Truth, and Joy: The Body in Creative Writing

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It is with great joy that I offer these introductory words to the curated works gathered in this issue of *Chicana/Latina Studies*. I am humbled and elated to have the privilege of sharing the beautiful selections collected here, as the new Creative Writing Editor at *C/LS*. I have learned so much from the previous editor, Dr. Patricia Trujillo, and I hope to continue learning alongside my fellow editors. Thank you so much to the Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social leadership for having faith in me.

For this issue, I have collected work that focuses on the body and spirit. Currently, this theme is newly prevalent in the work of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color writers, but draws from older work like Sojourner Truth's assertion of her own womanhood in "Ain't I a Woman," (1851) Donna Kate Rushin's poetry equating body as bridge in *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), and Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987). More contemporary works that continue this legacy include former Texas Poet Laureate Laurie Ann Guerrero's "Preparing the Tongue," (2011) where she becomes both chef and surgeon when cutting (her) tongue for dinner, recalling Anzaldúa's aforementioned lengua as nourishing, tense, and tasty. We can also look to critically-acclaimed, award-winning author Rachel Eliza Griffiths' most recent book, *Seeing the Body* (2020), which focuses on the death of her mother and how her mother's body informs her experience with her own body. Roberto Carlos Garcia explains how body

knowledge is communicated across genders in “To a Young Man on His First Period,” in his latest collection, *Elegies* (2020), and Len Lawson, in *Chime* (2019), touches on the body in poems like, “black body be like,” and “the body is a cave.” We have become hyper-aware of our bodies, perhaps because of lack of gun control, or police violence, or perhaps because of a deadly pandemic and the accompanying isolation and limited movement. Therefore, our featured writers naturally gravitated toward this theme.

In our collection of poetry, we see Elodia Esperanza Benitez start us off, in “Eva y Julia,” with young girls, “traviesas,” who “have never been heard” yet still speak volumes with their “eye roll[s]” and “Songs sung,” using their bodies as a form of liberation. Violeta Orozco makes movement miracle, when describing a sports arena from an airplane view as, “stadium, cheering/in unison as my Mexican body/was carried over the oceans,” in “The Railroad in the Skies.” We move from an overground railroad to one in the sea, where the body of a turtle is metaphor for the human body, in “Outside the Turtle’s Shell,” and then are reminded that the displacement of the body is decided by something as precarious as having money for rent, in “Shipwreck on the Shores of the Potomac.” Dorotea Reyna, in “Sandía,” delights in what the mouth accepts and rejects; sees an abundance of morning glories as throat, matriarchs, and even conquerors in “Las Abuelitas”; asks us to “Imagine your body as a city/which never changes!” in “Poem for an Architect”; and has the reader experience a game of marbles in terms of gender, asking us to touch, taste, and manage these mini-galaxies.

In the fiction section, Vanessa E. Vega writes in the voice of someone who would adopt a child who is not necessarily of the same culture or race, in “El Salvador—The Savior.” We are put in the body of someone who might see

us as “other,” resulting in a complicated negotiation on the part of the reader and a main character who learns nothing, still thinking they are in the place to “save” someone.

Our non-fiction section takes us to Pico del Hierro-Villa’s “Reimagining La Llorona: Looking into the Border Crisis,” where the author sees the myth in the very real bodies of our family members affected by border policies. They write that La Llorona, “lived in women, children, trans people, parents, and men....The weeping was now heard all day and all night, and it came from the women in Mexico mourning all those lost from the femicides. It came from parents being torn away from their children to be put into internment camps. It came from the trans mujeres doing sex work near the crossing point into Mexico being murdered and wishing society would accept them one day.” The culminating essay in this section, by Guillermina Gina Núñez-Mchiri, brings us back to the pandemic and how it has physically affected the bodies of our loved ones. Titled, “A Dream is like a Phone Call Away,” the author recalls her mother as healer and seer of their community, discusses the importance of her mother’s healing after succumbing to COVID-19, and the importance of her own personal healing—focusing on sleep—as a response to her mother’s battle with the disease. This take on healing made me think of The Nap Ministry, which is a movement that encourages women of color to rest and recoup.

These writers have all taught me to become more aware of my body in the circumstances I find myself in, to hear what it says to me, and to rest regularly—not just when I’m exhausted. Ultimately, we must protect our own bodies the way we would protect the bodies of our children, our parents, all of our loved ones. This protection includes joy, rest, and pride in our love-based work. Let me know what lessons *you* find in these works. Please feel free to reach out to me with your thoughts. Enjoy!

