

Shedding and Becoming Through Nauhcampa
by sol cardenas moreno

INTRODUCTION TO WRITING/EAST-TLAHUIZTLAMPA — a couple of weeks after the Sun began a new cycle, 2025:

I am obsessed with creative nonfiction as a genre; playful storytelling feels like home. Ancestors of spirit calling life onto me, breathing fire into my spirit with their tales. I am embraced with the wisdom that comes from loving with stillness and with intention. And the thing is, I would not have lived through all the ridiculously absurd experiences of mine, and neither would my bloodline, if we did not get creative. If we did not survive, resist, respond, react, love, hate, desire, hope, gamble, hunt, think, imagine, betray, venge on, sabotage, and live creatively. *This* is all real, and all new. We are new creations because creativity is our birthright, my birthright passed on from my relations in a way that transcends time, in a way that cheats life and death; in a way that is divine. To be disgustingly present with who we are and are not, to embody the feelings we have been taught to fear, and to scrape our knees day after day as we struggle for our own heaven on earth as the creators of our lives. *This is what angels speak of.*

To create is the birthright of all oppressed peoples. To create is to live beyond the physical limits of our own life, to cheat an end and never fully die as long as we lean into our very own nature of expression and relation. To create and fail, to create and win, to create and be loved, to create and be shunned, to create and have absolutely no

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witness. These are all necessary practices to express our humanity. A revolutionary process carried out in the psyche, radical in comparison to bloodlines and lineages who have had to shrink, mold, or altogether extinguish any creativity not directly involved with their immediate survival. When we lean into our own nature of expression, we lean into *them* whom our bodies have long kept stored. From the very first point of self-disconnect for survival and every instance since, they were kept safe under locks we hold the keys for. Often, we know the keys intimately, privately and ashamedly.

Should we dare to create a future of liberation, we will create that warm embrace those kept away once needed, for ourselves, for our connections, and our collective. Today, I write about the courage it has taken me to believe and implement the very same daring nature; to embody the courage of speaking truths which have lived in me across my bodies. As I have come to learn, sometimes our bodies are patient keepers, waiting for us to relearn and reclaim our intuitive nature as the avenue for communication and connectedness to self. Today I entrust you, my reader, with the ability to hold my story– to see me through the creative fire of mine and the creative element of yours.

ON SHAME, A FIGHTING SPIRIT, AND HEALING/SOUTH-HUITZLAMPA— as the Sun journeyed South and was soon to be away, 2024:

I breathe in, I hold the weight of the grief for a moment, I breathe out. I am finding it very difficult to provide a Queer testimonio that is significant enough. For the

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past year, I have worked on alchemizing all the learning, the lessons, the wisdom, the *conocimiento*; trying to transform knowledge obtained from some series of deeply painful experiences. I do wonder, however, if everyone existing outside of the normative, outside of what the colonial has defined as existent, valid, and as visible has trouble providing testimony. I wonder if everyone who lives at the margin also deems their stories as not too significant.

I have not made my peace with the pain just yet, to be honest. Sometimes, it all feels as if I allowed it to hurt me, allowed it to get the better of me. As if somehow, if I was a quicker, or *more* politically active, or wiser of a person, then I would simply not have fallen for the traps of the systems that aim to make queer existence impossible. As if, had I simply been queer enough to be queer, then self-abandonment would have never become another weapon waged against me. By my own hands, too. I have not reached the place of forgiveness in my body just yet. There is a part of me that feels as though I am part of a bad batch of Queer, of not meeting the requirements of pursuing justice; flawlessly and swiftly overcoming social persecution, threat of punishment, exiling, erasure, invisibility, loss of self, and simply moving on focused on taking back more power. I do not know how to go about a “tidy” pursuit of justice, one that is “rational”, consumable, and is not born from a place of feeling too much..

As I document my own queer testimonio, I am also finishing a class titled: Queer Indigenous Histories in the Americas. We have covered many readings, but amongst

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them are “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native” by Patrick Wolfe, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s Ch. 8 “Indigenous Queer Normativity” in *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. For me, two foundational quotes from the previously mentioned works are: 1) “... we are not talking about an isolated event here. Thus we can shift from settler colonialism’s structural complexity to its positivity as a structuring principle of settler-colonial society across time” (Wolfe, p.399) and “Queer Indigenous bodies are political orders. Queer Indigenous bodies house knowledge, relationships, and responsibilities. Queer Indigenous bodies are a threat to settler sovereignty, which is why queer Indigeneity has been and is violently targeted by colonial and settler colonial powers in an ongoing way in order to dispossess” (Simpson, p. 127). This class has given me the courage to piece together my own journey. As I near my completion of it, I take with me some of the main points we have covered: 1) just as settler-colonialism is ongoing, the embodiment of queerness for Indigenous peoples must also be ongoing, 2) there is a decolonial embodiment of ourselves, and a land based decolonial embodiment, 3) settler-colonialism requires a settler landscape in which it can continue to reproduce; the settler landscape must then be physically and socially constructed and ongoingly reproduced, and 4) the embodiment of Queer Indigeneity in connection with the land has the power to disrupt this reproduction, and ultimately reveal a temporary settler landscape— imposed

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structures, and imposed cultural practices— unsustainable by the space in which it carries itself out. A series of the tools of colonialism.

Hegemonic straightness is a colonial tool that has inflicted profound wounds. It has stripped Queer people from communities of care, of love, of communal healing. Lives on as a settler landscape in which we do not learn of the communal values within Queer culture, showcased across the Queer movement. For example, the efforts by the Boston's Gay Men's Liberation to abolish heteropatriarchy in order to guarantee a queer future in which children are not considered or treated as property under the nuclear family, only to later be disposed and discarded if they do not fall in line with the heteropatriarchy and come out as Queer themselves. The settler landscape reduces these efforts to a narrative about the fight for the legal recognition of same sex unions. Ultimately, the reduction of impact and narrative control becomes another reason why many young queer folks develop a perception of their queer identity as separate from the world around them.

I would often look at pictures of my initial Queer Studies books and think to myself: when do you think was the last time this person felt they could cry? Was it the morning of? Do they ever resent their courage and feel lonely? So much of what was accessible to me in my youth about queerness were impersonal narratives. Extracting any knowledge with zero regard to the person as a whole person. I believe this has affected the way that we see ourselves in position to community; but it also has affected

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how my image of queerness has been twisted inevitably by forces carrying out efforts to erase its existence. It has been incredibly empowering to learn that, in pre-colonial societies, Queer people throughout many indigenous cultures are or were venerated as caretakers of the spirit. Whether or not my testimony is significant, I think I am going to have to invest enough belief in myself to think of my history as holding valuable knowledge. The knowledge of a caretaker, a healer, and a leader.

Compulsory heterosexuality, specifically referred to as “comp het” within lesbian circles, was something I came to understand when I was about 21 or 22 years old. That is, the conditioned belief that all women exist to one day serve in a partnership to a man, as well as the conditioned training that goes into readying oneself for that day. This was facilitated by a document online titled “Are you a lesbian? Master doc on spotting compulsory heterosexuality.” In reading it, I felt as if I had been caught, as if my mask had fallen. As far as I remember, I had gotten really good at pretending like that wasn't the case, though I hardly remember my borrowed life. After reading and re-reading a couple of times, I began coming to terms with the fact that *I* had not been present, and I wasn't going to be present if I kept forcing myself to be in relationships with men.

In the past three years, my mind has started to make amends with my body, telling it what it remembers; and my body has responded by telling the mind what was forgotten. The separation is tragic, but not surprising as they were on a journey away

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from each other for a good two decades. Separating my consciousness from my body, trying to make sense of my reality by finding clues around me. I always knew when things did not feel right. I felt it in my stomach, but my stomach was my body, not my mind. Raised by an abusive mother, following that inner knowing was not an option. *I had to separate.* I had to believe the ideas of the world that I was being fed.

It is no surprise that when someone breaks down a child, as the child begins to understand the life around them, and enough to not trust their own body and to instead trust what others are telling them; their fulfillment becomes their last priority. It was always more important to prevent interactions from being worse than to think about whether or not I would be happy. I was to 1) be a girl, 2) to become a woman, and 3) someday to be someone who held relationships with men; it was technical, simple, and in that order more or less. I did not have time to wonder whether I was happy— as obviously I was happy with what I got when I could be perfect and never get in the way— receiving what I wanted, and needed. What the cavity in my torso yearned for was not to matter.

SHAME - I developed the core belief that the biggest shame would be to not be normal. It all became about hiding, making sure I was remorseful, and feeling guilty. I went on collecting guilt and shame throughout most experiences: 1) guilt from experiencing sexual violence in my childhood and later in one of my relationships with men, 2) shame about failing to get the gendered performance of girl right, 3) guilt from

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trying harder to be cis-girl pretty and interesting, and 4) guilt and shame from coming across as “boycrazy,” or possibly reinforcing stereotypes directed towards Brown feminine bodies, as I carried out my masking of self.

THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF THE BODY - The more that I have learned to connect my body and learned to listen to what it asks of me, the more that I have been able to see myself living. Visualizing my life, and myself still living for years to come. It is deeply impactful to experience something I believe to be very common in our youth, even if people do not realize it; to carry an everlasting passive ideation of suicide. I’ve heard it from others and fully resonated because, like, why *would I* make it past 30? Present circumstances are hard, and there appears to be a looming threat to life prospects to be taken at every misstep. If not by job loss, disabling, impoverishment, homelessness, or addiction, then it might just be the inability to maintain the “perfect” mental wellness after overcoming any one or any combination of the former.

So, I am thankful to have started listening to a certain knowing in my body whenever I think about how that passive suicidality used to be my reality. Somehow, I have been able to hold on with a desire to live, a great sadness, grief, but for the first time in my life barely any guilt or shame. In the past, I was deeply cynical about my life or wellbeing. These days, I am still driven to explore all questions and all possibilities of how I could have prevented *all*, and at the same time there is this knowing that there is not much of an answer beyond “this is how violence breaks us apart from our body.”

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Coming to terms with existing outside of the gender binary was confusing for a while, and it is possible that I would not have been able to explore it without the COVID-19 pandemic forcing me into introspection. But my sexual orientation? The one aspect that challenges the notion that female bodies are for men to own, to hold, to subordinate, to claim as an investment for their legacy? The aspect that becomes an enemy and obstacle should the female body be a racialized body as well? The promised grounds for men to subjugate, to violate, to breed, to use without a need to lay claim or responsibility? That journey towards self arrived almost miraculously. I found that it was a different case of questioning to explore: whether I was internally homophobic, internally transphobic, or internally lesbophobic? Two of those questions became easy and comforting explorations answered by thinking about the experiences of others under the broader LGBTQ2S+ umbrella; and if you are unknowingly a lesbian who has lived a lifetime of internalized lesbophobia, then those two simple answers can provide you with the easiest out to not change a thing. That is, until you learn that homophobia and lesbophobia are often conveniently conflated, and that lesbophobia is an entirely different beast.

It took a longer amount of time to realize I am a Lesbian who has experienced Comp Het, than it took to realize I am not a cis-woman. A long time to reclaim value, and to start actively reclaiming power over my life. As for gender identity, it demanded of me to no longer be ashamed of existing out of the margins. The beginning of living,

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exploring, and expressing my gender identity was really terrifying; I wasn't ready to live the life of someone who existed that much further outside of the norm, this I ruled, after a much disempowered evaluation. An evaluation of self I began after I saw myself rapidly losing value. The time for authentic self-exploration and becoming was up. It was that much more important to have my value confirmed by being chosen by someone who partook in manhood, and could extend some social value to me. Much more important that when my relationship at the time— one I wanted to end after three months, the one that held the most emotional manipulation and ongoing sexual coercion— ended despite putting so much work into learning everything about relationships. I was left without answers. The only logical solution was that its failure had to be for ANY reason other than because I did not like him. So, I told myself it had failed because I could not like him, or anyone else who was a man, because I was “meant” to be with the first boyfriend I ever had. I worked hard to convince myself that someone who had abandoned me, who could only ever hold a bond of love bombing and discarding, and whom I began to see casually while never sharing about my gender identity or my lived name, was in fact the only person I could find love in. Thankfully, he was just as he was before. And when my devaluing and discarding came, the shattering of my illusions was so intense that, in due time, I was freed.

There are a lot of similarities between child me learning and reinforcing to myself that neglect and abuse were part of love, and my constructed pursuit of relationships

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with men. That is: surviving, being “happy” with what I projected from a mental manufacturing of love, and manufacturing of connection; all despite the people— whose love was to complete me, if I was good enough to earn it— bringing experiences of anxiety, despair, and disgust within myself. After the shattering, I sought out therapy. For three years now, I have worked to make my life fulfilling. I still struggle with a lot of heaviness. My life is slower. My body is slower. I try with intention to make space for providing me all the humanity I may need. As I write this, I recognize that I want to carry awareness of the spiritual responsibility I have in expanding my visualization of what Queer lives are like. It is unjust to follow a reductionist narrative and attempt to reduce my Queerness to a thing that could and should persevere through it all: untouched while being political, unapologetic 1000% of the time, and ready to fight all the time. This would be to continue to reduce Queerness by reducing myself. I would be continuing the dismissal and invalidation of Queer pain by demanding of myself to be untouched, by not slowing down, by not tending to permanent debilitations.

In accepting and claiming my story as part of a history of ancestral resistance, I refuse to live as if my life has lost value simply because others have decided to devalue me or to violate the right to my wellbeing. So, I am not cynical anymore. I have begun to create a very Queer life, a very non-normative life for myself. A life where I live on as someone who has actively moved towards ancestral connection through spiritual veneration, who is a non-binary femme lesbian, who is autistic, who is disabled, and who

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requires support in order to have an autonomous life; intentionally living as me despite how unwelcomed it may be for many. It is still a little uncomfortable as it feels like my life is larger than myself, and I do not really remember asking for that. I do know, however, that my life not entirely feeling like my own is not a bad thing this time around. After all, why would I not breathe life into everything that I love?

When I chose my lived name, I was in one of the heaviest and hardest moments of my life, wanting to renounce it. At this point, all I had ever known was self-abandonment. For a good while I am sitting and crying in the sunlight, and looking at the sun. In our communion together I asked the Sun: “Do you ever get tired being all? How do you give love to all day after day? How is it possible to give so much life and not need to receive the same? Does it give you purpose? Does that purpose give you life?” Searching for ways to reciprocate as, otherwise, I would forever be indebted with endless gratitude. I chose the best way for me to reciprocate then— promising to carry on with my gratitude, to honor the warmth and the love by spreading it in my life, to spend less time worrying about how my actions will be received out of survival conditioning, and to instead go on to create a life guided by intention and purpose— to be and give in ways that allow me to feel alive. So with that promise, and with the feeling of being seen in my loneliness, I have worn my name for a couple years now. Years of sewing my consciousness and my body back together. Honoring both as I

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continue creating myself, and creating my life on my terms, like many queer people before me.

ON MEMORY AS ETERNAL LIFE GIVING/WEST-CIHUATLAMPA — months into winter and awaiting the fated return of warmth, 2025:

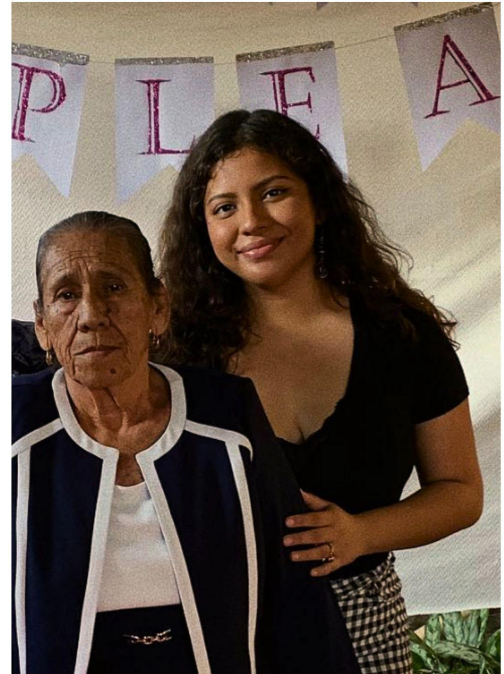
For this flesh of mine, memory exists as a wheel constantly turning and always moving. One of the most vibrant memories is the nostalgia of home. The moment in time where I am eight years of age, sitting at the dining table placed bajo la ramada, disfrutando una canelita con galletas toscanas, y jugando con el borde punta de cruz rojo bordado en el mantel blanco. El mismo bordado que me ha acompañado cada diciembre al pueblo para celebrar a la Virgencita de Guadalupe. A woman who, I believe, resembles my younger grandma. And she must have been so beautiful, if that was the case. And would *she* be punished for being morenita? When this image here is loved with so much devotion and beauty? Can we exist only in tales, in imagination, in illusions, and projections; but never in full-flesh, full-sinning power, full-sinner embodiment? And time gets hazy, and I start noticing there is a pattern across spaces that is out to punish girls and women of richer skin tone *a lot* more than it is out to punish lighter-skinned women and girls. And I am pointing it out because I know a lot, but I am told I not only know nothing but will always know even less because I am bad, maldita, and a disobedient child. But I *do know*, I know *I know* because I feel it true in me. And I *don't know* why the feeling of not knowing never comes, no matter how much

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it would make life at “home” better for me. Nevertheless, I still have a week before I leave the place that has always felt like home to the place I cannot exist beyond flesh and bones.

Time was always hazy, and it is hazy as I write this too. You took care of my heart from the outside before, and now you take care of it as your home. Here, I hope you live forever and that you never go again. *Time is hazy*. I pray it is a sign of it being cyclical as I hold on to the idea of hugging you again— of wiping your tears like you wiped mine. But this time, unlike the last, it is not because



Doña Adela Diego Hernandez with her grandchild on her 87th birthday. Photo courtesy of the author.



La cocina de barro y leña de Doña Adela Diego. The place where sol and their abuela held each other for the last time. When sol traveled back to Colima eight months later due to the passing of Doña Adela, sol found that this kitchen no longer exists. Photo courtesy of the author.

we are parting. In the meantime, I have been treating my own tears as if they were yours for some time now. I grew kinder to myself when the only place I could find you was within me. Your flesh returned to the land that birthed you, and the fire in your spirit has

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kept mine warm through the shedding, as I journeyed back to my very own fire.

Te extraño mucho mami 'dela.

**MY JOURNEY TOWARDS RECLAIMING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND EMBODYING
ANCESTRAL CONNECTION HAS AND FOREVER WILL BE MY JOURNEY TOWARDS**

MY DISABLED EMBODIMENT/ NORTH-MICTLAMPA— days after the sun solstice and
being a pupil to abundance, 2025:

I am aware of the nuances of the
story of Coyolxāuhqui, and due to them, I
have struggled to make sense of the
sacredness of her fragmentation;
especially because she is someone I feel
deeply connected with. That was, until I
sat on logged Redwood trunks unable to
find the words or flow into the thoughts
that might give me an answer. These



The discerning Huehuetotl o “Volcan de Fuego” in Colima, Mexico. One of the most important places and symbols across the land to Colimense culture and identity. Photo courtesy of the author.

logs are positioned as a seat at the base of an old lime kiln; where men used to blow up
the goldless earth to make giant pits and use logged Redwoods, the gifts the same
earth had birthed, to desecrate the Mother and extract lime from the limestone. There is
a lot of grief to be felt in this little space hidden away from the image the university
masks itself under.

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uniform exterior is a badge of honor earned for living its role throughout the many seasons? When every fiber has been weaved to carry out the gospel of the infinite manifestations of life on Earth?

Fragmentation due to exploitation and extractivism is awful, but it should never be the fragmented that goes ashamed. As for the Redwoods, the fragmentation in their bark is not the same as the *maiming* they were subject to by Henry Cowell and his men in order to extract profits and carry out dominion across the land. The land has been the target of endless waves of debilitation— and so have we. I am disabled because the Earth is disabled.

With every act of violence, with every desecration, the disconnect has widened. Threatening and preying on those who cannot follow the path of dissociation in exchange for adjacency to power. Cuando yo era niña, mi papá me

enseñó cómo debía ser protegida del mal del susto. He used to squeeze my cranium between his palms so that my body would not lose sight of my soul. That was, however, in the few and far in-between instances when his soul felt safe for being in his body too. It is a difficult journey: finding our way back to the body.



Rio Coahuayana near Zinacamittan, Colima. Pictured are sol's cousin, sol, and a few other people enjoying the jade colored waters on a sunny December day. Photo courtesy of the author.

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I know you from another life but I cannot remember

You tell me you remember for the both of us.

I'm so sorry I left you, I'm sorry I left us,

I'm sorry I wasn't there, I'm sorry you had to.

You tell me that is your gift, you stay,

But your structure is shaking,

And the earth that holds you is always so dense.

I wish you hadn't stayed,

Mostly I wish I hadn't left,

That's a lie, I wish we had both left.

How am I to care for you when you know so much more?

I do not feel like I am enough to care for you above all.

But I owe it all to you, there is no leaving you anymore.

It's a strange feeling to be,

And to be at an ongoing peak of mental ability,

And to have a body that gets more debilitated the more I come back.

I am so sorry. I am so sorry. I am so sorry.

Why did you not call for me sooner?

Why did I not notice you needing me sooner?

Would you still lose your ability if I had not come back?

Did I poison you?

Do I make you feel like a burden when I ask this? When I owe you all?

I guess it is not very honest to claim gratitude,

All while chastising you.

Allow me to make a vow,

To learn patiently and to never doubt,

To defend you and to celebrate your rest.

Unfortunately, as someone who (has semi-recently learned) was the target of child

torture at the will and hands of my mother, my body developed spiritually, mentally, and

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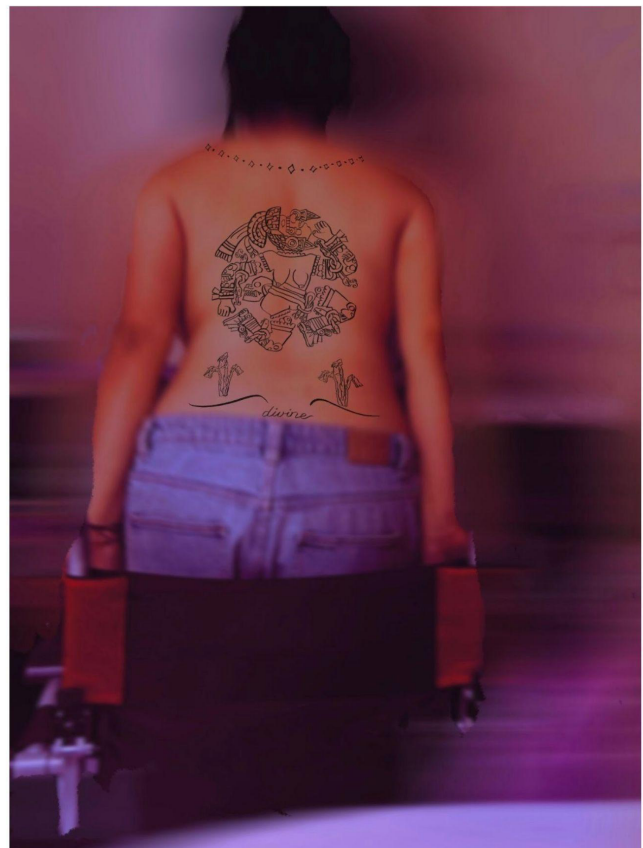
physically fragmented in ways that do not tell a similar story as the fragmentation of the standing redwood. Not stories of relational value, elemental balance, and ongoing change; but instead stories of dominion, powerlessness, colonial violence, and an absence of nurture. Despite the well-intended efforts of my father to keep me from knowing *el mal del susto*, now I am tasked every day with managing an autonomic nervous system condition that signals to

my heart that there is always threat.

Every time I sit up, stand up, remain upright for over a certain period of time, or raise my arms above my torso: there is the signal. Every day I go out trying to balance my goals, ambitions, basic needs, and tasks, with the chronic fatigue, cognitive impairment, and syncope symptoms my embodiment of POTS entails.

Although my father was not able to prevent me from developing an

autonomic nervous system disorder, he helped me with the cost of getting my first mobility aid: my electric wheelchair. It has taken me a couple of months to use my



Graphic piece created by sol. The graphic depicts sol in the process of sitting down in their wheelchair, with an image of Coyolxāuhqui, two ghost pipe flowers, and the word "divine" printed on their back. Photo courtesy of the author.

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mobility aid more publicly and more consistently. I am overjoyed every time my patience with my very own shedding of the shame over my fragmentation brings about new discoveries in the knowledge making of my ability as defined by myself. I am forever grateful to my dad as he asked no questions and he projected no shame; I hope he lives forever. In his ability to believe in the unseen, he instilled in me a concept that I lived too casually to understand until I saw it outside of people.

Months ago, there was a hummingbird in the hoop house at the garden I work at. The hummingbird was stuck, as far as it perceived, inside a hot plastic greenhouse structure, flying and hanging on twine to rest before each attempt to fly up to escape. In trying to help, my closeness distressed the hummingbird further. I could see its little chest speeding rapidly when it hung to rest until it began losing balance, could not take flight in the same way, and began trying to hide in between the plastic and the metal pole structure. I rushed to try to catch it between two planting pots, but instead of going inside the pots, the hummingbird used the edge of one to rest on, giving up his plan to run from me. I asked it to trust me as I got it out, and, if it could, to trust me all the way to the hummingbird feeder across the garden. When we made it out to the



sol's father holding them at 1 year of age for their baptism at the Capilla San Jose in Barranca del Rebozo, Ixtlahuacan, Colima. Photo courtesy of the author.

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feeder, the divine creature was frozen— uninterested in feeding or leaving the pot, its body needed rest as it was in shock.

After a couple of minutes, and with no other motivator or antidote but the passage of time itself, it took flight high up. Guidedly so, returning to the rays of his father revitalized. It wasn't until then that I was able to truly shed most of the conditioned shame over embodying disability. Over moving at a different pace, listening to the needs of my body over the sea of expectations from unknowing spectators, and finally understanding that overcoming adverse experiences is a process with no real ending as long as I am alive. And what joy— to reclaim my flow across time as I make my way to the Sun day after day.

TO BEGIN AGAIN/EAST-TLAHUIZTLAMPA— nearing the end of my very first spring living in and being embraced by the city of angels, 2026:

Due to health reasons, I am on leave of absence from my bachelor's program at UCSC. Additionally, my parents have moved back to Tijuana, Mexico to live out the rest of their lives. I have moved from the small L.A. County suburbia-adjacent bubble they had us settle with extended family and live in, to the massive, overstimulating, warm, rich (in textures and lives) city of Los Angeles/Boyle Heights.

Funny enough, the city is so chaotic that I feel normal. I have struggled to feel belonging to places all my life, but we might have just crossed paths at a very guided time. Oh, to be a Brown femme lesbian, and a Mexican immigrant en Los Ángeles

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figuring out a life I would have never counted on. Life continues to surprise me, but it has become impossible to feel as though the feeling isn't mutual. I am as excited as I am terrified! But, to my advantage, I have recently been put on beta-blockers to manage my physiological symptoms of anxiety. So, the playing fields are evening out. (but let's still pray for me, porfis)



sol enjoying a treat at Dyke Day Los Angeles '26. Dyke Day LA celebrated its 18th birthday by continuing their commitment to providing a free event with no police presence and no corporate sponsors. Photo courtesy of the author.

Author's Note:

This is a work of creative nonfiction. Many choices in this piece are stylistic, but some are not. Throughout my writing, readers may notice patterns of impersonal ambiguity surrounded by much detached technicality despite this work being a personal one, and of ongoing spirals as I retell experiences. To some readers, these patterns may read as pesky or frustrating, and that is fine with me. I am aware of these patterns, for their presence is intentional. This piece is, in fact, personal, so it is important to me to remain as honest about my processing and perception of these experiences as possible. I perceive life through trauma, and there is no telling when that will change for me. Through these patterns, I am communicating to my readers the persistent and underlying disconnection that exists between my

mind and reality as it has unfolded in front of me. So, I entrust my readers. Ultimately, if I am to believe my own words and reclaim the expression of my humanity, the struggle to find and maintain my voice is meant to be witnessed by my readers.

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