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ALIENS

A Thesis

by

LIZBET CANTU MONTIEL

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major Subject: Creative Writing

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

May 2022



# ALIENS

A Thesis by  
LIZBET CANTU MONTIEL

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Jose Rodriguez  
Committee Chair

Emmy Perez  
Committee Member

Dr. Christopher Carmona  
Committee Member

May 2022



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## ABSTRACT

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*Aliens* is a collection of poems exploring the concept of alienations through heavy usage of figurative language and rich, dark language. Each poem will portray a variety of issues around the author and the world around the author of the work. Other important issues as underlying themes of the work explore diversity in different means through the concept of alienation, or not belonging, in a certain circumstance. Each poem also uses a variety of literary devices, especially the heavy usage of figurative language in order to portray the issues or themes at hand revolving around the concept of alienation.





## DEDICATION

The completion of my graduate studies and this thesis would not have been possible without the encouragement of professors, staff and everyone who inspired this work. Thank you for believing in my wild imagination.



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## CHAPTER I

### CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Aliens is a collection of poems with a touch of fiction and autobiographical traits. The focus of this work is revolving around the concept of alienation or the sense of not belonging, without being direct to the reader. When writing for Aliens, I always kept in mind the reader was on the other side of the work, similarly to one's reflection on the other side, they can't hear or understand and there may never be much explanation coming from the author to the reader in regards to the writing. In today's world, we have a better opportunity of communicating with the writer and understanding the work, but when writing this, I imaged the situation similarly to the connection I had with a lot of older writers and poets whom I could never meet, some of the classics such as Mary or Percy Shelley, John Keats, George Orwell, Shakespeare, Jane Austen among hundreds of others. I was a very young teenager when coming across literature, specifically in the gothic era. *Frankenstein* was a splendid work which sparked interest in me to write about dark events or themes. Although there is a reference to the gothic era, specifically with "Vampires Drinking Coffee Lattes," a more modern and different approach to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, a lot of the underling themes and messages in the work are not as direct. This is because the work heavily relies in using figurative language and other literary devices to convey the themes and messages of each work, including the call to action, if any exist. Each poem has been crafted to not only share a specific message or motif, but overall has been crafted to use unique and strange language to bring the work together into this massive, weird work of

art which connects back to the concept of alienating human beings, whether that is literally comparing humans to aliens or separating them from the rest.

The inspiration behind the work comes from the world, my life and other works I have come across throughout my years, and even other artists and researchers of different sciences, not necessarily just writers. I learned a lot from artists who used art to express their lives in a peculiar way, but also keeping their identity on the work. Growing up, this was a huge problem, I didn't like writing about people as myself; I felt a sense of shame because I wanted to write about the characters I read about in works such as Shakespeare's, light-skinned, blue-eyed type of characters. A major wave of influences happened during my undergraduate and graduate years. Without the diverse professors and their lessons, I wouldn't have been encouraged enough to write about my own culture. In graduate school, I learned about the need of representation of our culture, of minority groups, especially when it comes to writing, the urgent need of diversity. I wanted my thesis to be a representation of that. Of who I am; this complicated individual with a Mexican heritage, a traumatic childhood, a Christian with an ethical vegan philosophy mindset. If I wrote just about, say, Latino writing, without evoking the rest of my personality, then I'd go back to my childhood self, a sad attempt of writing what I see others write because that's the "norm" and I don't want to be part of the norm. I would have failed miserably of course, because I don't know how to write without the thoughts and traits I carry with me from infancy. It's a simple concept, I can't write about something I don't know. This work is titled, "Aliens" with the mindset that although finding meaning in life is very difficult and it may not make sense, a person can make sense out of it. In my case, I made art out of tragedy and gave meaning to it,



and also, there is no need for a sense of belonging if we create it ourselves. I want an uncomfortable feeling to grow from readers, but also make readers think and want to be themselves too. I want desires from the reader to bloom upon reading this work and want to chime in with their own art and experiences.

The base inspiration for *Aliens* comes from writer and scholar Gloria Anzaldua. Her work “How to Tame a Wild a Tongue,” from her book *Borderlands La Frontera* ignited the works’ creation with no filters and allow the speaker of each poem to freely express the themes in the work without fear of being silenced and with pride to represent diversity in the pages of the work. Her inspiration really pushed me to share parts of my Mexican heritage through the usage of ideas, objects, imagery, and certain items found in the poems, whether it’s specific food items or pieces of clothing, for example. A good example of this can be found in *Freedom in Feathers* in the lines which read, “smoke-scented braided woman with dirt and scraps of boiled beans under my nails.” This line comes from my upbringing where women would boil beans outside, as it was a cheap and filling food.

Having diverse writing is a pivotal means to not only dig the truth of the country’s history but also allow writers to create a culturally rich nation and have freedom of expression through writing. Gholdy Muhammad in his book, *Cultivating Genius*, says “One of the ways in which they set out to counter the conditions they endured during a time of racism and oppression was through reading, writing, and engaging with literary texts.” In a Poets and Writers’ article, titled, *Degrees of Diversity*, some students shared their fears when it came to writing about their heritage. ““I worry that my ignorance will get in the way of my intent to do no harm,” wrote one

student in an anonymous prompt from the article. Another wrote, “I worry that I don’t know how to write about my own people.”” (Larson) And the way to combat this is by continuing to learn more about ourselves and learning about diversity through schools, the world around, and self-reflecting in different mediums of art such as poetry or other forms of writing. It’s also necessary to have representation of different ethnic and racial groups in all lights, not just negatively as it often happens when someone writes about a culture they’re unaware of, and let viewers make their own judgement. Instead, creators of such shows or different forms of writing should also show the enrichment and beauty on the culture and heritage of each different minority group, not create or add to the negative stereotypes.

Due to the lack of representation or inclusion of cultures, even lack of undertaking what equity means, I wanted *Aliens* to serve as a lesson for readers who don’t know, and help break those barriers created for minority groups.

Other source of inspiration comes from writer Natalie Goldberg and her lessons found in *Writing Down the Bones Freeing the Writer Within*. Goldberg lessons allowed me to have a direction when writing and a destination. I was able to find a place I wanted to get to as a writer, while Anzaldua allowed me to free and create that world without fear of the place. Goldberg says in her book, “Writers end up writing about their obsessions. Things that haunt them; things they can’t forget; stories they carry in their bodies waiting to be released.” (42) Goldberg also allowed me to experiment when it came to the art of writing. For example, “Why do I write?” When writing *Aliens*, I couldn’t word it better than she does when she says, “Why do I write? I write because I kept my mouth shut all my life and the secret ego truth is I want to live eternally and I

want my people to live forever... I write because I'm alone... I write because I am crazy, schizophrenic. I write because there are stories that people forgotten to tell, because I am a woman trying to stand up in my life. I write because to for a word with your lips and tongue or think a thing and then dare to write it down so you can never it back is the most powerful thing I know.” (123-124)

The actual contents of some poems come from different sources of influences such as Eco-Fiction. Barbara Kingsolver's book *Flight Behavior*, is an eye-opening book which conveys an urgent call for social justice for the environment and in the story of the novel. Similar themes calling for justice for the environment can be found in works such as “The Earth in Me,” or “Trees in Heaven.” The poem “Trees in Heaven,” uses biblical references to compare the eternal and paradise where trees will not perish, as in today's society; there are many forests being torn down today and just the overall destruction of the environment. Everyone dreams of a place where no such thing will continue in the future.

Other works which inspired the diversity and my heritage to become a major part of my work comes from Gloria Anzaldua, Sandra Cisneros, Emmy Pérez and Erica Garza-Johnson. These powerful, Latina women greatly encourage me as a writer to write who I am as a descendent from a Mexican family living in American soil. This includes not only writing about the confusing part of who I am as a Mexican-American, but the little things which make me who I am. We find a lot of references to Mexican-American culture throughout the work. I believe diversity has no ends, as it comes in different shapes, forms and colors as previously stated. Throughout my years of undergrad and grad studies, I read on different diverse groups which

pushed me as a writer to share my own piece of my culture, beliefs and who I am as a person. Specific writers are Tommy orange, Henry Gates, Angie Cruz, George Takei, and Haruki Murakami, to name a few. A lot of their works allowed me to share different parts of myself, in an autobiographical means embedded in poetry.

*FAT: The Story of My Life with My Body* by Jean Braithwaite inspired me to share pieces of my life in my poetry, especially to view bodies positively. Jean Braithwaite's powerful memoir is raw and honest. This is something I couldn't do before, but I did my own twist, it's something which is left ambiguous on the pages of *Aliens*. Although some of the poems are autobiographical, there's a line which blurs the distinction between what is based on reality and what is fiction. When reading Braithwaite's book, I connected to her work. I wanted my readers to have that same connection with my work, but I couldn't do it. I still managed to share a big portion of my life as much as I could. The best way I expressed my life experiences is by the of usage of figurative language which takes away the focus from the author and redirects it to the speaker.

*Aliens* explores a variety of themes, all taking place on the physical versus spiritual setting. Some themes on the work revolve around gender, patriarchy and family relationships. In "Our Women Warrior," and "To Become a Man," the poems revolve around powerful women in a male-privileged world. The speakers of these poems are women who are not aware of their strength as females, but the reader can witness it by the actions of the women. character battles with becoming Especially one that is the standard in Mexican cultures, men and women have

certain rules and behaviors to adopt as per their culture. This is why another light shed on themes goes into gender and the patriarchy found in families.

In poems such as, “I’m not his Daughter,” “HAIR,” or “My Father’s Son,” share the complex relationship between a female daughter and a bad father figure who carries a specific mindset which comes from their culture. The speakers from these poems are different characters, often sharing strong feelings of fighting the patriarchy of a male-dominated world where the speaker has to keep up and continue to fight against it or become part of it. Although, we often see there is strength on the hands of the speaker, it’s not enough to save herself in the conflict of the poem. But it also does not allow the speaker’s mind be overtaken by the evil characters from the poem, instead the speaker express a feeling of alienation.

Other complicated family relationships can be found in poems such as “Fur and blood” or “I ate through the Umbilical Cord.” These poems share the complicated relationship within the same family but instead of a relationship with a father as the previous poems, they shares the complex relationship between other females in the families. “Fur and Blood” shares the war and separation amongst siblings. The speaker of the poem is the eldest of the pack of wolves, and there is fighting for protection with the youngest wolf, but at the same time, there is war between the two. In the poem, “I ate through the Umbilical Cord,” there is a complicated relationship with the speaker and her mother using biblical references such as salvation in order to convey the message of saving the mother. This poem explores the way the speaker feels bound to her mother by using the comparison of a child bound to a mother through an umbilical cord in the womb.

Although themes vary from poem to poem, the connecting concept across poems is the concept of alienation. This is why I decided to work on each poem as a group. With this said, I made sure there was a concept behind each poem and connected back to the concept of alienation, or the sense of not belonging in different ways, whether that is biblically, economically, due to society standards for example. For one, biblically, Jesus was a prime example of an alien during the New Testament, which is the reason why Jesus was crucified to begin with. The term is also used in the legal system to describe someone who comes to the United States and is not legal in the country. The most popular understanding of the term aliens comes from UFOS, or in current terms UAP's, which is a being society does not understand nor know much about which is why I decided to play with Roswell, a UFO incident along with other interesting topics, such as information from articles shared by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Another important concept comes from Marx's theory of Alienation, a concept revolving under capitalism. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx shared the concept of workers feeling alienated from the work they perform for employers.

Gender is one of the primary, revolving themes in the work, specifically femininity and what it means to be a woman. Poems such as "Uterus" or "Chicken Eggs" make reference to this idea. "Uterus" compares a decaying Venus flytrap with a uterus. Although there are some clues as to why the uterus is being compared to a decaying plant, it's not really concrete, I wanted a level of ambiguity in order to represent different uterus in women, a uterus which cannot reproduce, a uterus with cancer or a uterus which is sick, for instance, and the speaker has no control over. I wanted readers to relate to this poem along with the poem "Cancer," a short Haiku

referring to the illness. “Chicken Eggs” is another reference to women roles and in this poem, the speaker explores the strong dislike for bearing children by comparing women fertility and motherhood with chicken and eggs. This narrative poem doesn't make comparisons the way the poem “Uterus” does, and instead shares a piece of the speaker’s life, heavily focusing on the eggs on her fridge and the absent hen which laid the eggs. There is also a section of the poem which reads, “For a second, I wonder if its egg bleeds inside,” and ends with, “The yolk and the white dance in delight and marry” which steps into the subconscious and deeper thoughts of the speaker which reveal more of the meaning behind the egg to the speaker which represents a child.

Another way I explore the concept of alienation is autobiographically. I incorporated different ways I witnessed alienation in my life and the world around me. I go through different phases from a traumatic childhood, events, both positive and negative and the way they affected me and turned them into a strange poem. I unintentionally incorporated this same concept onto the work where I leave the reader to assume, guess and use the surrounding lines and the rest of the poems to better understand the poem, the speaker and its contents. The poem “Angels’ Clipped Wings,” for example, use biblical references to metaphorically discuss animal cruelty by comparing angel wings being sold in a market, similarly to animal leather or other animal products. And other times, I do the opposite, I use nature images such as in “Blood and Water,” or “The Mountains’ Souls” in order to, once again, figuratively discuss biblical messages. This is personal taste, also a way to better understand certain messages. I also wanted to use this in order

to connect ideas across poems and in order to attract attention to the way one idea can be seen repeated on another work. I want repetition, but also connection.

The Bible is another great example when it came to the organization of the work. In the Bible, there are a lot of connections which are made from the old testament with the new testament and across books to understand parables, people and the entire book as a whole. This is how readers of the Bible often understand the Bible, they refer to other books within the Bible to understand another part of the Bible. This same tactic was used when creating “Aliens.” When reading “Aliens,” I want readers to recall messages, characters, or revolving themes, objects, titles and ideas from one poem to another and even connect them, I want them to create their own meaning. I believe the speaker to be a part of my personality, but it is not me. There has been a separation between the writer, myself, and the speaker, but they do carry traits from my own persona and my own shy, introverted personality.

The title of the work, “Aliens” is a not only a great representation of the concept of alienation found in the main concept shared across from poem to poem. But it also becomes a given identity to the lack of identity of the speaker or characters out of place in the poems.

There are a myriad of comparisons made, some come as metaphors or similes, each varies in complexity depending on the message or the work itself. In the poem titled “Aliens,” there is comparison between what is known as UAP’s, or previously known as UFO’s. The poem uses references to the Roswell incident. It turns the city into a character in the short story confined in the lines of this poem, although it visits different themes and ideas. “Aliens would just cut us in half, let the aliens eat the children,” it reads in one of the lines. This references back



to Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*. The idea behind this line, along with a few other lines embedded in the poem, is that people are not the most humane in the American capitalist society, something taught in Karl Marx' *Communist Manifesto*, and society should rather feed the children to the Aliens. What exactly are the aliens is not necessarily the creature in the sky, but rather government control, or authoritative groups in America. This is another important message found in the thesis, a strong dislike for America and its power. In the poem, "Women Warriors," the poems strongly speaks on gender, but it also discusses government control. In its ending lines, it reads, "Roaming cautiously, plotting to kill the pig on the throne, they will feed their children pork tonight." This line references back to the current president of America. When this poem was written, Donald Trump was in office which is who it was directed to. As a creative, free-spirited writer, I also want to give freedom to the reader to give a name and a face to the ruler, whether it is a president from another country or another form of authoritative control. Another important piece which focuses on injustices is "We'll Make Them Care About Us." This piece is a response to Michael Jackson's "They Don't Care About Us," a political piece which calls attention to prejudice and injustices. When writing this piece, I wanted to give it my own twist and my own cultural issues but make this piece connect to Jackson's piece. The use of italics in this piece is also important, as it is an outside voices which is not the speaker, but are also victims of prejudices. Throughout the poem, I also kept in mind events against people of color or even references to *Native Son* by Richard Wright, for example, "call for desperate times, so teach me how to steal the color from a girl's skin." In these lines, the "her" was inspired by

*Native Son*'s character Mary, a young white girl who everyone unjustly believes Beassie, the protagonist, rapes and murders for the color of his skin.

Speaking on the usage of "we" or "us" is left for the reader to identify on their own who that plural pronoun belongs to. Sometimes it's not as clear, due to leaving this idea open to the reader. Other times, there are clues found throughout the work to piece together to find the characters on the work. I like to think of my work to be one huge puzzle.

Punctuation and the formatting of each poem has also been purposely set. There is a lot of enjambment when continuing ideas, while other times, I abruptly end the idea from the line. With a period such as "I have Fallen in Love with the Hunter" in order to close the poem, meanwhile other poems leave the idea hanging with no ending punctuation. Italics is another incorporation in the work, besides the previously discussed poem, "We'll Make them Care About us" another example can be found in "Pomegranate Milk," where there is a single line in italics in the poem reading, "The children are hungry." The line ends with punctuation as well. First, it's important to understanding the meaning behind the objects in this piece. This poem compares pomegranate juice with milk, a liquid which is often fed to babies or young animals. The color of the juice, the fruit in this piece is important, as it is a red color, similar to blood. This piece visits two important messages, first, it visits animal cruelty, the representation of blood shed through the "pomegranate milk," while also referencing back to aliens. With this said, the italics refer back to the people hungry for shedding more animal blood. Another idea found in the piece heads back to government control. The italics serves as an outside voice,

sometimes it also serves as a subconscious. This also allows the reader to understand the speaker's madness or rage.

Other references used throughout the poem is by the use of comparing human concepts or feelings with animals. This idea comes from my personal love for animals, but also heavily influenced by Norwegian singer AURORA who uses animals in some of her songs. When writing *Aliens*, I listened to *Infections of a Different Kind*, Volume 1 and 2 along with *The Gods We Can Touch*. The most memorable lyrics which stuck to me were the lyrics from her song, *Animal* where the speaker of the song makes a comparison between the speaker and an animal. Throughout my years, I have also come across similar comparisons, so I wanted to continue this connection between animals and people and placing them on the same scale. Although, I used this comparison more aggressively. This is why throughout the poetry in *Aliens*, there are a lot of times where humans are compared to animals for their animalistic behavior. One example is found in "Dyr," a poem which uses a lot of dark imagery to convey the message of the animalistic behavior from humans.

The majority of the poems are very loose when it comes to format, specifically the division of stanzas and lines which influences the speed of each work without necessarily being too strict on the rest of the formatting of the poem. Other formats do follow specific poetry rules such as "Ice is for Iced-Tea" or "Cancer" which is Haiku. Although, there are a few poems I wrote in a specific format, the majority of the poems I wanted them to be written more loosely because the visual aspect of the poem also has meaning. I want readers to look at the work and say, "This is unusual." The same way I felt about my life. Of course, I wanted a level of understanding too,

but throughout my years in graduate school and even from other artists, I learned that writers don't have to explain the meaning to the bone of the work and if there is a need to leave ambiguity in certain pages, then that's okay. I want to be able to express a free-spirited creativity on the page without being confined to so many rules or writing expectations, especially because the pages contain myriad of topics from astrophysics, astronomy, philosophy, and even biblical. I don't want my work to be easy, I want it to be outside society understanding's if possible as crazy as it sounds.

In the beginning of my Creative Writing studies, I had no idea what exactly creative writing meant. I just thought it meant write whatever our heart desires without owing it to the reader if they understand or not. Of course, I believe that to be true to an extent, but as writers we want to be able to have some level of message embedded in the work, and some level of understanding, even if research from their part is necessary. This is something that took time for me to comprehend and to apply to my writing. I first wrote, just wrote. Professor Emmy Perez, UTRGV professor, I remember would encourage us to write in her courses. And that's a great start, but then I didn't know what to do with my mass amount of writing. It took me a lot of studying, practicing, reading, and writing to finally understand what I wanted for my own writing.

Point of view was definitely intense because even I didn't know who the "you", the "I," or even "we" was, I was just writing. Throughout revisions, I learned to be able to give a corresponding individual to the pronouns in each poem. The speaker is usually "I," who is often a product or a piece of me, but not me. And oftentimes, I will place the reader within the poem in

order for them to see themselves in the nature of the poem to think. Some poems are about society, and other times, the usage of plural pronouns is to represent the other characters, or even other personality of the speaker, sometimes it can also be the world overall. For the remaining of pronouns used, I oftentimes have other characters without being so direct about it, I often go back to literature and the way I grew up analyzing work when I was younger and think how I want that for my audience. I want my poems to be a playground of weird, interesting art, this is how I define writing for myself.

The setting of the entire work sits on a plane which constantly changes from a spiritual realm and reality on earth. This spiritual versus physical world is constantly seen across poems, sometimes direct and sometimes only inferred. It's important to note that the work is inspired by the Bible and the idea of heaven exists in the pages of *Aliens*, a hopeful place which exists in the mind of the writer and oftentimes in the head of the speaker as well. Although both the writer and speaker have yet to experience what heaven is, there is hope to reach it and is constantly discussed and explored in the poems. The spiritual world in a negative light is also explored, especially in a dimension where insanity constantly revolves around the speaker. Certain problems share a delusional dimension such as "HAIR" where the speaker finds herself in a world made of hair. Another example can be found in "I Have Fallen in Love with the Hunter," where the speaker is so obsessed with being murdered by the hunter, every page delivers a touch of insanity, such as when the speaker refers to the hunter by saying, "with desires to rip my skin, and the hope to caress my thighs with the back of his knife."

Other biblical references shared in the poem which illustrate a more optimistic dimension and future such as heaven can be found in the poem “Midnight Dance.” Although there is little to no direct biblical references, the poem is about a person who is dancing to honor God prior to dying. The speaker here is the person narrating the poem, which is the reason why the poem is told from a third point of view. Understanding that there is a hanging speaker which doesn’t seem to have a role in the work and seems more like a narrator is important. Although it’s left for the reader to make their own guesses who this other speaker is, whether it is the writer which plays a character in the poem or it’s a insignificant character thrown in the work.

Culture is important in the work, something heavily encouraged by many of the inspirational writers. Emmy Pérez’s *The River in our Faces* influenced the body of water which is now present in the pages of my own work. Understanding the meaning and symbolization of bodies of water such as rivers, oceans, leaks, for instance, helps better understand the rest of the poems. Water is seen across poems, one example can be found in “Iced for Iced-Tea,” where the poem ends with the following line, “The prey is spotted, and like ice, it will soon float in the waters too.” Since this poem explores immigration, the legal concept of what it means to be an alien, the usage of water here is more negative. Another example where water is used negatively can be found in “Vampires Drinking Coffee Lattes,” a silly poem which brings cultural diversity to the Gothic fiction. There is a line in this work which says, “there’s so much love in the water I drink, I have to spit.” In other poems such as “My Father’s Son” or “Mud Princess” the poem uses water more positively where water is part of the speaker, both symbolically and anatomically.

The imagery behind Aliens is crucial and helps create the syntax and overall language in the poem. It's important to note that the speaker of the poem uses all five senses and even more, it shares the world or dimensions the speaker lives in, and sometimes even speaks in a spiritual way. "Ice is for Iced Tea," for example, reveals to the reader the speaker's surroundings which is the forest, this is by using a variety of senses and gives room to the reader to learn about the location and the other character on the poem. Other examples which use a more figurative imagery to achieve a more mystical and fantastical world through the usage is "Angels' Clipped Wings," the speaker uses different senses to portray a market where angels wings are being sold to demonstrate a bigger and underlying message which consists of sharing the urgency to care for animals. Each poem has a different urgency to attract the attention of the reader, some poems are more calm and soothing with the way they describe the setting while others are more aggressive such as Fur and Blood which uses a lot of darker images.

The goal for the poems is to attract the attention of the reader and make them think and understand through contextual clues, learning about the environment, the mood, and tone, any shifts and any conflicts happening. Oftentimes, the speaker, or the character of the poem is a weak individual trying to do something but not being able to and instead the character shares the desires of change with the reader. This is why a lot of the poems will sound hopeful and sudden shifts can happen which will disrupt and turn the poem into a helpless and depressive work which doesn't often follow with a happy resolution or any resolution whatsoever. I didn't believe in resolutions existing in the work but in hopeful moments which is the reason why some poems throughout the end of Aliens are more hopeful.

The way *Aliens* is organized is for the reader to use previous poems as a form of reference to understand complex, future poems, as the reader moves forward. Some characters do jump from one poem to another, sometimes they're smaller characters in the work, sometimes they are just ideas or objects which do the same trick. This is in order to have the connection flowing from poem to poem and have all the poems be parts of one story which doesn't necessarily connect, but a better way to see it is by being able to understand that there are different stories being told at once. It's up to the reader to choose what to do with the information brought from the speaker of the poem. Sometimes, I felt that the speaker just wanted to speak and share feelings without doing anything while other times, the speaker screams at the face of the reader and urges them to do something. The urgency depends on the poem, and it is up to the reader to decide. As stated previously, *Aliens* is just a dark and intriguing puzzle.



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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

### ALIENS

#### FLOATING CADEVERS

I'm Just Nervous

It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
*But why would anyone want to hear me speak?*  
*Because I need to learn. y no ser chiflada como decia mi papa.*

*I need to say the correct thing...or he will hit me.*  
It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
*What is the correct thing...? Are all fathers like this?*

No one likes purple-colored bruises on their tiny, chubby arms and lie of their origin.  
It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
*What do you want me to tell you?*

That I can't speak. i cant speakanymore i—  
It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
CANT SPEAK ANYMORE. I'M MUTE.

*Su voz vive en mi cabeza mientras que veo como saca su valiosa pistola una y otra vez.*  
It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
*¡Hable recio! ¡Callese la boca! ¡Que no entiende!*

*What do you want me to tell you?*  
It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
*That I'm just nervous?*

*I'm sorry I cannot speak up when you ask me to come to the board.*  
It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
*I'm sorry I cannot participate like everyone in this class. There is so much in my head...*

*What do you want me to tell you? That I'm just nervous?*  
It was just best to be mute than see the gun out.  
I'm just nervous.

## Angels' Clipped Wings

Angels' clipped wings are  
sold in the corner market,  
Soft wings spread out on dirty tables-  
I want to be kissed by the same  
elements which make these wings  
And feel the dirt under my nails be pure  
As their dresses

Men hunt angels with pretty faces  
and rosy cheeks with the fluffiest wings,  
Angels up there are not like the ones here,  
stuck in stone adorning unhappy gardens

When their wings are clipped,  
even their screams are heavenly,  
their language is a distortion  
to my sinful ears,  
This is a dialect I will never understand,  
If I had the bills, I, too,  
would buy angels' clipped wings

Angel wings on the walls, used as rugs,  
and around a mother's wrist  
For her birthday, wiped clean from blood.  
Brother, see the beaten spine,  
And smell the clots of blood stinking the air.

Water disintegrates the blood which is now soup,  
The charcoal used floats around us,  
The old lady at the marker told me  
it's a sin to put it under the fire,  
but persisted on selling me a pair.

We will sleep in hell

The Monte knows my name

With a mouth full of mesquite sap  
the monte calls me by name.  
It says every syllable with a wet tongue.

The monte keeps my secrets in its dirt,  
and it sends moths to visit my mind  
to remind me of my past and future names.

The monte has buried the corpses  
of my ancestors' names in the back of my eyes  
and wakes them up with a shofar,

In dresses, made from skin pig and coyote fur,  
my ancestors dance on my sclera,  
the purest form of my body.

Heaven is in the monte,  
it's the grip and the blood in the branches,  
it's the water and the spirit of the hibiscus flowers.

The monte has marked my name  
and my ancestors'  
in the shape of moles across my body.

## I'm Not His Daughter

My mother vomited my body onto my father's sheep's pen  
where I roamed on his sacred, decaying ground  
with his devil eyes imprinted on my back.  
His eyes chained my fine soul and fed me ashes of those he wanted to kill.

I was a newborn lamb when he lead me out of the pen;  
he held my neck with his hands and tied my tail.  
He swore he loved me and sent me back to the pen and  
every step, I could feel the tightening of my tail.  
The bleeding drenched my white fur.

In his enclosure, my father showed me the way to haunt birds,  
he taught me how to eat the piglets and fight other lambs.  
He made me dig the hard soil to build my mother's resting ground.  
I've ran through these woods every season, my footsteps are marked on the ground.  
I collect every prey's head as a trophy to bring back to my father-  
*He said I'm not the prey.*

I have killed my sisters and brothers,  
and he did not allow me to mourn their death because I'm strong.  
His hands have yanked the wool from my skin,  
his fingers touched my lids before tagging me as his.  
My heart no longer beat alone; it beats with the ones my hand slaughtered for him.

His skin is now my skin, I'm a creation of his conscience in flesh.  
I dance in his pen with no tail, and with blood buried under my fingernails.  
I eat the bones his dogs choke on, I don't recognize my reflection in the water.  
Even though I am really him in the shape of a weak, furless lamb,

I'm not his daughter.

## Freedom in Feathers

There's blood of Aztecs keeping my cold-murderer organs alive  
I'm a quiet, smoke-scented braided woman with dirt and scraps of boiled beans under my nails  
With tired, coyote eyes, I don't hunt for my meals, I allow myself to be hunted  
I live under my mother's peach tree and make tea out of its leaves all year,  
And when I scream, the breath of peach is the only thing hear.

My skin is made of mud and mesquites  
with blood of naked women and men, children working bare foot  
there's blood of animals in the veins of my arms  
the indigenous and I are alike, but I don't recognize it, in fact, I am afraid I don't belong.  
In my dreams, I see the wildcat in my reflection, but I feel like the tribe's dog

I'll take you to my tribe, I am the chief, drink with us, run with us  
There's freedom in the feathers I wear in my hair, there's freedom in the hair on my legs  
We can swim to the land of the drumming  
Feel the breeze, dance with us, watch our ancestors' peach trees blooming

I imagine touching the peach's seed through my skin, the same way a mother feels her unborn's  
child through her stomach, and the same way we touch the earth's sin through the ground.  
We're so familiar with the feel and the sound, like a rumbling of animals running  
And our eyes when we found blood dripping in honey combs,  
While the singing roosters woke everyone in the village,  
there's freedom in the feathers I wear in my hair.

## Aliens

No one's prettier than Roswell—there's striking beauty  
in her grimy skin. I can even hear a celestial  
breathing from her hand when she pets me  
like the dog I am. Love grows  
from her palm and dies at her fingertips.  
She swears she's human, she loves to recite lies,  
but I know humans are lies in flesh.

Fathers steal their son's infancy  
and mothers break the necks of their children  
They collect ribcages for spices  
and wear braided-hair bracelets with crosses around their ankles  
Most children are never born, and those who are, are eaten,  
We should let the aliens eat them instead.

Aliens are born in the pyramids  
and rest on the breast of Roswell  
she doesn't let the dreams of men grow  
because she knows they starve of women agony,  
their heads are always on Eden  
it's kind of funny the way they believe Eden is a state of mind.

I give my last breath to the aliens—I sacrifice my soul for them to save our skies,  
But the human blood has corrupted my soul  
I just want to mutilate the flag like the aliens in my backyard  
I just want a world where four walls won't assault me  
I just want a tomorrow where an infinite number of myself exist

I wonder who gave humans the heavens to chew like that  
they demolish life with a thought. Nature roams in the herbs I drop in my pans,  
Your name comes close to a scream, but you don't even believe in the sun,  
Roswell could love better.

Fathers enjoy to break the spines of their wives,  
and mothers steal the voice of their daughters in silence  
Aliens would just cut us in half let the aliens eat the children.

Celestial beings know they will never love—  
we all know they just want to feed their hunger



Let them save the earth. We're a different kind of alien  
charismatically robbing the mana of this earth  
but we can't save it when  
we don't even understand who we are.

### Plastic Freedom

A tower of plastic is buried in the back of my throat  
where my dreams are bottled without caps, and they grow,  
open the earth in half, souls and plastics rest in origami style,

and let no one ask me to visit my home,  
it's just a tower made of plastic and sad prayers  
open our eyes, see around us;

plastic fragments in love, these chewed-up walls don't even  
collapse anymore,  
follow me to the inner caves of the atmosphere on earth

where the world is plastic from crust to  
core before my hand becomes plastic,  
and we never see each other again

And don't take me close to the sun,  
or anywhere where there is fire

The cosmos is filled with scraps and aggressive  
freedom I will never experience.

## HAIR

Yank my hair in your hand,  
let the strands slide through your fingers.  
Let the oils from my hair smear your skin.  
Your fingers sink into my scalp, flesh, nail and drops of blood.  
Allow yourself to grab however much hair from my head,  
these are the roots to my heart.

My white hairs are your favorite,  
They have become part of your skull; in the fall, I make  
my hair grow and hurt you in the most innocent way.  
Braid my hair, brush it, kiss it; my hair and you will birth  
the other side of the world where palm trees grow hair,  
And the grass is covered in beautiful, gold locks of hair.

And the summers are filled  
with black hair raining from the skies,  
and all I see is your figure,  
collecting it like wheat and putting them in your basket,  
your hands eagerly tie them together.

You take a hard day's earnings home where  
your hall is filled with framed hair of  
every color, every length adorning your walls.  
Your hands love to pull them out and caress each one.  
You never forget your favorite sits inside the lilac vase,  
On your dinner table where you place and water my hair,  
you never forget to whisper it good night.

Don't forget to return  
and steal my hair until you leave me bald,  
let my tears and blood moisturize my hair to grow more for you.

## Our Women Warriors

Mothers tighten ribbons around their feet and blind the eyes on their ankles.  
Delicate hands aim arrows at the pig, their arrowheads ready for war.  
Barefoot they skip, dancing, they raise flags to the heavens, *eh, eh*, they hum—  
one roar sends them to the mountains; they will bleed here and they will die there.

Where is the beauty in a warrior woman's muddy face *now*?  
Cracked skin from childbirth, no splendor in her body, but dirt in her eyes.  
Hair crawling from her skin, it twists and turns she is ready to die just to kill the pig.  
Warrior women running at the tip of a vein where life begins and ends, *eh, eh*.

Roses with no petals rolling from a mother's bosom onto the earth,  
as her saddened eyes watch from above.  
Warrior women, breathing fire like dragons,  
their courage feeds oxygen to the children they brought.  
Flying next to the bees, they murmur and they hum,  
and with their feet, crush human spirits.

Women warriors fighting for their bottled freedom  
with the same gentle hands that care for birds and babes.  
Hungry bellies hunting while rocks rip  
the back of their throats as they slide.  
Roaming cautiously, plotting to kill the pig on the throne,  
they will feed their children pork tonight.

Dyr

Waking up by carcasses of men, baby-bottle-fed blood and flesh  
If only I could choose where to go to sleep every night.  
The stars are merely all I have, illusion-filled as my borrowed dreams  
if only I knew what to pray for  
We're all like animals on earth; hungry for money, desperate for love.

Heartbroken, baby-face, crying at the sound of cracking bones of a brother.  
We're all hungry and wild animals, killing for fun  
I cut the roots from a mother whom I despised for bringing me to the slaughterhouse  
I don't recall deciding to be fresh meat or the butcher

We're all animals, abandoned and wounded, ditched by greedy owners  
*Dance for them; dance! When have you heard dogs sing so angelically anyway?*

Animals like me always wished for miracles  
if I could only see my living reflections tomorrow  
If only I could savor the air and the vibration of freedom floating in the atmosphere,  
take death from my head and turn me into a tree  
let me be demolished, but don't let me be one of the circling ghosts

Free. Free. Free. i don't want to be an animal  
Free. Free. Free. i don't want to be an animal  
Free. Free. Free. i don't want to be an animal!

## Fur and Blood

All of our lives our bodies have been connected by the blood running in our veins  
Your eyes reflect the hunter I have become and my eyes reflect the weapon you were born to be.

In the forest, I protect you from the cold with my fur. Out here, I kill for some ribs and teeth with my bow and arrow, and angrily drag you from the desert on your lost battles, believing losing my voice and skin is worth saving you, but look at me now

Out here, we roam the woods like we own them; we break, we devour, we set it all on fire if we want; out here, if I am hungry, I eat.

Swipe the dirt from your face, slap the ants biting at your arms— no blood of mine will be enslaved to the ground get up, wake up! We must swim in the great ink where our blood will become anew once again.

Today, I eat with the wolves, tomorrow I eat them, and I expect you to have a fork in hand. Can you carry the carcass of the body I once carry in my bare back. Can you carry the weight of betrayal. Can your eyes watch the sinking of the skeleton which I once fed with my own hands.

For how long did I feel my fur when I saw yours, brushing our legs, a familiar scent. When did I start constructing my weapon to rip it off you. Where did this desire to cut your claws come from? When did we turn into such animals fighting to quench our thirst

In the forest there's only one king— I have fought with my small hands and won, with my blood I have sent messages to the birds to keep sending males to fight me, in the forest, we are free to fight and die

In the deserts, where the waves of dirt come down on us, trips us and send us down, how did the two of us end here, engraving our claws into our fur when did our blood become our water, our devotion for beauty when did our lives matter so much and so little at once,

Fight for the life once yours, *fight for* the blood in you, let the beasts take the life chaining you down, running away, hungry and terrified *what animals we have become*. In the forest there is only room for one king, one less body made of fur and blood.

## Volcano Lovers

Smooth veins formed in the ground to give me life. The village where warrior women hid could hear the gases escape into the clouds, as I made you when the villagers tried to make me erupt. You became part of the puffs of stars and you became the molten rock which I sacrificed. You were the hands that made me rip my body to leave my home. We were two volcano lovers running to live in the ocean where the palm trees would shade us and we could be beautiful.

My head found comfort resting in the coal you made while we traveled. I could hear the palpitations from those who worshipped you when we slept. Your love burned for me, and I danced in the fire you made. We were one, and we sang and when we talked, it was just one voice. But when we got to the ocean, it was just me. You were no longer the smoke, a distant drumming, the crunching of pebbles when I was hungry.

I created you, and when we reached the sun, you understood it was time to go. Your heart was in my chest. I miss you, volcano, you have vanished into my skin. I rest in pain, deteriorating in merit, my tears never cease to end. Yet I rest in peace in the vast ocean alone.

## Mud Princess

I am made from dirt and water  
Salt and nopales keep my figure standing  
I have lived in my father's mountains all my life  
And eaten from the cavern walls

My children will find comfort in the cactus  
that forms my ribcage  
And feed on the hatred that I crocheted into my skirt.  
I don't understand love.

I wear beans as jewels on my crown  
I want to form legacy in the mud we build our houses from  
And play loud music with demanding screams  
using bones, and I pray my father hears, and he is proud of me.

I am the mud princess—I shield from the cold with banana leaves  
And my brown-sugar skin is imprinted by the sun like a cattle's skin  
I belong to a man  
I don't understand love.

I dress in legumes and lentils  
I can only breathe in smoke  
this clear air shows no mercy and chokes me  
There are markings on my feet from all the running

I am the mud princess—I bring prayers in exchange of  
Clap. Let me wipe the mud from your face and make it  
part of my soul.

## Anacahuita Trees

Anacahuita trees grew in the backyard of my home in Mexico  
I fell in love with the way its branches twisted to the skies as it grew  
And its leaves covered the ground in waves  
And the way in which it fought with vines from growing on them

Anacahuita trees were marked by the rope of resting horses,  
Its branches absorbed their sweat and made salty olives  
their intricate roots broke the ground  
I fell in love with the beauty in which I ripped its skin and it remained in silence,

In the depths of these trees is my home,  
yet I don't belong here.

One evening I collected all the anacahuita olives  
And a chicken and I sat quietly eating the fruit and swallowing the seeds

To the trees which have been cut  
To the trees which never bloomed  
To the trees which winter slurped  
To the trees which are now furniture  
To the trees which were sold  
To the trees which left roots trying to live again

In heaven, anacahuita trees will grow from the palm of my hand, and their seeds will be the milk  
for my children; in heaven, the trees will never die.



## Ears

There is gold rotting my earlobes  
and infections creeping onto my ear canals

Miracles and bone make up the cartilage from my ear,  
and the indefinite tunnels in my ears take me to the conscience of women,

At dawn, when daughters sing,  
I can hear the melody in their agony

They want mothers to love them as much  
as they love their fathers, but mothers only have one heart

My ears connect me to the voice of young girls,  
who kill each other in rage and in hunger

In this world, I can hear the curses and prayers  
of every woman cemented into the walls of homes

My ears can hear the desires for love in the silenced  
voice of women bowing their heads and touching doors in fear.

## Chai Tea

I drink chai tea from a fine ceramic cup  
by a window which has a provoking and arrogant sunlight  
The dust in the air, which comes in dancing, touches my cheeks  
My lover sits next to me and admires me in a dress and asks for a taste

As he nears, I can still feel the velvet from his shirt and the feel of his silky curls  
He reaches out to touch my hand, but there is still grease from the mountains  
from where I used to live, so I draw away knowing he will ask to bathe to scrub it away  
But deep inside I still feel like a pig in a dress.

Even when he holds my hair as I walk through his castle  
I'm made from cheap wax and grease with roaches crawling from my  
hair and there are stains in my feet, and my breath still stinks  
And even though he replaced my teeth with gold,  
I am toothless, my teeth are still in the walls of the mountains.

In the mountains, I drank with cupped hands  
And as much as I want to now, I get distracted looking at his glass-stained eyes  
wondering how it feels to own a girl, her hair, and her name.  
My chai tea is so bitter, I forget,  
the sugar sits at the bottom and I need to stir.

## I Have Fallen in Love with the Hunter

In nights like these,  
when the trees have made me a prisoner with their eyes,  
and the mercy of sleepwalking calamities save me again.  
I dream of the hunter's bow, and the way it sings as it chases me.  
Reminding myself that he will return the next day to steal my fur,  
brings warmth to my insides.

*Danza, danza a la libertad donde el mundo termina  
Danza, danza a el amor que solamente conozemos entre tu y yo y nos levanta cada mañana*

He comes dancing from his village,  
and the scent of the sweat resting on his forehead, calls me.  
Upon sight of his weapons, my heart palpitates faster.

I have fallen in love with the hunter and his arrow.  
The way in which he chases me through the core of the earth,  
with desires to rip my skin, and with hope to caress my thighs with the back of his knife.

*Danza, danza, a las maravillas de los sueños que jamás pensamos que existirían  
Danza, danza, porque eres la razón de las santas cortadas bajos mis pies*

I have danced with the hunter for years.  
It is now time- the arrow is finally inside of me,  
and I am inside of the arrow.  
There is no escape, behind me there is only the river.  
The blood and the water mix  
and make their way to my mouth.  
I need to die by his hand.

*Danza, danza, que el cazador no es el que caza, si no el que muere  
Danza, danza, que el danzador alegre nunca muere, solo nace una y otro vez a danzar*

I love the shine in your blade and the way you look at me  
Tell me how much you want me one last time.

## We'll Make Them Care About Us

I am trash, waste, the dirt under animals' feet.  
*Bang, bang, there goes the last hour of his shift.*  
*Bang, bang, there goes my last breath.*  
While the universe unfolds in my mouth,  
the stars seek refuge in the palm of my hand.  
I can never finish painting enough murals to say stop.  
That is just the way I am, I love to eat trash in fine China bowls.

Look up, I will never be  
a man,  
a woman,  
a person,  
a human,  
society hates me, and that's just the way life is.  
I walk in line, I walk in silence, and  
if I'm lucky, I'll get fed by the same hand that kills me.

## *I wish I could be loved*

I'll buy the color from anyone's skin, but desperate measures  
call for desperate times, so teach me how to steal the color from a girl's skin.  
I need to rinse my hands well, and make sure I put a cheap price for my presence alone  
I watch how men love to enslave themselves to coins  
and I don't forget they like to date walking computers.  
*How cheap, well, it's a nice piece of scrap metal to entertain a man, and*  
*They do say some nice things a man likes to hear!*

## *Raise those fists, drop them harder, hit them harder against American concrete.* *Make them bleed!*

I want the odor to hit my nose a mile away like period blood.  
I won't let the world squeeze me into white, Thank You plastic bags.  
*Who is crying?*  
No segregation, no selection, no separation,  
Where is the color in that?

If someone stands with me,  
I'll make them care about us!  
*Stomp those feet I said stomp those filthy feet.*  
I'll make them care about us!

*Raise bleeding fists, let them drop, give them their money.  
Let them drown in their salads and ranch, I can hear how funny they laugh  
We'll make them care about us!*

*Feed the hungry hands- can someone possibly feed one more hungry  
soul who roams around McDonalds, please? No?  
It's the skin color, it's the wallet, it's the knowledge...isn't it?  
We'll make them care about us!  
Who are you talking about? It's in your head. No one is here.  
Sanity pills for one more please.  
I am so lost now, I don't see anyone anymore.  
I'm choking on my own saliva again  
I don't even know what to say, does anyone?  
We'll make them care about us!*

*Who?  
Anyone.*

*Give me the baby powder to make me white—  
I wish everyone could be loved.*

## To Become a Man

I overheard my father teach my brother  
how to be a man. He told him,

Speak loudly, slap a hand, and don't pick after yourself  
Don't be afraid to cry, but do it in the dark  
Morning prayer coming out of man is a pity  
Fight ANYONE to death and lie mercilessly

There is a fire in your hands enough for one trip to hell and back, *use it.*  
Beat ANYONE to their knees and stand your guard  
Even if there's a piece inside you starving for love  
I know you want it, don't let your guard down and run  
You don't want to be free and run from your manliness

I want to watch you steal a woman's heart and body and give it away  
Never come back, enlighten the world with your selfishness.  
Show the world how much better you are; let me feel the way a hand slides down a throat  
Sanity is not worth it, the way your angry voice sound does,

No one wants to drown, everyone wants freedom that tastes of American apple pie,  
Human bodies are weak, but not yours, you ever heard of monsters?  
Those don't exist, but man does.  
*Remember that.*

Don't carry a daughter on your back, don't leave her food and allow her to starve,  
Hide yourself in the masculinity caves around you by dancing on the fire,  
I'll teach you how to be a man,  
I'll show you how to raise a hand which builds fear,  
I'll show me how to kill mercilessly in the name of hate.

I want to be a man like my brother, I want to be taught that too,  
I want to have my weak-minded soul slapped and be shown how to hurt a life,  
I want my delicate hand to be made firm and rough, I want my father to hit it, hit hard  
I want my father to make me a man, I want to be like him, is it so wrong I want to be like him?  
Even though I am a girl, I want my father to give me the option to be a son. To be a man.

I won't be weak, I give up my femininity, I return my features,  
I want to fight anyone like my father, like a man,  
Who wants hips, I refuse to bear children,  
I want to be show how to hold and strike from here,

Pull my luscious hair one by one, no shining lips  
Splatter dirt into my face and grease into my hair.

My thoughts are betraying me...

*I hate the way a man will always be above me,  
I hate the way man will always exist,  
Diminishing me, taking my place, and stealing everything I want  
Always better, just stronger and a presence that takes over the girls any time  
But when will they know love doesn't come in silver platters served by men. No men.  
I don't want to be a man, I want to be better than a man.*

Man or woman, we're not the same, a man is the hunter and we women are the prey  
We run, we get shot down, it's all a game of love  
A man can sell my body and he will get his money. Where is it now?  
It's buried ten-thousand feet underground,  
He is so smart, I'm sure he counted every foot down. I need to be a man.

*Don't make me laugh, I'll beat your laughter as soon as I can,*

I'm listening to my father's voice, he screams at my brother  
And he cries. He doesn't want to be a man. I do. I need to.  
I need to learn from my father, how to sleep at night doing the things he does.  
I need to be a man and fight, kill, destroy and lie...

*But my brother is crying...*

I need to be a man and stand up and save my brother,  
I need to crave for violence this is the only way to fight those filthy beasts.  
I need to learn, my father continues,

Don't ever run from the huntress, shoot her down with a kiss,  
It's how you win, a wake up in the forest and win,  
Be a man, know your place and turn the oceans' faucets  
Take the ocean in a sip and let everyone drown in their incurable sadness,  
Be a man, raise the flags to the war and fight for your comrades  
Be a man, raise your gun to the sky and bring those comrades down with your hand.  
Be a macho man, love the purity in the drying planet and the way we crush over everyone

My brother got slapped for crying.  
If I have to become like you to end you, I will,  
I promise.

### The Boar-Headed One

You give up your beautiful daughters to the one with the boar head,  
The boar feeds them rose petals and chains them in gold,  
Unlike fathers and their silly lovers,

We all see young ladies put down their backs for living room rugs  
And their faces to decorate parties and a grandma's kitchen  
And when they're old enough, they change owners

The one with the boar-head doesn't sleep,  
His hands are always full of cookies and a fridge filled with ice-cream for beautiful ladies,  
Richer than older brothers,

The boar-headed one walks through school halls, supermarkets  
And playgrounds with expensive rings and scraped knees,  
You gave up your beautiful women you can't care for without knowing.

And in the morning when they wake up, they find their clothes washed and folded,  
They dance in silk dresses, and there's breakfast in bed, a kiss for every single one of their toes,  
The boar-headed one even wears a maid outfit when it's time for Matcha tea with the girls.



## Pomegranate Milk

She steals pomegranates from flea markets' stands  
and eats the seeds to grow pomegranate on her insides  
to make pomegranate milk for the baby aliens.

There is milk pouring from her eyeballs  
and we are thirsty  
If she doesn't milk enough veins, we won't have the milk to feed us,

So she makes pomegranate milk  
but she also wants to bathe in the pomegranate milk  
and she wants to suck the fruit.

*The children are hungry.*

She puts her spirit and her thoughts in a blender  
along with the pomegranate milk  
and lays pomegranate skins on her face while she waits.

She sets a glass of pomegranate milk on her dinner table ready.

## The Art of Washing Dishes

When I look up, there are ceramic fruits on the wall  
and if I look down, the hands of poor men are imprinted  
in the designs on the tile below my feet,

Our sinks sit in front of windows religiously  
and screams of angry husbands fill the air.  
A tired hand with arthritis scrubs

the rag between my body, and the sink doesn't  
stop me from getting wet—  
People like me have always known what it means to be in the water—

it's like an aggressive stroke, an angry whisper.  
A quick glance behind me  
a room so hot it burns the wax from my ears.

The porcelain plate drowns into the water, aggressive scrub,  
and I allow it to breathe, and back into the water it goes,  
before I put onto the rack to dry

Pork burns in the pan on the stove  
The smoke fills the air  
Feet shake the kitchen floor.

## Old Fridge

You are the fridge in my parents' home   You are the harsh rust washing over the metallic skin  
You are the black water sitting in the back, stinking the atmosphere   You are the sticky, candy  
wrappers hidden in corners by chubby hands   You are the blinking bulb, someone'll lightly  
smack to turn back on   You are the ignored, fruit that'll attempt to guilt us into eating because  
inflation raised its price   You are the expired medication my mother faithfully believed regained  
my strengths   You are the leftover food from Thanksgiving, I was never thankful for   You are  
the stains on the walls, a recollection of memories of what we had   You, old fridge, can easily  
be replaced, but where would I put my meat when I come home?

## Midnight Dance

I can't see my hands in the dark, I only catch the gleam You put in my eyes  
When I flash past the mirror, and the lights shine directly onto my face.  
The wall spit the melody to the rhythm of my heart, □  
Witnessing the last day of this planet take an elegant leap, □  
When I jump and land on my feet, the world shakes and doesn't stop vibrating □  
If only I could stay in this little heaven You gave me for a little longer. □ □

The heat in my chest burns and spreads throughout my body, □  
The moon visits and stays to admiringly watch my midnight dance, □  
And like a delicate flower in the summer, I sway from side to side, □  
The nostalgia found in these four walls steals my tears, but I gracefully dance! □  
A swift step forward and a step back, and a slow-motion wrist-twirl □ A whirl in my body makes  
me quiver and sends me to my knees □ □  
A gentle kiss to the ground escapes my lips

## Ice is for Iced Tea

The white-tailed deer stands behind mold grown in pillars among caterpillars and indigo flowers. Little trees birth glowing, green leaves which push orange, tiny vines off the shrubs like crawling larvae. The buck's black-coal eyes catch the fawn dance across a pond and turns a curious ear to the giggling of children who shake the woods as they play. The rattling of their tiny feet in chanclas viejas scare raccoons quietly feasting. With a bitter mouth, taste of apple and corn, the deer gulps and stands in silence, following the sparrows being brushed off trees, and listening to the worried whimpering of a mother who places her index finger on her lips. The man who walks alongside her gently squeezes her hand, pulls the old suitcase closer to his chest, and turns a tearful eye to the children inching closer to the river. One of the birds stops by the water to say goodbye to its reflection and turns to look at two men drinking iced tea. "Because ice is for iced tea on a beautiful day for a game," one man says brushing dirt off his uniform while the other fixes the radio mounted on the side of his pants. The prey is spotted, and like ice, it will soon float in the waters too.

(The babe cries. The deer screeches.)

## Grandma's Koi Fish

My whole life, I watched the koi fish at my grandma's  
house come to the surface in its pond  
I was only two, and I wanted to know how it swam  
If it was hungry, how did it eat, how did it get there in the first place.  
I asked my grandma, "What is the scar on the top of its head?"

This is where it started. From there on, I just wanted to understand how things worked  
What people felt, and why they felt these things  
I wanted to understand the scars in their hearts like the scar on the koi fish  
and if God's words could cure their souls  
but grandma said, "Some things will never be known, and it's best this way."  
But I still wanted to understand, and I broke my heart trying to.

Now, I don't want to understand  
I'll let the wind twirl around me with no desires to grab it and attempt to save it  
I'll let the rain drown what it needs to drown  
I don't care to understand what happens when the ice caps melt anymore  
I could care less when the world ends, actually.  
The pond will eventually dry out, and the sun will no longer threaten to kill me  
because I will go the sun myself, and like the koi fish, I will dry and die in the heat,

Now that I look at my childhood photos  
where I stand next to my grandma's pond  
I think, how stupid of me, that wasn't a koi fish  
that was an ordinary fish swimming, it wasn't even orange  
I just didn't know the correct name of the colors  
and what was it to me if it ate or I ate it.

## Colonizer Knows Best

This world created me—  
Now accept me!

I think of the feathers in my grandfather's hair,  
and the way in which the colonizer snatched them away  
I run away from my own skin  
slash my own feet before the colonizer does.

Maybe one day, I will go back to my land  
find the feathers and put them on my hair like my grandfather did.

My people can't hear my voice  
they only hear the sound of the azadon when it pulls out weeds  
but we are secretly dancing with it.  
My people can't see me  
they only feel the coolness from my shadow when they're in the fields.

I wish I could run behind the screen  
behind the news,  
behind the lessons in public schools,  
behind laws and books like the colonizer does.  
Such a coward, hides behind taxes, applications and fees, but I can't read.

Walk into your churches, colonizer,  
You have created a god that looks like you,  
Dresses like you, walks and talks like you do,  
And only addresses people like you.

If only I could never bow my head again  
If only I knew how.

Tell me, colonizer, are miracles for your people beautiful?  
Where do they grow?  
Surely from heaven—I doubt they grow  
from the ground like ours.

I wish I could say what my identity is when I'm filling my voting application  
But I don't know that either. Only the colonizer would know, it is the colonizer who  
labeled my identity and placed it next to a checkbox for me to choose.

I want to hear my mother say my name  
but the colonizer stole that from me too  
she let the colonizer's shea butter melt shut her eyelids,  
it's an innocent way to blind herself when the colonizer did his best act—reshape my culture.  
My skin is the color of the ground, that's because  
that is where I belong, on my knees, my mother would say  
The colonizer not only intruded her thoughts,  
but even built a house of lies in her head.

Oh, we carry curses on our backs  
we carry curses in our necks  
we carry curses in our ankles  
and we carry curses in each of our ligaments.  
And we carry the colonizer along.

Tell me, colonizer, how does it feel like to be able to tell your children  
your ancestors killed my kind, that your great-great grandfather,  
sold a person in a market? Owned a person like an animal?  
Tell me, colonizer, how do you say these things?

Surely you lie.

And the mountains hear my cries,  
But they do not move the way they move for you, colonizer  
They don't even look my way,  
And when I get close, I am sent to the caves with one less limb.

I don't need a cure, I am fine, but the colonizer pulls out  
a stethoscope and says I need a cure  
My skin does not need a cure, *it needs freedom*,  
Freedom in the feathers the colonizer stole.

Tell my mother that even though she gave me life,  
The world created me  
and now it won't accept me.

Surely, the brown man will die alone and lost.



## Grandma's Shoes

I still don't know how my grandmother tied her braids  
Thin, long braids running on both sides down her back  
She had no hair ties, so she would use the same ends  
of her hair to tie her braids

She would cook eggs with butter in her rusty pans  
above the fire in her old stove, and the wind would come into  
the house and steal her flames through the holes  
in her walls as the only homemade decorations

I would always play her music box, a very cheerful song  
sung by some white man whom I could not understand  
Neither did my grandmother nor my mother, I would just listen  
before my mother would ask me to stop because I would use the battery up

My mother would always tell me how my grandmother  
would steal from their local corner store when she was a kid, candies and lollipops  
because my grandmother could only afford an ounce of cheese or meat  
and she couldn't bear to leave her kids craving some sweets

My mother never saw her again after we came to America when I was ten  
I learned to speak English with an accent, but I could somewhat read manuals now  
Grandma died and the last thing she asked my mother on the phone was for shoes  
but Grandma's legs were amputated years back due to diabetes and bad care from her son

Mother did not have any money for shoes, only a bad husband to beat her year round.  
I got paid today, I went and bought the shiny, black shoes Grandma asked for my mother  
They sit on the back of my closet, so they collect dust every day  
but I make sure to dust them because Grandma wouldn't wear dirty shoes anywhere  
"Pobre, pero limpia," my mother would say about her.

## My Father's Son

Even with an old woman's witchcraft hand, your herbs and teas  
I was destined to be your daughter  
no matter how much wishing you did to saints and candles  
I was destined to lose your last name.

You ripped my hair and made me swim and drown in the river to make a honeycomb our home  
you took the softness from my skin and the beauty from my lashes,  
you wanted a son, but you had a daughter  
and a what a disgrace when you had my sisters.

From the braiding of my hair to the bruises on my knees  
I will work our tierras and bring back the fruit to you  
even if you're ashamed to have a daughter  
I will work in the chicken's coop and bring every egg back to you.

With every scrape and every drop of my sweat running down my chest,  
I will work harder than your mules and run along your horses  
I will scrape the mud from under your feet  
Father, accept me as one of your sons.

I will learn to raise and kill our pigs  
prepare them in sacrifice to your name and cook them for you,  
in the casco— I will bring you the pig's head to eat  
Father, accept me one of your sons.

I have studied and written books to make you proud  
I have broken pencils and consumed lead  
The walls have collapsed over me when in fatigue  
and I have yet to hear your approval to be your son.

You do not look my way, the view of my body disgusts you  
you wanted a son to look like you, to dress like you, to walk and talk like you  
to take a woman and sit her on a chair and command her when to eat  
but instead, you will watch a man come and do that with me.

Father, accept me one of your sons  
You have pushed me and have hit me  
I have not cried, I have not once blinked or complain  
I am ready to take the world with your knife, teach me to be like your sons.

And even through the grace of God, He chose me to be your daughter-son  
If I had been born a man, would you have loved me?  
Would you have named me instead of asking someone else to name me  
because that was a chore.

I'm no mighty warrior, but I will run in the blazing fire  
I will work under the sun and watch my skin be caramelized  
for Father's approval, I will let the sun eat my skin  
and my hunger consume me and make me cry out to the heavens to reshape reality for you.

Father, accept me as one of your sons  
God did not want me to be a man.  
I was destined to be a woman  
his hand snaps mine when I ask to be the son you wanted.

Father, I have taken my skirts and dresses to burn  
I have set an offering in your name, and I have let my hair from my legs grow  
I want to be your son, but my anatomy comes from the water, and I cannot decide  
Please love me, even as your daughter-son.

## Sushi

The first time I had sushi, it was with Pierre and his friend  
The one who gifted us a Korean bill each  
which I still keep in my wallet today.

The Sushi was assembled in a porcelain plate, I was so hungry, I wanted to eat  
But I wasn't taught how to eat in the city; I didn't know how much to eat,  
There was sprinkled powdered and spices I couldn't pronounce.

There was ginger on the side, and warm soy sauce to dip the sushi in  
I wondered if I could warm my feet in the small bowl too  
I was ashamed when Pierre had to clean the food from the side of my lips

I was still an aggressive eater, but there was only delight in his eyes when he met mine  
It made me lose my appetite, noticing I was not eating with my ghosts  
did he eat with my ghosts prior to dinner?

*I was not eating with my ghosts.*

For him, I'd eat fish sushi and savor the scales in stripes, down my throat.  
But surely, I didn't have to, he saved the fish.

*I was not eating with my ghosts.*

The taste of sushi is still in my mouth today.

## Chicken Eggs

I gently wrap my fingers around the egg  
The poor, fragile thing feels cold  
It's been sitting on my fridge for a month  
My mother's hen hatched the egg but I don't eat eggs  
After the bloody egg I cracked when I was ten  
People should not eat eggs.

I want to free the chickens  
so, they don't lay a never ending ray of eggs for this world  
but the chickens want their chicks  
even chickens know they want to be mothers

For a second, I wonder if this egg bleeds inside  
I apply pressure with my fingers to this— *thing*  
I can feel the shell split in half, and a million tiny bits fly off  
The thick, sticky insides drip off my hand  
It will soon roll off my hand and land on the ground, *I can't stop it*  
The yolk and the white dance in delight and marry.

But how do chickens know they want to be mothers?  
Their eggs don't belong to them, the farmer sell their eggs  
The farmer is my mother.  
I would crack the egg one-hundred times more if I had to forcefully hatch like chickens.

The yolk smells awful  
How does anyone eat this?  
I let the rest of the egg go, the shell hits the ground  
There's a disarray of egg and thoughts on my kitchen floor  
My mother will probably send more eggs soon.

## I Ate through the Umbilical Cord

From the first nose bleed I got in order to save my mother, all I have seen since is red,  
Red in toothpicks, red in my notebooks, red in my walls, red in my hands  
The thread is red, but with a bloody mouth I ate through the umbilical cord.

My fingers are knots, I tied them myself  
I stopped searching for a connection  
so I ate through the umbilical cord.

My knuckles are locked, the way my ankles are strapped to my knees  
and I tell my mother to return the thread she stole from God  
which ended running through my nose when  
I ate through the umbilical cord.

There's nothing connecting my mother and I  
even the cells which we once shared  
I have destroyed them by running my skin under the fire.  
She showed me how when she demanded for me to learn to serve the men who hunt.  
But now I want hunt them.

The same waterfall that gives birth to the river where she washed my feet  
she will fall off the edge soon, I have asked to not step too close  
There won't be a cord to stop her from falling.

I don't know her anymore  
I refuse to give her salvation.  
My fingers are knots, I tied them myself, I told her  
So she could never yank because the end of the cord connected back to me.  
All she wanted was to serve the men who hunt.  
I can't save her because I will hunt them.

I ate through the umbilical cord  
and now she dances for the attention of the hunter  
And when he tries to hunt you  
you yank, you want me to save you, but there's no cord.  
I hear you scream my name.  
when she wanted me to learn to tie for hunters, I was learning for myself.

I can't save her anymore,  
I don't want to.

## Vampires Drinking Coffee Lattes

I was just fourteen reading vampire books  
when I suspected I became one of them  
In my mentally ill head  
I could swear I could feel fangs on my mouth  
and when I stopped seeing my reflection on the mirror  
I believed my parents when they said I was worth nothing

I just wanted to sleep in a coffin  
for the rest of my life but look at me now  
With garlic earrings and a matching necklace  
there's so much love in the holy water I drink  
I need to spit.

I am one of the vampires drinking coffee in the sun  
My writing forms the cathedrals they conceal their dead bodies in  
Every word written is a scream  
and every page is a lost breath, a lash which landed on my spine  
I don't need anyone, I could drink my own blood anytime

We are the brown-skinned vampires who eat toasted bread with stakes  
while we watch the world burn  
We laugh at the tickles when someone tries to pierce our dust-hearts  
We are too old for this.

Dracula was a poor sucker who could never drink coffee with us  
I'm going to wear a white cloak now  
We are vampires sitting at coffee shops who stare at plants sitting on the table  
We are vampires drinking coffee lattes and chat about the new movie coming out.

## The One

When I open his skin, gold unfolds from heaven  
A thousand, angelic faces sing from the back of their throats when I feel him  
He wears miracles as bracelets on his hands  
and there are architectural buildings, unlike any other on earth, on his eyes  
Each pore on his body is a portal to my past  
There are feathers at the bottom of his feet, and halos float around his elbows

Surely, he has been to the most holy place.

There are spirals of celestial water under his fingernails  
and his restless soul carries the scent of Mountain Zion.  
He grows the same hair as Samson's  
He has polished skin, opal teeth from a king's crown  
and a tickling heart I wish I could carry like a pocket watch

Surely, he saw the veil tear and danced with burning incense on his hand.



## The Mountains' Souls

On top of the mountains where I fed them pieces of my soul  
my grief become the pebbles which lay at the bottom of its river

The mountains' souls guarded my rejected heart  
and froze my rage in its peak where it snows, enclosed in a single snowflake

The mountains gave me canals of beauty that formed on the surface of my skin.  
On top of the mountains, I buried my mourning and my childhood innocence to become resilient

My tears constructed paths down the mountains  
and lead warrior women up to conquer the world.

Left behind with the mountain's souls  
this is where I belong.

## Molded by the Same Hands

We take turns to hit the same drum with worn hands  
We follow the same vine in our dreams  
We breathe the same freedom mounted in picture frames in our walls  
We have been shaped by the same hand, built from the same mud  
Our hearts pump from the same river of blood

Brothers and sisters, our skin has been crocheted  
and our muscles orchestrated to dance together.  
The smoke we coughed is now part of the tissue in our lungs  
and the sole of my feet is an imprint of those around me  
I am a sister to he who stole the oil from my lamp

In heaven, the clouds are made from the dishes of my mother  
and her rice is the ground, and there are oceans with oil  
to cook for my fellow brothers and sisters  
who want to serve me for dinner  
I want to love my brothers and sisters through a gauged eye.

I want to be blood vinaigrette for my brothers and sisters.

Cancer

Pink petals falling  
lumps growing in the branches.  
Watered roots can't die.

Uterus

My uterus is a Venus Flytrap  
It rests inside a glass of red wine  
Confined to reproduce  
and remain fragile to delicately and savagely eat.  
Instead, it decides to decay  
and I only watch helplessly.

## Blood and Water

In the center of the vast air and prayer around us, there is water rising up to my throat  
I am drowning, but I'm not dying, and my skin is dry and decaying

And the red ocean comes down on me; in a droplet of blood, I see galaxies spiraling  
It unveils in shape of a new name

In the water, there are people building villages  
In the water, there is adobe and herbs to eat

And when the rain stops  
different colors and shades of the tabernacle stay behind on my skin

And heavens stay as an image for a second though a water drop  
And I try to understand the feeling, but I'm confined to a new cult.

I am Pig

I am pig  
with the belief that I am human  
I trample on the pearls a man gave me  
I am pig, I wallow in the mud and run around in water.

I snort in disgust at fruits  
I watched my mother eat her tagged skin  
I await for castration  
I am pig, I eat leftovers from a man's table

I don't comprehend prayers and only grind my teeth  
when I'm content  
I am pig, in the den I live, I eat and I'm fattened for winter seasons  
and frown upon wild boars roaming free.  
I am pig, this is how I am loved and  
I love by giving my flesh and my fat to my owner.

## My Eyes are Not Fat

My pupils float in aloe vera gel  
and mixes with dry tears and clogged veins.  
My lashes can hold the weight of my heart  
but not the pounds of corn flour and lard in the rolls  
formed in my abdomen from when I was a little girl

I come from people who violently ate raw pig  
they carried proud bellies around like sacks of gold  
And their dead voices whisper to me to eat like their barbarian ghosts.  
But I also come from people whose eyes were sold for a pound of rice  
but at least my eyes are not fat; I am going to starve to have a delicate figure  
who roams in the crops with hunger like the children who worked them

I know my years and illnesses are written on my eyes  
when the walls of my heart are smeared with the fat from.  
A cow's tongue and a goat's intestines  
and their horns are placed on my head like a crown.

I will let my ancestors lick my eyeballs  
and cook my fears on their discos under the fire.  
The excess skin on my lids hides the fervent labor  
and inseminated lands my grandfather left to my mother  
where beans were grown for my people.  
You can't find beauty in my corneas but dirt to raise  
Nopales and chiltepin peppers to eat  
which kept my people thin.

At least my eyes are not fat.

## The Earth in Me

The earth and I are one, she and I.  
Inside me there is a storm which is born again every night.

I am the blinding, blazing vomit from the sun.  
I am the ocean and the shiny filth floating in the iris of its eye.

I am the crawling wind, I am the mud, the dust scrambling by in glitter-dusts.  
I am the last splendor found in cacti spikes in winter time.

The wailing of wolves catching the distant smell of cramped, crying slaughterhouses.  
I am the shadows that keep the hunter alive, and the glory from heaven to earth,

in the way I am the fervent urge in bees' will to live for their queen  
and so the dreams of crickets at dawn.

I am the fur of the panther that sweats and sheds  
I am the dirt that trips her

and the rocks that bleed her paws  
the beauty of her eyes

and the shine in the hunter's blade.



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lizbet Cantu Montiel earned a Bachelor's Degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2018, and a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing in 2022. She has been the Web Developer and Web Content Manager for the City of Edinburg in Texas since 2019. Lizbet Cantu Montiel's email is [Lcantu8109@gmail.com](mailto:Lcantu8109@gmail.com)