

Wearing aqua blue tights and a yellow, orange and red mask with matching boots, Fuego Sagrado looked every bit the comic book superhero.

"I've been wrestling for five years, and everyone in Mexico grows up watching lucha libre," he said.

He declined to give his real name, saying: "It's just like showing someone my face. It's tradition and I'd have to stop wrestling if I told you my name or had my mask ripped off."

Masks are an integral part of lucha libre, Anguiano said. He wore a mask for 15 years in a career that took him to cities across Mexico and the southwestern United States. One night he suffered the humiliation of being unmasked in the ring.

"It's something no wrestler wants to experience," he said. "Outside of the ring all of the men are friends, but inside it's every man for himself. But the mask is your manhood."

On a recent sweltering Saturday night, the fans—young and old—were out in force, and the four wrestlers in the ring did not disappoint.

"Hey, what are you? A Teletubby? My sister can wrestle better than that!" shouted Simon Herrera, a fan and crowd favorite who heckles from the sidelines in Spanish.

Marisela Mello, Herrera's daughter, said she grew up watching lucha libre on Mexican television. On most Saturday nights, she can be found sitting with her father.

"It's all done in fun and it's good entertainment," said Mello, who was there to watch her husband, known as El Atrevido, or the Risk Taker, wrestle, matched with El Rayo de Texas, or the Ray of Texas, against two opponents. El Atrevido keeps his face hidden behind a purple and yellow mask. He and his teammate were hoping to demolish El Ilegal and El Bruto, or the Brute. After about 40 minutes of body slams—in and out of the ring—El Ilegal and El Bruto were declared the winners, much to the chagrin of many in the crowd, including Mello.

"It's different from w.w.f., but that's what makes it fun," Mello said. "There's a lot more tumbling and we know the wrestlers."

Injuries, Anguiano said, are rare.

"There's no closed-fist hitting, no choking or no hammer hits," he said.

The regular practices—two hours, three times a week—can be tough on the working people who suit up on weekends, but they are committed to their avocation. Martinez said he kept coming back for the entertainment and the exercise.

"This is a good thing for San Antonio," he said. "I'm really glad we're able to do it."

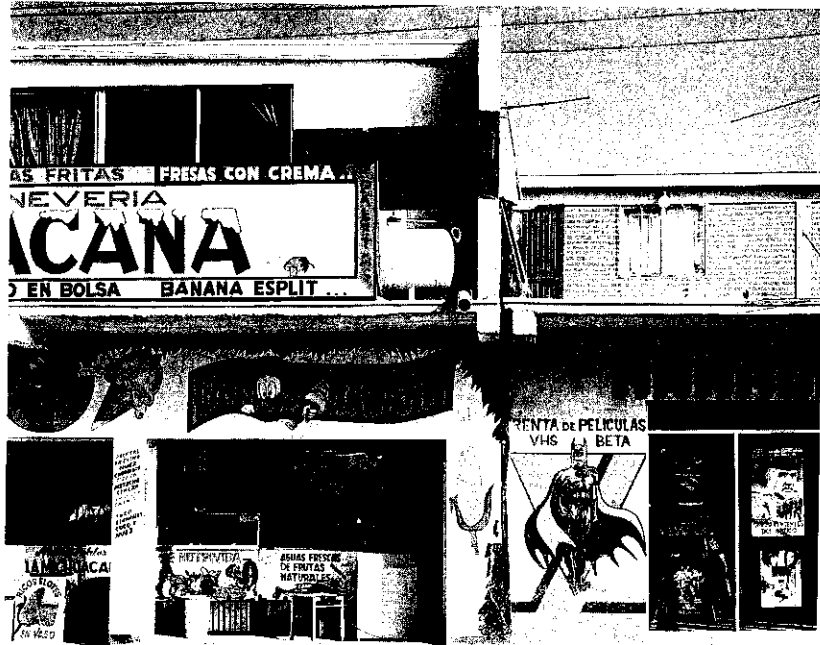
Two Poems about Immigrant Life

Pat Mora and Gina Valdés

Latin Americans have for many years comprised the bulk of immigrants, both legal and illegal, to the United States. While today there are relatively few parts of the country that do not have significant immigrant populations, the strength in numbers does not eliminate the many hardships faced by those seeking to adapt to a new language and culture. Below we present two poems by well-known Mexican American writers with very different takes on the clash of languages. They tell us of the difficulties of immigrant life while at the same time reminding us of the ways in which these immigrants have made U.S. culture more vibrant and diverse. Pat Mora, a native of El Paso, Texas, has taught English at all levels and has published several books of poetry, as well as memoirs and children's books. Gina Valdés was born in Los Angeles, California, and was raised on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. She has taught Spanish at several universities throughout the United States and has published several works of poetry and fiction.

ELENA, by Pat Mora

My Spanish isn't enough.
I remember how I'd smile
listening to my little ones,
understanding every word they'd say,
their jokes, their songs, their plots.
Vamos a pedirle dulces a mamá. Vamos.
But that was in Mexico.
Now my children go to American high schools.
They speak English. At night they sit around
the kitchen table, laugh with one another.
I stand by the stove and feel dumb, alone.
I bought a book to learn English.
My husband frowned, drank more beer.
My oldest said, "*Mamá*, he doesn't want you



(From Virgil Hancock, *Chihuahua: Pictures from the Edge*, photographs by Virgil Hancock, essay by Charles Bowden [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996]).

to be smarter than he is." I'm forty,
embarrassed at mispronouncing words,
embarrassed at the laughter of my children,
the grocer, the mailman. Sometimes I take
my English book and lock myself in the bathroom,
say the thick words softly,
for if I stop trying, I will be deaf
when my children need my help.

ENGLISH CON SALSA, by Gina Valdés

Welcome to ESL 100, English Surely Latinized,
inglés con chile y cilantro, English as American
as Benito Juárez. Welcome, muchachos from Xochicalco,
learn the language of dólares and dolores, of kings
and queens, of Donald Duck and Batman. Holy Toluca!
In four months you'll be speaking like George Washington,
in four weeks you can ask, More coffee? In two months

you can say, May I take your order? In one year you
can ask for a raise, cool as the Tuxpan River.

Welcome, muchachas from Teocaltiche, in this class
we speak English refrito, English con sal y limón,
English thick as mango juice, English poured from
a clay jug, English tuned like a requinto from Uruapán,
English lighted by Oaxacan dawns, English spiked
with mezcal from Juchitán, English with a red cactus
flower blooming in its heart.

Welcome, welcome, amigos del sur, bring your Zapotec
tongues, your Nahuatl tones, your patience of pyramids,
your red suns and golden moons, your guardian angels,
your duendes, your patron saints, Santa Tristeza,
Santa Alegría, Santo Todolopuede. We will sprinkle
holy water on pronouns, make the sign of the cross
on past participles, jump like fish from Lake Pátzcuaro
on gerunds, pour tequila from Jalisco on future perfects,
say shoes and shit, grab a cool verb and pollo loco
and dance on the walls like chapulines.

When a teacher from La Jolla or a cowboy from Santee
asks you, Do you speak English? You'll answer, Sí,
yes, simón, of course. I love English!
And you'll hum
a Mixtec chant that touches la tierra and the heavens.

dead here were squatters. One day the landowner would find out. But really, how can you fight with the dead?

One American said, "It's Boot Hill."

The men traded turns with the shovel, cracking, then scraping out the rocky soil. It took quite a while to make the hole, but between them, they managed it. Nobody complained.

They manhandled the box into the hole and stood around looking at it. Chacho almost fell in, he cried so hard. The men quietly went back to work, pushing dirt and rocks back in. Others who couldn't get close to the shoveling went from grave to grave, pulling dry weeds and picking up paper. Some of the crosses needed straightening. A couple of guys made borders of rocks around unmarked graves.

Jorge never went near Eduardo's grave.

But if you paid close attention, you could see Carlos moving in behind Chacho. He peeked out from between Chacho's legs. Then, at the last possible moment, he grabbed a little handful of dust and pitched it into the hole.

Pedro P., Coyote

Judith Adler Hellman

With Mexico's economy seeming to hover chronically on the verge of collapse since the 1980s, it is no wonder that as many as 150,000 Mexicans are driven to migrate illegally to the United States each year. Scarcely a month goes by without one of America's big-city newspapers carrying a major story on the transborder journeys of Mexican and Latin American migrants in search of a better life or merely the short-term opportunity to remit greatly enhanced wages to loved ones back home. Increasingly, many Mexicans have come to participate in migrant circuits that enable them to live truly transnational lives north and south of the Rio Grande.

Sadly, much of the media's coverage concerns the deplorable conditions and risks that migrants face in their efforts to elude U.S. immigration authorities ("la migra") along the two-thousand-mile border. Every year hundreds of migrants are killed in accidents: they drown in overflowing canals, fall beneath moving trains, and suffocate in sealed railroad cars and automobile trunks. Others fall victim to human predators, many of whom carry guns and badges. According to Mexican immigration officials, illegal migration has become very big business: international syndicates have turned the smuggling of migrants into a criminal enterprise comparable in profits and ruthlessness to those of the drug trade. The coyotes, or polleros (border-crossing middlemen), who lead undocumented migrants (known as pollos, or chickens) across the line, frequently overcharge and then abandon their clients at the first sign of a run-in with the migra. Often coyotes leave their human cargo cooped up and in deadly peril, exposed to bandits or corrupt policemen who rob migrants of their savings and possessions. Not for nothing, then, has President Vicente Fox vowed to create a special office for the investigation of immigrant smuggling.

Yet, as sociologist Judith Hellman tells us in her portrait of "Pedro P.," not all coyotes are unscrupulous opportunists. This Tijuana-based pollero is a decent independent entrepreneur, whose business depends on word of mouth and his ability—literally—to deliver. Her account takes us with Pedro on his nightly rounds and sheds light on his values and aspirations as a potential migrant himself. Based on extensive interviews, Pedro's story is one of fifteen portraits Hellman provides in Mexican

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