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## Macho Remixes: A Collection of Writings

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MACHO REMIXES: A COLLECTION OF WRITINGS

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
in the Department of English  
in the college of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
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Thesis Chair: Cecilia Rodriguez Milanes  
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## Abstract

*Macho Remixes: A Collection of Writings* is a thesis containing short stories, poetry, and a personal essay that discuss the matter of toxic masculinity through the representations of male and macho sexuality in the Latinx culture. It covers depictions of how Latinx men have been stereotyped in today's society. The works included here are my own perspectives of what masculinity means to me as a young multicultural male navigating life. Throughout these texts, I—my speakers and narrators—grapple with understanding the conflicting and oppressive expectations drawn from my roots, particularly those based in Latinx culture. The purpose is considering the negative and restrictive expectations and representations of Latinx men and redefining what it is to be a man.

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## Of the Night

They pass restaurants of all cultures still open at the late hour. The city is alive, the streets are packed with people from the Mexican festival. All Raúl can do is look into his neighbor Lydia's eyes.

"I'm glad you came out," Raúl says smiling, feeling like the luckiest guy.

"I needed to get out for a bit," Lydia says, smiling back grasping for Raúl's arm.

"Things have been difficult." Lydia looks away for a second in the opposite direction. In some way Raúl is glad he can understand what Lydia is going through. After his wife died, he felt like the saddest man in all of Washington Heights. Raising his now teenage son Santiago has been difficult all these years. It had taken some time to get adjusted to being both parents, from planning birthdays, attending baseball games, and meeting his teachers to making sure he was on the right track. It was difficult for Raúl to wake up in the morning to go to work and then pick his son up from school, to then cook and clean. With little support Raúl believed that it would be impossible but watching Santiago smile in the morning to nights was the only thing keeping him from becoming depressed from the day to day responsibilities.

"That boy is and always will be my beacon," Raúl quietly thinks to himself, being in a proud moment. From the side of the road in the distance Raúl sees prostitutes across the street, believing them to be fallen women.

"Excuse me," says a young man who is wearing a rainbow top, shorts, and platform shoes. Holding his partner's hand as they try to get by, he brushes into Raúl's shoulder. Raúl has an expression of disgust as if the young man stained his silk shirt. As the two arrive near the apartment complex both Raúl and Lydia take a step then two up the stairs.

"I had a great time." Raúl glances at Lydia as he slowly moves close to her lips. For a split-second just beyond Lydia, Raúl sees Santiago in the backseat of a parked car. He pauses seeing his son making out with a darker boy. With instant rage Raúl rushes past Lydia, down to the car and swings the passenger door wide open.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Raúl quickly grabs Santiago with one hand, pulls him from the vehicle, slamming him against the concrete. The mystery boy in a jacket that seemed like he played sports for his life. Raúl shifts his focus. Both men wrestle with force.

“Stay the hell away from me,” Santiago spits blood from his mouth. Anger ascended from Santiago’s eyes, ones that Raúl had never seen before. It was an anger far worse than when Raúl had taken a ten-year-old Santiago to his mother’s grave and watched him pour his heart out and curse the sky. Raúl felt his son’s anger, his agony, he knew that all he had done for his son could not replace the one person who could understand him best. Raúl looks at his son run away with hatred in his heart. Rising from the sidewalk Raúl, only small scratches and tense eyes, began to feel sad.

“I’m so sorry, Raúl.” Lydia walks close to him and reaches for his arm. Raúl gently pushes her hand away.

“I need to go search for him, I’m sorry.” Raúl takes one last glance at Lydia as she looks hurt for him. “I’m so sorry. I can’t abandon my son.”

Raúl began to walk away, first slowly then jogging into the moonlit night.

## A Mother's Love

A week before Christmas eve, Leon had finally unpacked the last box from the truck. He and his partner Anthony have finally purchased a home in Liberty City, Miami.

“I can’t believe that’s the last one,” Leon said as he wiped his forehead with an old rag. He looked around and can’t believe that it had only been a few years since graduating college and that he would be a homeowner, that he would leave his roots in New York to start a new life, especially with his best friend.

“It seems only yesterday that we ended up as lab partners in class,” Anthony gleams as he finds a place for the new lamp they had purchased. Leon embraced Anthony from behind and had not said a single word: the only thing going on in both men's minds was that there was one thing still missing. They felt that it was time to bring a bundle of joy into their lives. They wanted to have a child of their own. One that truly needed unconditional love.

Leon adored his mother Sandra raising him as her only child when his father passed away from pancreatic cancer. Anthony's grandparents had raised him after both his parents were dead on impact from a car accident. The nectar of pain had developed for both men their entire lives leading up to this moment. Still there were things to look forward to and accolades that inspired both Leon and Anthony to still have faith within themselves, especially on the road they were heading on. After earning a degree in biology, Leon works at a laboratory; Anthony, still in school, is currently working as manager of security at a nearby airport. After Leon had graduated with honors, his class decided to hold a celebration party by turning the dorm rooms into a night club. The music was loud, drinks were made, and everyone seemed to be enjoying the nearby pool outside. Many were afraid of faculty, but it was during spring break and most of the security had left and the others were fine with the festivity. Anthony had been a guest of the host who pulled all the strings together. Both Anthony and Leon had been together for six months but having to frequently visit family, to still be in the closet except for their peers knowing, and the priority of studying had become a hassle for one another. It would, however, be a night that everything would change; the majority of the time Anthony had kept grasping his right pocket, dressed casually for the occasion, he was happy to see Leon the instant he came through the front entrance. As both men embraced one another, Anthony wasted no time and proposed on one

knee as everyone watched and since making the first move Anthony never looked back on the decision. Leon in that moment realized that he had just found his partner in crime.

“When is your mother coming again?” Anthony places the lamp on a small circular bright brown table in the corner.

Leon says, “I’m not quite sure; she was supposed to have called me,” stepping away to move the sofa more to the left side of the wall.

“Please for the love of God be nice to her,” Leon swiftly walks into the kitchen to grab a water bottle.

“Oh, I can, I can be nice, I just wonder if she can,” Anthony softly says to himself as he steps into the kitchen and takes a sip of his lemonade. From the moment the proposal spread across campus like wildfire, Sabrina who was Leon’s cousin told her mother who then told Leon's mother who knew about his sexuality. Sandra still had become furious knowing that her only son was going to marry a man and not a woman: Leon had come out to her at the tender age of fifteen when he took the initiative of introducing his then-boyfriend to her.

She would first pray for Leon, believing he had made a wrongful choice in introducing her to his sexual sin, then for her behavior, she would chase the boyfriend out with a broom and ask the heavenly saints to remove the bad qualities her son obtained.

After the proposal, Anthony decided to take Leon on a few trips to Vegas and then to Miami. He had been given his inheritance from his deceased parents around his twenty-fifth birthday and wanted to use it for the both of them. He wanted to treat the love of his life to a never-ending honeymoon in which both of them could be away from the world’s troubles. Sandra had felt heart-broken inside that she had not spoken to her child for quite some time. Little by little the distance became longer between Leon and Sandra but after a recent phone call, Sandra had expressed to Leon that she could not wait to stay over and was especially interested in having a conversation with Anthony.

Two days had passed and on an early morning, a knock came at the door. Tired from unpacking Leon in his tight black tank top and white boxer shorts answered the door.

“Mi niño.” Sandra opens her arms and is filled with joy to see Leon after quite some time.

Leon takes a step back, “Hi, Mami,” embarrassed by his attire but still happy to see her smile.

“How is everything in Naples?” Leon says as he rushes over to the kitchen cabinet to make some coffee. Sandra takes off her coat and sits in the new leather chairs near the dark marble kitchen island.

“You would not believe how packed it is getting and new businesses expanding in those areas it seems like I'm always getting new neighbors.” Sandra waits for the coffee folding her hands and cannot take her eyes off Leon. Proud to have raised a fine gentleman, even through difficult times.

“I can't believe it's been so long since I've seen you,” says Leon putting on a robe on with tired eyes but felt awakened by the fact that his mother had arrived. Sandra clenches the cup in both hands and realizes the intense steam that comes from the top of it.

“Just like how your father used to make it,” taking a single sip, Sandra looks down at her hands and realizes the amount of time that has passed by. She sees her good work in raising a son and thinks back to the time when she came home from work and the five-year-old who would always run to her, kiss her, and had adored her to death.

Leon asks, “You want more?”, wondering if his mother still cared about the fact that he went against her wishes about being married to someone she never approved of.

“No, I'm good,” she said as she pushes her curls behind her ear. After several minutes of conversation and reminiscing about the old times from Leon winning his little league games, his mother earning her real estate license, Anthony came in from the bedroom.

Anthony says, “Hola Señora,” greeting her with both arms stretched out. Doing his best not to tick her off or bring up any history from before where both had yelled at each other. After an uneventful breakfast Sandra decided to move her stuff into the guest bedroom, placing her clothes in the empty spaces left for her in the drawers. Sandra made sure to place her bible on the nightstand and her rosary beads on the white pillow. Reciting a few psalms from the book she prayed for God to give her the strength she needed for the next few days.

As she raises her head to the sky, Sandra says, “Por favor protege a mi hijo y por favor protege a mi otro hijo,” closing her eyes and trying to open her heart.

Speaking low so that no one would hear her, “It's time to forgive,” Sandra says with a concerned look as she gets ready for bed and looks at a small picture of her boy that she had used as a bookmark.

In the early morning, Leon had left to buy groceries for dinner. He had forgotten to do such since moving into the new house and Anthony had promised to help a friend who was dealing with car issues. All alone in the apartment, Sandra looked hard at herself in the mirror, she missed the young Latin girl that had been accepted as a dancer at one of the acclaimed dance studios in Los Angeles but upon receiving her letter, she found out that she was pregnant with Leon. In having to choose between her love of dance and needing to care for her son she chose the route that she believed God had intended for her.

Sandra takes a cloth and wipes her face, "Look at you, pretty woman." She removes her scarf from her head as her long black curly hair falls to her waist. Touching each strand Sandra knew she needed this visit with her son and his husband for something important that was going on with her health. She would get dressed and wait for her son to arrive, sittings she sits on the living room sofa and grabbing a magazine and begins flipping through articles.

Out of the corner of her eye, she sees a purple envelope. Glancing at the address she sees that it is for Anthony and notices the top portion of the letter had already been opened. She goes back to the magazine, but the words are what crept back into her mind. The word (Adoption) was written in black letters and she couldn't bear to think what she believed to have been in that envelope.

"Maybe just a glance," she spoke pretending that God had not listened to her thoughts. As her red nails began to move across the envelope, she closed her eyes and prayed that this was all just a hoax. As she opened the note that was placed inside, she saw a letter was from an agency. One that gave good feedback on both Anthony and Leon's background checks and had explained that through their good judgment that they were finally approved to be adoptive parents to a baby girl. Unfolding more of the letter a little picture fell to the ground. Picking it up Sandra could see a dark-skinned girl in her purple onesie. She seemed to be only been one year old. Looking back at the agency's had mentioned that the little girl had parents that had been through hard times in the beginning stages of her life. The agency had mention how proud they were to have found a deserving couple to help raise her. From the heartfelt letter and the picture of the sleeping girl, Sandra felt sad for her but angry about the matters of the decision of adoption.

As she stared at the letter looking furious for a few more minutes the door swung open and it had been Anthony was coming inside. Wearing a tight tee and blue jeans, walking in all sweaty. In an instant, he realizes what she had done.

Sandra raises her body, “What is the meaning of this?” Sandra lifts herself from the couch and demonstrates the letter as if the world had just ended.

“What are you doing snooping through our stuff?” Anthony raised his voice and aggressively snatched the paper from her hand.

“How could you do this to me and my son?” Folding her arms as she begins to regret trying to try to like Anthony.

Anthony placed the letter back in the envelope and slammed it on the table.

“Your son and I are planning on taking care of this little girl,” Anthony snapped and decided to get a glass of water from the kitchen.

“You’re lying he would never keep a secret this big from me soy la única mamá que tiene.” Sandra, angry but still in pain over this information. About not being a part of such a thing knowing that she would not have accepted something that she felt was unnatural.

“I think this is all your fault. you do things behind my back, my son has not spoken to me, and to also distance us from our Faith,” she said listing everything and pointing her fingers. Sandra’s skin began to crawl, and her face was fuming.

“You’re wrong, it was your church that was the biggest issue with everything,” Anthony’s voice had gotten deeper. It was as if he was holding so much weight on it and finally felt like this was the time to tell his truth.

“Your religion burns us to the core,” Anthony says as he glares right at her, frustrated with the many accusations of his influence when the church had done the actual damage over the years.

“Your belief is what caused your son to not speak to you,” yells Anthony as he slams his palm on the table, not holding any remorse or resentment to his words.

Anthony’s voice howled through the walls of the room, “He would tell me how he use to cry when he was little knowing that he was never welcomed.”

Surprised at this news Sandra still does not believe in any of it; she could not fathom that her son had distanced himself from her based not a romantic stance but because of her beliefs. Sandra said as she crossed her arms the room was filled with tension.

“I still think that you are a terrible influence on him, I mean you both are experiencing something a man and woman should do,” Sandra said, feeling betrayed.

In dismay Sandra believed that this was a terrible choice,

“Now you think you have the right to raise a child like this,” Not wanting to lose control of the conversation Sandra moved away from the kitchen table and stood closer to Anthony.

Sandra shook her head, “You're fooling yourself this isn't the right way to have a child,” Sandra made sure to get closer and closer hoping that her message would come across. She moved one finger to Anthony's chest and delivered a passage from the bible.

“As it says, marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Hebrews 13.4.” After hearing the passage Anthony became even more upset as his temple began to throb.

“Is this your saying or what your church is saying through you?” Anthony embraced himself as if he was going to get hit; he clenched his fists tighter.

“You know what? I'm done arguing,” said Sandra, she backs away and turns around.

“I don't have to put up with you, I'm leaving,” said Sandra as both she and Anthony walked to their rooms slamming the door behind them. Sandra placing her hand on her chest and devastated from the exchange of words. Tears were about to begin. She sat on her bed and knew that she had to communicate to Leon in a different way. Her voice was lost, she could not bear to face him. As she jots down her purpose in showing up, she seals each letter one for Leon and the other for Anthony. She steps out holding her luggage, leaving behind in a bitter rage, she passed Anthony room without saying much of a goodbye.

Sandra said nothing more except, “I hate to leave like this,” underneath her breath and walks past the living room to head towards the front door, slamming it behind her.

Later, Leon returned with multiple bags and excited to cook special dishes as it was going to be the first dinner that the three would have in a long time. Anthony had told him everything that happened. That his mother left but had made sure to write them as letters that were left on her bed. Leon's letter had mentioned that she decided to leave the church. She could not stand a religion that could never accept her son for who she is. She further explained that the church had looked down on her for siding with her son.

The letter had mentioned Sandra's health condition and how she had recently received the news that her liver had problems. Difficult to discussed Sandra had wanted to tell them both

as her true motive for visiting them. After reading such information Leon dropped his hand holding the letter. He knew that his mother had something that was on her mind. A part of Anthony's note had mentioned how she was happy Leon found someone special. To enjoy and be with someone who even accepted her flaws.

As Leon walked into the guest bedroom, the only thing left was her bible wrapped around with the rosary beads.

"I'm sorry," said Anthony as this time he wraps his arms around Leon's waist knowing that this encounter with his mother was not made from love or of happiness.

"It's okay, maybe she will change her mind next Christmas when the baby is finally here." Leon turns around and the two embrace one another so strong yet gentle, hoping that in receiving a miracle at their doorstep that his mother could see the error in her ways.

Three weeks have passed and the festivities between husband and husband have begun. As Leon took out the turkey from the pan, Anthony stepped off the ladder placing all of the decorations. Instantly he felt a tug as his ankle.

"Come here my beautiful little angel," said Anthony as he grasped her and lifted her in the air until both of their faces met.

"You're happy to be with daddy, right?" Anthony would give her a gentle toss and make funny faces enjoying her blissful reaction. Placing each dish on the kitchen marble table Leon was smiling from a distance. A few weeks had gone by and Leon could not get in touch with his mother. Keeping the letter, she left for him, he had been worried if she had been alive. He wanted to call the cops to file a missing person's report, but Sabrina had called him to tell him that there was no need for a search party. Thankful that his mother was breathing and safe, Leon still felt broken inside. He felt guilt for his mother leaving and never wanted her to hear the true reason for why at times he couldn't be near her. He truly wished she could have at least been here to meet his precious gift from above, his little girl named Faith.

As the plates were set on the table and Anthony placed Faith in her highchair the couple blessed to explore the pathway of being new parents. As food was being passed around a sudden knock on the door was heard.

"I'll get it," Leon said as he rose from his chair and quickly made sure that Faith had been served. Opening the door Leon was in full shock of the sudden impact he received the

moment he saw that it was his mother. Difficulty speaking, Leon felt a force against his abdomen once he opened the door.

“Mami,” Leon still gasped for air when he saw his mother look up at his face the same way Anthony had done to Faith.

“*Perdoname hijo, perdoname por todo,*” Sandra said with bloodshot eyes as if leaving had tortured her as if she had been crying for days. Sandra cried her heart out and felt like she needed to return to make things right between everyone. She knew that deep inside she wanted to return to see the little girl in the photograph.

Leon in a gentle tone says, “*Mami, aqui esta tu nieta,*” as he rubbed his mother’s back and guided her into Faith's direction. Sandra sees the little girl. As she begins to face her, she sees her playing with her food.

Sandra picks her up slowly “*Que hermosa eres,*” proud to be holding her new granddaughter. She begins to soothe her. Pushing back her long soft hair as she does her tears begin to dry. Anthony kissed Sandra on the cheek and felt nothing but happy for Leon. Still holding onto his feelings of anger Anthony knew it had been time to let it go. Everyone under the roof knew that it had taken so long to get to this point of forgiveness. For Sandra, she realized that the best kind of love is one without rules or obligation but of unconditional love. She looked back at Leon and then to Anthony as they watch her holding Faith in her arms as she soon begins to sing her a lullaby.

## A man of his Word

When a word drips and saunters out from the O-gap  
out comes honey, moist turning raw and bitter

What needs to be said, how it is said,  
speaks volumes of a man left open and bares no bones

The man who is clean-shaven, suited, polished  
pulls out his tongue and looks into  
the distance of an eye that knows

The word is to be saturated in truth,  
of an early morning to the sun, the children that are to be fed

the word is supposed to be truthful  
even when the judgment is not fully established

of the oath on the good book  
the man who waits for approval

must stand tall; ears point towards north, posture  
like a stem in cold weather

His shell turns dark brown, withers off  
like a single word that dances softly

it bleeds and cuts because it demands obedience  
it must travel and withstand heavy breaking concrete

The man "*El Hombre*" must be wise, must be able

to control even when not in control

Words are supposed to have a life  
of their own, the man's excuses, beliefs,  
then to be left in the wild.

## Roles

*“Men and women have strengths that complement each other.” Edwin Louis Cole*

The tradition, the told message for women  
to carry baskets of fruits and babies,  
to make fire in the living rooms. That women  
are to bake/break bread and serve the empty mouths over and over  
The men to sharpen their spears, break necks,  
fight until the final breath. They are told to be soldiers in winter,  
hunt the weak, to shed blood for families, to become dominant

Women are bound to the ocean, for she  
drifts and drowns any living soul  
*the hunt begins* as men reach for a knife  
believing that that is the extension of the heart.  
As women remain within all fours of the sanctum  
men leave as they please, looking for another feast. They scatter in a herd  
among an army line-up. While a woman has many arms  
to change the direction of the wind.

If the roles were reversed, the women would be wise  
they would use the power of life and carve out remains,  
the men would see the difficulty of being needed, not  
of hunger, but eternal starvation of a decision. They would learn  
the hardships of being a part of nature that constantly feeds  
Caring for a life would be looked on as a challenge like separating  
Milk from honey, oil from vinegar

The men would meet a bridge that would fold on them,  
the weight heavy, less air to breathe.

## Five Signs of Power

1.

The first people had agreed, the man would look for berries, instead it became creatures of the land, and then land itself. This is where the belief that stood as strong and steadily as iron in the core  
Men would work agriculture, hunt, fish, search until pockets were full

2.

Of the heavenly fathers that wanted to build a community, homes within homes using both hands, it was necessary to let the young boys, carry torches, to tell them that they too will stand on the highest of mountains. That feelings are the enemy, that they must be built of impenetrable metal so that they will never fall.

3.

Fathers and mothers pray, they try to speak words into existence  
They pray for the small boy to be acceptable to the last name.  
They would hope for him, that he would not break by showing the bud of the root, the center of light in his chest, the compassion he carries across a lifespan. They pray that he will live a life in which they will accept  
Countless times, they will speak these words hoping that they become a body.

4.

Soldiers were not made in a day; they are told to “*suck it up*”  
“*Be the man that you know you are*” --lessons of obedience.

5.

As a boy one looks to his father, as he looks in the mirror  
He is told to find strength, leave vulnerability stranded, leave it somewhere that no one will find, ignore the female aspect of energy.

Be someone who produces massive strength, like a factory. Grow,  
increase the muscle, grow the beard, place the armor, enter this world  
Be accepted all at a price.

## Long Hair

Women show more through hair that hangs down  
coiling in such beauty like mass creations of the gods,  
their tresses, like vines sprouting blooms among summer rays.  
Men like Samson, leave, abandon and sever  
their names to please *tio*, to please *papá*  
to fall in line and lock their own mouths,  
to cut like razor teeth out of soft gums.  
They try to look away aiming for a different path  
their spirals and curls that from behind say “*una niña*”  
to be called “*Suave*” but not like smooth talk towards women  
but to be of soft pants in the laundry, pressed,  
that they will say, “*you don't wear them.*”  
The part where muscles begin to evaporate and nothing is left,  
they will say “*Delgado como un hilo.*”  
Fighting the wind, no chance for true identity.

## Venus is a boy

Wanting to create one of the same skins but called forth mothers and fathers  
from above to help. Making a burial, placing bones mixed with clay  
The men were to chant and show blood, the women were to wish,  
to pull on their hearts and pray, giving themselves, giving their whole strengths.  
The moon and sun dance and the wind blew towards the north  
a shaped cloud Eros would join, He would sharpen his bows  
aiming his arrow that was built from his own kindness,  
his own love missing the head. Sadness grasps his face,  
someone pours soft honey, shaping the form of tenderness.  
The pieces are coming together. The body, the thoughts,  
then the soul that must be seized from the river of Styx.  
Fire is added to make the rock of hard marble, nerves are placed.  
The head taken from another, farther and farther the veins sprout,  
the roots of life, the same ones from a tree that has watched lives  
come and go, one by one, as a god glances something is given.  
Last is Apollo, who cuts a piece of hair. The night separates its stars  
Ares wishes to give the name, a broken rib and flesh are placed  
to conceal each layer, unbalanced, then thrown into the ocean  
the foam erupts and slowly beauty reaches each passing planet  
a beam of light,  
  
a boy is made from scratch.

## The First Gentlemen

It is not a spot or a space that is looked forward to  
Yet thought of,

To consider as the second in hand.  
The one that comforts emotion of the people,  
To be a symbol, a blanket that covers the flag of a dream.

To kiss the bruise of a dream. To hold its hand and kiss  
The man that loses each piece as he walks.

Someone says, "Does the shadow feel cold?"

Not many know what it means to be a backbone,  
To be second to the high end, the man or woman at the top.  
The claim that was never a claim but the role of what some think is a lifetime  
Movie, only to know it is the decade of keeping face.

No one thinks of the time when the hands are to be shaken,  
The key to make sure the missiles are not sent.

The seat and the name are what it is  
Priority of the one to carry the iron of all, the hearts, the brain,

The chair is in the middle,  
The feet are to the side and one must smile in dismay,  
Not for the love that is in the center, but to be able to carry  
The ideology of best in choice.

The support to have love for the man is simple  
it is the decision that is effortless to lose its reason.  
It is the way of taking on the responsibility,  
the health, and the marriage is not the symbol it was the external arm  
it was the connection of the first word.

The position is the momentum of being here,  
to just be here means to stay based on knowing that the house falls,  
if no one knows how to glue it.

## Recreation

When people look closely at a face  
Yet realize it is just a part of a whole  
The eyes see the unthinkable, a nose that cannot see at all,  
A mouth to express and make noise for the world to hear.

We as humans, we the animals, creations  
As something,

Are we not allowed to roam the fields along with them?  
Can we not name ourselves? Or give a reason to why we look as we do?

When we glance into the rivers a person looking back,  
is it best to slam our hands against ourselves, our being?  
to break away every atom that took its time, a sacrifice to create a small bud  
that wants nothing more but to rise to the sun.

A moment to know, see, and feel

I prefer that nothing should constrict one's lungs  
The sap of blood should not be tampered with  
No surgeon cannot look in dismay and that the gods not say another word

The signs in every corner need to be read wrong,  
I think people should study over and over in every book what comfort is,  
“ease and freedom” -- yet freedom so loves to be an Ideology.

Fix is unfixable, Mistake is beautiful  
break open a heart and everything will vanish

Let the man shed a tear because from that we know he hurts, we can see inside  
Extend an arm and make sure no one feels what he feels.

You can call a doctor, pray for why,  
but no one ever ask the simple question of how

a body is a body that was a gift

no more crying in the bathtub / no more anger in the furnace,

time for some control

faith is the beacon from start to finish  
in a maze blindfolded with no light,  
coming to a path and there is no wrong or right.

## Burying it all away

It leaves little to the imagination of  
a boy crying. Unsure if his tear  
ducts work, but knows his eyes  
must never pool and mellow, they  
must connect with scorching scarlet,  
as hot as seething oil that wakes  
the inner child and transform  
into a man of decency.

Freshly bathed, no dirt behind the ears, mindful  
for the words spoken. With one choking sound,  
maybe it's the ties ancestry, strung  
together differently, the hunter or "*el cazador*"  
would only be a myth.

It'll shrink and become as thin as air.

Rules will be met with expectations  
he must unveil the stones  
will not make a single scratch,  
that roots from his feet are firmly planted.

He will understand what it takes to be a gravedigger,  
and practice the skill of pushing  
the meaning of his feelings  
like it never

happened.

## Muscle

The bad boy with cosmic eyes that mesmerizes the crowd,  
slick hair as if nothing will shatter it, given massively  
large biceps and suddenly he is Hercules.

Against the creek, he glances at the river and wishes  
to be the strongest, fastest, endurance much more than  
anyone who challenges his courage.

Never to fight for the need, to win for the inner soul,  
nothing is holding back deep within the chest, the solid hands  
how each root tells that the male has done  
what has shown the outside, the bare of the skin change  
showing the veins and the fury in eyes,  
strength is key, it makes the mask.

One has to beat the chest,  
scream until heard.

## Carving out

Someday the risk of expression would not be demanding,  
or conflicting with the matters of hardship. The gentle touch will reach in  
pure light. There will be no restrains on the vocal cords, the soft stares  
will reach each person so that they may understand. It would consist solely  
of free will to allow one's throat to be cleared. To unzip, unchain, unburden  
this boulder from the layers that hold no more. The body is filled with feelings,  
ones that want to leave the nest, that struggle in transforming its eyes to see  
where it is going, the graveyard is full, and the mind is not safe. Left in darkness,  
the expectations rise like waves, the cheering and applause are the engine of the car.  
Pleasing loved ones that dare not question attitudes.  
Boys are placed on racks and racks, the lineup.  
"Stand up straight" the father that had done his doings enforces what he  
believes is natural, "*Be strong, séa fuerte*" as the lion speaks to his cub  
to claim a generation and the next after.

## *El Hombre*

“*Supervivencia significa todo*”, the idea, the saying from each family member. The boy who is raised is owned by the culture. He cannot speak unless it is the appropriate time that shows his masculine side, where he must take in the cooling of air. Let the anger have the final word, to have the ability to spread to each cell, each part of flesh. “*Habla fuerte, levantar el puño, levantar un paquete desde cero*” teachings of what one thinks is from a wise man, it is one that has not navigated the world with his heart. The lessons of a son turned statue, breaks, each shard dissolves in the ground. The exo-skeleton of emotions pours itself with relief, the toughest reaches the peak of the mountain, winning, yet seeing himself fall Through the cracks and all he hears is the voices of those that were labeled as believers, he now places faith in the words, in the blueprint, he watches over and over himself left with nothing but doubt over his shoulders. The man, the name, the title, words that have gained control they rest never to be heard from again.

## Man, of The House

Created from stone and air,  
before birth itself

a title that was more than given, it is burned and marked in the blood and placed forever  
becoming identity, a name, a thread that holds the grasp, the tongue, the eyes when open.

The forsaken future and fate of a prince, a youngster, a man in the making,  
the light is open to the first word “boy”  
the expectations are set in the minds of the warrior and the parents.

The soldier trains the moment his eyes open and  
when the time comes the emperor leaves to step aside,  
he gets older and keeps the tradition, the treasure sacred,  
he turns to the young mind, he smiles, places his hand on his head, and turns away.

The pharaoh keeps the chair warm, questions and repeats the words,  
the soft-spoken whispers, the message that travels its way in one ear and remains.

“Step up” “carry the name” over and over the weight of the pedestal grows,  
it enlarges as each boy turns with big eyes and the father figure gives the blessing. Believing that  
force, charm, and a mask are needed for survival.

The young mind walks slowly on the path that was built ahead of time,  
from the mid-seventies of black and white where it was necessary to show muscle,  
to break steel and to show more than dominance, power is the beacon of a body.

Towards the 1980’s where one needed the magic touch, to tame the emotions,  
create the hole underneath the core and to throw away fear and sadness. Do not bother on putting  
effort in weakness.

Now as the years pass and the present is changeless, the scriptures have not been touched  
the new emperor walks faster and faster,

reaching the end that has been left undone. Kneeling down before ghost of warriors  
that have fought in wars, of the many faces that have not shed a single tear.

The new emperor watches as his skin turns to rock, confused, crying,  
placing his body down watching as each tear sinks deep.

Questioning the rules of being a man,  
and that is when the dawn covers the hurt.

Redefine/ Rename/ To see

It is time to let go of certain things in the vines,  
through the canals that have flourished through  
Spain, through the jungles of the Amazon. It is time  
to see from the gigantic lens that hails from the sky,  
It is time to self-reflect on those that came before us,  
a boy is a soldier, he protects those he loves, Why  
burden that love and bury it below to place underneath  
a home that he has to be considered as the lookout.  
In suppressing his emotions from the public,  
he has lost the battle; he fails to understand that his roots  
are to be celebrated. To never be masked, to have to  
rename its body or its purpose. Is a shame that  
one is expected but never given permission  
to embody love, to hold but never be held.

## Reflections of A Bisexual Latin Boy

For so many years I always wondered why I was being taught certain things, especially how to behave in society. Like why I was being told over and over “be a man” at just the tender age of eight. I wanted to understand why young boys were being told to look at their fathers as examples, as an inspiration to develop into adulthood. Early in my adolescent years, I grew interested in the men in my life. I would view my father’s behavior as someone who shared very little of his emotions and had shown more through his actions. He was always portrayed as the protector and provider of our household; I was interested in the motivation that my family had placed upon me telling me that men do not shed a single tear. That man must always be strong. This led to my purpose for writing and researching this thesis; I wanted to explore other writers and how they too had experienced the matters and expectations of masculinity. I began reading collections of essays, stories, and poems that wrestle with the different layers and encounters that establish masculinity in the social norm. I examined all these perspectives before asking my family their opinions and then reflected on my own beliefs and conveyed them in my writings.

What I have learned is that men, especially Latinos, tend to hide their emotions but I was surprised when other men didn’t follow this path. I realized as such when I had met my maternal grandfather for the first time. He had embraced me with open arms, and he was a man that didn’t hide any aspects of gentleness or kindness. He had asked me how I was doing and if I felt alright as if he was giving me permission to relinquish any hold or barrier that had contained my vulnerability. Over time, I soon had grown close to my maternal grandfather only ever knowing him in such a short amount of time. I felt as if I had gotten away with expressing my emotions to him more so than to the other men in my family who told me it was a terrible idea to do so. It was from that moment that I was able to see and visualize the different aspects of masculinity that pertain to the idea that men are supposed to be emotionless, to present themselves with just endurance. I began to view this perspective when learning more about my paternal grandfather who was an aggressive man, someone who would speak his mind. He began to express his strong values against the shameful acts of the Cuban military at the onset of the Revolution and this led to his arrest and imprisonment for twelve years. This would then cause my father to drop out of school to help raise his siblings thus becoming a man and provider at a young age. In writing this thesis I tried to envision his upbringing to see how he was raised and to understand the lessons

that he was taught that he then passed down to me. I learned that society expects some behaviors that are inflexible and harmful from young men from the time they are born to when they grow up especially in the Latinx culture.

My mother is a person who believed that in being raised one must grow up mirroring a parent; she believed that my father would be a perfect example for me, to be someone of high respect and hardworking. My mother believed that such qualities would rub off of him to me. In my research, I shifted my focus to what women believed about what makes a man and how they addressed the topic of masculinity. I viewed the great difference between my father and maternal grandfather. My father of silence but strength to maintain a family household, while my maternal grandfather was expressive and gentle with not only his words but with his actions. I asked my mother about her upbringing and what it had been like to be raised by her father. She told me that it had been difficult having to depend on a man that relied more on emotion than stability. After hearing this, I grew more understanding of what she meant because in her childhood was challenging because of a father who had no aggression within him but who could not support nor be in any way the breadwinner of the household. I grasped the purpose and reason for why my mother had married my father, trying to believe it was right, especially for her children. She wanted someone who could not only put a roof over our heads but someone who could keep it there. In doing more research and analyzing the Latinx culture through the literature and how it handles masculinity, it proved more often than not that of toxic masculinity with different attributes of sexual interest, behavior, appearance, and beliefs in a system that states that to be a man, one must obtain all these traits. I see now that in reading works such as *Butterfly Boy* by Rigoberto Gonzalez and many poems by Richard Blanco who are also Latinx gay males that they had gone through their adversity with masculinity. They identify that vulnerability is never an option in our society. For young boys, we are taught that vulnerability is the enemy, that it is considered our kryptonite, our weakness and with it nothing positive is done. In reading these works that illustrated the drastic measures Latinx culture takes to maintain masculinity inspired me to contribute my own writings to address the matter. I wanted to write a few pieces for a collection to not only explore my wonders of masculinity and its existence in my life but also of the major impact it has on us today. Looking at my family and the men such as my grandfathers, my godfather, and my father I hope to do justice to the topic by shedding light on this topic, one that deserves to be discussed.

In this thesis, I intended to make the topic of masculinity a priority and to have different works that took on various angles and repercussions toxic beliefs and behaviors. I wanted to introduce the idea and potential of redefining masculinity, especially in the Latinx community. As I look back at the teachings that my father had tried to instill in me from the past generations, I look forward as a father, if ever presented with the opportunity to my future children, and as a future educator to the next generation that there is more to be learned about masculinity and the outcomes of it. In these writings, my hopes are to grasp readers' attention and to expose the ways toxic masculinity limits the representation of males in society, particularly I sought to illustrate how more must be done to redefine masculinity within Latinx Culture and literature. I believe this will allow men like me to be more perceptive in how to raise a son and give men the opportunity and privilege to share feelings openly.

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