

Rhetorical *Herencia*: Writing Toward a Theory of Rhetorical Recovery and Transformation

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The barrio has its history, perhaps it is not written but as for me, it is oral. From the many that came to the barrio some left to go North to work, others with jobs as musicians, or shoe makers, others were carpenters, and they all sank roots in that barrio.

Ramona González,

“Historias y Cuentos de Doña Ramona: ¡Adiós, Barrio Chihuahuital!”

Academically speaking, I am a feminist rhetorical history recovery scholar; personally speaking, I am the maternal granddaughter of Doña Ramona González (1906-1995), a published Chicana writer from the 1970s, whose texts, history, and *herencia* I aim to rescue, recover, and preserve. Importantly, her writings also document the importance of memory, recovery, and preservation. Doña Ramona's writings ground my research, which is a part of my own rhetorical *herencia*. I begin theorizing rhetorical *herencia* through my journey of recovering of my *abuela's* writings.

In the summer of 2014, I completed my first book manuscript, *Occupying Our Space: The Mestiza Rhetorics of Mexican Women Journalists and Activists, 1875-1942*, a feminist recovery project, which highlights the writings and rhetorical history of Mexican women rhetors. While writing this manuscript (spring 2014) and recovering

the works of Mexican women writers, my family made an archival recovery of our own: an old cardboard box containing over seven hundred and fifty pages of my maternal grandmother, Doña Ramona González's, writings. Her works, written mostly in Spanish, were produced during the Chicano Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s in El Paso, Texas. Later that year, my father and I would begin the slow and laborious process of preserving them through digitization and later translating them into English. One afternoon, while writing the conclusion to *Occupying Our Space*, my father called and asked, "Can I read you a piece your grandmother wrote?" Giving him all my attention, I listened as he read the introduction to a piece she wrote titled "*Picos y Tolondrones: Para Todos los Preguntones*":

La cultura chicana es rica, por lo consiguiente, su literatura es rica. Son ricas porque es una mezcla de la hispana, indijena-mejicana y un regado de anglo-sajona. A la cultura que mas nos apegamos, es la indijena-mejicana, cuya mezcla le llamamos chicana aquí en los estados unidos americanos. La revolución en ésta cultura se trata de no dejarla desaparecer, aunque existe en la mayoría de los nacidos en los estados unidos, está oculta por varias razones. Y ahora, es el tiempo de ponerla a luz, de enzalzarla y de tener orgullo en ella..

Figure 1

Chicano culture is rich, so it follows that its literature is rich. They are rich because they are a mixture of Hispanic, Indian-Mexican and a sprinkling of Anglo-Saxon cultures. The culture that we are most attached to is the Indian-Mexican, the mixture of which we call Chicano here in the United States. The revolution in this culture is about not letting it disappear, although it exists in the majority of those born in the United States, it is hidden for several reasons. And now, it is time to bring it into the light, to lift it up, and to have pride in it.

Hearing Doña Ramona's words, delivered in my father's eloquent Spanish, I froze. From beyond the grave, my grandmother was speaking directly to me. Her words, written more than forty-five years ago, validated my writing and gave deeper meaning to my recovery work. In this piece (Figure 1), an introduction to over ninety-five pages of *dichos*, Doña Ramona frames the importance of recovering the Chicano and Mexican mestizo culture by recovering the stories of our ancestors from our own memories and calling upon members of our community to help construct knowledge. Expressing an early understanding of *Chicanismo*, Doña Ramona's concepts from "*Picos y Tolondrones*" and other of her writings with regard to historical discursive recovery, pride in our culture's history, and memory have come to frame my understanding of the work I and others do as rhetorical scholars, which I call rhetorical *berencia*. *Herencia*

means heritage, or that which is an integral part of you by birthright, such as culture, language, and traditions.

Claiming a Rhetorical *Herencia*

In the summer of 1990, at the age of nineteen, I moved from Central Texas to far West Texas or *la frontera*, which to this day is home to my extended family and has been for almost a century. I had been accepted the previous fall semester of 1989 to The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). Due to financial reasons, living in the dorms did not fit the family's budget. We considered other options. My eighty-five-year-old widowed *abuela*, Ramona González (1906 – 1995), was living alone and in need of a caretaker. As what often happens in many traditional Mexican families, children become the responsible caretakers of their elders. My *abuela's* advanced age had rendered her frail and physically weak, unable to leave the house or shop for her own groceries; and so, moving in with her offered a better situation for me as a young woman living in a college town away from family. In return for a place to live, I agreed to take care of the grocery shopping, cleaning, and caring for Doña Ramona, while I also went to school.

Upon moving in and taking on the role of caretaker, it became apparent that my *abuela* and I were generations apart in some of our thinking, but we found many more ways to connect and find common ground. To bridge the gap of the seven decades between us, we focused on the connection to our *herencia*. Our shared *herencia* marked those relevant characteristics and elements as women from the same family: food, genealogy, traditions, aspirations, religion, geography, literature, and writing. On many occasions, we spoke of the literature I was reading in my classes at the university, such as Faulkner and Hemingway, and then, on different days, we would read poetry from Mexican authors like Octavio Paz or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. From our talks, it was obvious she had read these important authors. Having gone only as far as high school, Doña Ramona had claimed her own education by becoming an avid reader. On occasion, I would share some of my college class writings with her. She would offer writing and editing ideas, which many times were far better than the advice I received from my instructors and tutors. Ashamed to admit, I never stopped to ask or wonder why this was so, but little did I know that she was a published writer. She has left it to me to piece together and recover her history.

Unfortunately, it would not be until years after her passing that I would learn the depths of Doña Ramona's skill and passion to write and discover her own significant publications. Unbeknownst to me at that time, in her sixties and seventies

she had accomplished her goal as a writer, writing mostly in Spanish. Significantly, she was a published Chicana writer in *El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican American Thought* (1967-1973), one of the key literary journals of the Chicano Movement (Cutler, 2014). However, she did not publish beyond this work. In our many conversations or *pláticas* (talks), she did not speak much, if any, of this facet of her past. Possibly because as many Mexican American women having grown up in the 1920s – 1960s (and even beyond) did not voice their accomplishments. For them, speaking out, especially to brag of oneself, was taboo. Writing as family and community scribe, though, Doña Ramona knew the power of not just our *pláticas*, but of her own *palabras* (words). Today, her words haunt me. I dream them. Fading when I awake, I can't always make out the details of the message. I wish I had recorded those *pláticas* during our *sobremesas*.²

In her early sixties, when she began writing the stories and memories she preserved from her childhood, Doña Ramona cultivated and revealed her intellect, insight, and creativity through her documented words in *cuentos*, poems, fables, *dichos*, riddles, and creative non-fiction vignettes. During her lifetime, Doña Ramona recorded her memories for future generations, yet she was not able to realize the publication of a large majority of her writings. However, the rescue and recovery of her materials has transformed into my rhetorical *herencia*. The moments and *pláticas* that I spent with Doña Ramona, would fundamentally ground my identity as a Chicana, and more, would instill hope in me that I could become a writer. Fortunately, I inherited the seven hundred and fifty pages of her written words, which are now considered an important part of US-Mexico literary and rhetorical *frontera* history. In February 2019, Doña Ramona's papers were accepted into the Tejana and Chicana Collection at the Nettie Lee Beson Latin American Collection at The University of Texas at Austin.

In reflecting on what I have learned about and have yet to recover of Doña Ramona's writings, the term *herencia* consistently comes to mind. Because she bequeathed me her writings, the scholar in me adds rhetorical to *herencia* – rhetorical *herencia*. Linguistically, I prefer the Spanish word *herencia* over the English word heritage because of its connection to my own Spanish language upbringing. As countless scholars of color (Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherie Moraga, Iris Ruiz, Isabel Baca, and Victor Villanueva) have argued, *Más que nada, el idioma forma una gran parte de nuestro patrimonio*.³ Now, in working on the transcriptions, translations, and future publication of Doña Ramona's writings, I frame rhetorical *herencia* as a key methodological and theoretical component of rhetorical recovery. Adding to the concepts of Latinx rhetoric, I also believe that rhetorical *herencia* can be used to ground recovery work in Latinx research approaches. As a relatively new term, Latinx emerges from wanting to break down

boundaries of gender, sex, ethnicity, and race, and results in a complex multifaceted definition, which seeks to include a variety of individuals and identities. Soto Vega and Chávez (2018) define Latinx as “refer[ring] foremost to an ethnic identity that is often associated with a brown racial identity, but it can also refer to a white or black racial identity, as well as an indigenous identity (not to mention how multiraciality complicates this simple schema)” (p. 320). For many, the term Latinx conjures mixed emotions regarding inclusion; however, I see it as a term rife with possibility. Like in mathematics, the ‘x’ in Latinx serves as a variable, an unknown, or placeholder for a value that is not yet known. The methodological approach of pairing the Latinx definition of possibility with rhetorical *herencia* has the potential to build upon Latinx scholarship as a connection to our personal (close communities and family) and professional transformation as Latinx scholars working in a system that many times works to further suppress our voices.

Latinx rhetorical scholars research, recover, and transform into knowledge not only of that which is familiar, but also what is not yet known or hidden from others in the academy. This transformation does not presume a simplicity of the process. On the contrary, knowledge construction remains difficult because the data must be subjected to a colonizing sieve of academic research processes. I propose that rhetorical *herencia* can aid or begin decolonizing processes, much like Iris D. Ruiz and Raúl Sánchez (2016) achieved in *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies*, to create a distancing from Western knowledge in order to reclaim one’s own self-determination. Many times, we don’t know our own rhetorical *herencia* until we ask such questions as “Who am I? Where do I come from?” But whom do we ask and where do we turn in order to uncover our rhetorical *herencia*? Here I position rhetorical *herencia* retrospectively as I see it within the current rhetorical and educational scholarship of Latinx researchers. Scholars, such as Octavio Pimentel (2015), have turned to *la gente buena* in their communities to tell *historias de éxito*; Aja Martinez (2016) asks questions about racism within the academy and looks at a counter story; Julia López-Robertson (2016) works with children of color and their mothers using *pláticas literarias* to tap into children’s knowledge of their lives along *la frontera*. In further surveying the Latinx rhetorical scholarship, rhetorical *herencia* grounds and builds our work in the academy. Rhetorical *herencia* appears in the scholarship of taco literacies and immigrant youth literacies (Alvarez, 2017); studies into Mesoamerican *códices* (D. Baca, 2009); the work of translation in Latinx communities (Gonzales, 2018); service-learning in our Latinx communities (I. Baca, 2012); feminist film work (Hidalgo, 2017); the Latino/a

discourse in education (Kells, et al., 2004), and Chicana feminist rhetorical recovery (Leon, 2013; Ramírez, 2015; & Enoch & Ramírez, 2019).

For this inaugural issue of *Latinx Writing and Rhetoric Studies (LWRS)*, which focuses on rhetorical recovery and transformation, I offer the theoretical and methodological framework of rhetorical *herencia*. I borrow Barbara L'Eplattenier's (2009) definition of methodology, "[M]ethodology allows us to theorize the goals of our research, methods allow us to contextualize the research process or the research subject and materials" (p. 69). The goal of adopting rhetorical *herencia* as a methodology is to create a way in which to include our local communities – the *barrios*, churches, not-for-profits, and other non-academic spaces of cultural gatherings, including our families' histories – in order to uncover marginalized voices and spaces that have been suppressed by traditional methodologies. Further, I suggest that rhetorical *herencia* functions as a feminist research methodology that within its framework questions the traditional methods of inclusion of white-only western Anglo-Saxon communities into scholarly conversations, or into the canon. Hui Wu (2002) brings the idea of feminist methodology to a strong point: "From a gendered point of view, feminist methodology of rhetorical history does not refer to an innocent research activity for research's sake, but rather an intentionally radical effort to exert transformative power of research methods" (p. 85). Drawing, too, on Michelle Colpean and Rebecca Dingo's (2018) recent work on engaging geopolitics of contexts, rhetorical *herencia* as a methodology pushes against the "drive-by race scholarship [which] assumes, unquestioned that unmarked whiteness is the 'phantom center' of our rhetorical theory" (p. 306). Thus, rhetorical *herencia* research and analysis forwards the assumption that traditional means of research are not value-free or neutral.

In proposing rhetorical *herencia*, I direct to it this question: How can Latinx scholars develop rhetorical concepts or approaches in and out of the classroom to account for rhetors and/or rhetorics that are excluded from traditional rhetoric? Rhetorical recovery is historical work, which legitimizes once-suppressed and hidden forms of writing and brings to light rhetorical situations within our current politics and work to re/center marginalized peoples' knowledge. It equates to bringing hidden or previously unrecognized writings, texts, and/or subject embodiments to the fore through the process of situating those texts within a legitimized history. In this article, I define and show examples of rhetorical *herencia* and also introduce my own work on rhetorical *herencia* through the writings my *abuela*, Doña Ramona González, left our family and the collective Mexican American community.

Locating and Defining *Herencia*

A recent study of genetic memory by Berit Brogaard (2014), a Danish American neuroscientist and philosopher, shows how humans are more than likely born with collective and connected memories of and about their ancestors. In a *Philosophical Issue* article, “In Partial Defense of Extended Knowledge,” Brogaard’s research pointed out that a person can have knowledge of episodes or actions without having experienced them within our states of reality. Furthering the argument in “Remembering Things From Before You Were Born: Can Memories be Innate?,” Brogaard (2013) suggests that we are able to capture and even relive the memories of our ancestors. Her research confirms a belief I have held for many years, which is that as living descendants of our ancestors, we carry a recollection of moments, events, or traumas experienced by our family members from before we were born, which I call ‘ancestral remembering’. Brogaard’s research, which indicates that we have a DNA connection to our ancestors, whether through memory, physical traits, “things remembered” or “things said,” provides a distinctive connection and opportunity for scholars of color. While the scientific research is promising, the Latinx community and scholars of color do not need such research to remind us that we can and do tap into this ancestral connection. Many Latinx scholars have already been engaging in this practice of recovering our family and community’s past and connecting it our present scholarship, which helps us define who we are today. Chicana scholar Eden Torres (2003), in *Chicana without Apology: The New Chicana Cultural Studies*, notes “that much of the creative work of Chicana writers exposes the wounds, confronts those who inflict pain, and tries to exorcise the shame that some individuals feel. Thus, this work can be seen as an attempt to grieve, to express the pain, and to heal” (p. 13). Latinx communities already know that we must link our memories to our current condition. We invoke our ancestral remembering through our ways of participating in the world –the food we eat, the music we listen to, the clothes we wear, the literature we read, the customs we keep, the ways we worship, the places we live and work, and the topics we engage in for research and writing. Rhetorical *herencia* is the way we study these participatory markers.

Imbricated within ancestral remembering, *herencia* refers to the traits, customs, practices, beliefs, and memories we inherit from our ancestors and their connected collective culture to our present realities. These belongings [I intend a double implication of “belonging” here as also being a part of a community] – some tangible, others intangible – are given to us at birth and are those we carry with us throughout our lives. Our *herencia*, especially that of people of color, which many times remains

lost or hidden due to colonial violence and institutional suppression, holds the power to ground us in the present and direct us toward a transformational future. When one's own *herencia* is uncovered, recognized, and articulated, whether in community writing projects or classroom assignments, it holds the power to shift the trajectory of future generations, much like the movement of the Mexican American Studies program in Arizona public schools (Cabrera et. al, 2014). In our current divisive political climate, it is not uncommon that the Latinx community can be blinded to or deny their *herencia*, preferring the current mode of thinking or status quo, believing that it can possibly lead to greater economic success or acceptance. Because for many the past remains a marked unknown, *herencia* and the processes of uncovering that which is hidden can also cause anxiety. However, to understand who we are as Latinx people, it is important to acknowledge our own *herencia*.

Rhetorical *herencia* as a methodology or theory can work as a basis for inquiry into writing studies in the classroom, as well as in the recovery of lost history, stories, and people, to connect us to those things we know, but maybe are not sure how we know. Or, as Victor Villanueva (2008) describes in "Colonial Memory, Colonial Research," "...knowing something ain't right and there ain't no puttin' it right but can't be no ignoring the wrong" (p. 84). The "not ignoring the wrong" is where rhetorical *herencia* comes into the process of "puttin' it right." As a theory, rhetorical *herencia* reminds us that we can materialize and uncover a past through inquiry – doing genealogical work, digging in local and national archives, and conducting oral histories with our family and people of our communities and barrios. Rhetorical *herencia* translates also into a writing studies methodology of "naming what we know," as Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (2015) have put it. I ascribe rhetorical *herencia* to serve as a Latinx threshold concept, which is a "concept critical for learning and participation in an area or within a community of practice" for the Latinx research and writing community to use (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015, p. 2). The work of rhetorical *herencia* can translate into a rhetorical research methodology of considering our local community members as knowledge makers, acknowledging those things spoken or not spoken, uncovering forgotten or suppressed cultures, religions, traditions and daily practices, and more that we find within our quotidian lives, such as Octavio Pimentel's work on redefining success within Mexican American communities (2015).

As an approach that many of our Latinx scholars already utilize, rhetorical *herencia* can be utilized with students in our classes or in our own scholarly work. We, as Latinx scholars, do write about these inherited memories or what Kiki Petrosino (2015) in her poem "Literacy Narrative" calls "complaining ghosts." When we answer

the ghosts and write about the ancestral connections and rememberings – our *herencia* – we write ourselves. We come closer to finding who we are, where we are from, and also, where we are going. Writing about and recovering our *herencias* helps reconcile the trauma, recover some of the lost memory, and transform it into public knowledge.

Locating Rhetorical *Herencia*: *un encuentro*

During the spring of 2017, I began piecing together Doña Ramona's expansive work by digitally scanning her writings, reading them page by page to identify writings for translation, and mapping her path in becoming a writer within the Chicano Movement. Primarily, her writings form a feminine part of the Chicano literary Movement through her five stories that were published in 1973 in one of the first special publications focusing on Chicana writings, *El Grito: Chicanas en la literatura y el arte*. To offer a gendered contextualization of her writings, *El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought* (Romano-V, et. al. 1967-1973), marks the literary journal that major Chicano writers, such as Rudolfo Anaya, author of *Bless Me, Última*, and Tomás Rivera, author of *...y no se lo tragó la tierra/ ...And the Earth did not Devour Him*, published some of their first writings. Anaya and Rivera would go on to win the Quinto Sol Literary Award, for which Doña Ramona was nominated in 1974. She did not win the prize; it went to Estela Portillo-Trambley.⁴ In short, my grandmother published alongside distinguished Chicano writers of the Chicano Movement, yet her writings have gone overlooked for over four decades. Now, Doña Ramona's writings, both published and unpublished, form a part of this told and untold history of the Chicano literary movement. Significantly, in February 2019, her writings were formally accepted into the Chicana and Tejana Collection at the University of Texas at Austin Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection under the title, *The Ramona González Collected Writings*.

While she began writing, I was hardly a toddler. Today, as a mestiza scholar, I write at the textual and geographic border of knowledges, languages, memories, and places – at the multiple and blurred disciplinary borders of my adopted academic language of rhetoric, the voice of personal narrative, poetics, history, two languages (Spanish and English), and the recovery lens of feminist historiography and rhetorical *herencia*. These border knowledges and Doña Ramona's recently recovered writings (my *herencia*) are imbricated in my skin and bloodline with a century-long maternal family history of struggle, life, and community connected to Mexico and the *frontera* along the US-Mexico border in El Paso, Texas.



Figure 2: Image of González Grocery in El Paso, Texas. circa 1938

Herencia, closely tied to memory, connects me to the time I lived with my *abuela*, Doña Ramona (1990-1995). We would sit together in the mornings and engage in what Francisco Guajardo and Miguel Guajardo (2013) call *pláticas*. Amid the toasted tortillas and café, our *pláticas* constructed realities and events from her past – memories of her growing up in Barrio Chihuahuaita, a historical barrio located along the Rio Grande, and moving to Segundo Barrio (both located in El Paso, Texas). She told of her wanting to attend college and to become a writer and journalist, and she recounted the events that happened in the family corner-store, González Grocery (1931-1958) (Figure 2). I would quickly eat my breakfast and rush off to school, attend my history, literature, and education classes, not giving these talks a second thought. In reality, it was my *abuela* who was truly giving me my own history, literature, and education.

Twenty-eight years after her passing, she once again is guiding me. One summer evening in 2014, while I was visiting family in El Paso, my mother, Sandra González, called: “You may want to come and look what is in this box your *Tia* Norma brought over.” I had no idea that I was about to open a time capsule of my *abuela*’s past, a treasure trove of Chicana rhetorical and literary history. Lifting the lid, I discovered over seven hundred and fifty pages of manuscript-ready writings stacked inside the faded vegetable box. The writings in this archive vary in genre: one-page poems, short stories, and memoirs as long as forty-five pages, universal sayings or *dichos* (over five hundred), oral history textual recordings, and much more. These writings were originally composed on a manual typewriter in the late 1960s and early 1970s and at times reveal her notes and pencil markings visible throughout the faded pages. As historical artifacts, they stand as textbook examples of primary documents.

In reading her writings closely, I recognize that they are fundamental texts to recover and preserve as part of our US-Mexico and Texas rhetorical, literary, and border history. The genres she wrote vary and demonstrate the depth of Doña Ramona's Spanish language proficiency, especially for not having been formally educated in its grammar. For example, there are approximately fifty poems written in Spanish for children, such as "*Amor chiquito*," "*A el niño*," "*A la niña*," and "*El gato y el ratoncito*." They speak of sweet first love, lessons for behaving at home and school, and conversations between a cat and mouse. While these themes seem simplistic in nature, they represent how Doña Ramona understood and communicated Mexican American's early literacy practices, such as through fables and tales. Other lengthier writings reveal a dual border and barrio historical significance. A series piece entitled, "*Por vida de estas santas cruces, yo viví en estos barrios*," narrates the daily living conditions and details in character vignettes a variety of historical moments of the people in Barrio Chihuahuita during the early 1900s. One story also reads as an oral account of a *barrio* episode in 1910, the year the Mexican Revolution erupted. These writings capture what Leticia Garza-Falcón (1998) contends narrative writings by Mexican Americans embody, "a more varied view of the human experience in the social world...[and]... recover a human complexity which would otherwise have been banished from the heterogeneous history of the people of Texas and the Southwest" (23). These first-person feminine narrative perspectives by Doña Ramona center on a *barrio* within the U.S./Mexico borderlands and represent essential pieces to historicize, preserve, and make accessible to Mexican American scholars and essentially to the greater public of the Texas border region.

During the civil rights era and at the beginning of the Chicano Movement, Doña Ramona, now in her mid-60s, began to record the memory of her *raza* on an old, grey Remington typewriter. From a young age, Doña Ramona longed to be a journalist, but never accomplished this goal. Instead, later in life she took up writing, and, from her memory, she recorded the daily happenings and conversations of the people from her home community, Barrio Chihuahuita. Word by word, she was constructing an early Chicano literary history. For over four decades, Doña Ramona's unpublished writings lingered in an unmarked family archive. The essence of a community and personal *herencia* in this project is reflected in the many of Doña Ramona's writings, such as in a piece titled "*Los Libros*," whose genre I have labeled a *cuadro*, a one-page literary piece (not a poem) that focuses on one subject. In this *cuadro*, Doña Ramona gifts a young child a book, admonishing him/her to read in order to claim a richer (not necessarily monetary) future. These examples point to everyday community literacy practices in her Barrio Chihuahuita and beyond, such as in other

barrios, where literacy practices do not resemble the Western standard of knowing and learning.

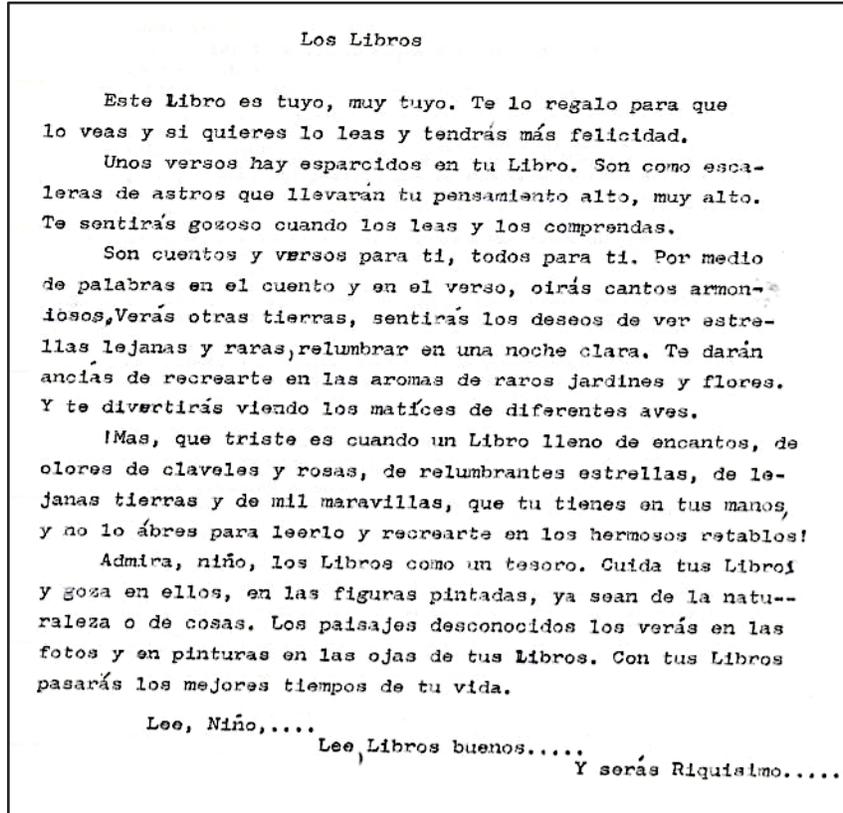


Figure 3: Los Libros: from the primary writings of Romana González. Circa 1973

Books

This book is yours, very much yours. I give it to you so you can see it and if you want, you'll read it and you will have more happiness.

A few verses are scattered in your Book. They are like stairways of stars that will carry your thoughts high, very high. You will feel joyful when you read and understand them.

They are stories and verses for you, all for you. Through words in the story and in the verse, you will hear harmonious songs, you will see other lands, you will feel the desire to see distant and rare stars shining on a clear night. They will make you desirous to recreate yourself in the aromas of rare gardens and flowers. And you'll have fun watching the nuances of different birds.

But how sad it is when a Book full of fascinations, of fragrances of carnations and roses, of sparkling stars, of distant lands and thousands of wonders, that you have in your hands, if you do not open it to read it and recreate yourself in the beautiful Tableaus. Hold the Books in high esteem, child, like a treasure. Take care of your Books and enjoy them, the painted figures, whether from nature or from things. You will see unknown landscapes in the photos

Rhetorical *Herencia*

and paintings on the pages of your Books. With your Books you will spend the best times of your life.

Read, Child.....

Read, good books.....

And you will be very rich.....

In “*Los Libros*” (Figure 3), the literal handing-down of literacy from one generation to the other in my family emerges as thematically central. Spanish language writings such as “*Los Libros*,” and many more within the archive, mark my own rhetorical *herencia* with Doña Ramona that represent her passing on to me the tools and understanding of a bilingual literacy. As recovery researchers, we must ask: When writing about ourselves, our families, and our communities, how do we remain the objective researcher? As a trained researcher, I don’t believe that this stance is fully possible with rhetorical *herencia*, as with Moraga’s and Anzaldúa’s (2015) theory in the flesh. On the contrary, researching and writing about one’s own family, community, or oneself can serve as an act of resistance and decolonization. As the maternal granddaughter of Doña Ramona, I recognize that I am always already written into this recovery of these writings, which I call *un cuento de cuentos* (a story of stories). The entanglement remains inescapable. As shown here, rhetorical *herencia* equates to a relational recovery connected to who we are and brings about a transformation of ourselves and our community. By using rhetorical *herencia* as a methodology, we recognize our proximity to the subject. Like seeking out our student’s funds of knowledge as a decolonizing pedagogy, uncovering my own rhetorical *herencia* presents an entanglement in which I hope to remain. Rhetorical *herencia* as a methodology of recovery makes this entanglement possible.

In some of the poetry and children’s stories she writes, I can identify the relational recovery, such as in this short poem, “*A la niña*.” In this work, I imagine Doña Ramona thinking of one of my cousins or of me, the young girl that would run into her lap on our family’s frequent visits and whose tears she would wipe away. After our family drove away, my *abuela* possibly sat at the typewriter and wrote:

A La Niña

Niña, no llores, no llores,
El tiempo es para mejor pasar.
Niña, sonríe, niña sonríe
Que el tiempo pronto se va.

Niña, eres dulcísima, eres dulcísima,
Atesórala como una virtud.
Que nadie se lleve ese almíbar,
Que es de tu vida, la Primavera.

Niña, eres el perfume, el perfume
Eres el aroma sinigual
De la gardenia y de la rosa,
y los azahares del oloroso naranjal.

Conserva las lágrimas,
Guarda tu dulcísima,
Esparce el perfume
Por el camino por donde vas.

Figure 4: A La Niña: from the primary writings of Ramona González. Circa 1973

To the Little Girl
Little girl, do not cry, do not cry,
Time is for something better than just for getting by.
Little girl, smile, little girl, smile
For time soon flees away.

Little girl you are sweetness, you are sweetness,
Treasure it like a virtue.
Let no one take from you that nectar,
That is the springtime of your life.

Child, you are perfume, perfume,
You are the aroma beyond compare
From the gardenia and from the rose,
And the blossoms of the fragrant orange grove.

Conserve your tears,
Keep your sweetness,
Spread the perfume
Along the pathway that you go.

These writings are not the fleeting words of calm from a grandmother to her granddaughter. Because of the situated historical and rhetorical context within the Chicano literary movement, “*A la niña*” (Figure 4) reflects a Latinx bilingual literacy of a 1960s Chicana writer from the US-Mexico *frontera* claiming her voice and transforming the history for those who recover it into knowledge for future generations. The more I read into and write about the writings from Doña Ramona, the more I believe this research and recovery work has been reserved for me to complete. The introduction of her work and recovery of just a few of her writings here marks only the beginning of this project. Further, I contend that my own rhetorical *herencia* and recovery serves as a transformational moment for our discipline, but more importantly, for the Latinx community, much like the people still living in Barrio Chihuahueta, looking to find their place with our world.

Conclusion

A method for academic and archival recovery work, rhetorical *herencia* can function as a threshold concept for Latinx communities and serve as a methodology for recovering texts, voices, and materials from our own families and communities. Rhetorical *herencia* gives a deep relational connection with our work rather than just a topic that we ask students to research and analyze. While the phrase rhetorical *herencia* may be novel, the method is not new to our Latinx scholars. Many scholars, Aja Y. Martinez (2016), Steven Álvarez (2017), Cruz Medina (2013; 2013), Isabel Baca (2012), Iris Ruiz (2016), Laura Gonzales (2018), and many more, have been engaging in this work for decades. Looking ahead to new research, rhetorical *herencia* serves as a way of talking about what we do and naming what we know as a research community.

Endnotes

1. Land acknowledgement – Native American Student Affairs. (2020). Retrieved February 26, 2020, from <https://nasa.arizona.edu/>
2. The word *pláticas* references Guajardo & Guajardo’s use of *pláticas* as etymology, inquiry, and pedagogy in “The Power of *Plática*” (2013) published in *Reflections: Public Rhetoric, Civic Writing, and Service Learning* (159-164). *Sobremesa* is a term in Spanish that refers to the intimate and connective talk after a meal.
3. More than anything, language forms a large part of our heritage.
4. See Faye Nell Vowell and Estela Portillo-Trambley, “A MELUS Interview: Estela Portillo-Trambley.” *Varieties of Ethnic Criticism*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1982, pp. 59-66.

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