

Not Done Yet

Juan Antonio Trujillo

Emeritus Faculty, Oregon State University



Author's Note

Juan Antonio Trujillo

info@elinverso.com

(541) 250-0367

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For Rita Lorraine Wheeler, 1940-2022

She asked me
on her deathbed,
voice muffled
by the respirator mask;
tell me about
your early retirement, about
leaving the university.

Not a time to lie
but with enough grief
already in the room,
I glance at the faces
of family surrounding the bed
then speak,
louder than I like,
hoping to be heard over
beeping monitors
and the unnatural rhythm
of assisted breathing
so I won't have
to say it twice;

Mom, I was not done yet,
not done teaching community,
not done teaching justice,
all that stuff that
made you proud;
finally acting like my
queer, Latinx self had a
place in the academy,
I learned that
I did not.
I was not safe and I
had
to
leave.

Mom, do you remember that time
you cut out felt leaves
to make us into trees
for the community theatre?

Juan Antonio Trujillo (he/him, él in Spanish) is an independent scholar and artist whose autoethnographic exploration of intersectional queer and Latinx identities encompasses academic and creative writing in Spanish and English, photography, and experimental nonfiction film. An applied/computational linguist by training, Juan Antonio's work reflects deep curiosity about non-verbal languages we create around complex marginalized identities and desires. His creative writing has appeared in Feminist Formations and the Headcase anthology on queer mental health, and his short film Topografías Eróticas, which explores the physical and emotional geography of Portland's queer spaces, screened at Ethnografilm 2022 in Paris.