

Crossing Borders: Personal Essays

By Sergio Troncoso

Arte Público Press (1-800-633-2783)

ISBN-10: 1558857109

ISBN-13: 978-1558857100

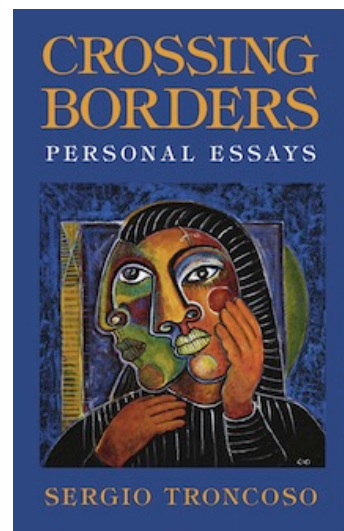
Publication date: September 30, 2011

A thought-provoking collection of essays about transcending cultural borders

*Best Books of 2011 by *The Hispanic Reader*

*Bronze Award for Essays, *ForeWord Review's* Book of the Year Awards

*2nd Place for Best Biography in English, International Latino Book Awards



“On good days I feel I am a bridge. On bad days I just feel alone,” Sergio Troncoso writes in this riveting collection of sixteen personal essays in which he seeks to connect the humanity of his Mexican family to people he meets on the East Coast, including his wife’s Jewish kin. Raised in a home steps from the Mexican border in El Paso, Texas, Troncoso crossed what seemed an even more imposing border when he left home to attend Harvard College. “I was torn,” he writes, “between the people I loved at home and the ideas I devoured away from home.”

Troncoso writes to examine his life and to create meaning from the disparate worlds he inhabits and the borders he has crossed. In “Letter to My Young Sons,” he documents the terror of his wife’s breast cancer diagnosis and the ups and downs of her surgery and treatment. Other essays explore interfaith marriage and evolving gender roles as Troncoso becomes a husband and father. A Christmas vacation in Ysleta leads to a severe argument with his father and reflection about machismo and independence within immigrant families. In “Fresh Challah,” Troncoso explores the impact his wife’s Jewish heritage and religion have on his Mexican-American identity.

Crossing Borders: Personal Essays reveals a writer, father and husband who has crossed linguistic, cultural and intellectual borders to provoke debate about identity in America today. Challenging assumptions about literature, the role of writers in America, fatherhood and family, these essays bridge the chasm between the poverty of the border region and the highest echelons of success in America. Troncoso writes with the deepest faith in humanity about sacrifice, commitment and honesty.

Discussion Questions for ***Crossing Borders***:

<http://sergiotroncoso.com/borders/questions/index.htm>

Praise for *Crossing Borders: Personal Essays*:

“Sergio Troncoso takes us on his journey from El Paso to New York, from child to husband, and student to father. He describes the solitary struggle of the writer, and the social and political hurdles overcome. Troncoso understands that in emerging from his chrysalis, he can never go back – nor does he want to. But the lesson is clear: You give something up to gain something else. As they say in the mercado in Chihuahua, 'What will you take for it?' Troncoso paid quite a lot, and it is worth our while to witness this journey from native son to the bloody birth of a public intellectual.”

—Kathleen Alcalá, author of *The Desert Remembers My Name*

“Touching and intelligent, this book shows what it’s like growing up an intellectual on the border of the US and Mexico. It’s often painful, often funny, but always precise in expressing how rich and challenging life can be, how sometimes moving away from home can bring you even closer to your family and heritage.”

—Daniel Chacón, author of *and the shadows took him* and *Unending Rooms*

“Border-crossings is a metaphor for the experience of Hispanic American professionals traversing America’s ‘borders’ on their way to making a better life for self, family and country. Troncoso’s use of short stories as if entries in a personal diary captures important life-impacting times along his journey from barrio through elite higher education to a life as a caring father and husband even while continuing to navigate the nearly always invisible barriers of exclusion. Readers interested in modern day acculturation will want to read and reflect on this rare opportunity to crawl into the mind of a talented Latino author who writes about a common Latino professionals story, and draw from his openness lessons intended to make us all better people.”

—Frank Alvarez, President and CEO of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund

Book Reviews for *Crossing Borders: Personal Essays*:

“We live in a complex time. Troncoso is a complicated man trying to understand a complicated world. In his quest for understanding, he eloquently shares lessons learned in 16 provocative essays.

These very personal essays cross several borders: cultural, historical and self-imposed....

The collection remains timely. We owe it to ourselves to read, savor and read them again.”

—Manuel Ramos for *The El Paso Times*



“Most heartwrenching are the three pieces entitled “Letter to My Young Sons,” which details their mother’s battle with cancer and shows a father’s love for his children. If a reader only reads one essay, though, it should be “Why Should Latinos Write Their Own Stories,” a piece that shows the importance of preserving heritage and teaching the world things that they may not know about Latinos. In all, Troncoso’s book is a piece of artwork and a piece of heritage that everyone, not just Latinos, should take the time to read.”

—Melissa Boles for *Portland Book Review*



“Troncoso’s essays are lucid, philosophical, and erudite without being condescending to the reader. *Crossing Borders* signals a shift in writing about what it means to be Chicano and a writer in the early 21st century.”

—John Olivares Espinoza for *The Packinghouse Review*



“A champion for the rights of immigrants who have come to this country for a better, more prosperous life.”

—Cheryl Wright-Watkins for *NewPages.com*



“Sergio Troncoso's *Crossing Borders: Personal Essays* is an engrossing and revealing peek behind the curtain of one writer's creative process, development and struggles.

The reader is treated to crisp and evocative prose that wades into the murky waters of ethnic, religious and familial identities....

Troncoso has already made his mark in the literary world. But if *Crossing Borders* is any guide, he will continue to spin stories and explain the writer's life for many years to come.”

—Daniel Olivas for *The El Paso Times*



“Troncoso is an elegant writer whose work will make readers grateful that he writes his life down.”

—*The Hispanic Reader*

SERGIO TRONCOSO is the author of *The Last Tortilla and Other Stories* and the novels *From This Wicked Patch of Dust* and *The Nature of Truth*. He co-edited *Our Lost Border: Essays on Life amid the Narco-Violence*. He graduated from Harvard College and studied international relations and philosophy at Yale University. He won a Fulbright scholarship to Mexico, where he studied economics, politics, and literature. Troncoso was inducted into the Hispanic Scholarship Fund’s Alumni Hall of Fame and the Texas Institute of Letters. He was born and raised in El Paso, Texas and now lives in New York City.

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