



# Once More to the River: Family Snapshots of Growing Up, Getting Out and Going Back

*Erasmus Guerra*

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"Like the howl of an accordion--half sorrow and half joy, wondrous and exquisite--these stories squeezed my heart."

--Sandra Cisneros, author of *The House on Mango Street*

★

In *ONCE MORE TO THE RIVER*, ErasmO Guerra writes a moving account of his boyhood on the Texas-Mexico border.

An award-winning novelist and journalist, Guerra explores present-day political and cultural realities, and recounts the shattering loss his family suffered when his teenage sister was murdered

Told with lyrical prose and a reporter's ear for the "Tex-Mex" language of the region, these stories capture the voices of South Texas. By turns humorous and haunting, powerful and tender, this collection is an intensely personal chronicle of tragedy and the triumph of survival.

★

## *From the Introduction:*

Many nights my mom stood on the front porch and hollered at my sister, brother and me to get home after we spent the day wandering the neighborhood. She called us desvalagados. Not exactly lost, but loose.

She didn't like us spending too much time in "borrowed houses."

"There's nothing like your own home," Mom said. "No hay más como tu propia casa."

And there never will be. Although I've lived in New York City for nearly two decades, when I sit down at my writing desk I still hear my mom's echoes and return to that stretch of the Texas-Mexico border along the Rio Grande River where I grew up.

Each of these stories first appeared in magazines, online journals and literary anthologies, but I wanted to gather them together in a proper collection of their own.

"Childhood's End," about my teenage sister's murder, was originally published in Texas Monthly. "Freedom Ride," about a bus ride out of the borderlands, and "Once More to the River," about a ferry ride across the Rio Grande into Mexico with my mom, appeared in The Texas Observer. "Once More to the River" was also included in Hecho en Tejas, edited by Dagoberto Gilb. I chronicle another bus ride, this one bound for the border, in the story "Tex-Mex Express," which ran in ColorLines. "Recuerdo: My Sister Remembered," a short family memoir, was in the collection Fifteen Candles: Fifteen Tales of Taffeta, Hairspray, Drunk

Uncles, and other Quinceañera Stories, edited by Adriana Lopez.

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**ERASMO GUERRA** was born and raised on the Texas-Mexico border. His nonfiction stories have appeared in The New York Times, Texas Monthly, The Texas Observer and aired on NPR. His work has been honored with a Lambda Literary Award and he has received writing grants from the Vermont Studio Center, The Fine Arts Work Center and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. He is a member of the Macondo Writers' Workshop. He lives in New York City.

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