

TRAVELING TO MY HOME COUNTRY

By Estefanie Garduno Rapp

Some objects, some people can become a symbol, or perhaps a doorway, into something much larger. Visiting Mexico City feels like a conversation across time. Every visit says, “I’m still becoming, and I wanted you to meet who I am now.”

I have a relationship with Mexico City, with Spanish, with my own history, and with a version of myself that still lives there. Every time I go, I take a piece of me with me and leave a piece of my new self there.

My parents’ home feels like a living archive of who I have been. Every photograph, every object, every familiar smell is preserving a chapter of my life while I’m busy writing the next one somewhere else...

I built a life abroad, and yet every visit creates a strange coexistence: the child I was, the ambitious young woman who left, the physician and scientist I’ve become, and the daughter who is still welcomed exactly the same way.

Time hasn’t actually stopped there. But my memories have been carefully protected there. On the walls, on the tables and all over the house, within a box, within a bag, within a cabinet.

Spanish is the language in which the earliest jokes landed, it’s the sound of a loving family, it’s the way memories were formed, and how my identity first took shape. Speaking it can feel like putting on clothes that fit perfectly after wearing something unfamiliar for a long time.

And Mexico City... what a city to have complicated feelings for. It’s chaotic and beautiful, exhausting and alive, heartbreaking and joyful all at once. The contrasts are part of its personality, and perhaps part of me too. Mexico always gives me an opportunity to reconnect with a version of myself: the one speaking Spanish effortlessly, the one surrounded by family, the one remembering old passions.

And perhaps, the real gift of traveling to my home country, is that it reminds me there are still unexplored rooms inside myself.