

# GINA VALDÉS

U.S. AND MEXICO (1943–)

LANGUAGES: SPANISH AND ENGLISH

## WHERE YOU FROM?

Soy de aquí  
y soy de allá  
from here  
and from there  
born in L.A.  
del otro lado  
y de éste  
crecí en L.A.  
y en Ensenada  
my mouth  
still tastes  
of naranjas  
con chile  
soy del sur  
y del norte  
crecí zurda  
y norteadada  
cruzando fron-  
teras crossing  
San Andreas  
tartamuda  
y mareada  
where you from?  
soy de aquí  
y soy de allá  
I didn't build  
this border  
that halts me  
the word fron-  
tera splits  
on my tongue



Gina Valdés is an iconic figure in Chicano literature and a life-long activist for Chicano and immigration human rights. She was born in Los Angeles, California, and grew up on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border. Throughout her writing career (through both poetry and prose) Valdés has focused on building understanding about the complexities and the riches of living life in two languages and two cultures.

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
allá (adv.)	in that distant place	there, over there, afar, beyond
aquí (adv.)	in this place	here
con (prep.)	accompanied by	with
crecí (v.)	from the verb <i>crecer</i> , meaning "to grow up"	I grew up, I was raised, I was nurtured
cruzando (v.)	from the verb <i>cruzar</i> , meaning "making a passage from one place to another"	crossing, passing
de, del (prep.)	indicates a connection between something or someone	of, from, by
en (prep.)	indicates location	in
éste (adj.)	referring to something previously mentioned	this
frontera (n.)	line dividing two areas	border, boundary, frontier
lado (n.)	a position to the left or right of an object or barrier	side
mareado/a (adj.)	unsteady and giddy	dizzy, faint
naranjas (n.)	citrus fruits	oranges
norte (n.)	one of the directions a compass needle normally points	north
nortado/a (adj.)	loose bearings	disoriented, unsettled, bewildered, lost
otro (adj.)	different, remaining	other, another
soy (v.)	from the verb <i>ser</i> , meaning "to be"	I am
sur (n.)	one of the cardinal directions; opposite of north	south
tartamudo/a (adj.)	speaking with a stutter	stuttering, stammering
y (conj.)	used to connect words; something additional	and, as well as, in addition to
zurdo/a (adj.)	preferring to use the left hand	left-handed, southpaw, lefty, out of step, contradicted, mixed-up

Poetry Inside Out  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Gina Valdés • Where You From?  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## PHRASE BY PHRASE

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## REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

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What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

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Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?

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