

I have really struggled lately with writing. The novel took a lot out of me and left me with a lot of questions about subject matter and how free writers really are to pursue their idiosyncrasies. I have had trouble facing up to the fact that my identity will always precede me and that it will shape how my fiction is perceived, no matter what I do.

This story took eight months to write, which is very long for me. But it was, in essence, a reluctant return to basics. I went back to family history for inspiration. I kept the storytelling linear, the sentences shorter than usual, and even used a first-person point of view, which I generally distrust.

I'm trying to figure out how to maintain a sense of complexity about a place and a culture that is still viewed too simplistically—I'm too committed to the Valley to feel I should stop writing about it.

—*Manuel Muñoz*

