M.B., the young writer who decided to live without happy endings

Montserrat Benavides, a student of Hispanic Literature at the Tec who has yet to turn twenty, has published four books in English and is about to publish her fifth.
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Kevin Chaires

At first glance, **Monserrat Benavides (or simply M.B. as she signs her books)** looks as if she has just stepped out of a fairy tale. She dresses in pastel colors, has a soft voice, a constant smile, and an innocent gaze.

But in her books, the lights go out. Her main characters have to deal with **death**, **guilt**, **obsession**, **reminiscences**, and **heartbreak**. They fall apart, are found out, or pretend they feel nothing. In her texts, life never quite fits in.

"Happy endings are overrated anyway," says the independent author and student of **Hispanic Literature and Publishing Entrepreneurship** at **Tec de Monterrey.**

She is one of the recipients of a **Tec national entrepreneurship scholarship**, a program that encourages young people from all over the country who have innovative projects.

So far**, she has published four books in English** and **is currently working on her fifth (her first in Spanish):** a**collection of contemporary poems** with elements of autofiction**,** which is due out in 2026.

Montserrat Benavides, independent author and Tec student, published four books in English before reaching the age of twenty. I Photo: Kevin Chaires

Writing about what no one wants to contemplate: fear, guilt, loss

As opposed to what many might expect from a young author, **Montserrat does not write nice stories.**

She is drawn to the uncomfortable side of the human experience**: fear, guilt, loss.**

“I have no idea where these tragic stories come from”.

She grew up in *“a warm family environment”*. Her parents are **Tec graduates** and entrepreneurs and often ask her to explain herself.

“My dad always says I have to make it clear ***that they didn’t harm me in any way and that I didn’t have a traumatic upbringing”.***

> ***“I think it’s my way of experiencing things that haven’t happened to me and feelings that aren’t mine”.***

The fact that there is no darkness in her own life may explain why she seeks it in fiction.

“I think ***it’s my way of experiencing things that haven’t happened to me and*** *feelings that aren’t mine.”*

Her first tales, for no apparent reason, were horror stories. She later discovered that it wasn’t fear she was interested in, but **the vulnerability of her characters when everything collapses** around them.

This is where her preference for **sad or ambiguous endings** comes from. *“I always knew how movies were going to end. It was frustrating how there was always a happy ending. I thought, ‘I don’t want to do that.* ***I’d rather have an unexpected ending".***

“Happy endings are overrated,” says M.B., who has taken darkness as her leitmotif. / Photo: Kevin Chaires

The girl who got tired of writing the same thing every day

Writing came upon **Montserrat Benavides** at the age of five when every Monday at school she had to write what she had done over the weekend.

She recalls, “I always wrote the same thing: I went to my grandparents’ house...” because that what what she always did, **until her teacher told her to come up with something different.**

> ***“I always knew how movies were going to end. It’s frustrating how there would always be a happy ending. I thought, ‘I’d rather have an unexpected ending".***

From then on, **Montserrat began to imagine** horses, picnics, and **new worlds.**

She remembers that she enjoyed it but had never thought of seriously getting into writing until she told one of her stories to her classmates in high school and saw their reaction:

*"Everyone got **caught up in the story,** and I thought maybe I could something with this."* That idea stayed with her.

M.B. writes about death, guilt, and heartbreak even if her smile would seem to indicate otherwise. / Photo: Kevin Chaires

The path to independent publishing

When she was **fourteen**, she decided she wanted to publish a book during the pandemic.

As she had no contacts in the publishing world, she **learned everything from the ground up**: she searched for online tutorials, read independent writers' forums, and spent hours researching how **to obtain a copyright registration.**

“I became completely immersed in the independent world. I wanted to do it like that because ***I like having the rights under my own name while protecting my freedom of expression”.***

Obtaining the licences was not easy.

“They asked me to send everything physically in Mexico and the process was very slow, so I decided to ***do it in the United States****, where I could do it digitally*".

She also learned how to generate her bar code and International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for identification purposes. *“As there was no one to help me, I was forced to put it on the back burner and keep on writing”.*

Finally, at the age of seventeen, **she published her first book on Amazon: *Miniature Novels*,** a collection of **horror short stories**.

“I didn’t know it would end up being a book; I just ***kept compiling stories*** *until I realized I had a* ***complete collection****.”*That’s how she took her first steps as an independent author.

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Books by Montserrat Benavides (M.B.)

Still not twenty, the **Tec de Monterrey** student of **Hispanic Literature and Publishing Entrepreneurship** has already **published four** books with a **fifth on the way.**

1. Miniature Novels (published when she was seventeen)

- *Her first book, which she wrote between middle school and high school.*
- *It's a **horror and dark fiction** collection of short stories dealing with violence and carnage.*
- *This was **independently published on Amazon** with copyrights processed in the United States.*
- *It was her literary "baby" and the beginning of her career as an independent author.*

2. Miniature Novels Vol. 2 (second book)

- *A continuation of her first collection in a **more mature and reflective tone**.*
- *It incorporates **autofiction**: emotions and personal experiences turned into fiction.*
- *"I had already accumulated more life experience and was writing from a deeper place," explains Montserrat.*

3. How to Get the Girl

- ***A tragic romance** novel.*
- *She wrote this as a personal challenge, "I always say I don't like to write romance, so I went ahead and did, but made it tragic."*
- *She shows us a different genre without abandoning her melancholic tone.*

4. Things You Never Understand

- *A short novel written between classes at high school.*
- *The protagonist **has no name** so that the reader can identify with her.*
- *It was inspired by **feminist marches and women's resilience**.*
- *"I wanted to write about how women can also be inherently resilient."*

5. Club de joyas fracturadas *(The Fractured Jewels Club) is a work in progress to be released in 2026.*

- *This will be her **first book in Spanish**.*
- *It contains **contemporary poetry** with elements of autofiction.*
- *This involves a transition of language and style: from English to Spanish and from narrative to verse.*

At the Monterrey International Book Fair, M.B. presented her books at two stands featuring independent authors. / Photo: Kevin Chaires

Writing in English to say what can’t be said in Spanish

Although Mexican, **Montserrat has written in English since she first picked up a pen.**

“I grew up reading in English and watching movies in English, so it felt natural.” She used to read Judy Blume and *Junie B. Jones*, whose children’s series inspired her narrative rhythm.

Montserrat also became familiar with English at school, *“All the readings were in English, and* ***I fell in love with its structure: it’s simpler than Spanish.”***

However, studying **Hispanic Literature** has **enabled her to rediscover her mother tongue**, **“***Now I’m starting to appreciate Spanish again.”*

Her fifth book will mark that transition. It will be her first work in Spanish: a **collection of contemporary poems** with elements of **autofiction** entitled ***Club de joyas fracturadas*** (The Fractured Jewels Club)**.**

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A scholarship to make money from writing

Although she writes of emotional chaos and unresolved endings, her **professional story is one of persistence.**

She is one of the recipients of a **Tec de Monterrey national entrepreneurship scholarship**, a program that encourages young people who have innovative projects.

When she applied *for the scholarship,* **she thought it only targeted science or technology.** *"I said, 'I have nothing to lose. I have my own books and my own publishing brand; maybe that can also be innovation*.".

Her proposal **was chosen from more than six hundred applicants nationwide.**

"I love the scholarship; it's the best thing that has ever happened to me. *They help us reach milestones to make progress with our projects; it's a* ***community where everyone shares their knowledge****."*

There she was afforded legal and technical advice to professionalize her work **and transfer her books from a digital to a printed format.**

“I was struggling to get information and that’s where I asked for help; I was put in touch with people who knew about it and a week later I was clear about the whole process”.

Since then, **she has been printing her own books** and selling them in Mexico.

M.B. is one of the recipients of a Tec national entrepreneurship scholarship; her dream is to set up her own independent publishing brand. / Photo: Kevin Chaires

Writing her future at her own publishing house

The author is clear about her next step: to create her own **independent publishing house**.

She doesn’t want to follow traditional models, but to create one in which authors retain their voice and rights. *“I would like to work with Mexican writers whose ambition is to be independent and help them keep moving in that direction.*”

The idea was born from her own experience. *“I’ve learned the whole process: from ISBN to distribution. Now I’d like to share it.”*

She calls this vision *a kind of editorial ghost*: a **support mechanism that she says gives structure without taking away the author’s freedom.**

Her purpose, she sums up, is simple: “**to write and to help others write. There is no other way.”**

In the meantime, her books can be found on display at several stands at the **2025 Monterrey International Book Fair.**

> ***“I became completely immersed in the independent world. I wanted to do it because I like having the rights under my own name while protecting my freedom of expression.”***

About FIL Monterrey 2025

Talks, tributes, book presentations, workshops, and activities for all ages were part of **FIL Monterrey 2025**, organized by **Tecnológico de Monterrey**.

The guest country this year was **Colombia**, which shared its literary and cultural riches in an event that brought together **over seven hundred authors from twelve countries**.

*“This year’s **FIL Monterrey** is very special. Having Colombia as a guest of honor is something we are looking forward to; it fills us with dreams and possibilities,”* said **Juan Pablo Murra,**Rector of**Tecnológico de Monterrey.**

The fair was held from **October 11 to 19 at Cintermex** and attracted around **360,000 attendees**.

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