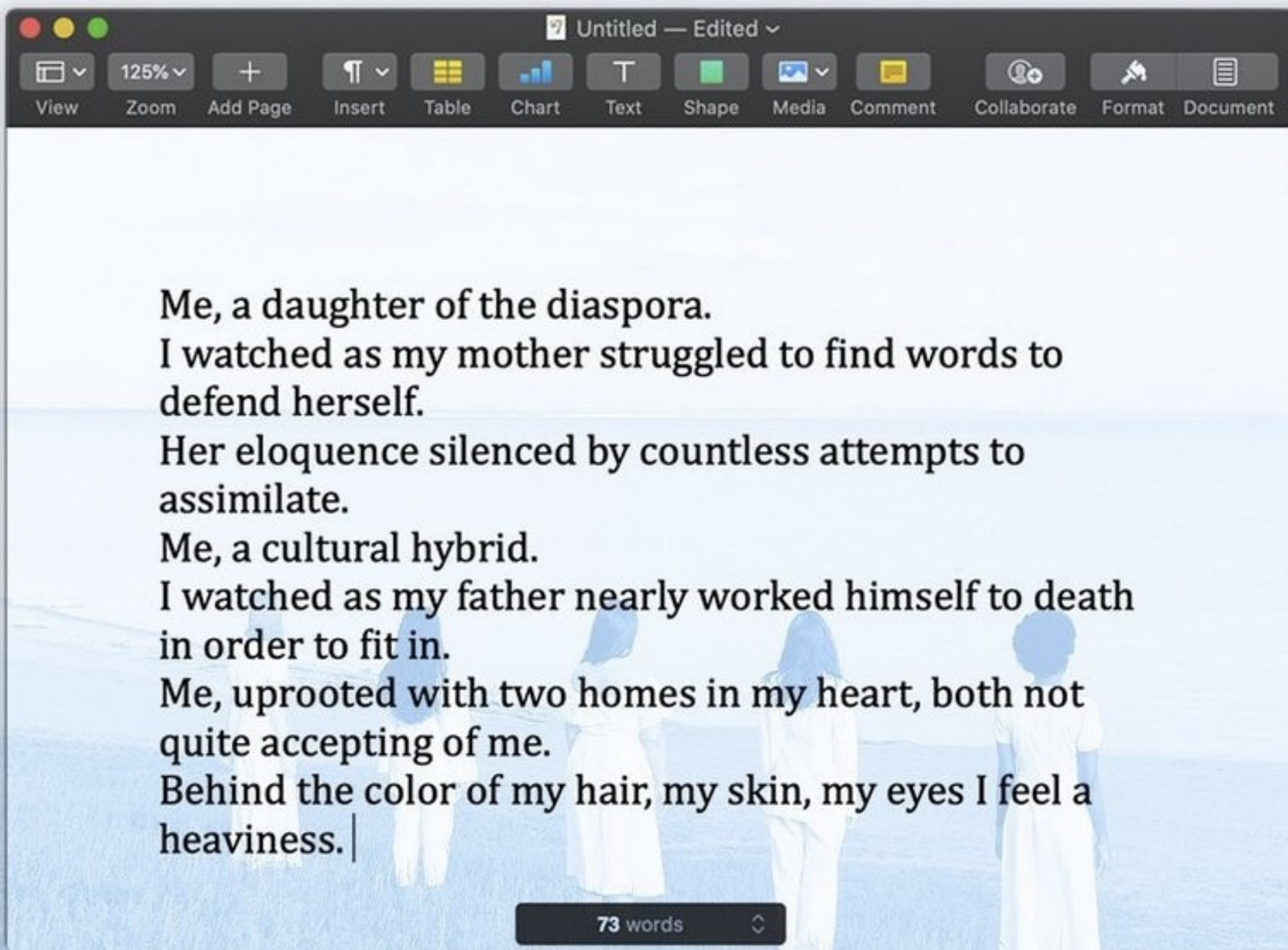


*Pilipinas.* Thousands of islands separated by the sea.  
I yearn for the smell, the taste and the sights.  
An ode to a country I never lived in  
and yet feel profoundly connected to.  
Fruitful were the lands that were stolen from its  
people.  
Over and over again.  
Resilient grew their bodies.  
Independence only gave way  
to new power struggles.  
How do you govern a nation,  
when its memory has been distorted by exploitation?







Me, a daughter of the diaspora.

I watched as my mother struggled to find words to defend herself.

Her eloquence silenced by countless attempts to assimilate.

Me, a cultural hybrid.

I watched as my father nearly worked himself to death in order to fit in.

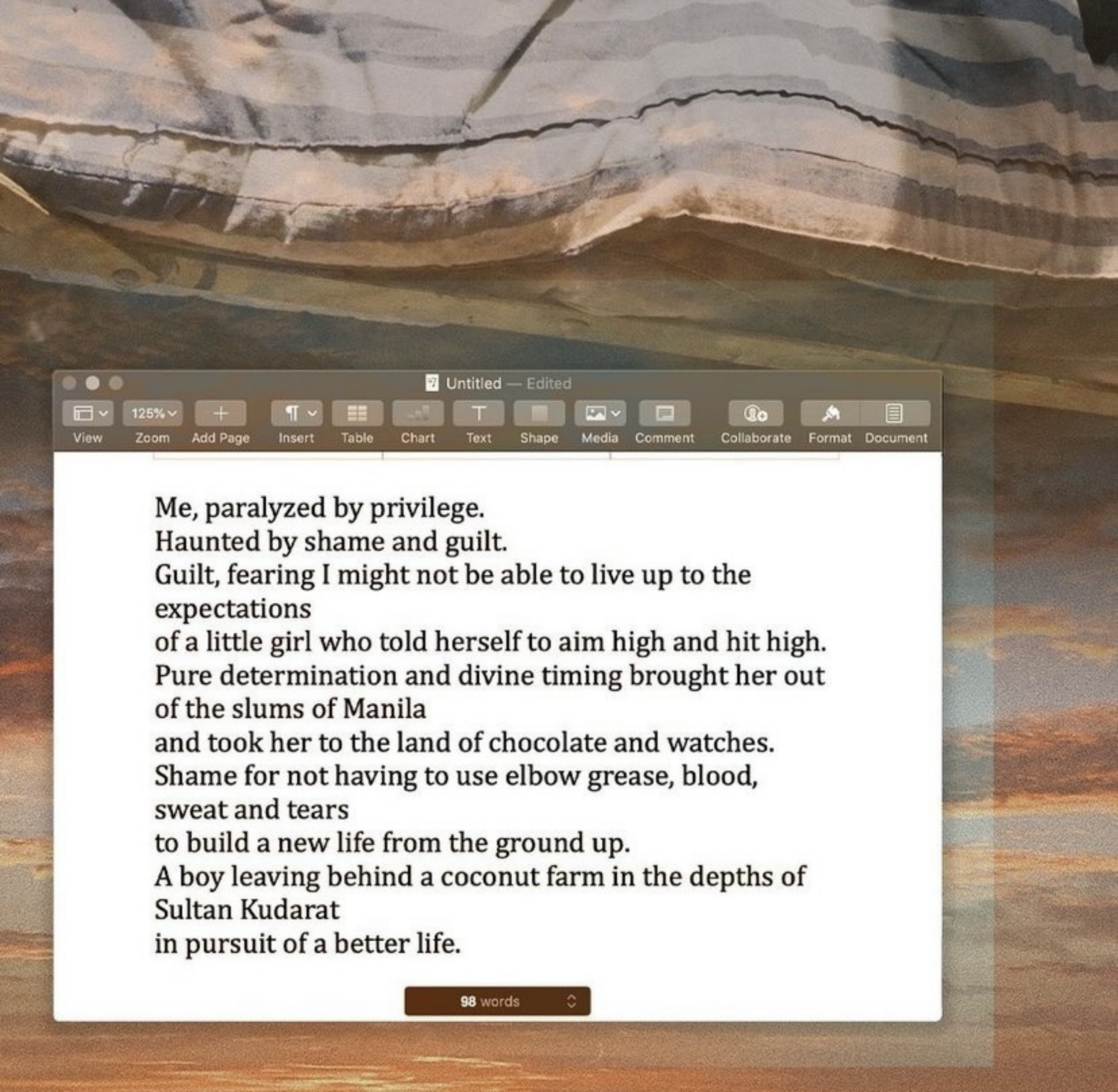
Me, uprooted with two homes in my heart, both not quite accepting of me.

Behind the color of my hair, my skin, my eyes I feel a heaviness. |



Me, born in the heart of Europe;  
a woman of Filipino descent.  
A childhood shaped by the western gaze.  
Always made aware of my otherness.  
„Where are you from?“  
„No, where are you really from?“  
„Can you say something in Chinese?“  
Me, resenting my so-called „foreign features“.  
Rejecting my native tongue.  
Bending to unattainable Eurocentric standards.





Me, paralyzed by privilege.  
Haunted by shame and guilt.  
Guilt, fearing I might not be able to live up to the  
expectations  
of a little girl who told herself to aim high and hit high.  
Pure determination and divine timing brought her out  
of the slums of Manila  
and took her to the land of chocolate and watches.  
Shame for not having to use elbow grease, blood,  
sweat and tears  
to build a new life from the ground up.  
A boy leaving behind a coconut farm in the depths of  
Sultan Kudarat  
in pursuit of a better life.





Generational trauma.  
I've inherited their pain, anger and grief.  
And yet  
Underneath the veil of suffering  
lies a stronger force  
Embedded in my DNA.  
Indigenous knowledge courses through my veins.

Seeded in the soil of a rice field half a world away,  
I carry the wisdom of my lineage.  
In my heart beats the rhythm of the ancient tribes. |



59 words





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Me, making peace  
with being between worlds.  
I am the legacy of those who came before me, who  
adapted to centuries of colonization, surviving war,  
hunger and rape.  
I am healing.  
For them, for us.  
My ancestors voices speak  
behind this aching body.  
Tending to the unseen wounds.

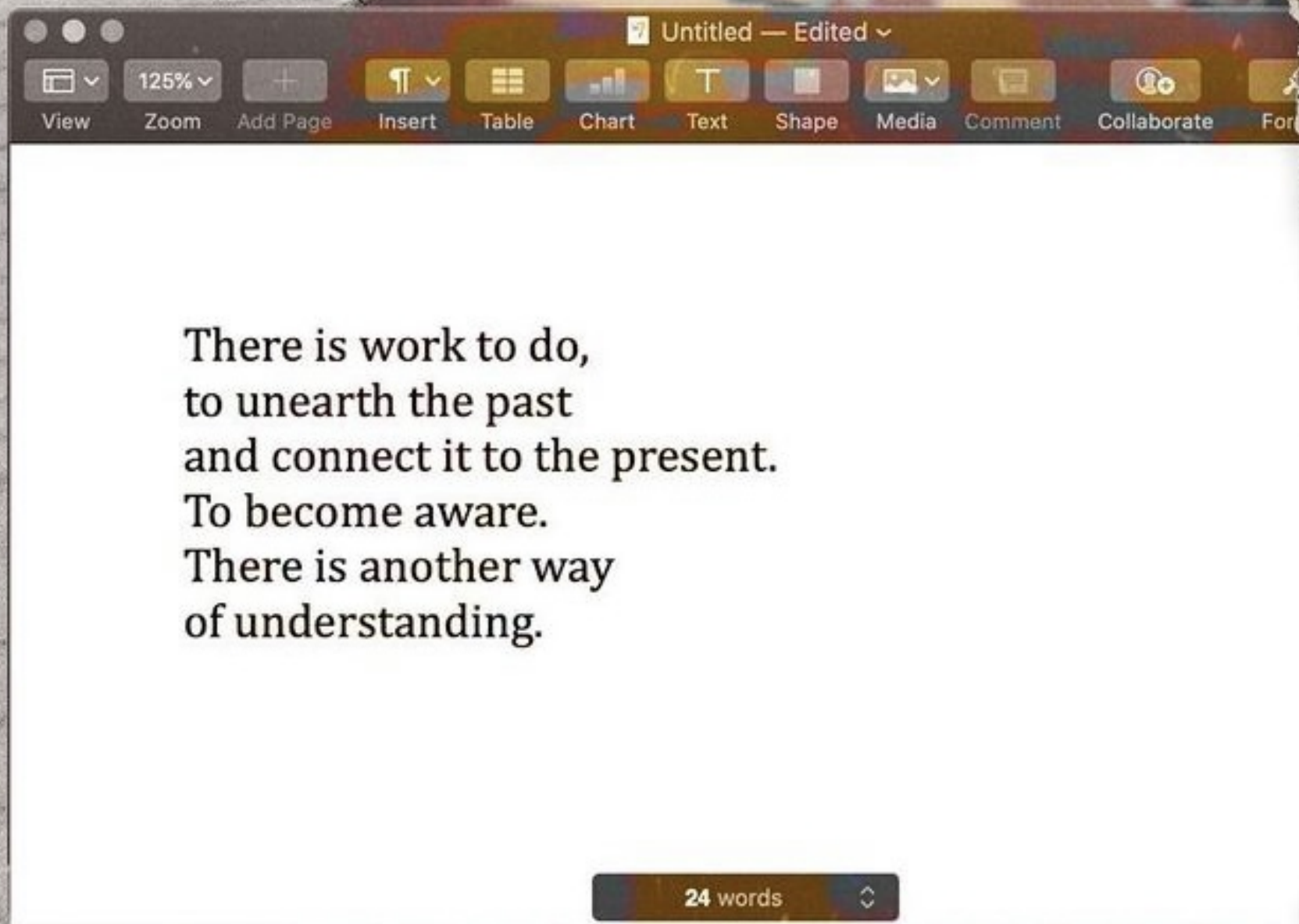





Me, breaking a generational curse.  
Tapping into my own power.  
Exhaustion has given way to agency.  
The hard shell broken open.  
Vulnerable flesh peaking through.  
Stripped bare to reveal  
what no longer can be hidden.

35 words









Time erodes identity.  
And so I ask you to come out of the shadows  
and step into the light.  
To face the mirror  
and see beyond the mask that is your face.  
Now answer me this one question:  
*Sino ka ba?* (Who are you?)