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Border Crossers and Coyotes: A Reception Study of Latin American and Latina/O Literatures.

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BORDER CROSSERS AND COYOTES:
A RECEPTION STUDY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND LATINA/O LITERATURES

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Interdepartmental Program in Comparative Literature

by
Delia M. Poey
B.A., University of Florida, 1987
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Border-Crossers and Coyotes, has been, contrary to the information presented on the cover page, a collaborative project. Its conception can be traced to conversations, too numerous to mention, with colleagues, friends, and family members regarding the status in the U.S. of Latin American and Latina/o cultural productions. It began as a detached scholarly investigation (as if such a thing were possible), but somewhere along the way became a personal quest to make sense of the contradictions. The journey from this project's inception to its completion would have been impossible without the help, guidance and support of my dissertation director, Leslie Bary, and the other members of my committee, Arnulfo Ramírez, Greg Stone, Reggie Young, Gerilyn Tandberg and Joseph Ricapito. For their invaluable help and insight in editing, I am forever in debt to my co-conspirators Carol Batker, Jerrilyn McGregor, Donna Nudd, and Stacy Wolf. For her help during the final stages of this project, I am grateful to Kelly Tompkins. Since every journey worth taking is not without its stumbling blocks, I must also acknowledge the contributions of a few people who, because they will never read this, will go unnamed. And finally, special thanks to my husband Virgil Suarez, whose love and support make anything possible.

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CONCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s, there has been an ongoing debate within the humanities regarding the canon and curricular reform. Moving beyond questions of advocacy and the dichotomy of center and periphery (without diminishing the necessity of these), *Border Crossers and Coyotes: A Reception Study of Latin American and Latina/o Literatures* surveys the various ways which marginalized texts enter U.S. academic discourse as well as analyzing the conflicts inherent in these border crossings. The study proposes the position of the coyote, a person who transports undocumented workers across the U.S./Mexico border for profit, as analogous to that of the critic/teacher.

Employing a cultural studies perspective informed by postmodern anthropology, reader-response, and feminist theories, the study analyzes the reception of texts including the canonical, such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the representative such as *Bless Me, Ultima* and *The House on Mango Street*, the disciplinary border crosser *Borderlands/La Frontera*, and the collaboratively produced but singly authored *Translated Woman* and *I Rigoberta Menchú*. This analysis functions to uncover the ruptures within the current discourse on "diversity" which make manifest the struggle to negotiate the slippery space between erasure and appropriation. By performing close
readings of critical responses to these texts, the study identifies various strategies of containment that foster decontextualizing, essentializing, and/or universalizing readings which neutralize their oppositional and transformative potential. This potential lies in the challenges which these texts pose to existing assumptions regarding genre, authorship, history, language and our conceptualization of literature itself.

Institutional practices and pedagogies are also problematized as conflicted in responding to calls for diversity, primarily by "tacking on" Latin American and Latina/o cultural productions in a process of inclusion without influence. This study proposes the abandonment of such additive models in favor of a relational and transformitive approach which allows for a revision of established reading practices and critical conventions.
INTRODUCTION

Borders are imaginary lines, drawn to invoke the effect of containment. The illusion is enforced by fences, walls, bold black lines on a map or so called "natural" borders, such as water. They are constructed for purposes of inclusion as well as exclusion. They are meant to keep things and people in as much as keep them out. To subvert the purpose of a border is an act of contamination, a violation of the principle of containment. Perhaps it is because the process of border construction has proven so successful that crossing these arbitrary lines, carrying the contraband of language, ideas, culture, or human experience from one side to the other proves so difficult. Once a border is crossed, the object becomes decontextualized. It metamorphoses into something else.

Several years ago, when the movie Malcolm X was released, along with its ubiquitous merchandising, teenagers in Mexico City could be seen wearing the black caps with the white X. A Malcolm X cap, outside of its U.S. context, becomes emptied of its meaning. It becomes, in more ways than one, una gorra équis. The phrase literally means an X cap, but it also means much more and much less than that. In Spanish, una gorra équis is a common cap, a cap like any other. It is undifferentiated
and therefore interchangeable with any other cap. The X or \textit{équis} carried across the border is also the algebraic unknown. \textit{Una gorra équis} is then both a particular cap, with an unknown but specific meaning or set of meanings, as well as any cap.

It could be argued that crossing the same border in the opposite direction, from South to North, is more intensely an act of decontextualization. Given the proliferation of U.S. popular culture outside of U.S. borders, particularly through mass media, the rest of the world has a much broader, even if sometimes warped understanding of the U.S., and a much more varied set of images from which to form a conceptualization of U.S. culture. The First World, in this instance specifically the U.S., is constantly invading the Third World nations which share this hemisphere. Of course, the cultural flux is not solely North to South. Latin America is also invading the U.S., but such a flux is still disproportionate enough to lead us to the conclusion that the U.S. has a much more limited vision of its neighbors than they have of it. As a result, an American object—meaning pertaining to the U.S., since the English language does not provide an equivalent to \textit{estadounidense}—is less open to the processes which effect cultural images carried from South to North.
The proliferation of reproductions of Frida Kahlo's paintings in the form of posters, calendars, postcards, and book jackets illustrates this point. Kahlo's work is particularly vulnerable to decontextualization because of its self-conscious fashioning of a Mexican iconography. The appropriation of Frida Kahlo became a charged issue in 1992 when Chicana actresses protested the production of a film based on Frida Kahlo's life because its producers had planned to hire an Italian-American actress for the lead. The media covered the protest, and attention shifted from issues of appropriation to those of artistic freedom (Fusco 26). Frida Kahlo, who reinvented herself as Mexicanness, even changing her birthdate to coincide with the year of the Mexican Revolution, had become a fetishized object, her life and work fascinating enough to be the subject of a Hollywood film, but perceived as palatable to a mainstream audience only if the cinematic version homogenized her difference.

These examples, which highlight the process of transformation that effect all culturally specific productions--and what production is not culturally specific?--is parallel to the process through which a text, produced at the margins of the Western literary establishment, is subsequently brought into circulation within the academy. As David Theo Goldberg spells out:

As nations acquire borders, so disciplines acquire boundaries, and for much the same reason: for
policing and self-policing what can be said and done, for ordering the unacceptable and the foreign, and for licensing membership and citizenship. (Goldberg 27)

Transformations and translations are inherent in any border crossing. Issues of "authenticity" are irrelevant in this context. Because appeals to "authenticity" have been discredited as embedded in colonialist and imperialist discourses of domination, we must avoid falling prey to the use of such simplistic models and pry deeper into the processes which are at play, as well as our own role as participants in a hegemonic discursive area such as the academy.

Negotiating the space between silencing or rendering invisible cultural productions from Latin America and Latino groups within the U.S. on the one hand and engaging in acts of appropriation and colonization on the other, is a difficult proposition. It's akin to walking a minefield, yet such negotiations are absolutely necessary if we as scholars and teachers are serious in our commitment to furthering knowledge—a category different from information—and our responsibility to our students in providing structures for their own investigations. It is with this understanding that this study is undertaken, a study which is at its core one of reception.

The motivation for this project grew out of an unspecified, general unease on my part in encountering a contradictory discourse within literary studies which on
the one hand seemed to be actively seeking out "marginalized" texts to the point of engaging in preemptive celebration of a newfound diversity, while simultaneously engaging in blatant colonizing practices which further strengthened hegemonic centers of power. It seemed logical at that time to sort out these contradictions through an articulation of precisely what Latina/o and Latin American texts were incorporated into this discourse, particularly outside of area studies and Spanish Departments, as well as attempting to discover how these texts were being used in both critical and pedagogical practices. The intent was to work backward from this information to ultimately reach a point from which to theorize the process of selection and incorporation.

I approached this project much like an anthropologist, gathering data in the form of surveys, cataloging artifacts such as calls for papers, conference proceedings and the MLA Job List. Most importantly, I gathered field notes from my time spent among U.S. academics in their "natural" environment, the university and its surroundings. What I discovered from this type of research is that the information I was seeking is elusive and prone to a high degree of ambiguity. As I labored over the cryptic language of a call for papers on "border crossings" for example, my training in performing close readings led to frustration regarding the undecidability not only of the
brief passage as a whole, but of practically every word contained within it. The highly specialized language of literary studies did not function as a means of delimiting meaning, but rather further compressed it, and the harder I tried to pin it down, the more likely I was to wind up chasing scattered signification.

Intra-personal communication in professional and pseudo-professional settings proved slightly more useful in guiding my research. On one occasion, a faculty member mentioned that he taught a class on the short story that included Borges. Quite proud of his "global" perspective, he boasted of what profound impact this had on his students: "It just blew their minds!" When he told me the story he had assigned was "The South," ("El sur"), I was a bit surprised and commented that that particular text seemed to me, and to many others as well, to be Borges' most Argentine story. As we engaged in a discussion of the work, he interrupted me and, confused, asked, "Are we talking about the same story?" After our conversation, he seemed disappointed. He had thought, if there was one Latin American writer he could read, and teach, without all this pesky business of context, Borges was it.

The "Borges Perplex" resurfaced during a job interview for a position in an English department for a specialist in Latina/o literature. Everyone wanted to talk about Borges. Well, I didn't get the job. Actually, the department
decided to pass up the line and assigned the Latina/o literature class to an instructor with a Ph.D. in Creative Writing and no course work, publications, or interest in Latina/o literature. So it goes.

What I started to piece together is that the perception seemed to be that specialized knowledge in Latin American or Latina/o literature is irrelevant, if indeed such a thing exists. Any reasonably smart person with a degree of competence in literary studies can write about this, and teach it as well.

This point was further illustrated by yet another encounter. A graduate student in English, with all of her course work completed, was advised to talk to me since she wanted to specialize in Latina literature, and the department had no such specialist. When we set up a lunch date I assumed she wanted feedback on her prospectus or perhaps information on hard to find critical materials, but what I discovered was that she had done no course work or in-depth independent research on this. She had read The House on Mango Street and a handful of other texts by Latinas, taken a seminar on African-American literature, and felt on some level prepared to write a dissertation on Latina literature.

She, and her director, assumed that over the course of a lunch, I could somehow impart all the information needed to transform her into a Latina literature specialist. Of
course, nobody would advise a student wishing to specialize in, say, Renaissance, to take a Renaissance literature scholar to lunch and gather all that needs to be known to write her/his dissertation in that field. All I could do was give her a few names and wish her luck, since she seemed adamant about her plans, once again on the advice of her committee, which felt this would make her a highly marketable job candidate.

I share these narratives because they seem to bear a great deal of relevance to how Latin American and Latina/o literatures are used as additives to curricula in a process of inclusion without influence. The texts themselves are too often viewed as raw material, extracted from specific locations and transported across geographic, political, and disciplinary borders for the production of knowledge in hegemonic centers. Barbara Harlow summarizes the reproduction of neocolonial relationships through scholarship in the following manner:

Theory...or a regionalized construction of what constitutes theoretical work, has, like "feminism" in its most dominant modes, come to be legislated from out of the western capitals, thus giving rise to another "international division of labor," whereby the cultural raw materials are mined in the Third World and delivered to the manufacturing and processing centers of the First World where they are transformed into commodities consumed by an educated elite. (Harlow 168)

I would add to this statement that in our participation as manufacturers of culture through both critical and pedagogical practices, we are also engaged in
illicit smuggling activities. Like the coyotes who transport undocumented workers across the U.S./Mexico border for profit, U.S. academics are transporting texts across borders, disciplinary and otherwise. Like coyotes, we control the route to be taken, the point of entry, and play a role in how our contraband is put to use for our own benefit and in the service of the powerful.

For undocumented workers, the stakes are of course much higher, often a matter of life and death. My use of borders as tropes is not intended to diminish or in any way exploit the all too real, desperate situation of illegal immigrants. Yet, as I witness anti-immigration rhetoric grow into an all out declaration of war, neatly dividing the "us" and "them," I can't help but see the parallels in academic discourse and institutional practices which tolerate certain trespassers but only under certain conditions, particularly if these could be put to use without interrogating and challenging existing structures of domination. To extend power to these cultural productions, on their own terms, would imply a loss of control over the institution's metaphoric boundaries, just as the shrillest anti-immigration voices warn may happen, or has already happened, as the nation fails to control its borders.

Because the topic of reception encompasses a multitude of factors, each of the five chapters presented here focus
on a specific problematic. Each of the first three chapters focuses on a single text so as to allow for an in-depth analysis of the issues each text presents in relation to the reception process. The last two chapters explore the process in a slightly different manner, moving from issues to texts. Although the individual chapters are written as somewhat independent units, making them readable in isolation from the work as a whole, I've attempted to follow a spiraling thematic structure cycling recurrent concerns from chapter to chapter.

Chapter One which lends its title, "Border-Crossers and Coyotes," to the larger project, frames a discussion of the dynamics of reception which defines the larger work through an analysis of Ruth Behar's Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story. Because this text engages an overtly self-reflexive strategy by incorporating Esperanza's story, the story of how the book was written, and Behar's own "intellectual autobiography" and "shadow biography," it is particularly well suited to laying the foundations for a discussion of how and why marginalized texts enter into academic discourse. By performing a reading of Behar's reading of Esperanza's life narrative, the chapter addresses reception as a form of production in the context of differential power relationships and asymmetrical exchanges in cross-cultural communication.
Behar's text explores what it means to be a Jewish, Cuban-American, Feminist Anthropologist, trained in and funded by U.S. corporations of higher learning, conducting research on the life of a very differently positioned woman. This exploration leads to the articulation of the role of the U.S. academic "doing work" on texts from el otro lado, the other side, as analogous to that of the coyote. Within this identity, the question becomes what type of coyote we choose to be. This is the question I take up in chapters two through five.

Chapter Two, "Out of Bounds: Testimonio and Its Reception," surveys the reception of testimonio, articulating and analyzing the various ways it destabilizes notions of authorship, genre, literature, and the relationship of all of these to political praxis. This second chapter draws into sharper focus concerns raised in chapter one regarding the process of constructing, through the editing and translation process, a life narrative so as to render it recognizable as such within existing frameworks. Using I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú, y así me nació la conciencia), as an exemplary testimonio, the chapter outlines the difficulties the text poses for the reader/critic and calls for a revision of reading and critical strategies which could then be put into pedagogical practice by re-reading the canon through
marginalized texts as opposed to the current practice of reading works such as *testimonio* through the lens of conventions established within a Western literary tradition.

Chapter Three, "Spic Spanglish?: The Reception of *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Linguistic Resistance," looks at the reception of Gloria Anzaldúa's hybrid autobiographical text and identifies trends which decontextualize, essentialize, exceptionalize, and/or universalize the work. These readings of the text are produced through a denial on the part of the reader/critic of the differential status of languages within U.S. hegemony. The chapter uses a cultural studies approach situating the reception of *Borderlands/La frontera* within a broader set of discourses ranging from popular culture to feminist critical and institutional practices, to theories of *mestizaje*. The chapter proposes engagement with the text through attention to the text's deployment of language as a site of resistance so as to allow for the opening of a transformational space from which to interrogate asymmetrical power relations based on race, gender, class and sexualities.

Chapter Four, "Coming of Age in the Curriculum: *The House on Mango Street* and *Bless Me, Ultima* As Representative Texts," attempts to plot the location of the uses of these works, as representative texts, on the
"multicultural matrix." This matrix is comprised of various forms of multiculturalism defined by critics according to the varying philosophical, ideological and political presuppositions and agendas which undergird each position. The chapter argues that these two texts have become legal trespassers on the academic landscape based on their high degree of intelligibility and the ability of academic discourse to contain their oppositional potential through "manageable difference."

That both these texts can be read as forms of the Bildungsroman is posited as particularly influential in their reception, as is the fact that they are narrated through the voice of children. By studying the reception of two texts which have moved, at least to some degree, from periphery to center, this chapter approaches the coyote question not at the time of crossing, as the three preceding chapters, but after the fact.

The final chapter, "Boom(ing) Fictions: Magical Realism and the Reception of Latina/o Literatures," surveys current articulations of "magical realism" as paradigmatic of Latin American literature, particularly by critics whose fields of expertise lay outside of Hispanism. The chapter outlines how the "Boom" in Latin American fiction has been constructed, particularly in First World critical discourses, and the effect this construct has had on the reception of some Latina/o texts. The practice of
subsuming all Latin American literature under the label of "magical realism," and the subsequent extension of the term in classifying and interpreting certain Latina/o texts is defined here as "Boom(ing)" or the "Boom effect." Such practices lead to reductive readings of Latin American texts as well as Latina/o texts. Perhaps more problematic still is the erasure of language hierarchies, as well as differences in histories, class, and relationships to hegemonic centers of power, all of which functions to distort and neutralize the literatures' potential to lead us toward new ways of reading and new ways of teaching.

While Border-Crossers and Coyotes was first conceptualized as having a primarily descriptive function, now that it is completed, I see it more as an intervention in institutional practices. Through this project, I've sought to uncover the ruptures within the discourse on "diversity," while simultaneously working toward the creation of a theoretical space from which we, as critics and teachers, can negotiate and define our roles as coyotes. Mary Louise Pratt has argued that "for reader-response theory to break out of its formalist mold...will require among other things, explaining specifics of reception as a socially and ideologically determined process," (Pratt 205). These five chapters strive to do just that.
But this is only a first step. To be truly inclusive in our critical and pedagogical practices, we must move away from additive models which merely "tack on" these "other" texts, either subsuming them under the familiar through the imposition of our culturally specific reading strategies and critical conventions, or isolating them in the name of difference to the point of closing off all possibility of engagement. I propose in its place the adoption of a relational and transformitive model which recognizes texts as products, rather than raw materials. Such a model, as critics such as Houston Baker and bell hooks have argued, require that we abandon pedagogies of protest in favor of a politics of transformation. This implies not only articulating alternative and oppositional discourses in the interrogation of systems of domination, but also working to provide for ourselves and our students a language from which to read dominant text through the marginalized.

If we are, in fact, coyotes, then it is imperative that we recognize our choices within that identification and the consequences of those choices, without romanticizing our participation as manufacturers of knowledge and culture. I hope this study is received as a step toward that goal.
Notes

1. This is true in more ways than one. The U.S. exports images of itself through the entertainment industry, transnational corporations, military intervention, and foreign aid.

2. Edward Said's classic text *Orientalism*, Christopher Miller's *Blank Darkness* and Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive*, to name but a few, present sound arguments for this point.

3. Nancy Fraser, quoted in Carol Boyce Davies' article "Collaboration and the Ordering Imperative in Life Story production," asserts that there are central, hegemonic discursive areas -- the academy, parliament, media -- and that these public spaces set boundaries on public discourse.

4. This term is borrowed from Lynne Uttal's article, "Inclusion Without Influence: The Continued Tokenism of Women of Color."
CHAPTER ONE

BORDER-CROSSERS AND COYOTES

There is no neutral standpoint in the power-laden field of discursive positionings, in a shifting matrix of relationships, of I's and you's.

James Clifford
The Predicament of Culture

down in the bowels
of the brick building
Esperanza's words come out
clean, neat, pretty
permanent-pressed on white paper
folded into fresh plastic bags
with zip-lock tops.

Ruth Behar
Translated Woman

How does a scholar, affiliated with and supported by U.S. institutions, go about gathering the life story of a Mexican woman--racially and economically marginalized within her own society--so as to put said story into book form to be consumed by an academic audience in the U.S.?

This is the story which Ruth Behar weaves into the text of Translated Woman, Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story. The subtitle directs the reader to the role the researcher's own story will play in the book, and the main title is also used to refer to both Esperanza and Behar.

The latter's positionality as a Jewish, Cuban-American woman is problematized in the text. The book is as much Esperanza's life story as the story of how the book was written, including chapters on theory and methodology as well as the researcher's "intellectual autobiography" and a "shadow biography." This overtly self-reflexive strategy
"shadow biography." This overtly self-reflexive strategy renders an analysis of Translated Woman useful in laying the foundations for a discussion of how and why marginalized texts enter into academic discourse.

The first and most obvious transformation of Esperanza's story is its movement from the oral to the written. This process of textualization, however obvious, is everything but simple. It has been argued by critics such as Derrida in his deconstruction of logocentrism, that all language mediates, the very act of language deferring meaning. In the essay, "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida subsumes speech as a form of writing. Even if we accept this scriptocentric position, it is still true that as a form of writing, the oral tale is quite different from the written. Even a transcript of an oral tale becomes something else. By necessity, "reading" in the literal sense is a different process from that of "listening," just as "writing" is different from "speech." Behar as editor is fully aware of her role as both listener of Esperanza's storytelling, and author of that story by "retelling" it in written form.

It worries me that one does violence to the life history as a story by turning it into the disposable commodity of information. One approach I took to this problem was to focus on the act of life story representation as reading rather than as informing, with its echoes of surveillance and disclosures of truth. I have tried to make clear that what I am reading is a story, or set of stories, that have been told to me, so that I, in
turn, can tell them again, transforming myself from a listener into a storyteller. (Behar 13)

The use of the word "storyteller" is significant in that it masks the fact that having to "cut, cut, and cut away at our talk to make it fit between the covers of a book, and even more important, to make it recognizable as a story, a certain kind of story, a life history" (Behar 12), she has assumed a role which if perhaps not entirely that of author, one which strongly resembles it. The construct of author implies the story be fixed as text, conforming in some way to a recognizable form; that is, we must recognize it as a story. Even the most experimental text presents itself as belonging to a particular genre, for to push or to put into question the boundaries of form we must first agree that such a form, along with its boundaries, exists.

To cast Behar in the authorial position of another woman's story is not intended here as criticism of her work. To expect the subaltern to speak, in terms of a written text which can then enter the realm of academic discourse is an utopian ideal, as Gayatri Spivak reminds us. What makes Translated Woman a particularly interesting text is that it drops the curtain which usually conceals the process of collaborative texts, be they anthropological in nature, ethnographies, or autobiography and testimonio. In doing so, Translated Woman avoids "treating the 'author' of the 'testimonial' as an authentic, singular voice without acknowledging the mediations of the editors and
market demands of publishing" which Caren Kaplan warns "can result in new forms of exoticization and racism" (Kaplan 122).

Translated Woman, rather than fostering the illusion of an unmediated first person narrative, upholds what Carole Boyce Davies identifies as the "oral narrative contract" in life story telling. Davies writes:

In the oral narrative process, "trust" is often fostered when the editor supplies features of her own life story. The narrating takes place then in a context of plural identity and shared history. In the written version, however, it seems, the oral life narrating contract is often violated. Rarely is the collector's story part of the narrative. At the point of writing, then, the dominant-subordinate relationships are enforced and the editor becomes a detached, sometimes clinical, orderer or even exploiter of the life stories for anthropological ends, research data, raw material, or the like. (Davies 12-13)

By writing herself into the narrative, or rather resisting writing herself out, Behar can avert the more obvious trappings of colonizing Esperanza's story. Yet by including her story in the text, Behar also intensifies our awareness as readers of how and to what extent every subject participates in the historical, economic, political and cultural set of relations which are implicated in a narrative which is displaced across borders for the purpose of consumption in an academic marketplace.

Behar chooses to use "both a novelistic style and a dialogical style in this book," so as to "keep Esperanza's voice at the center of the text" (Behar 14). The choice
reflects the changes over time in the relationship between the two women. Behar also makes explicit use of other forms such as drama, as when she introduces one of Esperanza's monologues with stage directions: "July 13, 1988. At the kitchen table again after another year's absence. Same cast of characters" (Behar 179). And by the final chapters of Translated Woman, prose is disrupted by poetry. This blending of forms is arguably a daring choice which make the book that much harder to define. In her preface, Behar posits a measure of success for this project in terms of its ability to reflect the complexity and contradictions which mark Esperanza's life and her story. She states, "If nothing else, I hope I've made her life in this book too big for easy consumption" (Behar xii). Her narrative strategies do just that.

The first part of Esperanza's story, beginning with her birth and leading up to the present time is narrated through recreated monologues which read as a testimonial novel. It is told in the first person, with the use of dialogue, an element which Behar notes reflects Esperanza's own style, "telling virtually the entire story in dialogue form, changing voices like a spirit medium or a one-woman theater of voices to impersonate all the characters in her narratives" (Behar 7). This "novelistic style" also reflects Esperanza's own narrative models, noted by Behar as being Christian narratives of redemption, fotonovelas,
confessional narratives, and "myths of women warriors, such as those found in the colonial Mexican Inquisition narratives" (Behar 12). It serves as a warning to our essentializing drive to note that purity in terms of influences, even when the storyteller does not have access to the technology of literacy, in an act of nostalgia. The culture of writing has so permeated outward to influence other forms, that while maintaining its difference from written texts, oral storytelling in contemporary contexts often reflects literary models based on writing which have been filtered through mass media.

The novelistic style of this first portion of Esperanza's life story conforms to the genre's seamless claim to "reality." It adheres to literary expectations of character, plot, chronology, conflict etc. Interestingly, this style's appeal to us readers lies in the contradiction that because it is highly stylized, and follows literary models, it becomes believable as truth. How this effect is achieved is quite complicated and well beyond the scope of this book, demanding an analysis of that blurred space between fiction and non-fiction, the very space which has been the subject of debate within disciplines such as anthropology and history in the recent past, as well as at the core of much of the Latin American fiction which has established itself as "canonical." Works by Borges, Carpentier, Garcia Márquez and Fuentes, to name just a few,
enter and explore this liminal space from the opposite side of autobiographical narrative. But liminal spaces such as this are borderlands, and as we enter, disorientation takes over. Because of this, approaching the "blurred space" between fiction and nonfiction, from the perspective of either, leads us to similar questions. Thus, by extension, to explore this borderland we should enter from both sides, or more accurately, from a multiplicity of sides.

In Part Two of the book, Esperanza's story narrates the here and now in the context of her evolving relationship with Behar. The "gringa anthropologist," a label which Behar uses and later in the text subverts, is an active participant in these chapters, venturing out alongside her comadre on her selling routes, visiting her comadre's milpa, and even accompanying her to a ceremony at a spiritist center venerating the, then problematic for Behar, figure of Pancho Villa. In these chapters, as opposed to those which constitute Part One, we hear Behar's voice directly through dialogue and narration. The visit to the spiritist center becomes a turning point, both in the relationship between Behar and Esperanza and in the text--it is placed, not coincidentally, in the physical center of the book. The events which transpire at the center are described as part fiesta, in the full sense of the word which strongly parallels Bakhtin's "carnavalesque," part religious ceremony, and part
performance orchestrated by the centro's leader, Chencha, speaking as the medium for the voice of General Francisco Villa.

The visit to the spiritist center is pivotal in that from that point onward the relationship between Esperanza and Behar becomes more complicated and layered, moving beyond that of anthropologist/informant and even beyond that of comadres, which in Mexico, particularly in rural areas, is still marked by a certain distance and formality although it is structured to not only allow for, but encourage relationships between women which transgress class divisions.' The narrative style in these chapters reflects Behar's negotiations of a heightened awareness of her own position or rather her multiple positionings in relation to Esperanza and the evolving narrative of her/their life stories. Gone is the seamless literariness of the previous section, replaced by stop and start dialogues and moments of authorial interruption offering interpretations of events only to later put those interpretations into question. By the end of Part Two, Translated Woman is a fragmented, multivoiced text.

Through the events described in these chapters, Behar begins to see "how Esperanza's historias fit into the fuller context of her life," (Behar 13). She also gains a broader understanding of how their relationship fits into the contexts of anthropology as a discipline, U.S./Mexico
relations, transnational feminism, and class differences. Interestingly, as fuller contexts are developed, what ensues is a greater degree of disorder, rather than order, and a discernable uneasiness in Behar and by extension in the reader as we become complicitous in Behar's project as consumers of her book. This heightened anxiety regarding positionalities, power relations, and contradictions reflects Edward Said's observation that "it seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientation of encounters with the human" (Said 93). The complexity of what it means to have one woman, from North of the border, gather and translate another woman's story for circulation del otro lado is reproduced thematically and stylistically in these chapters.

The assertion that Translated Woman as a text moves from order to disorder, paralleling the maturing relationship between the two women is also indicative of Behar's struggle in relinquishing rather than solidifying her interpretative power over Esperanza's narrative. This movement toward disorder, it must be noted, goes counter to what Clifford defines as the "approved topoi for the portrayal of the research process" within the field of anthropology. Behar inverts the "more-or-less stereotypic 'fables of rapport' [which] narrate the attainment of full participant status" (Clifford, 40). According to Clifford,

These fables may be told elaborately or in passing, naively or ironically. They normally
portray the ethnographer's early ignorance, misunderstanding, lack of contact--frequently a sort of child-like status within the culture. In the Bildungsgeschichte of the ethnography these states of innocence or confusion are replaced by adult, confident, disabused knowledge...[the pivotal anecdote] establishes a presumption of connectedness, which permits the writer to function in his [her] subsequent analyses as an omnipresent, knowledgeable exegete and spokesman...[the anthropologist's] disappearance into his [her] rapport--the quasi-invisibility of participant observation--is paradigmatic. (Clifford 40-41)

If we take Behar's visit to the spiritist center as the pivotal event in her relationship with Esperanza, we can see that in contrast to the researcher emerging as an authority by essentially writing the dialogical nature of her work out of the text, Behar emerges as a more problematized presence. Her privileged position as the "reader" of the event is brought into question. Her participation in the performance, scripted and directed by Chencha, involves gathering three pesos, from three different purses, to present as an offering. Yet because the peso had gone through a series of severe devaluations, the one peso coin had been rendered obsolete. As Behar realizes, Chencha's making her beg for three coins, whose value has been reduced to nothing due to global economic exchanges in which the U.S. plays a major role, inverts the relation of power between the "gringa anthropologist" and the other participants at the centro. Rather than writing herself out of the events which she seeks to interpret, Behar highlights how she cannot escape her scripted
positionings. Her interpretative authority becomes, through her own writing, suspect.

The inclusion, in Part Three of various anecdotes relating to photography provides for a concrete rendering of Behar and Esperanza's positioning in a history of images of "the other" crossing borders, a history wrought with conflict, exploitation, commodification and an exoticizing of "the other." When Behar casually mentions that she is finally able to photograph Esperanza with her calla lilies, we are invited to make the comparison between this second moment which takes place in Esperanza's garden, made possible by her explicit invitation, and Behar's first encounter with Esperanza, described in the introduction, which is set in the town cemetery on the Day of the Dead.

She was striking. She held a bulging bouquet of calla lilies and seemed to me like something out of one of Diego Rivera's epic Indian woman canvases...I jumped on her as an alluring image of Mexican womanhood, ready to create my own exotic portrait of her. (4)

Behar's description of this first framing of Esperanza in the anthropologist/photographer's lens is consciously pointed out as problematic and in sharp contrast to the re-framing of Esperanza with calla lilies occurring years later. There is no question that the two photo opportunities are strikingly different. The latter provides a context which is specific--Esperanza is a woman in her garden which is her source of income and tangible proof of her hard-won independence. This is contrasted to
the first context which is totalizing, positing Esperanza as the Mexican Woman, resulting in an exoticizing and colonizing image. Yet, even this second, more contextualized photograph is problematic in that it can't escape participation in the history of "photographing the other," nor can it suspend the asymmetry of power between photographer and subject and the commodification of the image. Behar's casual mention of this second photograph, and her directing the reader to the former, more obviously loaded framing seems to be a denial of how she and her work are entangled in this history. And Behar almost succeeds in getting herself off the hook, were it not for a hyper-awareness of her conflicted position, revealed in two other anecdotes relating to photography.

In the chapter entitled, "Gringa Sings the Blues," Behar agonizes over the townspeople's perception of her and her work, and "determined to be blue," asks her comadre, "Tell me again what your mama said about the photographs I took of her" (Behar 251). Esperanza then relates her mother's dissatisfaction with the photographs, which she feels made her look "All dark...with the garbage of papers around her," (Behar 251). More importantly, Esperanza's mother expresses suspicion as to Behar's motives.

Why do they go around taking pictures? They take them back and they make money off them. Here one's a ranchero, and they take our pictures and give them to those people who make calendars and they earn their money. And there your compadres

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Esperanza's mother, Doña Nicolasa, makes her suspicions regarding Behar's work even clearer by comparing her to two men who years earlier had offered to pay her and Esperanza for photographing them. Doña Nicolasa had refused, saying "No, señor, we are what we are, but we don't go around selling ourselves for money" (Behar 253). The anecdote parallels Behar's experience a few days earlier, during a town fiesta, when a man pressured her into taking photographs of him and demanded payment. Her reflections on the experience, "I knew that my interaction with that man inscribed a certain history of Westerners photographing others, in which those others were now seizing, if not the cameras, at least some of the power involved in snapping their pictures" (Behar 253), demonstrate that an awareness of the history connecting exploitation and photography, and even applauding resistance to it, does not automatically lead to making one innocent in these exchanges, no matter how noble the intentions.

Behar's reaction to Doña Nicolasa's indirect accusations is also revealing. She writes,

I had to admit...that I was impressed by Doña Nicolasa's knowledge of a market for photographs of exotic others and her resistance toward being a part of it, even if I resented being placed in the same category as the men who had stopped them on the highway. Her refusal to be objectified or commodified by men was admirable in every way--
except when I felt implicated. And how could I doubt that I was implicated--hadn't my first encounter with Esperanza been a photographic one? (Behar 254)

Behar's unease in confronting Doña Nicolasa's interpretation of her motives for wielding a camera lies in the fact that the nature of her work places her in the slippery position of standing in opposition to the history of exploitation, but only by working within hegemonic systems which she may inadvertently be perpetuating.

Further complicating this already complex set of historical relationships is Behar's approach to her work from a gendered perspective, identifying herself as a feminist anthropologist. The relationship between the two women, and the text which they collaboratively produce, then participate in yet another context, that of transnational feminism. As a feminist, Behar can admire Doña Nicolasa's "refusal to be objectified and commodified by men," and can even claim to identify with the two women; but because her work places her on the opposite side of the lens, her position is more closely aligned with that of the male photographers. Behar is then negotiating yet another slippery space which carries its own dangers.

Chandra Mohanty has pointed out that certain Western feminist practices engage in a form of "discursive colonization" which invokes an "appropriation and commodification of 'scholarship' and 'knowledge' about women in the Third World," by employing particular analytic
categories "which take as their referent feminist interests as they have been articulated in the U.S. and Western Europe" (Mohanty 333-334). Behar demonstrates a keen awareness of this potential for colonizing, the seductive lure of positing Third World women as the mirror image of First World feminists, where we can see ourselves through distortions as implicitly "educated, modern, as having control of [our] own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make [our] own decisions" (Mohanty 337).

Behar identifies contradictions in Esperanza's stories which are irreconcilable with her own feminism. She finds beating her daughter (once for not telling her about her half brother making sexual advances, and another time for not giving her a share of her earnings as a maid) intelligible, yet nonetheless problematic. Esperanza's beating the woman who was having an affair with her husband is equally if not more troubling to Behar. And Esperanza's participation in the spiritist cult venerating the super-macho figure of Pancho Villa is given a great deal of attention including a variety of interpretations which ultimately seem to be exercises demonstrating Behar's need to fit the pieces neatly together.

What Behar comes to realize is that a life is rarely "a well wrought urn," and when interpretive paradigms cross borders--be they cultural, geographic, racial, or economic--the inadequacy of said paradigms is either brought into
question, or quite simply the pieces are forced to fit, at any cost. Behar chooses the former, aiming to "work the dialectic between Esperanza's no-name feminism and my feminism of too many names, to go beyond the search for heroines on either side of the border" (Behar 276). This approach enables her to question her own authority over interpretation and ask "From whose perspective, whose absolute scale of feminist perfection, are her attitudes and actions being measured?" (Behar 296), and even conclude,

That I can now call myself a feminist ethnographer and this book a work of feminist ethnography does not mean, however, that I am "more" of a feminist than Esperanza. If anything I am "less" of a feminist, I who have sought to see the patriarchy in Esperanza's life through the lens of a patriarchal discipline, I who have crossed the border as an employee of a patriarchal academic corporation, I who have been so generously patronized by the inheritances of men who in their lifetimes made enough money to create foundations in their names. (Behar 302)

By questioning her own positionality, Behar is engaging in a critique of objectivity and by extension a critique of scholarship itself. She is, like other feminist scholars described by Lila Abu-Lughod, "reclaim[ing] and redefin[ing] objectivity to mean precisely the situated view. There is no such thing as a study which is not situated, [she] would argue" (Abu-Lughod 15). Behar's multiple selves, as a Jewish Cuban-American woman, are consistently highlighted, subverting the subject/object, self/other dichotomy which assumes a
unified and uncontested self, or, as many critics have argued, provides the illusion of the unified and uncontested self in relation to the other. She writes,

There's something about being on the border that is unsettling. Something about having your belongings open for inspection. Something about having to declare who you are, what country you owe allegiance to. Something about having to pretend your identity is not already in question. (Behar 227)

Behar's self-consciousness allows her to see how her own practices entangle her in "webs of betrayal...seeking out intimacy and friendship with subjects on whose backs, ultimately, the books will be written upon which... productivity...in the academic marketplace will be assessed" (Behar 297). Sliding back and forth between languages, cultures, national borders, and ideologies, Behar becomes, along with Esperanza, a "translated woman." But, unlike Esperanza, she is the translator, and as such must confront the all too present danger of becoming a Malinche. Referred to as "the tongue," Malintzin, or Malinche, was Cortez's concubine and translator. She has been scripted in a broad range of discourses from historical narratives to popular culture, as the ultimate traitor. Contemporary Mexican and Chicana feminists have offered alternative interpretations of this enigmatic woman, what she represents and how she is represented, but the associations between "traddutora, traditora" is still close to the surface. For Behar, the conflict comes down
to "whether one can in fact ever represent a counter project while being funded, housed and incorporated within the system" (Sánchez 84).

Behar's questioning of her own overdetermined "feminism of too many names," however, as a strategy of resistance, by itself, is still an incomplete recognition of Esperanza's "no-name feminism." As Lynn Phillips, quoted by Behar, points out, the acceptance of many feminisms "means giving up our power to define what feminism is" (Behar 297). Acknowledging this, Behar does articulate Esperanza's feminism, even as she admits her inability to make it compatible with her own.

First and foremost, Behar facilitates Esperanza's story, mediated as it is, so that as readers we may draw our own interpretations. She also offers interpretations of Esperanza's life story which recognize her difference and point out how apparently paradoxical positions such as Esperanza's appropriation "of culturally male values that oppress her as well as other women in order to liberate and redeem herself," can also be interpreted as feminist practices in that,

Esperanza's struggle to define herself, through gender and in spite of gender, ambiguously gendered rather than passively gendered, points the way to the possibility of true gender transformation. So does her struggle to make herself whole, to be self and other, "woman" and "man," in the face of metonymic representation that would reduce her to the insignificant partness of being only a subjugated female. (Behar 296)
Esperanza's performance of motherhood can also be interpreted as feminist practice. In a culture which formulates motherhood as the only means, for a woman, of attaining recognition, Esperanza resists sentimentalizing her role as a mother. For forcing her son out of her house, she is perceived by the other townspeople, particularly the women, as a "bad mother." Ironically, as Esperanza reveals to Behar, she kicks her son out of the house to protect her daughter whom he was molesting. By valorizing her daughter over her son, Esperanza transforms motherhood into an act of resistance, and for that, she pays a price.

Perhaps Esperanza's feminism is most clearly seen in her embracing of coraje, a term similar to rage. It is this coraje which Esperanza cites as motivation for telling her story, and she advises her comadre Behar to write what she wants, but with coraje. This emotion, powerful enough to dry up her milk when she was nursing one of her children, gave her the strength to leave her husband as well as the courage to refuse "to keep quiet about the violence that was enacted upon her body" by her father and her husband. And for this she also pays a price. Thus, although Esperanza's feminism has no name, it is certainly one which has made her not only a survivor, but an agent of change within her own life, and an influence on Behar, the feminist of "too many names" as well. She writes,
My comadre taught me quite a lot about expressing coraje...There's plenty of coraje here, about being a woman, about anthropology, about United States policy toward undocumented Mexicans; some of the coraje is my comadre's, some of it is mine, and some of it belongs to both of us. (Behar xii)

The metamorphoses of Esperanza's story as it is mediated by the editing process, translation, and border crossings, as well as Behar's own role in this transformation are explored as Behar writes,

Just as rural Mexican laborers export their bodies for labor on American soil, Esperanza has given me her story for export only. Her story, she realizes, is a kind of commodity that will have a value on the other side that it doesn't have at home; why else would I be "using up" my life to write about her life? She has chosen to be a literary wetback, and I am to act as her literary broker, the border-croesser who will take her story to the other side and make it heard in translation. The question will be whether I can act as her literary broker without becoming the worse kind of coyote, getting her across, but only by exploiting her lack of power to make it to el otro lado any other way. (Behar 234)

This exploration and articulation of the roles played by the editing process, which is in turn influenced by market demands and embedded in histories and contexts of asymmetrical power relations, can be expanded to also bear relevance to the role of the critic/teacher who carries texts across borders into the realm of academic discourse.

Behar posits an analogous relationship between herself as an anthropologist employed by a U.S. academic institution transporting Esperanza's story over borders and the figure of the coyote, the person who transports undocumented laborers across the U.S./Mexico border for
profit. This identification is particularly resonant given Behar's own positional relationship, as a Cuban-American Jewish woman, to academia. She too is, in a way different from Esperanza's story and Mexican laborers, a trespasser. Like a coyote, who is more often than not a Latino/a, Behar is a border-dweller; not entirely the "gringa anthropologist," but still a "documented" participant in the hegemonic discursive area known as academia.

In the lines cited, as she struggles with the possibility of carrying out her project, the question is not whether she will become a coyote at all, but rather what kind of coyote. This question must also be addressed by critics, as we transport texts which are "undocumented" across the invisible borders which have been constructed through time to guard the canon. Some texts are easily smuggled, others are more "alien" and are stopped at the gate. As critics, we must first recognize our own participation in these border crossings, and our own conflicted positionings as coyotes. The question then becomes what type of coyotes we choose to be.

Notes

1. Spivak argues that the subaltern are spoken about and even spoken for, but silenced in terms of their own ability to speak in terms of discourse which can enter hegemonic discursive areas. See her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

2. John Beverley, in his article "'Through All Things Modern': Second Thoughts on Testimonio" defines testimonio as "a novel or novella-length narrative told in the first
person by a narrator who is also the real life protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts." He also, however, points out that because the genre is flexible and open to change so as to meet the demands of the narrator to tell his/her story, and achieve desired effects in terms of political change, any attempt to define the genre is provisional and partial at best.

3. As an interesting side note, Translated Woman has been adapted for the stage by the theater company Pregónes.

4. Fotonovelas are story books which follow a format similar to that of a comic book. Their audience is primarily women and they are often romance stories, with an element of tragedy as well as an implied moral lesson.

5. For a well researched and compelling study of women brought before the courts of the Inquisition in colonial Mexico, see Jean Franco's Plotting Women. Behar cites Franco's work and was originally drawn to the town of Mexquitic to research women's Inquisition narratives.

6. A milpa is a small plot of land for cultivating corn.

7. The comadre relationship is founded on the request made of a woman by another to become the godmother of her child. It is important to note that a child has, aside from his/her baptismal godmother, also a communion godmother, confirmation godmother, and godmothers who contribute to special events and celebrations such as the madrina del pastel or cake godmother responsible for providing the cake for a girl's quince or fifteenth birthday party. Thus, a woman can and usually has many comadres. Often, the comadre selected is from a different socio-economic class, primarily more affluent than the mother of the child. This ensures a form of sponsorship for both the child and the mother, who can expect certain gifts or favors which are part of a godmother's and a comadre's responsibilities. The mother of the child, that is the less affluent comadre, is in turn expected to provide small gifts such as food or hand made items as tokens for her comadre. Comadres, particularly if they are from disparate classes, retain formalities such as using the formal terms of address such as usted, although they are bound to one another in responsibilities and loyalties.

8. For fuller discussions of the relationship between the West and the "Primitive," in relation to the West's construction of itself against this "Other," see Edward Said's Orientalism, Christopher Miller's Blank Darkness, and Marianna Torgovnick's Gone Primitive.

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9. See Angie Chabram-Dernersesian's article, "I Throw Punches for My Race, but I Don't Want to Be a Man," for a discussion of the link between the construction of the Malinche figure as the Mexican Eve and ultimate traitor and the construction of Chicano nationalism through the appropriation of machismo.

10. For an in depth explanation of the relationship between translation and betrayal in the context of Chicana criticism, see Norma Alarcon's article, "Traddutora, Traditora."
CHAPTER TWO

OUT OF BOUNDS: TESTIMONIO AND ITS RECEPTION

They've always said, poor Indians they can't speak, so many speak for them. That's why I decided to learn Spanish.

Rigoberta Menchú

We want to be the voice of those who have no voice? An Unfortunate expression. Well intended, but mistaken. There are no mute peoples. It is simply the case that the dominant culture, a culture of echoes of foreign voices, covers the mouths of those who have a voice of their own.

Eduardo Galeano

The genre of testimonio, in spite of its claim to transparency and "reality," or perhaps because of it, poses challenges for the reader/critic which put into question the very notion of genre, literature, historiography, and the relationship of all of these to political praxis. That testimonio, as defined and discussed here, is a Third World cultural product, furthermore one which aims to provide the subaltern with a public voice, places critical inquiry on the genre and specific texts classified under it squarely in the terrain of asymmetrical exchanges (of goods, labor, capital, and culture) between the First and Third World.¹ The reception of these texts within U.S. institutions, by necessity, becomes itself a field of inquiry which can make explicit the implications of testimonio's inclusion in and exclusion from academic discourses on race, class, gender, and transnational power structures.

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John Beverley defines *testimonio* as,

a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or a significant life experience. *Testimonio* may include but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, novela-testimonio, nonfiction novel, or "facto-graphic literature." (Beverley, "The Margin" 12-13)

In that article, he goes on to further delineate what *testimonio* is, but only, as implied by the above quote, by explaining what it is not. That is, how it differs in terms of production and effect, from those genres with which it occasionally overlaps. This process of definition by negation is most evident in descriptions of *testimonio*'s relation to two superficially dissimilar genres: autobiography and the novel.

Positing *testimonio* as an emerging genre in comparison to more established ones such as autobiography and the novel carries the risk of treating these genres as stable an uncontested; something which is simply untrue. Yet, what we may be able to agree upon is that these genres have been formulated and "tracked" in terms of conventions and development to the extent that we have at our disposal a "grammar" from which we can speak about them and articulate arguments which can participate in the discourse regarding a given text's place or lack of place in the canon. In the
case of testimonio, texts have been produced and circulated, and even in certain cases been incorporated, however problematically, into existing literary structures, without the availability of such a "grammar." The critic then, at this moment, can only approach these texts indirectly, through borrowed language.

If we choose to approach testimonio through the borrowed language of autobiography, we must do so with full knowledge of what the term implies in theory and practice. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith point out that "although the genres of life writing in the West emerge in Antiquity, the term autobiography is a post-Enlightenment coinage. Yet the word and the practice invoke a particular genealogy, resonant ideology, and discursive imperative" (Smith and Watson xvii). In his 1956 essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," George Gusdorf attempts to fix the limits of autobiography, and not surprisingly draws the boundaries around Western civilization in terms which are unambiguously male:

> It would seem that autobiography is not to be found outside of our cultural area: one would say that it expresses a concern peculiar to Western man, a concern that has been of good use in his systematic conquest of the universe and that he has communicated to men of other cultures; but those men will thereby have been annexed by a sort of intellectual colonizing to a mentality that was not their own. (Gusdorf 29)

While Gusdorf's definition has gone through significant revisions in the past forty years, by critics
as well as practitioners of autobiography, what remains a constant is the understanding that autobiography has participated in the cultural mythmaking of a specific kind of "selfhood," one in which

all "I's" are rational, agentive, unitary, [and] all "I's" are potentially interesting autobiographers...yet, not all are "I's." Where Western eyes see Man as a unique individual rather than a member of a collectivity, of race or nation, of sex or sexual preference, Western eyes see the colonized as amorphous generalized collectivity. (Smith and Watson xvii)

To produce autobiographical texts, outside or on the margins of Western culture, is itself a transgression of the genre, but one which is wrought with conflict given the problematic ideological assumptions embedded in the practice of autobiography.

Texts which transgress the limits of autobiography have been classified by Caren Kaplan as falling under the term "out-law" genres. She argues that such texts, including but not limited to testimonios, violate Derrida's definition of "The Law of Genre":

As soon as the word "genre" is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind...Thus, as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity. (Derrida 203-204)

The status of testimonio as an "out-law" genre and the problematic reception which such a status implies, can be analyzed in the critical responses to one specific
testimonio: *I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala* by Rigoberta Menchú with Elisabeth Burgos Debray. This particular text is taken here as exemplary, but only with a certain degree of trepidation, since testimonio, as Beverley states in the disclaimer to his definition "is by nature a protean and demotic form not yet subject to legislation by a normative literary establishment" (Beverley, "Margin" 93). To posit a certain text as "exemplary" is at least partially a move toward "standardizing" or "fixing" the genre so as to clear the way for smooth incorporation. It is, in other words, a strategy which carries the potential for neutralization.

Grounding this discussion on this particular text was rather a decision based on the existence of research, the availability of the text in English translation, and the inclusion of the text in courses outside of Spanish and Latin American Studies Departments. *I, Rigoberta Menchú* is of particular importance in debates over curricular issues, since it is included on the reading list for one track of the Humanities curriculum at Stanford University. It is thus exemplary, not in that it sets or enforces norms, but rather that it can illuminate the dynamics of reception within U.S. institutions.

A distinguishing characteristic of this text, which Kaplan identifies as a key element in "out-law" genres, is that it requires collaboration across participants' class,
and often times, racial differences. This process of collaboration, which violates the very notion of a singular and autonomous author, makes this text "impure," and arguably a "monstrosity," a deformation which makes it at once an object of derision and dangerous. "Thus, instead of a discourse of individual authorship, we find a discourse of situation; a 'politics of location'" (Kaplan 119).

As a testimonio travels from the mouth of the testimonial subject or the "autobiolocutor," to the notes and taperecorder of the editor or transcriber, and then to the written form to be "cut, cut, and cut away," as Behar describes, to be transformed into a recognizable "book," mediation upon mediation takes place. These mediations are then confounded once the text is translated into English, a necessary process if it is to circulate outside of Spanish and Latin American Studies Departments in U.S. institutions. To ignore the role of the editor in the production of a testimonio becomes more than a question of irresponsibility. It becomes a form of recolonization by reproducing the dubious assumption that the "Other's" discourse can be rendered transparent and knowable in a decontextualized, ahistorical space where power hierarchies and positions of privilege and oppression either play no significant role or go unquestioned.
In the case of *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, the ten page introduction by Elisabeth Burgos Debray reveals the pivotal role of the editor and the importance of scrutinizing the process behind the production of a testimonio, but does so mostly by what it conceals. At the time of their meeting, Menchú was twenty-three years old, exiled from her native country of Guatemala for her activities as a revolutionary leader and participant in the guerrilla war of resistance. During the week that the two women spent together, in Burgos' Paris flat, Menchú recounts her life and describes her traditions and customs as a Quiché. The original Spanish title, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* is closer to the content of her story, which centers on her coming to political consciousness and action in the context of Guatemala's external and internal colonial history.

As readers, information as to what transpired during the time the two women spent together is available solely through Burgos' introduction, where she relates and interprets specific moments of communication and exchange between herself and Menchú. This account has been closely analyzed by several critics as reproducing the very same structures which Menchú's story questions and resists. For example, Burgos denies Menchú's specificity and lapses into essentialist description in referring to her skill in making tortillas as "a reflex thousands of years old,"

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ignoring Menchú's accounts, which Burgos herself is editing, of the exploitation of this skill, which she learned from her mother, by the landowners as well as the urban middle-class (Carr 84).

This representation of the "Other" as static, knowable and ahistorical is also evident in the editor's description of her first impression of Menchú:

The first thing that struck me about her was her open, almost child-like smile. Her face was round and moon-shaped. Her expression was as guileless as that of a child and a smile hovered permanently on her lips. (Burgos Debray xiv)

The language used here is a reproduction of the discourse of colonization and the descriptions of "natives" as docile, ingenious children dependent on the colonizer.

Yet some critics seem to overlook this, taking Burgos' words as fact rather than interpretations. Rosemary Geisdorfer Feal in her article, "Spanish American Ethnobiography and the Slave Narrative Tradition", for example, first acknowledges the mediative function of the editor and dutifully notes, "Even transcripts of ethnographic interviews, such as those undertaken by Oscar Lewis, imply an ideological stance, a perspective, a selection of speaker and circumstance" (Geisdorfer Feal 103). Yet scarcely two paragraphs later, she treats Burgos' introduction as if it were authoritative and objective, introducing her citations of Burgos' text with
the detached vocabulary of science: "as she reports..."
(Geisdorfer Feal 103).

What Burgos, a white anthropologist from Venezuela, "reports" is summarized by Geisdorfer in the following way:

The two women share the same household for eight days; their relationship intensified when Menchú discovered that Burgos had a supply of maize flour and black beans, the staple diet in the Guatemalan highlands as well as in the Venezuelan culture in which Burgos grew up. In making and breaking tortillas together, these women solidified their part of the ethnobiographic pact. (Geisdorfer Feal 103)

What Geisdorfer erases from Burgos' introduction is a reflection of what Burgos' own text occludes, namely that "breaking tortillas together" reproduces on several levels the historical power relations which account for the differences between the two women. The household the two women "share" is not the neutral space which the word implies. It belongs to Burgos and Menchú is a visitor for the duration of the collaboration. Burgos' text performs this same type of erasure of the two women's differential relationship to the space they inhabit by stating that "For the whole of that week I lived in Rigoberta's world," (Burgos Debray xv) presumably meaning it metaphorically, yet in actuality the Paris flat was as far removed from Menchú's world as one could possibly get, and ownership or at least legitimate occupancy belonged solely to Burgos.
In order for the two women to "break tortillas" together, it is Menchú who does the cooking. Burgos writes,

The first thing Rigoberta did when she got up in the morning was make dough and cook tortillas for breakfast; it was a reflex that was thousands of years old. She did the same at noon and in the evening. It was a pleasure to watch her. Within seconds, perfectly round, paper-thin tortillas would materialize in her hands, as though by miracle. The women I had watched in my childhood made arepas by patting the dough flat between the palms of their hands, but Rigoberta made her tortillas by patting it between her fingers..."We only trust people who eat what we eat," she told me one day as she tried to explain the relationship between the guerrillas and the Indian communities. I suddenly realized that she had begun to trust me. A relationship based upon food proves that there are areas where Indians and non-Indians can meet and share things: the tortillas and black beans brought us together because they gave us the same pleasure and awakened the same drives in both of us. (Burgos xv-xvi)

As Robert Carr has commented on this particular passage, it is an attempt to obliterate differences, thereby "domesticating Rigoberta and radicalizing herself" (Carr 83). The term "domesticating" is particularly appropriate since Burgos is effectively recasting Menchú as a domestic, a role she played for several years in Guatemala City. Menchú, the object of the more privileged white woman's gaze, is grouped by association with the domestics of Burgos' childhood, these other women whom she watched patting dough. Interestingly enough, this very association between her own spectatorship of "Other"
women's labor spurs Burgos' "fantasy of two women who operate as equals within an exchange" (Carr 83).

Through her introduction, Burgos seeks to neutralize Menchú, relocating her in the discourse on the "Other," so that she can effectively appropriate her and her story. As Elizabeth Meese observes, regarding the introduction,

Fundamental differences inhabit these positions, Paris and Guatemala, the one who cooks and the other who watches, the Latin American and the Quiché Indian woman. The "theorist" mis(re)presents the differences; the "activist" appropriates them. (Meese 102)

This ten page text, then, makes the construction of Menchú's text through Burgos, highly problematic and one which must be read with caution. The introduction also turns the relationship or "non-relationship" as Meese calls it, between the two women back against the reader so that we also must question our own positionings in relation to both of these women and the text they collaboratively produce.

Robert Carr has argued that testimonio involves a speaker from an exploited and oppressed community, who works alongside someone who has, or can have access to the means of production of a commodity which can be marketed. Such a text inevitably extracts an experience from the Third World for consumption in the First World. Thus, it is imperative to recognize that First World/Third World relations are also implicitly in the text of "subaltern
subjectivity," constructed in and between these interventions (Carr 85).

As First World readers and consumers of a testimonio, then, we too are implicated. Our association with the university renders our position more intensely conflicted. As Beverley notes,

literature and the university (in the historically specific form each takes during and after the Renaissance) have been, appearances to the contrary, mutually dependent on each other and as such deeply implicated in the processes of state formation and colonial expansion that define early modern Europe. This legacy still marks each, making their interaction in contemporary processes of decolonization and postcoloniality at the same time both necessary and problematic. (Beverley, "Second Thoughts" 3)

Menchú's narrative itself draws our attention to our own conflicted positionings. Her statements, repeated throughout the text, demonstrate her need to conceal parts of her story, and parts of herself. In chapter three for example, she tells Burgos, "I can't tell you what my nahual is because that is one of our secrets," (Menchú 34). The final lines of the book, which we may by convention expect to be the most resonant, make no attempt to embrace us, or draw closure to this narrative, but rather reinforce distance and deliberately leave an empty space, the space of that which we can't know: "Nevertheless, I'm still keeping my Indian identity a secret. I'm still keeping secret what I think no-one should know. Not even
anthropologists or intellectuals, no matter how many books they have, can find out our secrets" (Menchú 247).

Doris Sommer has observed that "Menchú invites us to a tete-a-tete, not a heart to heart," (Sommer quoted in Meese 99). This is understandable since information can, and as Menchú's experience has painfully taught her, will be held against her. She cannot exclude intellectuals as potentially dangerous to herself and her compañeros since it is no mere coincidence that Latin American Studies programs experienced their most significant boom during the Reagan administration, which as Beverley points out, actually took Latin America seriously. While funding for such programs may have suffered in the 1980s, the work they produced was of interest to agencies seeking to protect "national security" and gather "intelligence" on the region.

It is absolutely clear that the speaker in testimonio is relating his or her story with the intent of bringing about specific material change, one based on politicizing the reader/consumer. In this regard it is what Barbara Harlow has termed "resistance literature." The efficacy of such a literature rests on its oppositional and revolutionary function, which ceases to function in that way once the text is assimilated by hegemonic institutions. Thus, in whose interest and to what ends do we as critics perform our rhetorical gymnastics attempting to
"legitimize" the genre by reifying its literariness in First World terms, so that we can comfortably fit it into existing structures, leaving such structures intact? This slippery space is the contradictory and highly charged terrain where criticism of testimonio takes place.

As we engage with these texts, our own participation in global systems of economic exchange and exploitation, and the ease with which we can reproduce these systems through our own scholarship and teaching must become a focal point of investigation and ongoing debate. Ironically, even testimonio's most ardent supporters occasionally become trapped in the desire to legitimize these texts by arguing their "literariness" in terms which have become established in First World discourses. One such example is Beverley's assessment of Menchú's detailed description of her mother's and brother's torture and murder in the hands of the Guatemalan army as containing a "hallucinatory and symbolic intensity different from the matter-of-fact narration one expects from testimonio. One could say this is a kind of testimonial expressionism, or 'magical realism'" (Beverley, "The Margin" 101).

This appeal to literariness works against Beverley's principal intent in that article, namely the need to negotiate the differential relationship between reading Third World testimonio and reading "literature" in the First World. It is a form of what Mohanty has termed
"discursive colonization," which Ketu Katrak, in critiquing Jameson's "Third world Literature in an Era of Multinational Capitalism" has described as "a Western theoretician's tendency, even with the best intentions and political sympathies, to appropriate 'third world' texts within an intellectual hegemony" (Katrak, 160). Carr insightfully notes that

we can learn much from Beverley's misconception regarding "magical realism": in the process of configuring the space between testimonio and "literature," in broad terms, I would in contrast foreground the politicization of "literature" rather than aestheticizing testimonio. (Carr 78)

Beverley reenters this critical dialogue with his essay, "'Through All Things Modern': Second Thoughts on Testimonio," which reframes the discussion of the genre in terms which are not in direct conflict with Carr's position, but which nonetheless demonstrate the difficulty in articulating testimonio's anti-literary function. Beverley argues that the aesthetics of testimonio are actually an anti-aesthetics which makes the genre subversive in the context of literary studies. Yet in doing so, he uses terminology, such as "defamiliarization," that has established itself as conventional in theorizing "literariness." He writes,

At least part of its aesthetic effect--I mean this precisely in the Russian Formalist sense of ostrananie or defamiliarization--is that it is not literary, not linguistically elaborated or authorial...Even where its instrumentality is to reach in printed form a metropolitan reading public culturally and physically distant from the...
position and situation of its narrator, testimonio is not engendered out of the same humanist ideology of the literary that motivates its reception by this public or its incorporation into the humanities curriculum; and in some cases it actually resists being literature. (Beverley "Second Thoughts" 8)

The opening lines of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* illustrate Beverley's point regarding testimonio's resistance to being read as literature. "My name is Rigoberta Menchú. I am twenty-three years old. This is my testimony. I didn't learn it from a book, and I didn't learn it alone" (Menchú 1). The lines succinctly express the text's difference from and opposition to that which we conventionally identify as the literary. They subvert the autobiographical "I" which narrates experience and selfhood as differentiation from other "I's." In *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, the "I" moves in the opposite direction, toward the formation of a "we" and functions throughout the text, not in an individualistic and autonomous mode, but rather as an "affirmation of the individual self in a collective mode" (Beverley "The Margin" 17). She goes on to state, "My personal experience is the reality of a whole people" (Menchú, 1). This key point in Menchú's narration is lost in the translation of the title from *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* to *I, Rigoberta Menchú* which is indicative of the cultural bias favoring singularity.

Fredric Jameson interprets Menchú's revision of the autobiographical "I" as a radical Third World decentering
of the subject which enables us to break from the "authority" of the formerly unified subject/private property and bring about a new collective space between known subjects and individual human beings. This type of anonymity does not imply the loss of the proper name or personal identity, but rather its multiplication. He writes,

> Anonymity then, [expresses]...the relation of one individual to a plurality of other names and other concrete individuals. This is, then, a concept which is as much literary (having to do with the nature of a type of narrative discourse and its basic classification of the character, or more specifically the protagonist--the hero or heroine) as it is social, to the extent that it offers what I believe is a new conceptualization quite different from the menacing mob and the faceless masses of First World fantasies: a vision of collectivity and collective life specific to the culture and experience of the Third World itself. (Jameson 129)

Menchú's testimonio also engages in a revision of the novel, paralleling the ways in which all autobiographical narratives depart from, overlap with, and revise the genre. Many critics have argued that the distinction between fiction and non-fiction is illusory. E.L. Doctorow, for example, summarizes this position by saying, "there is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative" (Doctorow 231). From this statement we can extract the position that reality itself is a fiction, a text; and by extension, our only reality is fiction. Klinkowitz argues that "we know reality only through our fictions," and thus, "reminding
readers that fictions are provisional realities and not bedrock truth is the essence of self-apparent writing" (Klinkowitz 135).

What is here referred to as "self-apparent writing" could be easily applied to the fiction of the Boom, with the novel One Hundred Years of Solitude as the most cited example. Roberto González Echevarría, in his influential study Myth and Archive argues that Latin American narrative has followed a direct lineage paralleling and appropriating the hegemonic discourse of each particular period, culminating in the Boom fiction which establishes fiction itself as the hegemonic discourse by retracing and fictionalizing all of the previous hegemonic discourses in the Archive. What these novels do then, is take the blurring of boundaries between fiction and nonfiction one step further and subsume nonfiction as a form under fiction.

Testimonio differentiates itself from the novel and the Latin American Boom novel in particular, in that it "never puts the referentiality of language into question" (Sommer quoted in Meese 98). Moreover, it stands in sharp contrast to the texts examined by González Echevarría in that it posits experience and orality as more valid than theory and the written word. Whereas, in the Boom fictions, books and writing encompass all of reality--recall for example that the very existence of the town of
Macondo was predicated on its being written in Maquiaidez's manuscript and once the manuscript is deciphered, the town literally blows away—in testimonio reality is constructed not only outside of writing, but in opposition to it.

Menchú's denial of an epistemology based on literacy transgresses humanistic ideology and articulates a theory outside of theory. It is useful here to situate her relationship to the written word in historical context, something which she herself provides for the reader in those passages describing her community's experiences with schools, teachers and books. Her father's reasons for not sending his children to school align his decision with resistance to assimilation which was, and still is, the goal of public education.

The relationship between writing and colonization in the Americas dates back to the fifteenth century and is evident in the crónicas written by the conquerors. As many critics, including Angel Rama in his now classic study La ciudad letrada (The Lettered City), have noted, throughout the colonial period, the printed word was used as both an instrument of domination in terms of its legislative power, and rhetorically constructing hierarchies which legitimated, consolidated and propagated power. Five centuries later, Menchú's narrative demonstrates that present day Guatemala is still struggling with this
historical link between literacy and domination (Smorkaloff 103).

When in Chapter five she recounts her first visit to Guatemala City, it is the image of the typewriter which lingers in her mind:

We went in and I saw my father take off his hat and give a sort of bow to the man sitting at a big table writing something on a typewriter. That's something else I used to dream about--that typewriter. How was it possible for paper to come out with things written on it? I didn't know what to think of all those people but I thought they were important people because my father took off his hat and spoke to them in a very humble way...The city for me was a monster, something alien, different...For me it was the world of the ladinos. (Menchú 32)

In this passage, Menchú conflates the typewriter, which is an instrument of technology as well as one which stands for print culture, with intimidation and oppression. It is the image of the city, the monster, which inhabits and stands in place of this space which is not hers, the seat of ladino power. In passages such as this, Menchú constructs the written word as an instrument of domination, the medium through which power hierarchies are established and reproduced, and furthermore a marker separating those in power from the disempowered.

This construct is arguably embedded in the formation of genres such as autobiography and the novel. Yet, Menchú approaches it from a radically differently positioned perspective. Autobiography, for example, recognizes the power of the written word and appropriates it in the
service of the autobiographical "I"'s self formation. The novel also seizes the power of the written word and through it constructs an entire reality. In contrast to this, Menchú's narrative, spoken in a language not her own, and then ordered, written and edited by someone unequivocally different from herself, can lay claim to being oppositional to the written word, even as it is paradoxically present to us solely in that form. This paradox is at the center of what makes the entry and circulation of this text in the U.S. academic marketplace a conflicted process, and one which challenges our entrenched notions of the literary, as well as our established reading conventions which have developed over time in conjunction with and in response to assumptions regarding literacy and its role in the struggle to obtain and/or propagate the distribution of power.

*I, Rigoberta Menchú*, like other testimonios, complicates the dialogic relationship between text and reader, subverting and problematizing the underlying set of assumptions which we as readers rely on in making meaning as we engage with the text. This relationship is dialogic based on both the text's on-going dialogue with other texts, which may or may not exist in written form, as well as the reader's expectations based on prior knowledge. In the case of testimonio, the collaborative process behind its production renders its dialogic engagement with other
texts, that is, its intertextuality, multiply directed and even internally dialogic.

Mechú's oral narrative is uttered in a specific context of speaker and listener, as well as being located in and constructed in relation to oral traditions, cultural expressions, customs, conventions, and even grammatical structures which are not available to us as readers of the text. This is partly the result of Menchú's own process of concealment, but also a built-in characteristic of the genre which is heavily mediated. Superimposed on this narrative, is Burgos Debray's manipulation of the oral narrative and her written text's location in relation to a different set of texts and conventions. *I, Rigoberta Menchú* is also engaged in an internal dialogue between Menchú's narrative and that of Burgos Debray.

Dialogic relationships have been articulated and explored by Bakhtin, particularly in relation to the novel. He argues that genre's heteroglossia, wherein various differently positioned discourses are simultaneously presented. Yet, *testimonio* defies being subsumed under the parameters of that genre. It differs particularly in its mode of production as well as its primary intent which is to inform and mobilize the reader to political action. While individual *testimonios* may gain and attain a "cultural value" which will secure their place in literary history far into the future, their primary intent is
strictly pragmatic. Testimonio's language and direct style also stand in contrast to that of the novel. While it may hold that truth is at times stranger than fiction, as it is narrated, truth is structured differently and to attempt to read it as fiction can, and in the case of testimonio often does, leave the reader frustrated and/or disillusioned. To put it more bluntly, testimonios make bad novels.

At the moment the reader engages with the text, there emerges yet another dialogic relationship consisting of the reader's dialogue with the text, not as a passive blank slate but as an active participant employing various reading strategies and critical conventions. To make meaning, the reader must not only decipher encoded words, but textual codes as well, codes which presume the reader's and the text's interpretive community to be determined by acculturation in a Western culture of literacy. Even Shklovsky's conceptualization of defamiliarization assumes a shared understanding of what we mean by the familiar. Beverley's assertion of testimonio's use of defamiliarization is for this reason invalid. If in fact testimonio presents the familiar in a manner which the reader can identify as different from other genres and texts, it is not because it makes use of literary artifice, but rather because the very notion of the familiar is inoperative. It is here that testimonio's power, and some would say danger, lies.


Testimonio frustrates our desire to make meaning through reading strategies informed by a culture of literacy and an epistemology rooted in that culture. As readers and critics we are further frustrated by an inability to articulate a critical discourse on the genre, since it resists the borrowed languages of autobiography with its emphasis on the "I," and the novel, a Western form that emphasizes in structure and narration the formulation of an imaginary reality. To read testimonio, then, requires that we develop new and specific reading strategies. This implies not only a revision of established strategies, but a questioning of these strategies as well as problematizing the political implications of employing critical conventions and our complicity in colonizing practices as we engage with Third World cultural productions through these strategies and conventions.

As scholars and teachers, we are challenged by testimonio to resist easy incorporation which neutralizes the genre's revolutionary intent. To include a text such as I, Rigoberta Menchú on a syllabus is not in and of itself practicing diversity or employing a global approach. If the text is merely "tacked on," without engaging in relational readings and pedagogy, that is without allowing for the reading of testimonio to influence our reading of canonical texts, we are reproducing the very structures of

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differential power relations which Menchú's narrative critiques. To be truly inclusive in our scholarship and pedagogical practices, we must go well beyond the mere addition and instead utilize our reading of testimonios such as *I, Rigoberta Menchú* to clear a transformational space.

"Transformational" is used here in reference to changes in the individual reader as well as institutional structures. *Testimonio*'s potential lies in its ability to affect change in the individual reader in terms of her/his reading strategies as well as effecting a change in direct political action through solidarity with revolutionary struggles of liberation. At the institutional level, testimonio puts into question entrenched notions of authorship, genre, and individual autonomy. *Testimonio* promotes a rethinking of categories such as knowledge, literature, theory, and reading as well as fostering an exploration of how these categories are constructed. Such a rethinking can produce a destabilizing effect on institutional structures which regulate access to power and its distribution.

To engage in transformational scholarship and teaching through testimonio means to subvert the established practice of reading marginalized texts through the strategies and conventions of the center, and work toward re-reading the center through the marginalized. This
transformational approach is a goal which has not been reached, but which holds the promise of a truly inclusive and revisionist model which successfully negotiates the conflict between silencing and erasure on the one hand and appropriation and neutralization on the other.

Notes

1. The terms "First" and "Third World" are used here in spite of their problematic connotations. The terms imply, for example, boundaries and differences which are not always rigid, as well as implying an internal homogeneity within each category which is illusory. The terms also suggest hierarchical ordering of comparison which goes beyond the naming of center and periphery and function in ways which actually reproduce the hegemonic. However, because competing terms such as "developing" are equally if not more problematic, "First" and "Third World" seem, at this time, the best choices amongst existing terminology.

2. For a more complete discussion of the potential for scholarship and pedagogy in this field to affect direct political changes, see John Beverley's article, "Can Hispanism be a Radical Practice?"
CHAPTER THREE

SPIC³ SPANGLISH?: THE RECEPTION OF BORDERLANDS/LA FRONTERA AND LINGUISTIC RESISTANCE

So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity - I am my language.

Gloria Anzaldúa
Borderlands/La Frontera

The struggle for Latina/o self identity and self representation is most passionately staged in the terrain of language(s). This struggle is both internal and external. It splits the multiple Selves within the individual, divides various Latina/o groups from one another, and is a marker of difference against U.S. hegemony. Unlike other groups, to which Latinos are often compared and pressured to emulate, Latinos have more intensely retained their language than any other group in history, with 90% of U.S. Latinos identifying themselves as Spanish speakers.¹ Linguistic affirmation, for many Latinas/os, is a strategy for "fending off a schizophrenia...that pathological duality born of contending cultural worlds and, perhaps more significantly, of conflicting pressures toward both exclusion and forced incorporation" (Flores and Yudice 60).

Gloria Anzaldúa takes up the issue of language as a site of struggle in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza by placing it in terms of both form and content, at the center of her snake-like autobiographical narrative.
constructing a "new mestiza consciousness". Like all texts, Borderlands/La Frontera, in entering the marketplace of ideas, becomes engaged in symbiotic relationship with its readers, as we in turn, and to varying degrees, participate in the construction and deconstruction of its meaning. The reception of this text in the academy, however, is multilayered and its inclusion in a broad range of courses and discourses transgresses disciplinary boundaries. This reflects the text's own scripting of border and mestiza consciousness. The book's structure, divided into two sections which interweave genres, is itself transgressive. The first section, "Atravesando Fronteras/Crossing Borders," consists of seven autobiographical essays theorizing "The New Mestiza". The second section, "Un Agitado Viento/Ethécatl, the Wind" is comprised of poetry. Borderlands problematic reception is also reflective of institutional conflicts which are often resolved through the employment of various strategies of containment.

These strategies manifest themselves through instances of decontextualization, removing the text entirely from its geographic, historical and cultural specificity thereby neutralizing it and unproblematically appropriating it. Another strategy of containment is the isolation of the text, the encapsulation of its discourse as entirely separate from competing discourses. This second strategy,
like other strategies of containment, leaves the very structures of exclusion intact while providing the semblance of inclusion. It is, in practice, a form of the "tacking on syndrome" mentioned in previous chapters whereby the text is prevented from entering into dialogue with other, differently positioned texts. For example, rarely is the text read in dialogue and occasionally in conflict with other texts of feminist theory.

Whatever form these strategies of containment take, to be effective, that is, to present themselves as coherent, they ignore the role which language plays in Anzaldúa's text. This omission is so pervasive that it begs the question: What is it about Borderlands/La Frontera and its languages that is so threatening that it must be ignored? The text itself is blatant about its concern with language struggle and resistance as evidenced by dedicating the chapter entitled "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" to it. Language struggle is even the medium itself, since the text uses several languages and does not always provide either direct or contextual translations. To begin to posit answers to this question of omission, or to even legitimate the question as such, we must first situate Borderlands and its languages within a historical, cultural and critical context. In mapping out this context, rather than following tidy sections and chronological order, this chapter will follow Anzaldúa's lead and unwind itself—-or
wind itself—in a coiling structure since all of these categories exist simultaneously and are embedded in one another.

In these final years of the twentieth century, the drive to regulate minority discursive practices, particularly those of Latinas/os, is not only prevalent but actually increasing as political and legal rhetoric is displaced so as to maintain U.S. cultural hegemony, or at least the illusion of it. Twenty-two states have passed legislation and even amended their state constitutions to become officially English only. In 1993 alone, four bills were introduced in Congress to make English the national language (Arteaga 12). The prevailing argument, by which many Latinos have been persuaded to vote in favor of these referendums, is that English only legislation is purely "symbolic" and in practice does not discriminate against non-English speakers. Furthermore, according to this argument, bilingual Latinos are untouched by such measures.

Yet, if we unpack the rhetoric behind the English only movement, we can see that the "symbolism" of these laws and amendments is rooted in racism and in fact intended to have very real consequences in the material world. Take for example, the words of Terry Robbins, a former head of U.S. English operations in Florida:

There are misguided persons, specifically Hispanic immigrants, who have chosen to come here and enjoy our freedoms, who would legislate another language, Spanish, as co-equal and co-legal with
English...If Hispanics get their way, perhaps someday Spanish could replace English entirely...we ought to remind them, and better still educate them to the fact that the United States is not a mongrel nation. (Califa 321)

If these words seem to represent an extremist position, one which would hold no currency in academic circles, let us point out that the quote is taken from a speech delivered at Florida International University, whose student population is overwhelmingly Latino.

Robbins' equating of the term "Hispanic" with "immigrant" denies history, particularly of the Southwest, and works on the presumption of English as the pre-existing language. In this swift rhetorical move, Robbins erases the previous presence of Native American languages throughout the territory which presently comprises the United States, as well as the presence of Spanish, and in some areas, French as the first European languages to stamp themselves on this map. In what is now the Southwest, Spanish was the legal and national language until the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, even if an overwhelming number of Anglo immigrants within this Mexican territory refused to speak it and tenaciously held on to English. As Alfred Arteaga summarizes:

In order to foster an image of an America born in the English language, it becomes necessary to propagate a story of contiguous and historically English presence...[and this is accomplished by writing history] not chronologically but, rather, from East to West so that Spanish is encountered by the likes of Austin and Fremont during the
Western expansion late in U.S. history; it appears historically after English. (Arteaga 25)

Robbins' use of the terms "co-equal" and "co-legal," as offensive as they may be in the context of his argument, are actually quite accurate. There are those, as Robbins asserts, who struggle to make Spanish, and other languages and discursive practices such as Caló, co-equal and co-legal. But this struggle does not take place in the realm of legislation. For it to do so would imply a high level of power, one which is restricted at the present time to white and predominantly male members of this society. The struggle to assert linguistic equality takes place rather in the deployment of language in everyday life. It is on this terrain "that Latinos wage their cultural politics as a 'social movement'" (Flores and Yudice 61).

A poignant example of this, and one which can also illuminate the centrality of language as a site of resistance in Anzaldúa, is a political cartoon by Alejandro Sánchez, drawn in response to the 1994 Supreme Court decision which upheld a ruling in nine states that allows employers to prohibit workers from speaking any language other than English during working hours. The initial frame shows the seven judges who voted in favor of the ruling pointing large and accusing fingers--angry, scowling versions of the classic Uncle Sam pose. The second frame shows the decision in practice as two supervisors order two Latino workers to "speak only in English." In the next
frame the workers respond "Sí se puede" ("Yes, it can be done") to which one supervisor points out, "They're speaking in Spanish!" The workers continue to resist, bringing on a list of accusations and further restrictions: "They're whispering in Spanish!...They're lip-reading in Spanish!...They're writing notes in Spanish!...They're dressing in Spanish!...They're pronouncing city names [which are in Spanish] with a Spanish accent!...They're pronouncing their names with a Spanish accent!" Finally, "Their body language is in Spanish!" The final frame reads, "And thus, the R-R-Resistencia continues..." (Sánchez, Alejandro 36).

The humor in this cartoon is double edged. On the one hand it demonstrates the absurdity of the ruling through the energy the supervisors must expend in enforcing it. The other side of this is that the supervisors are right on one key point and that is that language manifests itself through means beyond the utterance. Thus, language legislation, the codified form through which law reinforces the un-equal relationship between English and Spanish, is also a way of legislating expression in the broader sense, the performance of identity, and even the physical manifestation of the self through the body. Of course the cartoon also demonstrates that linguistic resistance takes many forms; or, to put it another way, linguistic resistance is an observable form of political resistance.
that, given the current distribution of power, relies on alternative means of expression i.e. those which are not codified through law and other institutions of power.

While identity and transformational meaning is constructed and played out by both linguistic and paralinguistic means, language choices, syntax, and interlingual as well as intralingual communication are the most consistent and most obvious sites of self representation and self formation. Flores and Yudice state:

Language, then, is the necessary terrain on which Latinos negotiate value and attempt to reshape the institutions through which it is distributed. This is not to say that Latino identity is reduced to its linguistic dimensions. Rather, in the current sociopolitical structure of the United States, such matters rooted in the "private sphere," like language (for Latinos and other minorities), sexuality, body, and family definition (for women and gays and lesbians), etc., become the semiotic material around which identity is deployed in the "public sphere."

(Flores and Yudice 61)

Borderlands/La Frontera is a text which disrupts the hierarchies established to maintain the boundaries between the "private" and the "public" by incorporating and politicizing "matters rooted in the 'private sphere' like language... sexuality, body, and family definition." What Anzaldúa does, however, is doubly disruptive in that she also brings her Lesbian Self and her Chicana Self into polyglot dialogue. If, as critics and teachers we ignore the role of language choice or as Arteaga refers to it,
"the form of the form," then we are only privy to a fraction of the conversation.

Arteaga, incorporating previous work on Chicano discourse by critics such as Rosaura Sánchez, argues that Chicano writing opposes the monologic discourse of U.S. American culture through the use of dialogic discursive practices. If we know that language stratification and suppression has lead to language becoming "an automatic signaling system second only to race in identifying targets for possible privilege or discrimination," (Deutsch quoted in Califa) and that "for Chicanos [and Puerto Ricans], linguistic practice has been the legal criteria to classify, to differentiate: Spanish Speaking, Spanish Surnamed, White Hispanic," (Arteaga 13) then we can accept Arteaga's argument that "Chicano subjectification is never far from the competition among languages" (Arteaga 13).

Anzaldúa's text demonstrates this, yet it strives to eliminate the term "competition" at least as it applies to the internal struggle over language and how through language a "new mestiza consciousness" is written into being. In her poem "To live in the Borderlands means you," the first stanza reads: "are neither hispana india negra española/ ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed/ caught in the crossfire between camps/ while carrying all five races on your back/ not knowing which side to turn to, run from." The lines deny purity in any form, including

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linguistic purity, and assert hybridity, with the knowledge that the hybrid space is not the same as reconciliation, nor is it a place of safety. The final stanza of the poem declares: "To survive the Borderlands/ you must live sin fronteras/ be a crossroads." (Anzaldúa 195). Survival then, is linked not to the resolution of dualities or conflicting identities, but rather to the ability to maintain conflict and difference without the defeat of one element over the other, that is, without resolution.

Anzaldúa's use of the word "mestiza" is positioned in the interstice of conflicting dualities. The word refers, in the literal sense, to the hybrid of Spanish and Indigenous blood, as well as that of African slaves brought to the Americas following the conquest. The word is used by Anzaldúa in theorizing multiply embodied subjectivities, which places this text within a critical tradition that dates back to the nineteenth century in the Pan-American discourse of José Martí and the discourse on mexicanidad of José Vasconcelos. It also participates in dialogue with more recent theories of hybridity formulated by Chicanos and Chicanas. Thus, Anzaldúa's text does not exist in a critical vacuum, and reading it outside of this context can, and often does, lead to the "temptation to pedestalize or even fetishize Borderlands as the work of one unique individual" (Yarbro-Bejarano 8).
Part of Anzaldúa's critical context is situated on the other side of the border, which for many critics translates to that which is beyond the border, out of bounds. Yet, because Anzaldúa positions herself along a specific geographic border which she describes as "una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds," it seems not only justifiable but necessary to extend her critical context outward toward Latin America.

The use of the word mestiza has deep roots in Latin American identity formation. Martí, for example, in his essay "Nuestra America," refers to Latin America, which he defines as "our America" as opposed to the United States which he terms "the America which is not ours," as "nuestra America mestiza." Martí's project is defined as Pan-American since it strove to unite the newly independent nations of Latin America in resistance to both the cultural imperialism of European centers, specifically Paris, as well as the economic neocolonialism of the United States. Several critics, such as Jose David Saldívar, have extended the category of "nuestra America" to include racial and "conquered" minorities living within U.S. borders. Anzaldúa's text makes further revisions to Martí's version of mestizaje. While Martí's essay was, and still is, in many ways radical, it established an ideological basis for differentiation from both Europe and the U.S. on purely masculine terms and left pre-independence racial and class
structures unquestioned. Anzaldúa's use of the term mestiza implies a gendered subject and examines mestizaje as the struggle in and between languages, class, race and sexualities.

A second text, from beyond the border, which also demands to be read as part of Anzaldúa's critical context is Jose Vasconcelos' La raza cósmica, which has been influential not only in ongoing articulations of mexicanidad, but in the Chicano Movement as well. Vasconcelos' theory of mestizaje centers on synthesis and is in effect a celebration of hybridity in racial and cultural terms. The book became a central text for Chicano affirmation and it is from this text that the term "La Raza" is reterritorialized. The centrality of this text which proposed a mythology of Mexican mestizaje, is particularly evident in Anzaldúa's reconstruction of myth and history. Vasconcelos' presence in Borderlands is perhaps too obvious for Chicano critics to mention, but because Borderlands has itself become a border crosser, transgressing disciplinary boundaries, it is important to point out this connection so as to situate the text in a tradition of theorizing mestizaje.

Chicana feminist critics have been articulating gendered theories of multiply embodied subjectivities since the 1970s, particularly in response to Movement ideology which had constructed Chicano nationalism and the Chicano
subject in unambiguously, and exclusionary male terms. This in turn set up a false dichotomy whereby Chicanas either adopted the Chicano male identity or took on the role left to them: that of the victim and traitor personified by La Malinche (Chabram-Dernersesian, Yarbro-Bejarano). Critics such as Angie Chabram-Dernersesian have taken on the role of historian, documenting the contributions which Chicana feminists made in the 1970s toward theories of multiple subjectivities. Chela Sandoval, in the early 80s called for models which could account for gender and sexualities in Chicana subjectivity. And Guillermo Gomez-Peña with the Border Arts Workshop and the publication of the journal La linea quebrada/ The Broken Line in the mid 80s has also been active and influential in generating dialogue within and about "borderness."

Anzaldúa's Borderlands has firm roots in this intellectual community and tradition as is evident in her use of the term "New Mestiza" which implies prior formulations and models.

Through its deployment of languages, Borderlands carries mestizaje over into the linguistic realm and makes the reading process itself one of negotiating conflicting dualities, making sense of multiple sets of codes; and constantly, depending on the readers' proficiency in these languages, engaging in the process of translation. The use of language, the "form of the form," is not solely the
medium, but the message itself. To suppress the role which language plays in this text is to deny engagement with the text and reduce "The New Mestiza" to a formulation which lies outside of the material world. The denial of language in *Borderlands* renders it an inert document, open to a process of dissection that can make of it nothing or anything at all.

The reception of *Borderlands* has, for the most part, severed the text from its critical context as well as from its language, and this has opened the door for readings which perceive it to be propagating essentialism or exceptionalism. At the other extreme, decontextualized readings have led to the universalizing of terms and experiences. A contextualized reading which situates the text in an ongoing tradition, carried out by Latin American and Chicana/o intellectuals, of theorizing mestizaje, can counter the drive toward exceptionalism and can provide insight for critics and readers who, finding themselves disoriented by the "newness" or "alienness" of the text, may resort to imposing paradigms and expectations which more closely fit critical traditions and strategies that are more "familiar."

A case in point is a review essay which appeared in *Feminist Studies*. In this essay, Regina Gagnier compares nine "feminist autobiographies" by African-American, Jewish-American, and Chicana authors. Because Gagnier
approaches these texts from a poststructuralist feminist perspective and situates them solely in that framework, she reads Anzaldúa narrowly through preferred reading conventions and chastises her for "still cling[ing] to more traditional, even romantic, conceptions of the artist and the self" (Gagnier 147). Gagnier interprets Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the Self, and more specifically the writing Self, as "romantic individualism." She writes, "Anzaldúa suggests that women of color cling to the self because of their alienation from the mother culture and their alien status in the dominant culture" (Gagnier 140). The wording here implies a paraphrase of Anzaldúa, when in fact it is an interpretation. This summation is presumably based on the following lines from Borderlands:

Alienated from her mother culture, "alien" in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can't respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits. (Anzaldúa 20)

The lines imply, not a clinging to the Self, which is described as a place of danger, but rather a different conceptualization of the Self through what Anzaldúa terms "la facultad."

Empowered by the "new mestiza consciousness," Anzaldúa can construct a Self from "los interticious." She writes:

What I want is an accounting with all three cultures--white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with the ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is
denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture--una cultura mestiza--with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (Anzaldúa 22)

In Borderlands, the "lumber..bricks and mortar" are language, which formerly used against her to disempower, to marginalize and to wound, is now being used to build, with Anzaldúa as architect, builder and author.

In contrast to this, Gagnier "translates" her own misreading of Borderlands into the following: "In literary critical terms, women who have never possessed the authorial signature are not ready to give themselves over to the deconstructive or postmodern 'death of the author,' and they cling more tenaciously to individualism" (Gagnier 140). Determined to approach feminist autobiography by women of color from the reductive perspective of the degree to which these texts subvert "their artistic brothers' pursuit of autonomy," (Gagnier 140) and conform to a monolithic notion of 'the death of the author,' the reviewer must then deny the texts' specific contexts as well as the ways these texts may be commenting on these critical paradigms, but in ways which demand a greater degree of complexity in interpretative strategies on the part of the critic.

Citing Anzaldúa's descriptions of her writing process, Gagnier concludes that she "appeals to an artistic 'self' that has all the trappings of romanticism...Her testimony to the difficulty and pain of genius does not differ from
similar expressions throughout the annals of canonical male literature" (Gagnier 138). This assertion disregards Anzaldúa's position in relation to writing and to language itself. As a Chicana, her struggle with language, not in the sense of lacking proficiency, but in the sense of being made aware of the differential power relations between her languages as well as the ways which the hegemonic censures and deligitimizes her use of language, makes her writing process one which is quite different from that of white male writers.

This review essay also demonstrates the danger of scholarship that in imposing inappropriate paradigms or inappropriately applying models without discussion of difference can lead to "discursive colonization." For example, Chandra Talpade Mohanty has described the tendency of some First World, white feminist scholars to posit themselves as "knowledgeable," "liberated," "modern," etc. by seeing the Third World woman as occupying the opposite space. Yet another aspect of this "discursive colonization," is the application of an evolutionary model to feminism. Various critics have pointed out Western feminism's associations with colonialism, which Barbara Harlow summarizes as having "at times assumed for itself the prerogative of the exemplary 'civilizing mission' of its own colonial past" (Harlow quoted in Weed, xxv).
Gagnier engages in this type of colonization in arguing that "although many feminists no longer emphasize their individual uniqueness, talent, or difference from others, some--especially women of color in positions of greatest vulnerability--still cling to more traditional, even romantic conceptions of the artist and the self" (Gagnier 147). This kind of rhetoric implies a feminism (white) which is located at a more advanced point in a presumed line of progression. Women of color, if we pursue this argument, occupy a less developed or less enlightened point on this line, and should rely on the guidance of the more sophisticated feminist.

Of course, Gagnier's essay is not itself representative of feminism, or of a feminist perspective. The very term feminism is misleading in its singularity since there are at least as many feminisms as there are feminists. Rather, Gagnier's essay is taken here to demonstrate the many ways which a text such as *Borderlands* can be read in ways which force the text into compliance with preferred reading strategies and critical conventions. The intended purpose is to analyze why these types of readings occur, that is, to identify the problems and/or inadequacies with the very institutions which shape and govern scholarship. If, as Gagnier's piece suggests, some critics face what Lippard has termed a "conceptual and theoretical difficulty" when approaching texts such as
this, then an investigation as to how "conceptual and theoretical" paradigms are constructed, as well as how these constructions are influenced by exclusionary practices could point the way toward better cross-cultural communication and a better informed and more inclusive criticism.

In contrast to Gagnier's exceptionalist reading of Borderlands, some critics, including Chicanas/os, have pointed out what they believe to be essentialist representations in the text, particularly in regards to "the Indian Woman." Once again, a contextualization can help us to locate the text and its use of representations of the indigenous in historical, cultural and critical perspective. Implicit in Anzaldúa's conceptualization of mestizaje is the figure of the Indian woman. As mentioned earlier, the term mestizaje, in its most literal and reductive definition, is miscegenation between Spanish (white, European) and Indian. In this union, the Indian woman is, whether named or unnamed, present. The necessity of this union being Spanish man/Indian woman is obvious if we consider history, and the fact that when the Spanish invaded the New World, only men stepped out of their ships. Thus, any historically located discussion of mestizaje implies another discussion, often suppressed, on the representation of the Indian woman.
In *Borderlands*, the Indian Woman is constructed as an active agent in history and in the present. Anzaldúa traces steps backward to pre-columbian Aztec/Mexica representations of the feminine as well as citing evidence to the reality of the lives of women prior to and following the conquest. She simultaneously pulls forward to the position the Indian Woman occupies in the culture at the present time. Anzaldúa also acknowledges the Indian Woman within herself, and how her "Indianness" marks her as a target for oppression within her own culture as well as that of the U.S. at large. Racial stratification in Mexican and Chicano culture is well documented, whereby skin color and Indian features function as signifiers. To be "prieta" as opposed to "güera" signifies more than mere physical description, as both Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, amongst others, have articulated.

In U.S. culture, physical evidence of racial makeup is equally, if not more so, a marker for stratification and differential treatment. Recent sociological research reveals a significant correlation between phenotype and wages. According to Edward E. Telles, "dark and Native-American-looking Mexican origin individuals sampled in the National Chicano Survey receive substantially lower earnings than their light and European-looking counterparts" (Telles 121). Further research, conducted by Dávila, Baharana and Saenz points out that Telles' study
did not take speech accent into consideration. Their study correlates speech accents and wage earnings concluding that "independent of English proficiency, Mexican Americans speaking English with an accent tend to earn significantly lower wages than their non accented peers...The employer finds an accent a more reliable indicator of an individual's origin than the person's immigration documentation." (Dávila, Baharana and Saenz 903). Both of these studies provide evidence of discrimination based on both racial make up, signified by skin color, and language. Both factors are perceived to be markers of "alien" status, even superseding legal documentation.

If skin color and language function as markers, not only of difference, which is a neutral term, but of differential status, gender further stratifies and complicates the relationship of the individual within the Chicano community as well within U.S. culture. As previously mentioned, the construction of mestizaje as the hegemonic in parts of Latin America played a strategic unifying role in the movements of independence. Norma Alarcón likens it to the "melting pot" paradigm espoused in the U.S.; the key difference being the privileging of mestizaje in Latin America, and Mexico in particular versus the privileging of the white Anglo as the ideal in U.S. culture (Alarcón "Chicana Feminism").
Yet, the idealization of mestizaje in nation formation in Mexico was and is based on the denial and suppression of the Indian Woman. In Mexican history and culture, the Native Woman is constructed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the monstrous double of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Guadalupe, who is represented as a mestiza, her figure emblazoned on banners carried into battles for independence, a symbol of the nation itself, is a syncretism of the goddess of fertility and sensuality, Tonatzín, and the Virgin Mary (Bartra 42-45). Through her, the Native Woman is appropriated and the "barbarous" within her projected on to Malintzin. Thus, "as a political compromise between conquerors and conquered, Guadalupe is the neorepresentative of the Virgin Mary and the native goddess Tonatzín, while Malintzin stands in the periphery of the new patriarchal order and its sociosymbolic contract" (Alarcón "Tradditora" 58-59). Known as "the tongue," Malintzin was Cortes' translator as well as his concubine. Disparagingly referred to as La Malinche or La Chingada (The Fucked One), she is scripted as a traitor to her people through both her language and her body.

By recognizing and naming the Native Woman as part of herself, Anzaldúa turns the discourse used against women to police their bodies and their language back against those who have wielded it as a weapon as well as those who have internalized it and used it against themselves and other
women. Reappropriating and reterritorializing the Native Woman symbolized in La Malinche, Anzaldúa states,

Not me sold out my people but they me. Because of the color of my skin they betrayed me. The dark-skinned woman has been silenced, gagged, caged, bound into servitude with marriage, bludgeoned for 300 years, sterilized and castrated in the twentieth century. For 300 years she has been a slave, a force of cheap labor, colonized by the Spaniard, the Anglo, by her own people (and in Mesoamerica her lot under the Indian patriarchs was not free of wounding). (Anzaldúa 21)

By contextualizing Anzaldúa's use of the Native Woman, we can see that it bears similarities with what Gayatri Spivak terms "strategic essentialism" employed in a scrupulously visible political interest (Yarbro-Bejarano 205). In a Chicana context, as Alarcon writes,

the strategic invocation and recodification of "the" native woman in the present has the effect of conjoining the historical repression of the "non-civilized" dark woman—which continues to operate through "regulative psychobiographies" of good and evil women such as that of Guadalupe, Malinche, Llorona and many others—with the present moment of speech that counters such representations. (Alarcon "Chicana Feminism" 252)

Through the figure of La Malinche, the Chicana's language and body become the sites of treason. Anzaldúa subverts and negates this construct by refusing to tame her "wild tongue" in the face of "linguistic terrorism" from both sides. As a lesbian, Anzaldúa also reconfigures her body as site of treason. Chicanas have long been accused of malinchismo, in a heterosexist context, for sleeping with white men. As a lesbian, Anzaldúa is also aligned with La Malinche by removing her body from circulation
among Chicano men. Once again, Anzaldúa uses her identification with La Malinche and turns it back against that discourse through her denouncement of homophobia: "Not me sold out my people but they me."

Anzaldúa's discourse on the Indian Woman is actually a form of what we can term "inversionismo." Invertir is to turn upside down, or to turn inside out. Either one of these meanings, or both of them simultaneously can be applied to the process by which Borderlands constructs a new script for the Indian Woman. The text inverts the figure of the Indian Woman personified in La Malinche and reveals what is hidden below. Anzaldúa also pulls herself inside out so to speak in revealing the Indian Woman within her self and tracing and naming her presence on her very skin. The term inversionismo is also resonant in Anzaldúa's discourse on sexuality, since "invertida" is a slang term for lesbian. Thus, through inversionismo, Anzaldúa turns the discourse used against her upside down and inside out while engaging in discursive self formation and transformation.

Although Borderlands is unmistakably grounded in a specific historical, cultural and geographic location, as its languages makes clear, particular reading strategies are still capable of wrenching it from its context and universalizing its content. Such reading necessitate the suppression of the text's discursive practices, since these
cannot be universalized. Read in isolation from the other texts with which *Borderlands* is in dialogue, as well as the unwritten cultural and historical iconographies which the text subverts, it is almost inevitable that terms such as "border" and "mestiza" be read as abstractions and therefore easily grafted on to the reader's own experiential and critical framework. Elizabeth Spelman has coined this as "boomerang perception" whereby "I look at you and come back to myself," (Spelman 12).

As Yarbro-Bejarano states, regarding this type of misreading: "If every reader who identifies with the border-crossing experience described by Anzaldúa's text sees her/himself as a "New mestiza," what is lost in terms of the erasure of difference and specificity?" (Yarbro-Bejarano 8). Engaging in this type of appropriation neutralizes the text and carries the added benefit, or liability depending on how we interpret it, of providing an illusion of having included a deferentially positioned perspective. It is a form of what Caren Kaplan has termed "academic tourism," and Yarbro-Bejarano has renamed, in relation to *Borderlands*, as becoming "boarders at the border," (Yarbro-Bejarano 22).

Various critics have pointed out that discussions of "difference" without any real recognition or articulation of difference, and more importantly without the responsibility of re-evaluating or reconfiguring models...
based on knowledge or insight gained, is tantamount to superficial incorporation and recolonization. Anzaldúa's language requires that the reader constantly face and engage with difference. It refuses to translate and instead demands "to be met halfway," (Anzaldúa, Preface). Readings which erase or neutralize difference require a form of amnesia, since the text must be reconstructed as monolingual, its discursive practices forgotten, before the reader can appropriate it as her/his own.

Readings of Borderlands that ignore its languages facilitate interpretations which decontextualize, essentialize, exceptionalize and/or universalize. To perform such readings we must assume that the reader skips over those portions of the text he/she does not recognize. This practice implies a belief on some level, that these portions are somehow irrelevant, or at least non-essential to the text as a whole. This practice is a reflection of the marginal status of Spanish and Spanglish in U.S. culture. It is on the one hand a form of academic arrogance which can justify a partial reading of a text, even when training in literary studies emphasizes close readings. On the other hand, it can also be interpreted as a reflection of the muting of Spanish and Spanglish—and by extension the invisibility of the Spanish or Spanglish-speaking subject—itslself a form of denial employed in maintaining U.S. metaphorical and linguistic borders. In
either case, readings of Borderlands that do not engage with its languages prevent the possibility of transformational readings that can effect changes in individual reading practices as well as institutional changes which can allow for real inclusion and diversity in scholarship and the curriculum.

Borderlands/La Frontera has reached a broad readership in the academic marketplace, albeit not as numerous as we might wish. It has been included in primarily graduate but also a few undergraduate courses within Chicano studies, Women's Studies and courses in English as well as Spanish departments. It has been taught at a full range of institutions from the elite such as Stanford, Yale, Brown and Cornell, to state universities such as Ohio State and the University of Arizona, as well as smaller universities and colleges throughout the U.S. It is even found as part of a graduate Theory course at the prestigious Art school, RISD. The book has been a publishing success for Aunt Lute, which is continuously selling out of each edition it prints. Yet, as encouraging as these facts may be, it is not all good news. For example, it is primarily taught in "special topics" courses, as opposed to required courses which are intended to be "foundational." It is also very rarely taught in undergraduate or even graduate courses which are introductory or general topic. And, more rarely still is it taught as part of a course on multiculturalism.
The preferred representative Chicano autobiographical text at the undergraduate level is unfortunately Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*. Thus although it is included in a broad range of courses, the courses themselves are marginalized.

While getting texts such as *Borderlands* into the curriculum is itself an important goal, we must resist becoming complacent once that is achieved. We know that how a text is taught is as important if not more so that what text is taught. A course syllabus can accurately reflect the latter, but is rarely an indication of the former. We can look toward scholarship on the text for critical trends and preferred readings, assuming that critical materials inform pedagogical practices. But here we run into problems of institutional power inequities that perpetuate certain critical conventions and limit publishing access to less empowered scholars.

Even fields such as Women's Studies and Cultural Studies, which are committed to revising both the canon and critical conventions engage in exclusionary practices at the institutional level. Scholarship in Women's Studies, for example, is regulated through publication in two leading journals in the field: *Signs* and *Feminist Studies*. As Maxine Zinn, et al. in their article, "The Cost of Exclusionary Practices in Women's Studies" have pointed out, the editorial boards of these two journals are
comprised almost exclusively of white women working at elite institution, which further limitts their involvement with women of color as either students or faculty. As the study concludes, "The major implication...is that women of color are rarely sitting around the table when problems are defined and strategies suggested," (Zinn et al. 32).

Furthermore, by lacking the informed input of women of color or specialists in Chicana/o and Latina/o literature, publication of research on these literatures tends to be a duplication of the prefered reading strategies and critical conventions with the only difference being the use of these marginalized texts as raw material.

So then, what can we make of the critical avoidance of the interplay of languages in *Borderlands*? What is at stake in the ways we read this text? Arguably, the stability of language dominance, as well as the stability of the institutions, such as academe, which regulate the dissemination of knowledge. Engagement with the text's languages necessitates the opening of a transformational space which puts into question differential power realtions in terms of race, gender, class and sexualities through the deployment of language as a form of resistance.

Notes

1. The word "spic" is being used strategically here with full awareness of its wounding effects. It is intended to put into question the associations between discursive practices and oppression. It is also a play on the word "speak."
2. Juan Flores and George Yudice quote U.S. census figures in their article "Living Borders/Buscando America." The figure reflects continuous immigration over the past 30 years as well as the historical back-and-forth migration of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. The term Latino, as used here and in census reporting, it must be noted, is heterogenous in terms of class, race and nationality. Yet, even as an umbrella label for many distinct groups, Latinos differ from other "ethnic" groups, such as Irish-Americans or Italian-Americans, in that they represent a "conquered" minority, as in the case of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, and other Latin American migrations are fueled by economic as well as political motivations, many of which are a direct result of U.S. interventions in the region.

3. Saldívar's book, The Dialectics of Our America, includes chapters on Rolando Hinojosa and Ntozake Shange, as writers of "our America," although they are both U.S. authors. He approaches the work of these authors through the legacy of both Martí and Retamar, and argues for Casa de las Americas (which has awarded prizes to both Shange and Hinojosa) as a unifying force among the disparate parts of "our America".

4. Some of the texts which Gagnier discusses in this essay as autobiographies do not fall under that genre. House on Mango Street, by Sandra Cisneros, for example is a short story cycle which is not an autobiography, or even autobiographical, unless we subscribe to the idea that all fiction is autobiographical.

5. Critics who have explored the associations between feminism as sometimes practiced by Western (white) scholars and colonizing practices include Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Lila Abu Lughod, bell hooks, and Elizabeth Weed. A particularly influential essay on this topic is Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes."

6. The term "prieta" means dark, while the term "güera" denotes light skinned, or in its most literal use, blonde. "Güera," however also carries class identification, particularly in Mexico, where one's skin color is closely tied in with class status. For example, depending on contextual clues, such as clothing or other signs of economic differentiation, the same individual may be classified as either "prieta" or "güera."

7. The scripting of La Malinche as traitor has taken various forms in the twentieth century. Octavio Paz in El laberinto de la soledad (The Labyrinth of Solitude), depicts her as the double of the Virgin in the Virgin/Whore dichotomy, and as a victim of rape as well as the mother of
the Mexican people. Carlos Fuentes in Todos los gatos son pardos scripts her as vengeful of her people and a misguided fool, nonetheless a traitor. Chicana artists have been refiguring her representation by conflating her image with that of Guadalupe. For a discussion of visions and revisions of La Malinche and Guadalupe, see Alarcón's "Traddutora, Traditora."

8. For a contextualized discussion of the construction of the female body and female sexuality as a site of treason, see Cherrie Moraga's "A Long Line of Vendidas."
Since the late 1960s, there has been a growing current of debate within the humanities surrounding the canon. This current has had visible effects on the curriculum as evidenced by the institutionalization and growth of programs in areas such as Black Studies, Women's Studies, Chicano Studies, Latino Studies, etc. More recently still, there has been a trend within traditional programs, such as English, involving curriculum revisions resulting in departments not only offering more courses emphasizing works by minority writers, but actually requiring students complete a minimum of course work centering on issues of gender, race, and class. While these changes have been interpreted as too radical and accused of "political correctness" by conservative factions, others have described them as superficial, implemented for the purpose of stabilizing institutions in the face of growing dissent and militancy from disenfranchised groups.

These curricular debates have tended to center around the term "multiculturalism" respectively arguing its definitions, parameters, pedagogical practices and political implications. This on-going debate has even moved from the usual academic settings of departmental meetings, professional journals and books published by university presses to candidate speeches, mass media and
mainstream publishers. Take, for example, Pat Buchanan's speech during the 1992 Republican National Convention which employed military rhetoric to rally support in fighting the "culture wars" being waged against "American" values and traditions, a war "over the hearts and minds of the American people." More specific attacks on curricular reform have appeared in book form, marketed for a mainstream, that is not necessarily academic, audience. Titles such as Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (Houghton Mifflin, 1987) by E.D. Hirsch, Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education (Harper Collins 1990) by Roger Kimball, and The Closing of the American Mind (Simon and Schuster 1987) by Allan Bloom received media attention, reflecting a broader public anxiety regarding contested definitions of history, art and culture in an American (U.S.) context.¹

These reactions to curricular debates and revisions can be described as a backlash against a perceived erosion of a "common ground" in the construction, representation and reproduction of knowledge within institutions of higher learning. In denouncing "multiculturalism" as politically motivated, the voices of the backlash re-edify the Eurocentric, white, male and middle-class values expressed through "the best that has been said and thought" as the apolitical, naturalized norm.¹ If we take these arguments seriously, and surely we must given their prominence in
discourses both within and outside of academe, we must first examine how "multiculturalism" is being defined, how and to what extent it has been implemented in curricular reform, and ultimately, how legitimate are Bloom and Hirsch's worries, regardless of whether or not we share their political positions as defenders of the canon.

Because definitive and fully inclusive answers to these questions are well beyond the scope of a single chapter, or a single volume for that matter, this study will focus on the circulation of two texts: Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya and The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros. Both have become "representative" of Chicano and Latina/o literature. This chapter attempts to plot the position of these texts in the multicultural matrix using as coordinates key factors in their reception. These factors are here identified as degree of intelligibility, which corresponds to a given text's approachability through existing paradigms and methodologies, and their relative flexibility for incorporation through "manageable difference." In other words, this chapter will examine how and to what extent these two texts are incorporated as additives to the already established canonical tradition as well as the logic behind their promotion as documented, legal trespassers into the academic landscape.
Peter McLaren identifies four forms of multiculturalism: conservative, liberal, left-liberal and critical. Conservative multiculturalism is defined by its drive to construct a common culture, using the term "diversity,"

to cover up the ideology of assimilation that undergirds its position. In this view, ethnic groups are reduced to "add-ons" to the dominant culture. Before you can be "added on" to the dominant United States culture you must first adopt a consensual view of culture and learn to accept the essentially Euro-American patriarchal norms of the "host" country. (McLaren 49)

Liberal multiculturalism is closely identified with "universalistic humanism in which legitimating norms which govern the substance of citizenship are identified most strongly with Anglo-American cultural-political communities," (McLaren 51).

Left-liberal multiculturalism differs from both conservative and liberal forms in its emphasis on difference, yet "work within this perspective [has] a tendency to essentialize cultural differences...and ignore the historical and cultural 'situatedness' of difference," (McLaren 52). Critical multiculturalism rejects both conservative and liberal stress on sameness and left-liberal emphasis on difference as "essentialist logic: in both, individual identities are presumed to be autonomous, self-contained and self-directed," (McLaren 53). In place of this, critical perspectives situate representations of race, class, and gender in contexts of social struggle.
where meaning is constructed and deconstructed in specific histories and power relations. Critical multiculturalism does not simply emphasize "textual play or metaphoric displacement as a form of resistance, (as in the case of left-liberal multiculturalism)," but rather moves beyond it to interrogate "the construction of difference and identity in relation to a radical politics," (McLaren 53).

Locating the reception of these two representative texts on McLaren's graph points to a shifting plotting point between conservative and liberal quadrants, with an occasional bow toward a left-liberal position, but only as this third form conforms to the requisites of conservative and liberal forms. What is generally lacking from the use of these texts as representative in pedagogical and critical practices is an emphasis "positioned against the neo-imperial romance with monoglot ethnicity grounded in a shared or 'common' experience of 'America' that is associated with conservative and liberal strands of multiculturalism," (McLaren 53).

Referring to *Bless Me, Ultima* and *The House on Mango Street* as representative texts does not carry the implication that they encompass sole and complete representation of Chicano or Latino literary expression. The term representative is here used as reflective of existing institutional practices which overwhelmingly include one or both of these texts to the exclusion of
others. These texts become representative, then, by often being the only Latina/o works assigned in a relatively broad spectrum of courses. For example, one or both are frequently the only Latina/o texts included or excerpted from on Multicultural Literature and Contemporary American Literature syllabi.¹

That these texts and their respective authors share striking similarities may be a first step in explaining their reception, yet even these similarities cannot fully account for their selection over others. For example, both Anaya and Cisneros have strong ties to universities. Anaya holds a Ph.D. and retired as Professor Emeritus after thirty years of service at the University of New Mexico. Cisneros is a graduate of the Iowa Creative Writing Program, where she wrote and workshopped The House on Mango Street as a student. While there is no doubt that both these writers' relationship with academia informs their work, it cannot account for their works' relative prominence within that context since most Latina/o authors share similar connections. Alberto Ríos, Helena Maria Viramontes, Tomás Rivera, Ana Castillo, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Rolando Hinojosa, and so on, are all examples. In fact, we would be hard pressed to name a handful who would be excluded from this list. Although some have argued that this is a situation specific to Chicanos and Latinos, it is
probably more a reflection of the institutionalization of writing in general in the U.S.‘

Marketing forces yield similarly ambivalent results in terms of their explanatory potential since both works were initially published by small presses, *Bless Me, Ultima* with Tonatiuh and *Mango Street* with Arte Público, with limited distribution and resources. Nor can we credit the authors themselves as promoting these works as representative texts. Cisneros actively resists the label, as evidenced by her refusal to *Mango Street* being excerpted for publication in the Norton Anthology of American Literature as a protest against the editors' exclusion of other Latina and Latino voices. Anaya is similarly involved in broadening rather than narrowing literary representation, working as an editor himself, providing publication access to less recognized authors as well as establishing and funding "La Casita" which provides writers, particularly Chicanas and Chicanos, with room and board while completing creative projects.

Having ruled out or severely restricting the roles of institutionalization through ties with the university literary establishment, marketing and publishing forces, and self-promotion on the parts of the authors, let us return to the set of factors previously hypothesized as bearing relevance to these texts becoming established as representative. The first of these, intelligibility, is
here defined as the degree to which a given text is accessible to a given community of readers based on that community's prior knowledge and expectations deployed in making meaning and assigning value. Critical work on speech act theory and reader response informs this term as well as its application in this chapter to the reception of *Bless Me, Ultima* and *The House on Mango Street*.

As the discipline of linguistics has demonstrated, all units of language are necessarily incomplete or open. No utterance or written text is free of ambiguity. In the case of the written text, undecidability is further complicated in that body language or physical expressions are absent as contextual clues, and clarification on the part of the speaker is simply not an option. The negotiation of meaning, then, is removed from the speaking or writing subject and transferred to the text, so that interaction is contextualized through the reader's prior experience and knowledge of other written texts. Intelligibility then hinges on the extent to which a reader is able to make use of this prior knowledge, or to use Jonathan Culler's terminology, to perform "reading competence."

In this regard, both of the texts under consideration can be argued to conform to a high degree of intelligibility in terms of both language and content. Most notably, they both fall into the category of the
This particular genre, deeply rooted in the conventions and formulas of a patriarchal and individualistic tradition, draws both of these texts into a specific intertextual framework which Culler's competent reader can plug into to fill the interstitial spaces which Anaya and Cisneros' bicultural works make fluid and unstable. In other words, because the reader possesses a thematic map of the Bildungsroman, drawn to specifications embedded in a predominantly white, predominantly male system of cultural values and artistry, she/he is competent to navigate these "other" texts with a diminished level of frustration. Anaya's novel is particularly well suited for grafting on to the Bildungsroman cartography while Cisneros' book, based on the protagonist's gender as well as its structure as a story cycle is more flexibly aligned with the form.

The term Bildungsroman is applied here as it has been defined and used in English literary studies, as opposed to its somewhat different and more specific application in Germanic studies. Jerome Buckley's appropriation of the term as the novel of youth or apprenticeship, a definition expanded and detailed by Randolph Shaffer, will be used as the model of the Bildungsroman as it has been understood in relation to an English language tradition.

According to this model, the protagonist moves through various stages of maturity, encountering tests which lead
to a fulfillment of potential and the formation of a self capable of reconciling the individual with a larger social order. *Bless Me, Ultima* follows this master plot almost precisely, even while simultaneously articulating a Chicano mythopoetics with strong ties to indigenous New Mexico culture and cosmologies.

The novel opens with the protagonist, Antonio, first learning about Ultima, la Grande, leaving the llano and coming to live with his family on the outskirts of town. This marks the beginning of his apprenticeship, in the most literal sense, as Ultima's assistant. The tests which comprise his progressive initiation into both Ultima's magic and the larger society include his witnessing the violence of a man shot and killed, becoming the focal point of the struggle between the destructive magic of the *brujas* and Ultima's power, and most notably in terms of the boy's coming to spiritual understanding, his encounter with the Giant Carp.

In addition to adhering to the master plot of the *Bildungsroman, Bless Me, Ultima* also fulfills the set of presuppositions which Shaffer identifies as corollaries of the genre:

1. The idea that living is an art which the apprentice may learn.
2. The belief that a young person can become adept in the art of life and become a master.
3. The key notion of choice.
4. The prerequisite of potential for development into a master.
5. An affirmative attitude toward life as a whole.

(Shaffer 18)
While the novel bears out all of these presuppositions, it does so within historical, societal and economic parameters. In the world of the novel, the privileged reality is the one constructed by and through the immediate community. This reality does not deny the existence of a larger society, nor the differential locations of power, as in the passages relating to the racism encountered at school, but value is placed first and foremost in the context of the Chicano community, its order, values, and internal cohesion.

Within these parameters, Antonio struggles with a multiplicity of choices. For example, at his birth Antonio's maternal family, the Lunas, desire to have the child follow their traditions of farming,

And to show their hope they rubbed the dark earth of the river valley on the baby's forehead, and they surrounded the bed with the fruits of their harvest so the small room smelled of fresh green chile and corn, ripe apples and peaches, pumpkins and green beans. (Anaya 6)

In conflict with this is the paternal family, the Marez, and their wish to make him a vaquero:

And they smashed the fruits and vegetables that surrounded the bed and replaced them with a saddle, horse blankets, bottles of whiskey, a new rope, bridles, chapas, and an old guitar. And they rubbed the stain of earth from the baby's forehead because man was not to be tied to the earth but free upon it. (Anaya 6)

Further complicating the child's choices is his mother's wish of making him a priest. Settling the raging argument,
Ultima intercedes, "I pulled this baby into the light of life, so I will bury the afterbirth and the cord that once linked him to eternity. Only I will know his destiny" (Anaya 7).

That Antonio's future is predestined by Ultima does not, in the logic of the novel, occlude his ability to make choices. Because Ultima keeps his destiny literally buried, Antonio's coming of age and fulfillment of that destiny is still regulated by the interplay between his will and his growing spiritual consciousness. The "key concept of choice," then is present in the novel, as are the other presuppositions of the Bildungsroman identified by Shaffer, and this ability to be grafted on to the genre's master plot allows the reader to make meaning of the spaces in the novel which display marked differences.

According to Reed Way Dasenbrock, writing in the PMLA,

one could say, adapting the language of Paul Grice, that there is implicit in any act of reading a maxim of intelligibility, which is that readers--like speakers and listeners--will work to make texts as intelligible as possible. Assuming that a work makes sense and has significance, the reader will try to find that sense and significance even when they are not readily apparent. (Dasenbrock 14)

This commentary bears relevance to the reception of representative texts in two ways. It assumes that readers will work toward making meaning, but only to a point. Secondly, it assumes that a reader has decided at some point, perhaps prior to reading the text, that the work
"makes sense and has significance." This second assumption is problematic when we are dealing with non-canonical texts. "Sense" and "significance," in this context are highly contested terms. Because we cannot assume that the reader has made this determination, we can assume that the reader will work toward making meaning in a more limited way since she/he is more uncertain about the potential payoff for her/his effort.

This point becomes clearer as Dasenbrock further states,

This principle can be abused, but a skillful writer will make the reader work hard only at those moments where the work is meaningful...Only by doing that work, by striving to understand a different mode of expression, are we brought up against the fact of cultural difference. If everything is translated into our terms and made readily intelligible, then our cultural categories will be reinforced, not challenged. (Dasenbrock, 14)

These lines, which seem to be, on the surface, arguing for the pedagogical and cultural "value" of multicultural texts, contain some disturbing implications. For example, there is a differentiation between the "skillful" and the "unskillful" writer based on the degree to which the text produced requires "work" on the part of the reader--work here is defined as the negotiation of meaning when confronted with difference from hegemonic norms. Dasenbrock praises the "skillful" writer who requires the reader work hard, but in a limited way: "only at those moments where the work is meaningful." The assumption here
is that we can with confidence identify these "moments," as well as discount other "moments" in the text presumed to lack meaningfulness.

What we can begin to decipher about Dasenbrock's perspective on multiculturalism, is that it falls under what Goldberg calls "weak multiculturalism," which encompasses McLaren's conservative and liberal forms. Goldberg defines weak multiculturalism as follows:

This [weak multiculturalism] consists of a strong set of common, universally endorsed, centrist values to which everyone--every reasonable person irrespective of the divisions of race, class, and gender--can agree. These universal principles are combined with a pluralism of ethnic insight and self-determination provided no particularistically promoted claim is inconsistent with the core values. (Goldberg 16)

Thus far, this chapter has argued that Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima has become a representative text based on its high degree of intelligibility in regards to form (the novel) and content, (adherence to the master plot of the Bildungsroman). Yet, according to Dasenbrock's taxonomy of intelligibility, this novel is "much more difficult" than other multicultural texts due to its "aggressively bilingual mode of presentation," (Gingerich 215-216 quoted in Dasenbrock 15). He argues that, "though the novel is in English, it includes a substantial amount of Spanish, for which there is very little covert or overt translation," (Dasenbrock 15).
According to Dasenbrock, this use of code-switching could be a barrier to intelligibility, yet, in Bless Me, Ultima, it is used strategically to convey a bilingual reality in which not everyone understands everything all of the time since the older generation is monolingual in Spanish, the Anglo teachers are monolingual in English, and only the children who have attended school are bilingual. This is partly correct, yet, the text's use of Spanish is much more limited than the "reality" which Dasenbrock argues it reflects. Translations, for example, are supplied in both covert and overt fashion.

The following lines typify the text's use of both overt and covert translation: "'It would be a great honor to provide a home for la Grande,' my mother murmured. My mother called Ultima la Grande out of respect. It meant the woman was old and wise" (Anaya 4). Note that Antonio's mother's dialogue is in English, although it is understood that she is speaking in Spanish. More subtly, the translation of "la Grande" is in fact provided. What the novel does do, which can be interpreted as "aggressive use of bilingualism," is not italicize Spanish words. By not signaling the appearance of these words, the text catches the reader off guard and causes moments of disruption in the reading process. Even so, the tension brought on by the surprise appearance of a "foreign" word is quickly
dissipated as the reader regains confidence through direct or contextualized translation.

Even Dasenbrock's brief summary of the novel signals his dominant culture-centric approach. The brevity of the description, "a novel about a young Hispanic growing up in bilingual New Mexico in the 1940s," (Dasenbrock 15) is understandable, particularly since the article also discusses three other texts, yet even in its brevity it exemplifies a number of problems in multicultural critical practices. The most obvious of these is the use of the term Hispanic, which has a controversial history as a term brought into circulation by the U.S. Census Bureau to homogenize differences among groups such as Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and Cuban-Americans as well as being offensive, particularly to many Chicanos, because of its emphasis on Peninsular culture. This lumping together of various distinct groups with specific cultures, histories, and modes of expression, also blurs important racial and class based distinctions within groups. Such generalization is particularly dangerous in the case of a writer such as Anaya who writes from a specific location as a New Mexico Chicano mestizo, with special emphasis on his indigenous heritage.

Secondly, Dasenbrock's "young Hispanic" lacks gender, and although the protagonist's gender is unmarked (not female), it certainly is significant as will become obvious
when we compare *Bless Me, Ultima* to *Mango Street*. These crucial oversights become even more disturbing in light of the fact that the article appeared in the *PMLA* which is indicative of the lack of participation of multiculturalists with a more critical bent on editorial boards at elite publications. Not surprisingly, this is the only article on Latina/o literature published in the *PMLA*. Furthermore, it is not dedicated solely to a Latina/o text, but to the broad label of multiculturalism.

Herein lies the danger of blanket terms such as multiculturalism. Through normative institutional practices, the term allows for a recognition of "difference," yet because the term itself is overdetermined, it provides opportunities for exploitative uses of marginalized texts. These uses can function as strategies of containment which on the one hand acknowledge the cultural specificity of texts such as *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Mango Street*, but regulate their oppositional or transformational potentialities by requiring "manageable differences" as conditional to acceptance.

In these two texts, the fact that they are both narrated through the voices of children is exemplary of manageable difference, whereby misinformation and stereotypes can be re-edified. These two texts, in and of themselves do not engage in stereotypic representations, yet because they have become representative, their
portrayals of characters and community life are easily generalized. The child narrator in particular facilitates problematic readings of Chicanas and Chicanos as childlike, which undercuts anxiety regarding the policing of minority individuals and communities. In other words, these two texts, read outside of a fuller context of inclusion which would provide opportunities for recognition of diversity within diversity, foster an illusion of communities which are not only non-threatening to the dominant society, but also by association with the child narrator, less knowing, less experienced, and less empowered than the adult reader.

Sandra Cisneros' *Mango Street* can, like Anaya's novel, be classified as a *Bildungsroman*, but due to gender, and to some extent form, it imposes itself on the cartography of the genre more resistantly, pushing and stretching boundaries in all directions. The gender difference in the *Bildungsroman*, most critics agree, turns on the concept of choice, and "even the broadest definitions of the *Bildungsroman* presuppose a range of social options available only to men" (Abel et al. 7).

While the male protagonist of the genre undergoes a process of education to become a "master," for the female protagonist an education as to her function and role in society tends to be in the opposite direction, toward subservience. And, as Anais Pratt points out, whereas in
rites of passage, adolescent males undergo tests in valor and strength, younger girls are given "tests in submission" (Pratt, Anais 14). Thus gender problematization is built-in to the Bildung the moment it is undertaken by a female protagonist. That in Cisneros' book this protagonist is a working class Chicana, further interrogates the presuppositions of the genre's universal tenets.

Yet, even as a revision of the genre, Mango Street offers a veneer of familiarity in its association with coming of age books. Like other works of the genre, the protagonist of Cisneros' book, Esperanza, undergoes a process of individuation, constructing a self in relation to and in opposition from others. In connection to this process of individuation, and a requisite of the Bildungsroman, is the protagonist's physical removal from family and community in the form of a departure. In the conventional Bildungsroman, the completion of a formal education prompts the protagonist's leaving home. There is a promise of this in the final vignette of The House on Mango Street: "one day I will say goodbye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep me here forever," (Cisneros 101). But for Esperanza, leaving Mango Street in the process of individuation is neither the beginning of her apprenticeship nor the goal. Rather, the departure is seen as a step toward the return, toward reconnection or attachment: "They will not know I have gone away to come
back for the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot get out" (Cisneros 102).

This going away to return, or seeking distance as a step toward reunion and public responsibility is reflective of an alternative Chicano tradition of the Bildungsroman exemplified by writers such as Tomás Rivera in his classic work ...y no se lo tragó la tierra (And the Earth Did Not Devour Him). This alternative tradition, informed by the ideology of the Chicano movement and the emergence of a new group identity, worked toward a "decentering of individualism" (Calderón 112) through both content and experimentation in form. This experimentation has led to the widespread use of the short story cycle, characterized by Renato Rosaldo as "the novel's 'poor relation'" (Rosaldo 88), and by Hector Claderón as "prenovelistic" (Calderón 100).

*Mango Street*'s structure as a short story cycle enables the text to "poach" elements from the Bildungsroman (Gutiérrez-Jones 310) while participating in a counterhegemonic discursive tradition which works to subvert the ideology of individualism. As a critique of the novel and the social, economic, patriarchal structures which gave rise to the novel and which the genre in turn reproduces, the short story cycle relies on oral narrative traditions, matriarchal heritage, and community centered values. Unfortunately, because this is a relatively
obscure form, story cycles are often read as if they were novels which leads to a disregard for the construction of meaning through form.

In the case of Mango Street, this disregard has lead to some conflicted readings of the text. Feminist critics, for example, familiar with arguments of relationships between gender and genre have questioned the possibilities of the female Bildungsroman, and feminist readings of the text have been carried out which argue the text's relation to more traditional forms of the genre. Yet, as important as establishing this text in a feminist context may be, it is also imperative to locate it within a Chicano critique of the genre through the story cycle.

As feminist critics have noted:

> Isolate individualism is an illusion. It is also the privilege of power. A white man has the luxury of forgetting his skin color and sex. He can think of himself as an "individual." Women and minorities, reminded at every turn in the great cultural hall of mirrors of their sex or color, have no such luxury. (Friedman 39)

Esther Labovitz has argued that because the sanctioned social role of women has in the past precluded the search for or the existence of an individual self, there was no possibility of a female counterpart to bildung prior to sociateal changes in the twentieth century. She goes on to provide an argument for the evolution of the genre paralleling the male bildung as "cultural and social
structures appeared to support women's struggle for independence" (Labovitz 70).

While this may hold true, at least to some degree, for white middle class women, it is questionable to assume it could be applied to women of color or, more generally, women marginalized on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or class (Gutiérrez-Jones 299). What Labovitz's evolutionary model is lacking is an interrogation of the construction of the autonomous individual and the desirability of the adoption of such a construct by marginalized women.

Regina Gagnier, in a review essay of women's autobiographies in the 80s, looks at several texts including Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Cisneros' *Mango Street* in relation to the ideology of individualism and the exceptionalization of the artist. While Gagnier does engage in a critique of the political implications such an ideology carries when adopted by women of color, she reads Cisneros and Anzaldúa as reproducing that ideology in their respective texts (Gagnier 140). As it has been argued in chapter three, such a reading is fostered through a displacement of these texts from their respective contexts and intertextual play with other discourses and traditions. Gagnier, for example, does not acknowledge the structural subtext of *Mango Street*, and in fact misidentifies it as an autobiography.
Mango Street negates the ideology of individualism in several ways, the most notable being that even as the narrator remains constant, the text is comprised of forty-six vignettes describing and expressing the interiority of a wide spectrum of characters who make up the Mango Street neighborhood. For example, there is Mamacita for whom "home is a house in a photograph" (Cisneros 77). There is Geraldo No Last Name, whose life Esperanza, in spite of never meeting him and learning of him from someone else, can nevertheless imagine and explain: "They never saw the kitchenettes. The never knew about the two room flats and sleeping rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchanges. How could they?" (Cisneros 66). And there is Marin who dances under the streetlight, "waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall, someone to change her life," (Cisneros 27).

In the traditional Bildungsroman, attention remains focused exclusively on the protagonist, while Mango Street disperses the spotlight to include the community as inseparable from the protagonist's identity. As the three sisters tell Esperanza: "You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street" (Cisneros 105).

Unlike the protagonist of the traditional Bildungsroman, Esperanza does not travel during the course of the book, nor does the text end with an escape. This is significant in that her psychic movement from childhood to
adolescence to adulthood takes place within the geographic and cultural boundaries of her community. Her individuation is undertaken, like Antonio's in *Bless Me, Ultima*, in a community centered context which is a marked difference from the master plot of the genre in which the protagonist physically travels outward. This community centeredness demonstrates a point of negotiation of the conflict, for the Latina/o author working within the *Bildungsroman* tradition, between the valorization of the individual inherent in the genre and its incompatibility with the political and cultural implications that valorization carries for minority intellectuals.

Generalized readings of these two texts that connect them solely to the familiar mapping of the novel, and more specifically the *Bildungsroman* with its assumption and valorization of the autonomous individual, reduce reader frustration at moments of difference, be it content based as in Anaya's text, or structural difference as in Cisneros'. This diminished frustration leads to a higher degree of intelligibility, and the assigning of a higher status for these two texts, relative to that of other Latina/o texts. By isolating these texts from their discursive and historical contexts, they can also function as mirrors of the hegemonic and confirmations of stereotypic representations. Thus, it is not the texts themselves which are problematic, since they do engage in
layered critiques and propose their own aesthetics.
Rather, it is their acceptance as representative that is troubling, given that they do provide opportunities for easy incorporation which erases their transformative possibilities.

Notes

1. There has been an equally if not more vocal response to this backlash, yet these responses have been published within the traditional channels of scholarship. See for example: Mary Louise Pratt, "Reflections on the Western Culture Debate at Stanford," John Guillory, "Canon, Syllabus, List," Micheal Geyer, "Multiculturalism and the Politics of General Education," and Henry Louis Gates Loose Canons. A specific response to Hirsch's Cultural Literacy and Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind, is Greywolf Press' Multicultural Literacy: Opening the American Mind.

2. A succinct example of the backlash's anxiety regarding the dangers of multiculturalism is Kimball's summation of the implications of muticulturalism as "an attack on the...idea that, despite our many differences, we hold in common an intellectual, artistic and moral legacy, descending largely from the Greeks and the Bible [which] preserves us from chaos and barbarism."

3. Anaya's novel is also frequently included in Native American Literature courses, and Cisneros' book is also frequently used in Women's Literature syllabi.

4. Chicano critic Hector Calderón, argues that given the fact that most Chicano writers work from within educational institutions, we cannot deny "how institutionally Western our literature is." Yet, he points out, this does not erase or neutralize their cultural productions' oppositional potential.

5. For a more detailed explanation of this, see J.L. Austin, Paul Grice, and Stanley Fish.

6. Jeffrey L. Sammons, for example, in his essay "The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification," argues the genre's Germanness and points out misappropriation of the term in English Studies, including the work of Jerome Buckley.
7. The term Latino is more accepted as a blanket term, if we must have one, since it implies a strategic political alliance. For a fuller discussion of the problematics of labels and labeling terms, see Suzanne Oboler's Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives.

8. Carlos Muñoz Jr. has argued that the term "Hispanic" in the mid-1970s became associated with a "politics on white ethnic identity," by emphasizing "whiteness" through European decent (Spain), and erasing racial and interracial identities (African, Asian, Indigenous) in the Americans, specifically denying Mexican-American/Chicano ties to Mexico.

9. Calderón terms the short story cycle as "prenovelistic" in that it bears parallels to Cervantes' work during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in terms of societal forces influencing production as well as audience. He argues the form's critique of the novel by returning to alternative structures used and developed prior to the novel's becoming "the bourgeois literary monument it is today" (100).

10. For contextualized readings of The House on Mango Street in relation to a Chicano formative tradition in the short story cycle, see Erlinda González-Berry and Tey Diana Rebolledo's article "Growing up Chicano: Tomás Rivera and Sandra Cisneros," and Renato Rosaldo's "Fables of the Fallen Guy."
I want to see Gabriel García Márquez in 3-D/ a post-psychedelic rendition of Castañeda/ holographic shamans flying onstage/ political massacres on multiple screens/...what's wrong with you pre-technological creatures?!  
Guillermo Gómez-Peña
"Border Brujo"

Without a doubt, the most popular Latin American novel in the U.S. is *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*) and its author, Gabriel García Márquez, the most well known of its writers, his name often mentioned alongside that other great cultural export from the region, Jorge Luis Borges. Both of these authors' short stories are heavily anthologized and routinely taught in undergraduate English courses. Their names and works are also associated with the phenomenon referred to as the "Boom," although critics are still debating whether Borges' work falls under that classification or predates it. What most critics can agree on is that Borges influenced the Boom writers, and his fiction shares many of the elements associated with Boom fiction.

A generic definition of the Boom covers a rather brief period of time, from the early 1960s to the 1970s, during which there was a veritable explosion--hence the term--of literary production, specifically fiction, by Latin American writers, large enough to be recognized on the international cultural market. These authors, it seemed,
were doing something different, and doing it in such a way
that readers based in metropolitan centers found
intriguing. They wrote of exotic places, strange
occurrences, cyclically returning history, the narrative
process itself, and all of this carried out in tight,
hypercrafted plot lines, in language as lush and fertile,
as the landscapes they described.

The word used to describe this outburst of literary
talent--the Boom--implies surprise and suddenness. William
Gass explores the nuances of the term in the following
lines:

The critics have called it "the boom." As in
"business is booming." As in "What a loud
racket!" As in a cannon shot sent North. As in
"blow-up," an enlargement of image which uncovers
a crime. Boom as in "Big Bang," and the first
milliseconds of creation. (Gass 33)

These comparisons, although intended by Gass to represent a
degree of condescension on the part of critics, are
nonetheless useful. The first connection, to commerce,
highlights the use of Latin American literature as a
commodity exchanged in the international market in much the
same way as other exports such as bananas provide profits
for multinational corporations based in the First World.
The next two comparisons, to disorderly noise (a loud
racket) and the sound of a cannon fired bear relation to
perceptions of Latin America, and by extension its literary
production, as undecipherable, chaotic and violent.
But it is the final comparison, to "the Big Bang," that is particularly revealing. To an international readership, meaning European and American (U.S.), the Boom marked the beginning of a literature where it presumed there was none. Taking this phenomenon as the moment of creation, it is only a logical step to then make it the originating and therefore "authentic" expression of Latin America. For non-specialists this is still a pervasively held notion. John Brushwood summarizes the stereotyping of Latin American cultural productions and its manifestations in the Boom phenomenon as follows: "For no one would accuse Europe of a boom...booms reverberate only from unexpected places, suddenly and sonically as if from empty air. Nothing was there before, and then BOOM!" (Brushwood 35).

Boom authors brought attention to a an amorphously defined mode of representation which critics have termed, in English, magical realism. Although the term itself and works which have been classified as employing elements of magical realism predate the Boom by either a few decades or a few centuries depending which critical perspective one adopts, it was the Boom that brought the term into international circulation. Through a conflating of magical realism, the Boom, and the beginning of Latin American literature itself, magical realism became mistakenly established as paradigmatic of Latin America.
Take, for example, the following lines by Gayatri Spivak:

Consider, for example, the idea that magical realism is the paradigmatic style of the third world. What is the hidden ethical, political agenda behind claiming that a style practiced most spectacularly by some writers in that part of the third world which relates most intimately with the United States, namely Latin America (just as India used to relate to Britain), is paradigmatic of a space which is trying to cope with the problem of narrativizing decolonization? In Latin American space, one of the things that cannot be narrativized is decolonization, as the Ariel-Caliban debate and today's intimate involvement with the U.S. have clearly articulated for us. (Spivak 13)

In these lines, Spivak on the one hand argues that magical realism has been misapplied as paradigmatic of the third world. But her opposition to the generalization of the term boils down to it being paradigmatic exclusively to Latin America which she claims incapable of narrativizing decolonization based on its neocolonial relationship with the U.S. The extent to which Latin America can, has, and is narrativizing decolonization is an issue which will have to be taken up elsewhere. But Spivak's statement must still be critiqued as performing the same type of problematic generalization she is accusing other critics of doing. What makes her words particularly important is that her name as a postcolonial theorist and critic carries substantial weight, obscuring the fact that she is not a Latin Americanist.
The association between magical realism and Latin America has become so entrenched, that there is a growing need to specify that the region existed prior to and outside of its being made readable by the Boom. Cuban writer, Reinaldo Arenas, in his 1993 memoir, *Before Night Falls*, feels a responsibility to his readers in explaining his childhood habit of consuming dirt by pointing out: "I should make it clear right away that to eat dirt is not a metaphor, or a sensational act. All the country kids did it. It has nothing to do with magical realism or anything of the sort" (Arenas 11). Through this disclaimer, Arenas signals a point of departure from what he assumes his readers' frame of reference will be, namely Rebeca's lifelong indulgence in eating dirt in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Further complicating the fact that magical realism, as practiced by some Boom writers, has come to be taken as paradigmatic of Latin America, is the extension of the term to texts produced by Latina/o authors writing in English. While there are undoubtedly intertextual dialogues between and amongst Latina/o texts and those of Latin America, reader expectations have lead to reductive interpretations of both. This practice of subsuming everything under the Boom can be referred to as "Boom(ing)." As a step toward sorting through these assumptions, it is imperative to first situate magical realism and the Boom in a historical
and theoretical context. This can then lead to a more cogent articulation of how the conditions--historical, material and literary--that gave rise to the Boom are different for those informing Latina/o cultural productions.

The term Magical Realism, or Magic Realism (Magischer Realismus), was first used by the German art historian Franz Roh to describe Post-Expressionist painting's return to representations of real objects while integrating elements of Expressionism. This coinage, however, had little impact in 1925, the year of its publication, since Gustav Hartlaub's competing term, New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit), became the preferred terminology (Guenther 33). While Roh's essay lost influence in his native Germany until a renewed interest in the Weimar Republic during the 1960s exhumed it from obscurity, it had reached a broad and influential audience in the most unexpected of places: Latin America. Roh's essay, translated into Spanish and published by José Ortega y Gasset's Revista de Occidente in 1927, and in book form later that same year, was widely read in literary circles, and was even being discussed in relation to contemporary European prose (Guenther 61). But it was Alejo Carpentier who "Americanized" the term and argued its efficacy as a specifically American mode of expression.
In the preface to his first novel, *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World, 1949*), Carpentier proposes the term *lo real maravilloso*, the marvelous real, as a narrative strategy born of the experience of the Americas, as opposed to the Surrealist perspective of "the marvelous, manufactured by tricks of prestidigitation, by juxtaposing objects unlikely ever to be found together," (Carpentier 85). What Carpentier identifies as the marvelous in the Americas is the hyperbolic, overwhelming characteristics of the landscapes, the co-existence of several historical epochs within a single frame, and the beliefs and rituals of cosmologies and mysticism that bear a different approach to the improbable, the unbelievable, the miraculous. He concludes his essay with an ontological argument for *lo real maravilloso* being a uniquely American mode of representation: "After all, what is the entire history of America if not a chronicle of the marvelous real?" (Carpentier 88).

Angel Flores, in a paper presented at the 1954 MLA convention, enters the debate and uses the term magical realism to describe a "new phase" in Latin American literature which he marks as beginning with Jorge Luis Borges' "Historia universal de la infamia" (*A Universal History of Infamy*) published in 1935 (Flores 133). Flores' argument distances itself from Carpentier, locating the development of magical realism as a literary departure.
from and rebellion against the "sentimentality,...romantic tirades and psychological distortions" which marked classics such as Doña Barbara, María and Aves sin nido (Birds without a Nest) (Flores 110). Writing of this "new phase," Flores comments: "Their style seeks precision and leanness, a healthy innovation, to be sure, considering the flatulence of so many reputed writers in Latin American fiction" (Flores 116).

Theoretical debates are still raging regarding magical realism--its definition, its history and its political implications. What we can conclude with some degree of certainty is that the emergence of magical realism as a consciously adopted narrative strategy which gave impetus to the Boom is both a historically constructed phenomenon as well as a literary reaction to previous generations of writers. Roberto González Echevarría, in Myth and Archive proposes a theory of magical realism as part of a progressive development of Latin American narrative. According to Echevarría, Latin American narrative has paralleled and appropriated the hegemonic discourse of each epoch. Archival fictions, such as Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos (The Lost Steps) and Cien años de soledad (One Hundred Years of Solitude) retrace and incorporate all historical discourses, fictionalizing them so as to ultimately establish fiction as the hegemonic discourse of their time. This approach can be useful in establishing
both a historical and literary context for what critics call magical realism, as it has been practiced by Latin American authors.¹

Because many non-specialists first became aware of Latin American literature through the Boom, and in fact remain aware of it solely through these novels, there has been a tendency to view them outside of their historical and literary context, as if they emerged from a vacuum. This has lead, as mentioned earlier, to a perception of magical realism as paradigmatic, but it has also lead to critical practices that dislocate the texts, denying their "situatedness" at every level.

Take for example Richard Watson's reading of One Hundred Years of Solitude which argues the novel is, in form and content, one of self-negation where death and life are the same thing, nothing changes, and ultimately everything is irrelevant, meaningless. He writes:

It is a pig's tail. I do not know if the same ambiguity hangs on a Spanish pig's behind, and I am not going to look it up. I hope you can go from tail to tale in Spanish, because if you cannot, then the English novel is that much better then the Spanish. (Watson 90)

In these lines, Watson centers his interpretation on the play between tail and tale, which is inoperative in Spanish (cola and cuento or relato respectively). Yet, he is unconcerned regarding whether the connection does or does not work in the original language, since the book he is discussing is One Hundred Years of Solitude,
a novel in English written by Gregory Rabassa based on a novel in Spanish by Gabriel García Márquez. This is not merely because I don't read Spanish, but also because this text exists as an object in itself that has been received as a novel in English by numerous ordinary readers, critics, and even scholars. (Watson 89)

Watson's point, namely that a translation of a text becomes a different text, authored by the translator, has been articulated by various critics working in translation theory. A particularly poignant explication of this position is Borges' story "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," in which various approaches to translation are explored, leading to an exact reproduction of the Quixote being received as an "original" work by Pierre Menard. Watson's evaluation regarding the English language novel being "that much better than the Spanish" even echoes the critics' position in Borges' story.

It seems particularly appropriate that translation has played such an important role in the reception of Boom novels given that the process of translation itself is a running subtext within many of them, especially Cien años de soledad, as generations of the Buendía family struggle to decipher (translate) Melquíadez's text written in Sanskrit. The preoccupation with translation is actually not surprising, given the Boom novels' obsession with the writing and reading process. Since we can ascertain that reading, making meaning through a deciphering of codes, is a form of translation, then the inverse, that translation
is a form of reading, must also be considered. Gregory Rabassa makes the observation that "translation is the closest reading one can possibly give a text" (Rabassa 6).

Reading a work in translation, then, is performing a reading of a reading. This shift to the twice removed facilitates Watson's exclusion of Márquez's novel and its language from his discussion and interpretation of the English language version. It is also worth mentioning that the translators responsible for rendering most Boom novels in English, Gregory Rabassa and Edith Grossman, approach translation as reproducing the text as if it had been written in English, seeking semantic and cultural equivalents recognizable to an English speaking audience. This, too, facilitates the displacement of the text. Yet, by isolating Márquez's novel from its linguistic context, readers such as Watson are also isolating it from the historical and literary conditions which produced it.

The removal of Boom novels from their language, Spanish, also erases the hierarchical relationship between languages in a U.S. context. As Arteaga elucidates, in this country, Spanish is the language of the poor, the foreign, the disempowered (Arteaga 14) and as such has become established as a low status language. The fact that novels such as One Hundred Years of Solitude circulate in English translation, furthermore seamless translation which provides the illusion of it always existing in the English
language, removes them from associations with Spanish. This is a main point of difference between Latin American Boom novels and Latina/o literature.

While there exists a corpus of Spanish language work by Latina/o writers, most of the literature published after 1970 is written in English. This is partly due to Latinos reaching higher levels of formal education, which is in English, and English becoming the dominant language for many; that is, the primary language of public expression. It is also partly reflective of a conscious choice made by writers to reach a broader audience. Yet, much of Latina/o literature in English retains elements of Spanish. Sometimes bilingualism is represented through words, phrases or entire passages in Spanish or Spanglish as is the case with Rudolfo Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima, Judith Ortiz Cofer's The Line of the Sun and Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La frontera.

Other times, the text is entirely monolingual, but bears traces of bilingualism through syntactical choices, rhythms, or over-translation. For example, in Jose Antonio Villareal's novel, Pocho, the father's dialogue reproduces the rhythm and diction of formal Spanish, although it is entirely in English. Alberto Ríos also makes use of Spanish language syntax, as in the lines, "Nothing is bigger in a small town than two people in love without the permission of everybody" (Ríos 187). The lines reflect the
Spanish word order for "sin el permiso de todos" which would be "translated" as "without everyone's permission."
The use of over-translation is subtle in Cisneros' Mango Street, as in the vignette titled "Salvador Late or Early," which is a literal translation of the Spanish phrase "tarde o temprano." Rather than rendering the phrase through equivalent translation which would be "sooner or later," Cisneros opts for over-translation which gives the phrase, in English, a broader interpretative field while adding layers of meaning for the bilingual reader. Roberto Fernández, in his novel Raining Backwards, pushes over-translation to its limits for satiric effect and gives readers absurdities such as an announcement in the "English Supplement" to the newsletter of "the Municipality of One Hundred Fires in Exile," (a literal translation of Municipio de Cien Fuegos, a city in Cuba) which informs its readers that one of the members will "undergo surgery to correct the waterfall in her left eye" (the Spanish word for waterfall is catarata which is also the word for cataract) (Fernández 33-34).

Thus, although we might intuit that texts by Latin American authors would be perceived as more "foreign" than those by Latinas and Latinos writing in English, the inverse is actually true. And this has had an influence on reception. Because Boom novels gained a broad monolingual audience in the U.S. prior to there being a broad
circulation of Latina/o texts in English, language expectations, based on reading Spanish texts in translation, have carried over to readings of Latina/o texts. The presence of Spanish in these works has subsequently lead to either selective and incomplete readings which ignore the presence of Spanish, as is the case with the critical reception of Borderlands analyzed in chapter three, or readings which interpret the presence of Spanish as disruptive, alienating, or "picturesque."

The language difference between Boom novels in translation and Latina/o texts in English also points to another difference between the two groups, that of socioeconomic class. Because the language(s) of Latinos in the U.S. functions not only as "an automatic signaling system second only to race in identifying targets for possible privilege or discrimination," (Deutsch quoted in Califa 321), but also as markers of class status, so too does Latino discourse function as a class marker in literary texts. While the discipline of Literary Studies is currently engaged in an internal struggle to include class differences in its project on "diversity," there still exists a qualitative differentiation between "high culture" and all other forms of artistic expression, as well as a privileging of cultural productions which express the values and aesthetics of a white, Eurocentric, middle and upper class hegemony.
To some degree, the existence of Boom texts in translation distance these texts from the intertwined association between language hierarchies and those of class. But this class difference is also in some respects present, in a different way, in Boom novels in Spanish. The writers categorized as being part of the Boom are all, not coincidentally, from middle class, professional, and privileged backgrounds. Not surprisingly, their concern and agendas as artists and members of the intelligentsia reflect this positioning. Their use of Spanish, too, aligns them with the hegemonic. Latin American nations also have internal language hierarchies, with Spanish, and Portuguese in the Case of Brazil, being the language of domination. Thus, within their own national histories and cultures, Boom writers are located within the ruling class. They are linguistically, economically and culturally closer to the conquerors than they are to the conquered, even if Latin America as a region is marginalized in the global marketplace.

For Latina and Latino writers in the U.S., the relationship between their language(s) and the hegemonic is different, as is, for many, their socioeconomic class background. As mentioned in chapter four, most Latino writers have ties to institutions of higher learning, but many come from working class or migrant agricultural labor families. Although critics such as Juan Bruce-Novoa
assert that the generalization of class difference has obscured the existence of a Chicano and Latino middle class, the fact remains that much of Latino fiction is written by authors such as Tomás Rivera, Helena Maria Viramontes, Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Abraham Rodríguez Jr., who are the first generation in their families to break into the middle class, and their work reflects, through both language and content, a working class perspective.

Gender, too, seems to play a role in the reception of Boom fiction. Women are most conspicuous in this phenomenon through their absence. The various projects which undergird the works of Boom authors are primarily masculanist. In Latina/o fiction, on the other hand, women writers have come to a place of relative prominence, even if this is a recent phenomenon. Not surprisingly, these authors are quite vocal on women's oppression under patriarchy, focusing on conditions for Latinas within their immediate culture and community as well as in the larger society. These writers are in the process of scripting a feminist critique which Chicano Movement ideology suppressed in constructing an oppositional identity based on purely masculine terms. While earlier Chicano texts, for example, embraced La Raza, as defined through a Chicano male subjectivity, Sandra Cisneros dedicates The House on Mango Street to "Las Mujeres."
Given the differences between Boom authors such as Cortázar, García Márquez, Puentes, and Vargas-Llosa, and Latina/o writers, as well as differences in the historical and material conditions under which both groups of texts are produced, it follows that their respective agendas and locations in relation to a cultural hegemony are also different. These differences in turn inform how narrative strategies such as those classified under magical realism are used and to what ends. Reader expectations that indiscriminately lump simplistic paradigms of magical realism, developed through ahistorical and decontextualized readings of Boom fiction, together with moments of "magic" or narratives of the unexpected in Latina/o fiction, effectively erase the "situatedness" of both groups.

Some Latina/o texts are presumed to fit in a Boom tradition, as defined by perceptions of the Boom as spontaneously emerging from a vacuum. These texts, then, are evaluated as failures or pale imitations, when they do not meet readers' expectations. Barbara Kingsolver's review of Ana Castillo's *So Far from God*, for example portrays the novel as "a sort of Latin American 'lite'" (Christian, 14):

"[So Far from God] distinguishes itself from its South American predecessors by its chatty, accessible Norteño language and relentless good humor. Give it to people who always wanted to read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* but couldn't quite get through it." (Kingsolver 1)
Other reviewers have proven less "generous" than Kingsolver. For example Andrei Codrescu's review of Raining Backwards laments the novel's missed opportunity and concludes that it would have been a much better book if "the echoes of Gabriel García Márquez that run like a ritual motif through it had been made conscious and dealt with intelligently" (Codrescu 27). The irony in these lines is that Fernández's novel alludes to and parodies not only García Márquez, but other writers as well ranging from Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz to José Lezama Lima. In fact, if any one writer "run[s] like a ritual motif" through the novel, it is Lezama Lima and his novel Paradíso, rather than Márquez.

Fernández's appropriation of magical realist codes is deployed so as to make the irretrievable past in Cuba unreal, mythic, literally out of this world. As the aging Mirta tells the young Eloy, "In all the beaches in Cuba the sand was made out of grated silver, though in Varadero it was also mixed with diamond dust...The sun rose in the North and set in the South" (Fernández 12-13). Mirta's words also echo the crónicas of discovery which similarly told of riches and natural marvels. Even the disorientation in her assertion that the sun "rose in the North and set in the South," parallels Columbus' diary which is filled with navigational errors rationalized by the wonders of the New World.
Allusion to and appropriation of the discourse of discovery is also a component of Carpentier's "lo real maravilloso" as well as Echevarría's study of Latin American narrative. Yet Fernández transforms its use by distancing Mirta's hyperbolic narrative from "reality." In parodying magical realism, the novel also satirizes the Cuban exile community's reconstruction of the island as a paradise on earth with a knowing wink to the reader that such a place exists solely in idealized memory, that is, in the imaginary. Mirta's memories of Cuba cannot exist in the real world, as we can humorously see in her attempt to recreate Varadero in her bathtub with talcum powder, a fan, wallpaper and tinted water.

Judith Ortiz Cofer makes similar use of magical realist codes in her novel The Line of the Sun. As Karen Christian has pointed out, the passages which are set in Puerto Rico parody magical realism, co-opting Marquezian diction and style as in the line, "Ramona and Rafeal were to be man and wife not a full year after they faced each other on Mamá Cielo's porch," (Cofer 83). Yet the narrative style changes as time shifts to the present and the setting is no longer Puerto Rico, but New York. The powerful spiritism that was not out place in the island that "was too lush, too green, too hot," (161) has no place in "el building" on the mainland as proven by the fire resulting from one of the ceremonies gone awry. As in
Fernández's novel, there is strict distinction between the here, the now, and the "real," and the nostalgia of another place, another time, another reality.

This is quite different from the use of magical realism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which functions to create an entire fictional reality enclosed within the covers of the book. That is, in the world of the novel, these occurrences are intended to be taken at face value, inseparable and indistinguishable from the ordinary which is at times narrated as the marvelous. Recall, for example, the opening lines of the novel in which Coronal Aureliano Buendía recalls seeing ice for the first time.

Some Latina/o texts, such as Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and John Rechy's *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez*, confuse readers familiar with Boom fiction in that they narrate "unreal" or "magical" events, but do not incorporate the narrative strategies and codes of magical realism. As opposed to texts such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* wherein magical occurrences or those at least out of the ordinary, such as Remedios' ascension and the town priest's levitation after drinking hot chocolate, take place without further explanation, in Anaya's novel as in Rechy's, the miraculous occurrences are situated in specific cosmologies and carry spiritual dimensions different from those in Boom fiction. The Boom(ing) effect erases these differences, and in so doing reduces the
complexity and heterogeneity of Latina/o conditions and struggles for representation to an identifiable and manageable "essence."

The Boom(ing) effect has also played a role in the marginalization of Latina/o literature within institutions of higher learning. Latina/o literatures' bilingualism—in terms of both the presence of Spanish in English language texts as well as its roots in Spanish language texts such as border ballads, poetry and Spanish language journalism—renders it difficult to integrate into an English curriculum. Boom literature in translation is more easily "smuggled" across linguistic, class and disciplinary borders, and the illusion of its emergence from nowhere alleviates the responsibility of contextualization.

The situation is no less conflicted in Modern Languages or Spanish departments. Here too, bilingualism plays a role, with the language(s) of Latinos, particularly variations of Spanglish, finding an unwelcoming reception. Course offerings on Latina/o literature are uneven, often taught, if at all, under special topics designations. In many Spanish departments, Latina/o literatures are relegated to the status of "poor relations," or afterthoughts to Latin American literature, itself, until quite recently, the "poor relation" to Peninsular literature. Latina/o literature, then, is too often
perceived as the "poor relation" to the "poor relation," or second generation illegitimate.

The coyote's job in transporting Latin American Boom fiction across national, linguistic, and disciplinary borders has proven to be too easy. White, male, dressed in European clothes, and speaking through translation in unaccented English, these texts easily blend in. Without a past, their difference could be interpreted as exotic, the peculiar eccentricities of a well traveled gentleman. For Latina/o texts, and in a different way for testimonios, the crossing has been more difficult, their differences self-consciously brought to the surface, a constant reminder of a past that goes unrecognized and a present filled with contradictions and fissures that resist resolutions. As coyotes engaged in this illicit, yet nonetheless necessary activity, the journey across the border is only part of our job. The other part, the more difficult one, necessitates a commitment—in our roles as teachers and scholars—to clearing and creating transformational spaces where these texts can refuse to blend in and instead engage with and revise their canonical and mainstream surroundings.

Notes

1. Carpentier's essay first appeared as the preface to El reino de este mundo (The Kingdom of this World) and was later expanded and published in a collection of essays Tientos y diferencias, published in 1967. The quotes included here are from Tanya Huntington and Lois Parkinson Zamora's translation published in Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community.
2. Doris Sommer, in her introduction to *Foundational Fictions*, makes a similar connection from a different of emphasis. She argues that Boom writers, while denying being influenced by romance novels of the nineteenth century, were nonetheless motivated by them in their rebellion.

3. For evidence of the large volume of work produced on this topic see Antonio Planells' "La polemica sobre el realismo mágico en Hispanoamérica," which includes a comprehensive bibliography with over 125 entries. See also the "Selected Bibliography" by the editors of *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, which lists over 100 entries.

4. Since the publication and critical reception of Boom fiction, some critics have identified elements of Magical Realism in the works of non-Latin American writers such as Günter Grass, Leslie Marmon Silko and Salman Rushdie, to name but a few. See for example: "Magic Realism in *Midnight's Children*," by Jean-Pierre Durix; "Les Romans de Jean-Louis Baghio'o et le réalisme merveilleux redéfini," by Charles Scheel; and "Naming, Magic, and Documentary: The Subversion of the Narrative in *Song of Solomon, Ceremony, and China Men*," by Paula Rabinowitz.

5. While there are many different approaches to translation, most can be divided into two groups. The first of these is exemplified by Benjamin's approach which argues that a translation must always sound "foreign," reminding the reader that it is in fact a translation. The second group is exemplified by practitioners such as Pasternak whose Russian translation of Shakespeare is generally viewed as a re-authoring of the plays as if they had been originally written in Russian for a Russian audience.

6. For a fuller discussion of translation in Márquez's novel, see Aníbal González's "Translation and Genealogy: *One Hundred Years of Solitude.*"

7. Although fiction writers have chosen to work almost exclusively in English, many poets such as Francisco Alarcón, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Tino Villanueva, and Martín Espada continue to write and publish their work in Spanish or in bilingual editions.

8. More recently, publishing houses have been experimenting with Spanish translations of Latina/o texts such as Mary Helen Ponce's *Hoyt Street* (Anchor/Doubleday), Joaquín Fraxedas' *The Lonely Crossing of Juan Cabrera* (St. Martin's Press), and Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango*.
Street (Random House). Early sales figures for the first two titles were discouraging, but Cisneros' book is indicating sales which parallel its success in English.

9. Critics have pointed out Cuban-Americans as the exception. Although the initial wave of migration following the Revolution in 1959 was primarily white and middle to upper class, subsequent migrations have included large numbers of working class individuals resulting in class diversity within exile communities. This in turn has affected Cuban-American literary production with a growing number of authors, such as Elías Miguel Muñoz and Virgil Suarez, coming from working class backgrounds.

10. For a historicized discussion of the construction of Chicano identity through machismo, see Angie Chabram-Dernersesian's article "I Throw Punches for My Race, But I Don't Want to Be a Man."

11. Notable exceptions to this trend are found in institutions with Latino Studies and Chicano Studies, which offer more courses and do so at regular intervals, providing students with opportunities to study these literatures in depth.
CONCLUSION

The reception of Latin American and Latina/o literatures as a field of inquiry necessitates a multidirectional approach which interrogates not only the conditions under which a given text is read, but also the conditions under which it is produced. Faced with border crossing texts such as those examined in this study, our reading strategies and critical conventions become frustrated and ultimately limiting. Metacriticism in this context uncovers as illusory the naturalized norm that promotes certain preferred readings, and censures or severely limits possibilities for alternative readings.

The interaction between reader and text does not take place in a vacuum. Rather, the deciphering of any system of codes, such as that of written language, is situated in a specific moment and a specific place which generate contexts of relationships. These relationships are inseparable from the historical, political, linguistic and economic struggles that shape human conditions. The interaction between text and reader when the text is produced on the margins of a literary establishment and subsequently brought into circulation among an academic, elite community of consumers is in the metaphoric sense of the word, a "border experience." The act of reading, in this context, is located at the border between self and
other, the border between the hegemonic and the counterhegemonic, and/or the border between the First and Third World.

Situating our readings along these borders demands that we recognize both sides as mutual and dynamic participants in our making of meaning. Just as, whether we are conscious of it or not, our experience with prior texts—be they written, oral, pictographic or experiential in form—informs our reading of a given text, so too do these factors play a role in the production of the text. Recognizing that textual production must be a conscious and influential part of our reading and reception process challenges us to strive for the creation of a new critical language based on paradigms which resist defining the marginal through the strategies and conventions of the center, and rather work toward opening up transformational spaces from which the marginalized can redefine and restructure the center.

Our roles as critics and teachers may at times be problematic and conflicted as we smuggle our contraband, aligning us with the figure of the coyote who transports undocumented workers across U.S. borders. Yet, there is much to be said for the services the coyote provides. It is an enterpreneurial endeavor born of a mutual need for higher wages and sources of cheap labor. Our role, too, is born of a mutual need for broader audiences which can
affect change and an inclusive curriculum which reflects a fuller spectrum of human conditions and promotes respect for diversity through knowledge. If we accept our roles as teachers and critics to be analogous to that of the coyote, we are free within that definition to choose a coyotismo that diminishes the exploitation of marginalized texts as raw material. In place of the established strategies and conventions which work toward either isolating these texts or, at the other extreme, co-opting them to the point of neutralization, as coyotes we can renegotiate our roles and work toward opening up meaning and interpretation, rather than closing it off.
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**Chapter Two**


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