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Genre Matters: Transgression, Innovation, and Transformation in the Writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Cherríe Moraga

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

Shelley Nicole Garcia

December 2017

Dissertation Committee:
  Dr. Steven Gould Axelrod, Chairperson
  Dr. Traise Yamamoto
  Dr. Alicia Arrizón

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The Dissertation Shelley Nicole Garcia is approved:

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Portions of my introduction and first chapter were previously published and are used with permission.

Shelley Garcia: "Genre Matters: Tracing Metaphors of Miscegenation in Genre History, Derrida's 'The Law of Genre' and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*" in Cristina Herrera, Larissa M. Mercado-López (Eds.): *(Re)mapping the Latina/o Literary Landscape*. 2016 Palgrave Macmillan, with permission of Springer Nature.

My journey to completion has been long and full of unexpected turns, but I have been gifted along the way with wonderful people supporting my work and encouraging my progress. My studies and career have spanned two universities, and I am grateful for the lessons I have learned and people I have encountered. I am thankful for the wonderful folks at the University of California, Riverside, for the professors I studied under and colleagues I studied alongside. I am so proud to be a part of the good work being done in the English department and broader university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Mom, dad, and Krista, words cannot express my love and gratitude. Your support has been enthusiastic and love unwavering. You helped make this dream possible.

I also dedicate this dissertation to the Chicanas and Latinas who came before me and will come after me and to the writers whose words are life-giving and help us envision a better world.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Genre Matters: Transgression, Innovation, and Transformation in the Writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Cherríe Moraga

by

Shelley Nicole Garcia

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
University of California, Riverside, December 2017
Dr. Steven Gould Axelrod, Chairperson

This dissertation explores the early and influential works of Chicana feminist authors Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Cherríe Moraga through the lens of modern genre theory. Despite the tendency of these authors to write in multiple genres and hybrid forms, much of the scholarly response has focused on the new perspectives and experiences present in the texts rather than on their formal innovation. I contend innovative content should be considered inextricable from innovative form. These authors do not merely offer new perspectives but offer new ways of presenting ideas. Socially constructed and culturally embedded, genre operates at the level of meaning-making, purveys dominant ideology, and shapes interpretation. Given the subtle yet influential role of genre, the resistance to traditional genre in Chicana writings must be understood as challenging both literary and social norms. Because no text performs or transgresses genre in the exactly same way, there is no single theory or methodology which applies. Rather, an attentiveness to genre in texts and scholarship exposes the influence of genre in our understanding of texts. This dissertation traces genre history and

its frequent borrowing of racial metaphors to illustrate logics of genre purity and reads Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and its refusal to perform traditional genre as resistance essential to Anzaldúa's theorizing of mestiza consciousness, a framework based on embracing racial miscegenation. Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* provides the opportunity to explore genre indeterminacy and to examine *Bildungsroman* as a genre case study where the origins and centuries-long debates make the constructedness of genre visible. In Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* and the co-edited anthology *This Bridge Called My Back,* I examine the innovation to the autobiography and anthology genres as well as the genre-related trends in scholarship, considering the consistently significant, if not always obvious, role of genre in shaping interpretation and analysis. The writings of Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Moraga have changed the literary landscape, but only when genre is part of the analysis can the fullness of their innovation and literary legacy be glimpsed.

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Introduction

New Directions and Familiar Paths: Genre Analysis and Chicana Literature

New directions sometimes require returning to old destinations, and covering new ground may mean revisiting the well-trod areas. Occasionally, the focus on the newest and most recent perspectives can eclipse the focus on renewed understandings of the past. Often distance is necessary in order to gain perspective on important moments of cultural significance. Such is the case with this dissertation, which returns to the early work of influential Chicana authors Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Cherríe Moraga. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to glimpse the tremendous impact and influence these three authors had on the field and on the larger literary landscape, and with the application of genre theory to readings of these texts, their innovative legacy can be grasped.

This study began years ago when my first introduction to these writers caused me to notice that they were each in their own ways making important interventions in genre. At the time, I had more observations than insight and more questions than answers. I lacked the language to explain what I was seeing and the necessary genre knowledge to point out what made their works distinct. I had only the conviction that these authors were saying important things in new ways. That conviction led me on a journey to learn more about genre in order to explain the incredible innovation I was seeing. After the detour into the field of genre studies, I was able to make connections and, more importantly, use genre discourse to articulate what I was seeing. What I found was a rich legacy of genre theory dating back to Aristotle as well as important developments in modern genre theory that offer context and insight into readings of Chicana literature. However, I also discovered that those connections, between genre discourse and Chicana literature, are not currently being made. With the privilege of institutional centrality, genre study tends, to its detriment, to focus primarily on established literature. Although ignoring genre does limit the possible insights gleaned from Chicana literature, ignoring Chicana literature, as genre studies has, means missing some of the most significant generic innovations in recent decades.

The first section of the dissertation title "Genre Matters" can be read two different ways, and both meanings are intended and important. When "genre" is read as an adjective modifying the noun "matters," it highlights the fact that this is a dissertation about matters of genre. This descriptive meaning of "Genre Matters," then, sets the parameters of the study. It details the scope of the inquiry—methodologically, I apply genre theory as my critical lens and focus on generic elements of each text. Additionally, the second meaning of the title is an argument, with "genre" serving as the subject and "matters" the verb. "Genre Matters" signals not only the focus on genre but also argues for the usefulness of genre as an interpretive lens. Ultimately, the goal of this project is to demonstrate the value, even necessity, of reading *for* genre when engaging with Chicana literature.

This project started with the general observation that Chicana authors were doing groundbreaking, innovative work through their use of genre. Chicanas wrote books that defied easy categorization and were writing in multiple genres, both in the case of a single text as well as across the body of their work. While they did not share a single approach to genre, it was clear that for Chicana authors, genre was a tool to employ, a limit to test, and a constraint from which to break free. Yet, although genre is key to unlocking new understandings of their works, there is not one approach capable of explaining Chicana generic innovations. As a result, instead of offering a single unifying principle of Chicana authors and genre, I want to posit that reading these texts with attentiveness to genre can offer new insights.

While genre transgression and innovation is visible in numerous works by Chicana authors, the scope of this project is limited to the early works of three of the most influential Chicana authors: Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Cherríe Moraga. This dissertation examines four texts: Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza,* Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street,* Moraga's *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca paso por sus labios*, and Anzaldúa and Moraga's co-edited collection, *This Bridge Called My Back.* It is my hope that the attention to genre—transgression, innovation, and transformation—in texts that changed the literary landscape will help us further understand those texts as well as their literary legacy.

In all of these texts, there is a clear awareness of genre. These authors invite a conversation about genre, its qualities, and its limitations, and the texts foreground genre as inherent to the process of reading. The genre nonconformity causes readers to question how works like *Borderlands/La Frontera, The House on Mango Street, This Bridge Called My Back,* or *Loving in the War Years* should be read. These questions of genre are relevant not only at the level of individual reading but also are visible at the level of scholarship, and so all of the chapters trace the genre trends visible in the scholarship. Genre matters in these texts, and by taking on the task of reading genre, these texts, their author's projects, and genre itself will be understood in new ways.

Why Genre Matters

While genre has become an essential part of my thinking about Chicana literature, for some the relevance of genre to a discussion of Chicana literature might be in question. However, there are several important reasons why genre is relevant. First, the literature itself prompts genre questions by its revolutionary and unique engagement with genre. The texts themselves make genre a relevant, even essential, aspect of analysis. Whether, like Moraga and Anzaldúa, they mix traits of various genres in the space of a single text creating hybrid forms and prompting new genre classifications, or like Cisneros they challenge existing genres by reimagining the *Bildungsroman* from a Chicana feminist perspective, all of these authors transgress, transform, and revolutionize the way we read and understand genre. Put differently, genre analysis matters to Chicana literature because of their innovative performance of genre.

Secondly, genre matters because genre is a privileged area of literary study, an analytical framework rarely applied to minority literatures. The discussion of genre, the study of form in literature, is central, well established, and occupies a position of power. According to Tzvetan Todorov writing in *Genres in Discourse,* genre "constitute[s] a privileged object that may well deserve to be the principal figure of literary studies" (20). While making genre the principal figure of literary studies as Todorov suggests may be unnecessary, it is absolutely necessary that genre play a role in any discussion of Chicana literature. All too often, the only attention paid to Chicana literature is to the way it provides a kind of social commentary.[1] Innovative style is overlooked. The difference is important. To claim that in its content Chicana literature critiques dominant ideology is altogether different from claiming that not only in content but in its revolutionary form Chicana literature challenges dominant discourse. To be clear, the goal is not to focus on form while ignoring content; doing so would merely replicate the imbalance in reverse. Rather, the goal is to bring the study of genre alongside that of the already existing understanding of content, gaining new methods for analysis and garnering greater insights.

This dissertation is marked by returns: a return to foundational Chicana texts and, in its focus on genre, a return to earlier analytical modes. Genre theory has a rich, well-established history, with the earliest discussions of genre dating as far back as Aristotle, whose analysis of literature centered around distinctions of genre (the difference between lyric and prose). Arguably, genre studies are the most ancient and enduring form of literary study. Even though genres rise and fall in prominence at different times and prevailing genre discourse changes, genre never ceases to be an important aspect of literary studies. In fact, the classical pedigree of genre studies is especially appealing because all too often, writings by white women, men of color, and women of color are treated differently—they are read primarily in terms of identity. A text authored by a woman is read as a gendered text, one written by, about, and for women. A text by a person of color is read as raced, and perhaps, secondarily if at all, as gendered. This is not to say that these texts are not about identity and culture. In fact, there might be very strong identity politics articulated in these texts, and we would do well to pay attention. The problem is that this kind of analysis has traditionally been limited to writings by white women and men and women of color. Writings by those occupying the normative position of white male are considered neutral, universal even.

It is important to make sure that the kinds of analysis, formal and aesthetic, traditionally reserved for texts perceived as neutral must also be applied to all other texts—in this instance, those written by Chicanas. As the hard work by feminists and critics of color have established, aesthetics are never and have never been politically neutral. In fact, aesthetic judgments were for centuries cited as the reasons to refuse female-authored texts (and other marginalized groups) a place in the cannon. It would be naïve to assume that a pure focus on aesthetics or formal qualities of a text will ensure a greater sense of parity. The goal of this project is not to suggest the formal qualities of genre should replace a discussion of Chicana identity, that poetics should supplant politics. This is neither desirable nor possible. Genre, whether in its strategic performance or in its transgression, is inseparable from the political projects of the authors. The goal is not to supplant an analysis of identity and culture with one of genre, but rather to understand their interrelatedness in Chicana feminist discourses. My goal is that this methodology of analyzing genre matters will treat Chicana authors as activists and writers who are politically and creatively energized and will result in an enriched understanding of the ways Chicana authors are participating in the social struggle for meaning at the level of discourse.

Thirdly, and finally, genre matters because as John Frow writes in his book *Genre: The New Critical Idiom*, "it [genre] is central to human meaning-making and to the social struggle over meaning" (20). To claim Chicanas are engaged in a social struggle over meaning is unlikely to spark controversy. Their writings are unambiguously engaged, blending art and activism. In fact, one could point to multiple examples of the ways Chicanas have challenged dominant culture and called for changes within their own communities. Yet, the struggle is not only about policy and practices, it extends to the level of meaning. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this participation is the long tradition of Chicana feminist writers and artists of revising the myths shaping cultural notions of femininity. Across mediums of art, poetry, fiction, as well as in historical and theoretical pieces, Chicanas have sought to recuperate such figures as *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Llorona*, and *La Malinche*, understanding that myths are more than narratives of cultural significance—they shape a community's understanding of its past, its expectations for current behavior, as well as its beliefs in future possibilities. [2] When the Chicana, as Anzaldúa describes in *Borderlands*, "reinterprets history and, using new symbols shapes new myths," she is intervening at the level of shared cultural meaning (107). Chicanas' engagement in the struggle over meaning-making could be illustrated in a variety of ways—revisionist myth-making is merely one of a many. What is perhaps less obvious is how genre might be involved in that struggle. The genre transgression and innovation Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Moraga exhibit is also intervention at the level of cultural meaning, but it is work far less visible, and so careful examination is necessary.

By evoking genre as the critical lens for analyzing Chicana literature, there is potential for confusion. With the vastness of genre discourse—its many theorists and debates—it is possible to have different understandings and assumptions associated with genre. This dissertation works from the framework of modern genre theory. And by "modern genre theory" I mean to set up a category of theoretical knowledge separate from classical genre theory, roughly spanning the late nineteenth century until now. (The first chapter will trace genre discourse from its classical roots through Derrida's "The Law of Genre," but the weight of both the chapter's and the project's emphasis will be modern, rather than classical, genre discourse). Although morphologically similar, the choice of "modern" is also in contradistinction from both "modernist" and "postmodernist." This is not to say, however, that modern genre excludes modernist and postmodernist genre discourse; in fact, the opposite is true. "Modern" allows for a range of genre discourse which includes both modernist and postmodernist genre theories, a framework which understands the continuity between the two, that postmodernism implicates modernist perspectives even as it might seek to disrupt, destabilize, and dismantle them. From the perspective of modern genre theory, the perennial proclamations of genre's end are understood to usher in not the end of genre discourse but rather the renewed efforts to understand how genre functions differently at different moments. Put differently, the greater the disruption of traditional genre in a text, the greater the need is to discuss genre because as Marjorie Perloff has written in *Postmodern Genres,* "It is the paradox of postmodern genre that the more radical the dissolution of traditional generic boundaries, the more important the concept of genericity becomes" (4).

In truth, while postmodernism has witnessed the abandonment of traditional genre categories in favor of non-genre terms such as "text," modern genre theory is indebted to postmodern, poststructuralist and deconstructionist challenges to traditional modes of thinking. The story of modern genre theory could be understood alongside larger trends in thought, wherein genre moves from being of perceived as natural to understood as contextual, from normative to "always culture-specific, and to a high degree, historically determined" (Perloff 7). When genre is rejected, it is often because of its perceived hierarchical and constraining nature. However, as Ralph Cohen has argued in "Do Postmodern Genres Exist?" when critics and theorists who believe genre is irrelevant reject "generic procedures" they "deprive themselves of explanatory tools" and "resist the usefulness that generic critics find in discussing entities" (19, 20). Modern genre theory, inclusive of modernist and postmodernist genre theories, refrains from the prescriptive discourse so common to classical genre theory and instead offers descriptive tools. With these tools it is possible to identify and appreciate the transgressive and innovative work of Chicana writers.

One further note on postmodernism is important. While many of the aesthetic features—disruption, indeterminacy, multiplicity—associated with postmodernism (as well as the dislocation and mimicry of postcolonialism) are visible in the texts this project studies, simply labeling them "postmodern," although accurate, does not expand understanding. "Postmodern" provides a conceptual category above and alongside genre, and while it may provide contextual and stylistic information, the vastness of its meaning and implications (not counting the many contestations of its meaning) makes it an imprecise tool for examining genre. Even as postmodernism "de-naturalizes," and exposes "those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural'" as being "in fact 'cultural': made by us, not given to us," according to Linda Hutcheon's important work in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, genre discourse is needed to understand those things previously considered natural that are now understood as culturally constituted (2). Further, it is only with a focus on genre where Chicana's challenge to traditional genre, and its attendant values and ideologies, becomes visible.

One of the difficulties of approaching Chicana literature, or any literature, through the lens of genre is the ubiquitousness of genre. Genre categories are unavoidable and widely encountered, one needs only point to entertainment consumption, where our movies, television, music, and book selections are all categorized by genres, to see the frequency with which we engage genre. In the case of literary genres, where some level of training exists in formal education, every layperson feels themselves to have a working understanding of genre. However, genre categories and our interfacing with them as natural, discrete entities is very different from how modern genre theory understands genre.

Mostly when we consider genre, we think of it as a classificatory criterion, certainly this is where most classical genre theory is focused. This kind of classificatory work genre performs allows us to recognize characteristics in a given text and to place that work with others that share similarities. In this taxonomic thinking, which has been motivated by a desire for literary study to be more scientific in approach, the text's formal characteristics take primacy when evaluating, interpreting, or analyzing a text. A line breaking instead of continuing on to the end of the page signals that a work is likely poetry and not prose. Once the basic formal qualities are assessed, the content provides the next clues for how to classify a text. The subject and tone may tell us if a text is fiction or nonfiction, if the novel is gothic or romantic, if the poem is an epic or an ode. These qualities allow us to place a text within its genre.

For most readers, genre's importance is limited to its pragmatic, classificatory function; however, the impact of genre extends beyond classification. As modern genre theory has demonstrated, genre both produces and constrains meaning, and more than "mere stylistic devices, genres create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility" (Frow 2). Further, genre impacts reading and writing, not simply by allowing us to identify or employ genre, but also because it is integral to the process of semiosis. Literary forms are integral to the creation and communication of meaning, with writers and readers alike dependent on the unspoken rules and meaning of genre. Words alone are insufficient for communication; it is words fashioned strategically within larger systems of meaning, of which the genre system is one, where words gain significance. Genre provides a lens through which Chicana writings can be understood not only as participating in the social struggle over meanings at the level of content but also the level of semiosis, which is arguably deeper and more forceful than the explicit content of the text (Frow 19).

Beyond classification and the codification of generic convention, it is important to understand genre as producing meaning. While the influence of genre is difficult to measure, its influence on how meaning is produced in reading and writing is profound. Genre is both textual and extratextual, and meaning is made at the intersections of the two. Put differently, genre is a "framework for processing information and for allowing us to move between knowledge given directly in a text and other sets of knowledge that are relevant to understanding it" (Frow 80). When we read and interpret, we import what we know of genre rules from our education and previous experience, and those rules tells us how to read a text. A sentence in a poem is read far differently than a sentence in a novel, or further still words on a billboard. This difference in reading is a difference of genre. While reading genre is largely an unconscious process, much of interpretation is dependent on information provided by genre. Simply knowing the genre of a text, provides the reader with considerable information. Yet, while most people would agree that knowing if a book were an autobiography or fantasy would provide general information about a text, they are generally less likely to credit genre as shaping meaning. The invisibility of genre in semiosis is precisely what makes the writings of Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Moraga noteworthy—their texts make genre an explicit part of meaning making. By transgressing and transforming genre, these authors invite their readers to engage on a level deeper than content and consider the multiple forces shaping culture, identity, and voice.

Genre's constitutive powers are not limited to reading, but are also a factor in the writing process. Writers depend on conventions of genre to be able to communicate their ideas to their readers. In much the same way that language functions as an arbitrary set of conventions necessary for communication, genre provides conventional structure by which authors can communicate with her or his readers. This structure is necessary for communication. In language we understand words are merely signs comprised of the signifier and the signified where words are the image that signifies the concept, and, while writers may think of themselves as creating in isolation, writing is an act of communication and is therefore dependent on systems of signification. Although a reader and writer can be separated by space and time, the text is a site of communication. Unlike simple face-to-face conversations in which the conversants have the ability to clarify and read contextual cues like vocal inflections and body language, writers depend on their ability to craft their words in a way that conveys their ideas. In this case, genre acts as a kind of specialized language: additional structures of already agreed upon meanings that can be used to communicate ideas.

While thinking about genre as language highlights the usefulness of genre to writing (how it can be a tool for crafting meaning), it is also necessary to acknowledge that genre also constrains meaning. Genre provides the rules, conventions, and expectations for a text. Genre becomes more than a classificatory process; it becomes standards or law as Derrida has suggested in his aptly titled "The Law of Genre." Genre exerts remarkable power of designation; the categorizations become sites of belonging that confer legitimacy. Perhaps at minimum, genre is the guidelines which suggest the contours of the text, or genre serves as standards that are policed. When a text is assessed for genre, it is compared with other texts, and it is grouped based on how well it fits with others. Here, originality is not a sign of the author's creative genius, but it is a sign of the author's disobedience, ignorance, and possibly incompetence. A text not easily classified by genre runs the risk of annihilation, being unable to be identified, read, and understood. Meaning is constrained by these conventions. For readers, genre provides rules about how to interpret, a kind of shorthand to fill in the blanks with meaning. For writers, genre becomes a set of limits and contours that shows what is appropriate as well as what is out of bounds. Although it is possible for meaning to exist outside the system, the communication of that meaning depends on the system. If an author violates generic conventions, she risks becoming inscrutable to her readers, thus there is a careful calculus involved in genre transgression. One must retain enough to be recognizable while not succumbing to constraints and sacrificing genre innovation. In an interview included at the end of the second edition of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa frankly acknowledges her "struggle between how many of these rules I can break" without losing her readers (253):

> …[I]f I had made *Borderlands* too inaccessible to you by putting in too many Chicano terms, too many Spanish words, or if I had been more fragmented in the text than I am right now, you would have been very frustrated. So there are certain traditions in all the different genres—like autobiography, fiction, poetry, theory, criticism—and certain standards that you have to follow. Otherwise you're almost naked." (252)

Yet, despite the vulnerability and potential loss of readership, Anzaldúa makes clear she never wavers in her goal to "change the disciplines, to change the genres, to change how people look at a poem, at theory or at children's books" (252-253). The Chicana authors studied here are deft in their performance, brave in their transgressions, and ultimately groundbreaking in their transformations of genre.

The starting site of this project is Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera,* perhaps the most influential and widely read text authored by a Chicana. It is a work that has sparked new fields of study, border studies, and it has entered and shaped the larger conversation of racial discourse, providing a vocabulary of "*mestiza* consciousness" that situates Chicana experiences in a specific geographical, psychological, and historical space. Perhaps most importantly for this project, *Borderlands* is the early, if not the first, site of Chicana innovation in genre. Even now, some thirty years since its publication, *Borderlands* is a challenge to describe. It is powerful, provocative, and innovative in both its content and form (not coincidental, but intentional—the innovative content requires new forms). Like the mestiza consciousness and the borderlands she describes, Anzaldúa's work is site of contact and miscegenation; it is an interface of genres and languages, a crossroads of the personal and political, a narrative of individual and communal history, and an amalgam of spiritual and theoretical musings.

Anzaldúa's genre innovation is not limited to *Borderlands*. In fact, Cisneros and Moraga along with Anzaldúa, all make important generic innovations across their many writings. In fact, inspired by the observation that a high amount of Chicana authors seemed to work across genre, earlier plans for this project included covering an author's complete body of work. While there would be tremendous benefit to exploring genre in light of an author's oeuvre, not simply an individual text, the scope was simply too broad. While focusing exclusively on one author's generic innovations, say Anzaldúa or Cisneros, would provide tremendous depth of insight, it would miss the opportunity to explore a larger Chicana trend of generic transgressions and innovations as well as the unique genre choices each author makes in her text. Additionally, each chapter is designed to provide to different analytical opportunities using various genre perspectives as points of analysis.

In the chapter on *Borderlands,* I analyze Anzaldúa's work in light of Derrida's discussion of genre as law, arguing Anzaldúa's project employs genre mixing as an analogous support for her theory of mestiza consciousness. Focusing on metaphors of miscegenation, the chapter traces logic of racial purity throughout the history of genre discourse, pausing at Derrida's work, which challenges the law of genre purity and suggests an alternate law of contamination. The chapter bridges Derrida's theorizing to Anzaldúa's work in *Borderlands*, arguing the logic of racial purity Anzaldúa eschews is functionally similar to the laws of genre purity her writing defies. In much the same way that Derrida introduces genre as a law dependent on purity which outlaws mixing, Anzaldúa's text advocates a perspective of plentitude and inclusion described as mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa makes explicit, through her transgression of genre laws, the interconnectedness of laws of genre with laws of racial, linguistic, and heterosexual purity. Functionally, genre in *Borderlands* becomes the performance of Anzaldúa's project. As she deconstructs binary notions of race, language, identity, and geography among others, Anzaldúa deconstructs genre.

The second chapter shifts the focus to Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street,* highlighting the text's generic nonconformity through the scholarly efforts to identify and label the text. *Mango Street*, the first of its kind to break through to mainstream readership, has found its way into classrooms from grade schools through graduate level classes. A remarkably powerful narrative, *Mango Street* contains complex concepts in a deceptively simple form: forty-four brief vignettes all told from the perspective of a young narrator. On an individual level, each of the pieces can be read like poems for the strong imagery and symbolic meaning, but taken together, they read like a novel with an overarching plot of Esperanza's maturation. For its focus on Esperanza's development, *Mango Street* is most frequently given the genre designation of *Bildungsroman.* The chapter explores the patterns and limitations of existing genre scholarship (examining analysis which treats *Mango Street* as *Bildungsroman*) and the ways *Mango Street* draws attention to genre even as it resists simple categorization. The chapter closes with an extended analysis of the field of *Bildungsroman* studies, revealing how even the consensus genre label for *Mango Street* provides further evidence of genre as constructed, rather than natural, and inextricable from dominant ideology.

The final chapter looks at two works by Cherríe Moraga, the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* which she co-edited with Anzaldúa and *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca paso por sus labios.* Whereas the previous two chapters only explored one text each, this chapter examines the innovation in two separate genres: anthology and autobiography. While previous chapters also traced the genre-related trends in the scholarship, this chapter reinforces the importance of applying the genre lens to both macro level (analyzing fields of scholarship) and micro level (close readings) analysis. Given the relative absence of scholarship on *Bridge*, which is itself a genre-related trend wherein anthologies simultaneously enjoy tremendous influence as one of the primary genres in academia yet receive relatively little in the way of scholarly scrutiny, the majority of the chapter focuses on providing close readings of the genre innovations from *Bridge*'s editors and contributors. The remainder of the chapter explores genre trends in the scholarly response to *Loving*, explaining the consistently significant, if not always obvious, role of genre in shaping interpretation and analysis. Further, the chapter offers observations regarding the limits and effectiveness of various genre readings, emphasizing successful strategies for genre analysis which can be exported and applied to other texts.

This dissertation marks a return to foundational Chicana texts and the critical lens of genre discourse. The return is not, however, a return to reading modes which focus on formal aspects to the exclusion of all else. The avoidance of genre, and formal criticism broadly, has for some been directly tied to the perceived conservatism of the approach, a myopic focus on the text without any awareness of the larger milieu. This project reads genre matters in Chicana literature as inextricable from their larger political projects.[3] As David E. Wellbery has so eloquently stated, "Postmodern aesthetic experimentation should be viewed as having an irreducible political dimension. It is inextricably bound up with a critique of domination (qtd. in Hutcheon 4). The writings of Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Moraga are unambiguously political, but this project works to highlight the ways their revolutionary content is paired with its revolutionary form. The subtler layers of resistance and critique, those operating at the level of unconscious meaning, are only visible when attending to genre.

Chapter 1

Tracing Metaphors of Miscegenation in Genre History, Derrida's "The Law of Genre," and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera*

Bridging genre studies with Chicana literature, this chapter traces metaphors of miscegenation in three central areas: throughout genre history, in Derrida's important work "The Law of Genre," and in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera.* It attempts to prove that Anzaldúa's generic innovations provide formal support for her theoretical concepts, and in so doing, counters genre's essentialist logic. The logic of racial purity that Anzaldúa eschews is functionally similar to the laws of genre purity her writing defies. Anzaldúa's text rejects such notions of pure essence and instead advocates a perspective of plentitude and inclusion described as mestiza consciousness. Functionally, genre in *Borderlands* becomes the performance of Anzaldúa's project. As she deconstructs binary notions of race, language, identity, and geography among others, Anzaldúa deconstructs genre. Focusing on genre in *Borderlands* is a strategic corrective to the unfortunate tendency whereby formal and aesthetic qualities are overlooked when examining texts authored women and people of color. Reading *Borderlands* with an attentiveness to genre offers new insights in the ways Anzaldúa, and perhaps Chicana authors more broadly, participates in the social struggle for meaning at the level of discourse.

Modern Genre Theory

To understand the role of genre in meaning-making requires a shift in our thinking about genre. Traditionally, the tendency is to think of genre, primarily or exclusively, in terms of its classificatory function. While this approach is quite common and rooted in a legacy dating back to Aristotle, focusing exclusively on genre's classificatory work is ultimately reductive. Modern genre theory offers an expansive and more dynamic understanding of genre that acknowledges genre's role in placing texts within categories but also seeks to understand genre as part of creative and interpretive processes, where genre both produces and constrains meaning (Frow 2). Genre theory spans centuries, even millennia, seemingly literature's constant companion. Modern genre theory by comparison is more recent, including developments from the mid-nineteenth century until now.

For modern genre theorists, the transition from traditional genre understandings to new ones entails the declining prominence of genre classification. Genre, according Thomas Beebee in his work *The Ideology of Genre*, "is only secondarily an academic enterprise and a matter for literary scholarship. Primarily, genre is the precondition for the creation and the reading of texts" (Beebee 250). Beebee's citing genre as a precondition for creation and reading texts builds off work by other genre scholars who have claimed genre as integral to interpretation. Hans Robert Jauss famously described genre as providing a "horizon of expectation," highlighting the way genre knowledge precedes the reading of a text and impacts, in varying degrees, interpretation (131). E.D. Hirsch Jr. in *Validity in Interpretation* sees meaning not as dependent on but inseparable from genre, writing "all understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound" (76). Modern genre theory, therefore, understands genre as having a more powerful role in creative and interpretive processes.

Additionally, while genre's power is considered more pervasive and diffuse, modern genre theorists are careful to denaturalize genre. No longer are genres thought of as natural essences, deviating from a tradition originating with Aristotle's work in *Poetics* and steadily continuing through the early twentieth century. As Adena Rosmarin in *The Power of Genre* has written, genre is best thought of as "pragmatic rather than natural, as defined rather than found, and as used rather than described" (25). For Rosmarin, genre is "the most powerful explanatory tool available to the literary critic," allowing metaphoric readings of one text in light of another; genre is utilitarian tool not a timeless truth of texts (39). This shift is perhaps most significant because it moves genre from a fixed essence to an element of textuality, which in turn transitions genre analysis from reading to discover to what genre a text "belongs" to reading for "an awareness of how the subtle ties of texts are generically formed and governed" (Frow101).

In correlation to its denaturalizing genre, modern genre theory acknowledges the constructed nature of genre and its embeddedness in culture. As Frow has claimed, "Genres have no essence: they have historically changing values" (134). When society shifts, those changes are felt even in genre.[1] For Todorov, genre is of interest to historians and ethnographers because of "each epoch has its own system of genres, which stands in some relation to the dominant ideology, and so on. Like any other institution, *genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong*" (emphasis added 19). Bakhtin, although taking a different approach than Todorov, also points to genre as being a socially-constructed, culturally-embedded system of meaning. Bakhtin describes the process of learning genre as akin to the process of learning language, gaining mastery of structure and composition "not from dictionaries and grammars" but from the everyday speech we hear and then replicate (90). By comparing genre acquisition to language acquisition, Bakhtin makes genre a matter of cultural fluency. What connects Todorov and Bakhtin is their observations that genre is enmeshed in its cultural context and is not exempt from ideological influences. In fact, because genre is intertwined in the cultural context that births it, studying genre can reveal cultural values embedded in a seemingly neutral system of categorization. As Rosmarin has claimed, genre designations reveal less about textual traits than they do about what literary traits are considered valuable (39).

What may be modern genre theory's most useful contribution is the way it makes genre's role in creative and interpretive processes visible. This is not to say that genre was invisible in traditional genre theory, far from it. It was simply visible as categories and formal characteristics but invisible in its shaping the creative process and framing interpretations. For example, when reading (and interpreting), we import what we know of genre rules from our education and previous experience, and those rules tell us how to read a text. A sentence in a poem is read far differently than a sentence in a novel, or further still words on a billboard. This difference in reading is a difference of genre. Simply knowing the genre of a text provides the reader with considerable information. Significantly, reading genre has traditionally been an unconscious process and therefore largely invisible, with much of interpretation dependent on information provided by genre, seemingly without our knowledge. Frow describes the murky relationship between genre and interpretation, claiming the genre framework constitutes “the unsaid of texts,” and provides a network of information “which lies latent in a shadowy region from which we draw it as we need it” (83). Further, this shadowy information is “information that we may not know we know” and which is “not directly available for scrutiny” (Frow 83). Frow, along with other modern genre scholars, points to the unconscious, invisible qualities of genre as its most powerful. As Rosalie Colie has suggested, so much of genre boundaries are already understood that “a great deal need *not* be said about them,” and Frow, commenting on Colie’s statement adds, “To speak of genre is to speak of what need not be said because it is already so forcefully presupposed” (cited in Frow 93).

The invisibility of genre in meaning-making is precisely what makes Anzaldúa’s writing in *Borderlands* all the more important. She makes genre an explicit part of semiosis. By transgressing and transforming genre Anzaldúa, and others, invite their readers to engage on a level deeper than content and consider the multiple forces shaping culture, identity, and voice.

In order to understand Anzaldúa’s monumental work to counteract millennia’s long racial logic embedded in genre thinking, it is necessary to place *Borderlands* within a context of genre discourse. By tracing metaphors of miscegenation through genre history, Derrida’s “The Law of Genre” and ultimately in *Borderlands,* Anzaldúa’s project becomes newly impressive, illustrating the need to apply genre analysis to Chicana literature.

Genre History

In looking at the history of genre theory, there is a clear trajectory, beginning with a belief in essence and emerging in more recent thinking about genre as historically bound expectations of and associations with a text. Classical understandings of genre begin with Plato and are developed by Aristotle. It is in Aristotle's text *Poetics*, where he famously designates three genres of poetry: epic, lyric, and drama. His clarity and descriptive approach have appealed to and influenced scholars and readers for more than two thousand years, and yet it is the legacy of what I am designating "genre essentialism" that is most significant. Writing in *Poetics*, Aristotle describes his project as follows, "I propose to treat of Poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each" (1). Genre theory begins with Aristotle asserting genre essentialism, that texts do contain specific, discrete qualities which make them recognizably different from each other. Genre essentialism becomes the abiding trait of genre discourse, only recently being called into question by modern genre scholars in the last decades of the twentieth century. Aristotle's legacy and the impact of genre essentialism cannot be overstated.

Writing three centuries after Aristotle, Greek philosopher Horace further entrenches the authority of the Aristotelian approach by linking genre essentialism with notions of decorum, writing: "Let each form of poetry occupy the proper place allotted to it" (cited in Altman 3). Whereas Aristotle's approach was one of description, Horace's became one of prescription, expecting writers to adhere to the literary models designed by critics such as himself and determining textual quality based on its adherence to genre expectations. By the time Horace is writing, the belief in essential genre characteristics is fixed. Genre is an unquestioned reality. Just as there are different kinds of animals, there are different genres. Genre titles are merely designating the differences already evidenced. When what he perceived as the natural boundaries of genre were being violated, Horace responded with ire describing genre mixing as unnatural as crossbreeding: "it does not go to the extend that savage should mate with tame, that serpents should couple with birds, or lambs with tigers" (cited in Altman 4). It is this metaphor of miscegenation, linking violations of genre boundaries with crossbreeding, (which seems to Horace to be both inconceivable and repulsive) where Horace unwittingly exposes the logic of purity underlying both race and genre.

Over a millennium after his writing, the Aristotelian doctrine of the division and natural essence of genres, espoused by Horace and others, would serve as the cornerstone of the Neoclassical critical system, exerting direct influence over practice. During this time, genre as a classificatory system would gain its most significant reinforcement through its co-optation of scientific discourse. Drawing from the work of Carolus Linnaeus, who was considered the father of modern taxonomy and most known for his development of the binomial naming system, genre studies claimed for itself greater power through the performance of scientific objectivity. Like the butterfly in natural history that could be studied and categorized based on its observable characteristics, literary texts were believed to be easily recognized and ordered by genre. At this moment, genre essentialism is codified and naturalized. To talk about a text in terms of its generic traits is simply to point out observable facts.

It is especially important to note that the emergence of so-called "race science" coincides with the height of thinking about genre as a taxonomy. Although now recognized as spurious and far from objective science, these pseudo sciences emerged adopting procedures of natural history and making scientific distinctions between races by things such as skin color, skull shape, facial features, and the like, resulting in claims of natural superiority and inferiority of beauty, intellect, and morality.[2] The same generative power that propelled the emergence race "science" inflects the taxonomy of genre thinking.

The Neoclassical revival of Aristotelian genre essentialism and the infusion of scientific discourse into genre studies would remain unquestioned until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when Romanticism emerged championing art as individual expression. Writing in 1797, German theorist Friedrich Schlegal represents the spirit of Romanticism's critique, claiming "every poem is a genre unto itself," recommending the abolition of all genre classifications (cited in Duff 5). The Romantics resented the constraints of genre categories on artistic expression. Yet, despite the protests of generic constraints, the genre system and its logic of genre essentialism remained intact. In fact, at the end of the nineteenth century, genre essentialism is once again influenced and supported by science. In his multivolume work *The Evolution of Genres*, French literary historian Ferdinand Brunetière adopts Darwinian concepts to explain genre changes, demonstrating a certainty in genres as if they were biological species. In this marshaling of scientific discourse, Brunetière provides the scientific underpinnings to the already existing model of genre essentialism. Rick Altman, film and genre scholar, describes the impact of Brunetière and the scientific justification of genre study saying, it “serves to convince theorists that genres actually exist, that they have distinct borders, that they can be firmly identified, that they operate systematically, that their functioning can be observed and scientifically described, and that they evolve according to fixed and identifiable trajectory” (Altman 5).

In much the same way that Romanticism protested the constraints of genre in the nineteenth century, Modernism in the early twentieth century questioned literary tradition and focused on innovations to literary form. Despite Modernism’s questioning of traditional form, the period also saw genre essentialism reinforced with the emergence of structuralism and Russian formalism, the latter most associated with Vladimir Propp and his work on the plot structure of fairytales. In his essay “Fairy Tale Transformation,” Propp compares his work as a folklorist to that of a naturalist, saying, “both deal with species and varieties that are essentially the same” (51). Despite the often contentious relation of formalists to structuralists (Propp and Leví-Strauss) and even between fellow structuralists (Frye and Todorov), the twentieth century genre disputes focus largely on the terms and divisions of genre categories not on their essence or existence. Perhaps the best example of this dynamic, is Gérard Genette’s 1979 *Architext*, considered by many to be one of the most important works in modern genre studies. In it Genette contends that centuries of scholars have misread Aristotle conflating two “logically dissimilar categories”: mode and genre (Duff 210). Aristotle and his genre essentialist approach is enshrined, the system of classification and the logic of purity go unquestioned, and the debate centers on who can best classify.

Derrida's "The Law of Genre"

It is in this context, where genre categories are debated but the larger classification system remains intact, that Derrida's lecture and later essay entitled "The Law of Genre" emerges. Delivered mere months after Genette's *Architext* is published, Derrida references Genette's work, but takes an altogether different tack. Instead of claiming, as Genette does, that scholars have for centuries incorrectly interpreted the genre categories outlined by Aristotle, Derrida investigates whether genre categories are even possible. David Duff in *Modern Genre Theory* describes Derrida's work in "The Law of Genre" as a re-enactment of the Romantic revolt against the Neoclassical conception of genre, a re-enactment "rendered necessary by what Derrida plainly saw as the totalizing claims of modern structuralist thought" (15). However, to read Derrida as simply reenacting the Romantic protest of genres as constraining creative production misses Derrida's deconstruction of genre essentialism and the larger system of categorization.

Derrida opens his lecture, with four short statements: "Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres. I repeat: genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix them" (55). With those arresting opening lines, Derrida foregrounds the shaping power of the genre system and then proceeds to dismantle the system by naming its underlying logic and proving its instability and illogic. The very notion of genre, for Derrida is wrapped up in rules and regulations. He writes, "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: 'Do', 'Do not' says 'genre', the word 'genre', the figure, the voice, or the law of genre" (56). The response to the very word "genre" puts boundaries, codes, and regulations in place.

Unlike those before him, Derrida does not resort to using metaphors of miscegenation to provide analogous support for genre categories. In fact, the piece ultimately calls into question the very system of genre. That is not to say that metaphor is absent in the piece—far from it. Derrida's entire argument is based on one central metaphor: genre is law. By equating genre with law, Derrida makes both the shaping power of genre and its constructed nature visible. Whereas traditional genre theory employed metaphors to give genre categories the ability to seem natural and conceal their constitutive power, Derrida's use of metaphor does the reverse. By describing genre as a law forbidding mixing, a law governed by a logic that demands purity and discrete differences, Derrida exposes what was for centuries unremarkable: genre's essentialist logic.

Miscegenation, ultimately, does factor into Derrida's framework in his characterization of the genre law as first and foremost a law of purity, a law against mixing. Derrida expands his explanation, emphasizing the imperative not to mix genres saying, "If a genre is what it is, or if it is supposed to be what is destined to be by virtue of its *telos,* then 'genres are not to be mixed'; one should not mix genres, one owes it to oneself not to get mixed up in mixing genres. Or, more rigorously, genres should not intermix" (57). Given Derrida's citing of genre law as essentially a law forbidding mixing, it could be said that the law of genre is an anti-miscegenation law, and while the law forbidding mixing, refers to genres, Derrida's writing makes the racial connotations if not explicit, certainly resonant.

After establishing genre as a law forbidding mixing, Derrida proceeds to destabilize the genre system and its attendant requirement for purity. Derrida's deconstruction rests in his observation that at the heart of the law of genre is another law, "a law of impurity" or a "principle of contamination" which registers the impossibility of not mixing genres and understands the textual relationship to genre as "participation without belonging" (59). In other words, the law of genre is both undone and fulfilled by a law of impurity. Derrida points out the function of genre as law, its conceptual instability, and offers the law of impurity (a metaphor of miscegenation) as a far more inclusive alternative.

Derrida's contribution to genre studies appears subtle but is profound. He exposes genre as having existed functionally as a law when all the while it has been considered natural. Even the protests of the Romanticists, which centered on critiques of genre as constraining creativity and demands for greater artistic freedom, did not make explicit how the constraints of genre were a natural byproduct of genre as law. The Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, writing at the turn of the twentieth century seems the closest to such awareness. Considered the inheritor of Romanticism's anti-genre thinking and genre's most strident opponent, Croce described the genre system as little more than ancient "superstition" which "survives to contaminate modern literary history" (cited in Duff 5). According to Croce, theories of genre "especially when codified into definitions and rules, impoverish artistic creation and criticism alike, inhibiting originality, setting up erroneous standards of judgment, and belying the tendency of true art to break rules and violate norms" (25). Clearly, Croce believes categorization in regards to literary forms is damaging to the creative force of the author and to the potential interpretation and analysis of the reader.

What grounds Croce's argument, however, is his belief that the kinds of activity involved in writing literature and categorizing it are two fundamentally different things. So, to engage a work of art from a perspective of categorizing is at odds with the very nature of the text. Croce objects to genre's constraints on creativity, but he grounds his critique of genre systems in his philosophy of intuitive and logical knowledge. For Croce, these two types of knowledge are independent and irreducible to one another. Croce considers artistic forms and creativity to be intuitive knowledge and genre categories to be logical knowledge. Therefore, to discuss a work of art in terms of genre is thus to falsify its nature to make a "category mistake" (25). Croce's work couples a critique of genre constraints with attempts to demonstrate the illogic of the genre system. Unfortunately, the latter part of Croce's approach does not seem to be remembered in the legacy of his work. He is remembered in genre history as reviving the Romantic protest, very much the image of the idealistic artist refusing limits; Croce's critique and logical reasons are remembered only as complaint.

In light of Croce's unsuccessful attempts to dislodge the genre system, Derrida's maneuverings here are instructive. Avoiding complaint or critique altogether, Derrida's framing of the law of genre appears purely descriptive, dispassionate even. In fact, the opening lines of the speech ("Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres") become in Derrida's performance a playful puzzle of interpretation, ultimately demonstrating the ways those utterances have various possible genre-specific, interpretations. Rather than offering a polemic, Derrida defines genre as a system based on one rule: the absolute non-mixing of genres: “Genres are not to be mixed.” The second sentence “I will not mix genres” which follows Derrida’s initial proclamation forbidding mixing becomes a statement of acquiescence pursuant to the law of genre. As Derrida explains, the second sentence might be interpreted as “a vow of obedience, a docile response to the injunction emanating from the law of genre,” an oath whereby “I promise you that I will not mix genres, and, though this act of pledging utter faithfulness to my commitment, I will be faithful to the law of genre, since, by its very nature, the law invites and commits me in advance not to mix genres” (57). What is crucial about Derrida’s description is that the genre system (its categories and meanings) cannot be separate from the law of genre; the imperative of non-mixing is as central to genre as is the notion of categories. Additionally, one’s relationship to genre is circumscribed. Derrida’s description of the genre law as inviting and committing in advance pierces the illusion of one’s relationship to genre being voluntary participation, and although the description of genre as law seems to invite censure, Derrida is careful to avoid explicit critique.

Derrida’s work can be understood as consisting of two elements: description and deconstruction. Both elements correspond to one of Derrida’s laws. In the law of genre, the law forbidding mixing, Derrida describes the system of genre as law-giving. In the second law, what he refers to as “the law of the law of genre” or the “law of contamination,” Derrida deconstructs the first law. The opening statements discussed above, are first interpreted as law proclaimed and obedience promised. Alternately, Derrida suggests the statement could be considered non-binding, containing no promise of fidelity if said in a context of a “wager, a challenge, and impossible bet—in short, a situation that would exceed the matter of merely engaging a commitment from me” (57). Seemingly buried a few pages into the piece is the conceptual unraveling of genre: “And suppose for a moment that it were impossible not to mix genres. What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity of a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the *a priori* of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order, and reason?” (57). In a maneuver worthy of a magician, Derrida reveals that law of contamination as the spoliation of the law of genre, the former nested within the latter, rotting from the inside out.

Using the language of purity and its opposite, Derrida continues the tradition of genre scholarship. What differs, however, is significant. In previous genre scholarship, genre essentialism and its logic of purity underwrote genre thought. When language of contamination and impurity were used, it was censorious, a designation of literary failure. For Derrida, contamination is not a label of judgment to be placed on texts that fail genre purity standards; rather, it is the destruction of the entire system. “The Law of Genre” and its dual laws, reveal genre as a system built on purity, a system always already failing because such purity is impossible. In spite of the fact that Derrida uses a string of descriptors to describe the law of contamination— “internal division of the trait, impurity, corruption, contamination, decomposition, perversion, deformation, even cancerization, generous proliferation, or degenerescence” (57)—which all seem disapproving, he eventually expands his description to include more positive connotations. To the law of contamination, he appends the following, describing the law as a law "of abounding, of *excess,* the law of participation without membership" (63). Carefully avoiding the temptation to critique the law of genre and its requirements of purity as constraining, Derrida manages to describe genre in such a way that makes its legal function irreducible, reveals the internal instability of genre system (the law of contamination at the heart of the law of genre), and subtly champions the advantage of contamination, its excess and abundance. In moves strikingly similar, Derrida and Anzaldúa challenge logics of purity, racial and generic, and offer up alternatives based on inclusion.

Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza

Throughout *Borderlands* Anzaldúa uses a variety of metaphors, ranging from the two titular metaphors, borderlands and mestiza, to food and language. These metaphors are foundational to her conceptual paradigm and have become some of the most memorable, theoretically rich elements of the text. Significantly, these metaphors are also either explicit miscegenation metaphors or metaphors which provide support for Anzaldúa's concepts. Anzaldúa's most explicit, and most central, metaphor of miscegenation is the mestiza. The mestiza, being racially and culturally mixed, faces the difficult task of navigating worlds and identities that are often incompatible, perhaps even mutually exclusive. It is through the text's exploration of the mestiza, the literal embodiment of miscegenation, where Anzaldúa challenges the logic of racial purity directly.

Instead of an essentialist logic based on exclusion and discrete difference, hers is a logic of inclusion and absorption. Borrowing José Vasconcelos' idea of a cosmic race, which emerged in opposition to the theory of a pure Aryan race and the policy of racial purity, Anzaldúa describes the notion of a cosmic race and her own mestiza consciousness as a theory of inclusivity (99). Anzaldúa understands that the existing racial system built on exclusion and differences breaks down in the face of inclusion.[3] It is important to note, however, that Anzaldúa is not theorizing racial inclusion in the abstract. "Mestiza" applies to actual people with felt challenges. Anzaldúa's vividly describes the chaotic nature of mestiza identity, writing:

> Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, and inner war…. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque,* a cultural collision. (100)

The transformation of the mestiza, a fact of racial mixing, to mestiza consciousness, is a painful alchemy Anzaldúa describes the process as turning "ambivalence into something else," a "new consciousness," and though it is a process of intense pain, it sources its energy "from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm" (79-80). The mestiza who has developed a tolerance for ambiguity, writes Anzaldúa, "operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned" (101). It is a consciousness, an ontology even, birthed from survival strategies. For Anzaldúa, "In our very flesh, (r)evolution works out the clash of cultures" (103).

The opening lines of Anzaldúa's "To live in the borderlands means you," a poem which perhaps best condenses the complex musings of the prose portions of *Borderlands* (especially "Towards a Mestiza Consciousness") into a portable poem, makes the racial aspect the initial focus of mestiza experience. First defined in negative terms as not racially pure, the opening lines of poetry read as a continuation of the title "To live in the borderlands means you": "are neither hispana india negra espanola / ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed." Here Anzaldúa makes explicit there is no pure racial or ethnic identity which applies; being white or black, Latin American, Indian or Spanish is inaccurate. Rather, it is the designations marking racial mixing which pertain. Further, the mixed race status in the first and second stanza are characterized by the conflict and rejection, by being unhomed: "caught in the crossfire between camps / while carrying all five races on your back / not knowing which side to turn to, run from." The psychological aspect, which Anzaldúa refers to as an "inner war" (100) in "Towards a Mestiza Consciousness" is also present in the poem with the image of "carrying five races on your back" evoking the cultural baggage the mestiza bears. The cross-cultural conflict is a battle staged externally— "caught in the crossfire between camps" as well as internally— "knowing that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years, / is no longer speaking with you."

The third stanza of the poem suggest a further mixing, but the proclamation of "you're a …forerunner of a new race," takes an unexpected turn from all of the racial mixing described in the preceding stanzas. This new section introduces what Ian Barnard identifies in his "Gloria Anzaldúa's Queer Mestizaje" as the expanded meaning of identity terminology, where "class is raced and sexualized; sexuality must carry racial content, as race implies sexuality; and so on" (42). The new race birthed in the Borderlands is "half-and half—both woman and man, neither— / a new gender." Anzaldúa resists the binary racial categories and puts forward the mestiza identity, but she also resists a purely racial, even mix-raced, identity in her vision of the new race.

Another frequent metaphor of mixing that shows up throughout the prose and poetry in *Borderlands* is food. At times the mixing of cuisines serves as the evidence of cultural contact: "To live in the Borderlands means to / put chile in the borscht / eat whole wheat *tortillas*." Food, or more specifically the availability of ethnic cuisine, is often an aspect of cultural contact with which people are quite comfortable. Urban centers inhabited by diverse populations are appreciated for the accessibility of various cuisines. It is easy, through the consumption of food, to have the appearance of being cultured without the inconvenience of significant interactions with those culturally different. However, Anzaldúa's reference to food in the lines mentioned above is partnered with the final line of the stanza, which ground them in the grave concerns of life in the Borderlands, where the physical safety is not guaranteed because of the reality of "be[ing] stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints." For the readers for whom the extent of contact is at the superficial level of food, Anzaldúa reminds them of the seriousness of those living in the Borderlands whose very bodies are policed.

In "Towards a Mestiza Consciousness" the seventh and final chapter in the prose portion of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa offers a rather extensive food metaphor to illustrate miscegenation: corn. Although rarely, if ever, mentioned in the scholarly analysis, Anzaldúa ties her discussion of mestiza consciousness to corn and its transformation into corn tortillas over the course of the section "*La encrucijada/*The Crossroads." Before introducing this metaphor, the first few sections of the chapter cover Anzaldúa's concept of mestiza consciousness (based in an understanding of racial identity from the perspective of inclusion rather than exclusion) as well as the psychological consequences of being mestiza: the internal conflict that produce "a tolerance for ambiguity" (101).

In "*La encrucijada/*The Crossroads," Anzaldúa works to connect the physical and psychological realities of mestizaje to the level of consciousness, to the spiritual, and does so by a complex set of genre maneuverings and a central (albeit shifting) metaphor. Before focusing on the food metaphor, I want to spend some time detailing the portions leading up to the metaphor given how Anzaldúa weaves in and out of poems and impressionistic writing in her analysis. The section opens with a poem describing a religious ritual where a chicken is sacrificed at a crossroads:

> A chicken is being sacrificed
>   At a crossroads, a simple mound of earth
> a mudshrine for *Eshu,*
>   *Yoruba* god of indeterminacy,
> who blesses her choice of path.
>   She begins her journey. (102)

The poem is followed by prose, the first sentence of which is in Spanish: "*Su cuerpo es una bocacalle*" (Your body is a turning/entrance to a street, my trans., 102). Here the bodily metaphor is made more pronounced with the Spanish word, a combination of "boca" meaning mouth and "calle" meaning street. The Spanish speaker would see the play on words and understand the body, when described as "bocacalle," is doubly evoked. The one sentence in Spanish is followed by a sentence in English proclaiming the transformation of "la *mestiza*" from "being the sacrificial goat to becoming the officiating priestess at the crossroads" (102). Here, the woman is no longer the victim but the empowered practitioner. The short section ends, and a brief line break separates the poem and the above statements from the subsequent paragraphs in which Anzaldúa foreshadows the extended metaphor:

> As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) … I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. *Soy un amasamiento.* I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings (102-103).

I have included a large portion of the section for two reasons: in order to understand the metaphor in the context of Anzaldúa's larger analysis as well as to see how the oft-cited portions are placed right alongside the metaphors which are crucial to Anzaldúa's discussion. The first portion of the passage is what draws most scholarly attention, but it is the second half that is actually the focus of the chapter. The rejection described in the first portion is the context from which the new mestiza consciousness emerges.

As Anzaldúa heralds the arrival of a new, non-binary culture, with new symbols, meanings and ways of understanding, she offers her own metaphor as an example. These metaphors function as the performance of mestiza consciousness, demonstrations of transformation at the ontological level. Amidst the portions cited above, is the relatively inconspicuous line: "*Soy un amasamiento.* I am an act of kneading" (103). The domestic metaphor is subtle and unexpected, easily overlooked given the grand statements surrounding it. It brings to mind a woman working dough, kneading the ingredients together by touch. While subtle, the image is important enough to be written twice, first in Spanish and then English. Further, the imagery of kneading anticipates the extended metaphor to follow.

As before, Anzaldúa pairs sweeping statements of her philosophy on mestiza consciousness with illustrative metaphor. However, the prose chapters are not linear but are more elliptical, with sections often opening with a quote, poem, song lyric or aphorism followed by some combination of personal or communal memory and what might in other texts be treated as the argument or central analysis. From the poem opening the section where Anzaldúa references religious ritual, readers anticipate the connection of Anzaldúa's ideas, but the nonlinear nature of the piece requires trust and resourcefulness in connecting the ideas. It is not that Anzaldúa's work is inscrutable; in fact, the further into *Borderlands* one reads, the more one is able to appreciate the beautiful logic and rhythm Anzaldúa creates. While readers may be trained to expect a clear argument followed by reasons, explanation and evidence, *Borderlands* often evokes an image (and its attendant set of feelings or experiences) and then connects those impressions to Anzaldúa's philosophical musings (no less rigorous because they are not immediately grasped) and follows those up with illustrations. Although not identical to the familiar pattern of argument and evidence, there is still some resemblance, but Anzaldúa seems intent on engaging more than reason, striving to connect the reader to her or his emotions using metaphors that operate on an unconscious level. As Erika Aigner-Varoz has demonstrated in her original and highly percipient article "Metaphors of a Mestiza Consciousness: Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera,*" metaphor is central to Anzaldúa's work, not merely as an explanatory tool but as demonstration of new ways of thinking:

> Anzaldúa asserts in her text that because metaphor has the power to restructure the collective unconscious through both linguistic and visual means, it is therefore possible for her to alter the unconscious of the reading masses with her own metaphorical constructions. Anzaldúa's position is thus one of both appropriation and resistance. (47)

Anzaldúa embraces the power of metaphor and makes extensive use of them in *Borderlands.*

In the final passage before her extended metaphor of corn, Anzaldúa uses a series of comparisons to explain "spiritual *mestizaje*" (103). She writes of the transformative process as alchemy, as soul work taking place in bodies: "In our very flesh, (r)evolution works out the clash of cultures. It makes us crazy constantly, but if the center holds, we've made some kind of evolutionary step forward. *Nuestra alma el trabajo,* the opus, the great alchemical work; spiritual *mestizaje*" (103). Using multiple references—scientific, musical, and metaphysical—Anzaldúa further expands her discussion of mestiza identity beyond the physical and psychological to include the spiritual.

Throughout *Borderlands* Anzaldúa refuses the traditional splits of Western culture: mind/body, reason/emotion, and material/spiritual. The spiritual is as much a part of her experiences and her conceptual framework as is her historical and theoretical analysis (expressed in prose and poetry), and it is inseparable from her writing. In fact, in the previous chapter "*Tlilli, Tlapalli/*The Path of the Red and Black Ink" Anzaldúa describes the power of story as shamanistic. Intertwined with recollections of her own childhood spent listening to her parents and grandparents tell stories and Anzaldúa in turn telling stories to her sister every night, Anzaldúa's recounts the Indians (whom she refers to as "my people") and the role of story in their sacred rituals and daily practices (88). The precolonial culture offers Anzaldúa a model for a more integrated understanding of the world, given that "the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life. The religious, social and aesthetical purposes of art were all intertwined" (88). More importantly, for fully grasping the importance of metaphor and storytelling in the context of "spiritual *mestizaje*" is the way Anzaldúa writes of the author as shaman and the shamanistic quality of story: "The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener to something or someone else is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is a *nahual*, a shaman" (88). Anzaldúa carefully lays the groundwork throughout the preceding chapters, but given the richness of the text as a whole, it is easy to miss the importance of metaphor and storytelling overall.

It is Anzaldúa as shaman who writes in the seventh chapter of the crossroads, the sacrifice and the priestess and who provides her readers with an extended metaphor of mestiza as corn, which shows up as multiple, connected and transforming metaphors: as an act of kneading, corn, corn tortillas, as well as the instruments for making corn tortillas. It is Anzaldúa as *nahual* who writes first in prose, later followed by a poem which reads like a chant, in English and in Spanish who seems to animate the inanimate through her words. In order to discuss her use fluid use of metaphor and its transformation of the identification between the corn, tortilla, and woman, I will include the final sections of "La encrucijada/The Crossroads" below:

> Indigenous like corn, like corn, the *mestiza* is a product of crossbreeding, designed for preservation under a variety of conditions. Like an ear of corn—a female seed-bearing organ—the *mestiza* is tenacious, tightly wrapped in the husks of her culture. Like kernels she clings to the cob; with thick stalks and strong brace roots, she holds tight to the earth—she will survive the crossroads. (103)

The comparison is made explicit. Using simile, the mestiza is repeatedly described as "like corn" because both are indigenous, cross-bred, and enduring. In the last clause, "she will survive the crossroads," Anzaldúa reconnects the reader to both the section title ("La encrucijada/The Crossroads") and to the opening poem describing the mestiza as officiant of ritual sacrifice at a crossroads.

In the following section, Anzaldúa shifts the focus on corn and its features as representation of the mestiza to describing the process of making corn tortillas. Anzaldúa writes: "*Lavando y remojando el maíz en agua de cal despojando el pellejo. Moliendo, mixteando, amasando, hacienda tortillas de masa.* She steeps the corn in lime, it swells, softens. With stone roller on *metate*, she grinds he corn, then grinds again. She kneads and moulds the dough, pats the round balls into *tortillas*" (103). The opening Spanish sentences emphasize the process, with the use of the present participle form; the woman is washing and soaking the corn in lime water, stripping off its husk, then mixing, grinding, and kneading the the masa for tortillas. The English lines that follow mirror much of what was included in the Spanish preceding it, but the tense is slightly different: in English she "steeps," "grinds," "kneads," "moulds [sic]," and "pats," with a slight emphasis in the Spanish version of the process and labor and the English version slightly more of a narrative recounting.

Given Anzaldúa's resistance to traditional forms and methods, it should not be as surprising to find the spiritual mestizaje Anzaldúa describes as alchemy not written about in abstract or mystical language, but demonstrated in a simple domestic task: making corn tortillas. The metaphor of corn (and its transformations) not only serve as conceptual illustrations in her writing, but they reflect the non-dualistic thinking, seemingly harkening back to pre-colonial ways of being. The alchemical process of spiritual mestizaje is illustrated by the image of a woman making corn tortillas, with a final poem reading as a meditation:

> We are the porous rock in the stone *metate*
> squatting on the ground.
> We are the rolling pin, *el maíz y agua,*
> *la masa harina. Somos el amasijo.*
> *Somos lo molido en el metate*.
> We are the *comal* sizzling hot,
> the hot *tortilla,* the hungry mouth.
> We are the course rock.
> We are the grinding motion,
> the mixed potion, *somos el molcajete*.
> We are the pestle, the *comino, ajo, pimiento*,
> We are the *chile colorado,* the green shoot that cracks the rock.
> We will abide. (103-104)

This section, beginning and ending with a poem, written in English and Spanish, containing complex philosophical musings alongside descriptions of everyday practices, is consistent with the approach throughout the seven prose chapters. Anzaldúa opens with a poem with provocative imagery of animal sacrifice and ends with the seemingly mundane elevated to the level of ritual. Or perhaps put differently, Anzaldúa works to dismantle binary systems and the Western tradition of splitting the sacred and secular, not elevating the mundane to the sacred but seeing them as inextricable and on the same level as each other. Throughout the poem, the repetition of “We are” and “somos” is used throughout to identify the as belonging to a group. The poem further identifies the mestiza with the final product (tortilla and *chile colorado*), the consumer ("the hungry mouth") as well as with the various cooking instruments (the mortar and pestle, the cookware, and the seasoning), ignoring separations of subject and object, animate and inanimate. In doing so, Anzaldúa further substantiates what she wrote in the immediately preceding section "A Tolerance for Ambiguity": "The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended" (102).

Again, cyclical rather than linear in her writing, Anzaldúa repeatedly returns to images and concepts, expanding and demonstrating ideas. The final two lines offer an additional image of the mestiza's resilience ("the green shoot that cracks the rock") and the direct proclamations ("We will abide") which echoes the "she will survive the crossroads" of the section before the poem and forecasts the final lines of the chapter (which is also the close of the prose section of *Borderlands*), claiming the same type of endurance for the land:

> This land was Mexican once
>   was Indian always
>   and is.
>   And will be again (113)

These lines close out both the chapter and the entire the prose section, even as the use of poetry seems to resist closure but rather suggest a continuation to (or even interpenetration of) the poetry sections of *Borderlands.* The proclamation of survival and persistence of these lines harkens back to earlier sections, and explicitly repeats with slight variation a stanza from the first pages of Ch. 1 "The Homeland, Aztlán / *El otro*

México. The lines are identically replicated with the exception of the final line. In the first iteration, the line starts left of the preceding line and include a gap between the first and second words: "And   will be again" (25). The slight pause in the first iteration is gone in the final repeat, and the indent of each line increases, seemingly suggesting any hesitation has been remedied in the interim.

Considering the rich complexity of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa's use of corn as metaphor, one of several metaphors of miscegenation used throughout, is easily overlooked. Yet, Anzaldúa's discussion of spiritual mestizaje is both illustrated and performed in her extended musings on the corn and its transformation to corn tortillas. to serve as elaboration and performance of her concept of spiritual mestizaje.

Corn provides powerful, but this time dark, symbolism in the penultimate stanza of "To live in the Borderlands means you" discussed earlier. Whereas the mixing of ethnic cuisines— "*chile* in the borsht" and "whole wheat tortillas"— serve as relatively benign examples of cultural contact, which are also metaphors of miscegenation, the poem continues with multiple descriptions of life in Borderlands as perilous. Anzaldúa depicts the fight to resist the inclination towards self-harm ("resist the gold elixir…the pull of the gun barrel / the rope crushing the hollow of your throat") and alludes to border life as akin to life in a warzone:

> In the borderlands
> you are the battleground
> where enemies are kin to each other;
> you are at home, a stranger,
> the border disputes have been settled
> the volley of shots have shattered the truce
> you are wounded, lost in action
> dead, fighting back

Corn becomes metaphor of horrific assimilation, describing in graphic detail the process of corn becoming white bread, a transformation in stark contrast to her earlier descriptions of corn tortillas, with the "razor white teeth" of the mill wanting "to shred off":

> your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart
> pound you pinch you roll you out
> smelling like white bread but dead;

Between the two, there is the image of the spiritual mestizaje compared to the alchemy of making corn tortillas and the counter image of the violent destruction of dominant culture which wants to transform the corm into something in no way resembling itself. In both cases corn is the symbol of the mestiza in the process of transformation, with the self-fashioning glimpsed in the making of corn tortilla and the hostile external pressures of assimilation to dominant culture is visible in the violent description of the white bread.

Borderlands

In addition to the mestiza and food metaphors, other supporting metaphors proliferate in the text, which offer context and evidence of miscegenation. The other titular metaphor, borderlands, is the site of cultural contact and racial mixing, the geographic location wherein miscegenation occurs and mestiza identity is created. Anzaldúa describes the U.S./Mexico border as a "1,950 mile long open wound" in one of the stanzas from her opening verse section of the chapter:

> 1,950 mile-long open wound
>   dividing a *pueblo*, a culture,
>   running down the length of my body,
>   staking fence rods in my flesh,
>   splits me   splits me

me raja   me raja (24)

In the previous stanzas, the speaker of the poem is described as interacting with the border landscape— "I walk   through the hole in the fence / to the other side" (24). The speaker touches the rusted wire and "press[es] [her] hand to the steel curtain" of the "chainlink fence crowned with rolled barbed wire—" (24). But in the description of the wound, the speaker and the land become one and the same, suggesting the wound is experienced by both border dweller and the land itself, with the nearly two-thousand mile wound marking land that is personified. The images of the stanza—the open wound, the flesh impaled and body split— are disturbing and violent. Anzaldúa leaves no question as to the damage inflicted by the border. However, the identification between the speaker and the land takes on a new, devastating meaning with the dual resonances of the Spanish line. The standard translation for "me raja" works as a repetition for the English line preceding it: "splits me   splits me," with implications of cracks in a surface or gashes in skin clearly violent. It is the slang translation meaning "vagina," or more accurately "cunt," which amplifies the image of violated land to that of rape.

In the prose section that follows, Anzaldúa continues her description of the "*una herida abierta* [an open wound]" emphasizing the border as the source of cultural contact and site of mixing. Like the mestiza, the borderlands metaphor is rooted in specifics of location and historical legacy and is marked by suffering.[4] Anzaldúa describes the border as an open wound where "the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture" (25). Like the mestiza, the borderlands are rooted in specifics of location and historical legacy and is marked by suffering. Anzaldúa's description of the border as a wound is a powerful metaphor, and it is an image that is often referenced by others when they mention Anzaldúa's work on the border. What is perhaps overlooked is the way Anzaldúa describes the continual friction of the border as resulting in hemorrhages merging "the lifeblood of two worlds" (25). The border wound in Anzaldúa's description results in mixed-blood. Anzaldúa is careful in her metaphor—the borderlands are not merely the cite of contact and mixing but it creates miscegenation.

In addition to highlighting the specificities of the U.S./Mexico border as the central source of contact and mestiza identity, Anzaldúa is careful to point out the metaphorical nature of borderlands. In the "Preface to the First Edition" Anzaldúa explains how the concept of borderlands, although specific in her usage about the Southwest, is not limited to that geographic location and circumstances. Instead, she seems to expand the term to include places of cultural contact and conflict: "In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy." While simultaneously insisting on the specific geography Anzaldúa also allows for her conceptual framework to be exported and applied to other spaces and cultures. Even as she resists the binary of discrete national boundaries for the more diffuse conception of borderlands, Anzaldúa also avoids the binary of us (those living on the borderlands) and them (those not living on the borderlands), keeping open the possibility that class-based boundaries rather than national or ethnic boundaries might produce borderlands. It would be incorrect to assume such metaphorical understanding of borderlands voids it of its unique context, rather the emphasis seems to be on the possibility of different contexts creating different borderlands.

Not only are the two central concepts, “mestiza” and “borderlands,” metaphors of miscegenation, they share similar deconstructive methodology. Instead of the binary system of racial purity, Anzaldúa offers the mestiza who is a genetic cocktail of multiple races and who, in order to survive the chaos of multiple and competing cultures, has developed a new consciousness—the mestiza consciousness, which Anzaldúa has argued could “heal the split” and bring about a “massive uprooting of dualistic thinking” (102). In a similar manner, the borderlands framework is Anzaldúa’s replacement and deconstruction of the U.S./Mexico border. Instead of discrete national boundaries, Anzaldúa designates a non-specific geographical space of contact. The difference, in her own words, is as follows: “A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the motional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition” (25). Instead of a dividing line separating two nations, Anzaldúa designates space that is a “third nation” which, although it sources lands from two nations, ceases to be one or the other but becomes a new entity entirely.

In addition to the tropes of food, mestiza and borderlands, there are stylistic and formal aspects of *Borderlands* that also perform mixing. Anzaldúa’s use of English, Spanish (including various dialects and vernacular Spanish), and the occasional Nahuatl provides a stylistic element that both reflects the linguistic patterns of border dwellers but also provides a powerful illustration of mixing. The inextricability of language, specifically multilingual expression, to her message is visible throughout, starting with the cover page and continuing through every chapter and section heading and throughout the body of the text. There is a visual representation of the border in the very title, not just in the words but in the arrangement of the words. Although written as *Borderlands / La Frontera* the title is not arranged on the cover side-by-side but places "Borderlands" above "*La Frontera"* with a graphic line separating the two. The visual emphasis on north/south dividing lines marked by Spanish and English throughout the text serve as powerful reminders of the geographical and cultural context of the project.

Borrowing terminology from linguistics, Anzaldúa acknowledges *Borderlands'* code-switching in the preface, claiming the inclusion of English, Castilian Spanish, North American dialect, Tex-Mex and "a sprinkling of Nahuatl" reflects her language, what she describes as "a new language—the language of the Borderlands, a living language birthed "at the juncture of cultures" where "languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized." Anzaldúa carefully resists a binary understanding of language with English and Spanish in opposition but rather emphasizes linguistic contact results in mixing and the creation of new, hybrid speech, a position emphasized by the persistent multilingual voice of *Borderlands*, what might be thought of in terms of Juan Bruce-Novoa's work on interlingualism. According to Bruce-Novoa, interlingualism is the mixing of two languages—putting them "into a state of tension which produces a third, an 'inter' possibility of languages" (245). Or as Martha Cutter has expanded in her article "Malinche's Legacy: Translation, Betrayal and Interlingualism in Chicano/a Literature":

"[W]e might say that interlingualism connotes the creative mixing of languages so that a kind of 'linguistic stereo is created in which lexicons become unstable and open; from this instability binary oppositions might be dismantled and new meanings might be generated across cultural boundaries and discourses" (3). Alfred Arteaga in *Chicano Poetics: Heterotexts and Hybridities* suggests "Chicano poetry often manifests some degree of interlingualism" and describes the interlingual speech as "especially apt at expressing the ambiguities inherent in mestizaje and those in…the borderlands" (17). Despite the value of scholarship on interlingualism and code-switching, it is Anzaldúa who best captures the significance of her linguistic choices in *Borderlands* when she states plainly: "This book, then, speaks of my existence."

Unapologetic and unashamed, Anzaldúa prefaces *Borderlands* by describing the book as an invitation to readers to meet her "halfway" and follows that invitation with a linguistically diverse text as well as a chapter "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" explaining not only her own painful history (her well-meaning mother who wants her to speak English without an accent, an educational system intent on ridding her and others like her of her accent, other Spanish speakers who look down on her Chicano Spanish as inferior) but also the linguistic history of Chicano Spanish, the conquest and contact which resulted in her "border tongue." Clear in her critique of assimilationist pressures to speak English as linguistic terrorism, Anzaldúa also challenges the pressures from Spanish speakers to speak "proper Spanish" and critiques the sexism embedded in language—"We are robbed of our female being by the masculine plural. Language is a male discourse"— and culture (Anzaldúa recounts the many derogatory phrases she heard growing up to describe women who gossip, lie, talk too much, or talk back, phrases never applied to men and which worked to silence women). Resisting shame and silence, Anzaldúa's use of language is both expressive and strategic, serving as an illustration of border mixing while also modeling Anzaldúa's critique of purist ideology.

Genre as Miscegenation Metaphor Performed

As has been established in the preceding sections, Anzaldúa employs metaphors of miscegenation as her central concepts throughout *Borderlands*. They are vividly described and powerful—the elements of the text most likely remembered and most often referenced. The mestiza and borderlands, the titular metaphors, are most prominent even as Anzaldúa employs additional food metaphors to reinforce her work deconstructing binary thinking. There is, however, another aspect of the text that serves as an important metaphor of miscegenation: genre. Although not a named metaphor nor concept developed in the body of the text, genre mixing, as with code switching, in *Borderlands* becomes miscegenation performed.

Although some aspects of Anzaldúa's innovative genre play are visible (a book split into two different genre halves is hard to miss), the movement from one genre to another and the blurring of genre boundaries is subtler than Anzaldúa's code switching. The markers of language change are visible in the use of italics, whereas genre markers are only visible in the formatting differences of prose and verse; any subtle changes in prose genres have to be discerned by the reader. Further, while reading language and genre is dependent on the reader's knowledge of the system, a person could read and understand, perhaps with less appreciation or depth, *Borderlands* with no previous genre knowledge. For most readers, genre knowledge is gained experientially rather than exclusively through formal educational training, so a person learns genre as one reads. If person's first book was *Borderlands*, they could assume it was consistent with all other works, and the innovation would be imperceptible. A monolingual English speaker will be far more aware of the language shifts because they will be shut out of those sections of the text—meaning apprehending the full meaning would require that reader to do the work of translation.

Understanding the metaphors of miscegenation, both the metaphors themselves as well as the stylistic and formal aspects which perform miscegenation, is essential for comprehending Anzaldúa's work in *Borderlands* but a focus on genre is especially important because it is the one likely to be overlooked. Further, it is in *Borderlands'* innovative genre moves that the text counters the long history of genre teachings and the essentialist logic undergirding that history.

The text as a whole is wonderfully complex, challenging to describe and even more difficult to categorize. In Anzaldúa's own words, *Borderlands* is an "Aztec-like" mosaic, a "weaving pattern" full of: "… a hybridization of metaphor, different species of ideas popping up here, popping up there, full of variations and seeming contradiction," a seeming "assemblage, a montage, a beaded work with several leitmotifs and with a central core, now appearing, now disappearing in this crazy dance" (88). Like the mestiza consciousness and the borderlands she describes, Anzaldúa's work is site of contact and miscegenation; it is an interface of genres and languages, a crossroads of the personal and political, a narrative of individual and communal history, and an amalgamation of spiritual and theoretical musings. It is a book made up of two sections, one primarily prose and one poetry, containing frequent code-switching among English, Spanish, Chicano Spanish, as well as the occasional Nahuatl. Throughout the first seven chapters it is common for quotes, song lyrics, cultural sayings, and Anzaldúa's own verse to frame, and sometimes interrupt, sections. The changing genre forms are occasionally visible because of formatting, but the prose sections where Anzaldúa weaves among personal experience, family history, and communal history blurs the genres boundaries of historical text and autobiography, and there is no format cue to mark the change, implicitly calling into question the laws that delineate what content and form each take.

I am certainly not alone in highlighting the complex genre aspects of *Borderlands* because although subtler than code switching, Anzaldúa's breaking with genre conventions is still prominent, especially to those trained to notice. Ian Barnard in his article "Gloria Anzaldúa's *Queer Mestisaje*" describes Anzaldúa's deviation from genre norms and its connection to her depiction of identity as follows:

> As a literary text, *Borderlands / La Frontera* further shatters any notion of identity as unitary, fixed, stable, or comfortable in its resistance to the categories of genre that inform traditional English courses and the disciplinary demarcations that constitute academic institutions in general. It seems to encompass, for instance, poetry, theory, autobiography, mythology, criticism, narrative, history, and political science, while suggesting the limitations of these delimitations and, ultimately, of delimitation itself. (45-46)

In her description of *Borderlands*, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano links Anzaldúa's text to the genre aesthetics present in Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years: Lo Que Nunca Pasó Por Sus Labios* and their jointly edited anthology *This Bridge Called My Back:*

Writings by Radical Women of Color: "*Borderlands* juxtaposes essays and poetry, political theory and cultural practice, not separating one from the other but producing a fusion of the two, a 'theory in the flesh'" (17). Monika Kaup's chapter "Crossing Borders: An Aesthetic Practice in Writings by Gloria Anzaldúa" claims Anzaldúa "makes crossbreed thinking a definite stylistic paradigm" and later suggests "Anzaldúa's book about the *mestiza* . . . translates the racial process of what the Mexicans call *mestizaje,* the mixing of colored with white blood, into a *mestizaje* text" (101, 106). Arteaga, like Yarbro-Bejarano places Anzaldúa's work alongside Moraga's (in this instance he points to *Last Generation*, which like *Loving in the War Years* defies traditional genre norms). According to Arteaga, both works are "confused texts generically, replete with poetry, essay, relacíon, with dream. They are also confused linguistically in the style of the Chicano utterance, playing among and between languages" (153). Elisa A. Garza's chapter "Chicana Lesbians and the Multigenre Text" looks at *Borderlands* and *Loving* and contends the multiple modes of expression are tied to the author's multiple identities. Many of the scholars working with *Borderlands* acknowledge in some way the genre transgression of the text; however, few make genre the focus of the analysis. Further, my work seeks not only to connect Anzaldúa's genre transgression and innovation with her larger project but to understand it within the larger context of genre's long history of essentialist logic.

Alternate Approaches to Genre in Borderlands

Despite the fact that *Borderlands* is arguably one of the most generically innovative texts written in the late twentieth century, modern genre studies has failed to pay adequate attention. Take for example Leigh Gilmore and her groundbreaking work *The Limits of Autobiography,* where she explores trauma and its disruption of autobiographical genre limits. It is a brilliant example of modern genre theory's understanding of genre as both constraining and shaping meaning. Gilmore focuses on what she refers to as the "coincidence of trauma and self-representation" to discover what it "reveals about autobiography, its history, and, especially, its limits" (3). Unfortunately, Gilmore's text also exemplifies modern genre theory's tendency to overlook texts written by non-mainstream authors. Although *Borderlands* is listed alongside Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* and Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* as examples of texts considered "formally experimental," in a paragraph explaining how the current flourishing of autobiography is due in part to the social and political movements in recent decades that have made it possible for "a broader range of people" to publish accounts, Gilmore provides no more in the way of analysis than the mere mention of these texts (16). There are certainly solid and nuanced reasons for Gilmore's choice of texts, but it still remains that her selections skew white, with her chapter on Jamaica Kincaid the only one focused on a work written by a non-white author.

Even as Anzaldúa, as well as other Chicana and women of color authors, has been recognized by genre theorists for her innovation, her work remains at the margins of their analysis. Take for example Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's edited collection *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader.* This mammoth (more than 500 pages) anthology compiles previously published and influential works by feminist scholars working in the area of autobiography. With forty entries and a more than fifty-page introduction, *Women, Autobiography, Theory* provides a window into field in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Smith and Watson cite *Borderlands* and *Loving in the War Years* in their introduction as evidence of what they see as the "challenges by women of color to a white feminist theory of autobiography" which produced "new modes of writing" because "critique is inseparable from resistance from dominant modes" (26). Despite this awareness of the innovations to form (and its attendant critique of dominant forms) in writings by women of color, there is still the tendency to avoid deep engagement. Apart from the brief mention of *Borderlands* in the introduction, Anzaldúa is referenced in four of the forty entries, and an excerpt from *Borderlands* is included alongside a lengthy quote by Paula Gun Allan in a page marking the "History" section of the anthology. Of the four, one piece includes a quote from Anzaldúa as one of two epigraphs without any further discussion. In both instances, the section and chapter epigraphs, the words of women of color are used to frame a discussion but are not a part of the discussion. When Anzaldúa's name does appear in the body of one of the entries, it is usually a brief mention alongside other female of authors of color. Two entries focused on sexuality and autobiography list *Borderlands* with *Loving in the War Years* and make brief gesture to intersectionality and the texts as reflecting complex identities. The only entry which goes beyond a sentence or two mention, is perhaps unsurprisingly, the only entry in the entire anthology focused on these authors, Lourdes Torres' "The Construction of Self in U.S. Latina Autobiographies." While certainly not exhaustive proof, the anthology highlights the failure of genre studies to deeply engage with texts by Chicanas.

Latinx Literary Studies

Within the field of Latinx literature, and certainly in Chicana literature, *Borderlands* is revered and the focus of much scholarly attention. However, the text's innovative form receives notably less attention from scholars than Anzaldúa's concepts, and the difficulty of classifying *Borderlands* results in discussions of Anzaldúa's important genre work being limited to simple labels and descriptions of "unique" aesthetic or stylistic features. Rarely does analysis of *Borderlands* include significant discussion of genre. Fortunately, there are exceptions, and that work is worthy of some detailed analysis. Norma Klahn's "Literary (Re)Mappings: Autobiographical (Dis)Placements by Chicana Writers" recognizes the self-writing practices of Chicanas from the latter part of the twentieth century as "counter hegemonic activities" (115) that have "opened up a symbolic space for talking back and a feminist practice of intervention that seeks to speak from the experience of marginalization" (117). Klahn's piece draws on Adrienne Rich's work from "A Politics of Location," which offered a compelling argument for rooting analysis in one's body and ever expanding spatial locations, emphasizing situated experiences. Using a spatially situated feminist lens, Klahn sees important differences between the Chicano autobiographies mostly written by men during the Chicano nationalist period of the sixties and seventies and the Chicana feminist autobiographies written during the eighties and nineties. As Klahn observes, Chicana writers open up a space that challenges the patriarchal, nationalist leanings of Chicano writers by telling their own stories. Although Klahn's chapter focuses on what she terms "autobiographical fictions," among those included are Sandra Cisneros' *The House on*

Mango Street, Norma Cantu's *Canicula,* Mary Helen Ponce's *Hoyt Street*, and Par Mora's *House of Houses* and the spatial dynamics of the narratives, she places this new genre within the larger context of Chicana self-writing, works that are innovative, counter hegemonic, and decolonizing.

As is the case with Klahn, those who do address genre in Chicana writings, tend to propose new genre categories. Juan Velasco, in his article "*Automitografías*: The Border Paradigm and Chicana/o Autobiography" offers a new genre, *automitografía*, to explain the centrality of myth to Chicanx autobiography. While Velasco's new genre category provides a helpful way of drawing attention to relevant components of texts and the ways Chicana autobiography deviates from and innovates traditional autobiographical form, his work offers more than a new category. His discussion of *automitografías* is situated within a larger understanding of "historical trajectory of the autobiographical tradition of Hispanic cultures in the United States" which "goes back to Spanish letters and chronicles from the end of the sixteenth century" (313). According to Velasco, despite this long autobiographical tradition, it is not until the mid-nineteenth century that "life narratives become a space of resistance for Mexican culture" (313). Velasco understands the complex relationship between writers that have been shaped by experience, that the writing selves are shaped by the world they inhabit, be it nineteenth or twentieth century contexts, and the new selves expressed and created in the discursive space of autobiography.

Perhaps the most insightful discussion of genre in *Borderlands* appears in Sonia Saldívar-Hull's introduction to the second edition of *Borderlands* where she labels the work an *autohistoria*, a term originally used by Anzaldúa to describe border art. In "Border Arte: Neplantla, el Lugar de la Frontera" Anzaldúa explains the way border artists tell visual narratives that include communal history along with the autobiographical. The work, according to Anzaldúa, "supersedes the pictorial" and depicts "both the soul of the artist and the soul of the pueblo" (183). While Anzaldúa's first use of "*autohistorias*" is in the context of art, it is a term applicable to all narrative, whether visual or verbal. Support for such broad application of the new genre category can be found in a 1993 interview where Anzaldúa mentions a work in progress about the new genre *autohistorias* as well as an additional genre *autohisteorías,* describing the latter as follows:

> One of the essays I'm writing focuses on what I call autohisteorías—the concept that Chicanas and women of color write not only about abstract ideas but also bring in their personal history as well as the history of their community. I call it "auto" for self-writing, and "history" for history—as in collective, personal, cultural, and racial history—as well as for fiction, a story you can make up. History is fiction because it's made up, usually made up by the people who rule. (242-243)

Saldívar-Hull is perceptive in seeing the applicability of *autohistorias* to *Borderlands*. The same quality that Anzaldúa identifies in border art, the hybrid narrative of individual and communal history, is true of *Borderlands* as well.

Although genre is not actually the focus of Saldívar-Hull's short introduction, she offers, in the space of one paragraph, not only a useful new genre category borrowed from Anzaldúa's own writing but also one of the single best descriptions of genre at play in *Borderlands*. For Saldívar-Hull,

> [H]istory in this New Mestiza narrative is not a univocal discursive exercise—in this new genre, a moving personal narrative about her Grandmother's

> dispossession occupies the same discursive space as a dry recitation of historical fact, while lyrics from a corrido about 'the lost land' butt up against a poetic rendition of an ethnocentric anglo historian's vision of U.S. dominion over Mexico. (3)

Saldívar-Hull seems to be offering two distinct observations. First, continuing Saldívar-Hull's metaphor of vocality, *Borderlands* functions as a chorus of narrative, incorporating Anzaldúa's own voice together with the sounds, voices, and stories of life in the borderlands. Second, the narratives in their various generic forms share the same discursive space. They are alongside one another, sharing the same space, which seems to suggest a leveling out of power or equalizing of authority.

Taken together, the trends are important. Those working in the field of genre studies do not include *Borderlands* or other non-mainstream literature as the focus of their studies. Additionally, the primary approach of those studying genre and Chicanx literature is to offer new genre categories. That so many feel the need to invent new categories in order to explain Chicana literature speaks of the innovations to and transgression of traditional genre form. However, while inventing new genre categories serves a useful explanatory end, giving credit for innovation and identifying the counter-hegemonic, decolonizing work of Chicana writing practices (Klahn 115), the usefulness is limited to its designatory power. New genre categories provide new information within the existing genre system, but they do not and cannot challenge the existing genre system and its essentialist logic. Only by placing *Borderlands* in the larger trajectory of genre thinking, from Aristotle to Derrida and more recent genre thought, is it possible to recognize the ways *Borderlands* rejects essentialist logic both in racial thinking and genre systems.

Conclusion

Current scholarship on *Borderlands* understands the revolutionary quality of Anzaldúa's metaphors of miscegenation, exemplified in her concepts of mestiza and borderlands. The text's innovative style is recognized, and even understood as a reflection of mestiza identity. It simply seems reasonable to read the genre-switching, code-switching style as a resulting from or being an expression of mestiza consciousness. However, mestiza consciousness extends beyond use and stylings of language, it extends to the ontological, it encompasses ways of seeing and being in the world. That is where an attentiveness to genre is helpful. Mestiza consciousness, an identity based on miscegenation, disrupts dominant racial ideology, and in its performance of genre, *Borderlands* disrupts traditional genres and its underwriting logic of purity. *Borderlands* is comprised of both the explicit commentary of Anzaldúa's miscegenation metaphors, which provides a counter-logic to racial purity, and the implicit critique of racial and genre essentialism performed in her transgression of genre laws are present in the text. Yet, the latter is often overlooked. This tendency to overlook genre, is understandable, even expected. Genre essentialism invites us to think of genre as natural, neutral, and unrelated to power and logics of purity. Genre operates at the level of semiosis in meaning-making, a level deeper and more forceful than the text's explicit content. Precisely because we register genre only minimally when reading, its impact and its underwriting logic of racial purity seep in without notice. It takes works like *Borderlands* and the very noticeable genre transgressions to cause us to look deeper. Genre participates in the meaning-making process, and Anzaldúa's genre work seeks to change meaning, doing, and ultimately, being.

Anzaldúa's goal is grand; it is revolutionary. She is not merely describing the consciousness that results from mestiza identity, but she is locating in mestiza consciousness a paradigm that could topple prevailing ideology. Anzaldúa writes:

> The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (102)

This conceptual seed, resulting from mestiza consciousness, which Anzaldúa posits as having the potential to unravel dualistic thinking and heal foundational splits is present throughout her metaphors and in the deep structures of her text, namely in her performance of genre. Careful study and exploration of *Borderlands* has gifted readers of Anzaldúa with new paradigms for understanding border culture and hybrid identity. Renewed study of Anzaldúa's generic innovation, in light of the long history of essentialist logic, reveals the strategic link between her theoretical concepts and her revolutionary form, and the need to unearth the buried logics of essentialism and racial purity that permeate culture as well as culturally embedded systems, such as genre.

Chapter 2

Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*: Deconstructing and Transcending the Traditional Genre System

The 1984 publication of Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, and notably, its subsequent reissue through a commercial press a decade later, marks what many consider to be the inception of Chicana writers as a mainstream phenomenon. In the decades since, Cisneros's book (alternately called a novel or a collection of stories) has been assigned to classes from grade school through college, often as a way to illuminate the experiences of poor, working-class, urban Chicanos from the perspective of a little girl.

For many, the first introduction to *Mango Street* occurs in a classroom, making pedagogical approaches to the text instrumental in how it is read, understood, and appreciated. As scholars and educators, we should rigorously consider not only the content we teach but also the methods with which we teach that content because the way we teach and write about texts reflects our preferences and biases. Not only does our teaching—the texts we choose and the way we teach those texts—reveal our personal perspectives and their limits, but it also reveals the shortcomings of our educational systems and culture. In recent decades, texts by non-white and non-male authors have been brought into classrooms, often by the pioneering teachers who understand the value of these texts to the larger academic discourse, and more importantly to the broad education of their students. In some cases, these pioneering educators have managed to change the curriculum not only at the level of their own classroom but in the larger structure, be it campus, district, university, or publishing house. This progress toward diversity and inclusion has been slow but meaningful, ensuring students of future generations are exposed to the broad array of literary voices.

Still, the work does not stop with the achievement of more inclusive textbooks and curricula (and admittedly, the work is still in its infancy in many places), but must include changes in the way these texts are taught. All too often these texts are taught as interesting cultural pieces added to the regular mix. They are read exclusively as cultural commentary, texts documenting personal experience of non-dominant cultures. A female text is read as insight into the female experience. A text by a non-white author is read as insight into racial experience. The texts by women and people of color, although now present in the classroom, are not taught in the same ways the traditional canon is taught. This difference in teaching approaches may be in part due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of some of the educators who still resist a changing canon or changing demographics. Yet, the difference exists even in those who willingly, even enthusiastically, teach texts by non-traditional authors. Certainly, it makes sense for the stories previously excluded to be discussed in terms of the experiences they describe. After all, these are the lives and experiences, which, although fictional, have been excluded. It matters for students to encounter the vast array of people and circumstances that exist even if they are only through fictional encounters. But a discrepancy in how these texts are taught perpetuates a stigmatization, a pedagogical ghettoization, of the discourse of difference.

Fully established canonical texts are taught largely by examining their aesthetic elements. Even when historical or theoretical lenses are used, formal analysis still maintains a prominent methodological status. Ignoring the formal elements when teaching texts by nontraditional authors communicates to students the texts' inferior quality, suggests a situation where certain texts are creative masterpieces and others are relevant only as cultural artifacts. To address this discrepancy requires intentionality and training, and while early and enthusiastic adopters of the new canon have the former, the latter is often harder to find. Pioneering educators may have only their own efforts and research to rely on. They may have never taken a course that taught these authors and if they did, it may have been one which perpetuated the imbalance of treating these texts as important not for their literary contributions but only for their cultural insights. Many of the teaching differences can be attributed to differences of training. Even now, when the canon includes newcomers, the teaching methods for these texts remain different from those of their counterparts. It is necessary to address the insights into racial, ethnic, and gender experience, but it is also important to teach the literary contributions of these authors, not just the cultural contributions of their stories.

Many of us lack a significant education in genre as a field. We know and regularly engage with genres, but they operate primarily as natural categories. Unfortunately, this lack of training leaves us ill equipped to engage with texts that overtly innovate with or transgress genre boundaries. In many ways, *Mango Street* reflects the advent of a changed, more inclusive canon, and the vital contribution women of color make to the literary landscape. And yet, the accounts in *Mango Street* are too often read as interesting cultural pieces, texts that simply document personal experience of non-dominant cultures. An opening toward inclusion in the literary canon has been mistaken for achievement. While inclusivity is a necessary precondition, equitable treatment requires we analyze texts with some similar methods and in some consistent terms. It is possible that new interpretative lenses are required, that the existing ones are in fact inadequate, but we will not learn of those inadequacies until we first attempt to apply those original lenses and take stock of their powers and limits. We may need to adjust our lenses for all texts, and not simply the new ones. Not exploring the aesthetic and formal qualities of literatures by women and authors of color communicates that those literatures are somehow lacking. By categorizing Cisneros differently, we imply that texts by female and non-white authors do not warrant, or cannot bear, deep aesthetic exploration. More than merely adding new texts to our canon, we need to reconsider the propriety of our current understandings of aesthetics and form.

To shift how we engage these culturally diverse texts we must pay attention to their formal aspects. I advocate, specifically, for the lens of genre. The choice of genre is important because though genre is often considered simply as a categorization schema for bookstores and libraries, genre is actually an early, revered method of literary analysis, dating back to Aristotle's *Poetics.* Considering genre's consistent role in literary discussion throughout the centuries and its renewed role in critical debates occurring in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, genre is fundamental to teaching literature.

Ironically, while I am advocating a consistent application of one analytical model across the entire literary canon, from longstanding members and newcomers to those not yet admitted, my own study has shown distinctive results for the newcomers and the not-yet-admitted. In many cases, Chicana authors are doing genre differently, critiquing the genre system and the cultural biases it enshrines. Almost instinctually, current pedagogical approaches to texts by women of color recognize a difference; yet focusing primarily on the differences of content fails to uncover the differences of form and perpetuates a faulty hierarchy whereby traditional, canonical authors are the masters of literary enterprise and nontraditional authors are neophytes/novices granted entrance out of social pressures rather than merit.

To demonstrate my point, I offer Sandra Cisneros's *Mango Street* as an example. It is a text that has gained widespread implementation into high school and college courses. Reading *Mango Street* from the perspective of genre theory, this chapter offers new insight into the text and Cisneros's literary innovation. *Mango Street* relates the experience and observations of a young girl as she enters puberty and develops a writerly ambition, even while subtly painting sexist and racist oppressions by her society. The failure to adequately address genre has meant that the full range of Cisneros's innovation has remained overlooked. To fully appreciate Cisneros's work, acknowledgement and study of its groundbreaking form needs attention. *Mango Street* defies, even transcends, easy genre categorization. Only by investigating the various genre categories *Mango Street* implicates but does not fully conform to can one comprehend Cisneros's achievement. Consistent application of genre analysis across all of the literary canon, from longstanding members to newcomers and those not yet admitted, is the only way to demonstrate the work of trailblazing Chicana authors such as Cisneros, who not only changed the types of stories being told but the way those stories are told.

To detail my methodology further, this chapter does not provide a close reading of *Mango Street.* Those analyses already exist and have offered quality insight into Cisneros's novel. Scholars have studied the autobiographical components of the text, explicated the origins of the piece during Cisneros's time at the famed Iowa Writers Workshop, acknowledged Cisneros's own reflections of hearing a lecture on a house as a metaphor of memory, and considered the feeling of difference when the multi-level house described in no way matches the author's experience. Scholars have unearthed the theorist whose name Cisneros cannot recall—Bachelard—and several have performed various spatial analyses of *Mango Street* (Olivares; Martin). Still others link Cisneros's work to Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (Doyle). Latina scholars, in particular, have focused on what Esperanza and her community reveals about life as a Latina, exploring issues of poverty and sexual violence (Herera-Sobeck, Yarbro-Bejarano, González). The earliest scholarship identified *Mango Street* as a *Bildungsroman* and assessed it along side the work of Tomás Rivera (González-Berry and Rebolledo) and later the work of Rudolfo Anaya (Klein). Some have focused on the text as an exploration of identity (Valdez) or the narrative of a child's wished-for escape and the empowered return of the adult (Sánchez). Strong work since has recognized the text's innovative qualities (Ganz) or postmodern characteristics (Mermann-Jozwiak), has revealed the depth underneath the "simplicity" of the text (Cruz), and has highlighted fairy-tale (Wissman) and operatic allusions (Gutierrez-Spencer). All of the existing scholarship provides useful insight into the story collection or novel, applying a theoretical or social lens through which to read Cisneros beloved text.

What is unique to my approach is the desire to reverse the focus. Instead of putting *Mango Street* under a microscope so that the tiniest details of the story can be examined, I want to use Cisneros's text as away to explore the workings of genre(s) at play. Although this chapter will start with a perhaps more familiar method of using genre to guide interpretations of the novel, the goal is not to use genre as a lens to mine insight but rather to telescope out from the text to larger considerations of genre(s). What soon becomes clear is that genre is neither inert nor static but dynamic, debated and wholly constructed out of disciplinary, social, political, and ideological concerns. There is no singular genre that applies to Cisneros's text but several, and none completely fits the characteristics of the text. I propose reading *Mango Street* as a generic limit case whose reading results in deconstructing the system of genre altogether. My experience of reading Cisneros's novel from this orientation has been a little bit like pulling on a thread and watching an entire tapestry unravel, and this chapter seeks to reproduce this experience in order to highlight the tenuousness of a genre system that has been allowed to function as unquestioned literary truth.

Given that this chapter seeks to replicate my own exploration of *Mango Street,* it seems helpful to review my process and to explain my methodology even further. So much of the research that went into the project regarding genre theory informs the first chapter and my reading of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* where her genre non-conforming writing must be understood as inextricable from her political project to tell her own story, her family's story, her community's story, and her ancestor's story. In working through this polyvocal, multi-perspectival, transgeneric text, what becomes clear is that resisting generic constraints is necessary because as my reading of Derrida's "The Law of Genre" and several centuries of genre theory suggest, the system of genre thinking was built on a logic of racial purity. While this logic is the most prominent and a consistent underlying element of the entire genre system, a still larger contention is that genre systems are inherently human constructions and therefore carry with them the problems and biases of hegemonic ideology.

Having already established in the first chapter that the basis of genre thinking is the logic of racial purity, this second chapter seeks to read *Mango Street* as deconstructing the genre system and reconstructing its role in the interpretive process. This chapter offers three segments of metacritical analysis: first, a look at how *Mango Street* scholarship grapples with (or fails to grapple with) Cisneros's genre transgressiveness in their efforts to provide a genre designation for *Mango Street*; second, a consideration of the body of work that reads *Mango Street* as fitting within a single genre, such as that of a contemporary Chicana *Bildungsroman*; and third, an exploration of *Bildungsroman* scholarship, treating the genre as a case study whereby the construction (and contestations) of genre discourse are made visible. Cisneros's *Mango Street* serves as the test case with each successive potential genre category (*Bildungsroman*, short story cycle, serial narrative, prose poem, and sequence of vignettes) failing to adequately capture the formal and thematic elements of the story. But more than demonstrating the failure of individual genre categories to capture the essential aspects of Cisneros's innovative text, the focus on these genre categories will reveal the tenuousness of their boundaries and the outdated character of contested academic fights over defining characteristics and representative texts. What becomes clear is that, as with any discourse, power is instrumental and constitutive.

What is it?: Mango Street and Genre Indeterminacy

Much of the discussion, in classrooms or in published articles, engages details of the story line itself. Esperanza is incandescently charming, bold yet vulnerable, smart yet sullen. It is no wonder readers are captivated by such a narrator and her community. But such discussions of characterization and theme, of content broadly, miss Cisneros's formal innovations and her departure from tradition. A careful look at scholarship reveals the initial questions to be addressed when analyzing *Mango Street*: issues of identification and classification. Namely, "What is it?" This question is sometimes directly engaged, sometimes only obliquely referenced. Nonetheless, for readers and scholars, the text requires that we grapple with it. It is impossible to read the text without having to make interpretative choices that are based in genre. Readers may come to a conclusion while in the midst or at the ending of the text, but they do not have the luxury of knowing from the outset the genre and its attendant rules. The very fact *Mango Street* requires some determination regarding genre classification is a break with tradition. This book's indeterminacy and nonconformity with regard to genre sheds light on the entire genre system and its influence on our reading and interpretive strategies. Cisneros's work reminds us how much we rely on genre classification to fill gaps, direct focus, and guide interpretations. By countering traditional form, Cisneros challenges genre's role in shaping our engagement with texts. She invites readers to consider how genre designations are decided and what implications they have for reading.

The problem of genre designation is unique to texts with innovative forms. Most often, the function of genre and its impact on our interpretive approaches is inconspicuous, with genre registering as a fact of a text not as a decision to be made or a riddle to be solved. Genre's ubiquitous but unobtrusive presence is part of the mechanism by which it perpetuates itself as objective fact, not as a constructed system of knowledge through which dominant ideology and systems of power exert influence. In refusing traditional form, Cisneros reveals the shaping role of genre in our engagement with texts and invites readers to consider how genre designations are decided and the implications of those designations for reading.

In terms of frequency, *Bildungsroman* is the most common genre designation scholars apply to *Mango Street.* For obvious reasons, scholars find the story of Esperanza Cordero growing up in a Chicago barrio to fit the general contours of the genre, even if the specifics of Chicana experiences make it unique within the tradition. Several scholars, such as Ellen McCracken, Alvina Quintana, and Felicia Cruz, reference the *Bildungsroman* designation or its corollaries ("rite-of-passage" or "coming-of-age" narrative), and still others such as Erlinda González-Berry and Tey Diana Rebolledo, Diana Klein, Leslie Gutiérrez-Jones, Annie Eysturoy, Maria Karafilis, and Stella Bolaki provide sustained analysis of *Mango Street* as a contemporary *Bildungsroman*. There are even some who refer to it as a *Künstlerroman,* recognizing Cisneros's text fits the parameters of the genre subcategory of a coming-of-age narrative specifically about an artist. Given that *Bildungsroman* analysis figures prominently in *Mango Street* scholarship, I will dedicate a subsequent section to discussing how scholars read Cisneros's text as *Bildungsroman* as well as a final section dedicated to *Bildungsroman* genre scholarship overall.

Despite *Mango Street* being comprised of forty-four pieces, ranging in length from a few paragraphs to several pages and loosely following the experiences of the protagonist, albeit not always in a straightforward and linear fashion, some have decided the text qualifies as a novel. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano in her 1987 article "Chicana Literature from a Chicana Feminist Perspective" describes *Mango Street* as a "slim novel" composed of short sections that are "marvels of poetic language" (142). Published just two short years later, Ellen McCracken's 1989 chapter "Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*: Community-Oriented Introspection and the Demystification of Patriarchal Violence" classifies the "group of 44 short and interrelated stories" as a novel because "there is character and plot throughout the episodes" (64). In Annie Eysturoy's analysis of Cisneros's text in her book-length project on the Chicana *Bildungsheld* (the hero or protagonist of a *Bildungsroman*), she designates the work a novel while also acknowledging the "narrative strategies…stand in opposition to the linear, chronological convention of the [*Bildungsroman*] genre" (87). Despite its occasional use, the designation of "novel" is relatively rare in the *Mango Street* scholarship perhaps because it is a genre with quite developed theories and criterion. More frequently, scholars opt for terms with more general application. Whether referring to *Mango Street* as a "text" made up of a “collection of texts” (González-Berry and Rebolledo 114) or “work of fiction” (Yarbro-Bejarano 142), scholars are careful to avoid a genre designation with too rigid or too many (and ultimately conflicting) qualifications. Many scholars opt out of either, using non-genre terms such as “story” to sidestep genre designation, or wider terms such as “text” or “narrative.”

Often the conversation circles around whether *Mango Street* is poetry or prose. As Cisneros’s first published works were poetry, it is not surprising genre designations would sometimes lean towards poetry in the face of a text not following traditional novel form. Even without Cisneros’s background as a poet, the brevity, imagery, and resonance of the individual sections in her text have a certain poetic charge. As Maria Elena de Valdez acutely observes in her article “In Search of Identity in Cisneros’s House on Mango Street,” Cisneros marshals her skills as a poet and offers compelling and exquisitely descriptive narrative: “The first person moves effortlessly from observer to lyrical introspection about her place in the world. The language is basic, idiomatic English with a touch of colloquial speech and a few Spanish words…. The description has been that of a keen observer, the composition is that of a poet (14). In her review of *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories,* a text arguably more prose than Cisneros’s *Mango Street,* Barbara Kingsolver joins Valdez in emphasizing Cisneros’s identity as a poet and confidently describes the work as poetry. According to Kingsolver, “Sandra Cisneros has added length and dialogue and a hint of plot to her poems and published them in a stunning collection” (qtd. in Ganz 28). With a humorous take on the relative unpopularity of poets in the United States, Kingsolver writes of Cisneros's work as follows:

> It's a practical thing for poets in the United States to turn to fiction. Elsewhere, poets have the cultural status of our rock stars and then income of our romance novelists. Here, a poet is something your mother probably didn't want you to grow up to be.… When you read this book, don't be fooled. It's poetry. Just don't tell your mother. (qtd. in Ganz 28)

In Kingsolver's view, the genre identity is shaped by the cultural prominence of genre, with *Mango Street* functioning almost as incognito poetry.

This same skirting of genre labels ("text" or "story" rather than "novel") is visible when scholars highlight *Mango Street's* poetic quality and emphasize Cisneros's literary identity as that of a poet first. Rather than confidently making a genre designation, they adapt language of description: so "poetic" "poetic" (Yarbro-Bejarano 142; Klein 22; Quintana 66) or "lyrical" (Valdez) is used rather than "poem" or "poetry" which allows authors to describe stylistic elements of the text without committing to a definitive genre category. Still others address the prose/poetry divide by refusing either one and claiming both. Valdez describes Cisneros as a poet, the text as a novel, the collection of forty-four pieces as "written in the manner of a young girl's memoir"—not in a daily journaling, but rather a "loose-knit series of lyrical reflections" (para 1). Valdez ultimately determines each piece "can be seen as a self-contained prose poem," and when read collectively, Valdez finds "a subtle narrative unity" (para 8).

In keeping with Valdez's rejection of a binary choice, several scholars suggest *Mango Street* is best understood as a genre hybrid or as some new, yet unnamed, genre. In fact, Cisneros and her Chicana and Latina contemporaries are broadly understood to have ushered in new genres. Eliana Ortega and Nancy Saporta Sternbach underscore the emergence of new genre forms in their aptly titled chapter “At the Threshold of the Unnamed: Latina Literary Discourse in the Eighties,” stating:

> Latina writers have not only occupied new literary spaces, they have also created new genres. The majority of Latina literature has tended to be poetry, but recently they have developed a genre of their own, still to be defined and still emerging, which specifically articulates Latina experience. It draws on the Latina as storyteller and situates the speaking voice in a genre somewhere in between poetry and fiction, blurring the line between the short story and the novel, between conversation and literary discourse. (17)

Sonia Saldívar-Hull’s analysis of Cisneros’s project highlights the innovation Ortega and Sternbach identify in Chicana writing. Situating Cisneros’s *Mango Street* with Moraga’s *Loving in the War Years* and Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands.* She labels all three as *mestizaje* texts, a “mixture of fiction and history” providing literary stories as well as “politically charged histories of people often ignored in official histories and canonical literature” (85). Using descriptive language but not quite proposing new genre terminology, Saldívar-Hull reads “its postmodern aesthetic attributes” and the way “it resists easy generic categorization” as a result of *Mango Street* being a “border text” (86).

Appearing in the same collection as Ortega and Sternbach, McCracken’s analysis of Cisneros’s text confirms the trend of Latina literature taking on new forms. At points McCracken describes *Mango Street* as “modified autobiographical novel, or Bildungsroman” as well as a novel because plot and character exist throughout the “group of 44 short and interrelated stories,” but she ultimately prefers to categorize the text as “a hybrid genre midway between the novel and the short story” (64). Putting Cisneros’s work in a new, unnamed hybrid genre category alongside Sherwood

Anderson's *Winesburg Ohio*, Pedro Juan Soto's *Spiks*, Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Tomas Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*, McCracken claims Cisneros's collection (as well as those listed) "represents the writer's attempt to achieve both the intensity of the short story and the discursive length of the novel within a single volume" (64). The difference between standard novels and the one's McCracken identifies is that the chapters work as an independent unit but together create an "additional important meaning when interacting with the stories in the volume" (64). Whether drawing from emerging genre theory work on short story cycles of the nineteen seventies or eighties,[1] or whether McCracken is simply insightful, she recognizes neither genre category fully captures what is occurring in Cisneros's text.

In keeping with McCracken's description of *Mango Street* as a hybrid genre, Diana Klein, author of "Coming of Age in Novels by Rudolfo Anaya and Sandra Cisneros," offers perhaps the most beautiful genre description of Cisneros's text. Not only does Klein contrast Cisneros's innovative text with Rudolfo Anaya's more traditionally structured *Bless Me Ultima,* but also she is able to capture important aspects of the reading experience: "But, unlike Anaya's chronological novel, *The House on Mango Street* is the story of growing awareness which comes in fits and starts, a series of almost epiphanic narrations mirrored in a structure that is neither linear nor traditional, a hybrid of fictive and poetic form, more like an impressionistic painting where the subject isn't clear until the viewer moves back a bit and views the whole" (22). For Klein, the hybridity of form and nontraditional plot structure creates a reading experience where Esperanza's experiences unfold and create a stunning vision of Chicana life.

As evidenced in Klein's comparison of the text to an impressionistic painting, scholars have drawn heavily from art metaphors to characterize Cisneros's text. Stella Bolaki, in her chapter "'The mestiza way' — a *Bildung* of the borderlands in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*" echoes Klein and characterizes the work as a collection of vignettes, which when taken together create a tableau, and once it "hangs complete[,] we stand in front of a tapestry of static women confined in houses 'sitting their sadness on an elbow' looking out the window all their lives" (109). These art metaphors emphasize Cisneros's facility with language to craft images so powerful they capture life in ways only master painters could rival.

Of the art metaphors used, the label "vignette" emerges as the descriptor-of-choice for the individual units making up *Mango Street.* Erlinda González-Berry and Tey Diana Rebolledo, María Herera-Sobeck, Julián Olivarez, Jacqueline Doyle, Reuben Sánchez, Alvina Quintana, Maria Karafilis, Kelly Wissman, Karen Martin, and Stella Bolaki all use "vignette" to describe the small components of the text. Despite its common deployment in *Mango Street* scholarship, however, "vignette is rarely defined. This lack of explanation is both problematic and instructive. It is problematic because, in terms of function, scholars are using the label as if it were an established literary genre even though it is not. Rather, it is a metaphor that, while it offers an illuminating comparison, is not a genre with defined theoretical history. In fact, the vignette, an impressionistic scene or descriptive passage, spans categories of fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose, essays and novels, screenplays, scripts, and stories. The lack of explanation is instructive because this label is receiving the same treatment as an established genre—no scrutiny or explicit explanation required. It is Bolaki alone who offers analysis and implications of the term for understanding Cisneros's writing choices. Bolaki reads Cisneros as dramatizing "the idea of border struggle in a more subtle way: through its basic structural principle, that is, the vignette" (103). Possibly recognizing the term "vignette" as being widely used in reference to *Mango Street,* Bolaki provides several dictionary entries for "vignette," offering a clearer understanding of its characteristics and the implications of it being applied to Cisneros's text:

> "illustration, especially on the title-page of a book, but not in a definite border"; "photograph or drawing, especially of a person's head and shoulders, with the background gradually shaded off"; "an illustration that has soft edges"; "an illustration unenclosed by a formal border"; "an image that does not have a definite border around it. This term also applies to a small image that is part of a larger print"; "an image in which the colours or tones gradually bleed out into the background." (104)

Bolaki concludes "the item that recurs in these definitions is the border; a border that, rather than appearing as a rigid line, merges with what has been described as the borderland" (104). For Bolaki the original meaning "vignette" as an illustration without a clear border supports her understanding of Cisneros's writing as border-crossing.

The origins of the French term "vignette" which translates to "little vines" references the little vines accompanying cover illustrations for nineteenth-century novels on the title page and chapter openings. Therefore, the word for the illustration, in a kind of synecdochic relationship, is actually taken from the designs surrounding that illustration. As the meaning of "vignette" expanded from the literal illustration prefacing a narrative to include a descriptive scene within a narrative, it retained the footprint of its earlier meaning. The little vines that were in fact extratextual genre markers, subtle cues provided by publishers to the readers that framed the opening image and demarcated chapter sections, became synonymous with the illustration itself and eventually referenced a descriptive passage where an image was painted with words. These forgotten remnants of meaning are useful because they reveal there has always been a connection between the visual image and the narrative text as well as an understanding of the novel as being comprised of component parts.

In the case of *Mango Street*, perhaps the most famous example of modern vignettes, the pieces challenge readers to reexamine the relationship of each individual sketch to the whole. So each unit, each vignette, can stand alone or be read together as a larger story, allowing for individual and composite readings that complicate a simple teleological interpretive approach. The seemingly simple designation of "vignette" still does not capture all of the text, nor does it offer a rigorous understanding of genre. Further, despite some scholars using "vignette" interchangeably with "short story," Olivares is correct in pointing out that although some of the sections would qualify as short stories, not all of them would (161). Despite the usefulness of the label "vignette" and other art metaphors provide, the fact remains that it is more metaphor than developed genre category, and the very need for metaphorical description of the text reveals the lack of existing terminology to adequately describe the text.

Alternate approaches to genre designations move away from literary designations of fiction, poetry, and prose and instead draw from other disciplines for genre titles. In her chapter "*The House on Mango Street*: An Appropriation of Word, Space, and Sign" from her book *Home Girls: Chicana Literary Voices*, Alvina Quintana describes

Cisneros's work as an "ethnographic allegory of female experience" (61). In the preceding chapter where she offers her own theory of Chicana poetics, Quintana presents women's writing as a type of ethnography and focuses in on the usefulness of such an approach for Chicana writers specifically:

> A form of ethnography, women's literature provides the method, voices, experiences, and rituals of growing up female. Like ethnographers, Chicana writers focus on microcosms within a culture, unpacking rituals in the context of inherited symbolic and social structures of subjugation. They use their own writing for self-analysis; their cultural self-ethnographies or self-representations provide an indispensable means for deconstructing Chicana cultural experience(s), because they eliminate the possibility of outside misinterpretation of cultural symbolic systems and allow the writer to record an intimate social discourse regarding her ambivalence around ethnicity and gender. This process permits marginal individuals to become subjects of their own discourse. (34)

Pedro Gutiérez-Revuelta in his article "Género e ideología en el libro de Sandra Cisneros: *The House on Mango Street*," seemingly highlighting similar qualities as Quintana, describes Cisneros's text as a "las *historias* (historias del barrio)" (51). For Gutiérez-Revuelta, *Mango Street* differs from stories and legends because they "llevan implícito un carácter de historicidad, de realismo; de lo que, aunque no aparezca ni en los libros de historia ni en los noticieros ni en los periódicos, es parte de la verdadera y diaria historia del barrio. Convirtiéndose así la autora no simplimente en creadora de fábulas o las voces *sin voz* de sus habitantes" (51). (…implicitly carry a type of historicity, of realism; which, while it may not appear in history books or in newscasts or in newspapers, is part of the truthful and daily history of the barrio. The author is thus transformed, not simply as a creator of fables or legends but as witness to what happened in the barrio and as transmitter of the voicelessness of its inhabitants" (translation in Saldívar-Hull 85). Both Quintana's and Gutiérez-Revuelta's work point to the not so distant history when communities of color were objects of study, with narratives being written about them, not narratives emerging from within the community.

In must be noted that whatever Quintana and Gutiérez-Revuelta gain in truth claims by designations of ethnography and history, they lose in estimation of literary quality. They are not wrong in pointing to *Mango Street* as a source of barrio stories and rarely acknowledged Chicana experiences. Unfortunately, there is a tendency for texts by minoritized peoples to be read as exclusively relevant for cultural rather than aesthetic purposes. As Ortega and Sternbach observe in their review of Latina literary discourse in the nineteen-eighties, "It has been a common practice to view Latina(o) literature as sociology rather than as a literary production. As such, it has been the object of more ethnological studies than literary ones" (5). If such non-literary genre designations simply accrued value, it would be useful to credit Cisneros's text as a work of artistic genius while also acknowledging its chronicling of the real-life (if fictionalized) stories of Chicanas in the late twentieth century. Unfortunately, there is a double standard operating that assesses texts by female authors of color (as well as by white female authors and non-white male authors) to be inferior, not as universally appealing, and certainly not at the level of genius equal to the longstanding members of the canon. This is a double standard, certainly, because literary texts by white men are received as encompassing human nature writ large and not assumed only to report on a group or culture. Creative expression does not diminish the veracity of the insights or depiction of life. Texts by Fitzgerald or Steinbeck, Shakespeare or Milton are considered no less accurate about society and culture when we praise their artistic genius. As Simone de Beauvoir pointed out so eloquently in *The Second Sex* there is a gender double standard when it comes to assumptions of objectivity, with the female body believed to be a hindrance and the male body a direct conduit to objectivity: "He thinks his body as a direct and normal connection to the world," writes de Beauvoir, "which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of a woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it" (xxxxix). The female writer, then, is perceived as reliable enough to report on her own story and perhaps even "women's experiences" but not capable of depicting broader culture with any accuracy or insight, and creative capacity seems even less probable.

There is also a racial and/or ethnic component to this bias. The very designation of "ethnography" evokes images of far off places and unfamiliar tribes, and while the content of *Mango Street* is every bit as culturally situated as is Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio,* there is not the same perceived foreignness, the foreignness that is perpetual for non-white residents of the United States regardless of origin or citizenship status. However, the problem is not with acknowledging these attributes. Scholars like Quintana and Gutiérez-Revuelta are working to quantify the contribution of a Chicana author to a readership, which historically has been unreceptive. The problem is with a larger literary field which can read a female-authored text as valid only because it is centered in personal experience or a text written by an ethnic minority as an interesting, perhaps even eye-opening, glimpse into the lives of Others, while texts by white, male authors have and continue to be read as creative and culturally perceptive, inspired and distinctive.

For some scholars, the process of determining a label or genre category figures less prominently in their project. However, despite lacking overt engagement in the "What is it?" question presented by the text, the analysis itself makes clear how they are responding to the question of the text's identity. Jacqueline Doyle, Kelly Wissman, and Laura Gutierrez-Spencer in unique and various ways all read *Mango Street* as feminist revision. In Doyle's article "More Room of Her Own: Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street,*" she interprets Cisneros's work as a revision of the white feminist vision articulated in Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own." Both Kelly Wissman in "'Writing Will Keep You Free': Allusions to and Recreations of the Fairy Tale Heroine in *The House on Mango Street*" and Laura Gutierrez-Spencer's "Fairy Tales and Opera: The Fate of the Heroine in the Work of Sandra Cisneros" read Cisneros's text as critiquing and revising fairy tales. Although overall these scholars are less focused on genre form, Gutierrez-Spencer and Wissman each offer analysis of fairy tale plot structure. Gutierrez-Spencer argues Cisneros rewrites the traditional fairy tale ending of "happily-ever-after" by showing the unhappy, imprisoned women in the narrative and refusing the "kill-the-bad-girl plot resolution" (287). She ultimately concludes, of Cisneros: "she tells stories that shake the roots of a literary traditions old as the fairy tale" (Gutierrez-Spencer 287). What connects the analysis of all three is the recognition that Cisneros's work challenges the existing traditions, be it feminist tradition for being white and middle-class centric or fairy tales for carrying the pernicious values of a patriarchal system.

Still others make the determination of what the text is by determining the audience—adult or child. Surprisingly, although an important aspect of how one might approach the text, few scholars state whether they are reading it as children's literature. Gutierrez-Sanchez, in her analysis of *Mango Street* as a revisionist fairytale, recognizes although the text "feature[s] characteristics elements of classic children's stories" they are nonetheless "set within a different context" (279). Perhaps the strongest argument for an intended adult audience is the serious topics presented in the text: poverty, racism, gender oppression, domestic violence, and rape. Yet, given that these experiences happen not only to the young narrator but are a reality for many, it seems inconsistent to argue that the presence of such topics necessarily excludes young readers. Although not explicitly stated, the presumption of most of the analysis seems to be an adult readership. Or put differently, the presence of a young adult narrator is not assumed to indicate or constrain audience. Given that no scholar makes a case for either adult or child readership exclusively, however, there is perhaps a tacit consensus *Mango Street* has wide appeal to young and old alike. As Saldívar-Hull has revealed, sometimes the choice is not made by readers, authors, or scholars, but by a publisher. When the original publisher Arte Público decided to include the text in a "Young Readers" section of its catalogue, limiting the potential college and university audience (Saldívar-Hull 82), it was deciding readership and genre. Although such marketing choices stopped when Random House gained the publishing rights and the text has been widely read by students from elementary to university settings, the incident reveals the power of genre designations to shape commercial success, readership, and interpretations.

It is interesting to see no mention of the 1997 publication of *Hairs/Pelitos,* a bilingual, illustrated children's book using the vignette of the same name from *Mango Street,* in the discussion of whether the latter is a work of children's literature. One could argue "Hairs" being published as a children's book with only the addition of illustrations is evidence of *The House on Mango Street* already being children's literature. Certainly, the images make explicit one of the strengths of Cisneros's writing— evocative and powerful imagery. It is also possible the opposite could also be argued. The changes involved in transforming the piece into a children's book mark the two as distinct. Although perhaps suitable for the new form, the necessary requirements for conversion mean the original state of "Hairs" was not sufficient for publication as a children's book. What the dual incarnation of "Hairs" (also *Hairs*) illustrates is the genre blurring quality of Cisneros's writing and the persistent presence of the genre system to frame our interactions with texts.

Of the scholars who approach Cisneros's text from the field of children's literature, it is noteworthy that no case is made for why the text should be read as children's literature. Reuben Sánchez and Kelly Wissman, in articles published in *Children's Literature* and *Children Literature in Education* respectively, spend little of their analysis making or explaining a decision to categorize Cisneros's text as one written for children. In fact, apart from her discussion of the text as "re-writing of the scripts of passivity, victimization, and powerlessness embedded in the popularized versions of these tales that circulate heavily in popular culture and in the public imagination" (19), Wissman either works off the assumption fairytales are obviously children's literature or the intended readership of Esperanza’s story is irrelevant for its critiquing of the sexist values proliferating in fairytales. In contrast to Wissman’s seeming avoidance of designating *Mango Street* as children’s literature, Sánchez opens his article by referencing Virginia Woolf’s delineation of the difference between children and adult literatures, where she describes the difference as follows: “adult literature laments our homelessness and reflects the fragmentation or loss of myth, most children's literature celebrates home and affirms belief in myth” (qtd. in Sánchez 221). Applying this schema to Cisneros’s text, Sánchez sees a more complicated dynamic than either the loss or affirmation of myth. Rather than deciding between themes associated with children’s literature (home and myth) and those associated with adult literature (homelessness and irony), Sánchez sees myth as cultural storytelling, “a way by which the writer who belongs to and identifies with a particular community explains why the world is the way it is, from the point of view of that particular community” (222) and sees Cisneros as participating in a new type of storytelling that combines “myth (home) and irony (homelessness) in her depiction of life in the barrio as seen through the eyes of a girl” (222). Sánchez appears to argue Cisneros’s narrative spans the limits Woolf set out, spanning audiences if not genre. In following Esperanza’s maturation process, the narrative moves from myth to irony and from home to homelessness, and perhaps by extension from a children’s story to an adult’s story. Although not stated in genre terms, Sánchez ultimately recognizes the text escapes traditional categories.

Scholars also commonly consult Cisneros’s own commentary to identify *Mango Street*’s genre. Canvassing the interviews, essays, and speeches given by Cisneros about her life and writing, scholars pull from her own remarks to explain the text. In not a few articles, scholars refer to Cisneros's own description of *Mango Street* origins while at the famed Iowa Writer's Workshop where she encountered the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's ideas about home and memory and recognized the profound differences between herself and her colleagues. Cisneros's own recount describes her movement from shame ("They had been bred as fine hot-house flowers. I was a yellow weed among the city's cracks") to defiance ("I began them in anger, in defiance, drawing on subjects I knew my classmates could not write about"), ultimately finding a "simple language and colloquial speech" which was "part of [her] personal vendetta against the poetics that predominated the workshop" (Binder 63, 63-4, 65). Cisneros's explanation of her text's origins is referenced by several scholars and serves as the central point of analysis in Julián Olivares' 1987 article "Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and the Poetics of Space" and Kelly Martin's 2008 piece "*The House* (of Memory) *on Mango Street*: Cisneros's Counter-Poetics of Space." Scholars pull from her own artful descriptors of her own writing, noting in particular her inspiration and agenda to innovate literary forms:

> I recall I wanted to write stories that were a cross between poetry and fiction. I was greatly impressed by Jorge Luis Borges' *Dream Tigers* stories for their form. I liked how he could fit so much into one page and that the last line of each story was important to the whole in much the same way that the final lines of poems resonate. Except I wanted to write a collection which could be read at any random point without having any knowledge of what came before or after. Or, that could be read in a series to tell one big story. I want stories like poems, compact and lyrical and ending with a reverberation. (Cisneros "Do You Know Me?" 78)

Scholars hold up as explanation Cisneros's description of how certain stories started out as poems, how the project started out as memoir but morphed into something else altogether, and how she intentionally structured the text so that a reader could pick up and start at any point in the text. At various points, Cisneros described the choice to construct *Mango Street* out of short pieces which could be read in isolation as part of her desire to write for busy, working class people whom she believed deserved to have beautiful things in their lives. In her characteristically image-filled prose, Cisneros's writes of her project ambitions as intentional and describes each unit of the piece as beautiful as a pearl that could be strung together:

> I didn't know what I was writing when I wrote *House on Mango Street*, but I knew what I wanted. I didn't know what to call it, but I knew what I was after. It was a naive thing, it wasn't an accident. I wanted to write a series of stories that you could open up at any point. You didn't have to know anything before or after and you would understand each story like a little pearl, or you could look at the whole thing like a necklace. That's what I always knew from the day that I wrote the first one. I said, "I'm going to do a whole series of these, and it's going to be like this, and it'll all be connected." I didn't know the order they were going to come in, but I wasn't trying to write a linear novel. (Jusswalla and Dasenbrock 305)

Although unable to fully name the form *Mango Street* would eventually take, Cisneros was always clear that she wanted it to differ from existing forms. Although Cisneros's commentary is certainly interesting and useful, the overreliance on it is problematic. Such scholarship defers to Cisneros's explanation of intent in order to deal with Cisneros's generic innovation

Cisneros seems to be aware scholars are overly dependent on her explanations of her own writing for their direction. In a lecture given at Texas Lutheran College, and later published with two other essays in *Americas Review*, Cisneros revises an earlier description she'd given of her work as "lazy poems": "I said once that I wrote *Mango Street* naively, that they were 'lazy poems.' In other words, for me each of the stories could've developed into poems, but they were not poems. They were stories, albeit hovering in that grey area between two genres" (Cisneros "Do You Know Me?" 79).

Because her nonconforming genre style confounds reviewers and scholars, Cisneros seems to provide extensive explanation, even defense, of her work as intentional and crafted, not accidental or "lazy," but this burden is unreasonable. Granted, Cisneros's interviews and essays are compelling and engaging in their own right, but the way academics have depended on Cisneros to describe her work and provide the answer for what exactly the text is or what she was thinking when writing is striking. In a later interview, Cisneros is less willing to do such labor. Cisneros responds to interviewer Gayle Elliott's first question (asking for her definition of a short story) with barely disguised frustration, "I don't know what the definition of a short story is, and I don't even care to answer that question. That's something somebody in academia would think about. I just want to tell a story, and if people listen, and if it stays with you, it's a story" (97). When Elliot follows up the genre question with a similar line of inquiry, asking Cisneros how she classifies herself ("minimalist, magical realist, or postmodernist"), — and Cisneros responds with even more directness: "I don't classify myself as any of those things because I don't know what that means, and I don't have to know. It's not my job to be classifying my stories" (98). The exchange between Elliot and Cisneros is illuminating—it reveals the way *Mango Street* has confounded scholars because of its nontraditional, nonconforming style and how frequently they have relied on Cisneros to fill the gap in the genre framework her text creates. However, Cisneros is right to point out the work of genre classification is not her job. Rather, it is the responsibility of academics and scholars to study the genre transgression and transformation occurring in *Mango Street* and its critique of the existing genre system.

The House on Mango Street* as *Bildungsroman

From the earliest responses to Cisneros's beloved work to the more recent commentaries, there is one thread of analysis that remains a consistent point of focus: reading *Mango Street* as a contemporary *Bildungsroman.* In the section that follows I will provide an overview of the scholarship looking at *Mango Street* as a *Bildungsroman* in order to illustrate how even the most frequent genre designation for Cisneros's text is in fact insufficient for explaining the fullness of Cisneros's transgressive and transformational approach to genre. The text confounds easy categorization, and the existing genre explanations fall short because *Mango Street* is written in such a way that it escapes genre categorization. The point of this examination is not to criticize the existing scholarship on Cisneros's text. In fact, far from criticism, this section highlights the valuable and necessary insights gained through genre analysis. The *Bildungsroman* analysis provides some of the most insightful readings of the text as well as the most attentive observations regarding form. Instead, the goal is to document how even the most agreed upon genre designation and thorough *Bildungsroman* genre analysis does not go far enough and therefore cannot capture the fullness of genre innovations occurring in *Mango Street*.

In the more than twenty years since the publication of Cisneros's landmark text, numerous articles and chapters have been written offering new insights and understanding. As a matter of course, scholars have wrestled with how to answer the questions of identity and classification the genre non-conforming text inspires. As mentioned, the most frequent genre designation applied to *Mango Street* is *Bildungsroman,* the genre with its origins in late eighteenth-century Germany and the novels tracing the development of literary heroes as they navigate the larger world, its culture and expectations, to ultimately reach maturity and submit to the demands of an adult member of the polity, the archetypal model of which is Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*). At times referred to more generally as coming-of-age novels, the term is more accurately translated as a novel of formation. The *Bildungsroman* genre has more than two centuries of texts and scholarship, and given the breadth of the field, this section will cover the *Bildungsroman* readings of *Mango Street* and the following section will trace the progression of the field of *Bildungsroman* studies as an example of the genre system as constructed knowledge rather than objective truth.

In the body of *Mango Street* scholarship, there are pieces briefly referencing the *Bildungsroman* designation and others providing sustained analysis anchored in *Bildungsroman* genre discourse. This section will focus primarily on the latter, the work of Erlinda González-Berry and Tey Diana Rebolledo, Diana Klein, Leslie Gutiérrez-Jones, Annie Eysturoy, Maria Karafilis, and Stella Bolaki who provide sustained analysis of *Mango Street* as a contemporary *Bildungsroman*. This scholarship can be understood as falling into two categories: early scholarship performing comparison analysis and later scholarship which reads *Mango Street* as participating in the *Bildungsroman* tradition while fundamentally remaking it.

The trend in the early Cisneros scholarship is for scholars to provide a comparative reading of Cisneros's and another Chicano-authored text. By focusing on two texts, they are able to establish a general perspective of Chicanx youth experiences as well as, to a lesser degree, point out the gendered differences of those maturation processes all while working to establish the texts as part of the larger *Bildungsroman* tradition. Writing one year after the publication of *Mango Street*, Erlinda González-Berry and Tey Diana Rebolledo in "Growing up Chicano: Tomás Rivera and Sandra Cisneros" offer a comparative reading of Rivera's *. . .y no se lo tragó* (*. . . And The Earth Did Not Devour Him*) and Cisneros's *Mango Street,* examining the two novels as "part of the *bildungsroman* for their similarities to each as well as their differences and for their relationship to the traditional *bildungsroman*" (111). Placing Rivera alongside Rolando Hinojosa and Rudolfo Anaya, González-Berry and Rebolledo group their writings as "tales of young boys growing into manhood or self-knowledge through the acceptance of the symbols, happenings, and circumstances of the past, and the subsequent integration/unification of these as their destiny" (109). Offering a loose categorization of male *bildungsroman* (it is unclear if the authors chose these characteristics based on the Chicano novels referenced or from larger discussions of *Bildungsroman,* though the latter seems unlikely as no sources are directly referenced), González-Berry and Rebolledo put forward seven characteristics "this male *bildungsroman* may include":

> 1) the hero leaves home or goes to school, 2) undergoes a trial by his peers, 3) is either accepted or learns to deal with his situations, 4) overcomes adversity, 5) in

> some way is successful at some heroic act, 6) discovers who he is, as a man and as a person in society, and, 7) at the end of the novel has integrated his consciousness, thus achieving self definition and is ready to deal with the world on his own terms. (109)

These characteristics of what González-Berry and Rebolledo term "male *bildungsroman*" are contrasted with the stories of female girlhood and maturation, and the contrast is striking in both process and outcome. Whereas both men and women go through difficulties along the pathway to adulthood, "the young male hero…comes into a complete sense of integration and freedom," but "the female adolescent is carefully schooled to function in society, to lose her freedom and her sense of individuality in order to become a loving wife and mother (110). Perhaps even more dire are the endings of these female *Bildungsromane,* which tend "…to culminate in images of imprisoned women. When escape is an option, it is most often through death or insanity" (110).

Dianne Klein's 1992 article "Coming of Age in Novels by Rudolfo Anaya and Sandra Cisneros" has a similar comparative approach to González-Berry and Rebolledo's work. The focus of Klein's text is to show "the forces—social and cultural—that shape and define their characters" (21) and highlight the lack of coming-of-age stories by anyone not, white, heterosexual and male. Whereas González-Berry and Rebolledo compared *Mango Street* to Tomas Rivera's novel, Klein compares Cisneros's work to Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima.* Both Klein and González-Berry and Rebolledo before her seem to understand the shared differences from traditional *Bildungsroman* authored by white males as well as the distinctions of Chicano and Chicana experiences. Interestingly, both articles compare Cisneros's text to ones by men written more than a decade earlier, suggesting awareness *Mango Street* marks a new era of Chicana writing.

Klein traces the impoverishment of the Chicanx literary legacy, citing both Cisneros and Anaya's limited access to stories reflecting their own experiences. Young Sandra or Rudolfo had no Chicanx *Bildungsroman* they could read, no stories about Chicano life and community. So while there are *Bildungsromane* as models of maturation, there are not coming-of-age narratives matching their experiences. Despite this absence Klein contends Anaya's and Cisneros's texts clearly fit into the *Bildungsroman* tradition, and she offers the following to explain the characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* genre categories:

> *Bless Me, Ultima,* and *The House on Mango Street* are strong coming-of-age stories containing many of the elements of the traditional bildungsroman as well as other features that place them firmly in the Chicana/o tradition. The protagonists come of age by going through painful rites of passage, by performing heroic feats or passing tests with the help of mentors, by surviving symbolic descents into hell, and finally by reaching a new level of consciousness—the protagonists have changes and have moved from initial innocence to knowledge, from childhood to adolescence. (22)

Klein foregrounds the similarities of the texts to each other but emphasizes their differences from dominant narratives:

> These two novels, separated by about a generation, one about the male experience, one about the female; one rural, one urban; one mythopoetic and one dialectic, both show the struggle of the Chicano/a people to find identities that are true to themselves as individuals and artists but that do not betray their culture and their people. (21)

Although careful to highlight the differences between the two texts, primarily in terms of gender but also including the innovative structure of Cisneros's text, Klein maintains they share more similarities than differences. Klein's task is a complicated one, claiming Anaya's and Cisneros's texts are *Bildungsroman* but that they are unlike any previous *Bildungsroman,* that they are different from each other but provide insight into the

Chicano experience. Klein argues for their inclusion into the genre category while simultaneously suggesting they are completely unique. In terms of classification, she is trying to prove they are alike enough to the genre standards to fit while still distinctive enough to merit notice.

Klein is writing seemingly without any awareness of the González-Berry and Rebolledo essay, but the fact both of the articles take on a comparative approach suggests instinctive understanding of the significance of genre to the stories. These authors are performing genre analysis, albeit not explicitly. The work of classification is examining features and deciding which categories belong and which do not. The analysis performed in both essays seeks to put specific Chicanx texts, and Chicanx literature more broadly, alongside the larger literary canon. Klein makes clear these goals to see Chicanx writing reach prominence alongside mainstream literature. Ultimately, Klein's analysis culminates in the following claim:

> And so, these two novels are every bit as strong, as literary, and as meaningful as the bildungsromans [sic] traditionally read in United States-literature classes. At the same time, they take different paths, preventing a single or stereotyped view of the Chicano/a coming-of-age experiences. *Bless Me, Ultima* celebrates a rich cultural past and heritage, taking joy in myth and in the spiritual quest. *The House on Mango Street,* instead, celebrates the search for the real self and cultural responsibility in the face of different oppressions. Yet both texts show that Chicano/a literature has come of age; they announce "I am." That announcement should not go unheard. (25)

For Klein, the goal is to demonstrate that Chicanx writings are equal to the other *Bildungsromane* taught in US literature courses. By choosing two separate texts, she is able to demonstrate their compliance with/fit into the genre category. Her choice of two texts and their distinctiveness is what Klein relies on to disprove stereotyped Chicanx experiences. Like González-Berry and Rebolledo, Klein depends on there being more than one text to suggest a larger pattern and justification for considering Chicanx literature in discussions of *Bildungsroman.* Also, while not a stated goal of their essay, the scholars are making a case for the texts to be considered as part of the *Bildungsroman* legacy and perhaps even warranting new conceptions of the genre.

While the politics of the texts (and perhaps even of scholars working on literatures by marginalized populations) are progressive, perhaps even radical and revolutionary, the approach is conservative. The conservatism of the approach is visible in the way the final weight is behind the comparison in spite of the contrasts being acknowledged. Even though each article points out the differences between the two texts (between *Bless Me Ultima* and *Mango Street* and between *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* and *Mango Street*) being compared as well as between the texts discussed and the existing *Bildungsroman* canon, ultimately, any disparate elements are deemphasized because the goal is to gain admittance into the genre category. In particular, despite "novel" being a root part of the genre label *Bildungsroman* ("roman" translates to "novel")*,* the elements not characteristic of the novel are mentioned but not determined to be disqualifying.

The work for legitimization is not only understandable but is strategically necessary, and the work done by these scholars to secure attention and credibility, made possible the advancement witnessed later in the decade. Writing after Chicano writers had attained mainstream success in the seventies, Cisneros is the first Chicana author to do the same. *Mango Street* emerges in a new and tenuous field. Although clearly pointing out the different lived experiences of Chicanas/os (the article titles signal the difference of focus) the burden of marginalization requires not the emphasis of difference (as that is already the baseline assumption) but the proving of similarity, of belonging. The outsider position requires a different kind of work, of proving belonging and legitimacy before having the ability to mark distinctions or offer critiques of existing systems.

Alvina Quintana objects to the practice of comparing Cisneros's text to Rivera's for different reasons. Quintana cautions against simple comparisons to Rivera's*...y no se lo tragó la tierra* due to structural similarities. While acknowledging the validity of some comparisons, Quintana is concerned that it reflects the larger "tendency to categorize women's literary production by measuring it against what has been deemed the universal (generally masculine) standard" (55). For Quintana, the classifying based on a "simplistic comparison to Rivera's standard rite-of-passage narrative" would "depreciate Cisneros's experimental critique of gender inequality" (56). Quintana's concern is well founded given that both of these early articles compare Cisneros's text to a text authored by a Chicano. However, Quintana's critique does not go far enough to diagnose the problem. The very process of genre classification (which employs comparison), privileges the more established member of the pair. Even though seemingly neutral, the comparison occurring in genre analysis is not happening between two equally weighted pairs but between an established text and the newer or less-established text. Even if no singular text is serving as the established point of comparison, the text being considered for genre classification is being measured against genre standards that are exemplified in an archetypal text. The weight in the comparison lies in the precedent not in the new, innovative comparate. Quintana is right to warn against male bias, which sets up the male experiences as universal human experience, but part of the privilege is in levels of establishment (of which maleness is certainly a factor but not the entirety of achieving legitimacy). As they are written a decade before *Mango Street*, both Rivera's and Anaya's texts are the standard by which Cisneros's work is evaluated, but all of these texts are also evaluated against the established canon of *Bildungsroman,* which are primarily written by white men, and, until the twentieth century, predominately by European authors. Further still, the danger of analyzing *Mango Street* in relationship to the Chicano literary canon is that it misses Cisneros's innovation because the effort is centered on explaining how it fits with the existing categories not with understanding how it is offers new perspectives and expressive techniques. This is a problem for all genre comparison readings: the goal of acceptance into an existing category encourages deemphasizing any aberrant aspects.

The bias is not a result of González-Berry and Rebolledo or Klein but of the larger system in which they are operating. In fact, their work is in line with feminist of color practices exposing the multiple oppressions: the racial and ethnic oppression of the Chicano male and the racial and ethnic as well as sexist oppression experienced by Chicanas. As González-Berry and Rebolledo make clear, the maturation process is experienced positively by Rivera's male protagonist and painfully by Cisneros's female protagonist:

> Rivera's young protagonist has only to separate sexuality from religion in order to achieve a positive integration of the former into his gradually expanding world view. Young Esperanza, on the other hand, must suffer some very negative experiences, or knowledge of them, which in the end leave her, and the reader, with a very strong impression of female sexual vulnerability. (116-117)

Klein joins the acknowledgment of the increased vulnerability (not increased freedom accompanying male maturation) of womanhood as highlighted in Cisneros's text, writing, "Esperanza's rite of passage speak not through myth and dreams, but through the political realities of Mango Street. She faces pain and experiences violence in a very different way. Her major loss of innocence has to do with gender and with being sexually appropriated by men" (25). For both pieces, they are careful to point out the gendered challenges Esperanza faces.

On another level, the approach is conservative because it treats *Mango Street*, a text that challenges the existing genre system, by seeking to fit it into the larger literary and genre tradition. The problem is not with these scholars or with particular arguments but is rooted in the interpellating power of the genre system whereby even the most counter-hegemonic perspectives are made to support the status quo. Further, in regards to the status quo, genre is a part of the mechanism by which a text is canonized. A text is identified as a member of a specific genre group and is evaluated in comparison against standing members, inherently privileging the old over the new. The entire classificatory gene system, which is inextricable from the process of canon formation, works to regulate and encourage conformity to already existing standards. The unspoken imperative for Cisneros's text to be legitimized and understood by comparing it to an established Chicano-authored text and then by comparing both to a traditionally white-dominated genre reveals the imbalance and explains the relative lack of acknowledgement of Cisneros's groundbreaking work. Ultimately, the pressure to illustrate compatibility with traditional genre form blunts the distinctiveness of the texts.

Following this early trend of comparative readings of *Mango Street* to other Chicano *Bildungsroman*, scholars began to move in a different direction, acknowledging Cisneros's radical departure from traditional *Bildungsroman.* On the whole, the trend in later Cisneros *Bildungsroman* scholarship is to argue for *Mango Street* as participating in the *Bildungsroman* tradition while also fundamentally remaking the genre. This shift in approach emerges with the 1993 publication of Leslie Gutiérrez-Jones' article "Different Voices: The Re-Bildung of the Barrio in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street.*" It is a piece that signals a new stage in genre analysis for Cisneros scholarship. Unlike the previous two pieces, which seem to apply the *Bildungsroman* category for a compare and contrast analysis with indirect discussion of the genre and its limitations, Gutiérrez-Jones delves deep into the existing *Bildungsroman* scholarship and offers insight into the way Cisneros's text challenges the limited confines of the genre category. Gutiérrez-Jones argues that the *Bildungsroman* is a white, patriarchal form that is strategically revised by Cisneros in order to write a story consistent with her politics and with Esperanza's development as a non-white female.

Gutiérrez-Jones' reading is grounded in the theories of Michel de Certeau found in *Practices of Everyday Life* where the non-dominant person "poaches" from the land (terminology which suggests circumstances of survival and resistance). Describing her argument and use of de Certeau, Gutiérrez-Jones writes:

> One model for understanding what is at stake in such an appropriation may be found in Michel de Certeau's analysis of the creative art forms of the disempowered, the "subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups, which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and relationships" (18). For the marginalized writer, the "already established forces and relationships" are represented by the literary tradition of

> the dominant culture; the genre definitions, the intertextual “lineage,” the theoretical frameworks, and the like. Such products of hegemonic culture are ubiquitous, and contact with them virtually inescapable; any writer, then, becomes a “consumer” of sorts. (297)

Gutiérrez-Jones continues:

> But consumption for de Certeau may become a form of production: creativity may thus be expressed in the Chicana writer’s “ways of using,” in her “innumerable and infinite small transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to [her] own interests and [her] own rules” (xii-xiii). Cisneros, in de Certeau’s terms, “poaches” up on the supposedly private reserve of the white male Anglo-European literary tradition, moving like a nomad ‘across fields she did not write” (174). Like Esperanza, she can neither purchase nor inherit a “ready-made” structure to call home, but instead creates from within a new space, a home in the heart where her fellow transients are welcome. (297)

De Certeau’s theories provide the groundwork for Gutiérrez-Jones to explain the writerly resistance from non-dominant authors. For de Certeau, whose “investigation is concerned with this difference,” the important thing to know is how the system functions, in this case language, and how it functions differently when performed by users who did not construct the system but on whom the language is imposed. The difference in use, even if small and subtle, is instructive because it represents resistance, adaptation, and appropriation. Gutiérrez-Jones’ invoking of de Certeau’s theories makes the complicated relationship between marginalized (or colonized) populations[2] and their use of dominant group’s cultural practices clearer and highlights the “ways of using,” specifically the ways Cisneros and others use but adapt (or using de Certeau’s language “poaches”) the *Bildungsroman.*

Drawing from Cisneros’s own architectural symbolism, Gutiérrez-Jones offers a reading both intricate and elegant, suggesting a connection between Esperanza’s desire and Cisneros’s own desires. Gutiérrez-Jones contends Esperanza’s desire is not merely for a physical room but for a creative space which can allow for imaginative expansion: “Acutely aware of the disempowerment that results from lacking ‘a home of one’s own,’ she yearns to stake out an architectural space—one which she implicitly assumes will provide her with the ‘space’ to develop a sense of identity and an artistic voice” (296). However, Gutiérrez-Jones’ continues, “when architecture will not cooperate, she must look instead to her imagination in order to create a sense of place—one which can, in turn, provide a place for her writing” (296). Cisneros’s own desire, then, is not for a literal home but for a creative space all her own. Facing the challenge of making a “home” for herself in a literary neighborhood that does not have other residents like her (nor is it built for her), Cisneros must renovate the architecture of the *Bildungsroman*:

> Just as Esperanza must leave behind her dependence on rented spaces and on standards external to her own experience, so Cisneros, a Chicana writer, is faced with the challenge of creating a home in the midst of a predominantly white, predominantly male, literary tradition: that of the *Bildungsroman.* Writer and character both face the conflict between desire for self-expression and fear of being co-opted by the very forms of self-expression available…. Cisneros must insistently remake the conventions and formulas of a patriarchal individualistic tradition, using them in order to transform them, tactically appropriating them in order to make them her own…and, by extension, her community’s. (Gutiérrez-Jones 296-297)

Gutiérrez-Jones casts Cisneros’s project as a battle with a white, patriarchal genre and literary—akin to the way Esperanza creates a space for herself through her writing. Although she does not yet have the physical home she wants to have—one hospitable to “bums in the attic”—she creates a home for herself in her writing, and by “tactically appropriating” the *Bildungsroman*, Cisneros carves out a writerly/literary home for herself and other Chicanas/os (297).

Gutiérrez-Jones does not ask for *Mango Street* to be considered as *Bildungsroman.* Simply being added to the *Bildungsromane* canon is not the goal of the piece. Rather, it is to acknowledge Cisneros's resistance (even insurgency) to the form (individualistic/white/male). Her analysis makes explicit connections between genre, power, and dominant ideology, and it is through her application of de Certeau's theories of everyday practices of resistance, which acknowledge power and the non-dominant's persistent effort to adapt within a constrained environment, she is able to make visible Cisneros's departure from tradition. When Cisneros writes *Mango Street* in a way that evokes comparisons to *Bildungsroman* all while challenging some of the central expectations of the genre, she is adapting and appropriating literary form for her own needs, she is, to use de Certeau's terms "poaching (xii)." Gutiérrez-Jones in her recognition of this resistance altogether changes the scale and understanding of *Mango Street.* While inhabiting a generic form, Cisneros is adapting it for her own purposes. Or, to use building metaphors, Cisneros inhabits the *Bildungsroman* while renovating it.

What is perhaps the most important difference between *Mango Street* and the other traditional occupants of the *Bildungsroman,* according to Gutiérrez-Jones, is its refusal to privilege individualistic narrative at the cost of the community.[3] Cisneros's choice of title rather than some version of Goethe's über-model like *Esperanza's Apprenticeship* highlights the focus on the space and the community as much as it follows the maturation of Esperanza. Unlike the familiar story of the young man making his solitary way in the world, (or even the more individualistic white female *Bildungsroman* admitted into the fraternity like Jane Eyre), Gutiérrez-Jones *Mango Street* belongs to an archive of non-white female-authored texts, including Alice Munro's *The Lives of Girls and Women,* Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place,* Joan Chase's *During the Reign of the Queen of Persia,* Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine,* Nicholasa Mohr's *Rituals of Survival,* Alison Lurie's *Only Children,* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club,* which refuses the isolated approach. Gutiérrez-Jones highlights the fruitfulness of the genre for female authors of color and Cisneros specifically:

> The genre of *Bildungsroman*, then, provides a particularly treacherous, yet particularly rewarding, ground for Cisneros's 'poaching.' As the young Esperanza must create an identity for herself in a fictional world which denies selfhood to members of her sex, her class and her ethnic group, Cisneros must create her own space, and assert her own voice, within a culture not historically open to her; her tactic of poaching upon the *Bildungsroman* provides an opportunity, as it were to renovate and remodel the rented cultural space of this patriarchal genre, in order to make it her own. (309-310)

Ultimately the crucial progress Gutiérrez-Jones' article brings to the scholarly understanding of the text is recognition of the transgressive quality of Cisneros's work. With a postcolonial theory-inflected analysis, Gutiérrez-Jones approaches Cisneros work from the perspective of its complicated relationship to literary tradition, determining Cisneros, in *Mango Street,* employs recognizable elements of the dominant literary tradition but makes strategic adaptations.

In many ways picking up where Gutiérrez-Jones left off in her discussion of a women of color literary archive, Jacqueline Doyle in her 1994 article "More Room of Her Own: Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*" places Cisneros in the feminist literary legacy. Doyle reads *Mango Street* as a continuation and necessary expansion of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own.* Doyle adds Sandra Cisneros to a list of Tillie Olsen and Alice Walker who have directly engaged Woolf's work in their own, critiquing its oversight of class and race issues respectively. According to Doyle, Cisneros "offers a rich reconsideration of the contemporary feminist inheritance as well" (7) and reads *Mango Street* as continuing "Woolf's meditations" and altering "the legacy of *A Room of One's Own* in important ways" (6). For Doyle, Cisneros' work tells Esperanza's coming-of-age story as Chicana and author but does so in the context of the girls, women, and community surrounding her. Like the others before her, Doyle emphasizes this importance of the communal in the text.

Although not as central to her work as to Gutiérrez-Jones' before her, Doyle grounds her analysis of the ways Cisneros, and women of color authored texts, are a fulfillment and expansion of Woolf's vision. In her classification of the text as a *Bildungsroman,* Doyle draws from Rachel Blau DuPlessis's 1985 work *Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* and reads *Mango Street* as falling under the subcategory of *Künstlerromane* about the development of an artist. Of particular importance is DuPlessis's reading twentieth-century women writers' nonlinear narratives as breaking conventional plot, refusing the expected *Bildungsroman* plot conventions to avoid the destructive endings that subordinate women's freedom and happiness to cultural conventions of marriage and compliance. Interestingly, Doyle (as well as Gutiérrez-Jones before her) reads Esperanza's wish for a house of her own as metaphorically representing Cisneros's own desire for a creative space of her own. For both, Cisneros's writing is inhabiting and revising the dominant structures and literary legacies. According to Doyle, "By engaging *A Room of One's Own* in *The House on Mango Street*, Cisneros opens a dialogue. Preserving Woolf's feminist architectures, she enlarges and even reconstructs Woolf's room to make space for her own voice and concerns" (26). When read together, Gutiérrez-Jones's and Doyle's work contends *Mango Street* occupies and renovates the patriarchal structure of the *Bildungsroman* as well as the white feminist literary legacy.

Despite the quality work of early *Mango Street* scholarship, 1996 is an especially important year for Chicana literary and *Bildungsroman* scholarship, a year in which both Alvina Quintana's *Home Girls: Chicana Literary Voices* and Annie O. Eysturoy's *Daughters of Self-Creation: The Contemporary Chicana Novel* are published. With the publication of their two texts, Quintana and Eysturoy advance Chicana literary studies significantly, offering new insights into the projects and style of Chicana writers. More importantly, their writings cement the trend begun with Gutiérrez-Jones of recognizing the challenge *Mango Street* presents to the standard *Bildungsroman.*

In the opening of her chapter titled "*The House on Mango Street*: An Appropriation of Word, Space, and Sign," Quintana situates her analysis of *Mango Street* within the historical moment of its production. Recalling George Orwell's famous dystopian novel *1984* and the anticipated crises of that imagined world, Quintana highlights one of the important details of 1984 as the first time the National Association for Chicano Studies recognized the emergent Chicana feminist movement by setting the conference theme as *Voces de la Muje*r. Against that backdrop, Quintana describes Cisneros's text as unique even among the five Chicana texts featured at the conference. With a sense of almost gleeful celebration, Quintana recounts Cisneros's emergence as follows:

> Of the five books featured — Pat Mora's *Chant;* Evangelina Vigil's *Woman of Her Word: An Anthology of Writing by Latinas* and *Thirty an' Seen a Lot;* Ana Castillo's *Women Are Not Roses;* and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* — only Sandra Cisneros's *Mango Street* defied the poetic form previously privileged by many Chicana writers. In the text of forty-four poetically charged vignettes centering on women's experiences, Cisneros defined a distinctive Chicana literary space — oh so gently she flung down the gauntlet, challenging, at the least, accepted literary form, gender inequities, and the cultural and economic subordination of minorities. Theoretically speaking, this little text subverts traditional form and content in a way that demonstrates how conventional applications of literary genre and the social construction of genre undermine a "feminist aesthetic." (55)

What comes across clearly is Quintana's joy at the impact the "little text" has, the way it moves away from the trend of Chicanas writing primarily in poetry, and the way *Mango Street*, in both its content and form, challenges the status quo.

Key to Quintana's contribution is her recognition of *Mango Street*'s groundbreaking qualities. As in the opening of the chapter described above where Quintana singles out Cisneros's work from the other Chicana texts, Quintana consistently champions the distinctiveness of Cisneros's text. Quintana credits the text with subverting "conventional literary form" and "blurring genres" (56) in order to tell the story of young Esperanza growing up in a Chicago barrio and praises Cisneros for writing a seemingly naive protagonist whose depiction "itself represents a refined challenge to domination" (58). The point here may seem obvious but Quintana is careful to highlight Cisneros's resistance as occurring not just in the dominant narrative of Esperanza's agency but also in the social circumstances in which Cisneros situates her protagonist. Core to Quintana's discussion is the notion of appropriation. Although it is less focused on *Bildungsroman* and genre analysis more broadly, Quintana recognizes Cisneros's work as an act of appropriation as did Gutiérrez-Jones and Klein before her.

Quintana recognizes in Cisneros and the other Chicana authors she writes about a kind of literary resistance to dominant ideology and forms that requires new analytical methods. Old methods of analysis are insufficient; the study of Chicana literature, according to Quintana "commands an awareness of historical, cultural, and gender issues" and "requires an approach that escapes the confines of conservative modes of analysis" (13). Quintana appreciates the incredible work of Chicana authors and recognizes Chicana authors as part of the larger collective of "Chicana cultural critics" (14). Further, Quintana understands that in this cultural work, "these writers involve themselves with intellectual projects that interrogate and challenge established tradition. As revisionists they write in order to inspire social change and influence the future (14)." What makes Quintana contribution valuable not only to Cisneros scholarship, but also to broader Chicana literary scholarship, is the way she articulates the revolutionary quality of Chicana writing, making clear that these women write in a way that can hold up a mirror to dominant culture, show new experiences never chronicled in dominant narratives, and imagine new possibilities for life and culture. While Quintana is right that traditional, conservative modes of analysis are insufficient tools for analyzing Chicana literature, genre analysis need not be conservative. In fact, only with careful genre analysis is it possible to uncover the true brilliance of the Chicana revisionist project—they are inspiring social change not simply in the content of their works but also in their innovation, transgression, and transformation of form.

As mentioned in the previous section on early comparative *Mango Street* scholarship, Quintana critiques the approaches comparing Cisneros's text to Tomas

Rivera's. Quintana is absolutely right to point out that such comparison readings with male-authored texts reveal a male-centric interpretive methodology that compares the female-authored texts against the already established, and perceived as universal, male-authored texts. Further still, analyzing *Mango Street* in relationship to the Chicano literary canon misses Cisneros's innovation because the effort is centered on explaining how it fits with the existing categories not with understanding how it is offers new perspectives and expressive techniques. This is a problem for all genre comparison readings: the goal of acceptance into an existing category encourages deemphasizing any aberrant aspects.

Of all the scholars included in the second wave of scholarship which recognizes the fundamental innovation of Cisneros's writing, differently described as "poaching," renovating the *Bildungsroman*'s architecture, or appropriating dominant forms, Quintana is the least invested in exploring genre. She fits into the trend because she is adamant in acknowledging the text's subversive qualities, but, unfortunately, Quintana's analysis is ultimately undercut by her unwillingness to employ formalist criticism. Even in moments when it seems clear Quintana is directly inviting scrutiny of form, she ends up diverting back to discussions of thematic elements. Take for example when Quintana writes the following: "By taking her writing one step beyond the conventional, Cisneros has moved into a terrain explored by few Chicana writers" (66). Using language echoing Adrienne Rich's important work on feminist re-vision, Quintana claims *Mango Street* "not only exemplifies an act of revision that looks back with fresh eyes at the cultural history and day-to-day experiences of her young protagonist, Esperanza, it also redefines literary form" (67). With a strength and clarity of argument, Quintana advocates Cisneros's work be recognized as nothing short of momentous. However, the final claim—that *Mango Street "*redefines literary form" is not served with the completion of the sentence: "in its mediation between the romantic and the harsh" (67). Additionally, the close reading her statement ushers in fails to deliver any evidence of the "beyond the conventional" or "redefin[ing] of literary form" more than content analysis.

Quintana's insights are incisive and her critical instincts honed, so this miss regarding Cisneros's innovation of form is even more frustrating. However, her avoidance of genre analysis is intentional and not a mere oversight. In her earlier chapters, where Quintana reviews the three book-length projects in existence at the point of her writing: Cordelia Candelaria's *Chicana Poetry: A Critical Introduction,* Ramon Saldívar's *Chicano Narrative: Dialectics of Difference*, and Marta Sánchez's *Contemporary Chicana Poetry: A Critical Approach to an Emerging Literature* and finds them to "serve as solid introductions that can be characterized by their descriptive/structural concerns on the one hand, and on the other by their allegiance to either Anglo American feminist or Chicano nationalist ideologies" (23). While Quintana takes issues with the approaches which she finds "reproduce many of the problems associated with exclusivity" (23) she finds fault with Sánchez and Candelaria's analysis for being too heavily weighted in structuralist and formalist criticism to the detriment of the political voice of the authors. Remarking on this deficiency of Candelaria's methodology, Quintana writes, "Here, as in the case of Sánchez, the structuralist/formalist method functions to contain the political, as it surprises any discussion of ideological tensions" (25). In response to the perceived failure of Cordelia's structuralist approach, Quintana endeavors to do the opposite and avoid any formal analysis, convinced such analysis results in muted political and ideological analyses.

Quintana is correct in maintaining any reading of Chicanx literature must look at the politics. However, Quintana's mistake lies in her assumption the text's politics exists solely in the content—she fails to realize it is also possible to observe the politics of form. Candelaria's reading is not apolitical because it is formalist; it is actually a highly political reading, albeit conservative, because it deemphasizes the transgressive aspects of the texts she analyzes. Quintana is right to demand the political voice of Chicana writers be acknowledged, but doing so also requires attentiveness to the political challenges lodged in the form as well as content. Ultimately, Quintana limits her own analysis because she ignores form. There are political maneuverings happening in texts at the level of form that will be missed, and a genre reading can indeed reveal the political resistance of altering traditional form and even producing inexplicable, innovative forms.

Published the same year as Quintana's *Home Girls: Chicana Literary Voices,* Annie O. Eysturoy's *Daughters of Self-Creation*: *The Contemporary Chicana Novel* represents the most significant development in Chicana *Bildungsroman* studies to date. As is clear from Eysturoy's title, her study is focused on the contemporary Chicana novel. What may not be readily apparent from the title is the fact that Eysturoy's book is not just focused on the contemporary novel, but is in fact a book-length study of the Chicana *Bildungsroman*. Up to the point of its publication, *Mango Street* analysis had not been deeply rooted in *Bildungsroman* scholarship. Although there were crucial insights and contributions to the discussion of the text as a coming-of-age narrative as well as thoughtful investigation of Cisneros's careful renovation to traditional *Bildungsroman* form, more often than not it was based on a general understanding of *Bildungsroman* or in one genre theory text (occasionally a scholar would site a small number of *Bildungsroman* sources), lacking a comprehensive understanding of the genre's history. Eysturoy's work significantly changes the depth and scope of *Bildungsroman* information provided in *Mango Street* analysis, proffering an impressive understanding of the field.[2] Eysturoy situates her analysis of Chicana literature alongside the traditional *Bildungsroman* in order to understand how works participate in the genre while also actively reforming the genre, continuing the trend started by Gutiérrez-Jones and continued by Klein and Quintana.

Eysturoy's not only provides exceptional scholarship in the field of Chicana *Bildungsroman,* but also contributes work which should be considered beneficial for the broader genre studies. In fact, Eysturoy's introduction is one of the strongest overviews of *Bildungsroman* scholarship that exists. She traces the German origins of *Bildungsroman* in the late eighteenth century through its spread in popularity and influence beyond its original German context into the English-speaking world where it resulted in numerous novels and expanded prominence in genre scholarship. With precision and thoroughness Eysturoy captures the problem of male bias in traditional *Bildungsroman* scholarship, where their examples and descriptions are male-centric while pretending to be universal, and also traces the development of feminist *Bildungsroman* scholarship emerging in the nineteen-eighties that sought to correct the patriarchal oversight and exclusionary practices of traditional *Bildungsroman* scholarship. Eysturoy also points out that despite the origins of feminist *Bildungsroman* as responding to the exclusionary practices of male-centric *Bildungsroman* scholarship, they are guilty of their own exclusionary practices given there has been a largely white, middle class focus. With the exclusion of Bonnie Hoover Braendlin's work exploring *Bildungsroman* by women of color, the studies focused on narratives by and about white women. Eysturoy's makes inroads by offering *Bildungsroman* analysis of contemporary Chicana novels.[4]

One of the helpful insights Eysturoy adds to *Bildungsroman* scholarship is her distinction of the various component parts of *Bildungsroman* in order to focus on *Bildung*. *Bildung,* the education and individual growth specific to a historical moment and cultural ideology that is nevertheless unique to any individual story, becomes more widely applicable by acknowledging there are different *Bildung* process. By making this distinction, Eysturoy counters the German studies and comparative literature academics who believe in a narrow understanding of the genre as limited only to German literature from a specific era. Further, Eysturoy's line of reasoning as makes visible how *Bildung* is intricately connected to dominant culture and ideology and how one's experience is contingent on one's social location (unlike the male scholars of traditional *Bildungsroman* studies who are oblivious to the fact that the *Bildungs* process they analyze is unique to males). By focusing on *Bildung*, Eysturoy also foregrounds the interplay between the real world and the narrative it inspires. The values, practices, and character traits a society wants inculcated in its members is accomplished through a variety of ways, the genre is explicitly a conveyor of dominant ideology which tells the story of a protagonist who goes through the *Buildings* process of a given culture.

Of the Chicana texts participating in the *Bildungsroman* tradition, Eysturoy finds Cisneros's work to be among the most subversive. Eysturoy's project is divided into two separate sections the first: "*Bildung* as Entrapment" and the second "*Bildung* as a Subversive Act." In the first section, Eysturoy's studies *Victum* by Isabella Ríos and *Trini* by Estella Portillo Trambley, two narratives that follow the traditional linear narrative with plots culminating and marriage and motherhood. Including these two texts in her section exploring *Buildings* as entrapment, Eysturoy is careful to point out the resistance, even if a "muted resistance" (31) to the societal norms of womanhood, ultimately concluding:

> Most revealing in both novels, however, is the portrayal of a *Bildungs* process that leads the protagonist directly to domesticity and passivity, to socio-cultural/plot entrapment, and then later to an awakening to her self-effacing existence. This awakening leads both protagonists to seek authenticity and selfhood beyond the social confines of patriarchal structures. (31)

In contrast to the muted resistance in the narratives tracing the maturation process as one leading to entrapment, Eysturoy offers Cisneros's *Mango Street* and Denise Chávez's *The Last of the Menu Girls* as evidence of a turn in Chicana writing, "away from patterning the female quest story on the traditional male-defined generic paradigm of individual accommodation to socio-cultural values and gender roles expectations" and towards "the *Bildung* of a Chicana as a process of self-discovery that is a conscious quest for authentic female selfhood" (85). The muted protest of the earlier texts is replaced by protagonists who “openly resist such confinement by daring to voice what previously remained unspoken in respect to growing up as a Chicana” (85).

In the case of Cisneros and Chavez’s text, Eysturoy identifies several aspects distinctive from Ríos’ and Portillo’s, depicting a *Bildungs* process that is subversive rather than imprisoning. In both texts Eysturoy recognizes a difference in narrative style, with the protagonist also serving as narrator, who in doing so becomes the “conscious subject of their own *Bildungs* story, who through the act of narrating, actively participates in the process of her own self-formation” (87). For Eysturoy, the power of the “female ‘I’” is taking on authority both of the narrative as well as of her own self-fashioning, a fundamentally subversive act (87). In addition to the protagonist as narrator, Eysturoy finds deviations from the traditional form: rather than the linear narrative trajectory conventional of the genre, both texts, instead, are comprised of collections of short narratives.

Maria Karafilis, in her 1998 article “Crossing the Borders of Genre: Revisions of the ‘Bildungsroman’ in Sandra Cisneros’s *Mango Street* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*” follows Eysturoy. Yet, despite offering a comparison reading, it is not a continuation of the earliest *Bildungsroman* analysis glimpsed in González-Berry and Rebolledo’s or in Klein’s work. Rather it is based in an understanding of the two texts authored by women of color as fundamentally revising the genre, making it a clear continuation of the later trend of scholarship reading *Mango Street* as challenging the traditional *Bildungsroman.*

Reminiscent of Gutiérrez-Jones' work a half-decade before her, Karafilis reads Cisneros's work in *Mango Street* as "appropriating and modifying" *Bildungsroman.* When Cisneros adopts and adjusts the traditional form to fit her needs, she speaks not only "to the options, futures, and responsibilities of their young narrator," but also is able to "comment on dominant Euro-American society by revising or even rejecting some of its values and certain aspects of its literary traditions" (Karafilis 64). In other words, *Mango Street* gives voice to Chicana experience while also critiquing dominant culture, adapting group-differentiated material conditions to its literary regimes. Both Gutiérrez-Jones' and Karafilis recognize a strategic alteration to the traditional genre. Whereas early scholarship highlighted shared *Bildungsroman* elements (seemingly to legitimize marginalized literatures by allowing membership in the long-standing genre), later scholars are able to build off of the previous work which argued *Mango Street* should be read as a *Bildungsroman* to arguing instead Cisneros makes strategic adaptations to the genre with *Mango Street*.

Interestingly, Karafilis and several before her use thorny, even violent metaphors to characterize Cisneros's relationship to genre. As previously mentioned, Gutiérrez-Jones grounds her reading in de Certeau's theorization of colonized peoples' everyday resistances, which he terms "poaching," (de Certeau xii) and Karafilis describes Cisneros's work as "coloniz[ing] this literary form and revers[ing] traditional lines of power by controlling representation instead of passively being represented by dominant culture" (64). In the case of de Certeau's work, the choice of poaching as metaphor seems incredibly complicated, even problematic. While the metaphor of poaching raises implications of power, ownership, and authority, it fails to address whose actions—natives or colonizers—best fit the designation of poaching. Legitimate rights to land and its resources become murky once colonizing ventures are introduced. Who determines land ownership and hunting rights? Is it the natives who have the power to determine these rights? If not, it seems inaccurate to use "poaching" as the metaphor for their resistance.

Although Gutiérrez-Jones refers to Cisneros's actions as "poaching" several times throughout the article, it is her own metaphor of Cisneros's literary form as an imaginative structure parallel to Esperanza's desire for a home of her own that is most helpful. Thinking of Cisneros's work in *Mango Street* as renovating the architecture of the traditional genre form acknowledges the use of the *Bildungsroman* form without employing violent imagery. It could also be argued the image of Cisneros's genre work as renovating the "rented cultural space" of the *Bildungsroman* is too benign (Gutiérrez-Jones 310). Perhaps what is needed is an acknowledgment both of the innovative and illicit nature of the work to adopt and adapt to traditional genre form. It must be acknowledged that power and dominant ideologies undergird genre, and so the stealthy raiding and refashioning is subversive, even dangerous.

In many regards, Stella Bolaki's chapter "'The mestiza way': a *Bildung* of the borderlands in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*" from her 2011 book *Unsettling the Bildungsroman: Reading Contemporary Ethnic American Women's Fiction* represents the culmination of *Mango Street Bildungsromane* scholarship. It is one chapter devoted to Cisneros's text out of a book-long project dedicated to exploring the way contemporary female authors of color have negotiated and revised the genre. As clear from her title, Bolaki ties Esperanza's experience and the cultural knowledge learned (*Bildung*) to the broader conversations on mestiza identity. In this sense, Esperanza becomes the embodiment of Anzaldúa's theorizations regarding mestiza consciousness, the fictional girl navigating the very real challenges that exist for Chicanas.

Bolaki's work builds off earlier Cisneros and *Bildungsroman* scholarship, offering nuanced analysis. One of the long-standing debates she weighs in on is the tension between individual identity and communal allegiance. Whereas others have read Esperanza's desire for a home of her own as evidence of assimilation to white-middle class acquisitiveness or the desire to leave Mango Street as a rejection of communal ties,[5] Bolaki joins those who read the narrative as articulating a more complex tie to oneself and one's community, not a simple binary but a constant negotiation. "Assertions of individuality" according to Martin Japtok's 2005 book *Growing up Ethnic: Nationalism and the Bildungsroman in African American and Jewish American Fiction*, "make sense in the face of a denial of individuality" (qtd. in Bolaki 90). Like Japtok, Bolaki denies the assertion that an exploration of individuality in ethnic *Bildungsroman* is a sign of assimilation. Rather, the revisions minorities make to "Western genres such as the *Bildungsroman* or autobiography" exist "in order to convey a sense of how inextricable a story of one's selfhood is from that of the larger community to which they belong" (Bolaki 91).

Bolaki's analysis is remarkable for the way it pushes forward with existing scholarly understandings and offers new insights and applications. Bolaki's work is the culmination of the trend started with Gutiérrez-Jones and continued by Karafilis, offering compelling and clear details of how Cisneros uses *Bildungsroman* elements while adapting the genre to suit her needs. Bolaki pushes previous readings (of renovation and assimilation) one step further and proclaims the *Bildungsroman* as "an appropriate site for the construction of 'third spaces' such as the ones suggested by the term of the borderland" (101). By using this language, Bolaki combines existing understandings regarding third spaces and borderland sites where boundaries are blurred and binaries unraveled, and suggests *Bildungsroman* (and possibly genre more broadly), can be such a site. The *Bildungsroman*, according to Bolaki, is where ethnic authors "dramatise their protagonists' constant 'border crossings' and negotiation of belonging in distinct territories" and ultimately "redefine traditional notions of eighteenth-century *Bildung* by turning attention away from organic integration to express the acute conflicts and complexity that characterise life 'on the border'" (94). The *Bildungsroman* by ethnic writers, in this case Cisneros, detail the protagonist's navigation of literal and metaphoric borderlands and the genre exists as a third space from which those authors can create. Put differently, the ethnic writers of *Bildungsroman* are navigating a white, patriarchal genre form as they write stories with protagonists navigating white, patriarchal culture, so the *Bildungsroman* ends up being a uniquely reflexive form.

From the earliest trend of comparative readings found in González-Berry and Rebolledo and Klein to the more recent trend of reading Cisneros's *Mango Street* as fundamentally remaking the genre as found in Gutiérrez-Jones, Quintana, Eysturoy, Karafilis, and Bolaki; the *Bildungsroman* analysis of Cisneros's text provides crucial insight into the text. Yet despite this tremendous progress, the *Bildungsroman* analysis is not fully able to articulate Cisneros's genre innovation. As mentioned earlier, the comparative approach of the early scholarship is rooted in the conservatism of a genre reading that encourages conformity and compliance to genre norms. While the later trend of scholarship moves beyond that pressure for sameness, correctly recognizing the challenges *Mango Street* poses to traditional *Bildungsroman* form, they miss it by one step. The genre transgression calls into question the entire system. Or to borrow Linda Hutcheon's terminology from her work on postmodern aesthetics, it "denaturalizes" genre. Cisneros is not simply remaking the *Bildungsroman;* she is disrupting the broader genre system.

The nontraditional aspects of *Mango* Street are not fully accounted for with the "*Bildungsroman*" designation. Even the scholars who recognize *Mango Street* as a radical departure from traditional form fail to address other aspects of genre. It could be argued that the consistent scholarly focus on *Bildungsroman* in *Mango Street* scholarship is due to this genre designation providing a relatively straightforward manner to classify an otherwise difficult to classify text. That it is possible to ignore the texts innovative formal aspects to focus solely on plot characteristics indicates that the genre is defined primarily by its content rather than, if at all, by its form. Questions of form (novel, composite novel, serial narrative, short-story cycle, vignettes) and style (poetic, prose, prosaic) may prove complicated, thus discussion is centered on Esperanza's development. While other elements of the text are more difficult to recognize and categorize, the coming-of-age aspect is rather simple. A classification of *Bildungsroman* thus encourages suspension of any further (or complete) genre categorization or discussions of innovation.

Early genre analysis of Cisneros's first book led readers to understand it as part of the *Bildungsroman* tradition, later analysis allowed readers to consider it in terms of how *Mango Street* radically challenges and remakes the tradition. Each approach fails to recognize the larger challenge *Mango Street* poses. Were Cisneros simply remaking the *Bildungsroman,* disrupting the inner form would be sufficient. The inner form (coming-of-age plot) as well as the outer form (44 independent segments with narrative cohesion that when taken together challenge genre categorization) are being renovated, so it is not enough to categorize Cisneros's text as a *Bildungsroman* with unconventional content. In truth, Cisneros is not simply renovating a genre but transforming our very understandings of genre. *Mango Street* exceeds the limits of the *Bildungsroman,* and spans multiple possible genres, yet never fits one. *Mango Street* calls not just the *Bildungsroman* genre into question but the very practice of genre classification.

Genre Construction: A Case Study of Bildungsroman

In this project thus far I have attempted to explore and explain the unique relationship foundational Chicana writers have with genre. The first chapter sought to illustrate the entrenched racial logics in the genre system overall by diving deep into genre history and how Anzaldúa's refusing genre purity was imperative given the logic of racial purity underpinning and suffusing genre history and genre itself. Anzaldúa's theory of *mestizaje* demanded a break from traditional genre formats because an agenda based in an understanding of identity as racially absorbing rather than exclusionary would be undercut by a communication format participating in genre, and by extension racial purity. Anzaldúa's argument, putting forth identity transcending binaristic thinking, required a form that not only blurred and blended genres but also offered a vision of genre transcendence.

In this chapter thus far, I have worked to show how Sandra Cisneros in her groundbreaking work *Mango Street* resists the rules of the traditional genre system. The struggle of scholars to pin down the genre identity of the text and the insufficiency of the leading genre designation (*Bildungsroman*) to account for Cisneros's genre innovation are a result of the direct challenge *Mango Street* poses to the genre system. Cisneros's text causes a crisis of reading, foregrounding the role of gene in shaping our reading approach. In its transgression of genre norms, *Mango Street* makes visible those formerly invisible norms because norms are most visible when transgressed. The genre transgression of Cisneros's work removes the power of genre's invisibility, and once visible, genre can be investigated.

To illustrate my point of the destabilizing challenge *Mango Street* presents for the genre system, I offer an examination of the genre history of *Bildungsroman*. Although it may seem somewhat tangential to explore the field of *Bildungsroman* studies, this kind of investigation is what reading *Mango Street* prompts. Because scholars struggle to categorize *Mango Street* and because *Bildungsroman* becomes the most frequent genre designation for the text, the next logical step is to seek a greater understanding of the genre, its origins, characteristics, and contestations. On the surface, settling the genre classification question of *Mango Street* by determining it a *Bildungsroman*, would seem to shore up the genre system brought into question by Cisneros's difficult, even impossible, to classify text. But in reality, settling the identity of the texts as *Bildungsroman* forecloses the possibility of identifying further genre aspects outside of *Bildungsroman* and holds up the genre for further scrutiny.

Upon even basic canvasing of the field, the truth of *Bildungsroman* becomes clear—it is a genre where the seams of its fabrication are visible. From the beginning of the genre to current scholarship, the constructed nature (and instability) of genre is clear. Any sustained perusal of the genre scholarship reveals internecine battles and offshoots and subcategories spawned from rigid boundaries and exclusionary practices.

The story of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre and field of study is not particularly unusual. It has a starting point and text considered first in the line and others considered its descendants. It is a product of its social context and the labor of dedicated scholars to carve out a coherent definition and canon. In reality it is a notion crafted as if by committee; it has its detractors and defenders as well as its revisers. The field has factions and a history of fights, with arguments over whose vision of the genre is most accurate, whose terminology most precise, whose analysis most faithful to the genre characteristics, and whose texts worthy of entry. It is a genre with enough age for the changing trends to be visible and yet young enough for the qualities not yet to be rigid.

What is unique to *Bildungsroman* when compared to other genres is its closeness to the social world is more apparent. As Mikhail Bakhtin eloquently puts it, the hero in the *Bildungsroman* “emerges *along with the world*” and “reflects that historical emergence of the world itself” (23). From its earliest conceptualization it is a genre anchored in a protagonist responsive to and inextricable from the social world. Yet, despite the fact contemporary genre scholars have come to accept genre as constructed through academic discourse, it functions in the world (even if no longer in academic circles) as a natural trait. The *Bildungsroman* is especially helpful for illustrating the interconnectedness of genre and the social world from which they are produced. In its very name the genre speaks to the *Bildung*—the formation, development, and education of a protagonist, what we can accurately describe as their education into dominant ideology and the dominant social order. This category encompasses novels that trace the journey of young men (and occasionally young women) coming to terms with the social world and submitting to or embracing its values. Further still, from its earliest theorizations, the *Bildungsroman* has been understood as not only tracing this progression by the protagonist but also encouraging similar processes in its readers. It both contains the societally preferred path of development but also functions to further that path for individuals. More than most genres, *Bildungsroman* foregrounds this social context. Additionally, in its iterations, revisions, and contestations, *Bildungsroman* scholarship also reveals the interconnectedness of genre and the social world, highlighting genres are not eternally existing realities but are constructed and revised through academic debate.

As mentioned previously, the origins of the genre date back to the late eighteenth century in Germany. Scholars identify Christoph Martin Wieland’s *Geschichte des Agathon* (*The Story of Agathon*) (1766–67) as the first *Bildungsroman* penned. Martin

Swales in his chapter "Irony and the Novel: Reflections on the German Bildungsroman" credits the emergence of the new genre to Wieland's *Agathon* as well as Friedrich von Blanckenburg's discussion of *Bildung* in his *Versuch über den Roman* (*Essay on the Novel*) published in 1774. "Blanckenburg's theoretical work," according to Swales, "grew out of his enthusiasm for Wieland's novel" and "marked the coming of age of the novel form" (48). Here, Swales' language ("coming of age") draws a parallel to the form and its protagonist, with the novel personified and described as maturing. In his recounting of the genre's origins and the interplay between Wieland's work and Blanckenburg's criticism, Swales argues Blanckenburg considered Wieland to have, "transformed the traditional novel genre by investing it with a new psychological and intellectual seriousness" (Swales 48). Rescuing the novel from its more frivolous tendencies in adventure and romance, the emergence of Wieland's novel and it successors, marked a shift towards more contemplative, serious literature. As Swales describes, Wieland's "signal achievement":

> resided in his ability to get inside a character, to portray the complex stuff of human potential which, in interaction with the outside world, yields the palpable process of human *Werden*, of growth and change. By this means artistic—and human—dignity and cohesion was conferred on the sequence of episodic adventures which novel heroes, by tradition, underwent. (48)

From this early point, even before the term "*Bildungsroman*" is put forward, the interplay between creative work and critical response is clear. Wieland writes a novel that inspires Blanckenburg's novel theories and his discussion of *Bildung* is part of that framework. Genres as a product of literary criticism are always reactive—they identify traits and trends after the fact.

Although Wieland's *Agathon* is considered the first of its kind and Blanckenburg's theories are thought to provide the groundwork for the genre discourse, it is Johann Wolfgang Van Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*) written in 1795 that is considered the culmination and exemplar of the *Bildungsroman* form. Michael Minden, in his book *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance*, confirms Swales' description of the importance of Wieland and Blanckenburg, describing Goethe's contribution as follows:

> What happens with the *Lehrjahre* is as follows. In the wake of Blanckenburg's V*ersuch über den Roman* (1774), the first German theory of the novel, and Wieland's *Agathon*, Goethe's novel played the decisive role in bringing the German novel under the jurisdiction of the aesthetic. This was a time in literary debate at which the novel was by no means assured of its status as serious literature. From then on, Goethe's adoption of the novel form supplied a reference point for those who wished to urge the aesthetic pedigree of the novel form. (Minden 9-10)

According to Minden's formulation, Goethe's novel is in direct dialogue with Wieland and Blanckenburg's work, influencing not only the *Bildungsroman* but also the novel, securing it as serious and legitimate. It is Bakhtin who increases the adulation, using language reminiscent of New Testament accounts of John the Baptist as the forerunner for the Messiah when he describes Wieland as "directly prepar[ing] the way for Goethe's novels" (24). Put differently, Bakhtin characterizes Goethe's work as the fulfillment of the promise anticipated in Wieland's novel.

In the story of the genre's development it is of note that the origins of the terminology occur separate from and somewhat after the novels are published, once again illustrating genre as produced and constructed rather than an eternal essence. The genre title and discourse are the product of several different scholars, their work of literary criticism and novel theory creating a new category of writings identified as *"Bildungsroman.*" Interestingly, the term for which Goethe's work becomes synonymous does not emerge and gain prominence in the academic discourse until nearly a century after the Wieland's and Goethe's novels are published. Building on Blanckenburg's earlier discussion of *Bildung*, German philosopher and sociologist Wilhelm Dilthey introduces the newly compounded term into the critical lexicon with his 1870 biography of Friedrich Schleiermacher wherein he identifies novels as members of the "*Wilhelm Meister* school, " which are characterized by "*menschliche Ausbildung in verschiedenen Stufen, Gestalten, Lebensepochen*" (human education and maturation in various stages, figures, periods of life) (qtd. in Hardin xiv). Dilthey later expands his discussion of the genre in his 1906 *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (*Poetry and Experience*), writing what will be the most referenced definition of the genre—describing it as the history of a young man "who enters into life in a blissful state of ignorance, seeks related souls, experiences friendship and love, struggles with the hard realities of the world and thus armed with a variety of experiences, matures, finds himself and his mission in the world" (qtd. in Harden xiv).

Although Dilthey is credited with popularizing the term and offering the description which would become the benchmark for the genre, archival research done by Fritz Martini in 1961 unearthed evidence the term was popularized by Dilthey but not first coined by him. Karl Morgenstern, in his position as professor at the University of Dorpat (now Tartu, Estonia) first puts forth the term in an 1810 lecture and further develops it in two lectures “Über das Wesen des Bildungsromans” and “Zur Geschichte des Bildungsromans” (“On the Nature of the Bildungsroman” and “On the History of the Bildungsroman”) given in 1819 and 1820 respectively (Martini 2). In the introduction to his 1819 lecture, Morgenstern signals his awareness of the neologism, commenting, “[to] designate the most excellent among the many types of novels as a Bildungsroman, a word which, to my knowledge, has not been used before” (qtd. in Martini 3-4). In the midst of the twentieth-century battles over the term, Martini’s discovery of Morgenstern challenges the widely accepted framework with evidence of earlier and slightly different characteristics. Unlike Dilthey, and nearly all later *Bildungsroman* scholars, Morgenstern does not point to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* as the model of the genre. Instead, he points to the novels by poet Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, Morgenstern’s colleague and head of the University of Dorpat, as presenting a superior masculine protagonist. According to Morgenstern, “none of the other philosophical novels of the Germans, or of their Bildungsromane in general, suited in the same degree” to edify readers in moral and masculine character (qtd. in Martini 3). The masculine strength of Klinger’s characters elevated his work, in Morgenstern’s eyes, above Wieland’s and Goethe’s “otherwise so wonderful Bildungsromane” (qtd. in Martini 3). Martini’s discovery of Morgenstern’s conception of *Bildungsroman* complicated the widely accepted version of the genre origins and it raises questions of how knowledge is passed on and who owns the meaning of a term—the person who first introduces it or the one whose definition gains most traction. Martini’s uncovering earlier *Bildungsroman* criticism also raises the question of what *Bildungsroman* discourse would look like, and what its canon would consist of, were Morgenstern's writings to have caught on rather than fade into obscurity. Ultimately, what it confirms is the messy, constitutive process of genre formation.

One of the unique complications of the field, a persistent challenge to the transmission and creation of *Bildungsroman* genre knowledge, is language. From its deeply German origins, both the literature and genre discourse, it is a field steeped in the German language. Sometimes the translation is delayed, lost, or incomplete, resulting in disruptions to or distortions of knowledge. Much of the nineteenth-century scholarship and a sizable portion of the twentieth and twenty-first century *Bildungsroman* scholarship is in German and is inaccessible to many, creating fissures in the broader field, with some having access to the more than two century-long body of scholarship and others depending on the smaller body of work written in English or waiting for translations. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre* was not translated into English until Thomas Carlyle's translation was published in 1824, ushering in a delayed but no less pronounced influence on English-speaking readers and writers. Wilhelm Dilthey's writings, with its crucial definition, were not translated into English until the 1950s, although as Tobias Boes points out in "Modernist Studies and the *Bildungsroman*: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends," the term "made its way across the Channel as a part of the lexical infusion that arose from Edwardian interest in the writings of German thinkers such as Freud, Weber or Simmel" (231). It is not until 1930, with the publication of Susanne Howe's *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen*, the first English work of scholarship on the topic appears. It is these material realities, however, that reveal the human construction of the genre—the language disruptions, delays, and divides undermine a vision of the genre as seamless, uninterrupted fact.

Bildungsroman studies is a field complicated by issues of language translation and diverging bodies of knowledge, participated in by scholars of varying national and disciplinary backgrounds. It is of no surprise that these different perspectives show up in the scholarship, often as conflict. The very term "*Bildungsroman*" is widely recognized as slippery. If not impossible to define, it is certainly difficult to find consensus on the meaning and deployment of *Bildungsroman*. Boes, in his historical survey of the trends pertaining to *Bildungsroman*, effectively captures this complicated legacy:

> The term "*Bildungsroman*," or "novel of formation," remains at once one of the most successful and one of the most vexed contributions that German letters have made to the international vocabulary of literary studies. More, perhaps, than with any other genre designation . . . the heuristic value of the *Bildungsroman* label has been disputed, defended, taken for granted, and otherwise muddled. The term is sometimes—especially within English departments—used so broadly that seemingly any novel . . . might be subsumed by it. ("Modernist Studies" 230)

For some the term was compromised by the academic fights that the benefit from using it was outweighed by the controversy of its usage. For many scholars working in English, the tendency was to use a translated title that invoked the legacy of the *Bildungsroman* while also allowing for some distance. "Novels of formation," "apprentice novels," "coming-of-age narratives" and "novels of development" are just a few of the corollary titles scholars use rather than use "*Bildungsroman.*"

In the German language scholarship, the arguments often revolve around clarifying existing terms and categories, demarcating genre boundaries. What emerges is an understanding of *Entwicklungsroman* as the broadest category of a protagonist's development: different from the *Erziehungsroman* that emphasizes training and formal education, different from the *Künstlerroman* which traces the development of the artist, and different from the *Bildungsroman* which emphasizes the process of self-culture. As James Hardin recounts, in his introduction to *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman,* German scholars such as Melitta Gerhard have "attempted to make the term Bildungsroman more precise by distinguishing it from the Entwicklungsroman or 'novel of development,' and from the Erziehungsroman, the 'pedagogical novel,' which deals with the educational process in a quite specific and limited way" (xvi). For Gerhard, the *Entwicklungsroman* is the umbrella category with *Bildungsroman* the subgenre, "a specific sort" of which "flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (Hardin xvi). Lothar Köhn, continuing Gerhard's efforts to distinguish the genre and subgenre categories, describes the differences between groupings as follows: "'Bildungsroman' is the term applied to a concrete, historic genre; 'Entwicklungsroman' on the other hand is a quasi-ahistorical structural type" (qtd. in Hardin xvi). The *Erziehungsroman*, according to Köhn, is "a strongly didactic genre that discusses pedagogical problems" (qtd. in Hardin xvi). It is of note that both Gerhard and Kohn tie their definition of *Bildungsroman* to a specifically German, historical context.

For some scholars, the investigation of the genre distinctions prompts them to question the accepted confines of the *Bildungsroman*. Jeffrey Sammons provocatively suggests the *Bildungsroman* is a "phantom genre," with few if any texts satisfying the *Wilhelm Meisters*-based genre requirements widely accepted in the field (239). Published in 1981, Sammons's polarizing and widely referenced piece "The Mystery of the Missing

Bildungsroman, or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" challenges the existing definition and canon. With whit and irony, Sammons describes himself as having completed "some reasonably conscientious inquiry and research" and yet being "obliged to report" himself "unable to locate this celebrated genre in the nineteenth century" (230). Although perhaps hyperbolic in his title, Sammons merely joins others in questioning the accepted definition and canon. Sammons joins earlier specialists in German literature, such as Jürgen Jacobs and Kurt May. Jacobs in his *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (*Wilhelm Meister and his brothers: Studies on the German Bildungsroman*), concludes the *Bildungsroman* is "an unfulfilled genre." Kurt May, in his aptly titled 1957 article "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, ein Bildungsroman?" (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, a Bildungsroman?"), questions if Goethe's archetypal text itself even qualifies as a *Bildungsroman.* Such internecine challenges is what Boes, in his historical overview of the genre trends, refers to as the tendency of specialists in German literature, to express "an almost masochistic glee in decimating their own canon, on occasion disqualifying even such seemingly incontestable examples as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* from its ranks" ("Modernist Studies" 230). Still others, among them Harmut Steinecke, see "*Bildungsroman*" as a term irretrievably mired in academic bickering and ideological bias and thus propose new, more precise genre terms such as "*Individualroman*" (Hardin xix). Although the impulse to scrap the *Bildungsroman* designation and start over with a new term is understandable, it fails to address the entirety of the issue. The contestations regarding terminology are only a small part of the larger battles. The majority and most heated of the arguments are actually about methodology and canon, deciding which are the appropriate approaches for constructing and applying definitional characteristics and which texts qualify for inclusion. Simply changing terminology will not bring consensus. The difficulties, differences, and disagreements are a part of the process of genre making, deciding which characteristics are defining and which texts fall under the genre category, the conflicts are simply more pronounced within *Bildungsroman* studies.

Although there were active debates within the German *Bildungsroman* scholarship regarding the meaning and application of the term as well as the canon, the participation of non-German speaking scholars and their application of the term to non-German literature has created some of the more sizable rifts. Writing the very first English-language work on the *Bildungsroman* in 1930, Susanne Howe focused not on German texts but on the English inheritors of the *Bildungsroman* legacy in her *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsman: Apprentice to Life.* Although her dedication, written in German, and citational patterns suggest German fluency and thorough knowledge of the existing scholarship, Howe makes clear her project is not "primarily a study of the influence of *Wilhelm Meister* on the English novel" (7). Rather than making an argument for the usage of "*Bildungsroman*" to apply to English texts, Howe instead uses "apprentice novel" and describes her reasons for her project's looser ties to the German genre as follows:

> But except when definite parallels with *Wilhelm Meister* present themselves . . . the question of Goethe's influence is far too complicated and vague to trace here. The line at which the direct effect of *Wilhelm Meister* ceases, and independent English variations on the theme begin, is blurred and uncertain. Two languages and literary traditions, and two national cultures during a complicated period of their history, have helped to make it so. Our main under taking here is rather to

> trace the growth and modification of a set of literary ideas that passed from Germany to England at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries—a set of ideas that shows because of its very comprehensiveness the changes which man's outlook on the world was undergoing during one of the most changeful periods of the world's history. (7)

Howe is the first to write on the subject in English, but more importantly, she is the first to apply the *Bildungsroman* concept, even if not the term, to non-German texts. Writing more than sixty years after Howe, Susan Fraiman credits Howe with "laying the groundwork for ensuing English claims to Goethe's legacy" and "putting into place a working definition of the English category" (4). In her study of the *Bildungsroman*'s legacy in English novels, Howe is herself creating legacy of scholarship on the English tradition of *Bildungsroman*, continued by Maurice Beebe's *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* and most famously by Jerome Buckley's *Seasons of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding.*

The response to Jerome Buckley's *Seasons of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding,* which continues the study of English *Bildungsroman* started with Howe, encapsulates much of the diverging perspectives in the field. Published in 1974, Buckley's was the first major work examining the English *Bildungsroman* since Howe, filling the gap that existed for scholars who did not have access to the German language scholarship. Perhaps, in part, due to the dearth of English language *Bildungsroman* scholarship, Buckley's gains swift prominence, with his definition gaining citational frequency perhaps second only to Dilthey's. While Buckley's work was successful in reaching a general audience among English scholars, the response from German studies spheres was enthusiastically critical. Jerry Dibble, in his review of *Seasons of Youth,* makes no attempt to hide his low regard for the general state of the field as well as Buckley's contribution:

> [O]ver the years English-speaking readers have been recognizably ill-served by critical treatments of the *Bildungsroman*. Until recently, for example, Susanne Howe's *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen* (1930) was the only full-length study of the genre in English, and a number of more recent essays on the subject notwithstanding, we have still to get much beyond a generalized plot summary in the attempt to define and analyze the significance of the *Bildungsroman* and its place in the history of the English novel. In this respect, Buckley's definition of the genre is neither better nor worse than his predecessors' (271).

Dibble continues his critique of Buckley and the larger English field by arguing, Buckley, "Predictably… has little to say about the development of the *Bildungsroman*" (272) and offering his own reading of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, generally thought of as a member of the English *Bildungsroman* tradition. Not only does Dibble argue against reading Dickens' text as a *Bildungsroman*, but also he argues against the general notion of an English *Bildungsroman* tradition, conceding that while there are other English candidates for the English *Bildungsroman* "they, too, are at bottom hybrids, a grafting of the typical interests and structures of the *Bildungsroman* onto the better established structures of the 'well-made novel' or the picaresque adventure" (274). Although somewhat lost in the criticism, Dribble's main issue is not as much with the idea of a Victorian text possibly being considered a *Bildungsroman* but with the general insufficiency of English-language scholarship to adequately understand and relay the German origins and context. Dribble concludes, with the observation regarding the German term and his recommendation for further studies, writing, "the term *Bildungsroman* remains untranslated even today because it expresses an ideology which is clearly German, undeniably foreign, and can be understood and correctly applied to English literature only after it has first been sought out on its native ground" (275). Dribble's frustration with Buckley's *Seasons of Youth* is part of his larger frustration with the state of English-language *Bildungsroman* scholarship, a perspective which reflects the tensions of the broader field.

The resistance to Buckley was not limited to Dribble; in fact, scholars tracing the evolution of the genre and its terminology through the twenty-first century point to Buckley's work and general methodology as the source of much of the problems in the field. Sketching the divide between specialists of German literature and the broader (especially English-speaking) literary field, Boes, in "Modernist Studies and the *Bildungsroman*": A Historical Survey of the Trends" characterizes Buckley's methodological approach to defining *Bildungsroman* as "inductive, thematic, and taxonomic" (232). Boes recognizes it, nevertheless (and perhaps unfortunately), "corresponds well with the generally free-floating use to which the term *Bildungsroman* has been put in the English-speaking world" (232). In contrast to the English approach, typified in Buckley, Boes identifies the more "restrictive" use of terminology by specialists as follows, "Generic classification is here carried out according to deductive principles, and texts are subsumed under the label if and only if they represent a specific aesthetic ideology" (232). Hardin, arguing along similar lines as Boes, identifies a "serious problem" in American literary scholarship as "the imprecise use of the word [*Bildungsroman*] to categorize virtually any work that describes, even in the most far-fetched way, a protagonist's formative years" (x). Although James Hardin contends "it would not be difficult to cite dozens of passages in which the term is used in a careless, cavalier, or simply naive or confused way" he finds Buckley's definitions of *Bildungsroman,* among others, to be ample evidence.

Although Buckley is a lightning rod for much of the criticism, the critique cannot be confined to him. The issues dividing the field are in fact much broader, rooted in deep differences of methodology and canon. For Buckley, who defines *Bildungsroman* as texts which include all but two or three of the following "principle elements": "childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy," (18) the genre is largely identified through plot and thematic elements. However, as Hardin contends, Buckley and other like him "tend to use the term in a loose, casual, arbitrary, or undifferentiated manner" because they "have lost sight of the historical context of the *Bildungsroman* and of the broad meaning of *Bildung*" (xi). This divide could be understood as differences of methodology, with Buckley and those like him, basing the genre in plot elements (an approach reminiscent of Vladimir Propp's formalist analysis of fairytales). Those opposing, view *Bildungsroman* as applied far more narrowly and based in a framework tied to German origins.

Feminist Bildungsroman

Another rift emerged with the introduction of feminist criticism and interpretive approaches to *Bildungsroman* scholarship. Feminist literary scholars, starting in the late 1970s and flourishing in the decades after, have brought about the most significant transformation/shift in *Bildungsroman* studies in recent decades, fundamentally challenging accepted notions of the genre and canon in their exploration of female *Bildungsroman*.[6] As with the rest of the field of *Bildungsroman* scholarship, there is broad variety in the approaches, terminology, and texts, but perhaps to an even greater degree. As *Bildungsroman* studies has moved from a purely German canon to include a British and American texts and finally to a canon of female writers and protagonists, there is a more expansive canon. Reading German *Bildungsroman* scholarship would likely produce a recognizable, largely agreed upon canon of texts, but the expanding application of the term to non-German texts has opened up, to the chagrin of some, texts being studied. In the more than forty years of scholarship, since Ellen Morgan's 1972 article exploring the twentieth-century female bildungsroman as "recasting" of the traditionally male form, feminist scholars have forged new ground, proposed new readings and terminology, applied varying theoretical and interpretative lenses, challenged existing perspectives, and offered new terrain for study.

Female *Bildungsroman* scholarship is diverse in its approach, readings, and, especially, terminology applied. It ranges from proximity to *Bildungsroman* and its English translation with categories such as "feminine *Bildungsroman*" (Baruch), "female *Bildungsroman*" (Labovitz, Lazarro, Fraiman, Frouman-Smith), "feminist *Bildungsroman*" (Morgan, Braendlin), and "novels of development" (Pratt). There are also slight variations in categories and terminology emphasizing age, "novel of adolescence" (White), emphasizing alternate aspects of development such as "novel of awakening" (Rosowski) or "novel of self-discovery" (Felski), emphasizing race, "Black

Bildungsroman" (LeSeur), or emphasizing *Bildung* in Black women's writing (O'Neale) and ethnic women's writing (Braendlin). Such variety reflects in part the complexity of "*Bildungsroman*" and its embroilment, but also the uncertainty of their place within the larger field of *Bildungsroman* studies. Additionally, the elements of women's development chronicled in fiction are frequently different from the standard development of male protagonists, so alternate labels (such as "novels of awakening" or "self-discovery") are thought by some scholars to depict more accurately what is occurring. The label "female *Bildungsroman*" is the most frequent even if not the sole label chosen, but the works nevertheless participate in a body of work roughly comparable to the (male) *Bildungsroman*.

Despite the variety of terminology, there is remarkable consistency in the arguments put forward by feminist literary scholars in their exploration of the *Bildungsroman* and female *Bildungsroman* tradition. Perhaps the most prominent contribution of feminist scholars is their critique of existing scholarship as biased and exclusionary, framing analysis as universal in its focus while presenting a masculine norm. As *The History of German Literature: From Beginnings to Present* day recounts, "the hero of the novel of education and development is always a man" (Beutin et al. 211). Suggesting the absence of female protagonists, the authors surmise it "may have something to do" with the primarily male authorship "coming to terms with their own socialization as individuals on a wider stage as well as with their own aspirations and fantasies"; however, more importantly, the reason for the absence of a female protagonist was more likely due to women in the eighteenth century holding "such subordinate social rank that they were unthinkable as suitable heroines for a novel of education and development, playing no more than a subsidiary role in the careers of men" (Beutin et al. 211). Yet even this awareness of the dearth of female protagonists in German *Bildungsroman* and in *Bildungsroman* broadly is something only recently acknowledged.

The movement in the field is observed in Franco Morretti's preface marking twenty years since the original publication of *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture,* where he responds to questions of why he did not include "the *Bildungsroman* of the others—women, workers, African-Americans" (ix) Moretti explains the reasons for his exclusions are linked to the "spatio-temporal coordinates of my study," which preclude him from covering later texts. According to Moretti:

> [A] deeper reason for those exclusions lies in the very elements that characterize the *Bildungsroman* as a form: wide cultural formation, professional mobility, full social freedom — for a long time, the Western European middle-class man healthy virtual monopoly on these, which made him a sort of structural *sine qua non* of the genre. Without him, and without social privileges he enjoyed, the *Bildungsroman* was difficult to write, because it was difficult to imagine. (ix-x)

Although the assumption of the *Bildungsroman* genre as a masculine domain was pervasive, it was unacknowledged, and for Moretti to be able to note the presence of a male *Bildungsroman* (and implicitly the absence of female *Bildungsroman*) as fundamentally linked to the material and social conditions of the era is itself a result of the work of female *Bildungsroman* efforts. It is to the credit of feminist scholars the bias and exclusionary practices of the genre and field were exposed and challenged.

Not only have male *Bildungsroman* protagonists been treated as reflecting human experiences (notice in even the naming, "female" is the added descriptor to distinguish it from "*Bildungsroman*" which is male, but unmarked), but also the narrow focus on male authored texts about male heroes determined the genre characteristics, foreclosing the possibility any female *Bildungsheld* might be included. Although the field expanded in the twentieth century to include British, European, and American texts, gradually expanding to "accommodate other historical variables," gender had still not been rendered as a relevant addition (Abel et al 5). Despite the occasional inclusion of the likes of Jane Austen or George Elliot in the canon put forward by scholars such as Buckley or Martini, the focus is still largely masculine. Laura Fuderer, in her 1990 *The Female Bildungsroman in English: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism,* has explained that even when women appear in a male scholar's proposed canon, "they tend to conceive of the genre as a male form, and most of their exemplars are by men" (2). As Abel, Hirsch, and Langland have pointed out in their influential 1993 work *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Developmen*t, Jerome Buckley's definition, widely understood (and roundly critiqued by German *Bildungsroman* scholars for being so) as the broadest and most widely applicable definition is still exclusionary to women, writing, "Even the broadest definitions of the *Bildungsroman* presuppose a range of social options available only to men" inevitably defining "'human' development in exclusively male terms" (7). The form and its correlating scholarship is patterned on male experience, simultaneously projecting itself as universally human and disqualifying narratives of female experience as dissimilar.

From the broadest definition to the original definitions of Morgenstern and Dilthey, the pattern of bias and exclusion hold. Esther Kleinbord Labovitz, in her 1988 *The Myth of the Heroine - The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century* points to

Morgenstern's and Dilthey's founding definitions as having "presupposed a male prerogative" unchallenged by later critics, ensuring "*Bildung* belonged to the male hero" (2). Bonnie Braendlin adds race to the awareness of gender exclusion, arguing, "Underlying the major critical studies of the *Bildungsroman* is the assumption that it is primarily a white male-dominated genre" ("Bildung in Ethnic Women Writers" 76). Yet perhaps what is crucial to note is not merely the exclusion of the female heroine from *Bildungsroman* but the complete lack of awareness of her absence on the part of the scholars. As Labovitz points out, the female *Bildungsheld* is an absent but unmissed presence: "At a period when the *Bildungsroman* flourished, in the nineteenth century, and a whole body of critical and theoretical literature had developed to define and interpret the genre, its critics never notice the missing heroine from its pages" (2). Feminist scholars have worked to expose the exclusionary practices at the core of the genre, its characteristics and canon, and to raise possibilities for female *Bildungsroman.* For many feminist scholars, the goal is both to point out the exclusion and to analyze female *Bildungsroman*, offering a counterpoint to the traditional genre characteristics. Others, such as Sondra O'Neale in "Race, Sex and Self: Aspects of *Bildung* in Select Novels by Black American Women Novelists" argues against any genre canon founded on samples that are not broadly inclusive, writing, "These novels reveal that there is no more a 'normal' pattern for the literary *Bildung* experience than there is for any other genre which has heretofore been measured only by the testimony of a select group of men' (26). Although most are not as direct as O'Neale in challenging the validity of the

Bildungsroman tradition, the challenge to it as exclusionary is consistent throughout much of the female *Bildungsroman* scholarship.

In addition to the critique of the exclusionary practices of traditional *Bildungsroman* scholarship, feminists offer a secondary critique—not of literary practices, but of the social world. Although more implicit, the critique female *Bildungsroman* scholarship presents is far-reaching, exposing the gender oppression of women under patriarchy. Much of the early animating energy in the scholarship was in answering whether or not there was such a thing as a female *Bildungsroman.* In addition to the bias of the male scholars of traditional *Bildungsroman* studies, which possibly accounts for some level of female-authored texts being absent, there is a recognizable absence of texts about female development during the era of the tradition's greatest prominence. In a masterful and complicated move, feminist scholars tend to agree that there is not a female *Bildungsroman,* not because there are not texts tracing the development of women but because they are rarely the tales of positive integration into society that are the hallmark of the genre. For some it is a two part-critique: the biased and exclusionary construction of the genre does not account for the experiences of women and girls to be included in the genre, and additionally, the conditions of women have been so hostile to make development, in reality or in fiction, a near impossibility.

From the earliest writings in the emerging field of female *Bildungsroman* scholarship, scholars have highlighted the constraints on women's lives under patriarchy and the reflection of those limitations in fictional lives as well. Writing one of the earliest articles on the subject, Susan Rosowski's 1979 "The Novel of Awakening" offers this titular category as the counterpart to the *Bildungsroman* or male apprentice novel, acknowledging the different trajectories of male and female protagonists. Whereas the male protagonists attempt to “acquire a philosophy of life and ‘the art of living,’” the movement of the female protagonist is inward, “toward greater self knowledge that leads in turn to a revelation of the disparity between that self knowledge and the nature of the world” (313). Rosowski concludes her rather bleak comparison as follows, “The protagonist’s growth results typically not with ‘an art of living,’ as for her male counterpart, but instead with a realization that for a woman such an art of living is difficult or impossible: it is an awakening to limitations” (313). Roughly two years later, Elaine Hoffman Baruch’s “The Feminine *Bildungsroman*: Education through Marriage” takes on the “critical commonplace that there is no feminine *bildungsroman*,” exploring novels such as *Emma*, *Jane Eyre*, *Madame Bovary*, *Middlemarch*, and *Anna Karenina*, and finding feminine *Bildung* taking place “in or on the periphery of marriage” (335). Despite the education Baruch observes in the female protagonists, she ultimately finds “traditional criticism may in fact be right. The authentic feminine *bildungsroman* is still to be written” (357). Even while observing some level of development and even resistance to constraining social values, Baruch nevertheless concedes all development is inextricably linked to the protagonists marital status, making the texts “less *bildungsroman* than *bildungsromans manqués*” (failed *Bildungsroman*)(357). While the decision to append a German genre term with a French modifier is unclear, Baruch makes clear there are drastic differences between the narratives following the maturation of male protagonists and those of female protagonists.

Along with Baruch, many scholars highlight the lack of positive development for female protagonists. Echoing Baruch's notion of failed *Bildungsroman*, Ellen Morgan describes the trajectory as "truncated" female *Bildungsroman* (qtd. in Labovitz 6), and Maureen Ryan describes it as a "tale of compromise and disillusionment" (qtd. in Fuderer 14) and Susan Rosowski describes it as narratives where female protagonists "awaken to limitation" (313). Annis Pratt's groundbreaking 1982 work *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* describes the consistent thwarting of female development found in fiction. Pratt's work is crucial in part because of its scale, she bases her observations regarding archetypal patterns after surveying three hundred novels, but also because of its impact. Her work, specifically her chapter on novels of development, is one of the most referenced in the field.[7] Pratt describes the recurring patterns in narratives of female development, where basic human desires are thwarted because of society's gender prescriptions (and proscriptions) for women:

> Our quests for being are thwarted on every side by what we are told to be and to do, which is different from what men are told to be and to do: when we seek an identity based on human personhood rather than on gender, we stumble about in a landscape whose signposts indicate retreats from, rather than ways to, adulthood. (6)

What is potentially Pratt's most striking (and certainly her most referenced) observation is that the *Bildungsroman* as a genre "pursues the opposite of its generic intent—it provides models for 'growing down' rather than 'growing up'" (14). Because the tendency is for female protagonists to "grow down" Pratt proposes the term *Entwicklungsroman* might be more appropriate for women's novels, because it is a "novel of mere growth, mere physical passage from one age to the other without psychological development" rather than *Bildungsroman* and its attendant expectations of development and positive integration into society.

A key contribution of female *Bildungsroman* scholarship is its highlighting of the relationship between the historical context, material conditions, and possibilities for women and for a female *Bildungsheld.* The consistent finding of early scholarship of there not being a narrative of positive female development, is rooted in the understanding of the historical context and its opportunities. For scholars who do find evidence of a female *Bildungsroman,* the difference is in the era examined. As Felski, in her article "The Novel of Self-Discovery: A Necessary Fiction?" has argued, the "increasing visibility" of the form is "obviously related to the growth of feminism as a contemporary ideology and to the changing social and economic status of women" (131). Felski, writing in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, has argued the plots available to female protagonists change over time in connection with changing material conditions, with "the limited options of marriage or death" in the eighteenth century and "the heroine's attempted rebellion through adultery (always severely punished)" in the nineteenth century to the limited offerings of "traditional heterosexual romance" in the twentieth century (qtd. in Frouman-Smith 101). Labovitz, in her work on the female *Bildungsroman* in the twentieth century, argues the genre was only made possible when, "*Bildung* became a reality for women, in general, and for the fictional heroine, in particular. When cultural and social structures appeared to support women's struggle for independence, to go out into the world, engage in careers, and self-discovery and fulfillment, their heroine in fiction began to reflect these changes" (6-7). Further still, it is not just that there are requisite social realities which need to be in place in order for a realist narrative to reflect a protagonist's "growing up" rather than "growing down," but there are necessary conditions for female writers to be able to write.

Over the course of several decades, female *Bildungsroman* has brought about a critical revision of the field, challenging the bias and exclusionary practices of traditional *Bildungsroman* scholarship and inviting new ways of seeing the genre, the literature, and the scholarship. The plan to interrogate existing generic paradigms and offer alternative or expanded versions has been explicit from the earliest scholarship. As Abel, Hirsch, and Langland described their work in *Voyage In*, "Our purpose requires that we first reexamine and revise generic definitions, beginning with the assumptions underlying the earliest example of the form" (5). "Through this proves of critical revision," *Voyage In* editors claim, "we describe an alternative generic model that not only reveals common strategies in diverse and hitherto unclassified female narratives, but which also redefines and expands the definition of fiction of development" (5). As previously mentioned, O'Neale, in her work on the *Bildung* in texts by black women writers, suggests a complete reconceptualization of the genre is necessary because a canon and definition based solely on white, male perspectives is invalid (26).

The work of challenging existing visions of the *Bildungsroman* is central to the female *Bildungsroman* effort, a necessary step to make room for new visions of a more expansive genre. Susan Fraiman, in her 1993 work *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and The Novel of Development,* describes her work as "clearing space for my own readings of novels about female development—readings that suggest a swerve from ruling definitions of genre" (2). The traditional *Bildungsroman* framework is so narrow, restrictive, and exclusionary these scholars are fighting to make space for their own analysis and for narratives of female *Bildungsroman* despite the ongoing debate in the wider field regarding the genre framework being perceived as overly-broad. In a remarkably bold move, Fraiman even argues to decenter *Wilhelm Meister*, claiming the "continual fetishizing of *Wilhelm Meister* as originary text" has "defended as normative the single path of middle-class, male development described above, eclipsing all others," resulting in a canon "of overwhelmingly male-authored and male-centered texts" (9-10). Lorna Ellis, in her 1999 *Appearing to Diminish: Female Development and the British Bildungsroman, 1750-1850*, joins Fraiman in decentering *Wilhelm Meisters,* going as far as to "divorce" *Bildungsroman* from the source text and claim Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* published in 1751 as the true origin of the female *Bildungsroman* genre. Ironically, Ellis largely denounces the field of female *Bildungsroman* scholarship, claiming they criticize the genre from the outside rather than within as she proposes; however, it is the very work of critical revision that makes it possible for Ellis to find space within the tradition to analyze female *Bildungsroman*. Ellis, and the field broadly, are indebted to the work of female *Bildungsroman* scholarship for expanding the field.

Not all *Bildungsroman* scholars, view the feminist intervention in the field positively. In some cases, the response is one of non-response, simply proceeding as if the feminist critiques of bias and exclusion were never uttered. For others, such as James Hardin, the response is a critique of the rigor and understanding of feminist

Bildungsroman scholarship. To Hardin, feminist criticism of *Bildungsroman* is part of the larger problem in American literary criticism, which he considers "in general lacks knowledge of the great tradition in the Bildungsroman" (xxii). Put alongside Buckley, whose work he considers "imprecise," feminist criticism "suffers from a restricted vision of the genre" (xxii). In his evaluation of Abel, Hirsch, and Langland's work, one of the foundational texts of the female *Bildungsroman,* Hardin finds *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* "strains the link with the Bildungsroman to the breaking point and again provides an illustration of what I would argue is needlessly cavalier application of what, used with more care, could be a useful literary term" (xviii). Although purportedly a critique of scholarly rigor, Hardin fails to address the substance of the critique of feminist scholars put forward. By pressing to expand the genre, feminist scholars leave themselves open to allegations of substandard work. Seemingly unaware of the irony, traditional scholars can use the cover of their own genre exclusions to defend against the feminist critique of patriarchal bias and exclusion.

Others, such as Tobias Boes, welcome the changes to the field brought on by feminist critics and recognize the quality of work responsible for bring about such changes. From his perspective, Boes suggest feminist critics should be credited for examining "the phallocentric premises of both traditional novels of formation and of the secondary literature that dealt with them" ("Modernist Studies" 234). Instead of disregarding the feminist critique because of perceived methodological faults as Hardin does, Boes credits the work of female *Bildungsroman* scholars for "calling attention to the link between aesthetics and ideology, rhetoric and reality" and as having "entered upon territory that was sorely neglected in previous Anglophone *Bildungsroman* scholarship" ("Modernist Studies" 234). Boes takes it even one step further, praising Abel, Hirsh, and Langland's *The Voyage In* (the specific target of Hardin's criticism) as providing "a groundbreaking contribution" and foreshadowing later feminist criticism by Susan Fraiman and Rita Felski, described as "some of the best writing on the *Bildungsroman* right up to the present" ("Modernist Studies" 234).

Although dramatic, the fights within and across factions (be they language, nation, or gender) are debates about exclusion and inclusion—debates to decide which texts are in the genre canon and which are not. They are also arguments about which methodology is most accurate in defining genre characteristics and determining canon membership. These genre boundaries determine whether non-German, non-white, or non-male texts belong in the genre. As Boes in his 2012 chapter "The Limits of National Form: Normativity and Performativity in *Bildungsroman* Criticism" argues, the divide can be understood as "essentialist" and "universalist" camps, with the former believing, "*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, as well as the other novels of formation that were more or less directly inspired by it, reveals something specific about the character of the German nation" (19), and the latter focusing on identifying "themes of universal human significance in the novel of formation" (21). In framing the sides this way, Boes is able to zoom out from the framework of disciplinary perspective and language (although these aspects certainly influence which camp a scholar gravitates toward) and distill the fundamental differences of approach. Julian Schmidt, who according to Boes fits firmly in the essentialist camp, argued *Wilhelm Meister* reflects "the spiritual orientation

[*Geistesrichtung*] of the entire nation . . . the destiny of the German people" (qtd. in Boes, "The Limits of National Form" 19). The universalist camp, on the other hand, finds its most elegant champion in Georg Lukács. In his *Theory of the Novel,* Lukács describes the central theme of *Wilhelm Meister* as "the reconciliation of the problematic individual, guided by his lived experience of the ideal, with concrete social reality" (132). Lukács, and others in the universalist camp, favor a broader understanding and application of *Bildungsroman*.

Despite criticisms of *Bildungsroman* broadly conceived as being ahistorical and lacking rigor, not all scholars broadly applying the term divorce *Bildungsroman* from its German origins. In Bonnie Braendlin's work on *Bildungsroman* by women of color—texts clearly outside any traditional *Bildungsroman* canon, be it German, English, or feminist—she writes of needing to transvaluate the genre (75). Maria Karafilis, borrowing from Braendlin's language, describes the complex but necessary work of "transvaluating the genre across history, class lines, gender, and ethnicity" (64). For many, seeking both the heritage and meaning of *Bildungsroman* as well as its judicious application to non-German texts, the key to doing so is in a careful conception of *Bildung.* As Braendlin describes, the study of *Bildungsroman* by societal outsiders, "The *Bildungsroman* of the disenfranchised Americans—women, Blacks, Mexican-Americans, Native Americans, homosexuals . . . asserts an identity defined by the outsiders themselves or by their own cultures, not by the patriarchal Anglo-American power structure" and requires "a revaluation, a transvaluation, of traditional *Bildung* by new standards and perspectives" (75). Although Frederick Amrine is correct in his characterization of the field (and more specifically of the divide on the issue between German Departments and English Departments) and its tendency towards extremes as it relates to the interpretation of "*Bildung*" with those taking the term "in its strict and limited historical sense" find nothing, not even *Wilhelm Meisters* qualifies as a *Bildungsroman* and those who take it "in the loose sense" find "*everything* is a *Bildungsroman,*" the potential to find middle ground is still possible (qtd. in Ellis 20).

It is possible to do quality work of *Bildungsroman* analysis on texts outside the German *Bildungsroman*, but it requires careful excavation of the original meaning of "*Bildung*" and thoughtful application to new literary and cultural contexts. Scholars must work to connect those ideas to alternate contexts; in other words, transvaluate *Bildung*. Failure to do so, using *Bildungsroman* in such a way that it refers only to plot themes of a protagonist's development, is intellectually dishonest, mere appropriation of a recognizable label evacuated of its meaning. Lamenting the ways "the concept of *Bildung* has been eroded by historical forces," Hardin suggests that the following two meanings of the German word are "especially relevant": "first, *Bildung* as a developmental process and, second, as a collective name for the cultural and spiritual values of a specific people or social stratum in a given historical epoch and by extension the achievement of learning about that same body of knowledge and acceptance of the value system it implies" (xi-xii). Too many scholarly approaches have acknowledged the former but ignored the latter.

The development process of the protagonist is a crucial, widely recognized as an essential element of the *Bildungsroman*. What is equally essential, but less acknowledged, is understanding the protagonist's development as contextual, rooted in specific cultural and ideological education of a given society. As Eysturoy contends in her work to transvaluate *Bildung* to a Chicana context, the protagonist's self-formation is inextricable from the society in which she lives:

> The protagonist has to measure his or her emerging self against the values and spirit of a particular social context, representative of an age and a culture. The environmental character and its influence of the protagonist reveals aspects of the zeitgeist of the individual work; the particular *Bildung* of the protagonist, its possibilities, prospects, or limitations, reflects to a great extent the spirit of the time and the place in question. (6-7)

As mentioned previously, Bakhtin has described the *Bildungsroman* as a novel wherein the hero "emerges *along with the world* and he reflects that historical emergence of the world itself" (23), a novel which constructs "an image of *man growing* in *national-historical time*" (25). Echoing Bakhtin on the inextricability of the *Bildungsroman* protagonist from the environment in which they exist, Lukács argues in *Realism in Our Time*, "their individual existence cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created" (19). As Hardin puts forward, it is possible to apply the term "*Bildung*" in a broad sense "linking it to the intellectual and social development of a central figure, who after going to into the world and experiencing both defeats and triumphs, comes to a better understanding of the self and to a generally affirmative view of the world" (xiii). In concrete terms, *Bildung,* the cultivation and self-formation of an individual, *can* be extracted from a specifically German context, but the importance of *Bildung* cannot be divorced from *Bildungsroman.*

Despite the possibility of rapprochement made possible through a thorough understanding and application of *Bildung*, the conflicts and fault lines of the field are not actually a problem in and of themselves. The very process of contestation, arguing about which texts belong under the category and which do not, highlights the constructedness of this and every genre. Each scholar, especially those working on book-length projects where each chapter focuses on a *Bildungsroman* text, constructs their own genre definition and canon. Some texts, by their inclusion into the category, change the characteristics of the category. The power to shape genre definitions is what at stake, and the role of power and bias in the construction of genre must be exposed. The power to determine which characteristics are defining and which are not, which texts belong and which do not, and when genre boundaries can be elastic or when they must be rigid—these all must be scrutinized.

The exploration of *Bildungsroman*, its origins and scholarly schisms, illustrates the constructedness of the genre and the larger genre system. As it relates to *Mango Street*, the exploration of genre is merely the beginning. A similar investigation could study the other genre categories that could also reasonably be considered to fit Cisneros's innovative work. The genre theories and histories of the novel and autobiography could be plumbed, and the relatively new genre categories of short story cycles, composite novels, and serial narratives excavated. Mexican genre traditions, perhaps *cuentos* and *corridos* among others, might also be studied. Yet, such study would be unlikely to finally pin down the correct genre categorization of the text once and for all. Rather, it would finally reveal the incredible work of Cisneros's *Mango Street* to challenge the genre system. Cisneros's exquisitely written and widely influential text opens up explorations of the functions and impact of genre, and scholars must do the work to explain the breadth of her contribution to the literary world.

Chapter 3

Revisiting the Landmarks:

Genre Transgression and Innovation in Cherríe Moraga's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* and *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*

In terms of historical chronology, it might seem confusing to conclude rather than start with Cherríe Moraga. After all, her first standalone work *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* was published in 1983, a year before Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and a full four years before Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera.* Moraga's very first publication was also Anzaldúa's. Their co-edited and widely influential *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* was published in 1981 and is considered a catalyst for US third-world feminism, the challenge made by feminists of color to the white, middle-class focus of second wave feminism. Further still, while Moraga's *Loving* was published before Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa started her project around the same time as Moraga did hers. Yet, regardless of the dates of publication, Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Cisneros are true contemporaries, writing in the early eighties and transforming the field of Chicano literature from a largely male enterprise to one where the most vital contributions emerge from Chicanas. While Moraga's influence as a trailblazer, the first to write about Chicana lesbian identity and sociality, cannot be overemphasized, it is also true that her work is rarely the entry point for Chicana studies. First exposure for most is likely to be to either *Borderlands* or

Mango Street. The chapter placement is intended to reflect and reward the likelihood that someone who has read Moraga's *Loving* has already done some reading.

This chapter continues the project of analyzing Chicana literature through the lens of genre theory, again not with the intention of replicating formalist readings of individual texts, but rather of working towards an attentiveness to the ways Chicana authors play with, challenge, transform, and transcend traditional genre techniques and characteristics. Although there is a clear trend of genre nonconformity in their writings, no author is working with or resisting genre constraints in exactly the same way. Innovation looks differently from text to text and from one author to another, meaning there is no single way of analyzing genre. Rather it is a lens, a way of focusing attention on what is happening in the text, what is happening in the reading of a text, and what is happening in the scholarly and readerly responses to the text.

In each of the previous chapters, I have focused on an individual text: Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and Cisneros's *Mango Street*. In the case of Anzaldúa's work, I brought my discussion of her genre hybridity as illustrative of her larger project of *mestizaje* but explained that miscegenation of form serves as a direct, necessary response to the logic of racial purity undergirding genre theory throughout history. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, a project resisting racial purity in subject matter, would inadvertently undermine the goal of inclusion and hybridity by conforming to genre purity. In the case of *Mango Street*, the classifying of the text's innovative form which mystified and delighted readers and scholars alike required scrutiny of exiting *Mango Street* scholarship as well as a canvassing of *Bildungsroman* scholarship and its attendant debates and territories. The analysis of *Bildungsroman*, its origins and development, reveals both the constructedness of genre and its inextricability from dominant ideology. The analysis of *Mango Street* scholarship explores the limitations of existing critical framework to adequately address Cisneros's innovation.

Despite all three authors working with (or reworking) genre in interesting ways, the differences and nuances are important. Moraga not only experiments with genre in her texts, but also works across genres. Anzaldúa blended genres in *Borderlands,* but over the course of her work, it seems clear she was most at home with the essay form (her version of which tends towards inclusion of multiple other genres within the essay). Cisneros, having published fiction, poetry, and essays, spends most of her career in fiction-writing. Moraga's career is less clearly organized. She started with an edited collection, *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (co-edited with Gloria Anzaldúa), and would later co-edit two other collections: *The Sexuality of Latinas* and *Cuentos*. She then published her first solo work *Loving in the War Years,* a collection of poetry, essays, memories, and journal reflections. Her career continued with a foray into theatre, beginning with *Giving up the Ghost,* followed by *Shadow of a Man, Heroes and Saints, The Hungry Woman,* and *Watsonville.* Moraga's playwriting occurring in the last two decades has also been interspersed with her prose, poetry, and memoirs: *The Last Generation, Waiting in the Wings,* and *The Chicana Codex*. Moraga's career is marked by variety of form, perhaps even more than her Chicana contemporaries.

Despite the breadth of her work, scholarship on Moraga's work tends to break along genre lines. In perhaps ironic asymmetry, Moraga's generic transgressiveness, even transcendence, is met with generically circumspect, even genre-defined, analysis. Her essays and autobiographical writings are read differently than her plays. Most of the scholarship is grouped by genre, by the disciplinary backgrounds of the scholars, as well as by the fields of publication. This chapter will focus primarily on Moraga's first collaborative effort *Bridge* but will also include analysis of her first solo authored text *Loving.* The expanded focus beyond a single text is in direct response to the ways genre designations have bifurcated the scholarship. While it is common for scholars to analyze several of Moraga's works, it is frequently along genre lines. Literary scholars and theorists explore *Loving, The Last Generation,* and *Waiting in the Wings,* perceived to be Moraga's trio of autobiographical writings while theater scholars respond to her various plays.

For a writer and artist whose earliest works (*Bridge* and *Loving*) resisted traditional genre conventions, it is striking how strongly traditional genre conventions have shaped the academic response to her work. It is not merely organizational convenience that explains the patterns of analysis where scholars approach Moraga's works from the perspective of shared genre characteristics, but it is also the constraints of disciplinary expertise. Moraga's creative output spans creative and theoretical writing, with essays, poetry, and plays easily exceeding the average academic's sphere of expertise. Even interdisciplinary scholars working in Latinx, cultural, or ethnic studies are still likely to be grounded in more traditional disciplines of literature, history, and theater among others. It is rare to see literary scholars work on both Moraga's autobiographies and her plays. When such scholars do address one of the plays, it is read from the perspective of literary studies, reading and responding to a narrative and its themes rather than engaging it as a performance. The critical lens of drama studies is absent. Similarly, those working in the field of drama study Moraga's plays and publish their scholarship in disciplinary specific journals and publications, so the conversations are delimited by generic and disciplinary boundaries.

Exploring Moraga's work not only continues the larger project of demonstrating the necessity of applying a genre theory lens, but also exposes the power that the genre system already exerts on the interpretation of texts, not simply on the level of individuals reading but on the scale of academic trends in scholarship. It shapes which texts are read and by whom, how they are analyzed, and where the scholarly conversations are happening. At every level, genre is a useful lens, both at the micro level of close readings and the macro level of analyzing fields of scholarship.

This Bridge Called My Back

As one canvasses the existing scholarship on Moraga's diverse body of work, the role of genre in the patterns of the scholarship become visible. Relatively little scholarship exists on *Bridge,* despite it being widely recognized as the pivotal intervention of women of color in second wave feminism. According to Jennifer Gilley in "Feminist Publishing/Publishing Feminism: Experimentation in Second-Wave Book Publishing," *Bridge* is "accorded nearly mythical status within feminist and women's studies circles due to the crucial work" of "breaking the silence about the racism in the second wave and paving the way for theory and activism that would refuse to prioritize gender over race, sexuality, disability, etc., in a hierarchy of oppression" (35). Estelle Freedman in her book *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women,* points to *Bridge* as an "influential anthology" which "opened a cultural space for further explorations of multiple personal identities" (91) beyond the exclusionary focus of mainstream (white, middle-class) feminism. Similarly, Chandra Mohanty in her introduction to "Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism" credits *Bridge* as being "groundbreaking" and the first book to "delineate the areas of concern for a broad-based political movement of U.S. third world women" (8). Hector Calderón in his chapter "'Making Familia From Scratch': Cherríe L. Moraga's Self-Portraits" argues *Bridge*'s editors "should be credited with the advancement of a Third World or radical feminist perspective through *Bridge"* and summarizes Gregory Jay's work *American Literature and the Culture Wars* which "credits *Bridge* with widening the horizons of American literary studies" (113). According to Jay, *Bridge* was a foundational text "in opening the canon, in linking the study of race and gender, and in connecting the social change movements of the 1960s to the campus reforms of the subsequent decades" (cited in Calderón 113). In fact, *Bridge* was the "first women of color feminist book or anthology that articulated a women of color feminist of color position" (Duffield and Cespedes 132). In her remarks to the 2002 conference "Practicing Transgression: Radical Women of Color for the 21st Century" marking the twentieth anniversary of *Bridge*'s publication, Chela Sandoval praised *Bridge* as the first manifesto of US Third World Feminism that no other "great de-colonial writer…could have alone proclaimed" (Duffield and Cespedes 125). In those same commemorative remarks Sandoval describes the power of

Bridge and its influence as follows: "This book is a guide that directs citizenry shadowed in hate, terror, suffering, disconnection, and pain toward the light of social justice, gender and erotic liberation, peace, and revolutionary love. *Bridge* transits our dreams, and brings them to the real" (Duffield and Cespedes 125). As Sandoval and many others have recognized, *Bridge* gave voice to women that had been marginalized in feminism and the larger culture. The importance of *Bridge* is undisputed.

Despite the widespread understanding of *Bridge*'s important position in the development of feminism, very little scholarly attention is paid to what is arguably one of the most crucial feminist texts by women of color during the era. The pattern of critical mention *Bridge* receives is similar to other texts by women of color—it gets cited in a type of academic name-dropping protocol that provides evidence of the author's critical awareness and inclusivity seemingly without the need for further engagement. This pattern is especially evident in the feminist autobiography scholarship where works by feminists of color are mentioned frequently as illustrating the innovation in the field, but are rarely read in significant detail or within the context of the larger cultural context.

My own interests lie in two aspects of *Bridge*: first, the general tendency of anthologies as a genre to fall outside the realm of scholarly analysis and second, the innovation *Bridge* represents to the genre of anthologies. Arguably, *Bridge* is one of the earliest and most important anthologies to break with traditional academic genre expectations. But like most anthologies, *Bridge* escapes thorough analysis, and in comparison to Moraga's other writings, has received little scholarly analysis. To be clear, the ideas expressed in the text have been broadly influential, but the text itself has not been treated by scholars as a work to be interpreted or analyzed in its own right.

There are some obvious reasons why anthologies broadly and *Bridge* in particular are not the focus of much analysis. First, the genre itself is treated more as an academic reference piece, a secondary source rather than a primary source. It is a source that is engaged in order to bolster a scholar's theoretical positioning, but it is rarely the object of study. There are, however, important original contributions, especially in *Bridge* which strays from the formal conventions of academic writing and falls more closely to autobiographical essays, poetry, and theoretical offerings. An additional explanation for scholars avoiding *Bridge* may be that it is perceived as too challenging to differentiate between the co-editors and their individual influence. However, given that the editorial choices reflect the generic choices and innovations witnessed in both Anzaldúa's and Moraga's later writing, *Bridge* lends important insight into both writers' works. Further still, each editor has original contributions, both in the forms of introductions, prefaces, section introductions, and essays included in the anthology. The goal, however, is not to scrutinize which choice or influence can be attributed to one editor over the other but will instead focus on the editorial choices and innovative vision which produced *Bridge* as well as on the genre innovations visible in the contributions to *Bridge.*

There are currently three published book chapters written about *Bridge,* with two of them focused on its publication history and the field of publishing more broadly: Kayann Short's 1994 "Coming to the Table: Differential Politics of *This Bridge Called My Back*" and Jennifer Gilley's 2016 "Feminist Publishing/Publishing Feminism: Experimentation in Second-Wave Book Publishing." In both pieces, the origins of the project as well as the challenges of publishing are detailed. Over the course of its existence, *Bridge* has gone out of print three times with three different publishers (Persephone Press, Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, and Third Woman Press) before a fourth edition was published by SUNY Press in 2015. At the time of Short's chapter, *Bridge* was only on its second printing and publisher, so her work traces the original arrangement with Persephone Press, the circumstances of its going out of business and the move to Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, which Moraga co-founded along with Barbara Smith (who was also the chief publisher) and Audre Lorde.

Short reads the move from Persephone Press to Kitchen Table as primarily a move from a white women's press to a women of color press. Based on the following three-sentence preface to the second edition of *Bridge*, Short concludes that the "deceptively simple statement" contains an "inherent challenge to hegemonic feminism" (3):

> When Persephone Press, Inc., a white women's press of Watertown, Massachusetts and the original publishers of *Bridge*, ceased operation in Spring of 1983, this book had already gone out of print. After many months of negotiations, the co-editors were finally able to retrieve control of their books, whereupon Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press of New York agreed to re-publish it.
>
> The following, then, is the second edition of *This Bridge Called My Back,* conceived of and produced entirely by women of color. (3)

Short is right that language of "white women's press" and "retrieve control of their books" after "many months of negotiations" suggests a terse relationship, at least in the end. However, Persephone Press was by no means a mainstream press. It was a lesbian feminist press founded in the late 1970s with the stated purpose, according to its co-founders Gloria Greenfield and Pat McGloin, "to build an autonomous lesbian-feminist publishing network to encourage and ensure global communication among women, without patriarchal censorship" with a commitment to "confronting and challenging heterosexism, racism, and conglomerate control/seizure of publishing" (qtd. in Short 6).

As Gilley's chapter makes clear, there were consistent difficulties with the book going out of print and publishers going out of business, caused in many ways by a market hostile to feminist values. Mainstream presses tended to ignore the more radical voices in favor of those with commercial appeal whereas feminist presses were founded to further the cause and sought to implement business practices which were congruent with their politics. Persephone Press (and later Moraga and Anzaldúa were able to commit Kitchen Table to continuing the previous arrangement with Persephone) offered higher than standard marketplace royalties, and Moraga and Anzaldúa were also able to secure an arrangement where contributors would receive a payment after every 10,000 copies sold. Both the editors and the feminist presses attempted to honor the value of intellectual work, paying authors and contributors more than was the going rate. However, the values and the basic process of publishing were unsupportable and both Persephone and Kitchen Table would eventually go out of business. As Gilley writes, "Persephone Press . . . experimented with enacting these types of egalitarian principles in their contracts, but the realities of the publishing business for a small undercapitalized press meant that there was rarely enough cash to pay royalties at all and these experiments failed" (27). Despite their admirable work from 1976 to 1983, Persephone Press's principles were overwhelmed by market forces.

With the benefit of hindsight, Gilley's chapter reveals how the move from

Persephone to Kitchen Table was not without its problems. And while the move may have been more in line with Moraga and Anzaldúa's values, as Short suggests, those shared values were not enough to keep presses afloat or the relationships smooth. In fact, the very same problems that plagued Persephone led to the downfall of Kitchen Table. Further still, although Short emphasizes the racial and power differences as a cause of the strain (between Persephone and *Bridge*'s co-editors), moving to Kitchen Table did not eliminate tension between the editors and publishers. The contracts arranged with Kitchen Table, with some of the same provisions that had previously been arranged with Persephone, seem to have been a source of tension between Moraga and Smith, previously co-founders of the press and former lovers. As Gilley makes clear, by including an excerpt from a 1988 letter from Smith to Moraga, the contract agreements caused commercial challenges despite upholding feminist values:

> Our decision to take on the payment commitments to contributors that had originally been offered by Persephone was a major error (and this policy was undoubtedly one of the factors that contributed to them declaring bankruptcy). Given the tiny margin of earnings available from independent book publishing, there is hardly sufficient money to pay for the production of new books, reprintings of previous titles, royalties, rent, telephone, supplies, and office staff let alone being obligated to pay contributors again and again. (Unpublished letter from Smith to Moraga 13 Oct. 1988, qtd. in Gilley 40)

Working with other women of color did not exempt Moraga and Anzaldúa from problems and disagreements, and it could, in fact, be argued the final results of the working relationship with Persephone Press and Kitchen Table Press were unfortunately similar.

As is clear from the above communication from Barbara Smith to Moraga, the ideals of feminist business priorities and female solidarity are tested in the world of publishing. Not only did Moraga and Anzaldúa sever ties with two separate presses, first with a press run by white lesbian editors and later with a black lesbian-run press. There is even some indication disagreements over publishing decisions were a point of contention between Moraga and Anzaldúa. As Gilley's research demonstrates, *Bridge*'s co-editors disagreed on the appropriate press for *Bridge*, and by extension which audience(s) they should seek. Based on letters between the two, Anzaldúa wanted to pursue a more mainstream press after Persephone (and later after Kitchen Table Press), with the hopes of gaining a wider audience, whereas Moraga felt the need to work with feminist presses (Gilley 39). According to Gilley, "Moraga felt that publishing with a small lesbian press, or subsequently a small women of color press, was the only way to respect the political integrity of the work, market it to its proper audience, and reap financial benefits for its editors and contributors" (40). While publicly supporting the decision to go with Kitchen Table Press (in a 1982 interview with Linda Smuckler), Anzaldúa's private correspondence to Moraga on May 2, 1983 reveals greater ambivalence: "As I told you on the phone, it might be a good thing at this time for Bridge to be published by a press such as Beacon where non-feminist Third World people (and others) would have excess [*sic*] to the book as I think most of the feminist community has been exposed to it" (Letter from Anzaldúa to Moraga, qtd. in Gilley 40). Clearly Anzaldúa want to move publishers to expand *Bridge*'s readership.

Later in 2000, when deciding which publisher to go with for the third edition, Anzaldúa's desire for a bigger press seems to have grown: "You think Third Woman will be easiest and less work for us, I don't agree. I do agree that it would be more politically correct. At this point I'm in favor of a bigger press like Routledge because it has better circulation, worldwide outreach, more publicity, and better money" (E-mail from Anzaldúa to Moraga, qtd. in Gilley 41). With her 1990 anthology *Making Faces, Making Souls / Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color,* which in many ways resembles the style and focus of *Bridge*, Anzaldúa would publish with another small lesbian press, Aunt Lute, but without a co-editor. Anzaldúa would eventually get her wish of publishing with Routledge with the 2002 publication of *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Co-edited with Ana Louise Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home* seems intended, at least in the titular sense, to be *Bridge*'s successor.

While both Short and Gilley's chapters provides insight into the political and commercial aspects of *Bridge*'s publication, *Bridge* itself is not the focus of analysis but rather its publishing history. Short reads the choice of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press as practicing Chela Sandoval's "differential consciousness." Gilley, instead, highlights the failed experiment of feminist publishing and practices.

It is Cynthia Franklin's *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* that moves the conversation in meaningful ways to explore the text itself, and more importantly, to explore *Bridge* as an innovation of the anthology genre. Franklin's book takes the multi-genre anthology, and its emergence in the late twentieth century by women of color, as the focus of her project, starting with *Bridge* and covering diverse anthologies in subsequent chapters. According to her own recounting, Franklin describes having discovered *Bridge* while in graduate school. Although not on her list of required readings for her exam areas of feminist theory and contemporary American literature, Franklin was nevertheless drawn to *Bridge.* This text, compelling but outside the recognizable bounds of canon, represented emerging voices in feminist writing, and Franklin admits preferring *Bridge* to the "exclusionary and full of posturing and self-importance" qualities in the texts she was used to encountering in the academy (3). Like many of *Bridge* readers, Franklin found its "emphasis on community, and its resistance to the academy's elitism" appealing (3). This early encounter as a graduate student would spark an interest which would later lead to a much larger project investigating the multi-genre anthologies created by women of color in the 1980s, resulting in a work which provides important insights for any discussion of *Bridge.*

The existing scholarship on *Bridge* provides useful contextual analysis. While Gilley and Short focus on *Bridge* in light of the publishing industry, Franklin provides analysis of the multi-genre anthologies by women of color, generally emerging in the eighties, alongside the canonical anthologies of the same era. Franklin's work focuses on the genre itself, providing a framework where formal innovation (as seen in *Bridge* and subsequent multi-genre anthologies by women of color) must be read in light of, or in contrast to, the canonical anthologies that have served as the standard and model for generic conventions. Although not explicitly described as a genre analysis, Franklin's analysis functions as such, which is important because as has been discussed in previous chapters, genre shapes reading, interpretation, and analysis all while readers and scholars are largely unaware of genre's influence. So, not only is genre underestimated, but the anthology as a genre is arguably one of the most influential genres while simultaneously one of the least studied.

Anthologies—Franklin cites *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* and *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*—are arguably the most influential player in cannon formation. Canonical anthologies give the impression of objectivity and present absolutes of literary periods and trends like they were found objects rather than inventions of literary history. At the time of *Bridge*'s publication, mainstream presses were under the pressure of increasing "multiculturalism" and were newly including texts by others than white men. The pressure editors experienced to expand their author catalogue was in part due to the emergence of *Bridge* and the increasing prominence of non-white and female-authored texts. Beyond the pressure felt by canon-makers and keepers, the very existence of multi-genre anthologies challenged the purpose and logic of canonical anthologies and "call into question the very notion of mastery" (Franklin 9). Further, the creation of *Bridge* and other anthologies like it, points to the lack of inclusion of the canonical anthologies. The exclusionary practices of second-wave feminism and mainstream culture more broadly creates the need for *Bridge* to exist; the types of authors and writings included in *Bridge* were rarely included in the canonical anthologies. According to Franklin, from their marginal positions, these anthologies "exert pressure and arguably have a transformative effect on canonical anthologies by working to redefine literature, by challenging and exposing its ideological underpinnings, and by offering a form of multiculturalism that, as it insists on the power differentials between groups, maintains a critical edge" (8). In other words, these counter-anthologies provide both explicit and implicit critique; they "resist and make evident the racial, ethnic, class, sexual, and gender biases of canonical anthologies, make visible the women these anthologies leave out" (Franklin 9). In their creation, *Bridge* and others like it expose the exclusionary practices of previous anthologies, and their innovative forms suggest not only new voices with new messages but new creative expression.

Franklin's work is especially generative for my own because although not described as such, her project applies a genre lens to her study of multi-genre anthologies. Across her entire project, the canonical anthologies are examined as the necessary genre context for understanding the multi-genre (non-canonical) anthologies studied. Franklin's second chapter "Another 1981: From *This Bridge Called My Back* to *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras*" explores the co-edited *Bridge* and Anzaldúa's later anthology. Franklin begins her assessment of multi-genre anthologies with *Bridge,* offering explanations for its representative status: it is the best known of the multi-genre anthologies and is "commonly perceived by contributors to later anthologies, as well as by academic feminists, to have been the catalyst for the explosion of multi-genre women's anthologies of the following decade, and to be of central importance to establishing and articulating a third world feminism" (31). Additionally, Franklin provides the contexts of and antecedents to *Bridge.* In tracing who wrote before and how they wrote, Franklin provides a genre genealogy for *Bridge.*

Franklin points to the importance of lesbian and feminist journals that published, often as special editions, the work which would eventually become the later anthologies Franklin discusses. In addition to the journals, credit is given to the small feminist presses ("Aunt Lute" and Kitchen Table"), the supportiveness of editors and publishers outside of the mainstream publishing world. Of note is the fact the presses are “driven by feminist ethics, not economics” (33). Despite the impression of *Bridge* as the first of its kind, Franklin provides the history of these presses, journals, and earlier anthologies such as *Black Fire*, a 1968 Black Arts anthology that linked “a literary movement with an identity-based struggle for civil rights” as well as the first Chicano anthology *El Espejo,* published the following year, but emphasizes the “relentlessly masculinist” qualities of the the nationalist movement anthologies (34). Franklin also reads *Bridge* as having predecessors in African American women’s anthologies published in the 1970s including Mary Helen Washington’s *Black-Eyed Susans* and Toni Cade Bambara’s *The Black Woman* (35).

Franklin takes special notice, in terms of literary antecedents, of Robin Morgan’s 1970 anthology *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (which, notably, is never mentioned in *Bridge*). In comparing the two texts, Franklin remarks the two share “a mixture of revolutionary optimism and rage, as well as a connection between a multi-genre form and activism,” but she identifies Morgan’s emphasis on sisterhood as ultimately disregarding the significant differences between women (36). Drawing primarily from white women’s writings, Morgan acknowledges the oppression of non-white women but “does not address the ways in which her own location implicates her in this oppression” and ultimately argues gender is the primary and original form of oppression (Franklin 37). In *Sisterhood*, the few texts written by women of color are rendered to the margins of the book and the the pieces written by white, middle-class, straight women tend to assume their normative status.

Franklin's analysis of *Bridge* is useful because it identifies what sets it apart from its contemporaries: "the striking degree to which it reflects on and articulates its own status and its purposes," with the editors describing their choices and decisions, and with *Bridge* as a "model of community as a revolutionary force for fighting racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia" (38). *Bridge*'s clear community and relationships between contributors, their radical refusal to deny differences between women, their desire to reach a broad (non-academic) audience, and their approach to an embodied theory ("theory in the flesh") all contribute to its power.

Unfortunately, while Franklin's work on multi-genre anthologies is groundbreaking, some of her conclusions are sidetracked by a focus on perceptions of exclusion. This attention shows up early in her introduction and carries over into her chapter on *Bridge*. The very first paragraph of Franklin's introduction retells the story of her first encounter with *Bridge* and its immediate appeal: "I was struck by this anthology's emphasis on community, and its resistance to the academy's elitism. The women in *This Bridge* were staging the rebellion I fantasized about…" (3). Franklin follows her accounting of initial attraction to *Bridge* with an almost confessional admission of her feelings of exclusion:

> I identified with the anger of its contributors. Accompanying these feelings were my longings for an academic community in which I would be at home, and my envy that this particular community was, quite decidedly closed to me, even invalidating or rendering suspect the points of identification I felt between myself and its contributors: as a white woman, and an (aspiring) academic, I was precisely part of what *This Bridge* contributors were resisting and defining themselves against. (3)

Despite her efforts to evaluate *Bridge* fairly, optimistically seeing it as providing insight for ways to navigate the academy “in a way that would be respectful to, perhaps even build alliances with, women marginalized by race, class, sexuality,” Franklin’s stated goals of evaluating the “possibilities and the limitations of writing women’s communities based upon a politics of identity” takes on a tinge of personal complaint (4, 5).

In her chapter on *Bridge* and Anzaldúa’s subsequent anthology *Haciendo Caras*, Franklin ultimately judges both as exhibiting varying levels of exclusion towards white women, even suggesting the “othering” of white women provides the central tie to the *Bridge* community, later amplified in *Haciendo Caras* (40). According to Franklin, “As in *This Bridge*, what holds the women of color community together in *Hacienda Caras* amidst all their differences is an ‘othering’ of white women and white culture in general” (47). Franklin reserves greater criticism for Anzaldúa’s *Hacienda Caras* and its more pronounced Chicana-identified style (Franklin points to Anzaldúa’s use of the Spanish inflected “*mujeres*-of-color” interspersed with the more common phrasing “women-of-color” as well as the cover art depicting various brown-skinned women based on Judy Baca’s mural “The World Wall”) which Franklin perceives to be less inclusive. Franklin also sees the contributors of *Hacienda Caras* as less tightly knit of a community than *Bridge,* which Franklin ascribes to Anzaldúa compiling pieces previously published rather than commissioning works for the collection. Further censure is leveled at the contributors being more rooted in the academy than those of *Bridge* (half of *Haciendo Cara* contributors mention their position as college/university teachers and are more willing to use and even defend academic jargon) and generally more oppositional to white women. For Franklin, Anzaldúa’s unwillingness to undertake analysis of anti-

Semitism alongside racism (as well as a classroom example in which Jewish female students are depicted negatively) is of great importance (48). She is also critical of the contributors seeming unawareness of their own privileges, conducting activism primarily through writing in academic settings.

While the contrasts between the two anthologies are interesting, Franklin seems unwilling to understand Anzaldúa's trajectory as part of the larger trajectory of women of color politics, their movement into the academy as they work to maintain ties to their communities. And while the outsider status creates an important component of *Bridge,* it seems unrealistic and unhealthy to expect such dynamics to be maintained. Further, Franklin's contention that "othering" of white women is the central mechanism of creating community among women of color in *Bridge*, and later *Hacienda Caras*, seems an extreme and cynical interpretation. The origins of *Bridge* have been well documented in Moraga and Anzaldúa's introduction to *Bridge*. The seeds of the project began in February 1979 when Anzaldúa found herself the only woman of color at a writers retreat, for which she had received a scholarship to attend, where the "management and some of the staff made her feel an outsider, the power relative, the token woman of color" (xxiii). Just two months later in April of 1979, Moraga and Anzaldúa, the only members of a national feminist women writers organization "which refused to address its racist and elitist practices," quit the group and commenced work on what would eventually become *Bridge* (xxxiii). The final product, however, is different than its origins; Moraga and Anzaldúa explicitly state the shift in their project: "What began as a reaction to the racism of white feminists soon became a positive affirmation of the commitment of women of color to our *own* feminism" (xxxii). Short's analysis of *Bridge* also confirms this transition from early origins to the final result, where the focus appears to have changed from criticism of white women to the needs, concerns, and efforts of women of color: "What emerged as the book evolved was the realization that complex differences existed among Third World women themselves…. In the process, the critique of white feminism became only one section of the book, 'And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures with You'" (29). Ultimately, the point is not to defend *Bridge* or *Haciendo Caras* against accusations of exclusion. It is possible there is merit to Franklin's criticisms and usefulness to her focus on the possibilities and limitations of identity politics. Unfortunately, Franklin's focus detracts from the work of uncovering *Bridge*'s genre innovation.

A careful genre analysis of *Bridge* requires more than just the acknowledgement of multiple genres; it requires focused analysis of how genre is functioning in the anthology (both overall and in individual texts), and of where the authors are transgressing genre conventions (and for what purposes), of where genre may be complied with or invoked. Granted, one of the challenges of working with an anthology is the element of multiple authors and the difficulty of attributing any textual element to editorial choice, but one of the things that becomes clear is the unusual closeness and transparency between the editors and the contributors, with some of the pieces even addressed like personal correspondence to Moraga. Still, even if genre innovation might be primarily attributed to individual *Bridge* contributors, the sheer volume of innovation suggests an editorial environment conducive to such innovation.

While my main focus is on the original content of the first edition, I also consulted both the second and fourth editions because I wanted to read the subsequent materials to get a sense of the editors' changing understanding of the project and its impact. The original edition contained a series of prefatory materials: a foreword by Toni Cade Bambara, "The Bridge Poem" by Donna Kate Rushin, a preface (later titled "La Jornada" in the fourth edition) by Cherríe Moraga, and an introduction jointly written by Moraga and Anzaldúa. In each of the subsequent editions, Moraga and Anzaldúa contribute a new preface (in the forth edition The Gloria E. Anzaldúa Literary Trust provides previously unpublished content from her drafts of the preface to the third edition). In addition to the new prefaces, the fourth edition also includes a new afterward by Moraga. Further, while the appendix in the fourth edition contains Anzaldúa's preface to the third edition as well as updated biographies of the contributors, it does not contain Moraga's foreword to the third edition (which is included in her collection of essays and writings *The Xicana Codex*). Taken altogether *Bridge* is 261 pages, and it consists of the prefatory materials, six sections with illustration and introductory content (the first four written by Moraga and the final two written by Anzaldúa), 45 entries by 28 authors, biographical notes, an extensive bibliography of works by and about Third World women in the US, and publishing resource information.

The unconventional, even transgressive, aspects of *Bridge* are not visible in any accounting of *Bridge* and its components because there is simply more occurring than a list of the included genres can provide. While "essays, speeches, letters, and poems" are recognizably present, the genre categories belie the revolutionary quality of it being a mixed-genre anthology as well as the way genre is deployed, both by *Bridge*'s editors and contributors (Short 28). Moraga and Anzaldúa craft a collection that is in dialogue with mainstream, academic feminism while also challenging the generic conventions of academic writing and offer pieces readable by those outside academia.

From the beginning, it is clear the editors are aware of genre conventions at the same time they circumvent what is expected. For example, the prefatory materials include a foreword by Toni Cade Bambara, a preface by Moraga, "The Bridge Poem" by Kate Rushin, and finally the introduction written by Moraga and Anzaldúa. Even a casual reader might pause to consider the difference between these various genres of prefatory materials: foreword, preface, and introduction, and the different work the Rushin poem does to frame the entire project. There is a fulsomeness to it all, a sense that a foreword, or a preface or an introduction alone would be inadequate, that multiple voices and modes of expression are required. There is even an interesting tension between the editors framing the project and their willingness to share that process with Bambara and Rushin.

From the first entry, *Bridge* proclaims its transgression of traditional genre norms and academic writing conventions. With Bambara's foreword, there is an oral quality evoking cadences of spoken word poetry or Black church preaching, a powerful presence throughout. Bambara floats in and out of standard letter prose into something more resembling stream-of-consciousness. At times the foreword seems to skirt, without following, academic essay form. Bambara inserts quotes in parenthesis from *Bridge* contributors such as Barbara Cameron, Audre Lorde, doris davenport, and Cherríe Moraga as well as dialogue from one of the characters in her own novel *The Salt Eaters.*

Yet it is the entire quote that is in parenthesis, not the citation as is standard for some academic citational styles, and the parenthetical quotes sometimes come at the end of the sentence or in the middle of the sentence. This somewhat minor breach in protocol creates the effect of incorporating the voices of others without following citational practices which might have changed the general tone of the foreword from something with the personal quality of a letter to something more traditionally academic and less personal.

In regards to genre, of note are the beginning and the postscript of Bambara's foreword. In her opening sentence, Bambara appears to recognize the unconventional genres making up *Bridge*, referring to them as a cherished, "collection of cables, esoesess [sic], conjurations and fusile missles [sic]" (vi). Symbolically rather than generically describing *Bridge*'s contents, Bambara foregrounds the potential work of the writings to connect, communicate, evoke and strike. Seemingly less important than the form is the impact, but Bambara's symbolic genre descriptions capture some of the genre nonconformity.

An additional point of interest comes after the close of Bambara's foreword, which she signs off in letter form. There is a brief description: "Novelist Bambara and interviewer Kalamu Ya Salaam were discussing a call she made in *The Salt Eaters* through The Seven Sisters a multicultural, multi-media arts troupe, a call to unite our wrath, our vision our powers" (v). The above description is immediately followed by an excerpt from an interview. It is unclear whether the content is there at the design of the editors of Bambara, but it is a somewhat jarring, obviously generically nonconforming attachment after the close of the foreword. While the description seems distant enough not to have been written by Bambara, there are no definitive clues. Further, the very substance of the appended conversation pertains to matters of genre. When asked by Salaam whether she believed fiction was “the most effective way to do this [call to unite]” (v), Bambara offers the charmingly direct rejoinder: “No. The most effect way to do it, is *to do it!*” (v). This is yet again a question of genre—of which genre has the most revolutionary potential. Bambara’s response seems to downplay the importance of genre, or at least suggest the method is relatively unimportant when compared with the result. While I argue there is revolutionary potential in genre, Bambara’s approach seems to be to deemphasize the academic or theoretical while promoting the practical.

This binary of academic versus practical, theoretical versus praxis that gets played out repeatedly in *Bridge*, can at times give the impression that the editors and contributors merely repudiate the former and promote the latter. However, the truth is more complicated. The constraints and control academic discourse exerts are certainly resented and at times enthusiastically rejected, but *Bridge* in its resistance changes the anthology genre as well as the types of writing considered relevant for educational purposes and academic contexts.

Following Bambara’s foreword is Moraga’s preface (titled “*La Jornada*” in later editions), and it takes a very personal approach to, in her own words, “reflect in actual terms how this anthology and the women in it and around it have personally transformed my life, sometimes rather painfully but always with richness and meaning” (xiii). The sentiment of *Bridge* as transformational is one that recurs with the editors, contributors, and, in later edition's reports, readers. There are four titled and dated entries, which most closely resembling journal or diary entries: "I Transfer and Go Underground (Boston, Massachusetts - July 20, 1980)," "A Bridge Gets Walked Over (Boston, Massachusetts - July 25, 1980)," "A Place of Breakthrough: Coming Home (San Francisco, California - September 20, 1980)," and "I Have Dreamed of a Bridge (San Francisco. California - September 25, 1980). The entries are four in total, with two pairs of entries where the second in each set is written five days after the first and the first and second pair are separated by a two-months span and opposite coasts.

Moraga's preface performs the genre nonconforming aspects witnessed in her own writing and in *Bridge* overall. While the sections are chronological, they are not linearly argued. The preface is impressionistic rather than argumentative, and Moraga uses the evocative recounting of personal experience to provide the conceptual framework for *Bridge*. Moraga's preface is very like what is later seen in *Loving* where a recounting of day might have a surface resemblance to diary entries given the date marks but are, in fact, highly crafted narrative descriptions of experience which take on larger symbolic import than a chronicle of daily events. Frequently, with little if any exposition, the experiences and reflections are left to the reader to connect and interpret. In this preface, Moraga recounts four central experiences. The first comes amidst her reflections of her time in Boston working to secure a publisher for *Bridge*. She is aware "such an anthology is in high demands these days" with the Left needing it because of "its shaky and shabby commitment to women, period" and (white) feminist circles needing it because what "was once a cutting edge, [is] growing dull in the too easy solution to our problems of hunger and soul and stomach" (xiii).

By evoking physical and spiritual hunger, Moraga grounds her politics, and the politics of *Bridge,* in real world needs and in material conditions. The problem of feminism, and the difference *Bridge* editors and contributors seek is a feminist approach relevant to the lives of poor women, queer women, and women of color. As Moraga notes: "I think to myself and the feminism my so-called sisters have constructed does nothing to help me make the trip from one end of town to another" (xiii). Leaving the white suburban area of Waterton and taking a bus and later underground train to a black neighborhood, Moraga is keenly aware of the protection of her light skin and gold-streaked hair and the vulnerability of brown skin, confirmed by the central event in this entry—her witnessing a physically aggressive arrest of black boy: "The train is abruptly stopped. A white man in jeans and a tee shirt breaks into the car I'm in, throws a Black kid up against the door, handcuffs him and carries him away. The train moves on. The day before, a 14-year-old Black boy was shot in the head by a white cop. And, the summer is getting hotter (xiv)." This is the experience in which Moraga chooses to anchor her preface.

The second section continues Moraga's coverage of her time in Boston, capturing the physical costs of weathering cross-cultural encounters and demonstrating the complex narrative maneuvers between memories, experiences, reflection, and multiple temporalities. The emphasis on the physical pushes the preface from the realm of personal to almost insistently embodied. Moraga draws attention to herself, her experiences, and her physicality as if to manifest herself as much as possible in a medium which is inherently disembodied. The bone-deep weariness is captured in the short, staccato sentences: "I am ready to go home now. I am ready. Very tired. Couldn't sleep all night. Missing home. There is a deep fatigue in my body this morning. I feel used up" (xv). Here, musings of her weariness are intercut with her remembering being asked by a friend Adrienne whether or not she could write about what happened in Boston—the emphasis on "can" not "would" calling attention to the taxing nature of the work. The source of the fatigue, perhaps apart from homesickness, is the physical impact of the emotional labor. The central experience of this day, which is interspersed with the memories of interactions with other women—Adrienne, Barbara, and Gloria, is a meeting of women. Moraga describes entering a room:

> Another meeting . . . walking into a room filled with white women, a splattering of women of color around the room. The issue on the table, Racism. The dread and terror in the room lay like a thick immovable paste above all our shoulders, white and colored, alike. We, Third World women in the room thinking back to square one, again. (xv)

Amidst the description of this painful interaction, Moraga wonderers how to "*not use our bodies to be thrown over a river tormented history to bridge the gap*" and flashes to Barbara's words from the night before commenting that "a bridge gets walked over" (xv). Once again back in the room, Moraga describes the physical reactions, the tightening up of the white women's bodies resulting from discomfort:

> I watch the white women shrink before my eyes, losing their fluidity of argument, of confidence, pause awkwardly at the word, "race," the word, "color." The pauses keeping the voices breathless, the bodies taut, erect - unable to breathe deeply, to laugh, to moan in despair, to cry in reject. I cannot continue to use my body to be walked over to make a connection. Feeling every joint in my body tense this morning, used. (xv)

The description is narrowly focused on the physical manifestation of the women's discomfort, the micro expressions of their emotional unease. Again, Moraga refuses disembodied abstraction so common to academic writing, making clear that the experience of race for white women and women of color is experienced bodily.

In a medium where the speaker is invisible and disembodied, Moraga works to make herself, specifically her body, visible to the reader. The transformation Moraga referenced in the first section is returned to in the closing of the second section. She not only remembers Gloria's words to Moraga that the book would "change your life, Cherríe. It will change both our lives," but also recalls a friend who comments to her she had seemed more white when they first met (xv). Moraga responds by saying she had felt whiter then: "I used to feel more white. You know. I really did. But at the meeting last night, dealing with white women here on this trip, I have felt so very dark: dark wit anger, with silence, with the feeling of being walked over" (xv). Although mixed-race and light-skinned as a result, Moraga feels herself undergoing a transformation, a darkening, both in terms of her identification and her emotions. She talks of the physical bearing of the racist encounters in Boston, of feeling her color the more she engages politically.

In the opening of the preface, Moraga proclaimed her intention to provide her readers with the process of creating *Bridge* and the personal transformation the project prompted in her (and in *Bridge*'s contributors). Moraga works to convey the deep level of growth by describing how she experiences her own body differently. Moraga feels herself to have grown darker; she identifies with women of color more and feels the pain of their suffering to a greater degree. Moraga's transformation serves as both warning and invitation to *Bridge* readers. The encounter with *Bridge* might change them in unexpected, profound ways, and in order to accomplish such an effect, *Bridge* editors and contributors engage writing and genre in new and unconventional ways.

The second section of Moraga's preface in regards to genre is notable for what it evokes as well as for what it transcends. As mentioned previously, the sections resemble journal entries. They are also highly readable pieces, seemingly simple descriptions of four experiences that provide an overview of Moraga's journey to complete the book project. The second section, even more than the others, brings to mind that from which it ultimately distinguishes itself. There are two noteworthy elements. First, in the space of a single page, Moraga manages to recount her meeting and intersperse it with memories of conversations and interactions seamlessly, into a short passage that is incredibly readable and not disorienting, an impressive feat given the numerous voices and temporalities from which she is drawing. This is a highly crafted passage although the appearance may seem like simple musings of the day. Second, and perhaps most interestingly, is they way Moraga closes this section with an excerpt from her journal, making a clear distinction between the two. The final paragraph of the section cues the differences as follows: "I wrote in my journal: 'My growing consciousness as a woman of color is surely seeming to transform my experience. How could it be that the more I feel with other women of color, the more I feel myself Chicana, the more susceptible I am to racist attack!'" (xv). By including an excerpt from her journal entry for the day the section is written about, Moraga makes explicit that the journal entry and the preface section resembling a journal entry are distinct. In her preface, Moraga not only recounts the process of getting *Bridge* published but also models the innovative writing, and thus prompts new, responsive reading approaches.

In the the final two sections of the preface, written two months after the previous two sections were written, Moraga has returned home to San Francisco. The sense of homecoming is strong—she is returning not only to the Bay Area but also to her community and, seemingly, to a greater sense of herself. The transformation of creating *Bridge* is complete and the isolated and tired Moraga of the early sections is replaced by a Moraga in healthy connection with herself and women. Both of the last two sections focus on the relationships among women: Moraga's sister, friends, lovers, and mother. Moraga opens the third section with a quote from Audre Lorde encouraging those seeking to deal with racism to "reach down into that deep place of knowledge insider herself and thought that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there" (qtd. in Moraga xvi). Moraga proceeds to think about her own experience loving women and the barriers and heartbreak that can be caused by the differences, the "failure between lovers, sisters, mother and daughter —the betrayal. How have we turned our backs on each other - the bridge collapsing - whether it be for public power, personal gain, private validation, or more closely, to safe face, to save our children, to save our skins" (xvii). Moraga presents *Bridge* as a mechanism to connect and work through separating differences, both for herself and for readers. She credits her lesbianism, her love for women, and the need to "deal with racism because I couldn't stand being separated from other women" as being the motivation for the anthology (xvii). The highly introspective piece is grounded in Moraga's recounting her experience on a panel at a conference and having five Latina feminists supporting her in the front row, a need fulfilled she had not even been aware she had: *"Si son mis comadres.* Something my mother had with her women friends and sisters. Coming home. For once, I didn't have to choose between being lesbian and being chicana; between being a feminist and having family" (xvii-xviii). Both the Boston experience and the painful tension of the meeting with white women who were uncomfortable talking about race is juxtaposed with this experience of finding a sense of home that had never been experienced before in a professional setting. The vision of Moraga transformed by finally having found a supportive community of women presages the community Moraga hopes *Bridge* will create for its readers.

In the final section, "I Have Dreamed of a Bridge" Moraga threads together several elements: her recurring dreams of a bridge, the pressures she feels to focus on the material conditions of oppression and formulate a strategy for revolution, and her relationship with her mother. At the center of these various connections is faith. Perhaps even more than the early sections, the progression of this section is less about logical arguments than it is providing personal experiences illustrating her central ideals. For Moraga, faith is what makes her willing to risk vulnerability: "…what I really want to write about is the faith. That without faith, I'd dare not expose myself to the potential betrayal, rejection, and failure that lives throughout the first and last gesture of connection" (xviii). Faith is also part of the connection she has with her mother, "so often I have lost touch with he simple faith I know in my blood. My mother. On some very basic level, the woman cannot be shaken from the ground on which she walks" (xviii). It is at a low point in the project where she receives a holy card from her mother, with her mother's patron saint St. Anthony of Padua on the front and a brief note sending her prayers for the book. Moraga is clear, however, that she does not view faith as passive, not "lazy faith" but instead she is referring to the kind of faith described as follows: "I am talking about believing that we have the power to actually transform our experience, change our lives, save our lives. Otherwise, why this book? It is the faith of activists I am talking about" (xviii). Here, as in the previous sections, Moraga leans on narrative recounting to carry both affect and argument.

Moraga closes the preface with a powerful declaration of her vision for *Bridge* and her desire for it to touch the lives of its readers. In the closing lines of her preface Moraga repeatedly describes a kind of interaction and intimacy not thought possibly and certainly not sought by an academic text:

> This book is written for all the women in it and all whose lives our lives will touch. We are a family who first only knew each other in our dreams, who have come together on these pages to make faith a reality and to bring all of our selves to bear down hard on that reality.
>
> It is about physical and psychic struggle. It is about intimacy, a desire for life between all of us, not settling for less than freedom even in the most private aspects of our lives. A total vision.
>
> For the women in this book, I will lay my body down for that vision. *This Bridge Called My Back.*
>
> In the dream, I am always met at the river.
>
> Cherríe Moraga (xix)

Topically and stylistically Moraga veers from the accepted terrain of academic writing, but it is consistent with the preface and the entirety of *Bridge.*

One of the prominent aspects in Moraga's portions of *Bridge* is her emphasis on the material realities of feminism, on human experiences as fundamentally embodied and the need for feminist theory to be equally embodied. In the second section already mentioned, Moraga describes the physical effects, and in the final section the importance of an embodied approach is made explicit:

> The materialism in this book lives in the flesh of these women's lives: the exhaustion we feel in our bones at the end of the day, the fire we feel in our hearts when we are insulted, the knife we feel in our backs when we are betrayed, the nausea we feel in our bellies when we are afraid, even the hunger we feel between our hips when we long to be touched. (xiv)

The politics is explicit, but the implicit politics of formal innovation requires greater scrutiny.

In between Moraga's preface and Moraga and Anzaldúa's introduction is Donna Kate Rushin's "The Bridge Poem." It includes and introduces the frustration of *Bridge* and many of its contributors, the awareness of their playing a role of constant explanation and translation: "I do more translating / Than the Gawdamn U.N." Over the course of the poem, she describes the relational labor she provides and her resolve to cease being a bridge for others: "Find another connection connection to the rest of the world" and "I will not be the bridge to your womanhood / Your manhood / Your human – ness." In the concluding lines of the poem, the speaker determines being a bridge to and for herself is the only possible direction to pursue:

> The bridge I must be
> Is the bridge to my own power
> I must translate
> My own fears
> Mediate
> My own weaknesses
>
> I must be the bridge to nowhere
> But my true self
> And then
> I will be useful

Perhaps as important (and for the case of this chapter, more important) as the sentiment in Rushin's poem in framing *Bridge* is the choice of the editors to include a poem in the prefatory materials. Given the prominence of poetry in *Bridge* (eleven of the forty-five pieces making up *Bridge* are poems), it is unsurprising the editors chose to use Rushin's poem as a touchstone, echoing the symbolism of the title and cover art.

The introduction, which follow's "The Bridge Poem and is written by both Moraga and Anzaldúa, functions in many ways as a traditional introduction would. It provides the oft cited origins of the project, the stated goal: "*This Bridge Called My Back* intends to reflect an uncompromised definition of feminism by women of color in the U.S." an overview of the six sections comprising the book, an explanation of their division of labor, their statements of thanks, and their vision for the book and its impact (xxiii). Given my focus on genre, what is most valuable is their discussion of the pieces included and how they describe *Bridge*—their vision of its function and future work. They acknowledge the wide range of the texts; what Franklin might refer to as the mixed-genre quality of *Bridge*:

> The selections in this anthology range from extemporaneous stream of consciousness journal entries to well thought-out theoretical statements; from intimate letters to friends to full-scale public addresses. In addition, the book includes poems and transcripts, personal conversations and interviews. The works combined reflect a diversity of perspectives, linguistic styles, and cultural tongues. (xxiv)

From their description, it is clear the editors recognize the "diversity" of texts (which are in fact multiple genres as well as genre innovations and transgressions) as being directly related to the authors' diversity and the perspectives they bring. As Moraga and Anzaldúa's continued description explains, they considered it their editorial responsibility to preserve the writer's "color":

> In editing the anthology, our primary commitment was to retaining this diversity, as well as each writer's especial voice and style. The book is intended to reflect our color loud and clear, not tone it down. As editors we sought out and believe we found, non-rhetorical, highly personal chronicles that present a political analysis in everyday terms. (xxiv)

Although not explained in detail it is evident the editors believe there is a direct link between one's "color" and one's expressive style, hinting at if not directly stating a close connection between *Bridge*'s genre transgression and innovation and the editors' and contributors' representation of their complex identities.

Moraga and Anzaldúa promote *Bridge* as new and revolutionary, but more as a result of who is writing—radical women of color. Less emphasis is placed on discussing any formal or generic innovations. In fact, there is a general opposition to such academic language and analysis. The general approach seems to be that the writing style, something looser and broader than genre, emerges out of the individual and their experiences. Additionally, the language of "non-rhetorical," "chronicles," and "political analysis in everyday terms" appears to move it out of the realm of creative writing or traditional academic writing into analysis based in experience.

While Moraga and Anzaldúa avoid using genre terms such as "anthology" to refer to *Bridge*, additional cues to how the editors understand *Bridge*—its content and its purpose—show up at the end of the introduction, where they describe their expectations for this text to serve as required reading for women's studies courses and ethic studies courses, and with perhaps a hint of acerbity that speaks to their own experience in academia, they specify that the book should not just be used in special topics courses on

Third World Women or in ethnic studies courses taught by women. *Bridge*, from their perspective, belongs as basic reading for any course dealing with race and/or gender and in courses taught by white women and men of color, not just in courses taught by women of color. Moraga and Anzaldúa make explicit *Bridge*'s defiance of conventional academic norms is not an indicator of their lack of desire for academic readership. In fact, the opposite is true; *Bridge* is intended for academic contexts, but it hopes to transform both the substance and method of the conversation.

Anthologies are primarily produced for academic audiences, and apart from textbooks, are the leading academic genre. There are generally two types of anthologies used in academic settings. First, are the anthologies compiling primary sources, one most likely read in an English or literature course. These are anthologies that bring together some grouping of texts: American literature, world literature, women's literature, and the like. These are edited by experts in the field who select which texts and authors are essential and provide introductory materials and explanatory notes. They are usually comprised of multiple literary genres unless the anthology is organized exclusively around a particular genre. Although most common in a literary context, these primary source anthologies are also prevalent in other fields. For example, an anthology for a philosophy course might have pieces by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as well as modern philosophers. In addition to the primary source anthologies are the secondary source anthologies, comprised of works of scholarly analysis. So for example, a course on autobiography might have an anthology of excerpts from autobiographies as well as an anthology made up of scholarly analysis of autobiographies and autobiography genre theory pieces.

Generally, the primary source anthologies are comprised of previously published works. In fact, for most primary source anthologies, take for example a *Norton Anthology of British Literature*, the goal would be representative coverage of the recognized canon. It is far less likely for primary source anthologies to be made up of works never-before published. In secondary source anthologies, it is common to see both new and previously published works, but perhaps for different purposes. A compilation of the recognized leading voices in a field would select previously published works. A collection of cutting-edge analysis might reasonably be comprised of new materials.

Bridge fits few, if any, of these common academic anthology characteristics. It includes predominately new pieces by relatively unknown writers. The few pieces republished in *Bridge*, works by Chrystos, doris davenport, Audre Lorde, hattie gossett, The Combahee River Collective, and Mitsuye Yamada, were still relatively new pieces, with Chrystos poem being the oldest, published in 1976 and all the others having been published in the year or two preceding *Bridge*'s publication. For a text intended to serve as a reader in a women's or ethnic Studies course, it would be expected to pull from well-established authors and texts. However, the very problem *Bridge* is seeking to fix is the lack of publication and visibility of female authors of color. Moraga and Anzaldúa truly were producing the type of text they had needed in their own classrooms but did not yet exist.

Moraga and Anzaldúa are also clear about their hopes for *Bridge* having a life beyond the academy. They present *Bridge* as unbound by traditional limitations of genre and audience:

> We want the book in libraries, bookstores, at conferences, and union meetings in every major city and hole-in-the-wall in this country. And, of course, we hope to eventually see this book translated and leave this country, making tangible the link between Third World women in the U.S. and throughout the world. (xxvi)

Here again the title symbol is relevant, representing the editors' desires for the writings to span cultural and economic differences, political and geographic divides, and to connect people to new ideas or shared experiences. It is their closing lines, however, that poignantly reveal their hopes regarding their readers: "Finally *tenemos la esperanza que This Bridge Called My Back* will find its way back into our families' lives. The revolution begins at home" (xxvi). For all of the many complicated reasons the editors and contributors may have strayed from traditional academic writing, it seems clear that a desire to be accessible to readers like their loved ones and their community is prominent.

Overall, Moraga and Anzaldúa spend little time in their introduction focused on the formal innovation of *Bridge*, which is understandable given their approach to genre seems to be enmeshed in their views on academic discourse. This seeming antipathy towards academic writing is most directly articulated in Anzaldúa's contribution to *Bridge*: "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," the title piece of the fifth section in *Bridge* focused on the "Third World woman writer." In her piece, Anzaldúa overtly addresses genre: "It is not easy writing this letter. It began as a poem, a long poem. I tried to turn it into an essay but the result was wooden, cold. I have not yet unlearned the esoteric bullshit and pseudo-intellectualizing that school brainwashed into my writing" (165). In this passage, Anzaldúa acknowledges the connection between genre style and impact as well as what she experiences as the distancing of academic genres. She makes clear the immediacy of the letter is what she wants, not the essay which feels colder and more removed: “How to begin again. How to approximate the intimacy and immediacy I want. What form? A letter, of course” (165). Not only is Anzaldúa cognizant of the impact of genre, but also it is clear that there are values, preferences, and assumptions attached to genre choice. In the piece overall, Anzaldúa identifies the unique challenges female authors of color experience in their efforts to write. The material obstacles and psychological discouragement are immense, and Anzaldúa criticizes academic culture for exerting pressure and expecting conformity to prevailing writing standards:

> I think, yes, perhaps if we got to the university. Perhaps if we become male-women or as middleclass as we can. Perhaps if we give up loving women, we will be worthy of having something to say worth saying. They convince us that we must cultivate art for art’s sake. Bow down to the sacred bull, form. Put frames and metaframes around the writing. Achieve distance in order to win the coveted title “literary writer” or “professional writer.” Above all do not be simple, direct, nor immediate. (167)

It is abundantly clear from Anzaldúa’s perspective academic genres and writing styles are incompatible with who she is and how she wants to communicate.

For *Bridge*’s editors, genre is both incredibly important and not important. By this I mean, they spend very little time writing about their genre choices in their prefatory materials. When they do explicitly address writing, as Anzaldúa does in her “Speaking in Tongues” letter, it is clear the genre choices are intentional. Further, the lack of explicit focus on genre choices is in line with their general avoidance of academic and literary discourse. This is not to say that genre is unimportant; in fact, the opposite is true. While they are uninterested in discussing genre, presumably because it smacks of the academic elitism and detachment they resist, they are very much *doing* genre. And while it is important to understand the motivation driving Moraga and Anzaldúa to produce a text useful for academic purposes while still accessible to broad readership, it is valuable to analyze the genre moves and innovations present in *Bridge*.

Following the prefatory materials, *Bridge* is comprised of forty-five pieces from twenty-eight different authors. Of those forty-five, eleven are clearly poems, and from the opening section with Kate Rushin's "Bridge Poem," the prominence of poetry is striking. In the first section alone, the one focused on childhood as the "roots of our radicalism," four of the six pieces are poems. And while the prose pieces increase in the successive sections, nearly all of the sections have at least one poem. The poems range in topic and tone, but they resist rhyme, traditional verse and forms so much there are a few texts which could be classified as either free verse prose poems or stream of consciousness prose pieces. The poems' power comes from the striking use of imagery, repetition, line breaks, and rhythm. Each has a clear voice, at times stinging and at times tender. Further, it is clear that the editors value the insight poets bring, regardless of the form a piece might take. As Moraga and Anzaldúa write in their introduction, "Some of us do not see ourselves as writers, but pull the pen across the page anyway or speak with the power of poets" (xxiv). Here "poet" seems more related to an identity or ability than someone who writes in a particular genre.

The starting point for genre categorization in *Bridge* is the poetry/prose divide. It is important to examine the poetry, not only because of its prominence in *Bridge* but also in order to counter the tendency to overlook poetry when it is part of a multi-genre anthology, such as *Bridge*, or when it is part of a multi-genre text such as Moraga's *Loving* or Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. To a surprising degree, scholars focus almost exclusively on the prose, suggesting poetry is somehow a lesser target for analysis. Examining *Bridge*'s poetry is crucial not merely because it, as much as the prose pieces, contributes to the larger project, but because some of the most interesting cases of genre innovation appear at the edges of the poetry.

As previously mentioned, *Bridge* is comprised of forty-five pieces in total, eleven of which are (visually obvious as) poems. However, the truth is somewhat more complicated as there are possibly several additional pieces that could be considered prose poems. The first, hattie gossett's "billie lives! billie lives" could either be read as a stream of consciousness piece cataloguing a day—Saturday, August 23, 1980—or a free verse prose poem. The piece is notable for its length (nearly four pages), its consistent use of lower case lettering (including "i"), nonstandard use of punctuation (only periods, ampersands, and exclamation points), use of paragraphs, casual diction ("cuz"), and a jazz orality evocative of the songstress she references.

In addition to gossett's piece, there are two pieces by Rosario Morales that on the page look like stream of consciousness prose pieces but might be better categorized as prose poems. While the following analysis focuses on the poetic qualities and techniques of the pieces, the point is not to prove conclusively one genre designation. Rather, the intention is to highlight the frequency with which *Bridge* troubles simple genre readings and calls attention to interpretation being shaped by genre and perceptions of genre.

Morales has two pieces in *Bridge*; “I Am What I Am” is the fourth poem in the first section, and her second poem “The Other Heritage” immediately precedes hattie gossett’s “billie lives! billie lives.” Both of Morales’ works test the bounds of genre. The placement of Morales’ first piece, after three previous poems creates a visual contrast, with the preceding works visually presenting as poems, with their stanzas and clear line breaks. Even without meter or rhyme scheme, they visually conform to genre conventions. When reading Morale’s piece, it appears on the page more like an essay with its paragraphs than a poem. The additional spaces are perhaps the first visual distinction of the piece’s deviation from standard essay form; however, as the reader progresses, those gap spaces end up having the effect line breaks might—creating emphasis and cadence. Additionally, Morales makes frequent use of repetition, especially of the title refrain, as well as near and true rhymes: “I am what I am   I am Puerto Rican   I am U.S. American   I am New York Manhattan” (14). Morales’ poetry, as occurs in *Bridge* as a whole, challenges the notion of simple identity, of easy categorization. The message of complex subjectivity is paired with a form which also resists easy categorization.

Morales’ second poem “My Other Heritage” functions in much the same way as the earlier piece. With her dedication to “June Jordan and Teish and all other Black women at the San Francisco Poetry Workshop; January 1980” Morales provides a provocative opening, “I forgot   I forgot the other heritage   the other strain refrain   the silver thread thru my sound   the ebony sheen to my life” (107). As she confesses to having forgotten the comfort of the Black community to which she grew up in close proximity, Morales plays with repetition and spaces to create emphasis. Additionally, while any rhyme scheme or meter is absent, there are repetition of words and sounds; the word “sound” shows up twice in the second and third lines followed by “bounded” twice in the fourth and fifth lines, and alliteration and repetition (“bleached bleeded and bleached”) create a lyric effect. Morales also includes the words of others and the words swirling around in her own head without the traditional markers of speech or dialogue and also switches into and out of Spanish several times in the piece.

The indeterminacy or liminality of genre in these texts, which appear as prose but read as poetry, requires readers to pay attention to genre inflected reading habits they may have not even realized they used. Visually Morales’ “I Am What I Am” and “My Other Heritage” look very much like Chrystos’s other *Bridge* entries: “I Don’t Understand Those Who Have Turned Away From Me” and “No Rock Scorns Me as Whore.” In fact, in terms of visual appearance, very little is different. They have the similar paragraph form with additional spaces breaking up phrases rather than traditional punctuation. However, although visually similar, Chrystos’s phrases read more like sentences, albeit short and sometimes interrupted, and overall have a more narrative quality. One aspect in these two pieces by Chrystos that is different from those by Morales is the presence of a time stamp almost as if they were diary entries. “I Don’t Understand Those Who have Turned Away From Me,” which appears earlier in *Bridge* is marked “5:32am - May 1980” and “No Rock Scorns Me as Whore,” which is the very last entry in *Bridge*, is marked “5:32am - May.” These simple markings act as subtle genre cues, whether intentionally or not, whether accurately or not. What becomes clear is the genre designation of a text is dependent both on the author's compliance with traditional genre characteristics and with a reader's familiarity with genre rules, and yet even these genre cues can suggest more than one genre possibility.

Reading *Bridge* is an exercise in comparative reading, an unconsciously genre-based approach. The different experiences detailed provide a communal perspective, with differences and similarities preserved; however, it is more than the substance of the experiences that are compared. The variety of ways the stories are told, many of them outside the norms of traditional academic writing, are also compared. Additionally, *Bridge* editors disrupt the common approach to arranging anthologies, not grouping the texts by literary genre or the author's ethnic groupings but by topic.

Not only is it helpful to examine Chrystos's "I Don't Understand Those Who have Turned Away From Me" in light of Morales' works which they resemble, but also it is useful to look at them in conjunction with Chrystos's other works. The comparative reading makes it possible to unearth the genre-transcendent techniques Chrystos uses in her nonconforming prose poems/pieces as well as her more visually conforming poetry. Of all *Bridge* contributors, Chrystos has the most entries included. In addition to the pieces discussed above, *Bridge* contains four additional poems: "He Saw," "I Walk in the History of My People," "Ceremony for Completing a Poetry Reading," and "Give Me Back." All four poems visually present as poems with left-justified lines of varying lengths, and as in the prose pieces/poems, Chrystos makes effective use of spacing, a technique not especially genre-bound.

In "He Saw," a tragically beautiful poem about her Native father returning to the reservation and to fishing after a life of government work and blending into white culture, Chrystos plays with line length and unexpected spacing. Using spacing, a relatively pedestrian aspect of writing, Chrystos crafts a beautiful piece that is both powerful in its critique of dominant culture and accessible to readers of any educational background. The assimilation done in order to provide his daughter "all the whitest advantages" and "to be safe," is resented by his daughter: "I want your wildness" and "I don't want this man who cut off his hair / joined the government / to be safe." The pain permeating the poem, both the father's and the daughter's, is present from the first lines:

> his roots/went back to the reservation old
> pain/old hunger
> None of the ghosts were there
> He went fishing   caught
> one or more every
> day   The fishing is what he needed to do

Throughout the poem the visual placement of the lines and spaces are striking. Throughout the poem nearly all of the lines are left-justified. There is one stanza break between the lines "I grow hungry" and "He gave me all the whitest advantages." The eye is almost fooled into believing another line of separation has occurred after a line of poetry so long is spans the entire width of the page. However, rather than a stanza break, the following line is actually so far indented that the two-word line "white oven" appears only a few spaces from the right margin. In replicating the lines below, it becomes clear that Chrystos is playing with spacing not merely to add pauses and dramatic rhythm to the poem but also to draw attention to the relational distance, separation, and disconnection between the speaker and her father:

> He gave me all the whitest advantages

square house, football school, white mother baking white bread in a
                                                                                    white oven
He wanted to spare me his pain
didn't
Silently our misunderstandings shred   rage clouds our blood ties
I stare at his words   wonder who he is

Like the far right indent of "white oven" line, Chrystos once more indents a line for emphasis: "I want your wildness, want the boy who left on a freight car / I want a boy who cried because his mother is dead / & his daddy's gone crazy." Yet unlike the earlier long indent of "white oven," this later indent is what one might see in a paragraph indent, a kind of visual cue of changing topic. In the poem, this indent follows a shift in the author's tone, a clear stating of what she wants (her father's "wildness") and not the assimilation she has witnessed. This indent marks a shift in tone of the next few lines and ushers in the final lines of the poem, all indented a full inch from the left margin, which read like a coda, a clear-eyed diagnosis of the problem and commitment to self-sufficiency:

We are both in danger
of your ancient fear
I learned to fish on my own
stopped
Now I'm learning to weave nets

The spacing techniques present in the prose pieces/poems and in "He Saw" are also present in "Give Me Back," although more sparingly. Only three times in the poem are there gap spaces, perhaps given that it is the shortest of her works, roughly a half page. Interestingly, in "Ceremony for Completing a Poetry Reading," a poem roughly double the length of "Give Me Back," there is only one line where Chrystos makes use of gap spacing: "I have more to give   this   basket is very large." Instead, she makes use of repetition— “this is a give-away poem” and “I want to give you…” and “I give you…”— and a handful of short, one or three word lines. The opening notion of a give-away poem is developed throughout, with the speaker describing what she has to give in nourishing images of comfort, beauty, and provision; the speaker offers “the first daffodil opening from the earth,” “warm loaves of bread, “a shell from our mother sea,” “a warm robe,” “ribbonwork leggings, dresses sewn with elk teeth,” woven “moccasins,” “blankets woven of flowers and roots.” Following these lines describing gifts of food and and warmth, the speaker beckons “Come closer.” This is the first of the very short lines, sparse in comparison to the lushly descriptive lines preceding it and striking in its intimate call to the reader/listener. After beckoning the reader/hearer to draw near, the poem continues with the only line in the poem to use gap spaces: “I have more to give this   basket is very large.” The large basket is full of more gifts, the next ones seemingly more sacred in nature: “a necklace of feathers & bones,” “a sacred meal of choke cherries,” a “mask of bark which keeps out evil ones.” The speaker once again suggests there is more to give: “This basket is only the beginning / There is something in my arms for all of you.” Once again an abbreviated line follows, “I offer you,” emphasizing the speaker’s voice and offer.

The early offer of food and provisions as well as the following offers of sacred items and protective aids, are followed by gifts of memory:

> I offer you
> this memory of sunrise seen through ice crystals
> Here, an afternoon of looking into the sea from high rocks
> Here, a red-tailed hawk circling over ur heads
> One of its feathers drops for your hair
> May I give you this round stone which holds an ancient spirit

This stone will soothe you

The final lines continue much as the previous lines began, with descriptions of the poet's bounty and willingness to share, but with perhaps sharper rhythm, stronger repetition, and a sense of resolution and clear purpose at the close:

> Within this basket is something you have been looking for
> all your life
> Come take it
> Take as much as you want
> I give you seeds of a new way
> I give you the moon shining on a fire of singing women
> I give you the sound of our feet dancing
> I give you the sounds of our thought flying
>   I give you the sound of peace
>   moving into our faces & sitting down
>   Come
>   this is a give away poem
>   I cannot go home
>   until you have taken everything
>   and the basket which held it
>
>   When my hands are empty
>   I will be full

In "Ceremony for Completing a Poetry Reading," Chrystos captures with exquisite description the abundance of reading *Bridge*, the relationship between reader and writer/ poet and hearer that seems to transcend the page, and she does this in a poem complying with genre expectations but uses the same techniques in pieces which blur genre.

"I Walk in the History of My People," unlike Chrystos's other poems included in *Bridge*, does not make use of gap spacing. Instead, like "Ceremony for Completing a Poetry Reading" Chrystos makes effective use of line breaks, imagery, and repetition. Perhaps the most powerful quality of the poem is the way the speaker identifies the historic and present suffering of her people as being born out in her own body. In the first stanza, the speaker catalogues various bodily aspects—joints, blood, tendons, and marrow—and links them to her people's suffering. The opening lines cleverly uses the dual resonance of "joints" to refer to both bodily joints as well as incarceration: "There are women locked in my joints / for refusing to speak to the police," and the violent tension continues with the speaker's blood being described as "full of those / arrested, in flight, shot" and the tendons "stretched brittle with anger / do not look like white roots of peace." The final lines of the stanza are perhaps best reflective of the repetition and use of line lengths to create rhythm and suspense. They repeat the initial part of the sentence for three lines and follow with three lines of infinitives:

> In my marrow are hungry faces who live on land the whites don't want
> In my marrow women who walk 5 miles every day for water
> In my marrow the swollen faces of my people who are not allowed
> to hunt
> to move
> to be

The short second stanza (4-lines) introduces the most vivid imagery—that of the speaker's scarred and damaged knee, a provocative reference to Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 as well as to the lasting legacy of conquest and genocide. The scars and the "pins in my bones" are linked to the traumatic experience of boarding schools and being "…prisoners /   of a long war." In the final stanza the "wounded knee" imagery is further developed, likening it to a festering wound which has gone ignored for centuries: "My knee is so badly wounded no one will look at it / The pus of the past oozes from every pore / The infection has gone on for at least 300 years." The following line references the commodification of her culture: "My sacred beliefs have been made pencils, names of cities, gas stations." The final lines see near repetitions of an earlier line: “My knee is so badly wounded no one will look at it” becomes “My knew is wounded so badly that I limp constantly,” and finally is written “My knee is wounded.” While the first stanza of the poem progresses from a series of mid-range lines to several nearly full page lines to be concluded in a series of three, two-word lines and the second stanza (only four lines) is paced by a repetition of a long line followed by a four-word lines. The final stanza progresses from long lines (one the full width of the page) into closing lines that are short with one or two syllable words. The final lines of the poem, seen below, reflect both the perpetual damage, anger, and impossible resilience of the speaker and demonstrate Chrystos’s understanding of pacing and impact:

> My knee is wounded so badly that I limp constantly
> Anger is my crutch
> I hold myself upright with it
> My knee is wounded
> see
> How I Am Still Walking

Here, once again and consistently throughout *Bridge*, the editors and contributors foreground the embodied nature of their experience and of the project.

The poetry in *Bridge*, of which we have only examined a few, is substantive, powerful, and worthy of analysis. The poems are an integral part of the overall project, and far too many scholars overlook the poetry for the prose. Additionally, for the purposes of this chapter, the poetry provides some of the most interesting examples of genre compliance and transgression. Chrystos’s poems are vivid and moving, and examining her techniques of spacing, repetition, rhythm, and imagery become even more intriguing when applied to her prose pieces/poems. Reading a text like gossett’s, Morales’, or Chrystos’s that appears on the page like a stream of consciousness prose piece or a diary entry but which makes use of poetic devices is just one of the many genre rich aspects of *Bridge*. Interestingly, the very fact they appear in a mixed-genre anthology makes their genre designation more ambiguous. If they were in a collection of poems, the work of classification would not fall on the reader, having already been done by the editor.

While some might argue the questions of genre classification are irrelevant to the average *Bridge* reader, or worse, are indicative of the kind of abstract academic discourse *Bridge* resists, the former is certainly possible, but the latter is far from the intended purpose of this analysis. It is true a genre classification is not required for readers to enjoy a piece. However, it is inaccurate to think genre analysis is ever absent from a reading experience. Every reader, no matter how highly trained or how novice, is shaped by genre expectations. Things like length, layout, spacing, address, title, tone, among others, all serve as genre cues. As to the latter charge of replicating the kind of discourse *Bridge* pains itself to avoid, it is crucial to remember the goal of the project as a whole is to shed light on the tremendous innovation and resistance to traditional genre forms. It is certainly true genre analysis, as discussed in the first chapter, is one of if not the oldest method of literary analysis. Additionally, as has already been discussed in both the second and third chapters, genre is a conveyor of dominant ideology and is therefore not neutral despite its self-presentation as non-ideological and naturally-occurring.

Bridge was intended for the university classroom even as Moraga and Anzaldúa hoped it would be useful for people outside academic contexts. The editors desired for *Bridge* to find its ways into the hands of those across the globe and back in their community and, even, to their loved ones. *Bridge* has made it into academia and beyond, and examining how genre functions in the text can provide new ways to understand and appreciate its impact.

The prose/poetry divide is the clearest genre demarcation in *Bridge*, but as discussed, there are several entries which blur the line between poetry and prose. While any cataloguing of *Bridge* is genre-based, simply listing the included genres masks the genre transgression, innovation, or indeterminacy. Listing genres gives the false impression of seamless genre conformity. The difficulty of classification is in part due to the sheer variety of writings but also to the nontraditional nature of many of the pieces. However, it is as a result of the unconventional nature of many of the pieces that readers are made aware of convention. In their genre transgressions, in the simplicity, accessibility, and vulnerability of many of these texts, *Bridge* contributors draw attention to the importance of genre even as they transgress academic and genre conventions. From its first publication to its fourth, readers have been moved by strong voices of *Bridge,* and while the message (content) is always the most important aspect of *Bridge*, understanding the delivery (form) of that message is also incredibly valuable.

This final section of *Bridge* analysis aims to shed light on the prose pieces, the clever nuances of genre play as well as the bold innovations and resistance to traditional forms. Of the many prose pieces making up *Bridge*, the essay is perhaps the most common genre. However, the essay is itself a rather “slippery form” which has “resisted any sort of precise, universal definition” (Nordquist). Some its most famous practitioners such as Aldous Huxley, Francis Bacon, and Samuel Johnson, describe the essay respectively as “a literary device for saying almost anything about almost anything,” “dispersed meditations,” or the “loose sally of the mind” (qtd. in Nordquist). So it is perhaps no surprise when various *Bridge* pieces which could be catalogued as essays are quite different from each other in tone, style, audience, formality, focus, and function.

Despite the editors’ occasionally complicated relationship to academic discourse, it is nevertheless surprising how few academic essays are included in *Bridge.* To be clear, it is not that any of these texts are somehow unsuited for academic study, in fact, the opposite is true. Rather, what is striking is the editorial and authorial choices to express in forms less common to academic discourse and stylistically less formal. Norma Alarcón’s brilliant and groundbreaking literary analysis essay, “Chicana’s Feminist Literature: A Re-Vision Through Malintzin/ or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object” is the only essay that might be expected in a standard academic anthology of secondary sources. In its rigor and formal style, Alarcón’s essay represents the best of traditional academic writing. However, it is only in its compliance with genre expectations that Alarcón’s work is traditional; her focus on the figure of La Malinche/Malintzin in Chicana feminist literature is far from traditional. Yet, as Anzaldúa presciently writes in her introduction to *Bridge*’s fifth section “Speaking in Tongues: The Third World Woman Writer,” regarding Alarcón’s piece, “This article represents the kind of literary criticism that is beginning to appear in every segment of the Third World women’s community” (163). Despite the clear evidence of being able to find and produce literary scholarship of the highest caliber, it seems neither *Bridge*’s editors nor contributors were interested in providing standard academic fare.

In addition to Alarcón's essay, there are several other pieces in *Bridge* that bear recognizable markers of academic writing: formal tone, focused analysis, and reference citations. Cheryl Clarke's "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," with its formal syntax, tightly-focused argumentation, and use of end notes, effectively makes the case articulated in her thesis: "For a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture, such as that of North America, is an act of resistance" (128). Several of the previously published pieces, The Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement" and Mitsuye Yamada's "Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster" also tend towards more formal writing. However, unlike Alarcón's, these essays do not serve as secondary sources, providing analysis of another text(s), but instead, they provide commentary on identity—experience and perspectives. Neither of these authors employ the detached third-person voice so common to academic writing, but rather write in first-person voice, with "I" and "we" providing a powerful, direct authorial voice.

Although not named as manifestos, these pieces seem to bridge personal and political statements. They offer personal and communal perspective not generally part of academic feminist discourse at the time. Clarke provides an extensive analysis of lesbianism and the layered challenges of race, class, gender, and sexuality. As is clear in her title and throughout the piece, Clarke views lesbianism as a resistant, mobilizing identity. Her analysis, however, is not distant but is deeply personal, a trait made visible in the switches from first to third person in the following passage:

> As political lesbians, i.e. lesbians who are resisting the prevailing culture's attempts to keep us invisible and powerless, we must become more visible…. I

> am not trying to reify lesbianism or feminism. I am trying to point out that lesbian-feminism has the potential of reversing and transforming a major component in the system of women's oppression…. If radical lesbian-feminism purports an anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-woman-hating vision of bonding as mutual, reciprocal, as infinitely negotiable, as freedom from antiquated gender prescriptions and proscriptions, *then all people struggling to transform the character of relationships in this culture have something to learn from lesbians.* (134)

Clark makes a compelling argument, and does so by marshaling her personal beliefs and presenting them on behalf of a larger group. Interestingly, Clark also seems to be targeting the piece to, at least, two distinct audiences: feminists and lesbians. To the former, Clarke is interested in challenging their narrow and exclusionary framework, pushing towards an intersectional analysis, and to the latter, there seems to be a call to more political engagement.

Similar to Clarke's "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," The Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement" provides a focused, intersectional perspective, but in this case its politics is anchored in Black feminist experience(s). Of note is the choice of "statement" to describe the piece, a label noticeably not a genre designation. The group describes their own political position as being "committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (210). Further, they present their politics as directly tied to their identity and experience: "Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face" (210). Once again there is movement between the authors and the people they are writing on behalf of and the people they are writing to. As a collaboratively produced document, the text certainly stands as a reflection of the group members, but it also attempts to speak for Black feminists and speak to non-black feminists and Black people who are not feminist.

Although more formal than many of the other *Bridge* entries, Mitsuye Yamada's contributions to *Bridge* are less formal than Alarcón's and more personal than either Clarke's or the Combahee River Collective's. Yamada has two essays included in *Bridge*: "Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman" and "Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism." For each, the titles provide clear cues regarding scope and style.

"Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman" is Yamada's first piece in *Bridge,* and it previously appeared in the journal *Bridge: An Asian American Perspective.* The editors place it in the "Theory in the Flesh" section, and like many of the other texts included in that section, it makes use of personal and professional experiences to elucidate larger conditions, specifically invisibility as an Asian American woman. Yamada anchors her analysis in the opening anecdote, set in her ethnic American literature course where white students were offended by the perceived militancy of Asian American writers (despite their not having been bothered by their reading of African American, Chicano, or Native American authors) largely because the students felt blindsided by the anger the Asian American writers expressed: "It made me angry. *Their* anger made *me* anger, because I didn't even know the Asian Americans felt oppressed. I didn't expect their anger" (35). In the piece, the student's words are almost epiphanic for Yamada who sees in her students' responses explanation for reactions she was receiving at the time from colleagues and supervisors while she pursued a grievance process. Like her students' shocked response, her co-workers seemed stunned she would pursue her claim because such action contradicted their stereotypical expectations of Asian femininity.

Had different writing choices been made, Yamada's closing line— "Invisibility is not a natural state for anyone" could have easily been the thesis for an argument-driven essay (40). It could have worked along the lines of Clarke's essay, but instead of arguing a positive definition of lesbianism, Yamada would be refuting Asian American, especially female, invisibility. In fact, in another collection, a piece organized in a theory section about Asian invisibility might be expected to be highly abstract. Instead the nature of the text, as advertised in the title, is highly self-reflective. With a confessional style, Yamada writes of her dawning awareness of how her own complicity with stereotypes contributed to her invisibility, weaving the narratives together in such a way that she allows the reader to journey with her as she encounters how her behaviors she had thought of as "passive resistance" were in fact "so passive no one noticed I was resisting; it was so much my expected role that it ultimately rendered me invisible" (36).

Yamada's essay is an intensely personal one. Even as she starts with experiences of professional invisibility, Yamada traces the roots of her complicity to her own choices and childhood. Yamada describes her life as follows:

> For the past eleven years I have busied myself with the usual chores of an English teacher, a wife of a research chemist, and a mother of four rapidly growing children. I haven't even do much to shatter this particular stereotype: the middle class woman happy to be bring home the extra income and quietly fitting to the man's world of work…The seemingly apolitical middle class woman and the apolitical Asian woman constituted a double invisibility. (37)

In looking back at her life of cultivated invisibility, which she describes as "an underground culture of survival," Yamada at nearly fifty years of age emerges from "a long conditioning process" (38). In terms of genre, this piece could be considered along the lines of other feminist consciousness-raising narratives, where a woman tells the story of her own coming to consciousness. However, as befits a consciousness-raising narrative in *Bridge*, it is not merely her dawning awareness of gender oppression but her experiences of invisibility as an Asian American woman that is the focus. Rather than an abstract theoretical explanation, Yamada shares her story so readers might recognize a bit of their own story because as she writes in the closing section, "To finally recognize our own invisibility is to finally be on the path toward visibility" (40).

Yamada's second *Bridge* essay "Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism" continues in the personal vein of her previous essay but is less self-reflective. Yamada's essay, aptly placed in *Bridge*'s third section focused on racism in the women's movement, uses her own experiences as well as experiences of other Asian American women to tell the larger story of the dynamics between white and Asian American women. Yamada's efforts to weave her own voice and experiences to reflect larger community experiences is seen throughout the essay when she moves in and out of a collective "we" voice and her individual voice. This play of representational voice is present from the first paragraph, which opens, "Most of the Asian Pacific American women I know agree that we need to make ourselves more visible by speaking out on conditions of our sex and race and on certain political issues which concern us" (71). Here Yamada appears to connect her previous discussion of Asian American women's invisibility. Yet, in this process towards greater visibility, Yamada calls out white women, who make up the leadership of feminist circles and organizations, as the part of the obstacles to be overcome:

> Some of us feel that visibility though the feminist perspective is the only logical step for us. However, this path is fraught with problems which we are unable to solve among us, because in order to do so, we need the help and cooperation of the white feminist leaders, the women who coordinate programs, direct women's buildings, and edit women's publications. (71)

While in both essays Yamada draws from her experiences to serve as illustration of larger patterns, the second essay reads as slightly more formal, more controlled in tone. One explanation for the difference between the two essays, might be the difference of audience. Although broad readership can benefit, Yamada's first essay "Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster" seems primarily aimed at other Asian American (and minority) women, whereas "Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism" is aimed to educate white women. The authorial voice in Yamada's first essay is vulnerable and introspective, sharing her journey from unconscious complicity to self-awareness and resistance, in the hopes that if readers relate to Yamada's experience of invisibility might also find her path to visibility instructive. The authorial voice in the second essay, while not cold, is more distant, and when personal stories are used, they are used as evidence of problems within white, mainstream feminism.

Following *Bridge*'s more formal, and perhaps more traditionally academic, essays are the series of personal essays included in *Bridge.* Cherríe Moraga's "La Güera," Barbara Cameron's "Gee, You Don't Seem Like An Indian From The Reservation," Aurora Levins Morales ". . . And Even Fidel Can't Change That!" Barbara Noda's

“Lowriding Through the Women’s Movement,” Gloria Anzaldúa’s “La Prieta,” and Andrea Canaan’s “Brownness” are less formal than the essays discussed above, but no less powerful. They range in topic, length, tone, and purpose, and are spread out through each of *Bridge*’s sections, but each offers powerful, personal narrative. Moraga’s “La Guerra” explores her mix-raced identity and its resulting light-skinned privilege, her experience of gender within her traditional family upbringing, and lesbianism as her entry into understanding oppression. Like Moraga, skin color is also a focus for Anzaldúa and Canaan. In Anzaldúa’s essay, her skin color and childhood health problem are her connection to the spiritual world, and Canaan’s beautiful piece describes her refusal to either vilify white people or leave feminism to the domain of straight, middle-class white women, proclaiming: “The buck stops here as it did with a brown woman in Montgomery, Alabama. *The women’s movement is ours*” (237). Some, like Noda’s “Lowriding” are short reminiscences, recalling a third world women’s group in Watsonville, California back in the seventies and one of the members who had since passed. Others, like Cameron’s “Gee, You Don’t Seem Like An Indian From The Reservation” and Levins Morales’ “. . . And Even Fidel Can’t Change That!” poignantly recount complicated childhood racial dynamics and the adult self coming to terms with her own identity. Even their titles capture the painful words heard (Cameron) or the rousing self-talk, refusing to be limited by one’s past (Levins Morales).

The wide range of essays *Bridge* contains draws attention to the relative unhelpfulness of “essay” as a genre designation with the breadth and variety of works included in the category. Making distinctions between essays becomes the work of descriptors: “formal,” “personal,” or “academic.” But these modifiers seem the realm of rhetorical rather than genre analysis, raising questions of how one designates the essay. Reading these diverse essays reveals the challenge of categorization and the unclear characteristics upon which the genre designation rest.

Cameron’s essay is particularly arresting; in it Cameron recalls her childhood fear and loathing of white people because of the violence she had witnessed and heard discussed in her community, acknowledges her own bias against whites and other people of color, and describes her resistance to the perpetual marginalization she experiences a Native American lesbian. Cameron’s essay is so dynamic and readable that, although one of the longer pieces, it keeps the reader’s attention. The essay is compelling and personal throughout, but it is the final addition of the epilogue that best reflects the distinct power of personal voice and the non-standard choices made by both *Bridge*’s editors and contributors:

> Epilogue. . .
>
> Following writing most of this, I went to visit my home in South Dakota. It was my first visit in eight years. I kept putting off my visit year after year because I could not tolerate the white people there and the ruralness and poverty of the reservation, And because in the with years since I left home, I came out as a lesbian. My visit home was overwhelming. Floods and floods of locked memories broke. I rediscovered myself there in the hills, on the prairies, in the sky, on the road, in the quiet nights, among the stars, listening to the distant yelps of coyotes, walking on Lakota earth, seeing Bear Butte, looking at my grandparents’ cragged faces, standing under wakiyan, smelling the Paha Sapa (Black Hills), and being with my precious circle of relatives. (52)

Cameron continues:

> My sense of time changed, my manner of speaking changed, and a certain freedom with myself returned.
>
> I was sad to leave but recognized that a significant part of myself has never left and never will. And that part is what gives me strength - the strength of

> my people's enduring history and continuing belief in the sovereignty of our lives. (52)

What becomes abundantly clear when canvassing *Bridge*'s essays is that more informal writing style is not indicative of less rigorous thought or less capable writing. Far from it. Even if very few pieces are argument-driven, the author's voice and perspective comes across clearly, and the lack of traditional research is replaced by the knowledge of personal and communal experience.

In the group of essays discussed, it becomes clear the genre category "essay" is broad and flexible. Additionally, when looking at the essays together, the focus on form allows for greater comparative analysis and reveals nuances of each piece. The range of styles, from academic, thesis-driven essays with citations all the way to personal reflection essays are present in *Bridge*. Even two pieces by the same author on closely related topics take on different tone given the project and intended audience. While *Bridge* may not be transgressing essay conventions (especially given that the form is itself quite loose in its contours, allowing the genre to contain most transgression), it is transgressing traditional academic anthologies in its inclusion of more personal pieces.

On the whole, the prose pieces in *Bridge* span the gamut. If put on a continuum, Alarcón's would be the most formal and analytical. Clarke's work proffers a focused argument with a handful of citations, and The Combahee River Collective provides a carefully crafted statement of values and political perspectives. Yamada's work provides personal experience to make larger observations regarding communal dynamics. *Bridge*'s additional prose pieces also range from academic genres to more informal genres such as letters. There are two conference talks included in *Bridge*: Pat Parker's "Revolution: It's

Not Neat or Pretty or Quick" given at BASTA conference in Oakland, California in August 1980 and Audre Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House" presented at "The Personal and the Political" panel for the 1979 Second Sex Conference. Interestingly, neither piece fits the expectation of an academic conference paper. They are conversational rather than research-heavy. Instead, Parker and Lorde take the opportunity to share their expertise and challenge their audience. Lorde's now famous piece begins a stinging indictment of the particular academic situation:

> I stand here as a black lesbian feminist, having been invited to comment within the only panel at this conference where the input of black feminists and lesbians is represented. What this says about the vision of this conference is sad, in a country where racism, sexism and homophobia are inseparable. To read this program is to assume that lesbian and black women have nothing to say of existentialism, the erotic, women's culture and silence, developing feminist theory, or heterosexuality and power. (98)

Lorde additionally challenges the work being asked of third world women to serve as educators for privileged women, a sentiment echoed throughout *Bridge*.

Lorde's second piece in *Bridge* is a letter, which is the third most common genre in the collection after the poem and essay. Although "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" was first published in 1980 in *Top Ranking: A Collection of Articles on Racism and Classism in the Lesbian Community,* the now widely recirculated text was first introduced to broad readership in *Bridge*. The personal correspondence of the letter form is made public in the open letter, and given it is from one academic to another about Mary Daly's book *Gyn/Ecology*, it is perhaps unsurprising the piece is less casual and more rhetorically honed than the average personal letter. At times a stinging rebuke to both Daly and the myopic academic practices of white feminists who overlook and/or misrepresent non-white perspective, "An Open Letter" reflects the discontent echoed in many of the other *Bridge* entries.

Although perhaps differently than Lorde's, all of the letters in *Bridge* might reasonably be considered open letters, given that they are written with a readership in mind broader than the addressee. Despite the absence of salutations or closing signature which are the recognizable genre features of the letter, Judith Moschkovich's "— But I Know You, American Women" shares more in common with Lorde's open letter than the essays in *Bridge*. Moschkovich's piece is written in response to a letter "which appeared in a women's newspaper with national distribution" and "reflected the blatant ignorance most Anglo-American women have of Latin cultures (79)." Directed, according to Moschkovich, "to all women of the dominant American culture, " the letter challenges the general ignorance of many regarding Latin history and culture as well as the tendency of white feminists to presume greater sexism and oppression in Latin culture.

The remaining six letters included in *Bridge,* although written with the knowledge of publication, retain a sense of intimacy that Lorde's and Moschkovich's do not. Merle Woo's "Letter to Ma" is an especially poignant exploration of complicated mother/daughter dynamics—the strain of a self-described "Yellow Feminist" coming to terms with her mother's traumatic background and transmission of toxic ideology. The intimacy and tragedy of the opening lines signal the powerful emotional transparency with which Woo writes:

> Dear Ma, January, 1980
> I was depressed over Christmas, and when New Year's rolled around, do you

> know what one of my resolves was? Not to come by and see you as much anymore. I had to ask myself why I get so down when I'm with you, my mother, who has focused so much of her life on me, who has endured so much: one who I am proud of and respect so deeply for surviving. (140)

Woo documents the perpetual miss between the herself and her mother, the way her mother does not, and perhaps cannot, understand her actions and beliefs, and the painful chasm. With an almost painful honesty, Woo explains herself to her mother and pleads to be understood: "I desperately want you to understand me and my work, Ma, to know what I am doing!" (141). Whether Woo's mother ever read the letter is unclear, but what is clear is Woo's use of the genre allows her a very personal mode of self-expression and creates a sense of intimacy for the reader.

Both editors and contributors to *Bridge* avoid the elevated distance of common academic genres and instead either choose less formal genres or adapt existing forms to fit their need for meaningful and authentic connection. In addition to Lorde, Moschkovich, and Woo, *Bridge* has letters from Mirtha Quintanales, Naomi Littlebear, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Nellie Wong. Quintanales, in fact, has two letters in *Bridge*, which provides a unique opportunity to examine stylistic differences within the same genre by a single author. Her first piece "I Come with No Illusions" is far more casual, as is visible from the address to "Querida Chabela (Isabel Yrigoyen)." It reads as an introspective, meandering letter, almost like a journal entry because of how internally focused it is. In terms of its content, it is also quite intimate. Quintanales writes of her difficult decision to end a relationship with a working-class, white woman. Although the decision is prompted by a career-oriented move, Quintanales is candid about the deeper reasons for the changes she is pursuing: "What does it mean to say to myself that only other Latina, bicultural lesbian women can satisfy my needs? What are the implications of separating myself from American women and creating a separate community with women I identify as my counterparts?" (149). Questions populate the entire piece as do the wide-range of emotions: grief, guilt, worry, and hope. The self-examination and thoughts of the future show up in the repeated questions which seem to be directed as much to herself as to her friend. Quintanales opens her second and third paragraph with such musings: ". . .What lies ahead? A mystery," and "Setting myself up? Closing up, putting up barriers? Perhaps. Perhaps just trying to be 'my own woman'" (148). The questioning and uncertainty expressed in the letter to her friend is accessible and effecting to the reader, creating an intimacy between strangers across time a space.

At the heart of Quintanales' letter is her relationships with women—the pain of ending a relationship with a non-white woman, who although white, "has no more privileges than I do. As Alone as I am. She is not my enemy. World upside down" (148). But it is not merely the decision to end one relationship but to confront the reasons for and resulting complications of choosing to be involved with other Latinas. Although she describes the decision as failure ("Failure to adjust, adapt, change, transcend cultural differences"); she sees the proliferation of ethnic minority enclaves as a similar failure, the necessary survival strategy given the "context of power imbalance between 'natives' and 'foreigners'" (149). The letter is breathtaking in its honesty, and the choice of genre fits the incredibly personal nature of her subject matter. The transparency with which Quintanales allows readers to glimpse her pain and doubt creates for even more admiration for her choice to live out her politics, to choose to invest all her "energies into creating a community with my Latina sisters" (149). This letter perfectly illustrates *Bridge*'s performance and expansion of the feminist creed "The personal is political." Quintanales is writing about a deeply personal choice regarding who she will love, and that choice is also a political one. Further, the focus on genre helps elucidate that not only is the personal political, but the deployment of genre in the communication of the personal is also political.

Quintanales' second letter "I Paid Very Hard for My Immigrant Ignorance" immediately follows her first letter and performs more of the traditional dialogic qualities expected for the genre. It is addressed, "Dear Barbara (Smith)," and seems to be in response to an earlier letter from Smith. The letter gives the impression of warm colleagues if not close friends, with Quintanales recounting how she took readings from Smith (written by black lesbian/feminist women) to a San Francisco group of "Latina lesbian/feminist sisters" and commenting on how much the readings spoke to their own experience (150). After the opening exchange of pleasantries, however, the letter shifts focus to the complications of group identity—who is and is not included in designations of "Third World women" and "women of color." Quintanales relates an experience of organizing a roundtable for the National Women's Studies Association on the topic of US "racial and ethnic minority lesbians" with a Greek female colleague and a Black woman. Although somewhat vague, Quintanales suggests there were tensions as well as there having been a history of rejection from white women and women of color experienced by her Greek feminist colleague. What follows is a rather long exploration (the total letter is almost six and a half pages) of the complicated dynamics of identity politics. Quintanales uses her own background, as a Cuban thoroughly understanding Third World contexts as well as her light-skinned privilege and almost middle-class upbringing with nannies, horseback riding, dance lessons and the like. She points out the fact that many women of color feminists are attaining education and working into middle or upper class lifestyles, and even the poorest in an American context are far better off than those in poverty around the globe. Uncharitably, one might read Quintanales' desire for "*all* the sisters of the world - to form a common, human-woman-lesbian bond" as the familiar call to feminist sisterhood that ignores differences between women, an interpretation perhaps ironically supported by Quintanales' signing off her letter "In sisterhood" (156). However, Quintanales' position as a newcomer to US race relations provides necessary perspective, challenging women of color to be aware of their own privilege and tendencies to replicate the exclusions they have been subject to. As Quintanales writes in the closing paragraph of her letter: "The fucking irony of it! Racism. It has so thoroughly poisoned Americans of all colors that many of s can simply not see beyond it" (156). Although both Quintanales pieces are the same genre, they are noticeably different. With questioning and critique manifesting as greater distance between author and receiver, but still more close in tone than texts in *Bridge* written to white women.

One of the most unconventional letters in *Bridge* is Naomi Littlebear's "Earth-Lover, Survivor, Musician." From a genre perspective, it is not particularly unusual. In fact, it conforms to letter conventions pretty consistently. It is more casual than the other letters, occasionally forgoing capitalization rules or making frequent use of interrupting phrases; however, these are largely stylistic choices, with the latter reflecting speech patters, rather than genre transgressions. What is important to note about Littlebear's piece is how it reflects editorial choices. Littlebear's letter, which is actually addressed to Cherríe Moraga, is preceded by the following sentence: "The following is an excerpt from a letter in response to Cherrie's request that Naomi write an essay on "'language & oppression' as a Chicana" (157). Moraga includes Littlebear's letter explaining why she cannot write on the topic Moraga suggested, how although the topic coincided with a book project she had just completed, the work came at from a place of pain. According to Littlebear, her writing that would fit Moraga's request was from an emotional place she had left behind: "my criticism, analysis, etc. did not come from a natural place in me. It was not the 'voice of my mothers' nor did it completely reflect the way i was brought up to be" (157). For Littlebear, "music and beauty are my tools" and her courageously honest appeal to Moraga for acceptance— "I want you to accept me as i accept you. Be an amiga, not a comrade to me"—is immediately followed by her offer to "send you more words if you like but right now the hurt's all around me and i feel like flying away. I will fight back with music, but don't ask me to fight with words" (158). Littlebear's letter is important for this analysis because of the glimpse behind the scenes it gives us into editorial (and genre) decisions. Moraga's decision to run a piece different in topic from what she had requested is notable, but it is her decision to run the letter rather than a new essay on a different topic that is most important. It is consistent with the editors' prioritizing the accessibility and authenticity of the message.

Gloria Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers" and Nellie Wong's "In Search of the Self as Hero: Confetti of Voices on New

Year's Night, A Letter to Myself" both appear in *Bridge*'s fifth section, the section focused on Third World women as writers. The introspective qualities of the genre glimpsed in Woo and Quintanales is even more pronounced in Wong's piece. She uses the letter to capture the swirling voices of self-doubt and then reject any such hesitancy. Throughout the piece, there are a series of "Who are you?" refrains—"Who are you who has written a book of poems, who has stored away over ten years of fiction, poems and prose? Who are you who describes herself as an Asian American Feminist, who works and writes toward that identity, that affinity, that necessary self-affirming love?"—yet Wong's response to those self-doubts is a refusal to retreat: "You know there is no retreat now, no avoiding the confrontations, the debates and disagreements" (177, 178). As the letter progresses, the voices of doubt shift to more positive voices, with the final paragraphs a crescendo of self-affirmation:

> Now you are strengthened, encouraged by the range of your own experiences as a writer, a feminist, an organizer, a secretary. Now you are fired by your own needs, by the needs of your sisters and brothers in the social world, by your journey towards solidarity, against tyranny in the workplace, on the streets, in our literature and in our homes. You are fueled by the clarity of your own sight, heated by your own energy to assert yourselves as a human being, a writer, a woman, an Asian American, a feminist, a clerical worker, a student, a teacher, not in loneliness and isolation, but in a community of freedom fighters…. And you will not stop working and writing because you care, because you refuse to give up, because you won't submit to the forces that will silence you… (180, 181)

Wong's piece makes some of her most private thoughts, her doubts and uncertainty, visible for her readers, and in so doing demystifies common writerly insecurities for her readers. Further, Wong's progression to a confident writer/activist exorcized of her self-doubts serves as a model for writers.

In much the same way as Wong's letter, Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues: A

Letter to Third World Women Writers" addresses the challenges common to women of color writers. Of all the letters in *Bridge*, however, Anzaldúa's is the only one to call attention to itself as a genre. In fact, although Anzaldúa titles the piece a letter and discusses why she chose letter form, the piece deviates from traditional letter form. Anzaldúa's letter pulls in material from other authors and multiple genres, ultimately blending the interpersonal closeness of a letter with the essay (most visible in her use of source material, ranging from quotes to poems, and endnotes). The piece itself is rather long, totaling nearly nine pages and is a composite of three different dated entries: "21 mayo 80," "24 mayo 80," and "26 mayo 80." In addition to the main content of the letter, Anzaldúa includes excerpts from her own journal entries, two poems from Moraga, quotes from Alice Walker, Naomi Littlebear, Cherríe Moraga, Nellie Wong and Kathy Kendall.

While the substance of Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues" is powerful and worthy of further consideration, what is most relevant for this chapter is Anzaldúa's explanation for her genre choices. In the second paragraph, Anzaldúa describes the difficulty of writing the piece and its morphing from a poem, then essay, to a letter: "It is not easy writing this letter. It began as a poem, a long poem. I tried to turn it into an essay but the result was wooden, cold. I have not yet unlearned the esoteric bullshit and pseudo-intellectualizing that school brainwashed into my writing" (165). After leaving behind the essay form (although some its qualities are still present in the final piece) Anzaldúa makes the genre choice of letter for specific reasons: "How to begin again. How to approximate the intimacy and immediacy I want. What form? A letter, of course" (165).

Like the other letter writers in *Bridge*, Anzaldúa values the "intimacy and immediacy" of the genre, especially in contrast to academic forms which she finds constraining. It is clear the deployment of genres are crucial choices and are not purely about aesthetics but are always also about politics. Interestingly, the final sections of Anzaldúa's letter are filled with bodily metaphors for writing, a theme seeming to echo Moraga's notion of "theory in the flesh," a kind of embodied writing that is grounded in the lived experience and material conditions of women of color. Anzaldúa instructs her readers whom she addresses as "Dear mujeres de color, companions in writing" as follows:

> Throw away abstraction and the academic learning the rules, the map and compass. Feel your way without blinders. To touch more people, the personal realities and the social must be evoked - not through rhetoric but through blood and pus and sweat.
>
> *Write with your eyes like painters, with your ears like musicians, with your feet like dancers. You are the truth sayer will quill and torch. Write with your tongues of fire. Don't let the pen banish you from yourself. Don't let the ink coagulate in your pens. Don't let the censor snuff out the spark, nor the gags muffle your voice. Put your shit on the paper*. (165, 173 emphasis in original)

Anzaldúa's essay gets as close to an acknowledgement from *Bridge*'s editors as to their philosophy of writing—the conscious decisions to resist standard academic genres, or genre conventions broadly, in order to prioritize the accessibility of the message and its groundedness in reality. The title image and bodily metaphor of non-white women's backs as bridge is connected to form. The "how" of *Bridge* writing is inextricable from the "what."

Somewhere along the genre continuum of essay and letter sits doris davenport's "The Pathology of Racism: A Conversation with Third World Wimmin." In many ways, davenport's piece reads like an essay, albeit not a formal academic essay despite its one footnote. It does not have the opening or closing salutations or the time stamp of the letter form, but davenport's titling it a conversation and her repeated use of first person in reference to "we, third world wimmin" evokes the dialogic qualities of the letter. davenport also refers to her piece as an article: "In this article, which I conceive of as a conversation with third world wimmin, I want to explore the whys [of white women's racism]" (86). These varied descriptions— "article" and "conversation"—highlight the looseness of genre categories, or perhaps, the efforts to skirt strict genre requirements by evoking recognizable categories without the same genre strictness. The text raises the questions of what marks the difference of an article conceived of as a conversation different from an essay or letter. The lines of demarcation become less visible, but what is consistent in *Bridge* is the emphasis on the pieces functioning as a kind of conversation with its readers. *Bridge*'s editors and contributors have made choices that are not merely stylistic but are also political because genre, as has been argued throughout this project, is not neutral.

The conversational quality found in the letters and essays is perhaps best exemplified in *Bridge*'s two interview transcripts. The first, "Across the Kitchen Table: A Sister-to-sister Dialogue" records responses to a series of questions posed by the editors by sisters and well-known activists and authors Barbara and Beverly Smith. In their short introduction, signed "The Editors," Moraga and Anzaldúa describe their questions a "regarding their experiences as Black feminists in the Women's Movement" (113). The title reference to a kitchen table conversation captures the quality of their dialogue, which ranges from jokes and lighthearted teasing to serious discussion of black women's vulnerability to physical violence in the past and present.

The second interview transcript Anzaldúa's "O.K. Momma, Who the Hell Am I?: an Interview with Luisah Teish," has a similar warmth to the Smith sisters' chat, but in this case is not due to a sisterly bond but to a connection between two deeply spiritual women. Anzaldúa and Teish discuss goddess energy, feminist spirituality, and the spiritual needs for women of color, topics rare in mainstream feminist or academic collections. When feminists such as Mary Daley do put forth a study of feminist spirituality and goodness worship, it is still largely from a Eurocentric perspective, whereas Anzaldúa references pre-Colombian beliefs and Teish references African goddess deities. Further, even as the discussion is on the spiritual, there is a groundedness in material conditions common to women of color perspectives, with Teish and Anzaldúa at one point discussing charms for "two women who find themselves in dire, dire poverty" (225). Rather than a formal essay on doctrine or analytic essay challenging the patriarchal nature of world religions, *Bridge* includes a lively conversation between two women who talk about the spiritual world with as much comfort as they do the physical world. The format captures and reflects not only the kind of rapport between the two women but the kind of spiritual connection to the divine. Formality, abstraction, and distance would be out of place with a woman who repeatedly uses the phrase "OK momma" when talking to her god(s).

The final prose pieces in *Bridge* are noteworthy because they do not fit easily into a genre category. Anita Valerio's "It's In My Blood, My Face - My Mother's Voice, The Way I Sweat" is a mixture of memories, musings, and spiritual visions. The piece most closely resembles an essay given its recognizable paragraphs, but it is not linear nor logically organized. At the core of the piece is Valerio's working through what it means to be "half blood Indian and half Chicana," and she does that through impressions, voices, or memories that seem to spark further contemplation (42). Both Valerio's and Naomi Littlebear's aptly named "Dreams of Violence" are impressionistic and fragmented, texts broken up into separate sections. Sections in Valerio's piece are marked by headings in bold type face which are lines pulled from the section, sometimes phrases from others or from Valerio. Littlebear's text reads as a frame narrative, with opening and closing narration set in the present and two sections marked by roman numerals that read as traumatic flashbacks. Littlebear writes, "I was awakened by the sound of school children screaming at each other" and proceeds with traumatic flashbacks of being beaten by other school children and then going home to being beaten by her grandmother who sees the blood and dirtied clothes and violently punishes her (16). This short, not quite two-page, piece reads like a brief moment in the present being intruded on by past trauma. The closing description reveals the narrator waking up next to her lover and "wondering how we can blend our two worlds. How to mend the holes in our pasts, walk away bravely from the nightmares" (17). Without argument or didactic narration, the piece is powerful and provocative.

The sheer volume of personal essays, letters, and interviews helps to create the intimacy of the reading experience. Additionally, the poems refuse the kind of abstraction and distancing qualities so popular in modernist and postmodernist poetry, instead insisting on direct speech. Many of *Bridge*'s contributors crossing the multiple genres resist the distancing style of standard academic writing. Whether in the letters, essays, conversations and interviews, or conference talks, the editorial choices consistently value both the voices of women of color as well as the importance of building relationships within and across communities. The inclusion of broad and diverse texts reflects the unlimited vision of Moraga and Anzaldúa as well as the boundless innovation of *Bridge*'s contributors.

One final piece in *Bridge*, hattie gosset's "who told you anybody wants to hear from you? you ain't nothing but a black woman!" captures the transgressive and innovative quality of *Bridge,* both in content and form. At both authorial and editorial level, genre rules are defied and brilliantly reimagined. The piece was originally written as the introduction to gossett's own book, but it follows none of the standard conventions even as it powerfully highlights the challenges black women writers, and women of color writers more broadly, face. With refreshing honesty and straightforwardness, gosset opens with the following: "first of all let me say that it is really a drag to have to write the introduction to your own book" (175). gossett refuses formality or pretension and instead complains about having to write the introduction:

> i mean! after i went through everything i had to go through to write this whole book (and believe me i had to go through a lot) now thats not enough. i have to do more. what more can i say…. now the editors are telling me that i have to tell you more. well. sigh. if i have to. sigh, sigh. but i just want you to now from the beginning that i don't like this part of the deal at all (175)

The almost humorously disgruntled tone is paired with an honesty that is disarming. Not only does gossett admit to not wanting to write the introduction, but she describes her reasons—being busy with other revisions and editing she has to do, but most powerfully, writes “but the main thing i want to be doing now is getting through this nervous breakdown of the crisis of confidence variety” (175). Between the long process of writing the book (nearly fifteen years) and self-doubt that emerged close to its completion, gossett pens the self-doubt she experiences: “you are finally about to get there and then suddenly you start doubting yourself and saying things to yourself like who the fuck do you think you are to be writing a book? i mean who do you think you are” (175). For gosset, writing the introduction delays her “getting my nervous breakdown over with so I can move on” even as she recognizes the doubt as “a trap laid out in the patripower days of long ago to keep me/us from doing what we know got to e done” (176). gosset seems to lament an introduction that, if written by someone else, would “be a sensitive loving understanding piece of writing that would tell you what you need to know…so that you can get the most out of it. but no cant even do that. i got to sit here and write this introduction myself ” (176). gossett’s introduction, here serving as a stand alone essay, resists genre conventions in both textual contexts while also making a larger social critique. gossett’s seemingly irreverent introduction exposes how genre tradition assumes and privileges a different writer with vastly different life circumstances.

While gossett’s introduction is certainly unorthodox, the choice of *Bridge*’s editors to include gossett’s introduction, rather than any of the pieces from the book she introduces, is also unconventional. However, it is convention, specifically genre conventions, that are restrictive and need to be resisted. gossett’s honest disclosure is more helpful to readers than the “sensitive loving understanding” piece literary norms would demand she write. Similarly, the selection of an introduction for a different book to be included in *Bridge* not functioning as an introduction but as part of the section on Third World Women as writers reveals the kind of innovative thinking Moraga and Anzaldúa bring to *Bridge*.

The disruption of convention continues even after the official close of *Bridge*. Moraga provides an extensive bibliography as well as a list of small presses, clearly working to provide further resources for *Bridge* reader. But it is in the contributors' biography section where standard professional biographies sit alongside details about plans to raise sheep or confessions about sometimes getting "sick and tired of trying to be a grown-up lesbian feminist which is why I still maintain cordial relationships with my teddy-bears" (249-250). There is a playfulness and joy that survives amidst the difficult experiences and subjects.

Loving in the War Years

In this final section, I want to turn to Moraga's first solo book-length endeavor *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó port sus labios* for the final exploration of genre. While this chapter examines only the earliest parts of Moraga's writing career, with so much still needing to be studied, *Loving* along with *Mango Street* and *Borderlands* have an important place in Chicana literary history, are crucial to the literary flourishing of the era, and have influenced much that came after. As Moraga's work in *Bridge* illustrates, the choice of genre in a text (or collection of texts) is not only important but central to the project. With *Loving*, Moraga turns her attention from compiling other authors' works to her own writings from a more than ten-year period.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, scholarship on Moraga's works is shaped, perhaps even more than most, by genre. Moraga's career which demonstrates genre innovation and broad capacity across multiple genres is met by scholarship that is largely bound in traditional thinking. *Bridge*, a project originally conceived of by Anzaldúa but shaped to a large degree by Moraga, has received little to no substantive analysis. While widely recognized as a crucial text in the emergence of Third World and woman of color feminism, very little attention has been paid to the text itself and what scholarship that does exist is focused on *Bridge*'s publishing history, with the exception of Franklin's work on multi-genre anthologies.

This chapter has attempted to correct some of the oversight of minimal *Bridge* scholarship by focusing on its innovation to the anthology genre as well as provide close readings of entries which in their deployment and/or transgression of traditional genre rules call into question the very system of genre itself. Given the relevant absence of scholarship or focus on the textual elements, it was important to provide a close analysis of genre functions in the texts comprising *Bridge*. This final portion looks to read the genre-related trends in *Loving* scholarship: focusing on the perhaps latent effects of genre logic on literary analysis as well as the methodologies employed for the most insightful genre analysis of *Loving*.

To be clear, one existing limitation of Moraga scholarship is its segregation into genres and fields, with much of the literary scholars focusing primarily on her prose pieces and theater scholars focusing on her plays. Moraga's work requires an attentiveness to genre, and the scholarship on her body of work illustrates the challenge of responding to cross-genre work, straining the disciplinary knowledge and fields of expertise. When academics do approach a text outside of their areas of expertise, for example a literary scholar working on one of Moraga's plays, the tendency is to treat it as a text rather than a performance. If on the rare occasion scholars do mix genres in their analysis, the focus is often on shared thematic elements with genre receiving little notice. Unfortunately, the parameters of this project, the focus on the early and influential works of Anzaldúa, Cisneros and Moraga, do not allow for correction of this trend. Further, my own disciplinary limitations would necessitate further research of theater studies and performance theory before being able to fully engage in a responsible discussion of genre in all of Moraga's works. However, there is need to do just that—to examine Anzaldúa's entire body of work from the perspective of genre, in order to fully capture her innovation.

Genre shapes all readings, but the impact on *Loving* (and broader Moraga scholarship) is especially pronounced. In canvassing the existing scholarship on *Loving*, it becomes clear that genre has a profound, if not always obvious, role in the analysis. *Loving* scholarship tends to be comparative, with scholars reading *Loving* alongside other texts and sometimes paired with texts by other authors or texts (of perceived similar genre) by Moraga. In one of the earliest pieces of scholarship on "U.S. Latina Autobiography," Lourdes Torres reads Moraga's *Loving* along with Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and *Getting Home Alive,* penned by the mother-daughter team of Rosario Morales and Aurora Levins Morales. Leslie Bow examines *Loving* in light of Cixous and Irigaray's theories of *écriture féminine,* Kate Adams looks at *Loving* with Anzaldúa's

Borderlands and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*, Maria Szadziuk innovatively combines Esmeralda Santiago's *When I was Puerto Rican* and Cisneros *Mango Street* with Moraga's *Loving,* Rosetta Haynes pairs Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior* with *Loving* for her analysis, Elisa Garza analyzes *Loving* and Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* (Anzaldúa's concepts often are pulled in to explain Moraga's writings even when *Borderlands* is not an official focus in a piece), and Esther Sánchez-Pardo González works with a set of pairs: Moraga's *Loving* and *Last Generation* and Castillo's *Mixquiahuala Letters* and *Sapogonia.* In 2004 two separate pieces emerged: Héctor Calderón's "'Making *Familia* from Scratch': Cherríe L. Moraga's Self-Portraits" and Lisa Tatonetti's "'A Kind of Queer Balance': Cherríe Moraga's Aztlán." Both pieces approach Moraga's *Loving* as part of her trilogy of personal writings, which also includes *The Last Generation,* published a decade after *Loving,* and the 1997 *Waiting in the Wings: Portrait of Queer Motherhood.* The vast majority of the existing *Loving* scholarship takes this approach, and while comparative readings are certainly not uncommon in general, the prevalence of this type of analytic approach towards this text is noteworthy. In fact, the tendency toward comparative analysis should be understood as a result of ingrained genre logic. Before genre was an unconsidered categorizing schema, it was the first form of literary analysis. The move to compare is a move to categorize, and the majority of these comparisons are rooted in the assumption of shared qualities. The tendency to read *Loving* in light of other texts is more common because of the scholars' desire to place the text, to understand it and fix it in place.

Many of these comparative readings make their selection of texts based on a reading of *Loving* as autobiography. Calderón's and Tatonetti's works both look at the trilogy of Moraga's *Loving, Last Generation,* and *Waiting*, from the perspective that when taken together they reflect a fuller picture of Moraga's beliefs and experiences. Calderón, who refers to the three texts as Moraga's self-portraits (the use of art metaphors to provide descriptions less binding than genre designations was discussed in the previous chapter), focuses the majority of the chapter on *Loving* because he contends it is Moraga's "intellectual autobiography, a self-analysis, as well as a critique of male and female relations within Mexican culture" (114). Tatonetti's article, published the same year as Calderón's chapter also focuses on the trilogy of Moraga's personal writings; however, while Calderón spent the majority of his time focusing on *Loving*, reading it as the establishment of Moraga's intellectual project, Tatonetti apportions her time roughly evenly through the three texts, reading the three as a progression of understanding racial and sexual identity (with *Waiting* representing a culmination of Moraga's understanding in queer motherhood). Tatonetti's analysis focuses less on the formal aspects of Moraga's work, nevertheless, she anchors her analysis with a genre designation when she argues in her thesis: "When considered together, Moraga's three works of autobiographic fiction present a rubric in which queerness can be used to productively reconfigure both multiethnic and sexual subjectivities" (229). Although explanation for her designation of "autobiographic fiction" is not provided, it is clear genre is an organizing framework for Tatonetti's piece.

The comparative inclination, although I believe a remnant of genre logic, does not guarantee a rigorous genre analysis. In fact, genre designations and categorizations are at times taken for granted and loosely deployed. Maria Szadziuk's "Culture as Transition: Becoming a Woman in Bi-ethnic Space" provides an original take on *Loving*, in her exploration of three autobiographies by Chicana women of different generations of immigration: Esmeralda Santiago's *When I was Puerto Rican,* Cisneros *Mango Street*, and Moraga *Loving*. For Szadziuk, these texts reflect varying levels of cultural assimilation, with Santiago being first-generation immigrant, Cisneros second-generation and Moraga third-generation; however, categorizing all three texts as autobiography requires the genre designation be loosely defined. While Szadziuk is not alone in treating *Loving* as an autobiography, it is certainly not a traditional autobiography, and *Mango Street* is an even more challenging fit. Although inspired by personal experience (despite coyness admitting whether or not *Mango Street* was autobiographical, Cisneros has publicly acknowledged it started out as an autobiography), it seems like quite a leap for Szadziuk to simply read *Mango Street* as autobiographical without providing any rationale for why it is not a piece of fiction or explaining how she is expanding or applying the genre of autobiography so as to include *Mango Street.*

The overall insights of Szadziuk's piece, that levels of assimilation correlates to literary innovation, are useful and would be no less so without the autobiography designation. The same selection of texts would still be instructive. Nevertheless, it is clear from the following passage Szadziuk is aware of both the formal innovations in *Loving* as well as the connection between genre, dominant ideology, and political resistance:

> As first/second/third generation immigrants, their writing respectively evidences an increasing movement toward non-conformity and protest. The tendency to take a radical stand against the mainstream culture becomes more pronounced with progressive abstraction from the individual's ethnic roots. . . . Increasing

> distance from mainstream literature is also accompanied by increasing freedom of form, and is reflected in the degree of fragmentation in the various texts as well as in the greater variety of means of expression (e.g. the poems that Moraga includes).

While the majority of Szadziuk analysis is focused on the content of her three texts, her observation regarding *Loving*'s "freedom of form" is worth further development and would be strengthened by more rigorous genre analysis.

A few scholars work with *Loving* as part of a larger set of texts, but their focus is on thematic similarities rather than formal ones. Esther Sánchez-Pardo's "The Desire Called Utopia: Re-Imagining Collectivity in Moraga and Castillo" provides an interesting look at Moraga's *Loving* and *Last Generation* and Castillo's *Mixquiahuala Letters* and *Sapogonia* working to "attempt to disentangle the complex web of identity, community, home/land and collective and individual histories in their writing. It also aims to reflect upon the role and the unyielding persistence of utopian thinking today" (95). Despite a brief mention of utopian form, Sánchez-Pardo's piece is relatively unconcerned with formal aspects. Two additional texts, Martha Cutter's "Malinche's Legacy Translation, Betrayal, and Interlingualism in Chicano/a Literature" and Aimee Carillo Rowe's "Vendidas y Devueltas: Queer Times and Color Lines in Chicana/o Performance" pull in Moraga's work as part of a larger discussion of La Malinche. Cutter focuses on Malinche in the works by Sandra Cisneros (in *Woman Hollering Creek*), Nash Candelaria (in *Memories of the Alhambra*), Richard Rodriguez (in *Days of Obligation*), and Cherríe Moraga (in *Loving in the War Years*), offering insight into Malinche's symbolic legacy, the role of translation, and the development of "interlingualism." Carillo Rowe's article provides a narrower look at Malinche as depicted in Moraga's essay from *Loving* "A

Long Line of Vendidas" and her viewing of a performance Luis Valdez's iconic play *Los Vendidos.* Carillo Rowe, who draws on theories of "queer and feminist temporality," locates, "the figure of La Vendida in queer time to underscore the violent heterosexuality of her origin story as one that potentially gives way to temporal trajectories animated by queer and radicalized desire and modes of reproduction that foil linear time" and offers her concept of "La Devuelta" as an alternative to "La Vendida," the figure of Chicana return and empowerment (117). These thematic analyses provide important connection of Malinche across texts, but its avoidance of genre makes impossible any serious exploration of Moraga's innovation.

In regards to genre-related patterns in the Moraga scholarship, there are some interesting similarities to patterns observed in the Cisneros' *Mango Street* scholarship. Autobiography, like *Bildungsroman*, is a well-established genre with significant scholarship dedicated to its theoretical framework and genre characteristics. Additionally, the two genres enjoy broad designation and flexible genre contours, despite the presence of scholars ardently defending narrower, specific genre boundaries. In the case of *Mango Street* scholars tended to apply the designation of *Bildungsroman* without accounting for the other aspects of the texts that did not comport with the traditional genre characteristics. One of the common tendencies that shows up in *Loving* scholarship is the tendency to deemphasize the aspects of *Loving* which transgress traditional autobiography.

Deemphasizing Moraga's transgressive genre tactics does not appear to be the intended goal for scholars but is perhaps a latent consequence. For those who do not acknowledge or address in detail the nonconforming nature, the tendency is to focus more on traditional aspects of the text. As is the case with other multi-genre texts such as *Borderlands* and *Bridge*, scholars focus on prose pieces rather than verse. The tendency to ignore the poetry and less traditional genres included in *Loving*, shows up in scholars' attentiveness to Moraga's "A Long Line of Vendidas." In fact, at some points the scholarship seems to reduce *Loving* to "Vendidas." In terms of the whole project, "A Long Line of Vendidas" is one of two essays included in *Loving*, and is both the longest and final entry included. However, what is most important in terms of genre is that it is the most familiar of forms for scholars, following academic norms of citation and analysis. As mentioned previously, Carrillo Rowe's "Vendidas y Devueltas" article looks at "A Long Line of Vendidas" alongside Valdez's *Los Vendidos*. One of the early pieces of *Loving* scholarship, Nancy Saporta Sternbach's "'A Deep Racial Memory of Love': The Chicana Feminism of Cherríe Moraga" also focuses her attention on "Vendidas," arguing that it (along with the other essay) "contain the essence of Moraga's thinking, incorporating dreams, journal, entries and poetry as part of her testimonial discourse" (51).

"A Long Line of Vendidas" is a rich, provocative essay, and is certainly worthy of critical attention. However, the repeated creation of a synechdochal relationship between "Vendidas" and *Loving*, where scholars analyze the essay as a representation of the larger text, reduces the genre complexity and perhaps reflects the preference of scholars to interact with the text more traditionally academic in nature and more straightforward than some of the other pieces. Elisa Garza's exceptional chapter "Chicana Lesbianism and the

Multigenre Text" also uses "Vendidas" as a stand-in for *Loving* in her exploration of both Moraga's work and Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. Garza's decision to "limit her examination" to "Vendidas" is done for "practical reasons," but defends the choice, writing, "The essay is more than fifty pages long and presents nearly all of the important themes of the book" (201). Garza's piece, to be discussed in further detail, is one of a handful focused on the multi-genre aspects of the text, so she is not selecting "Vendidas" in order to avoid the nonconforming genre qualities. In fact, in her explanation of her choice of "Vendidas," Garza lists the essay's inclusion of dreams, journal, entries, and poems as part of why she felt justified in interacting with the essay as microcosm of *Loving*, with the same themes and techniques as the whole. However, while "Vendidas" is a text with multiple genres, it is not interchangeable with the entirety of *Loving*. It is perhaps the most direct in its argumentation, which is likely why many scholars work with it, but it is only part of *Loving.*

Consistently, in the analysis of *Bridge*, *Loving,* and *Borderlands*, when scholars have the option of multiple genres in a complex text, they default to the prose, to the more linear presentation of arguments and ideas. Some make their focus on prose explicit, such as Garza who argues the poetry in *Borderlands* and *Loving* are less "powerfully critical in a feminist or cultural sense as the multigenred 'prose,'" albeit they "evoke meaningful images" (206). The relative power of prose and verse is debatable, but it is clear the latter form is treated as supplemental. The genre preference, if not bias, is made clear in Garza's observations regarding the placement of poetry at the end of *Borderlands* and the placement of poetry before the "Vendidas" in *Loving,* with the former serving as illustration of the essays and the latter serving as introduction. Whether placed at the end of *Borderlands* or in the sections preceding the final essay in *Loving*, Garza perceives the poetry as serving the purposes of the prose. For most scholars, however, the decision to focus on prose is never explained or even acknowledged, leaving the inattention to poetry as its own signal as to the relative worth of rigorously analyzing poetry.

One of the few, and delightfully innovative, texts to resist this prose-focused trend and explore the poetry in *Loving* is Kate Adams' chapter "Northamerican Silences: History, Identity, and Witness in the Poetry of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, And Leslie Marmon Silko." Whereas the majority of scholars tend to approach these works as primarily prose with other genres included within, Adams reads them as innovative poetry collections that push "the traditional boundaries of the genre" (131). For Adams, these texts are not only revolutionary in their politics but also with how they engage readers; they complicate "our understanding of poetry's range and purpose by merging poetry with other literary forms and by bending the genre to serve revisionist literary and cultural agendas" (131). While many recognize the content as revolutionary, Adam's genre approach exposes the revolutionary quality of the form. Adams reads all three texts as being "engaged in building literary forms that can 'overwhelm the dominant' or subvert it, or break the dominant open to diversity, to difference. Particularly all three works present poetry to American readers in novel ways" (131). Reading *Loving*, as with *Borderlands* and *Ceremony*, requires a shift in reading, a new approach to the text and, perhaps, to reading poetry more broadly. As Adams explains, readers are accustomed to encountering poetry either in anthologies or in a slim volume of poetry by a single author with little critical or explanatory guidance:

> Readers of contemporary poetry, then, often read poetry within fairly formulaic, narrow contexts and containers; because of the effected position of poetry among contemporary arts, readers do their reading in an atmosphere free of the kinds of critical apparatus that accompany other cultural products. Novels, movies, plays, even pieces of sculpture or painting are often presented to the public with more evaluative information floating around them than is available for poetry. (132)

These mixed-genre pieces run counter to traditional venues for poetry, with the necessary explicative materials being provided within the broader text. With the weight of the existing *Loving* scholarship prose-focused, Adam's work provides a necessary counterbalance. However, it is notable scholars emphasize one genre over the other without a way to account for the whole as including multiple genres without seeming to grant one genre, either poetry or prose, primacy.

In the remaining section, I want to turn to the strongest genre work scholars have done with *Loving* and explain the shared methodological trends that generate quality analysis as well as highlight the limitations and potential future direction of research. Lourdes Torres' "The Construction of the Self in U.S. Latina Autobiographies," is one of the first pieces to explore *Loving*, alongside *Borderlands* and *Getting Home Alive*, as disrupting traditional autobiographical norms. Torres acknowledges the relative absence of Latina authors in mainstream discussions of literature or autobiography as well as the radical departure of these texts from mainstream modes. According to Torres, "these collections are both revolutionary and subversive at many levels. They challenge traditional notions about the genre of 'autobiography' through their form and their content" (276). Torres builds off feminist analysis of the gendered differences between male and female autobiographies by Estelle Jelinek in "Women's Autobiography and the Male Tradition" who highlights gendered genre differences in content and form, but also points out tendencies towards greater chronological linearity in male autobiographies and greater "fragmented, disjunctive units" in female authored autobiographies (277). Latina autobiography, however, does not merely differ in terms of style due to gender, so Torres places the Latina texts alongside other nonconforming texts by nonwhite female authors Audre Lorde and Maxine Hong Kingston, with their combination of "essays, sketches, short stories, poems, and journal entries" and their refusal to privilege any one genre above the rest (277). For these reasons, Torres describes these collections as "fundamental subversion of mainstream autobiographies' traditions and conventions" (277). In a simple but accurate reading, Torres suggest the fragmented form reflects the author's fragmented identity, or what we would come to recognize after *Borderlands* as the authors' mestiza consciousness. Although Torres analysis tends towards description of content rather than an analysis of form, Torres's works sets the parameters for much of the scholarship that follows. Subsequent scholars build off Torres's insights into the Moraga's transgressive deployment of genre and the interconnectedness of complex identities with complex forms.

Debra Blake's 1997 article, "Unsettling Identities: Transitive Subjectivity in Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years*" published in the *Autobiography Studies* journal, marks a turning point in the genre scholarship on *Loving*. Blake, continuing with the genre assessment began with Torres, applies rigorous genre analysis resulting from the boom in autobiography studies, especially feminist autobiography theory. Unlike some scholars who use the label “autobiography” loosely, Blake and several succeeding her work—Rosetta Haynes, Elisa Garza, and Christina Cloud—bring focused scrutiny on the genre transgressions in *Loving*, taking seriously both the revolutionary form as well as the content.

Blake’s pioneering work shifts the conversation to *Loving*’s genre transgressions as challenging autobiographical genre conventions. Recognizing *Loving* does not fit the traditional rules of autobiography, Blake effectively applies Caren Kaplan’s highly cited concept of “outlaw-genres” (specifically cultural biography and biomythography) to *Loving*. Blake’s work represents some of the best of genre analysis, acknowledging the connection between genre and dominant ideology, anchoring her analysis of *Loving* in the historical trajectory of genre in replicating dominant ideology:

> Over the past 500 years of Western autobiographical tradition, the privilege of the dominant—white, heterosexual, middle and upper class males—has been represented and reinforced. The cultural discourse of autobiography has reproduced not only ideologies of gender, but of race, class, and sexuality which have circumscribed and elided the particular and differing experiences of women of color, poor women and lesbians. (71)

Against this longstanding tradition, *Loving* represents ideological and formal disruption. As Blake highlights, “the transgressive feature of genre-switching, as opposed to a singular prose narrative, is immediately obvious to the reader” and, quoting Nourbese Philip, those disruptions of reading disturb “‘order, systems, and traditions of knowledge’” (qtd. in Blake 73). While scholars had recognized from the start the revolutionary quality of *Loving*, fully grasping the impact of transgressive form requires an understanding of the ideological nature of genre.

In what may appear to be an obvious move, Blake’s placement of *Loving* into a genre category with as much precision as possible is essential for quality genre analysis. While others may apply the label of "autobiography," Blake works to locate *Loving* within the complex genre system from a framework of existing genre theory. She foregrounds the connection between the genre as a purveyor of dominant ideology and attends to the nonconforming aspects of *Loving*. When Moraga's text does not easily fit within the contours of autobiography, Blake turns to Kaplan's work on out-law genres for further help articulating the genre nonconforming aspects. Yet, even in Kaplan's identification of six out-law genres, *Loving* cannot fully be housed, thus Blake determines *Loving* fits somewhere between two of Kaplan's out-law genres: cultural autobiography and biomythography (73).

In addition to Blake's framing *Loving* within the larger context of "the past 500 years of Western autobiographical tradition," she is the first to detail the nonconforming strategies of *Loving*. Methodologically, this move is crucial because it separates research which evokes genre from research which analyzes genre. Blake is performing a specific kind of close reading of *Loving*: a close reading of genre, formal, and narrative strategies. In addition to Moraga's incorporation of multiple genres evidenced in the way the "collection moves between, among, and in and out of forms of poetry, prose, essay, dream sequences, and journal entries and weaves them together on the page and thought the subject matter," which Blake refers to as "genre-switching" (73). Blake also identifies Moraga's transgressive strategies, pointing out the non-chronological structure of the narrative, which Moraga describes in her introduction as following "a kind of emotional/political chronology" rather than a linear chronology (i). In addition to the genre-switching and non-chronological structure, Blake claims Moraga's use of untranslated Spanish (both formal Spanish and Chicano Spanish) "disrupts conventional readings" and "represents the negotiation between and among cultures in which Moraga's autobiographical subject engages" (73, 74). Finally, in what is the major focus of her piece, Blake discusses the nontraditional treatment of identity in *Loving*. While in traditional autobiography the author, narrator, and protagonist are identical, Blake argues Moraga "defies the universalized and united subject by signifying herself multiply, sexually and racially as Cherríe, Cecilia, Cher'ann, Chorizo, Mi'jita, Pesadilla, güera, Jota, Pata, Dyke, mujer español and Chicana," and this multiple subjectivity is evident, according to Blake, in the way Moraga "interweaves fragments of her life, her mother's life, and lesbian friends lives into presentations of experiences that remember collective cultural and racial histories of Chicana and lesbian oppression and resistance" (74). For Blake, once again returning to Kaplan's work, *Loving* does not fit easily into any one of the six out-law genres Kaplan identifies, but rather is a mixture of a cultural autobiography of the Chicana community as well as a biomythography whose "fluid figure" Blake reads as "unsettl[ing] identity constructions of race, class, gender and sexuality" (76).

For scholars, such as Haynes, Garza, and Cloud, who continue the rigorous genre analysis after Blake, there are important similarities of approach which both support and extend Blake's initial observations. Hayne's chapter "Intersections of Race, Gender, Sexuality and Experimentation in the Autobiographical Writings of Cherríe Moraga and Maxine Hong Kingston" continues the exploration of genre transgression linked to identity begun by Blake. Hayne's argues the innovative forms are connected to the identities of the authors:

> I argue that the complex and often conflictual nature of the authors' multifaceted identities motivates their use of hybrid narrative forms. In particular, I address the ways in which race, gender, and sexuality influence their formal choices and the manner in which these texts depart from and challenge traditional conceptions of autobiography. (135)

The challenge of "self-representation for racial/ethnic and female autobiographers," according to Haynes, is "finding appropriate forms through which to express a complex, multifaceted self fully" (135). Haynes reads the theme of conflicting identities in the martial imagery of the titles—*Woman Warrior* and *Loving in the War Years*—and suggests that those conflicts manifest in the mixing of genres. Haynes observes not only the mix of genres in *Loving* but also what she describes as "the blurring of forms *within* genres," with "dreams in journal entries, journal entries within essays, and poetry contained in essays" (136). According to Haynes, Moraga's "inclusion of a variety of forms parallels her attempt to acknowledge and validate each aspect of her complex identity. It is as if a single, coherent form is inadequate to express her many selves" (136-137). Here, as with Blake, the connection between genre is linked to complex identity and the need for comparably complex forms of representation.

Elisa Garza's chapter "Chicana Lesbianism and the Multigenre Text" provides, along with Blake, the most important analysis of *Loving* from a gene perspective. Garza situates her analysis within the larger context of *Borderlands*' and *Loving*'s influence on the field, arguing the form is a necessary focus of study given "it has an impact on the strength and delivery of the messages—and, hence, the theories—that Moraga and

Anzaldúa are proposing" (196). Garza, as I have been attempting to demonstrate throughout this project, recognizes the interconnectedness of the message and the form. Further, whereas Blake situates *Loving* in the context of, and in contrast to, the literary legacy of the autobiography, Garza places *Loving* and *Borderlands* in the more narrowly focused genealogy of ethnic women's autobiography, Chicanx literature, and ethnic autobiography. Garza cites Anne Goldman's work in *Take My Word*, which suggests reading personal narratives of ethnic women in texts not normally considered literary such as cookbooks, oral histories, and labor-organizations histories and argues such writings both "transgress and stretch the boundaries of literature" (qtd. in Garza 197). In addition to placing *Loving* within a context of female ethnic writing expanded beyond traditional autobiography, Garza also traces the emergence of Chicano ethnic autobiography in the sixties and seventies and the later emergence of Chicana writing in the eighties that resisted the masculinist and heteronormative framework. Akin to Blake and Haynes before her, Garza identifies the multiple genres as deeply tied to the multiple identities of the authors; however, it is Garza alone that positions Moraga and Anzaldúa as resisting both the larger genre legacy and the culturally-specific history of Chicanos writing before them:

> Moraga's and Anzaldúa's multigenred writing not only grows out of a Chicano tradition that articulates oppression; their efforts also define and therefore rely on the power of their simultaneous identities as Chicanas, as women, and as lesbians. As such, their attempts at self-definition reflect their struggles to reconcile those simultaneous identities, and therefore their texts move beyond autobiography into criticism, theory, poetry, and narratives. This multigenre articulation reflects both multiple identities and multiple modes of expression. (200)

As with Blake, Garza does the work of locating *Loving* within its literary and cultural context.

Interestingly, while Blake pulls from Kaplan's work on out-law genres to explain the non-conforming relationship between *Loving* and autobiography, Garza offers expanded notions of autobiography. Rather than "autobiography," Garza suggests "narrative form" as an alternative, based on the work of the Personal Narrative Group in *Interpreting Women's Lives*. The Personal Narrative Group envisions a broader, more inclusive category, and recommends focusing on the form as fluid is more important than determining conformity to genre: "*Narrative form,* an inclusive term amenable to cross-disciplinary studies suggests in its more encompassing nature that a narrative might be viewed as fluid rather than fixed in the variety of shapes that it can assume" (qtd. in Garza 202). Rather than find a genre label, such as "out-law genres," that accounts for the nonconforming aspects of *Loving*, Garza pulls from theories expanding the genre category altogether.

Though Garza, as with Torres, Blake, and Haynes before her, continues the focus on the relationship between multiple identities and multiple genres, Garza's work demonstrates one of the essential tasks for effective genre analysis—a close reading of formal elements. In Blake's earlier work, she describes Moraga's technique of genre-switching and identifies transgressive narrative strategies, including Moraga's use of Spanish and non-chronological structure. However, although certainly transgressive, these strategies are not necessarily specific to autobiography. It is Blake's analysis regarding *Loving*'s varied, rather than unified, treatment of author, narrator, and protagonist that is critical for Blake's genre analysis, connecting multiple identities to the use of multiple genres. Haynes worked along similar lines, with her discussion of the complex identities and the corresponding need for complex genre expression: “I argue that the complex and often conflictual nature of the authors’ multifaceted identities motivates their use of hybrid narrative forms” (135). However, when demonstrating the transgressive genre aspects, Haynes provides mainly thematic evidence (content evidence rather than formal evidence). Garza similarly argues for the multiple identities correlation to multiple genres: “This multigenre articulation reflects both multiple identities and multiple modes of expression” (200). Garza later expands on this matter further, writing: “Moraga’s personal self is multiple: biracial, bilingual, working class, educated, feminist, lesbian, writer. She has therefore chosen to represent her multiple self in multiple genres, constructing and reconstructing her life as multiplicity as it is” (203). Yet, Garza, like Blake and unlike Haynes, supports her argument with insightful close readings of the formal innovations of Moraga’s writing.

As discussed earlier, Garza is one of scholars who focuses on “A Long Line of Vendidas” as representative of *Loving*. However, while many others who reductively focus on “Vendidas” in order to avoid the complications of genre disruption and work with the more familiar form of an essay, Garza explicitly focuses on the multiple genres within “Vendidas,” providing thoughtful close readings of passages as evidence of the connection between multiple identities and forms. Garza points to the concluding section of “Vendidas” and suggests Moraga’s genre use correlates to different identities: “Moraga uses three genres to represent three different aspects of herself, memories for *la hija*…poetry for *la lesbian*…and essay for *la chicana*” (203). Garza also explores the multiple purposes and identities in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, with genres corresponding to Anzaldúa's various roles: reporter, daughter, family historian, and poet (205). While these patterns of correlating roles and genres might not hold up across the entirety of the texts, given how complex the interweaving of genres is, Garza provides readers with some of the first textual evidence to prove the much-agued claim of a connection between multiple identities and the deployment of multiple genres (only Blake, who explores the non-unified autobiographical subject, has offered formal rather than content/thematic evidence) as well as a new reading strategy for analyzing multigenre texts.

Garza's citational footprint is notable for its referencing of the early work by Leslie Bow in "Hole to Whole: Feminine Subversion and Subversion of the Feminine in Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years.*" Previously mentioned because of its comparative approach, discussing *Loving* alongside theories of *écriture feminine* put forth by Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, Bow's work attempts to account for the nontraditional traits of *Loving* without the benefit of genre discourse. With an article appearing in a special volume of *Dispositio* titled "Toward a Theory of Latino Literature," Bow works to theorize the stylistic innovation through some of the most well-known French feminist theorists doing work at the time on innovative female writing styles. Ultimately, Bow concludes *Loving* does not fall into the type of writing Cixous describes as *écriture feminine* (marked by a break with rules of syntax), but Bow admits to the "innovation both in its narrative chronology and its multiplicity of form" and later acknowledges that by "her confounding of a traditional chronology, Moraga demonstrates a radical form that complements her political message" (9, 10). While

Bow's theoretical knowledge is sound, it is disconcerting how much Bow rests in theoretical frameworks put forward by white women to explain Moraga's work. On the one hand, Bow's work could be read as making helpful connections from the mainstream to more marginalized texts, but it largely fails to situate the work in its cultural context and operates in the abstract. Moraga's work becomes mere illustration of Cixous and Irigaray's concepts, almost derivative in nature rather than groundbreaking in its innovation. Garza's work, however, seems to pull the very best from Bow's insights. Commenting on and quoting Bow's work, Garza writes:

> She finds the multigenred nature of Moraga's writing to be its most important and radical move: "By writing verse, personal narrative, and fiction, Moraga subverts the generic conception of political theory . . . What Moraga ultimately rejects is a unitary method for written expression, while keeping intact the social function of discourse . . . [Which] gives *Loving* its power and significance." I agree with Bow that Moraga's writing has a "social function." Her subversion of genres is a means to reveal her very personal concerns as social concerns with large social implications. (qtd. in Garza 202)

When connected with Garza's other references to Torres and The Personal Narrative Group, Bow's insights bolster Garza's larger argument regarding *Loving*'s deviations from traditional autobiography.

When tracing Moraga scholarship, trends and patterns are visible. This chapter has already highlighted genre-related trends that are perhaps latent results of genre logic rather than explicit intent—scholars performing comparative readings, using genre labels often without the weight of the genre theory to ground the appellation and reducing the text to forms more familiar and manageable (the focus on the essay rather than poetry or non-academic forms). With the scholars ably working with genre theory to analyze *Loving,* there are also important trends which provide models for effective genre analysis:

locating the text within a genre and its historical or cultural context, explaining genre nonconforming aspects (both purpose and impact), and providing textual evidence regarding genre nonconformity that is not merely content or thematic evidence but also evidence of formal innovation. When read together, it becomes clear the important interconnection of knowledge production, with more recent scholarship by Garza threading in and expanding Torres' initial claim of the link between multiple identities and multiple genres as well as her highlighting of Bow's work.

Christine Cloud's 2010 article "Cherrie Moraga's *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca paso por sus labios: Autoethnography of the New Mestiza*" is certainly not the last of the scholarly investigations of *Loving*, in fact, there were several pieces published the same year and in subsequent years. However, Cloud's work is the last of the pieces to continue with the rigorous focus on genre Torres started nearly two decades earlier. Cloud's piece continues and expands the important work of genre analysis already established, relying closely on Blake's early analysis while offering her own insights. As with Torres, Blake, and Garza before her, Cloud works to situate *Loving* within its generic legacy. Although neither Cloud's essay nor her bibliography suggests she is familiar with Garza's work, there are strong similarities; Cloud's approach blends Blake's focus on transgressive narrative strategies with Garza's attentiveness to the Chicanx literary legacy. Similar to Garza, Cloud opens her analysis with a discussion of Chicano ethnic autobiographies of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, describing the obstacles Chicana writers faced (of gender and sexuality-based exclusion) and the distinctiveness of their writing to male predecessors:

> These obstacles did not block Chicanas from using autobiographical writing as a platform upon which to draft empowering new forms of collective identity. On the contrary, they forced would-be Chicana auto-ethnographers to conceive of alternative avenues of representation grounded upon the coming together of the many and oftentimes forever mutating multiple forms of subjectivity that characterize any given collectivity of citizens. (83)

Cloud reads Moraga's *Loving* as revising the content and style of Chicano auto-ethnography, an example of an "out-law genre" á la Kaplan and regards Moraga herself as trailblazing a new type of text. According to Cloud, *Loving* is "a memorably transformative manifesto…which privileged a post-modern, multiple, mutable and multifaceted collective self that exists simultaneously within a variety of communities rather than within one ethnic community" which ultimately "underscores the many multiple and shifting identities which simultaneously infiltrate our being and characterize our lives" (85). Moraga's trailblazing work on pluralized identity Cloud reads as terrain Chicana authors would also return to in subsequent, noting Anzaldúa (1987), Sandoval (1991), and Castillo (1994), "would soon trace Moraga's twisted path through the newly constructed portals of pluralized identity, etching out new routes of possibility" (85).

Despite explicit use of genre terms ("auto-ethnography" and "cultural autobiography"), much of Cloud's work diverts to narrative analysis, a trend also seen in Blake's work. She describes the postmodern narrative techniques, largely the non-chronological arrangement of the pieces as well as the varied narrators. Cloud's genre close readings also provide insight into the organization and structure of *Loving*, identifying two sections: one a more personal, a "coming of age story if you will followed by an overtly more academic segment" (86). And while Cloud reads the first section as "more overtly autobiographical chapters" of Moraga's life, and sees connection with other Chicano auto-ethnography attempts to elucidate the oppression with which the community contends, Cloud observes a difference in Moraga's ability to "so effectively and continuously weaves the events of her life with those of her fellow Chicanas as to make them seem to flow together as one" (86). In weaving her life story with the collective story, Moraga "turns her narrative into a collective story rather than a story about a collective which only further distinguishes Moraga's auto-ethnographical writing from that of its male-authored forebears" (86). Further, whereas the Chicano auto-ethnography, according to Cloud, records an "individualized journey to self-realization," Moraga's *Loving* is an "auto-ethnographic account of a collective coming to consciousness" (86).

In Blake's earlier work, the argument regarding the relationship between multiple genres and multiple identities first introduced by Torres is strengthened by her distinguishing the traditional narrative strategies of a unified subject from the non-unified subjectivity witnessed in *Loving*. Cloud continues this line of reasoning, but points to the nonlinear structure and unfixed narrative identity as reflecting postmodern writing:

> Principally because rather than a prose account neatly divided into a progressive series of succinct and orderly chapters, *Loving in the War Years* embodies a collection of essays and poetry intermingled throughout that fail to follow any reasonably apparent order; preferring instead to celebrate a decidedly nonlinear accounting of events. Thus, it epitomizes the rhizomatic nature of post-modern writing. This makes Moraga's narration even more radically distinct from that of the first wave of Chicano authors' autobiographical linear development of a "Chicano consciousness." Nevertheless, the lack of order and structure within *Loving in the War Years* represents a fundamental part of its construction, given that Moraga writes her life in order to demonstrate the multiple and mutable and "unfixable" nature of post-modern subjectivity…. Thus, the avant-garde structure of Moraga's narrative essentially announces its evocative content. (91)

Again, the influence of Blake is clear, with Cloud identifying the transgressive narrative strategies and their link to complex subjectivity. Yet, Cloud's genre analysis also moves in the direction of Garza's work when she identifies the various roles Cloud identifies in the second part of *Loving* as building bridges, reflecting Moraga's stance as an activist and community builder" (94). Ultimately, Cloud like Blake before her, finds the out-law genres proffered by Kaplan are not the exact fit. Whereas Blake determined *Loving* resided somewhere between Kaplan's cultural autobiography and biomythography, Cloud also concludes "ethnic autobiography" nor "auto-ethnography" are accurate genre labels and suggests "Moraga's text is best described as a new post- modern/post-colonial auto-ethnography" and which "represents a new generation of life-writing" (96).

While the consistent correlation between complex subjectivity and multiple genres is perhaps overdetermined, or at the very least overly dependent on Anzaldúa's writings regarding mestiza consciousness, it is an important insight worthy of further study. The genre scholarship on *Loving* helps us understand the pattern, but it is necessary to resist analysis that might naturalize or essentialize genre. Moraga (and other female authors of color) who transgress genre norms and write multi-genre works presumably have the same familiarity with genres as white authors do, but it is her relationship to genre and by extension to the dominant ideology that is different. It is the active resistance that must be foregrounded.

Over the course of Moraga's work and the scholarship responding to her work, genre's impact is clear. The impact is visible at the level of the entire field of scholarship as well as at the level of individual texts. Certain genres such as anthologies are read but considered outside the realm of analysis, which misses the innovation and the transgression of multiple genre rules by the editors of *This Bridge Called My Back* and by its contributors. In reading *Loving* scholarship for genre trends, the latent influence of genre logic, and the desire to complicate and update that logic, is clear.

Conclusion

While this marks the end of the dissertation, I am keenly aware that this is more a stopping point than the end of the investigation. Genre provides an invaluable critical lens from which to study the early and influential works by Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Moraga. Only by pairing attentiveness to genre with broader content analysis is it possible to glimpse the revolutionary challenge and remarkable innovation these writers present. Anzaldúa in her theorizing of mestiza consciousness, an inclusive, non-binaristic ontology, depends on metaphors of miscegenation to serve as new symbols, the new mythos for her new world. In so doing, she not only deploys metaphors such as the mestiza and borderlands but also works strategically with language and genre to perform hybridity. Anzaldúa's refusal of genre purity in *Borderlands* must be read as part of her larger efforts to resist logics of racial (as well as other forms of) purity.

Cisneros's beloved *Mango Street* is perhaps even more subtle in its genre transgression. The charming and deceptively simple viewpoint presented by the adolescent narrator softens the tragic narrative of burgeoning Chicana femininity depicted as the move towards greater constraints and vulnerability. Cisneros's striking social critique is partnered by the genre innovation where short vignettes charged with poetic impact and lyricism provide glimpses into the life of Esperanza, *Mango Street*'s narrator, as well as the lives of those in her community. The painful accounts of rape, incest, domestic violence, poverty, racism, and foreclosed opportunities are narratively answered by Esperanza's escape through writing. Esperanza's identity as a writer allows her (the text at least hints at this future possibility) to escape the constraints experienced by the women around her, and so it should be no surprise that writing is also key to Cisneros's resistance. *Mango Street*'s genre innovation beguiles scholars, leading them to make varied genre conclusions, with most determining *Mango Street* a *Bildungsroman.* It is the experience of reading *Mango Street* that draws attention to the process of reading and the role of genre in shaping interpretation. Further, the text inspires efforts to categorize and affix a genre designation, yet the very process of doing so reveals *Mango Street*'s resistance to categorization and exposes genres as constructed and incomplete systems of meaning.

Moraga's works, including both *Loving* and her co-edited anthology *Bridge*, highlight genre's influence. Broadly speaking, Moraga scholarship is profoundly shaped by genre, with different disciplines and interpretive models applied to texts based on genre. These genre-related trends are visible both at the level of individual interpretations and broader fields of scholarship. Both texts disregard traditional genre expectations, mixing and blurring genres for strategic, expressive purposes. Also, both texts are met by scholarship that tends to disregard the complexity of the genre innovation, with very little analysis available that attends to the literary aspects of *Bridge* and *Loving*.

Clearly, there is more to be done. The work of all three authors warrants analysis that takes genre into consideration across their entire oeuvres. It is exciting to consider how genre techniques employed in *Borderlands* might intersect with Anzaldúa's later theorizing or her children's literature; how the play of form (not-quite novel made up of not-quite short stories) in *Mango Street* compares with Cisneros's collection of short stories *Woman Hollering Creek and other Stories* or her quasi-novel *Caramelo*; and how a cohesive yet complex message might be glimpsed across Moraga's personal writings, essays, and plays. Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Moraga all have rich bodies of work that benefit from genre analysis.

Beyond the further analysis possible for the three authors studied, the recent works of other Chicana authors also need to be examined in order to connect the influence of these early texts' generic innovations to their literary legacy. Additional study might also seek insight into the genre innovation visible in multiple works written contemporaneously to Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Moraga by other female authors of color. Other possibilities exist for the tracing of genres (as well as genre transgressions and innovations) at specific moments of history, situating genre trends within the larger socio-historical context. The possibilities for future study seem vast, and I hope that my efforts to attend to genre in the early works of Anzaldúa, Cisneros and Moraga will inspire others to do so in their own areas of study.

Notes

Introduction

[1] Ortega and Sternbach argue, “It has been a common practice to view Latina(o) literature as sociology rather than as a literary production. As such, it has been the object of more ethnological studies than literary ones” (5). See Minh-ha, 6, for her discussion of the triple bind and the ways that the literary establishment further marginalizes non-mainstream writers by overemphasizing racial and sexual difference.

[2] See Laura Pérez’s *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* 258-281 for a thorough analysis of Chicana artists’ revision of La Virgen de Guadalupe; Castillo’s collection of writings on La Virgen, especially Cisnero’s “Guadalupe the Sex Goddess” 46-51; and Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* 49-53 for a discussion of colonization’s impact and the transformation of Coatlalopeuh into La Virgen de Guadalupe. See Anzaldúa’s *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* and Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek” for fictive revisions of the La Llorona myth. For historical and theoretical analysis of Malinche and her relation to Chicana literature, see del Castillo ‘s “Malintzin Tenépal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective”and Alarcón “Chicana’s Feminist Literature: A Re-Vision through Malintzin/ or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object.”

[3] Amy Moorman Robbins’ *American Hybrid Poetics: Gender, Mass Culture, and Form* explores writings of radical women poets of the twentieth century, offering insightful analysis of the connection between radical politics and hybrid poetics. Although her focus is different than mine, Robbins’ reading hybrid poetics as these authors’ resistance to dominant culture and ideology resonates with my own.

Chapter 1

[1] For exploration of generic evolution and the influence of cultural context, see Opacki 119-121.

[2] See Wiegman, especially chapter one, for a discussion of the developments in natural history and the connection to race science.

[3] See Jennifer DeVere Brody’s work in *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* for important analysis of the ways black identity was constructed oppositionally, during the Victorian era, to the supposed purity of Englishness, the foundations of which Brody reveals to be “miscegenated and impure” (1).

[4] Yarbro-Bejarano explains that one of the downsides of the wide acceptance of Anzaldúa's work has been the tendency to universalize “mestiza” and “borderlands” concepts, denying the text’s specific historical and cultural contexts.

Chapter 2

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[1] See Forrest L. Ingram's 1971 *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century* and Susan Garland Mann's 1989 *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide* for the earliest work on the short story cycle. Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris' 1995 *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition* offers related analyses to Ingram's and Morris' but contend "the composite novel" is the more appropriate designation. See 1976 *Short Story Theories* as well as the 1994 *The New Short Story Theories,* both edited by Charles E. May for key theorizing on the short story form and its changes. The edited collections *The Postmodern Short Story: Forms and Issues* (2003) and *Short Story Theories: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective* (2012) provide multiple entries elucidating the modern understandings of the long-standing short story form.

[2] According to Rafael Pérez-Torres in *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins,* Chicano culture can be understood as constantly negotiating the colonizing and the colonized. According to him, Chicano culture "perpetually negotiates two worlds: the (colonizing) North American and the (colonized) Mexican-American. In actuality, one could argue that Chicano culture bridges three worlds, taking into account the mestizaje of Mexican culture, comprised of the (colonizing) Spanish and (colonized) indigenous identities. One might expand this to four worlds by acknowledging the Spanish colonial age, the historical bridge to European culture and a residual living presence in the language and lifestyle of various regions of the contemporary American Southwest. Five worlds, if one recognizes the north American indigenous cultures that, along with pre-Cortesian cultures, forms something of a touchstone for the Chicano imagination" (29).

[3] See Ellen McCracken's 1989 chapter "Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*: Community-Oriented Introspection and the Demystification of Patriarchal Violence" for the first analysis of Cisneros's work as countering the individualistic bent of traditional *Bildungsroman* by telling a communal narrative.

[4] Arguably Eysturoy's work is the single most important contribution at the point of its publication when it comes to understanding *The House on Mango Street* as a *Bildungsroman* and on the important relationship between Chicana writers and the genre. What is disappointing and a little perplexing is the apparent lack of impact on the larger field of studies. In my research, the only scholar to reference Eysturoy's work is Stella Bolaki. Perhaps part of the problem can be ascribed to the title which does not use any of the terms or phrases commonly associated with the *Bildungsroman* genre that would have linked it to existing research and allowed it to be brought up under common search terms. This is a failure in the field of Chicana literature, where the most developed genre analysis of its time is overlooked by everyone except the person to offer the next most in-depth analysis of *Bildungsroman* in writings by women of color. This failure of readership and awareness is disappointing because Eysturoy's text is a helpful source for understanding the genre and the interventions Chicana authors have made to generic conventions but also because it is important for Chicana literary and cultural studies to

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have the tools to understand the text in new ways, but more importantly for genre scholars, in this case *Bildungsroman* scholars, to be exposed to texts beyond their mainstream sources.

[5] See Gutiérrez-Revuelta, "Género e ideología," 52–55 and Juan Rodríguez, "The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros," *Austin Chronicle*, 10 Aug. 1984 (qtd. in Gutiérrez-Revuelta, p. 52).

[6] As a point of clarification, female *Bildungsroman* is the category for the field of study looking at the female counterpart to the (male) *Bildungsroman.* It is, however, primarily a result of feminist arguments and approaches, so if perhaps fully named to include its theoretical approach it would be feminist female *Bildungsroman* studies, but that is such a mouthful. There is also a feminist *Bildungsroman* category (also referred to by Felski as novels of self-discovery), which explores the feminist awakening experienced by protagonists, usually of twentieth (and twenty-first) century heroines.

[7] Pratt's work and later the edited collection *The Voyage In: Fictions in Female Development* as well as Rita Felski's 1986 article "The Novel of Self-Discovery: A Necessary Fiction?" become foundational readings in the field.

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