

The Archive of Speaking/ Silencing in the Latina Borderlands: A Comparative Anzaldúan
Approach to Leticia Hernández-Linares's *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl* and Vanessa
Angélica Villarreal's *Beast Meridian*

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the significance of silence and speaking within the lens of the archive, precisely concentrating on the contributions of *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa in the 20th century, and exploring two contemporary collections of poems: *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl* (2015) by Leticia Hernández- Linares and *Beast Meridian* (2017) by Vanessa Angélica Villarreal. In a postmillennial movement, both Latina poets follow a first-generation immigrant perspective, in crisis for remaining in a fluctuating culturally liminal space, where oftentimes they find themselves in the dominant American culture, and other times within their Latinx roots. Their individual roots embody the personal encounter within the liminal cultural, social and political environment they grew up in, whilst challenging gender identities and exploring the survival and strength of immigrants, particularly that of women in a patriarchal society. Leticia Hernández-Linares demonstrates a political passion for cultural roots, while engraving the language of the Salvadoran womanhood to question gendered identities. She performs them through dances, songs and visual props to engage the audience. Vanessa Angélica Villarreal takes a different approach to societal destabilization, constructing a multi-layered story by introducing the voice of a speaker who suffers pain in a culturally displaced world. Villarreal intelligently roots her poetry in the *Borderlands*, speaking on intimate narratives of generational family trauma at the hands of cultural assimilation. This work proposes to investigate the significance of the unspoken and the spoken on both poetry books. Silence is used to convey an abstinence from speech and other times it is intentionally insisting on a moment of stillness and muteness, while speech is more direct through the contact with the reader through language.

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INTRODUCTION

The Significance of the Latina Borderlands

In the 21st century, a new era of post-colonial immigrant poetry has bridged the gap between the liminal space existing not only amongst geographical locations and national borders, but also the emotional distance that separates two cultures. This work will research the significance of two Latino collections of poems that contain themes such as cultural gender roles, sexism, violence, trauma, anti-colonialism, the encounter of a liminal space between two cultures and immigrant stories, covering a range of territory from Mexico to El Salvador. These collections are *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl* (2015) by Leticia Hernández- Linares and *Beast Meridian* (2017) by Vanessa Angélica Villarreal. According to the critic Urayoán Noel, in 1980s a large matter of the gradual incorporation of Latinos/as were slowly becoming part of the cultural mainstream and they were also becoming part of the social and marketing demographics, as Arlene Dávila analyzes (Noel 853). For that reason, authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa have paved the path for the work of both poets, Villarreal and Hernández-Linares in the twenty-first century, which has helped shape Latino studies by the “exploration of particular poetic strategies such as code-switching and Spanglish” (Noel 852). Poets helped shaped the Latino movement of poetry through public readings and cultural work. Nonetheless, according to Urayoán Noel in “Bodies that Antimatter: Locating U.S. Latino/a Poetry”, substantive analysis is absent from the scholarly writing on U.S. Latino/a poetry, which usually explores issues of identity and representation. In this case, Noel argues that Latinidad matters for the reason that it is a

performative identity which is attuned to the struggles that have shaped the Latino/a experience (Noel 856).

Furthermore, Noel continues to describe the value of performance in the Latino/a poetry of the twenty-first century: "...U.S. Latino/a poetry in the first decade of the twenty-first century is attuned to how body matters (much as they did to the movement poetics of the 1960s and 1970s), but it also engages with poetry as antimatter, as a function of the complexities of circulations in the post-millennium" (Noel 880). This movement that appears to be new, has in fact partaken in the Latino/a movement for a long time by altering the identity of what it means to be "Latino/a" in the United States, but the difference today is the technological aspect of it; YouTube and other social media platforms have helped to highlight the potential of this poetry that speaks on the loss and shock that occurs in the Borderlands, as well as in the telling of a personal story. Social platforms have assisted poets such as Hernández- Linares to present her poetry through songs and dances, while Villarreal has interpreted her poetry through videos of her personal life through everyday movements, such as raw everyday experiences, for instance running, while ensuring the voice-over of the poems is played.

In a postmillennial movement, Latino/a poets span a variety of geographical and styles of writing, which embody the deeply personal experience of each author. Questions of gendered identities, especially including the patriarchy, are significant to both collections because they aim to explore the survival and strength that it takes for first generation immigrants and immigrants to overcome their trauma due to their culture, gender, bilingual identity and their generation. These authors seek an identity between the dominant culture and the dominated one in the United States. Both books convey the

archival story through form, visuals and themes, at times through speech and other times through the use of silence. Of the criticism these books have received, silence has yet to be understood as a lens to the immigrant experience expressed in the poems. The unspoken words can be perceived between the lines of poetry, on the visuality of the poem and in the logistical order of words on the poem itself. At times, the poets are “screaming” in the form of songs, and at times they are holding back, silencing themselves. This silence can at times signify that both poets are internalizing their experiences and oppressing them. The relationship between silence and speech allows the reader to explore the trauma, the feelings and the stories conveyed through poetry.

This work proposes to study the duality of speech and silence, of the spoken/ unspoken and the effect this dichotomy has not only to theme and form, but also on reader reception. What is crucial here is the interpretation that the reader may perceive through the power of verse accomplished by means of silence. Silence in this sense is used to convey an abstinence from speech, and other times it is intentionally insisting on a moment of stillness and muteness to create a message. Speech on the other hand allows the reader to identify the underlining message through a direct contact with the writer. I will address the speech and silence through the Anzaldúan archive, considering that the book *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza* was the cultural disruption that occurred in 1987. The significance of this type of poetry is that Anzaldúa spoke out on matters of the psychological, the physical, the sexual and the spiritual borderlands that occurred to immigrants in the Texas- Mexico border. Moving through time to today, this duality of speech and silence has affected not only the physical borderland of Texas- Mexico, but it has become part of the cultural roots of various immigrants travelling to the United States.

This work will focus on the Anzaldúa borderland as a tool to explore other nonphysical borderlands that are occurring in both *MMTMG*¹ and *Beast Meridian*. Both of these works are leaving a legacy for poets to come- the poems are becoming the new archive for postcolonial subjects.

Anzaldúan as Inspiration and Archive

These two works of poetry will be analyzed through the cultural lens of Gloria Anzaldúa, an American scholar who grew up on the Mexico-Texas border. She is vital in the post-colonial studies because she specialized in the theories of the in-between, cultural marginalization and the experience of being caught between two cultures, a liminal space where she felt like an “alien” in the dominant culture of the United States. Anzaldúa writes about her childhood along the Texas-Mexico border in her prose and poetry book called *Borderlands La Frontera* in 1987. The author discusses in her book the tradition of silence, specifically in the chapter “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” in *Borderlands La Frontera*. Anzaldúa sets the stage for shaping a poetic vision and bringing it into life through prose and verse. Throughout her book, she tells stories of her culture and this story of her childhood mentioned above speaks on the importance of gendered and immigrant stories that happen in the Borderlands. In overcoming the tradition of silence, Anzaldúa had to endure pain both physically and spiritually as the dentist advises her: “‘We’re going to have to control your tongue,’ the dentist says, pulling out all the metal from my mouth. Silver bits plop and tinkle into the basin. My mouth is a motherlode” (53). In this memory, the author is using the theory of silencing the wild tongue, the institutionalized space that is

¹ I will be using *MMTMG* as an abbreviation for the book *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl*.

the dentist office is training Anzaldúa to be quiet and to restrain from her rights of speech. In an interview with Ana Louise Keating, Anzaldúa advocates that now people live in a global village and are capable to speak their truth since they “live in each other’s pockets and not in isolated ethnic plots” (Keating 186). Anzaldúa describes that it is necessary to listen to the Native people, to listen to the Indian and the Chicana² because they need validation of their individual lineage. This central idea is explored in *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, and it will be a central point in how all three works of poetry will be intertwined in the thesis. The project aims to reveal the ways in which silence has been used to convey an abstinence from speech and maintain gendered roles in the patriarchal Mexican and Salvadorian societies.

Beginning with the personal roots that drove Anzaldúa to feminism, in *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa describes how her youth affected her life as a woman and writer in an immigrant family. While on the Texas-Mexico border, she recounts the female experience of always being between two cultures and feeling silenced or an “alien” in both: “Alienated from her mother culture, 'alien in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self” (20). In this case, “alien” represents a person who is outside social norms; an immigrant who comes from another culture, a being who does not

² According to Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicanas have a particular limitation in the Western world for the color of their skin and prejudice that goes against them. For instance, in *Borderland La Frontera The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa describes what it means to be a chicana: “As a culture, we call ourselves Spanish when referring to ourselves as a linguistic group and when copping out. It is then that we forget our predominant Indian genes. We are 70-80% Indian. We call ourselves Hispanic or Spanish- American or Latin American or Latin when linking ourselves to other Spanish- speaking peoples of the Western hemisphere and when copping out. We call ourselves Mexican- American to signify we are neither Mexican nor American, but more the noun “American” than the adjective “Mexican” (and when copping out). Chicanos and other people of color suffer economically for not acculturating. This voluntary (yet forced) alienation makes for psychological conflict, a kind of dual identity- we don’t totally identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don’t totally identity with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero. Nothing, no one. *A veces no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy*” (Anzaldúa 62-63).

belong on a side of the Borderlands, because she has different traditions to others. Also, this identity is marginalized by skin color. In Anzaldúa's immigrant narrative, not only is the story of her life told, but it is also a feminist speech of strong and courageous Chicano women:

“(...) Anzaldua learned early that she was different, an ‘alien from another planet’ who didn't quite fit with the norms and expectations of her family and community, didn't ‘act like a nice little Anita Chicana is supposed to act’”(Lunsford 33). For this reason, Anzaldúa having lived in the "otherness", she prepares a narrative in which she rejects any kind of etiquette. This element appears in *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, which gives a poetic view of space to the borderlands.

Although women of Mexican and Salvadoran culture travel to another country, such as going from their homeland to the United States, the force of their roots still have fundamental origins that confine women, mothers, daughters and grandmothers. Traditionally, culture³ has the power to silence women through an unconscious belief that mothers, and daughters hold:

We're afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *la Raza*, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged. Most of us unconsciously believe that if we reveal this unacceptable aspect of the self our mother/ culture/ race will totally reject us. To avoid rejection, some of us conform to the values of the culture, push the unacceptable parts into the shadows” (Anzaldúa 20).

This reaction demonstrates how cultural power is truthfully a reigning order on the people who identify with that culture, in this case the woman body involved. In this case silence is every bit as important as speech because women have admitted to the values in order to avoid rejection, they have selectively silenced themselves to be accepted. Furthermore, in her personal

³ In this context, culture refers to the origins, the homeland, the roots and a sense of belonging.

experience, Anzaldúa provides the theory of the section "Intimate terrorism: Life in the Borderlands," which describes the fear that a person experiences when becoming part of a new culture. This occurs because the world is not a safe place, and less safe for brown-skinned immigrant women: "Woman does not feel safe when her own culture, and white culture, are critical of her; when the males of all races hunt her as prey" (Anzaldúa 20). In this space, Anzaldúa declares that women who feel silenced in their culture, but also feel "alien" in the dominant culture, that is, white culture in the United States. Although immigrant women of color could respond to these emotions of feeling alienated in their own culture, and in the new society, another obstacle appears: their own culture takes away the ability to act with respect to these powerful feelings. The patriarchal society the authors live in restrain women from voicing their thoughts freely.

Collections of poems

Both collections of poems will be studied through the double lens of silence, such as gendered silence and the unspoken as a form of power; additionally, an essential quality of these groundbreaking works is the importance of the archive. According to "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines" by Marlene Manoff, the compelling work of an archive has provided a window onto current debates and common concerns in academic fields (Anzaldúa 20). The essay describes the archive as "a place where documents and other materials of public or historical interest are preserved" (Manoff 10). This conveys that an archive is a collection of artifacts used by museums, libraries, schools amongst other historical records.

In *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl (MMTMG)*, Hernández- Linares offers the use of historical archive by citing not only important authors of all time like Fanon, but also citing

natural disasters that have occurred in El Salvador, specifically the earthquake that took place in 2001. At the same time, Hernández- Linares draws from songs based on the eighty's and cumbia, a type of beat that represents Colombia and Venezuela specifically, tying together African, Indigenous and European rhythm into one.⁴ At the same time, Leticia offers recordings of the poems, a place of documents and materials that can be located online. Her poetry book takes you through a narration of her “tierra”, her roots which are located in El Salvador all the way to the United States.

Conversely, in *Beast Meridian*, Vanessa Angélica Villarreal maintains a constant memoir of her childhood trauma when learning English presenting poems such as “Assimilation Rooms” (36) and “Dissociative States” (25) where the author connects her life history through artifacts, such as using archeological memories, photos of her grandmothers, parents, herself and other family members. Her poetry book is an archive that becomes more personal and intimate as it progresses from beginning to the end. In the present work of Villarreal, she uses archives to construct layers and complications that the women face within her culture, that she encounters in the liminal space of the Borderlands⁵, which she cannot escape when entering into the world. This

⁴ Cumbia (<https://www.npr.org/sections/latino/2013/09/30/227834004/cumbia-the-musical-backbone-of-latin-america>): This type of music intertwines African, European and Indigenous rhythm and beats. “Brought to Colombia around the time it became a Spanish colony, it was heavily influenced by the instruments of native tribes, such as the gaita flutes and the guacharacas. Its shuffle spread throughout Latin America; on this week’s show, we get a visit from Eduardo Diaz, director of the Smithsonian Latino Center, who tells us, among other things, about how cumbia was brought into Mexico and cultivated as part of the Mexican identity. Cumbia is one of the sounds of Mexico today, but it wasn’t always like that: It took a stellar Colombian musician showing up with a suitcase full of tunes and beats”. Another important fact about cumbia is that is it popular because cumbia step originated when the music itself was born: “slaves had their legs shackled and very minimal movement was possible”.

⁵ According to Gloria Analdúa in the book *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, she discusses the importance of the Borderlands and what that represents on a cultural, spiritual and intimate level, specifically dealing with the Texas- U.S. Southwest and Mexican border. “The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. 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, and middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (Preface). Importantly enough, in this book the author discusses how borders allow someone’s identity to shift and change over time, for instance Anzaldúa speaks on her personal story saying: “Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an “alien” element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being “worked” on” (Preface).

liminal space can at times silence Villarreal due to the gendered suppression, but other times, it requires “screaming” to be understood; whether it is done through the usage of words in her poems, or through the aesthetic form of the poetry. Villarreal allows the reader to perceive this “screaming”, in other words, chaos, through the visuals of her book, just like the front cover where the reader observes a line that separates the page into two separate parts to create a separation, a symbol for colonization as well. In this way, *Beast Meridian* is setting the tone for the division that has taken place in her life, whether that is cultural division, dissociation of her state of being or a disconnection in the assimilation of cultures. The use of archive adds a layer of intimacy in her poetry through the use of family photos and portraits. This in turn allows Villarreal to connect with her readers on a more profound level, a confidential level. Photos instill confidence in the reader because they show a personal truth of the life of Villarreal.

In order to highlight both works and consider their feminist theoretical content, the following questions will be answered: what characteristics of immigration shown in the text of Anzaldúa are the most transcendental in the poems explored? How are these works breaking the canonical order of patriarchal society, questioning the intentions of this cultural masculine world, where they live? Finally, how is silence and speaking forming part of the archive which these poems represent? Additionally, these collections will be studied through the dual lens of silencing and speaking, not only from a feminist perspective, but specifically through the Latinx lens.

Beast Meridian is a collection of poems that touches upon the great violence hidden inside women and the emotional territory that comes when exploring one’s cultural roots. This poetry book uses bilingualism during the poems, changing between English and Spanish. This language barrier creates an intimate memory with the poet because for the bilingual reading of the poetry

book, they will be able to connect with the stories on a more profound level. Meanwhile, for the readers who do not speak both languages, they will miss out on certain stories, concepts, memories and so on. This book contains a total of three sections, opening the book with the section “An Illness of Pines” (13) which contains thirteen poems, mostly focused on the upbringing of the poet Vanessa Angélica Villarreal. The book proceeds to the second section called “A Halo of Beasts” (47), importantly enough touching upon an understanding of the bestiary⁶, which is a work of emphasizing the importance of animals, originating in the Middle Ages. Some of the poems that mention the bestiary are “Praying Herd: For Safe Journey” (49), “Bestia” (59), “Ram, Laborer” (61), and “Beto, Sheep of Heaven” (62) amongst others. This section represents a set of poems that speak on the experience of becoming closer to nature, the constellations and animals. Other poems portray the importance of religion such as “To Hide a Goddess” (66) which is dedicated to Juan Diego and the Virgen of Guadalupe. This religious figure holds a special place in Mexico, and it has been important for the national identity of Mexico⁷. In the third section of the poetry book called “The Way Back” (81), Villarreal only includes one poem called “Estrellada” (94). In this section, Villarreal starts by adding a prose

⁶ The bestiary was based on a Greek text of the second century called the *Physiologus*. Oftentimes, the animals were interpreted in the bestiary as evidence of God’s divine plan for the world. “It contained only a few dozen animals in no discernable order, as well as a small number of trees and rocks. Every natural phenomenon was interpreted as a reflection of an aspect of Christ’s life or Christian doctrine. Sometime probably in the 11th century, information was added from a text called the *Etymologies* by Isidore of Seville (b. c. 580, d. 636), Archbishop of Seville. The text was the most popular early medieval encyclopedia of universal knowledge, including almost 250 individual animals. “all manner of animals, ranging from the noble unicorn to the humble hedgehog, inhabit the medieval bestiary, a type of manuscript containing descriptions of over a hundred animals. The lion is the first animal to appear in the bestiary, as described in the text: “Now *leo* in Greek is translated to king (*rex*) in Latin, because he is the ruler of all beasts”. (<https://www.bl.uk/medieval-english-french-manuscripts/articles/beastly-tales-from-the-medieval-bestuary>)

⁷ “Our Lady of Guadalupe’s role in Mexican history is not limited to religious matters; she has played an important role in Mexican nationalism and identity. In 1810 Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla promoted her as the patroness of the revolt he led against the Spanish. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared on the rebels’ banners, and the rebels’ battle cry was “Long Live Our Lady of Guadalupe.” During a religious revival in Mexico in the late 19th century, preachers declared that the foundation of Mexico could be dated to the time of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, because she freed the people from idolatry and reconciled the Spanish and indigenous peoples in a common devotion”. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Our-Lady-of-Guadalupe-patron-saint-of-Mexico>

writing starting on page 83 until page 93 before she introduces the poem. In these small prose sections, she touches upon these issues of immigration, the tie to the land and animals, monstrous antlered creatures as well and the mourning along with family suffering. There is pain, there is family unity, there is violence, memories, and life stories in this section of the poetry book. Overall, Villarreal is able to create a collection of poems that express those family traumas in such a way that she invites the readers to experience her stories together.

Meanwhile, Leticia Hernández- Linares is similarly capable of weaving together a family story and connection to El Salvador in her poetry book *MMTMG*, where she is also using bilingualism, switching between English and Spanish to make sure no detail of her story is left out due to language. It is important to note that although Leticia Hernández- Linares uses English and Spanish in her collection, she maintains both languages separate on her pages. The use of both languages occurs because once documents get translated, the meaning gets lost in the way and Hernández-Linares is well aware of it. In her poetry book, she separates the stories into three main sections, “Comadre” (11), “Hija” (47), and “Mi Gente (¡Ustedes!)” (71). In the first section, Hernández- Linares includes a total of thirteen poems, where she writes two poems under the same title as the book, “Mucha Muchacha” (44) and “Too Much Girl” (18). In the poem “Too Much Girl” (18), Hernández-Linares describes her experience in the graduate school she attends where the nested entitlement is taken up by white men. In this poem, Hernández-Linares is stating that she is “the scholar stuffing her anger into discourse” because this is her way to let out the discrimination that she encounters in a predominantly white school. This is demonstrated when Hernández-Linares claims: “[T]his brick academy was built / to prepare white men to run thing / not counting on me / I find a chair / later, a skunk” (“Too Much Girl” 11-14). In this moment,

the reader introduces to theme of resiliency that Hernández-Linares is demonstrating to protect herself in a place where she is not welcomed or accepted because of her race and her skin color. Also skunk in this case could signify an embodiment of an animal that is willing to defend itself against anything. The skunk symbolizes strength and awareness that will protect itself in case someone will attack. Hernández- Linares then explains the dynamic of systematic silencing in the classroom, where the brown girl is seen as the Other:

The professor, blonde bun at her neck, slam
the gavel on the short brown girl's head.
The specimen has an amazing acumen,
she should be studied. Another professor proclaims
the short brown girl is unable to theorize upon
the literature by a skinny over-privileged man
who questions existence, discards it in his boredom.
There is, gentlemen, no subject, since there is no one
left to conquer. ("Too Much Girl" 64-72)

Here Hernández-Linares describes how she is seen as a "specimen" that needs to be studied in a primarily white school, considering the professor with the blonde bun on her head. She is being silenced by the school professors because they are already assuming Hernández-Linares is "unable to theorize upon the literature" although she may be more than capable of doing so. She is demonstrating the bias and prejudice that institutions, such as colleges in America, maintain about first-generation students. Hernández-Linares is already placed in a box of preconceived notions of prejudgment by her professors, the role models of the

school. This discrimination aims to silence Hernández-Linares and to press her into performing within the limits that are assigned to her by the American white culture.

Other poems in the first section highlight the struggles of moving to a new country where a language must be learned- in this case, her family moved to United States and they had to learn English. This concept is mentioned in the very first poem of the book, “Learning to Talk” (15). For that reason, Hernández-Linares uses codeswitchings in her poems in order to refer to the Salvadoran identity and culture, immersed in the American culture. In order to not lose meaning and sight of her background, Hernández- Linares uses verbiage to demonstrate that she is a scholar and has integrated into the American culture. The second section of the book highlights the importance of the section “Hija” (47) which means “daughter” and is separated into 11 poems. Some important themes in this section include the discrimination against women such as “Lotería de la mujer” (56) and “Siguanaba” (65). In the first poem, Hernández-Linares is claiming that women need to win the lottery to check what cards they will be dealt with in life. The art created for this poem was managed by Nuvia Crisol Ruland, a San Diego based artists. In this art, the stages of a woman’s life are showing through imaged and a set of boxes that control women. Leticia Hernández-Linares is shedding light to this game to show the cultural prejudices against women and what they look like. In an interview with Therese Konopelski, Hernández-Linares shares how important it is for her to include humor and interaction in her poetry to engage the audience:

Humor and interaction play integral roles in the performance of my poetry. The familiarity, the fun of the game attracts me to lotería. I have used the game for youth art

⁸ “Sociolinguistics. The use of one dialect, register, accent, or language variety over another, depending on social or cultural context, to project a specific identity.” <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/code-switching>

projects and to engage the audience. In terms of this poem, Nuvia Crisol Ruland, a San Diego based artist, created “Lotería de la Mujer.” Her artwork and collaborative spirit inspired me. Her version depicts the stages of a woman’s life, and I appreciate the inclusion of unexpected images like an androgynous *Trabajador* and unapologetic *Vaga*. These images of the lotería⁹ highlight how women have been dominated within their gendered roles by the patriarchal society. In order to protect young girls and the innocent, Hernández-Linares is raising awareness to the way these boxes are created and maintained by society. In order to break the silence, Hernández- Linares does it by the power of word and Nuvia Crisol Ruland, the artist of “Lotería de la mujer” is capable to raising awareness through the magic of art.

The third section of the collection of poems is called “Mi Gente (¡Ustedes!) (71) speaks on the incredible circle of women that surrounds Hernández-Linares. One of the poems mentioned in the third section is “Chacarera de palabras” in which chacarera¹⁰ stems from a dance, and the words in this poem dance together in rhythm to represent the community of women and men coming together to sing and to cool the heels by the fire of cassette tapes and guitars. This poem attributes to the circle of strong *mucha muchachas* that surround Hernández-Linares growing up, considering that the book is dedicated to her Mama¹¹. In this section, *Mi gente* also refers to the cultural roots that keep the poetic voice grounded in the community, describing a song “Mi gente,” by Héctor Lavoe. This song expresses the pride that “my people”

⁹ You can access those images on this website: <https://www.artecrisol.com/Loteria-de-La-Mujer>

¹⁰ A type of music and dance that originated in Santiago del Estero, Argentina. This type of music serves as a rural counterpart to the cosmopolitan imagery of the Tango.

¹¹ Mama in this case stands for grandmother.

make the singer feel. This particular reference demonstrates that Hernández-Linares is drawn to the music and the lyrical illustration to represent the cultural roots.

Unfolding Works

Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl (2015) and *Beast Meridian* (2017) are significant works to discuss in a new era of Latinx poetry that speaks on gender issues, racism, feminism, and the intimate stories using the archive. These books are unfolding now and not as much academic research has been done on either work. Most of the information in this thesis will be taken out of interviews, YouTube performances, Social Media outlets and reviews by a range of publishers. The post Anzaldúan movement is demonstrated in both of these collections in means of the pain, the vulnerability and the healing that takes place. This is especially presented in *Beast Meridian*, where the very beginning of the poetry book starts with a quote by Anzaldúa, presenting the transformation that occurs in the in-between space, in the liminal space:

Bridges span liminal (threshold) space between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. Nepantla es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement... (Villarreal 5)

In the light of silence, Anzaldúa has defied being silenced and instead she has spoken on issues a racial, ideological, cultural and biological consciousness in the making of the Borderlands, in this case referring to how a person is defined with the word “alien” if they do not. This struggle of borders as mentioned above is not only geographic, but it lives

within the cultural understandings. For that reason, Anzaldúa has spoken on the consciousness of the Borderlands in *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, speaking on the ambivalence from the clash of voices that cause a mental and emotional state of perplexity in the life of the mestiza (Anzaldúa 78). This struggle of borders oftentimes results in an inner war and for the collision that takes place when two or more cultures come in contact, the silencing and the speaking out come in. Anzaldúa protested the commonly held beliefs that indigenous culture is less than white culture in America through her writing- Anzaldúa did not silence herself. The poem “Una lucha de fronteras/ A Struggle of Borders,” is an example of raising awareness to her struggle as a *mestiza*:

Because I, a mestiza,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio
Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultáneamente. (Anzaldúa 77)

In this particular moment of *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa is describing the shifting that happens in the cultural space through the use of both English and Spanish. In this eight-verse poem, Anzaldúa is speaking in English, the dominant language in the first part, and moving through to Spanish language in the second part of the poem. Simultaneously, the clash of an English voice and a Spanish voice is occurring, causing a product of bilingualism that is always in transition. Languages represent identity

and power, in this case, the use of language has the power to limit or expand someone's abilities to understand.

Her legacy has been shaped since the 20th century and is continuously shifting culturally, spiritually with a current unstable prediction of what will happen tomorrow. Both Villarreal and Hernández- Linares have lived through similar experiences in the Post-Anzaldúan movement, referring to being part of two cultures that clash, and their works demonstrate that through the act of speaking in a visual manner on the page, or through the sound of their songs, but also selective silencing by choosing exactly what issues they depict in their collections of poems.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis will have a total of three chapters, one dedicated to each specific author. The first chapter will introduce the theories that will be used, specifically focusing on the importance that Gloria Anzaldúa has had on immigration theories, silence, the borderland and the gendered discourse in Mexican culture of the Texas-Mexico border. I will provide an overview of the works and the fundamental role Anzaldúa has carried in the field. Then, I will examine the post-Anzaldúan movement and the influence it has in the 21st century Latino/a poetry movement through the perspective of writers such as Francisco Aragón, Urayoán Noel, Julia Alvarez amongst others. This first chapter of the thesis will also explore in detail the theory of silence in the book *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, specifically focusing on "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," (53) along with the theory of the archive, focusing on the scholarship of Marlene Manoff.

The next chapter of the thesis will be based on Leticia Hernández-Linares and her collection of poems, *MMTMG*. I will look into the influence and the impact that poets such as Roque Dalton, Gioconda Belli and Alfonsina Storni had on Leticia Hernández- Linares. This will be followed by a literature review, looking at what work has been studied and considered on *MMTMG* so far. A crucial aspect of this research will be to explore the groundbreaking work that this poet has and her impact in the Salvadorian community. Following the literature review, the use of silence will be studied in this chapter. What type of silence does Hernández- Linares follow and what are those reasons behind that choice? Questions like the above will be answered through the use of the research that Cheryl Glenn has contributed in the rhetoric of silence. In this chapter, I will study the binary of the silencing, how gender has been the silenced role in the Salvadorian culture and why that is. This will be analyzed in her poem “Porque no todos somos iguales” (28), meaning that we are not all equal. Her impact on this field of the rhetoric of silence is revolutionary because Hernández-Linares uses the physical silence as an attribute to her gendered themes in poetry. Amongst other themes, this chapter will cover the form of the collection of poems, language, and the voice of the poet.

The third chapter of the thesis will focus on the collection of poems of Vanessa Angélica Villarreal, *Beast Meridian*. This chapter will open with the biography of the author, her accomplishments thus far and the significance of her work in the Borderland field. This will be followed by a literature review, mainly looking into the contributions of poets such as Urayoán Noel and how his influences may have affected the themes of Villarreal. A crucial view of the archive view will be studied and analyzed in this chapter, through the lens of Marlene Manoff in “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines.” Consequentially, this will demonstrate the types of silence/speech that the poet proposes and where the reader

notices it the most. I will be studying the language use in the poetry book, the voice, theme and the use of code-switching in her poetry. One use of silence in this collection of poems will include the visual aspect of the poetry book, specifically the form. The following questions will be answered: “What type of silence is Villarreal using? At what specific moments of the poem does the poet reveal an absence of words, or a physical absence? How does silence contribute to the gendered roles in the Mexican culture of the Borderland?” Through the findings that are to come, the end of this chapter will be concluded with the post-Anzalduan movement and how poets are innovating this style of poetry in this new era.

This work will investigate the Latinx literary criticism that has been studied up until now. Relevantly, not much academic scholarship has been researched on the present collections of poems. Some of the complications of this research is not only the lack of other scholarship, but the new era of poetry is innovative and constantly being adjusted and modified in the present days. Although these ramifications could be significant in the overall message of the silencing/ speaking through the Anzaldúan lens, the opportunities of this work can introduce a wave of academic scholarship on the Latino/a borderland theories through the appreciation of present-day poetry. Furthermore, Villarreal and Hernández- Linares are at the peak of their poetry writing career thus far, which could emphasize new groundbreaking works will come from both of them. In this way, other poets can receive the inspiration to experiment with free verse in their telling of their story without judgement. This work can possibly inspire scholars to take on this research to even more discovery and investigation of the nonphysical borderlands.

THEORY- CHAPTER 1

What is Silence?

Silence is the rhetorical gesture of a pause, an emptiness or a void that can affect the way a piece of work is read, how an unspoken message is understood or how a movie is directed (Miller 1). In the works of poetry, the unspoken resembles an absence that draws the reader in, causing them to wander what the broader meaning is. The art of silence has been defined by Cheryl Glenn in “Unspoken A Rhetoric of Silence,” where she defines it as “as absence of the spoken word, as presence of nonverbal communication, as strategic choice, or as imposition, silence takes many forms and serves many functions, particularly as those functions vary from culture to culture” (15). Considering this connotation that defines silence in this particular moment, one can understand that cultural conditioning affects the way an individual perceives the silence of a poem. This individual will attach meaning to the poem based on her personal experiences. This is observed in *Borderlands La Frontera*, where Anzaldúa narrates that in a closed mouth, there will not be mosquitos entering that space:

En boca cerrada no entran moscas. ‘Flies don’t enter a closed mouth’ is a saying I kept hearing when I was a child. *Ser habladora* was to be a gossip and a liar, to talk too much. *Muchachitas bien criadas*, well-bred girls don’t answer back. *Es una falta de respecto* to talk back to one’s mother or father. (54)

In this part of the chapter “Overcoming the Tradition of Silence”, Anzaldúa not only emphasizes the significance the word “silence” contains in her Mexican culture, but also reveals the gendered silence which has been applied to women around her family. By using the word “*habladora*”, Anzaldúa implies that people in her vicinity were referring to

women, since Spanish is a gendered language and the “a” at the end of “habladora” references the gender of women. According to Richard L. Johannesen in “Unspoken A Rhetoric of Silence” by Cheryl Glenn, the personality and prior experience of an individual will change the way they recognize silence (16). He compiles a list of potential meanings of silence. He claims that: “The person’s silence is a means of punishing others, of annihilating others symbolically by excluding them from verbal communication” (16). Considering this meaning, Anzaldúa was punished through the use of silence, she should not be speaking or gossiping much because people would consider her a liar. Through this example, Johannesen is augmenting the representation and power exerted through silence.

The Theory of Silence - “Unspoken/ A Rhetoric of Silence” by Cheryl Glenn

According to Cheryl Glenn, silence has been a fundamental subject for a long time, just like our past is irrevocably silenced through gestures, conversations, and manuscripts that can never be recaptured and read again (1). Other places where one encounters silence is in libraries, archives, text and newscasts. For that reason, silence is a matter that must be analyzed into texts because the power of silence lies in the absence of words. Moving through history, silence has dictated the dominance and limitations of events: “There are eventless periods in human history, periods in which history seems to carry silence- nothing but silence- around her; periods in which [wo/]men and events are hidden beneath the silence” (Glenn 1). Importantly enough, both collections of poems speak on the tradition of silence which dates back to the past in 1980s, when a movement of Latino/a voice in poetry and texts was surfacing, taking into account the contributions of Anzaldúa in 1987 with *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*. With silence develop limitations and influences because one needs to be aware on how to use silence because if done strategically, it can create a dynamic of storytelling that helps generations of people, but

if used without intention, silence can cause problems. Silence can be truly authoritative and empowering because as Glenn puts it, silence is a specific rhetorical art that merits investigation in the rhetoric and composition studies. For that reason, silence will be explored in both works of *MMTMG* and *Beast Meridian* because both encompass selective silencing in the telling of their story. The speech appears in the absence of silence, while silence invades in the absence of speech. Although this contribution of silence and speech seems significantly uncomplicated at first, the analysis of the works will demonstrate otherwise, considering that the choices of both poets constituted conscious decisions of what poems, pictures and performances would go into their book.

Oftentimes silence has been applied in societies over the course of history as a way to oppress women, even dating back to St. Paul's first-century censure that says, women should learn in silence with all submissiveness (Glenn 2). As it will be noted in the future chapters, silence has been considered a tactic to oblige oppression, passivity, emptiness and obedience on the female body and voice. Taking away the voice of someone through a rhetorical tradition could at first demonstrate that silenced gendered bodies do not have as much power. However, in *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl* and *Beast Meridian* one observes that silence has power and dangers because what is kept from the public is done intentionally to show a message. Therefore, women writers have embraced the silence and turned it into a "weapon" to reveal individuality and the spiritual forces that come in spite of institutionalized oppression in the borderlands. In *MMTMG*, silence is communicated through the experiences of a poetic voice that has undergone oppression at the hands of a mainly white privileged graduate school, where Hernández- Linares claims that the brick academy built specifically for white men does not count on her (18). In this way, she exposes the systematic silencing that takes place in institutions of power such as

schools. On the other hand, Villarreal has a remarkable connection with silence since it demonstrates the visual aspect on the form and how that is intertwined with the use of language. For instance, in an interview with Stacey Park in “Kingsley & Kate Tufts Poetry Blog,” Villarreal discloses her view on form and complex is for women of color to experiment with free verse through the lens of visual potential:

When I started studying poetry more formally, I was frustrated with the limitations of certain received forms, even free verse or blank verse, because the sonic qualities and visual potential of the language weren’t achieving enough in a left justified poem on the page. Having a visual art and photography background, I wanted poems to use the field of the page to visually open up the potential for multiple readings, or show up as disciplinary forms, prayer cards, windows.

The explanation on poetic form and decisions that emerge in the work of *Beast Meridian* exposes the lyricism and fascination with becoming one with the poems. Also, this allows room for the reader to explore with the text through the silence of a pictorial imagery. More than that, Villarreal shares that she was captivated with defying the limited definitions of experimentations that her MFA program pushed on the students, especially on the students of color as Villarreal explains further in the same interview mentioned above:

... [Writers of color are often not given permission to be ‘masters’ of these colonial forms. So we deform them. And the idea of deformation was so powerful, and it unlocked something for me- I remember my grandmother’s long scars on her body, how I had bad and missing teeth growing up- the physicality of deformity speaks to me. Deforming language allows me to work through trauma.

Speech through Silence

The presence of silence does not simply mean that the absence of words is taking place because silence is existent even when speech is occurring. For instance, the poetic voice in both works demonstrates that silence is established in the background of speech, it will become displayed in the moment that silence ceases. Silence is not what happens when one stops talking, but it happens when language concludes: “When language ceases, Silence begins. But it does not begin *because* language ceases. The absence of language simply makes the presence of Silence more apparent” (Glenn 4). Although speech is described as powerful, silence rarely fails a work of text because ultimately silence forms part of the speech: “Thus silence remains inescapably one form of speech and an element in every dialogue” (Glenn 5). In this art of silencing and speech, one notes that silence is present when language ceases to be used. For instance, this is observed visually in the poetry of Villarreal, specifically in the poem “Malinche” (15) which is part of the first section “An Illness of Pines” (13). This poem speaks through visual silencing on the page, here the empty space embodies a void that is missing.

I find the victims in the valley I hunt the wilderness in myself I stalk my prey
 through myself let hornets hive my womb I am born fragrant stars and
 make planets of my body I noble the old people I make victim the valley
 I make mountains kneel in myself I eat a crown of lead make him an air
 I unearth the noble victim I make valleys of
 young women I cleave white the wilderness take
 violence into ourself I victim the gods in the
 valley the victim she is myself victim in the
 valley it is my own sun I stalk my victim in the
 valley it is my sun people I hunt my hunter
 the wilderness in myself I open my illness
 to the kingdom I am cleaved by the old and
 new world I entomb elders in the valley and
 grow mild flowers of their teeth I birth a
 betrayed nation I fill with hunted the
 wilderness is myself my illness led us to this see my braid the poisoned river and the
 lost tongues I walk as night I carry the child of the noble cause I make my victim my
 nation in the valley I hunt the wilderness in myself stalk the tall grasses I am she
 who betrays blood for a little bit of kingdom (Villarreal, “Malinche” 15)

The poem is speaking on the injustice that was caused to Malinche¹², an Aztec woman who was sold off to Hernán Cortés in the 16th century. The visual representation of the poem displays an empty square in the middle of the poem, which would usually symbolize the space where a photograph would go. Considering that this poem speaks of a crucial character that was treated prejudicially in the colonial times, Villarreal is setting the tone and theme of colonizing for the poems to come. The empty space on the page embodies the stories of immigration and discrimination that are taking place in Villarreal's personal life. The emptiness could represent the void and the displacement that happens when two cultures come in contact.

Theory of the Archive

In order to pursue the theoretical work of the archive, one must refer to the past through documents such as literary texts, songs, dances, photographs amongst other resources. As Manoff states in her research, "Librarians and archivists are intimately aware of how new modes of scholarly production and communication are transforming the ways we collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to the archive" (21). For this reason, both Villarreal and Hernández-Linares are preserving history through the stories they tell about their cultural roots in *Beast Meridian* and *MMTMG*. Villarreal is interested in demonstrating the raw photographic memories of her family, almost creating an altar where one can attend in order to remember the past. Meanwhile, Hernández-Linares takes the reader through a lyrical journey of songs that have

¹²Malinche, a Nahuatl woman born in 1500 in Mexico, she was the daughter of an Aztec *cacique* (chief). Malinche not only had an unusual level of education, but she took on the role of an interpreter, advisor and intermediary for the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. "According to Candelaria, the traders eventually sold Malinal to a *cacique* in Tabasco, where she lived until Cortés arrived in 1519. The *cacique* presented Cortés with a group of young women to serve him, including Malinal. She quickly distinguished herself. The Spanish gave her the respectful name "Doña Marina," while the Aztecs attached an honorary addendum of -tzin to her name, making her Malintzin." <https://daily.jstor.org/who-was-la-malinche/>. Also, Malinche gave birth to the first mestizo, the son of Malinche and Cortés. Considering that Malintzin was the translator of Cortés, she had the power to keep and switch certain elements within both languages.

impacted her childhood growing up- hence as to why she dedicates the collection of poems to her grandmother, Zoraida and all the *mucha muchachas* that have raised her.

Mucha muchacha Too Much Girl and Beast Meridian as Archival Artifacts

MMTMG and *Beast Meridian* work as an archive because they preserve cultural roots and identity. This contributes to the political elements that appear in both collections of poems, where the poets are questioning the institutionalized racism that takes place in America, specifically in the Borderlands. Both collections of poems are not simply focusing on the Borderlands as a physical and geographical space of the archive, on the contrary, they are more concerned with the social, ethnic and racial borderlands that are occurring through time and space all around America. Most importantly, if those borderlands apply to other cultural roots outside of America, Villarreal and Hernández-Linares truly take into consideration the archive as a tool to digitize and catalog their stories in their interdisciplinary work. Their work is created as an archive not to simply apply to the scholarly work, rather, both poets wish to allow other readers without access to an academic institution to pick up the collection of poems and have the ability to relate to the narrative.

Anzaldúan Archive

According to “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines,” the archive has been present for a long time but especially noticed more from multiple disciplines in the last decade. An archive is a compelling body of literature which provides truth and adequacy to the researcher. By definition, an archive is “a place where documents and other materials of public or historical interest are preserved” (Manoff 10). This conveys that an archive is a

collection of artifacts used by museums, libraries, schools amongst other historical records. In *Mucha muchacha Too Much Girl*, Hernández- Linares uses the historical archive by citing epigraphs by well-known authors such as Gioconda Belli, Roque Dalton and Nawal El Saawadi to demonstrate that her work is stemming from historical events. Also, Hernández-Linares constructs a cultural selection that has inspired her work. Meanwhile, she also offers recordings of the poem, a place of documents and materials that can be located online. Her poetry book takes you through a narration of her “tierra”, her roots which are located in El Salvador all the way to the United States. Conversely, in *Beast Meridian*, Vanessa Angélica Villarreal maintains a constant memoir of her childhood trauma when learning English presenting poems mentioned above, therefore relating her poems and creating them through the use of artifacts, archeological memories, and photos of her family. Both poetry books are an archive that become intimate as they progress from beginning to the end.

Meanwhile, the use of the archive is present in *MMTMG*¹³, where Leticia Hernández- Linares adds intense imagery through the use of historical archives. She is able to remind Salvadorans about her political passion in poems such as “Porque no todos somos iguales” (28) and “Tragilandia” (31). In the first mentioned poem, Hernández-Linares speaks of the “disappeared” and “the unidentified Central Americans, the casualty marked by two sticks forming a cross” (28). This poem speaks about the civil wars in Central America where people lost their lives and became the “disappeared”. The author uses repositories of documents and manuscripts, possibly books of history to tell the story of Central Americans. Meanwhile, “Tragilandia” speaks about the remembrance of the

¹³ *MMTMG* stands for the title of the poetry book, *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl*.

victims of the 2001 earthquake in El Salvador. In this poem, Hernández-Linares describes the aftermath of a tragedy, claiming only in Spanish the roots of where she comes from to create her identity:

Yo vengo de la tierra,
la tierra de tragedia,
yo vengo de la tierra
la tierra de tragedia
El Salvador, no se salvó,
el país que hasta Dios olvidó (“Tragilandia” 35-40)

In this stanza, the author accumulates information about the place of tragedy and reinterpreting facts for the reader to enter her world of pain and disaster. The author is connecting to her past with nostalgia in hope to remember the tragedy and the people affected. In a way, Hernández-Linares is embracing the disaster that hits close to home, connecting with her roots. As Manoff explains in the theory of the archive, in the establishment and consolidation under colonial rule, postcolonial subjects have been exposed to it have adopted strategies to contextualize and re-tell their stories through their perspective (16). For that reason, postcolonial scholarship demonstrates that the colonial archive is a way to connect to a past that today’s writers have not experienced first-hand: “Despite their limitations, we cling to archival materials in the hope of somehow connecting to a past we can never fully know” (Manoff 17). This quote represents the desire Hernández-Linares feels to connect to her past. This poem summarizes the silence encountered between the lines through an absence. For instance, the poet describes the tragedy that takes place in El Salvador, the earthquake that causes damage and also the

hole in the wall which represent a *tienda*, a place to shop that is usually missed as one walks by it.

Between numbered blocks, the hole in the wall,
tienda is open, shelves skinny, like counters
wedged between front porches
and the street, with just a little bit
of a few things, en las colonias, back home.
(Hernández- Linares, “Tragilandia” 10-14)

The hole in the wall embodies a physical empty space that has been a product of disaster where the shelves are skinny, or in other words, those shelves have become empty without food. These struggles maintain a moment of presence in the poem, they create an emotional relationship between reader and poem. The symbolical presence of silence is the hole that represents the desolation that comes with disaster.

Borderlands Theory

Beast Meridian by Vanessa Angelica Villarreal contributes to the experience of overcoming the cultural clash that presents itself as a liminal space, that is, the fact of being a Mexican woman but residing in the United States. In telling the story of the immigrants, Villarreal's poems portray the difficulties and obstacles of a person crossing the border and moving from one place to another, thus losing part of the identity. With this spatial movement, the liminal line is exposed in the imaginary territory that is externalized as a meridian. With immigration, there is anguish of experiencing cultural assimilation in an unknown and foreign place, where one immigrates. Villarreal, influenced by the theory of

Gloria Anzaldúa's work, *Borderlands La Frontera*, points to the cultural transformations that occurs within "this-between space" (Villarreal 5). Indeed, as mentioned above, it is indicated that Villarreal's poems are dynamic, precise, intuitive and intelligent. However, the study of the poem with respect to the theoretical contribution of Anzaldúa's work has not yet been explored. For this reason, Gloria Anzaldúa's theory is a useful tool for studying the Mexican patriarchal culture and personal experience of Villarreal. Her poetry will be studied from three points of view: women's rights in the patriarchal culture of Mexico, personal experience with the language in both and the marginalization of the other as a divisive tool between cultures. *Beast Meridian* establishes a connection with *Borderlands La Frontera* through Anzaldúa's theoretical lenses.

Although several critics say that Villarreal is breaking the schemes of the immigrant narrative in *Beast Meridian*, with a transcendental and innovative aesthetic style, its roots are inherited from Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands*. These roots refer to the immigrant, personal and feminist content of Villarreal's work. However, taking into account Anzaldúa's feminist work, Villarreal's poems are sufficiently innovative for his personal experience. This contributes to contemporary feminist discourse, intertwined with immigrant discourse and what it is to live in a "borderland" from an intimate aspect, causing Villarreal's poem to transcend community resistance in Mexican-Chicano immigrant groups living in Texas, USA.

Types of Code- Switching

The alternation of codes in the poetry plays a significant role, which includes telling the story of Vanessa Angélica Villarreal in the purest and most natural way she can. This poem is an autobiography of the author with private and personal images. These images depict her

grandmother, her mother, her dad, her tías,¹⁴ among other family members. There are times when the poem looks more like a diary or a *chapbook*, because the content is extremely sentimental and private. Vanessa Villarreal's writing is similar to the way Gloria Anzaldúa writes, they both invite the reader to enter their personal and sentimental world. Villarreal writes in Spanish and English because she does not wish to leave any story trait that is false or meaningless. Words lose meaning in the translation process, so the author wants to put the sentences in Spanish because if she translates them, the phrases will lose their meaning and lose the power of immigrant history. This alternation of codes¹⁵ is fundamental in these poems because it shows us that the audience who does not know Spanish, or does not have the slightest knowledge of Spanish, cannot easily understand the content of the poem. The author uses code alternation on purpose, and for two fundamental reasons: one reason means not losing the importance and content of the phrase in translation, and the other is to share the history of immigrants with readers who will put the effort on their part to read between the lines of the poems.

To show the importance of feeling belonging, Villarreal takes a freedom in the poem with using Spanish as a base language. This shows that she is tied to the use of Spanish as a cause of her pride in her identity. This style that Villarreal adapts in her poem has important features of Gloria Anzaldúa's theory. And we notice this at the beginning of the poem, where the author quotes Anzaldúa: "Nepatlá is unknown land and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement" (Villarreal 5). Anzaldúa and Villarreal, have had similar experiences with living in two places and always jumping between two identities and two languages. The coerced assimilation is evident in every aspect of Villarreal's life: at school, and

¹⁴ Tías stands for aunts.

¹⁵ Code-switching is important in the Anzaldúan movement because Anzaldúa fought hard to overcome the tradition of silence, the attacks she overcame as a student in school because she spoke English with an "accent" (Anzaldúa 54).

in public places. Always being between two cultures causes an identity shift, constant comparison, and a state of confusion as well. When it comes to writing all these feelings in the poem, Villarreal writes about her life using codeswitching because she wants to demonstrate what it's like to have two identities every day. To show this alternation of codes, she is inspired by Anzaldúa, because she has the same style of writing in Spanish and English. Why does Anzaldúa write by using codeswitching?

In her books, Anzaldúa expresses her objective ideas and feelings behind the alternation of code-switching, allowing the reader to understand her reasoning. She writes:

Until I am free to write bilingually. And to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. (Anzaldúa 59)

In this sentence, Anzaldúa is claiming that she will not accommodate the people around her with speaking English, because her language is Spanish. She's not going to let anyone make her feel less or feel ashamed to use her tongue, whether that means speaking Spanish, English or Spanglish. The same phenomenon we see in Villarreal's work with the use of code switching. In one way, Villarreal is paying homage to her language because it is her identification to her Mexican roots.

What is the importance of code-switching?

Code switching is a purposeful device that tells a story about Latinos in the borderland, as Gloria Anzaldúa called it “Oyé como ladra: el lenguaje de la frontera”¹⁶ (Anzaldúa 55). Not only

¹⁶ “Listen how it barks: the language of the Borderlands”

is this way of speaking natural to establish a connection between the reader and the writer, but it also expresses identity, culture, family values, and language. This type of writing allows the readers to connect with the book on a more cultural and spiritual level, especially if they speak both languages and are aware of the connotation of certain words in the Spanish speaking world. Codeswitching also creates a bond with the reader because it emphasizes a casual tone, an everyday language that allows the book to keep the memories, the humor and the tone. For instance, Leticia Hernández-Linares expresses how important humor is during her performances and the speaking in her collection of poems. By using codeswitching, the author is able to express poetry and to connect with the audience on a familiar way. Words and phrases will not lose the meaning, the audience may learn more expressions in a different language in case they do not know yet and the whole experience of the performance will be inclusive.

Origin and Culture

In Vanessa Villarreal's work, as well as the poetry of Leticia Hernández-Linares, an exploration between the nexus of her Mexican culture and her language as her part of identity is necessary. Throughout the assimilation process, the poets have been devalued for their origin, sometimes considered as *the Other*. The authors archive a journey into their own past, and in these poems, they use Spanish and English interchangeably. However, throughout their poems, the authors use an alternation of codes to emphasize this process of a binary identity, between being Mexican or El Salvadoran and being American, whilst living in the United States. The poets break down the barriers with the poems, making it clear that they will continue to be a person with two different realities, and that they will use Spanish when necessary, without feeling as the Other. This is the

genius of their poem: telling the story from a natural, true, and sentimental point of view at the same time, letting the reader travel with the writer through the aesthetics of the poem and the words in two languages, English, and Spanish.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot- Theory of Silence

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1949-2012), a Haitian academic and anthropologist, explores the meaning of silence in his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995). In this book, Trouillot explores the need to read history as an incomplete part of human narration of the reality as seen by the historian. For that reason, much of the past that is preserved even in records and archives get “silences” or pushed to the background. Hence, in the two-present works by Linares and Villarreal, although they are using archives such as songs, photographs and stories passed down in their families, oftentimes the silencing takes place in the creation of the memory. Trouillot also touches upon how history is produced, and a selective “silencing” occurs (*Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 1995). Furthermore, Trouillot expands on the idea that event such as records of texts and narration of history create the narration but at the end of the day, history becomes “fiction” with special power to create the past, the present and to dictate the future.

One of the most revolutionary contributions of Trouillot is associated with the different silences that make history which are identified in four specific categories: silencing in the making of sources, silencing in the creation of archives, researchers themselves silence on purpose to make a selection, and not every narrative will become part of the history from the past. For the purpose of this work, I will focus on the contribution of poets themselves silencing on purpose to make a choice and select the few archives they believe will create a main impact

on the audience. For instance, Villarreal spoke about the importance of selecting which archives to keep as photographs to accompany her poems in one of her interviews on the program “Words on a Wire” (El Paso, Texas). In this interview, Villarreal shared how difficult it was for her to choose exactly what pictures she wanted to be displayed on the collection of poems. In this way, Villarreal is actively silencing the past by making a choice of what memories she is revealing. In this way, the poet is actively creating the narration and creating those memories. Meanwhile, Hernández- Linares selected poems that pertained to the involvement of *mucha muchachas* in her life and their role, specifically focusing on her grandmother, Zoraida. Overall, both poets have constructed their books through a conscious decision of what to silence and what issues to speak on to create their projects, considering the issues of the borderland, whether that is physical in the case of Villarreal, or nonphysical in the case of Hernández-Linares.

CHAPTER 2- LETICIA HERNÁNDEZ- LINARES

Echoing the Hispanic Canon through Roque Dalton, Gioconda Belli and Alfonsina Storni

Leticia Hernández- Linares is an award-winning writer and community leader and has been involved in distinctive songs and poems performances. She focuses mostly on poetry about her motherland, specifically El Salvador, carrying with her the legacy of her family, her culture and her art. Hernández-Linares's writing has appeared in newspapers, literary journals, anthologies located especially in San Francisco, which is also where she resides. Some of those places are *Street Art San Francisco*, *U.S. Latino Literature Today*, *Teatro bajo mi piel*, *Huizache*, and *Pilgrimage* while also being a member of CantoMundo¹⁷. Hernández- Linares has been working in the Mission District since 1995, creating poetry and song performances that interconnect her experience with that of other immigrants. Appreciating the poetry art of performance, Hernández-Linares has collaborated with many visual artists in order to spark interactions between her and the audience across the country, as well as in El Salvador. Leticia Hernández- Linares is the founder of the ten-year event series called *Amate: Women Painting Stories* which led to the collaboration of *Mission Mortaja*, centering around the historical figure, Prudencia Ayala and her influence as a writer, seamstress, fortuneteller and pioneering feminist from the twentieth century El Salvador. Leticia Hernández- Linares has been writing and working in the Mission District to create work that envision Central American artists and writers, leading her to host the *Wandering Song* book launch at Busboys and Poets, as well as co-edit the

¹⁷ CantoMundo is an American literary organization founded in 2009 to support Latino poets and poetry, dedicating it to creation and critical analysis of Latinx poetry <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CantoMundo>.

Wandering Song: Central American Writing in the United States (2017). Importantly enough, Hernández- Linares was named a San Francisco Laureate.

According to Urayoán Noel, the last decade has also witnessed an increased mobility within certain Latino/a communities, a mobility shaped partly by demographics and partly by the deracinating effects of a global, neoliberal economy. Whereas mainland Puerto Rican communities have historically been concentrated in the industrial cities of the North, including New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia (cities where postwar migrants went to find work), the recent demographic growth has been most marked in the Southeast (especially Central Florida (854)). With this movement within the Latino communities, comes a representation of spaces that have been gentrified historically such as the San Francisco's Mission District, a movement that has been questioned and criticized by Leticia Hernández- Linares. The San Francisco area is well known for the collaboration with creativity and exploring a range of forms of art. For instance, the San Francisco Art Institute features large scale projects involving a multitude of artists. Furthermore, City Lights Publishers is an independent bookstore publisher in San Francisco, California, well known for literature and poetry. The independent press discovers new voices and gives them an audience with which they can convey messages into the public.

Hernández- Linares' poetry is replete with historical references, lyrical expression where her cultural stories come to life through embracing her historical testimony and creative re-telling. Resilient *Mucha Muchachas* in her family and history have shaped who she has become, therefore Leticia Hernández- Linares feels the needs to create and weave the lyrics into songs. The topics that she focuses on range from colorism, racism, equality and gender issues, to gentrification. In the telling of her stories, Hernández-Linares adds humor to interact with her audience as she performs her poetry. Her art and her youthful spirit show in the way she engages

the audience by singing, dancing and speaking her poetry. She follows the example of Roque Dalton (El Salvador, 1935-1975), an important poet who cites in one of his poems “Like you” (*Poemas Clandestinos*, 1986) that poetry like bread, is for everyone. She cites him in one of her interviews with Therese Konopelski (University of Notre Dame) in Letras Latinas Blog. Here Leticia Hernández- Linares expresses: “My poetic message follows Roque Dalton’s example, that *poetry like bread is for everyone, and that I exist and create in community* (Letras Latinas). With this example, the poet is paving the way of the literary scholarship and aesthetic philosophy that has inspired Hernández-Linares to create the collection of poems at hand.

Canonical Influences

Epigraphs – In the beginning of each section of the collection of poems, Leticia Hernández- Linares introduces quotes of famous writers such as Roque Dalton, Gioconda Belli, Alfonsina Storni and Nawal El Saadawi. The epigraphs contextualize some of the themes that will be presented later on in the poems offered in the respective section. The epigraphs serve to bring insight to the tradition of the poetry, and they set the tone for each respective chapter of the poetry book. These quotes by renowned authors function as the framework into the poems that will be used in the book. Furthermore, an intention is set through the use of language, specifically bilingualism where some epigraphs are in English while others are in Spanish. This works as a means to clarify and communicate the cultural roots of Leticia Hernández- Linares. In this way, Hernández- Linares maintains her identity and the identity of her community throughout her poetry.

In the following lines, I will highlight the importance of three key poets that are cited in *MMTMG* in their respective epigraphs from each section of the collection. In the beginning of

the book, Leticia Hernández-Linares cites a song by Mercedes Sosa and written by Félix Luna and Ariel Ramírez, “Alfonsina y el mar” (1969; Lagos Editorial), where she is referring to Alfonsina Storni (Argentina, 1892-1938) This important Argentinian poet, Alfonsina Storni, was born in 1892 in Switzerland but soon after moved to Argentina due to a business that her father owned. She became a fundamental figure in her time because she was amongst the first women who became successful in a world that was dominated by men. Some of the main themes in her writing contain topics concerning gender roles and discrimination, love and death, urban space and nature, as well as journalistic writing and theater.

During her career, Alfonsina Storni experimented with different forms of poetry, from traditional to free verse. Leticia Hernández-Linares cites the “Alfonsina y el mar” song, which itself draws from Storni’s final poem:

Te vas Alfonsina con tu soledad
¿Qué poemas nuevos fuiste a buscar?
Una voz antigua de viento y de sal
te requiebra el alma y la está llevando
y te vas hacia allá como en sueños
dormida, Alfonsina vestida de mar.

SUNG BY MERCEDES SOSA

WRITTEN BY

FÉLIX LUNA & ARIEL RÁMIREZ

(MMTMG 9)

By referencing this song, Hernández-Linares is setting the tone of her collection of poems-gloomy on one hand because the poet is focusing on the tragic suicide by Alfonsina Storni.

Having an incurable disease led Storni to commit suicide by heading towards the sea at La Perla Beach in Mar del Plata, Argentina. The death in this case terminated a final statement of agency due to the reappearing breast cancer that Storni had. Her death emphasizes the loss of a crucial and touching poet of the twentieth century. The poem is called “Partida” (158-160) and was written by Storni a few days before she completed suicide. In the poem, Storni expresses herself and describes the process:

Me llevan:
enredaderas invisibles
alargan sus garfios
desde el horizonte:
Mi cuello cruje.
Ya camino.
El agua no cede.
Mis hombros se abren en alas.
Toco con sus extremos
los extremos del cielo.
Lo hiero:
La sangre del cielo
bañando el mar... (35-47)

Referencing this particular part of Storni’s poem shows the significance of a woman who stood up for her beliefs and strength to support the roles of women in the world. The motif in the drowning scene focuses on female agency; that is, the tension between the female free expression in a patriarchal system. By drowning, Storni is letting go of the expectations that are

constructed around the female body. With this final decision to end her life, Alfonsina Storni gives up on her life but she leaves her legacy behind, years of writing poetry to writers such as Leticia Hernández-Linares to follow down her path and cite Storni in *Mucha muchacha* to this day. Furthermore, in this particular poetry piece, there is a combination of poetry and music in the rhyme of the poem. This aspect of poetry is noted in the work of Hernández-Linares; the music brings crowds together through the beats and the sharing of the rhythm of poetry.

Continuing with Roque Dalton, a Salvadoran poet, journalist and activist that is well-known for images related to life, politics and love. He was born in San Salvador in 1935 and was a leftist activist during this time. He became part of the higher education at the University of Chile and the University of El Salvador. According to Ernesto Cardenal, Roque Dalton was one of the most prominent poets of Latin America: “The Salvadoran guerilla poet Roque Dalton is one of the greatest poets of Latin America. And one of the most original. In one thing he is unsurpassed: poetic humor; humor even when he wrote about something as tragic as his beloved El Salvador, for which he gave his life” (*Clandestine Poems/ Poemas Clandestinos*, 1995). Just like Ernesto Cardenal, Leticia Hernández-Linares admires Roque Dalton for inspiration in her third section of the collection of poems. In her epigraph, Leticia Hernández-Linares cites a well-known poem by Roque Dalton where he highlights the importance of poetry in the world:

I believe the world is beautiful
and that poetry, like bread is for
everyone. And that my veins don't
end in me but in the unanimous
blood of those who struggle for life... (*MMTMG* 71)

In this part of the book, the poet is offering insight on the importance of community, therefore naming her third section “Mi Gente” (71), which means “My People”. The meaning of this short stanza shows that poetry, like eating bread, should be shared and it belongs to everyone. In this symbolic meaning, bread is symbolic of life, therefore poetry is life. This demonstrates that the poet is paving the way for the community to come together in the poems that follow. For instance, the part where the poet’s veins do not end in him but in the blood of those who struggle, it portrays the battle that people have had to fight for their beliefs. The Central American crisis began in 1970s where civil wars and communist revolutions took over and caused socioeconomic change. Her work confronts the political questions that El Salvador has undergone under the Salvadoran Civil War which was fought between the military junta and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front from October 15th, 1979 to January 1992. In this war, many anti-coup protesters were killed by the government which started the civil war. Hernández-Linares continues the legacy to fight for what she believes in, demonstrating that her language conveys the political passion and messages of equality, gender violence, and sharing her culture and upbringing.

Hernández-Linares also refers to Gioconda Belli, a central poet in Nicaragua, born in 1948 in Managua. Her scholarship focuses on gender issues, indigenous resistance, women’s emancipation and liberation. Leticia Hernández- Linares quotes Gioconda Belli in the beginning of the first section, “Comadre” (11). The poem chosen for this epigraph is “Madre mía de las palabras,” (11) where Linares sets the stage for the rights of women to speak up on their issues:

Soy una mujer hecha de palabras

Desde la antigüedad

Mi sangre flotó en la sopa de letras

Del vientre de mi madre

Gioconda Belli¹⁸ (1-4)

In this part of the section, Leticia Hernández-Linares is conveying the message that women come from a long line of other “muchacha muchachas”, women that have come from the mother’s womb, “del vientre de mi madre” (4). This shows that our poet is conscious of the importance that women have in the world and that their voices must be heard. This is also seen in one of the interviews that Hernández-Linares held with Therese Marie Konopelski in “Letras Latinas Blog,” where Hernández-Linares expressed: “The descriptor, accusation of “too much” has followed me throughout my life. My laugh: too loud; my words: too blunt; my anger: too extreme; my dreams: an epiphany” (Letras Latinas 2). In this instance, Hernández-Linares is marking the centrality of the issue- women must be heard and for that reason, her voice will be loud because she is a woman “hecha de palabras”, a woman made out of words from the ancient times. These messages must be conveyed to the public in a poetic voice, sung together.

¹⁸ This is taken out of *Mucha muchacha too much girl* on page 11 of the book section “Comadre”.

Types of Speaking & Visual Aesthetics

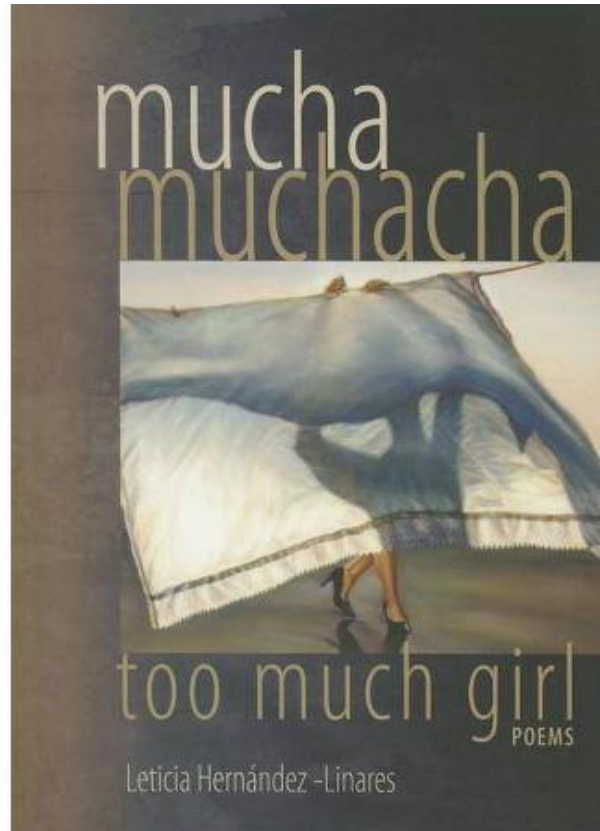


Fig. 1. Book Cover from Hernández-Linares, Leticia. *Mucha Muchacha Too Much Girl*. 2015, Tía Chucha Press.

The front cover of the *MMTMG* depicts an image of a woman performing household duties by hanging the sheets after doing laundry. The audience does not necessarily watch the woman doing laundry but is informed through this image that some gendered roles will be shown in the collection of poems. Importantly enough, the woman is wearing tacones¹⁹ while performing this everyday task which is unusual. This image ties well with one of Hernández-Linares' poems called "How to be Spiritual in Tacones" (53). In this poem, Hernández-Linares is breaking stereotypes and saying that one can be spiritual while wearing high heels.

¹⁹ Heels

Practicing a prayer that bruises
ball and arch, I diagram step and movement
for the guy who thinks you can't be spiritual
in tacones. The dance jumps over dismissal,
wrestles the tragedy, slides under the mark
of the question, how to be, how to be spiritual. (1-6)

With this example, Linares is speaking on the issue of stereotyping and putting the roles of women in a box. The judgement of women that sometimes can even come from church. For instance, in one of the interviews with Therese Konopelski, Hernández-Linares shares how this idea for the poem comes as a critique she heard about the way church ladies dress up and they were asked: “How can someone be spiritual in stilettos?” (Letras Latinas Blog: *Mucha Muchacha, Too Mucha Girl: An interview with Leticia Hernández-Linares*). By claiming that she is “practicing a prayer,” Leticia Hernández-Linares is emphasizing that she has entered a sacred space, that of the Church. However, the judgement is not tied in with that of religion necessarily, but that of the people who are judging others. Although others are trying to silence and oppress the version and identity of the woman in stilettos, Hernández-Linares is doing the opposite and speaking loudly through this poem. She does not stop at that, but she makes a conscious decision to design the cover with a woman performing household duties in *tacones*, therefore normalizing the act of wearing heels around the house without any prejudice nor judgement.

Literature Review- Performance and Themes

The performance of Hernández-Linares's poems come from a long tradition of cultural and literary history that she has embraced. This history dates back to Mexican and Central American

indigenous ancestors that would combine their poetry with songs in order to create a poetic oral tradition. Hernández- Linares has been merging her music with beautiful performance that includes dancing, singing and other forms to engage the public. She has collaborated with visual artists in order to incorporate costumes, instruments to be played and digital media. These collaborations and diverse ways of her performance add intensity to her poetry work in the way it is perceived by the audience. Her poetry crosses geopolitical borders and it increases awareness to gender equality and gentrification wars. As Rubén Martínez claims on the back of the book *MMTMG*, “She gives us a spirit-cumbia amid the gentrification wars. She swaddles her child in song. She brilliantly turns the invisible into verse, that we might sing ourselves back into our bodies, our names, our history”. Here the audience notes that Hernández-Linares is a powerful singer and songwriter who is willing to communicate her poetry in ways to persuade her audience to become part of the conversation that she speaks through verse.

Importantly enough, Hernández-Linares has been involved with other Salvadoran and Central American artist and writers. According to the website joinleticia.com, Hernández-Linares has worked with “Izote Vos book project and authored the Central American section of an Ethnic Studies textbook”. Furthermore, Hernández- Linares has performed in *Epicentrico: Rico Epicento (A Night of Central American Performance)* at Highways in Los Angeles. She has also performed *Salvadoran- American Poets* at the Smithsonian in D.C. and continues to work in project in the Washington D.C. area. These accomplishments of Leticia Hernández- Linares demonstrate the power that her performance carries in the heart of her audience.

In her book, Hernández-Linares writes two poems under the name of “Mucha Muchacha”, which in English means “Too Much Girl”. When asked about the meaning behind this phrase in an interview with Therese Marie Konopelski, the poet shares that in her culture women will

usually be accused of being too manly, considering the “rough” and “energetic” side of a woman that makes her more manly. Hernández-Linares shares in the interview that strong “Mucha muchachas” have surrounded her throughout her life: “Resilient mucha muchachas in my family and history shaped me, so why not embrace this? My poems often inspire me to write songs and I also weave song lyrics throughout my poems.” In the description of where this term derives from, Hernández-Linares speaks about a patronizing and silly song by Juan García Esquivel under the same name “Mucha muchacha.” In this song, Esquivel categorizes women into “Janes”²⁰ and men into “Tarzan,”²¹ therefore separating both gender by characteristics that define each character. Tarzan is known as a tall, handsome, athletic, intelligent and courageous character, meanwhile Janes are delicate and petite, in need of the help of a man.

Esquivel’s verses prompted a conversation that developed across the two poems throughout the book. “I wanted to respond to the premise that there is a particular way to be a girl, a woman” (Letras Latinas 2). In this song, Esquivel refers to himself as “Tarzan” meanwhile he calls the girl “Jane”. This binary between man and woman has driven Leticia Hernández-Linares to write two poems by the same name in the collection of poems, “Mucha muchacha”. In her poetry, Hernández-Linares defies Esquivel’s underlying message of what a woman should be, how she should behave by breaking barriers and encountering her space in society. Just like Linda McDowell wrote in her book, *Gender, Identity and Place*, where she sheds light on the concept of gender and gender relations, observing closely the attributes which have been assigned to men and which ones to women in a particular society. These two aspects- gender as a set of material

²⁰ Janes in this case is an American from Baltimore, Maryland, a daughter of Porter. She changes during the movie from a conventional person in distress, to an educated and competent and capable adventuress within her rights, defending herself in Africa [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Porter_\(Tarzan\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Porter_(Tarzan)).

²¹ Tarzan is a fictional character who embodies a child in the African jungle, where he later experiences civilization.

social relations and as symbolic meaning- cannot really be separated. In defining gender, and in the preceding discussion of the changing definition and understanding of place, it is clear that social practices, including the wide range of social interactions at a variety of sites and places- at work, for example, at home, in the pub or the gym- and ways of thinking about and representing place. Genders are interconnected and mutually instituted.

In this case, Linda McDowell offers the relations with which people make sense of their society, the places in which women and men belong, therefore separating them and even placing them into a said box with specific gender expectations, behavior in a public place and private sphere. This way of organizing societies and cultures and forming binaries pertaining gender has persuaded Hernández-Linares to write her collection of poems, in order for readers to start questioning these gendered roles not only in society, but also in popular culture such as the song reference. Her expectations possibly are for readers to dig deeper into what this feminist poetry tells and how these messages affect not only women, but the community as a whole.

What types of silence

In *MMTMG* the reader can notice a variety of forms of silence, from physical silence, to the absence of words. According to Cheryl Glenn in “Unspoken/ A Rhetoric of Silence,” silence is defined as a presence in which a plan is to be executed; silence works in forms of a rhetorical means- it has a purpose and it has a goal that is being achieved (1). In this case, Glenn cites Adrienne Rich in a short stanza that describes in detail what the rhetoric of silence means:

Silence can be a plan
rigorously executed
the blueprint to a life

It is a presence
it has a history a form
Do not confuse it
with any kind of absence

- Adrienne Rich, "Cartographies of Silence"

(Glenn 1)

Silence in this case is not subordinate to speech because the first – silence- aims to reach a goal, and it is just as important as speech. What the unspoken offers us is an underexamined part of communication. Because of this, silence makes up for what is missing: "When language ceases, silence begins. But it does not begin *because* language ceases. The absence of language simply makes the presence of Silence more apparent" (Glenn 4). In this silence, the reader understands that silence and language are working together to weave the meaning of a certain work. For instance, this same silence is found in the collection of poems of Leticia Hernández- Linares- *MMTMG*. One of the poems that portrays the silence in the collection is located at the very beginning: "Learning to Talk" (15), a poem that refers to the bilingual aspect of a person who grows up speaking more than one language. This signifies that a person who learns two languages is constantly being asked what the first language is:

What's your first language?
no, your first language,
so you're not truly bilingual what language
do you dream in?

("Learning to Talk" 38-41)

In this section, the silence is shown by the bilingual while being asked what language do, they truly speak. This represents an invasion of privacy by the individual that is asking. The person in question is not responding back, therefore they are silenced by the majority, the language that is spoken by the majority. Also, this silence is taking place through the action of asking too much, there is an absence of words by the bilingual in question. Maybe they are thinking and coming up with an answer, but that answer is not shown. Also, the breakage between side A on the left and side B on the right demonstrates that the journey of a bilingual is not linear, it is forever changing and questioned by many in the process, therefore visualizing a language gap.

Poetics- “Sweat” (37)

This section will focus particularly on one of her poems from the first section of the collection, “Comadre”, which means neighbor, a word used to describe a friend, a godmother, or a close companion. This term oftentimes denotes a close relationship with someone who is offering their services to you—for instance, a neighbor that can take care of the kids would be considered a “comadre”. Starting with drawing upon the poem called “Sweat” (37), Hernández-Linares quotes an important American artist who comes from Puerto Rico, Juan Sánchez. Born to Puerto Rican parents in Brooklyn, New York, this artist creates photography, painting and media work to confront America’s political policies and social practices. In his quote, Sánchez is referring to the over-consumption of clothing, which could be related to capitalism but also materialism of the 21st century.

We’re not gonna go on a trip glorifying the pava

which is a straw hat, or the guayabera

which is a type of shirt, cause there ain’t no hat

or no shirt gonna free anybody.

-Juan Sánchez

In this important quote, Hernández-Linares draws upon the importance that people are placing nowadays on fashion, glorifying certain items through globalization, which is an outcome of travel. In this, one can notice such cultural appropriation going on in this quote because the travelers are “glorifying” these items, with which could come the misuse of certain cultural items. Going on, Sánchez is calling upon the attention of his readers, claiming that “no shirt gonna free anybody,” which means that no matter how many clothing items someone will have, they will not be able to free those workers from the factory shops, working under terrible conditions.

The tone of this poem is melancholic and yet critical because it is highlighting the story of sweatshops, where one of the main characters, Hilda, completes her shift in the light, under poor factory conditions. The poem emphasizes that the surroundings of the shop are inhumane, referring to the description of the place where they work and the poor conditions which encompass them:

Writing her life on a hem line, Hilda watches
for shifts in the light. Windows are the choked up
holes that don't let the sun through anymore,
in the old garage where rusted tables,
tired sewing machines breathe heavily,
As the day slowly advances, Hilda gets anxious
for the view she's missing of overcast sky and the smog. (10-16)

Here, the author sheds light to the brutal conditions that are part of the sweat shop, from tired machines barely working, to the smog that is seen outside. This imagery of the smog highlights the obsession that people have with the new items of clothing, to the point where they cannot see the truth through the smog that blocks the view outside the shop.

The poem continues to emphasize the struggle that other women are facing in the sweatshop as well. Their names are Hilda, Betina and Rosa who are following the example of this worker whose name is Betsy Ross. Here is a distinguishing factor that one encounters in the poem, Betsy Ross²² does not carry the name of a Latina immigrant. Below her name, Hernández-Linares writes about the inequality of how employees are being treated.

Hilda, Betina, and Rosa follow Betsy Ross's example.

Except without the rocking chairs and exhibits displaying

Charcoal silhouettes of factory owners, antique artifacts

From sweatshops, impressionistic renditions of stale air,

Clay molds of empty hands. (38-42)

In this particular instance, there is a hierarchical construct between the immigrants coming in contact with what seems to be an American name, Betsy Ross. The latter has a rocking chair and exhibits of charcoal silhouettes are found in their space. According to Amanda J. Flather, structures in case spaces set boundaries to the practices and the concepts with which people in a society understand the world. To make this point more transparent, Flather mentions a fundamental quote in understanding how different cultures come together and they either have to both adapt, or one will rebel.

²² Betsy Ross (January 1, 1752 - January 30, 1836) was an American upholsterer who made the first American flag.

The link between mental and physical space is significant here. Writers in a variety of fields have shown ways in which spaces can be gendered, even when they are shared by men or women, through perception, experience, and use. Individual sense of space, and behavior within it, is influenced by a host of cultural clues that enable people to create “mental maps” to help them use spaces and to let them know when spaces might be difficult or dangerous to enter. In this case, sweatshops are present for immigrants to work at and they must negotiate their space. They have two choices; one is to rebel against the rules which in turn would not allow them to carry on with a job nor money; the other option would be to abide by the rules and regulations of the sweatshop and adapt. These two choices do not seem so difficult for the women mentioned because they need jobs in order to survive and end up becoming an “American citizen”, as the poem claims in the end.

Binary of silence—gendered

In the work of Cheryl Glenn “Unspoken A Rhetoric of Silence”, an essential part of silencing and speaking is revealed- moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed and the exploited. The scholarship of Aristotle has brought controversy into the theory of silence: Glenn quotes the binary established classically by Aristotle: “Between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject” (20). This quote alone demonstrates the notion of what has been imposed on women, which has been the subordination and the submissiveness to a male figure. This is taken further in the reading by claiming that feminine discourse has been the poor, the disabled, the “raced,” and the foreign. When having this perspective of women, the silence will be present because it is used in this case for men to maintain their power.

One of the fundamental types of silence that I will focus on here is the systematic silence, or in other words, the nonhearing. Women have been silenced systematically from public speaking and active listening. In this type of silencing, *muted groups* have been observed.

If we look at those classes which are usually considered to be the exploiting or dominant classes, and then we consider those others which are supposedly the exploited or suppressed classes, there is this dimension that hasn't been mentioned yet: which is [that] of relative articulateness. One of the problems that women presented was that they were rendered "inarticulate" by the male structure; that the dominant structure was articulated in terms of a male world position. Those who were not in the male world-position were, as it were, "muted". (Glenn 25)

This type of silencing is usually used on the oppressed, the ones that do not have a voice due to marginalization, *otherness*, or simply a muted group. This example is shown by Leticia Hernández-Linares in a poem called "Sweat". This poem "Sweat" is fundamental in understanding the construction of cultural gendered spaces, where muted groups appear to take over in an immigrant territory. The readers observe these three women, Hilda, Betina and Rosa make sense of their environment of which they become part, working hard to obtain their citizenship which is their goal. However, the conditions inside the sweat shop have created a hierarchy between the American citizens, such as Betsy Ross, and the immigrants. This dichotomy as to how immigrants are treated differently, inhumanely, is dictating that readers should start questioning the realities inside closed doors that one will encounter in the shops. The immigrants in this case are the discriminated group because they are systematically silenced due to the fact that they have an inability to speak fluently on what working conditions are unprejudiced.

Made in El Salvador

Made in Taiwan

Made by my tía

Made by una niña

Made in T.J.

Made in L.A.

Made by a slave (“Sweat” 30-36)

In this specific stanza, Hernández-Linares uses free verse to show the different marginalized territories that are working in those sweat shops around the world. One of those workers is considered to be a “slave”, by calling a worker that name, Hernández-Linares emphasizes that rights have been completely lost, just like freedom is taken from a slave.

This work focuses on the significance of travel as an exploration of immigration from the United States to El Salvador and vice versa. This work presents the transcendence of cultural belonging, adaptation to a new environment, the sweat shops and the construction of perceptions and experiences. Leticia Hernández-Linares writes about the hybridity of the cultural and literary histories she experiences. She tells the story through the recordings of her testimony of historical facts. Most times, Hernández-Linares is skillful in maintaining a collective voice in her poem. Hernández-Linares makes it clear that she would rather include her readers into the story, allowing their presence to enter her space in collectivity, as she narrates through her historical perspective.

The artifacts used to create the silence

One of the key artifacts that Leticia Hernández-Linares uses in her collection of poems is

the archive. She intends to create a window to the current topics of gender, immigration, marginalization and her cultural roots. She creates her sections by citing songs, historical details and scripts from other authors such as Gioconda Belli, Alfonsina Storni, Roque Dalton and Nawal El Saadawi. These crucial authors speak loudly on themes such as feminism, gender, marginalization of cultural groups and politics. Among these topics, what Hernández-Linares does on the subject matter of silencing versus speaking is: In what ways are these authors silencing themselves? Through the use of other authors, Hernández-Linares creates documents of historical happenings over the years, twentieth century until 2015, which is when her book was published. According to Marlene Manoff on “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines”, Robert Martin argues the differences between libraries, archives and museum. He claims that Paul Otlet “redefined the term ‘document’ to include a wide range of objects and artifacts. Otlet claimed that documents were simply objects that conveyed information and thus the term could refer to anything collected by archives, museums or libraries” (10). In this way, Hernández-Linares is using artifacts such as different documents, including even a digital platform online, where one can hear the audio versions of selected poems.²³ Through the use of sounds, multimedia and different historical context, Hernández-Linares creates a collection of poems that bring to life memories, narration and history.

Leticia Hernández- Linares shared in one of her interviews that she is interested in excavating the memories just like an archive because those keep people alive. In the interview with Therese Marie Konopelski, Hernández-Linares shares how fundamental it is for women artists of color to keep digging and creating new work, to not forget the past but to embrace it and to celebrate it:

²³ “To hear audio versions of selected poems, listen: <https://www.reverbNation.com/leticiahernandezlinares>” (97).

I worry about historical memory and urge younger writers to ensure they explore it. Excavating, learning from, and building community with elders has been an important part of my journey. I have felt fortunate that the Bay Area facilitates easy access to an incredible intergenerational intersection of artists. Women, however, often remain buried in the historical timeline (and in the headlines) so my hope is that female artists of color continue to dig as they create. <http://letraslatinablog.blogspot.com/2018/06/mucha-muchacha-too-much-girl-interview.html>

Here we see that it is important to Hernández-Linares to refer back to our ancestors because that is how people can build community and relationship with their elders, their roots.

Types of Speaking- Form

In *MMTMG*, Hernández-Linares creates imagery through songs and weaves her history throughout her book. She writes mostly in free verse, where her poetry at times seems like prose because there is a narration of her story, a lyrical exploration that goes along with it. Hernández-Linares's poems do not follow specific rules; the poet wants to express herself fully and if a message will take on four pages to be conveyed to the reader, Hernández-Linares completes the task. The author uses documents, manuscripts, books of history, songs, personal narrative in order to intertwine the culture, history and songs of El Salvador. The poems speak about civil wars that have taken place in Central America, tragedies that have embarked in her land, issues of gender equality and the white supremacy that some of her "comadres" have encountered in America, especially in the white institutionalized spaces. Furthermore, Hernández-Linares experiments using free verse, writing poems that carry repetition in order to represent a chorus like tone. Hernández-Linares comes from a family of musicians, her father is a musician and she

takes on that role that music has just like a chorus. The code-switching is maintained separate- English lines are kept separately from Spanish lines in her poetry.

Language

In *MMTMG*, Leticia Hernández-Linares follows free-verse poetry, which does not follow a specific meter or rhythm. Oftentimes, her poems include natural rhythm with pauses, sometimes onomatopoeia is involved in her poems, where the sounds bring to life the content of it. Her collection of poems is written through code-switching- at times Hernández-Linares uses English in her poetry and then she will switch back to Spanish. For instance, the poetic voice is noticed to use code-switching in “Learning to Talk” (15), where she talks about the obstacles of speaking a language /I learned to talk sin pelos en la lengua/. The use of colloquialism in this case, “sin pelos en la lengua” signifies that the poetic voice learned how to speak without hair on their tongue. The significance of this idiom explores the idea of speaking bluntly and without holding back. Why is Hernández-Linares switching languages here in this example? She wants to show the full story meanwhile creating a conversational tone. Everyday spoken language allows the author to achieve a type of informality and in that way, the connection with the reader could be made in a more spontaneous way. In another case, Hernández-Linares switches from English to Spanish when the poetic voice describes a family memory: “Mami, así no se dice” (21). In this case, the poet is creating a memory through the use of Spanish, which could have been the language used as a little kid. These memories are portrayed in an authentic way because the poet does not wish to lose the full meaning of the story that is told.

Voice

The poetic voice in *MMTMG* is rooted in the use and repetition of certain phrases to emphasize a meaning. For instance, in the poem “Too Much Girl” (18), where Hernández-Linares writes about her experience of graduate school, starting off with the physical silence that the poetic voice undergoes since she was a first-generation graduate student:

tiptoeing around lines
sharp with analytical points, the scholar
stuffs his anger into discourse (1-3)

The idea of tiptoeing shows that the poetic voice is minimizing herself, meant to be unheard by the surroundings. This behavior that leads the author to become smaller causes anger into the poetic voice. In this case, the grammar and syntax of the poem show that the poet combines certain words to express a lyrical narration of a story of a graduate student who feels a sense of displacement- a sense of not belongingness.

Furthermore, in this same poem, the poet uses a lot of repetition when referring to a door, in this case, a door of opportunity that will allow the poetic voice to move further up into life. Usually a door in this case represents an opening, a breaking-free point from all the anger and damage felt in graduate school.

But a door is a door
define door,
unhinge it, pour microscopic lenses over the grain,
find the core, until there is no more door (27-31)

In this example, there is a shift of voice in the usage of silence as a way to keep stories private from the rest of the world. The door could represent an opportunity that has presented itself in the life of the poet.

How does code-switching play as a form of silence and speaking?

Code-switching at times allows the poet to connect to a particular audience by giving voice to the marginalized, to the oppressed. In this way, Linares can share with the public a message that she may not want to display in the English language, but in Spanish instead. Oftentimes, this form of speaking to a specific group allows room for using colloquial words and phrases that even a bilingual who does not come from a particular culture, the Salvadorian culture, may not be able to understand. Meanwhile, code-switching plays a role in the silencing just as well as in the speaking. Being able to speak two languages can take away meaning from a person who is not capable of understanding both languages. Therefore, the poet has completed and utter control in how to use code-switching and also when. This decides what part of poetry the audience knows depending on whether they are bilingual or monolingual. Language is a key tool is silencing because just like Trouillot said, narrators silence themselves on purpose to make a choice of specific archives they believe will create a necessary impact on the audience.

Conclusion

This work highlights the importance of speaking and silencing as an exploration of immigration from the United States to El Salvador and vice versa. This work presents the transcendence of belonging, assimilation and image based. Leticia Hernández-Linares speaks about the hybridity of the cultural and literary histories she has experienced. She tells the story through the recordings of her testimony of historical facts. Most times, Hernández-Linares is skillful in maintaining a collective voice in her poem. The progression of the sections travel through a number of people, since it starts with “Comadre” (11), one individual who could be a neighbor, or a friend. Then it continues in section two with “Hija” (47), the presence of a

daughter figure, a feminine figure appears in her poetry. The final section ends with “Mi gente (¡Ustedes!)” (71), which could emphasize the voice of the people, all of you who are reading, or all of you who are singing. Hernández-Linares makes it clear that she would rather include her readers into the story, allowing their presence to enter her space in collectivity, as she narrates through the archive.

CHAPTER 3- VANESSA ANGÉLICA VILLARREAL

Literature Review

Vanessa Angélica Villarreal was born in the Rio Grande Valley to Mexican immigrants who were undocumented. She was raised in Houston, currently living in Los Angeles where she is in a Ph.D. program in Poetry and Digital Media Arts at University of Southern California. Her poetry blends in the intelligence and intuition of many of the generations that came before Angélica. Just by looking at the cover, one can see a line that passes diagonally through the middle, splitting the image into two halves and right away the reader comes to know a bridge, a liminal space that is taking place, separating two cultures. The beginning of *Beast Meridian* opens with a line that honors Angelica Lopez, Carmen Lopez, Mario Sanchez and Carlos Lopez²⁴. Then, Villarreal introduces an elegy that speaks about her grandmother and her death from cervical cancer:

Diagnosed, your hands became my bread

& we ate them –

& the hair flew off your head & wove

great red nests

selah for us women

your black cervix rot my first egg drop

& we hatched myself –

this is how we said you would survive. (9)

²⁴ Family members to Villarreal, closest family ties.

In this very moment, Villarreal is introducing the legacy of women who are surviving by staying strong together in trying moments. These women who survived by hatching symbolizes a new life is born and growing. This not only cultivates a story of pain, suffering and grief, but also a story of strength, humility, and family unity. Not only is Angélica's grandmother, under the same name, Angélica, important but it is fundamental to understand the injustice that happens in the Borderland. Many people of color in the Borderland between the Texas and Mexico do not have access to the hospital nor the means, therefore people die from diseases that can be cured. Right away, Angélica is raising awareness by speaking on this issue through a personal story, a memory and an archive of her own.

Echoing the Hispanic Canon through Frantz Fanon and Gloria Anzaldúa

Villarreal's way of writing is similar to the way Gloria Anzaldúa writes since they both invite the female reader into their personal and sentimental world. The authors support women's rights within a patriarchal culture because they have experienced this cultural clash in their personal experience. In addition, they write in Spanish and English because they want to show this duality based on having two languages and two cultures. On the other hand, they do not want their story to be misunderstood for reasons of translation from one language to another. Words lose meaning in the translation process, so the authors want to put the sentences in Spanish because if they translate them, the phrases will lose their intensity and the power of immigrant history.

The epigraph from Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) offered at the beginning of *Beast Meridian* describes the settler as the colonizer and the native being referred to as the bestiary.

Fanon was a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher from the French colony of Martinique and he was an advocate for the national liberation of colonialism. At the same time, Frantz Fanon was aware of the human psyche and for that reason he was concerned about the social and cultural consequences that would derive from decolonization. This is what Fanon claims: “When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms, he constantly refers to the bestiary.” By drawing this reference, Villarreal is taking note on how the colonizer describes the colonized as a “beast” or as “evil”, closer to nature. At beasts are a synonym of the animalistic, the unethical, even “uncivilized”, the colonized seem to take on the same role as seen through the lens of the colonizers. Therefore, Villarreal is speaking through the voice of an important scholar Frantz Fanon, dictating that this collection of poems will shed light on the issues of inequality, gender discrimination of the “other” and describing what “the beast” means.

On the other hand, the epigraph by Gloria Anzaldúa speaking on the liminal space that one encounters in the border between Texas and Mexico in the Rio Grande Valley, unpredictable happenings occur. This is what Anzaldúa claims in the epigraph: “Bridges span liminal (treshhold) spaces between world, spaces I call nepatla, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio” (5). Now, why would the land in between cause a problem between two cultures separates by a liminal line, an imaginary space? Oftentimes it happens because changes and transitions happen in this in-between space, such as discrimination, displacement, shifting of identities among other transformations. This idea of identity shifting is described in her book *Borderland La Frontera The New Mestiza* (1987) where Anzaldúa describes the consequences of this ever-changing liminal space by giving concrete examples:

Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity

and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an “alien” element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being “worked” on. I have the sense that certain “faculties”- not just in me but in every border resident, colored or non-colored- and dormant area of consciousness are being activated, awakened”. (Anzaldúa Preface)

For Anzaldúa, the speaking of her existence is necessary in understanding what happens in the Borderlands, the struggle to write about the border and the life in the shadows. For that reason, Villarreal is almost silently internalizing the voice of Anzaldúa as she tries to understand her place and identity within her culture, within words that are weaved together beautifully that allow Villarreal to note where these displacements have taken place within her socially and culturally.

What Type of Silence

This project includes many silences that appear throughout the books, considering silencing one’s identity, silence in the visual and silence in what is heard. The unspoken word is seen between the lines of poetry, on the visuality of the poem. Oftentimes the reader can hear the poetic voice speak, while other times that poetic voice is suppressed by the dominant culture. This example is seen in the poem “Gulf Pines, or Final Assimilation Rooms” (37) after Frida Kahlo’s Wounded Deer. In this particular example, Villarreal speaks to her experience attending a psychiatric hospital called “Gulf Pines” at a young age. On the back page of the poem, Villarreal presents a photo of herself when she entered the hospital. The silencing that is seeing in this poem is nonphysical silence, it is rather a social and institutionalized silence- an ongoing theme in her poetry. In this

hospital room, Villarreal clarifies with a footnote the story of a juvenile offender and what the usual story looks like:

When you talk to the parents of these juvenile offenders, you get the same old story: ‘Johnny stayed out late, he was moody, he skipped school... but, we figured he’d grow out of it.’ They don’t. Recently, I found out about a family-oriented adolescent treatment program that’s getting through to these kids- and it’s often covered by health insurance. If you have a troubled, teenager, don’t wait until he gets here, get help now. Television commercial for HCA Gulf Pines Psychiatric Hospital. The speaker is an older white male judge putting on his robe in his quarters, surrounded by leather bound books. (Villarreal 37)

In this case, the teenager is silenced through the act of generalizing and minimizing the story of a juvenile offender, believing that it is usually the same old story. Villarreal is referring to the possibility that it is not always the same old story- the offenders could have reacted based on their circumstances, which can be triggered by the cultural shock, racial discrimination and prejudice. Other factors besides staying out late and skipping school could be the reason and possibly it will not be that unproblematic for Villarreal to grow out of it. Interestingly enough, the title of this poem is “Gulf Pines, or Final Assimilation Room,” (37) which refers to the fact that this final white institutional destination in the United States will be where Villarreal conforms and embraces white culture. Therefore, the silencing relies on reserving one own’s culture, the Mexican culture, while accepting the dominant society. Additionally, by making a reference to the

“Wounded Deer”²⁵ by Frieda Kahlo, Villarreal is demonstrating that she cannot change her destiny because the final assimilation room would arrive no matter her circumstances.

Types of Speaking

Beast Meridian demonstrates a personal story through the art of storytelling-- including themes such as family ties, cultural rituals, recalling memories of the past and using photo albums as a way to connect to her family while excavating the recollections. The ancestral family and the roots are important to Villarreal and she speaks on that through the intimate figures and photos she presents. This project was born out of the importance of family, including the mother, tías, father, abuelita and other close ties to Villarreal. One of the poems that demonstrates the family ties is called “Guadalupe, Star-Horned Taurus” (Villarreal 54). This poem describes a photograph of her family, two older women holding each other in a dark and mystical green background. Some of the elements described in this free verse poem include plants, rituals such as “oiling feet” and familiar connections of love and care. The photograph used in this poem almost functions as an altar, a way to revive the dead- to revive the immigrants and speak out their story through the archive. Villarreal dug this personal photograph to display it in this collection of poems; she wants the readers to feel the presence of her family. As Villarreal expresses gratitude for the plants, the food and the care of family in the poem:

ask of the spirit and receive the knowledges: yerbabuena, vela de

²⁵ Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), a Mexican painter and artist was known for her naïve folk-art style to explore her identity, issues of postcolonialism, culture, social dynamics, amongst other themes. In her painting “Wounded Deer,” Frida Kahlo is referring to an operation that she had on her spine after a car accident. This painting expressed her disappointment towards the operation, because she suffered a lot of physical and emotional pain, undergoing depression. In the painting, Frida is a young stag with her head full of antlers. The word “Carma” also appears on the painting which demonstrates that Frida cannot change her destiny <https://www.fridakahlo.org/the-wounded-deer.jsp>.

virgen, baño de alhucema. Cut the joint at the hoof & fatten the
soup. Accept this offering, thank the plant. That I love you with
the knowledge of our ways lost to violence. That you will call me
up from the silt in your bones. (3-7)

Note that Villarreal does not capitalize any starting sentence in this stanza, almost as if she is telling the story to a close and trusted friend. For this reason, her poetry oftentimes takes the role of an intimate diary, a way to feel closer to the reader and create a sense of belonging. In an interview with KTEP El Paso, Texas (<https://www.ktep.org/post/words-wire-vanessa-ang-lica-villarreal>), Villarreal expresses how important spirituality and rituals are in her family. Her grandmother and mother knew plants, animals and they created a spiritual tie to the dead. The reason why words such as “yerbabuena”²⁶ because her family believed more in “potions” to cure disease and relieve pain rather than the institutionalized hospitals. This poem also works as a disruption in the art of speaking; the grandmother is standing up for what she believes in which is the earth, the plants, the healing that comes with the oils that will cure diseases. The disruption here is seen as a counteract to the dominant institution that is a hospital where doctors cure the patient with medicine.

Visual Aesthetics

Villarreal appreciates the art of taking pictures and turning them into art because in that way her collection of poems will not only speak through words, but also through visual arts. It is fundamental to remember that Villarreal has graduated with a degree in Digital Arts and for that

²⁶ Yerba is the Spanish names that stands for aromatic plants, such as mint. *Yerba* means “plant” and *buena* means “good”, therefore it means good plant or herb.

same reason she makes a case for photographs functioning as an altar to her poetry book. The significance of these photographs is the ability to excavate them like an archive. In this way, the book will then be read as an emotional, spiritual and intimate experience because the poems are speaking for themselves. Villarreal takes photos that comes from the past and brings them to light with the art of storytelling.

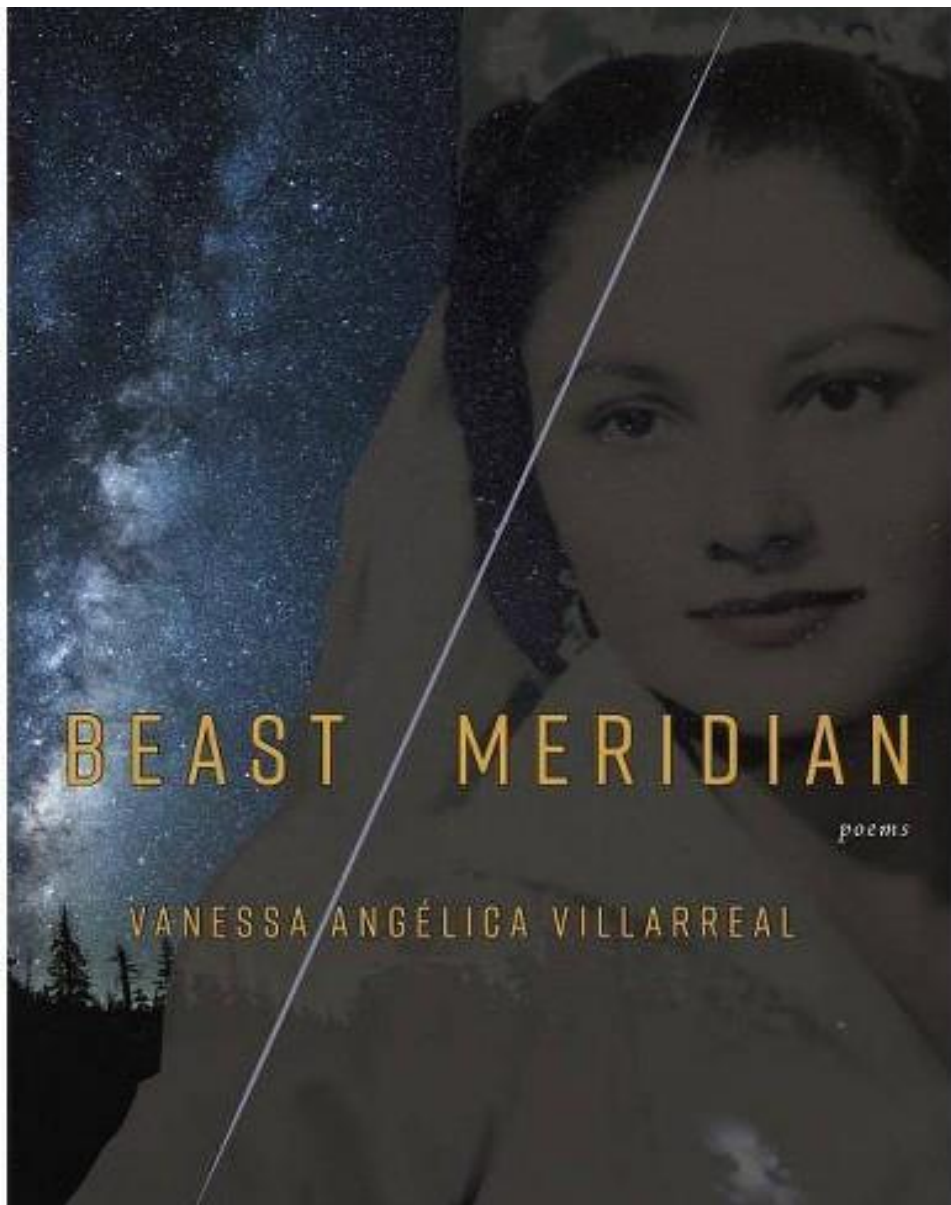


Fig. 1. Book Cover from Villarreal, Vanessa. *Beast Meridian*. 2017, Naomi Press.

To continue the application of the analysis of the application that comes from Anzaldúa's feminist theory in villain's poem, another of Villarreal's poems will be explained. The poem "Beast Meridian"(78) in this book highlights the power found in the meridian that splits a body in the middle. This imaginary line is represented in the world and divides this space into two cultures presented in the poem, creating a space between the two, as it appears in the visual elements of the poem. An example of them is received on the cover of the book, where the galaxy is illustrated with the stars and a line that passes through the middle of this world. Also, on the cover is a photo of Vanessa Angélica Villarreal that is divided between the two non-equal parts, but two parts representing the two cultures. This portrays the two spaces she occupies. For this same purpose, the poem "Beast Meridian" (78) is visually divided by a line separating Villarreal's thought. This poem Villarreal is dedicated to women because in line two she writes *girl*, where her audience refers to women:

Girl never
forget this night sky torn into in your center— the
widening
line that splits your body into halves was always a star
map
to home (2-5)

These Chicano women who live on the border have their bodies divided into two parts: "the widening line that splits your body in halves" (3), refers to the meridian of the beast that causes the transformation of each part of the body: one part because it is within Mexican-Chicano culture, and another part for trying to assimilate into American culture.

The female body can reconcile with this transformation in its identity, but there will always be something "torn into in your center" (3). The body transforms as the identity changes, resulting in a divided shape. Because she is chicane, the woman will not easily assimilate to the whiteness, to what is American, but she will internalize this new American culture within her identity.

In this poem mentioned, visual form and aesthetics are an important factor because the spaces between the poem are not coherent and show a form of displacement. This visualization of the poem already indicates an obstacle, and chaos that is to come. One may not have a previous reading and understand that there are problematic events in the poem. Anzaldúa actively narrates how his chicane identity has affected his way of behaving in the world, because he has isolated him from the Texan-American community. She has fought to establish a feminist platform in which immigrant discourse is shown in its natural essence.

Content

Following the contribution of Anzaldúa in writing, a contemporary author influenced by her is Vanessa Angélica Villarreal, a Mexican author born in Rio Grande, that is, on the border between Mexico and the United States. Villarreal's poems contain poems about her youth, her family, immigration, the suffering of women of color living in the United States and gender inequality. In addition, in this work there are poems of assimilation, where the author talks about the experiences that have occurred in the United States, mainly caused by the huge cultural clash between the two cultures, the Mexican with that of Texas. *Beast Meridian* alludes to the strong women in her family for their harmony between them. Her grandmother, Angelica, is one of the

women treated in the work, since she died of cervical cancer. Here, in this poem she talks about the consequences of her grandmother's illness, saying:

[guadalupe jeweled virgin. wax glass candle

entre todas las mujereswe kneel to push away the final night] (14-15)

In these verses, women are breaking the canonical order of patriarchal society because they come together in solidarity to help their sisters. When Villarreal says "Among all women" (15), she is talking about the female union that entails the power to cure the sick, only with the female presence which is also a discreet practice to pray. Together, women fight patriarchy by starting with supporting each other. This refers to the power of the female force that women have for staying together at these difficult times. The female union has given Villarreal hope to write about feminism. Women together, *kneel to push away the final night*; they all pray that Grandma Angelica will get better, which makes this group of women reassure.

To illustrate the importance of this poem in the feminist world, it is essential to mention the narratives of immigrant women, experiences that emit the trauma of living in "otherness", in a liminal space between being, not being and that I am. This is evident in the title "Beast Meridian", where a meridian is defined as a large imaginary circle passing through two poles. These two poles in this case are the two cultures that come in contact, Mexican culture with American culture, but with the meridian dividing. They meet in the liminal space which is the meridian, or in other words, Anzaldúa's "Nepatlá". To emphasize the importance of these two contacting worlds, Villarreal quotes Anzaldúa at the beginning of her poem:

Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call Napatla, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries.

Nepatla es tierra desconocida and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement (...). (5)

Being in this space between two worlds is the same as living between two places separated by a meridian, an imaginary line that separates Americans from Mexicans in their culture, their way of life and most importantly, in the loss that immigrants feel when cross this meridian, while Americans do not necessarily feel that pain. This loss refers to the traditions and history that one suffers in this liminal space because a person is transforming every day by the new experiences he faces.

Voice- Gender Inequality

Another poem, "Girlbody Gift" (28) by Villarreal talks about women's rights, bringing feelings of gender inequality. This poem dictates the personal history she brings, which means living in a world where inequality between men and women is seen as a standard phenomenon. People within culture perceive the dominant paradigms that are made by people in power, that is, of men. "Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them" (Anzaldúa 16). Here, it is noticeable that Anzaldúa highlights the inequality between men and women in their culture. This is evident in the poem when Villarreal expresses: me and my girl look hard / daddy's hands crush my neck / if you don't compose / I'll kill you / (4-5)

This event is reinforced by the patriarchal voice, where women must be of submission. "If a woman rebels she is a *bad woman*"(Anzaldúa 17). Here, the woman in Mexican culture who describes Anzaldúa, the woman has three options: to become a nun, to walk the streets like a prostitute, or to marry and be a mother. With this example, Villarreal would like to emphasize that a woman's work is not only hard, but also insurmountable. For this reason, Villarreal adds

that today, the only option that the woman has to get ahead is only if she is composed of the rules of patriarchy, because if not, a male figure can threaten you: "if you do not compose/ I will kill you", as Villarreal's father does.

In addition, "Girlbody Gift" (28) describes gender inequality in the male language gets and what this means for women. Anzaldúa brings his theory from a Chicano language perspective. Here, with the term, it is shown that Anzaldúa does not feel only Mexican, and nor does she feel American, because she has another identity called chicane. "Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally... Chicano Spanish is not incorrect; it is a living language" (55). Speaking Chicano is a language that has been naturally maintained over the years, although many Spanish speakers, according to Anzaldúa, criticize the Chicano language for not being complete. However, this language has its problems because: "Girls use *us* whether we're male or female. We are robbed of our female being by the masculine plural. Language is a male discourse" (54). Here appears the feminism that Anzaldúa entails in her book *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, because she not only wants to change the way immigrants are perceived in the United States, but also tries to push the limits of gender inequality in language, making women feel inferior. As Anzaldúa has experienced the Chicano language being masculine, in the poem "Girlbody Gift", the voice that speaks about the behavior of women is dictated by a male voice. This voice of Villarreal's father is dictating women's behavior, which shows gender inequality.

The characteristics of immigration marked in these texts are the concept of this "unknown land" that appears in the poem of Villarreal. The concept of the unknown land is developed in detail in one of Andrea Lunsford's interviews with Anzaldúa. To highlight this ideology of the imaginary line in what Anzaldúa has lived since she was a child, she says: " ...

this ideology or this little nugget of knowledge is both indigenous and western. It's a hybridity, a mixture, because I live in this liminal state between worlds, between realities, between systems of knowledge and between symbology systems" (Keating 267-268). Anzaldúa is able to speak about her theory of this liminal space between being Chicana, Texan, American and Mexican, the space she has occupied since she was a child. These different identities have made Anzaldúa theorize about the spaces and depth of the mixed experience that lies between layers of different cultures. Being a chicane means that you have to negotiate your reality in the world.

Connection between Anzaldúa and Villarreal

In the work of Vanessa Villarreal, this link between Mexican culture, the otherness and the cultural clash that the author experiences, especially in her language, has been explored as part of her identity. Throughout the assimilation process, the author has felt devalued by her Mexican origin, or the origin of the other. Influenced by Anzaldúa, the author breaks down the barriers with the poems, making it clear that she will continue to be a person with two different realities, and that she will use Spanish when necessary, to contribute her ideas. This is important because it shows the value of this poem: telling the story from a natural, true, and sentimental point of view at the same time, which lets the reader travel with the writer through the visual aesthetics of the poem and language. *Beast Meridian* and *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza* emphasize marginalization as a cause of immigration, along with the struggle for women's rights in Mexican patriarchal culture; two space movements that affect youth today, and which must continue to fight.

In Vanessa Angelica Villarreal's *Beast Meridian* 2017, the content of the poetry behind the use of Spanish phrases, is shown in a set of poems that are written in English and Spanish. This book is limited to a certain group of readers by the great use of Spanish. If a reader collects this book and has no knowledge of Spanish, he will lose some of the meaning of the poems. The alternation of codes in this book is fundamental because it expresses ideas naturally and in the most logical way, but only people who understand Spanish, and especially the phrases of Mexico, can grasp the totality of the meanings of each poem. The present work shows the cultural displacement of the first Mexican generation in the United States, using Gloria Anzaldúa's theories to what belongs to these immigrant borders. This use of code alternation in poems is maintained to subtly demonstrate the cultural obstacles of immigrants in the United States. In addition, the form and visual aesthetics of the poems is an important factor because the spaces between the poem are not coherent and show a form of displacement in the poem. This visualization of the poem already indicates an obstacle, and chaos that is to come. One may not have a previous reading and understand that there are problematic events in the poem.

Codeswitching

A fundamental and essential poem about the alternation of codes is "Crossover Album" (Villarreal, 16) at the beginning of the poem. This poem talks about the experience of having Mexican roots and then moving to the United States, creating another identity. From the beginning, the reader notices the title of the poem, which is a genre that is applied more in music, when two genres of music mix together and generate a new type of music, called *crossover* album. In Villarreal's poem, this title means that the author is in the process of a fusion of two languages, two different experiences, that of having Mexican roots, and the other, of living in the

United States, and that's why she calls her poem *crossover album*, which means going to another space, from Mexico to the United States. Here the reader can note that this poem describes the author's life between two different identities. These two identities are separated in the poem on two sides: one side A, and a B-side in this poem, which is dictated in free verse. The A-side represents her childhood in Mexico. She describes that as a child she had to "chase-the-cock", something the boys her age were doing in Mexico. There is a happier tone in the first part of this poem, because the author talks about topics like football, playing with her friends, and in one part mentions that she is laughing, too. Then, on the B-side depicting the experience in the United States, Villarreal mentions words such as melancholy, "the dying body", and violence. These terms represent living in the United States, a time when the author was not happy, because this era was of transition between two different cultures and two languages.

The exceptionality of the author in "Crossover Album" (16) is that she uses phrases that are in Spanish, but mainly that represent in Mexican Spanish. Some examples here are: bad smell made to lose, wolf cradle, great-grandmother Carmelita nodding, and go out in the. These swear words are typical of Mexico and have a strong semantic content throughout the poem. The first phrase "bad smell spoiled" means a bad teenager who is going towards a failure in life. This phrase represents the transition and assimilation that the author undergoes while living in the United States. Some call it a bad nose because Villarreal looks like he's a rebel around the Americans. The last phrase yourself is a form of curse and means that one must disappear from sight. These words are very courageous because the author will not be contained in the face of this injustice towards immigrants and wants to be heard. This semantic content grabs the attention of readers and forces readers to stop for a moment and try to understand the subject.

This use of Spanish is important in the content of the poem because it is showing a true story. If a person does not understand these phrases of Mexican Spanish, he will lose much of the meaning of the poem, or at least, he will lose important parts of Villarreal's life. The author uses typical Mexican phrases because in her private environment and related to her family, she often uses Spanish, her mother tongue. With the use of these typical Mexican Spanish phrases, the author is honoring her roots and her mother tongue. She wants to tell her original story, without losing any words in translation. An important phenomenon here in "Crossover Album" (16) of the author's youth, is that she refers to her relatives with the words "prima", instead of using "cousin". This is important because it teaches that the author cannot jump from one linguistic world to the other in this important aspect of her life. The moment she talks about her family, Mexican Spanish phrases come out of her mind and jump into the role. The direct connection with his family is rooted with the Spaniard. Villarreal expresses her feelings in Spanish because this relationship with the immigrant and Spanish experience represents its Mexican roots.

However, this use of Spanish limits the poem to what belongs to the audience that can access it. Villarreal wants readers who get the trip from his poem to know Spanish, because that way they can relate more to the poems. Here, it seems that the author has a goal as to what kind of audience can access the poem, a group of people that can relate to the struggle. For instance, immigrants and people who have suffered such a consequence of learning and living in another country, or at least, these people who think openly about the issues of immigration and racism. This factor is essential because the author wants to share her painful and melancholy story with people who will appreciate it and try to understand their suffering in the most natural way.

Poetics

Beast Meridian is a work that takes place in the identity transformations that occur in the liminal space, which is the Borderlands, re-imagining the past and re-creating it through the power of poetry. This work preserves the words to silence societal expectations. This is reflected in the limitation of the audience that does not know Spanish in "Assimilation Rooms" (30). This poem shows cultural displacement in the way the author writes the story. The spaces in the poem are not coherent and show a form of displacement. This displacement of the poem shows the experience of living in the United States, an immigrant experience and having to move from one place to another, in this case from Brownsville to Houston.

el día que nos fuimos de Brownsville las tías nos
dieron una bolsa de naranjas y sodas y unos
paquetitos de tortillas calientitas hechas a mano con
carne para el camino y en el u-haul papi nos manejó
hasta hou-stón y cuando llegamos mami me compró
ropita nueva para estrenar en el kínder y cada
mañana abuelita me peinaba diferente a veces con
bolas o una diadema y me dormía en su cuartito
porque juntas veíamos novelas y rezábamos hincadas (1-9)

In this part of the poem, Villarreal is speaking out on her experience of having to move from one part of Texas to another, from Brownsville which is closer to the border and considered a more dangerous part of Texas to Houston. Note how Villarreal is experimenting with language and writing out "Hou-stón" just like her family would pronounce. This ties the accent her family may use in the pronunciation of the word to display a sense of roots and identity engrained in the core

of this collection of poems. The “assimilation” part of the poem is seen here as the mother of Villarreal buys her clothes to go to kindergarten and play the part of a new identity that comes with living in Houston.

Additionally, a vital use of the alternation of codes from Spanish to English is occurring in this poem, therefore having a greater presence of Spanish than English. At first, Villarreal is using Spanish at the beginning of the poem because she is talking about her childhood. She connects the family ties with the presence of Spanish, rooting herself in the culture and keeping grounded throughout the poem. Some of the words written out in English are in bold, the poet really needs the reader to take note of those words and their meaning. She is taking readers into a painful past, where the author shares the misfortunes of the family, such as her grandmother's illness, cancer and the experience of not knowing English at school. Villarreal explains the challenges she encountered as a kid who could not speak English well and struggled because “los niños me gritaban cosas”, little kids would scream “things” to her and she was not able to capture the meaning behind it:

en frente de la virgencita y las velas y aunque casi no
me podía comunicar en inglés en la escuela si me
encantaban los libros y no me molestaba estar solita
sin embargo mi abuelita se puso malita y mientras me iba a
the honey tree después de la escuela con tanto miedo
porque no entendía nada y los niños me gritaban
cosas en inglés que hacia mal porque no sabia nada (10-17)

This pain that Villarreal endured is institutionalized- the students are together at school and although she would rather be alone and not bothered by the students who spoke English. Here

the author's life as a child behind the use of Spanish is underlined, with an alternation of English codes, with the phrase *the honey tree*, which emphasizes that the poetic voice is capturing the cultural shift in the English language. The author in this case emphasizes the traumatic experience she had with English, emphasizing that she could not yet speak English and therefore only uses an English phrase to demonstrate the frustration she felt with a language she was struggling to learn and that not knowing it, causes her marginalization and mockery at school. In addition, the school children shouted at her in English, even knowing that the author could not communicate in English. This first association of English was negative and painful for the author. For this reason, the author sets herself to using Spanish in these early years of her life because she associates it with the language of her experience and the language of her Latin identity. The use of Spanish in this part of the poem is important because it is aimed at a certain group of people. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, here in this poem of Villarreal, we see the concept of linguistic *terrorism*. This theory focuses on the mockery of a person who speaks a language different from others. In Villarreal's example, she spoke Spanish while students at the school spoke English. This event shows that the children in the class mocked Villarreal because she was "the other" in the class, a foreign person. Here, Villarreal gets feelings of exclusion and non-membership.

The poet is silenced by the majority, "violence is disguised as ordered" as Sara Borjas writes in her "Book Review: *Beast Meridian*, by Vanessa Villarreal." This poem not only is a six-page long story of Assimilation that occurs slowly when two cultures come together, but it is an archive that comes with the use of institutionalized violence. Villarreal is drawing not only from her memories, but at one point she refers to a psychiatric research due to the fact that she, herself, was a trauma patient. This study from the psychiatry is continuously used from page to

page until it becomes obscured and not able to be depicted by the audience. This type of language and visual creates a distorted sense of reality and intensifies the power of assimilation.

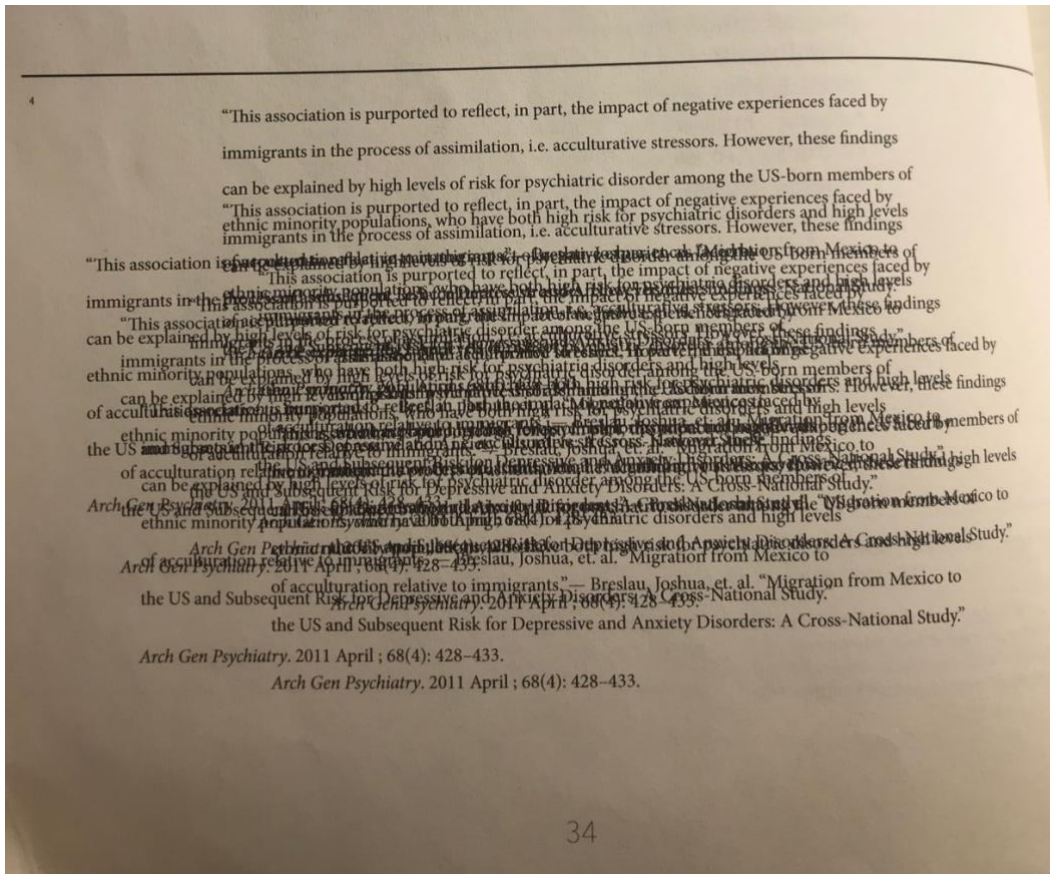


Fig. 1. Textual Chaos: “Assimilation Room” from Villarreal, Vanessa. *Beast Meridian*. 2017, Naomi Press. p. 34.

As the poem follows, there is another type of feeling of the author: that of marginalization and otherness. These sentiments are seen at the end of the poem "Assimilation Room" (16), where the author mixes some linguistic studies that have been completed on immigrant experiences in the United States. The reader can read the first six lines of the poem, but afterwards, Villarreal has mixed different phrases over each other, to show that assimilation to another country is not a linear process but is a process with quite a few obstacles along the way. As a child, Villarreal feels it's unfair for people to tell her that she has to "learn to serve

classmates with a smile" (32). Although small, Villarreal gains a fundamental understanding of the world around her. Why does she have to obey the Americans? Villarreal goes through a period of transition from shocking cultures because she notices racism against women of skin color, and expresses that, as a child, she knew that blonde American girls had more power than her in public institutionalized places, like school, where the majority of the students are white.

The use of code switching in Villarreal's poems shows the nexus between Mexican culture and her mother tongue as part of her identity. In both poems, Villarreal talks about her childhood in Mexico, compared to life in the United States. In "Assimilation Rooms" she dictates that her mother has a lower-class job because she needs to help her mom and says: "to help mommy wash the bathrooms" (32). In this part of the poem, we see that her parents are working-class people, and they teach Villarreal as a child that she must obey the rules and not speak enough because her mouth is "tamed". In addition, at school, Villarreal learns that she must learn what her place is. These verses of the poem show us that Villarreal is constantly comparing itself to the people around her in the United States. For example, she compares the color of her skin to the skin color of American girls who are blonde and dictates that they will be able to go to Harvard, Columbia New York, because they get more power because of their white skin color, while the color that Villarreal has is darker. This connection she feels to be Mexican is represented in every aspect of her life in America.

This journey that Villarreal makes from the past to the current place that she lives, is showing her bicultural identity. She has a mix of immigrant experiences in the United States and writes that she could not express her Mexican values freely. In the poem "Assimilation Room", there is a part where the author describes being a singer in the school choir and wants to sing a

song by Selena Quintanilla (1971-1995)²⁷, "Love Forbidden" (32). However, the author describes that the people around the school silenced her singing because it was not "American enough" by stating their feelings toward the song and expressing that Selena's songs are vulgar: "no that's vulgar singing/ trained singers hold the note aloft/ faithful so pleasing to protestants/ so taught out of myself I sing edelweiss" (31). This part of the poem is crucial in that the assimilation of the author was not a linear process, on the contrary, it was a process with obstacles when two cultures are constantly in contact. She cannot sing a song by Selena Quintanilla, who is such a well-known singer in Mexico and Latin America and part of her Latin culture, and on the contrary, she has to sing a song by Edelweiss²⁸, an American singer. The author lives in two different realities, in her private environment she speaks Spanish and lives with her Mexican family, but in the public environment, the author has had to assimilate to American culture.

Conclusion

Throughout Villarreal's life journey, it is essential to note that the use of code switching is beneficial, and the poem's message would not be the same without the format of the poem that is atypical and has a visual layout and aesthetic like no other. Villarreal shows us in the most natural and photographic way this displacement between the two cultures. The aesthetics of the poem indicate these obstacles that the poems represent. If a reader examines the title, and notices the aesthetics- including the diagonal line that separates the cover in half, then he may know that

²⁷ Selena Quintanilla was an American singer, songwriter, spokesperson, model, actress, and fashion designer. She was considered to be the "Queen of Tejano music" and she was a top-selling Latin artist in the 1990s. Some of the music that she produced incorporated country and western. One of the reasons why the school considered Selena Quintanilla "vulgar" may have to do with the fact that she was sometimes referred to as the "Mexican Madonna" for displaying her sexy outfits and moves during her performances.

²⁸ This song comes from the 1965 film of "The Sounds of Music" produced by Robert Wise.

this poem depicts problematic events in the history of immigrants, assimilation and racism, almost a chaos in the midst of a constellation. According to the scholarly investigation of Keating on the theory of Gloria Anzaldúa, the significance of a photographic image speaks louder than words because it evokes emotions, but an image requires the presence of words: "An image is a bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge; words are the cables that hold up the bridge. Images are more direct, more immediate than words, and closer to the unconscious" (214). Here we see that the images of a poem, or the way in which the poem is represented as an image, has enormous power because it provokes unconscious feelings of the reader. These images in the poem work quickly with readers, because they awaken the feelings of the reader, in this case, feelings of injustice and assimilation problems between two different realities of Villarreal, living in the white spaces of the American culture. Without this aesthetic format, this poetry collection might not reach the audience it has reached so far, because with the images and the playful experimentation, it attracts readers easily and without much effort.

CONCLUSION

Speaking/ Silencing

The speaking and the silencing of these collections of poems is noted from a range of perspectives- from the illustrations on the pages, the playful experimentation with different poems to demonstrate a chaos, to speak on issues of Postcolonialism in the United States and to draw the readers' attention. *MMTMG* and *Beast Meridian* are essentially a hybrid work that could be read in a Spanish class just as easily as they could be read in an English class. There could be gaps of understanding, especially when it comes to colloquial words that are portrayed in collections, but with some research it is an easy task to accomplish. Furthermore, these works can even be incorporated in historical classes because they carry personal narrative through a variety of references to El Salvador and Mexico. Also, both collections speak on issues of gendered bodies within their cultures, which leads me to believe that both *MMTMG* and *Beast Meridian* could be studied in a Gender and Culture class. The potential of these books is extraordinary because they are spirited, contain reference to pop culture- in the case of Hernández- Linares with songs and Villareal's with the paintings mentioned. Furthermore, these collections promise a new future of poetry experimentation in code-switching, free verse and gender inequality.

Research Implications

Considering that the United States is the second country with the most Spanish speakers in the world, this work will continue to be embraced by many new poets in the digital world who are using archives as a way to speak their truth and their story. In the decisions that come with

the archive, poets have to selectively silence certain parts of their histories in order to appeal to an audience. Not always is the audience previously intended by the poet, but oftentimes in the assimilation process that occurs when two cultures come in contact in the United States, the dominated become the audience that is mostly affected. The tension experienced by those individuals has been portrayed in both works of *MMTMG* and *Beast Meridian*.

The speaker in both collections of poems is speaking about the borderlands through the use of the archive, referring to crucial postcolonial authors such as Fanon, Anzaldúa, Dalton, Belli y Nawal El Saadawi, in order to create a historical narrative of the raw experience of both poets that live in a cultural borderland. In this case, this cultural shock is used as a space to explore the different identities that are constantly shifting and changing in a cultural Borderlands. Oftentimes, in these spaces, the voices of the dominated are silenced by the dominant, just like the colonial subjects. The Borderlands represented a social, cultural and political stance in the 1980s with *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza* by Anzaldúa, today, Borderlands embody the symbolic injustice that occurs in institutionalized white spaces in America. This new movement has progressed through the digital era where it has become easier to connect with the “colonized” around the world, the subjects who in this case would be the immigrants that enter the United States.

Both Hernández-Linares and Villarreal are creating this poetic space to echo Anzaldúa, they have become her voice in the present day. For that reason, both poets are speaking out on issues that have been crucial to immigrants that live in the United States, especially relating to first generation citizens like themselves. The Latinx poets are continuously raising awareness on issues of racism, and gendered spaces. This new movement of recognizing the postcolonial subjects in the white spaces of the United States is not created in the twenty-first century, on the

contrary, it has emerged with the postcolonial authors in the twentieth century taking charge of speaking out on issues of racism. The difference of the twenty-first century movement of Latinx poetry is the use of the archive of the speaking and the silencing of the borderlands becoming digitalized and converted into a more strategic way of poetically expressing the injustice that happens around the world. The tools of social media have allowed these collections of poems to reach a bigger audience than they could without the performing aspect of it.

This research has allowed me to explore the significance of poetry in the liminal space, in the space of silencing and of speaking through the use of the archive. In this in-between place one will change, will become displaced, will go through a series of distractions and cultural shifting to be converted into a new version. This experience can not only be confusing, but it can forever change the subjects that are being exposed to it. For instance, some themes that arise in both *MMTMG* and *Beast Meridian* depict the impact of immigration and the negative influence that gentrification has on immigrants and first-generation students among others that are affected by it. Just like Leticia Hernández- Linares endures the fight in light of the Mission District in San Francisco where gentrification has become part of her daily life, which is where she resides to this day.

Leticia Hernández- Linares constitutes a fundamental influence in the Latinx Poetry community starting from San Francisco and all the way to El Salvador. Since 1991, Hernández- Linares has worked in the arts education, she has engaged herself in leadership positions. Importantly enough, Hernández-Linares has taught multiple courses that focus on Gender Studies, Creative Writing, Ethnic Studies, Latinx Literature as well as currently teaching in the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. This type of leadership and commitment will allow Hernández-Linares to keep exploring the thoughtful importance of

languages, issues of gender and violence, socio-political passion amongst the communities she works with. Through this involvement, Hernández-Linares will continue to inspire generations to come and challenge herself in the process.

Vanessa Angélica Villarreal experiments with photographs, with free verse in her poetry as well as displacements that occur on the page such as the poem “Malinche” (15). The poet is making sense of her crisis and the painful experiences she has endured as a child stuck in between generational trauma, violence and economic struggle. Among these themes that would turn any collection of poems into a distressing and traumatic experience, on the other hand, Villarreal is clever to create a story that not only embraces the change, but meanwhile stays rooted in the origins and the family traditions during times of transformation.

Some of the limitations of this scholarship encompasses the fact that not much research has been investigated thus far, which could extend the time frame of this project becoming recognized. The accessibility of academic scholarship on both collections of poems was limited in the investigation of this research, but most of the historical interpretation of the collections came from the lens of Gloria Anzaldúa, with the help of contemporary interviews of Villarreal and Hernández-Linares, as well as other crucial investigators in this era such as Urayoán Noel, who speak on the Latinx poetry movement. Considering that the new Latinx movement of poetry is recent, this project could take a new turn because the development of new poetic ways to experiment with are changing rapidly.

The work I present is innovative because in all the scholarship done for Vanessa Angélica Villarreal and for Leticia Hernández-Linares, scholars have not yet discussed the idea of speaking and of silencing through the lens of an archive. This work will allow readers to explore both works as a body of crafting the silence through generations and gendered discussion in the

Mexican and El Salvadoran cultures respectively. Furthermore, this work has explored the significance of code-switching in the Latino/a scholarship of the twenty-first century in the United States, where a new era of bilingual poetry writers is present. I hope to continue the conversation of silence and speaking as a tool to be used as a double lens to the immigrant experience conveyed in these two ground-breaking collections of poetry.

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