2010

In the Margins: Thresholds of Text and Identity in U.S.-Mexico Border Literature

Allison E. Fagan
Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation
http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/169
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all of the people who were involved in helping me through the process of writing this dissertation, truly a social text. My committee has been invaluable to me: in a course taught over the summer of 2006, Dr. Paul Jay encouraged me to explore a field of literature that was almost entirely brand new to me – border literature – and I have been lost in that world ever since. Similarly, I caught Dr. Steve Jones’s enthusiasm for textual studies, and he provided a wealth of opportunities for me to develop my own textual materialist approach to the literature. And finally, Dr. Suzanne Bost has been a source of inspiration, both in her depth of knowledge of Chicana/o literary history and in her persistent asking of the really tough questions. I will take the friendships I have developed with each of these professors, as well as the confidence they instilled in me, wherever I go.

I would also like to thank all of the professors in the Department of English whom I’ve gotten to know, as well as Loyola University Chicago as a whole for providing me with the opportunity to learn and grow with them. Assistantships, the Toomey-Surtz scholarship, travel stipends, and Fourth Year Fellowship funding made it possible for me to live and work in the city I’ve always loved. But in particular, Catherine Fitzgerald, Dr. Harveen Mann, and Dr. Badia Ahad taught me to take pride in my teaching; Marcela Gallegos, Dr. Jessica Horowitz, Dr. Patricia Mooney-Melvin and Dean Samuel Attoh
taught me to see beyond my discipline; Graduate Program Director Dr. Pamela Caughie taught me to value persistence.

Thank you to my department family: Natalie Kalich, Erin Holliday-Karre, Faith Bennett, Lacey Conley, and Julia Daniel provided endless hours of laughter, commiseration, a few tears, and that weapon of all weapons, friendship. Lisa and Mike Herbeck offered their longstanding kindness, and Kate Goddard and Ryo Yamaguchi supplied such lovely meals. My immediate family – my parents, sisters, brothers, nieces, and nephews – reminded me of life outside of the dissertation, and Marty always kept me company.

And finally, to my very best friend, Brian Klima, thank you is never enough.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii

LIST OF FIGURES vi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1
  Section One: Chicana/o Borderlands and the Geography of Identity 5
  Section Two: The Borders of Border Texts: Textual Scholarship in/of the Margins 14

CHAPTER TWO: “A TOUCH-UP HERE AND THERE: EMBRACING BORDER TEXTUALITY IN REVISIONS OF ROLANDO HINOJOSA AND ANA CASTILLO” 30
  Section One: Rolando Hinojosa and The Valley 38
  Section Two: Ana Castillo and Sapogonia 60
    Part One: “The Most Neglected One”: Tracing the Production, Publication, And Reception of Sapogonia 60
    Part Two: “Someone Who Dominates”: The Effects of Revision on Interpretation 67

CHAPTER THREE: TRANSLATING IN THE MARGINS: THE SHAPING FORCES OF THE GLOSSARY AND TYPOGRAPHY 83
  Section One: “The Gloss Indeed Destroys the Text” 98
  Section Two: Normalizing Spanish 128

CHAPTER FOUR: “MY BOOK HAS SEEN THE LIGHT OF DAY”: RECOVERY PROJECTS AND THEIR PARATEXTS 146
  Section One: Recovering Ruiz de Burton 153
  Section: Two Recovery and Translation 173
    Part One: Aristeo Brito 176
    Part Two: Margarita Cota-Cárdenas 185

CHAPTER FIVE: WRITING IN THE MARGINS: THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET 205
  Section One: Cisneros and the Borderlands 209
  Section Two: Margins as Borderlands 215
  Section Three: The Margins of Mango Street 228

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION 257

BIBLIOGRAPHY 272

VITA 288
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Image of annotations in “Michigan” copy of <em>The House on Mango Street</em></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In 1981, Chicana writers Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga published *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, an anthology of essays now considered one of the foundational texts of U.S. third world feminism. They describe their intentions for the book as follows: “We want to express to all women – especially to white middle-class women – the experiences which divide us as feminists” (xxiii). The often ambivalent way in which the writers included in this anthology discuss serving as a bridge between the theories of white feminists and the experiences of women of color reflects a reluctant embrace of the border spaces that characterize their lives. But furthermore, the narrative of their ambivalence is made material in the story of their anthology’s struggle to stay in print. A close look at the opening of the text, particularly the 1983 edition, reveals evidence of the conflict and tensions surrounding the material text. One of the first pages of the second edition reads, in fine print halfway down the page:

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

Before readers have even read the introduction, they are presented with hints of struggle; Kayann Short explains, “There is a story here, and like all tales of struggle, it speaks of power, pain, and loss. Yet there is also pride in the words ‘conceived of and produced entirely by women of color,’ and a final sense of restitution, celebration, and homecoming” (3). The story of Anzaldúa and Moraga’s efforts to stay in print is told from the very textual margins of a collection that details the struggles for survival of women of color, reminding readers that the book they hold in front of them is part of that struggle.¹

In many works of border literature, the margins or borders of the material text serve to underscore the narratives of struggle – for autonomy, civil rights, history, identity – their writers set out to tell. Textual margins, also defined as “paratexts” and “bibliographic codes,” include those material elements that make up the border between the text and the world – cover pages, prefaces, glossaries, introductions, bibliographies, typography, and even the white space of the margins – and shape our understanding of those texts. The appearance of the brief publishing history supplied at the opening of This Bridge Called My Back appears in the textual margins – along with multiple forewords, prefaces, and other epigraphic materials – and conditions our understanding of

¹ And that struggle continues for Anzaldúa and Moraga’s anthology: in 2002, once again after years of being out of print, Norma Alarcón’s Third Woman Press brought out a third edition. This most recent edition appends new forewords by the editors and an updated bibliography as well as introduces visual artwork into the mix, but it also went out of print in 2008. In addition to a 1988 Spanish translation, Esta Puente, mi espalda: Voces de mujeres tercermundistas en los Estados Unidos (edited by Cherrie Moraga and Ana Castillo), a companion volume entitled This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation and edited by Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating was also published in 2002. The versions and related texts proliferate across decades as the “original” continues to fight to stay in print.
and expectations for the text it precedes. Sometimes the writers themselves speak from the textual margins, as when Moraga and Anzaldúa describe “retriev[ing] control of their book,” though in each of its versions and editions, they can never entirely control how or where it is marketed, sold, read, or reviewed. Just as often the borders between the text and the world are a site in which publishers and readers manipulate the meanings of narratives, selecting attractive cover pages or literally filling the margins with their own words.

The literal borders of the text function as a space where the interests and desires of authors, publishers, editors, reviewers, and readers contest for control over its meaning, and in works of border literature, they serve as a site from which to explore the instability common to identity and the social lives of texts. By “social lives” I mean to invoke the work of social text theorists like D.F. McKenzie and Jerome McGann to describe the circulations throughout and interactions with the world of texts in various forms, constructed by the competing discourses, intentions, and expectations of authors, publishers, editors, critics, and readers. The social life of This Bridge Called My Back is constituted by the forces of Anzaldúa, Moraga, their contributors, Persephone Press, Kitchen Table Press, Third Woman Press, readers, and the critics who cite the anthology to advance any number of arguments as well as the political climates of the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. The anthology, like all border texts, demands that we read and understand its contents in the context of this complex social life.

Until recently, there have been few scholarly attempts to study the intersections between border literature and textual studies. One of the reasons it has gone without
discussion is perhaps because studying it involves a perspective situated in a vast chasm between the criticism produced by scholars of border literature and that advanced by textual scholars. These two fields rarely meet. Perhaps because Chicana/o literary studies has primarily privileged performance and orality in Mexican American border traditions – from border *corridos* to El Teatro Campesino – discussions of the role and uses of the material text have yet to surface in the work of border theorists. Likewise, though textual scholars recognize that the borders of the text invisibly control, alter, and subvert the intentions of authors and their texts, such a relationship for border writers functions differently from the relationship of more canonical or central writers and identities to their respective textual margins. Racism, sexism, and classism, and nationalism permeate the history of American publishing, leading to an imbalance of power that complicates any relationship between a border author and editor, publisher, and audience. This difference has only recently been attended to in book history and demands further attention.

Bringing together these two fields requires examining where the fields themselves might inform one another, so I propose to outline some of the recent scholarship of both border literary studies and book history in order to highlight what each has to offer the other in terms of re-conceptualizing the shape and significance of the border as a social space. Weaving together these two fields can help us recognize how border literatures participate in “border textuality,” how we can use the material text to render visible the instability of identity, language, geography, narrative, and text. It is this concept of border textuality that I pursue in my study of the social lives of U.S.-Mexico border texts.
Section One: Chicana/o Borderlands and the Geography of Identity

In Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the U.S.-Mexico border as “home/this thin edge of/barbwire” (13), carving out a precariously balanced third space upon the interdependent material and metaphorical boundary lines that separate the nations. As the traditional definition of American literature continues to expand in response to demands for a more expansive, hemispheric, inclusive focus on the term “American,” much attention has been paid to the role of the border in generating that definition. By investigating the very geographical and political border that seeks to separate what Cuban writer Jose Martí calls “Our America” from the “Other America,” writers and critics often identify the space between as the most significant space of all to an understanding of American literature. Focusing their attention on the border as an expansive space between, José David Saldivar and other critics argue that for too long the story of American literature told by the canon has focused on the Protestant, Puritanical, and Northeastern to the exclusion of the Catholic, indigenous, and Southwestern. In Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies, Saldivar asks, “What changes, for example, when culture is understood in terms of material hybridity, not purity? How is the imagined community of the nation – to use Benedict Anderson’s terms – disrupted and customized by materially hybrid US-Mexico borderland subjectivities?” (19). In “The Dialectics of Our America,” he argues for a “new literary, cultural, and critical cosmopolitanism that fully questions as much as it acknowledges the Other, thereby serving as a more adequate and chastening form of self-knowledge” (4). Similarly, Ramón Saldivar insists we attend more carefully to how
Chicano literary texts “intentionally exploit their peripheral status to and exclusion from the body of works that we might call majority literature” (11). Practitioners of such “exploitation” contribute to a process of undermining the stability of nation, tradition, and identity. Nowhere are these terms and others more fraught than on the borders.

The concept of the border itself is subject to multiple definitions as writers simultaneously confront physical as well as ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and familial barriers, but for many artists and critics, it is important to recognize its foundation in the specific geographic location(s) between the United States and Mexico. A number of recent critics have taken on the project of exploring the border as location and theme in Chicano literature, tracing the relationship between Aztlán – the purported home of the Nahua people and the term taken up by Chicano activists and poets in the 1960s and 1970s in an effort to reclaim their homeland – and the borderlands.² In her introduction to Rewriting North American Borders in Chicano and Chicana Narrative, Monika Kaup notes, “Chicano authors insisted that the space of their culture, the mexicano borderlands of the Southwest, was not the peripheral fringe of the American historical process, but a place in its own right, home, Aztlán, the native homeland of different peoples than Anglo Americans” (1). Claire F. Fox, in The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border, however, indicates a distinction between “Aztlán and the Borderlands, which erased the border in the first instance, and valorized it as a liminal zone in the second” (46). Fox’s work, which performs “an inquiry into how

² A number of different names to describe the geographic region I’m referring to as the borderlands continue to circulate in academic and popular culture: for example, names like the American Southwest and Greater Mexico each convey slightly different national hierarchies, which I attempt to avoid.
contemporary representations of the US-Mexico border may be read as evidence of the persistence of the national in the postnational” (11), thus complicates the relationship by acknowledging that Aztlan signified a nationalist endeavor to carve out a new space, while the concept of the Borderlands acknowledges and invites recognition of the gaps inherent in the very concept of the nation.

The work of critics like Fox and Kaup depends heavily on the efforts of theorists like Anzaldua, whose *Borderlands/La Frontera*, along with Américo Paredes’s *With His Pistol in His Hand*, perhaps represent the most well-known studies of the geographic borderlands in Texas, often depicted as divided by the Río Grande/Río Bravo. Both texts defy genre categorization, combining academic prose with poetry, offering up re-writings and revisions of the history of the land as it changed hands between indigenous groups, Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Paredes brings under scrutiny the border *corrido*, using the corrido of Gregorio Cortez in particular to expose the discourses often silenced by national narratives of the Southwest provided by Anglo explorers and scholars. He argues, “One can see the balladry of the Lower Border working toward a single type: toward the one form, the *corrido*; toward one theme, border conflict; toward one concept of the hero, the man fighting for his right with his pistol in his hand” (149); his work recovers the border ballad as well as insights into the historical moments of cultural contact between Anglos and Mexicans. Anzaldua’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* speaks even in its title of the spaces between languages and identities, and while her focus is explicitly on “the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border,” her expansion of ‘borderlands’ to include “the psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual
“Borderlands” has allowed a number of critics and writers, both within and outside of Chicano literature, to transplant the border to any number of places, and to use it to describe any number of situations in which “two or more cultures edge each other” (Preface 19).

Because the concept of the border has become such a fluid one, incorporating both physical traits of geography and literal barriers as well as less tangible characteristics that separate nations, cultures, ethnicities, religions, genders, and even families, there is a tendency among critics to expand it continuously. Mary Pat Brady notes in “The Fungibility of Borders,” “Contemporary theorists have found the border a particularly attractive term because of its fungibility – its ability to slip outside of the material and the metaphoric and also to lay hold to both” (178). Border literature has come to mean any literature that places an emphasis on the border as a liminal space, and in which characters confront an internal or external divide, attempting to work out identity in that space between. The centrality of the specific U.S.-Mexico border often and easily gives way to analyses of the borders between the United States and any number of Latin American countries, or between any two countries anywhere. But Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano expresses concern over “the pitfalls in universalizing the theory of mestiza and border consciousness, which [Borderlands/La Frontera] painstakingly grounds in specific historical and cultural experiences” (7), and insists that it must be located within the spaces and places Anzaldúa outlines. Similarly, many critics believe it is of some importance to confine the definition more strictly to the border that literally
and figuratively juts against the United States, or at least to acknowledge its foundations in that space.

Thus, while each underscores the material and metaphorical complexities of the border and border consciousness, both Fox and Kaup ground their definitions of the border in specific locations. Fox acknowledges the multiple intersections of various systems yet focuses on the particular images of the fence and the river along the U.S.-Mexico border, arguing “the border as it appears in literature and art must be understood as polyvalent, as a place where urban and rural, national and international spaces simultaneously coexist” (3). Kaup more specifically insists on geography, arguing, “The border in Chicano literature represents the location of Chicano identity ‘in the world’: it is a theme chosen to put a fictional construction on what Mexican American culture, in relation to the US and Mexico, is about – a negotiation of multiple and conflicting social positions, connected to a real and specific geopolitical site, the border” (5-6). These calls for site specificity are in direct response to the borrowing or even cooption of the concept of the border by postmodern and postcolonial theorists working with a wide variety of geographic locations. Fox cautions against “the de facto emergence of the metropolis as site of ‘border crossings’ in the work of the postmodern theorists, in the wake of allegedly collapsed national boundaries” (130), arguing,

When an ‘art of place’ finds itself decontextualized and distributed for mass consumption on a national or international level, it becomes all the more important to differentiate between two ‘borderized’ cities like Matamoros and New York; often the distinction is not only spatial and national, but also divides production from consumption and distribution. The globalized border of postmodern theorists overlooks the specificity of regions such as the US-Mexico border, where nation-states continue to enforce differences within urban space. (136)
For Fox, the problems of expanding the border rest precisely on the fact that different geographic zones continue to have varying needs for and dependencies upon the concept of the nation-state, arguing for example that “The spatial dispersal of national boundaries and their diminished presence vis-à-vis transnational capital along the US-Mexico border does not indicate that the nation-state is defunct, as those who have noted the implementation of immigration blockades along the border will attest” (66). At the geographical divide between the United States and Mexico, the border continues to function as a very real, material barrier and sign of the persistence of the national boundary, though Brady rightly notes, “The bureaucratic and technical apparatuses surrounding customs stations create the very border they serve to guard” (“Fungibility” 181).

Furthermore, many critics express concern over those whose voices are silenced in the move toward expanding the concept of the border beyond one specific location. Claudia Sadowski-Smith argues in *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States*, “One of the more troubling aspects of liberating the border from its spatial referent to denote Chicana/o concerns with homeland, migration, identity, and aesthetics is that the voices of other border communities become muted” (35). Even Anzaldúa seems to express some mild distress at the uses to which her concepts of border consciousness and *mestizaje* have been put. In a 1999 interview with Karen Ikas, appended to the second edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa lightly complains about the critical cherry-picking performed in the service of expanding notions of border consciousness: “they take passages in which I talk about *mestizaje* and
borderlands because they can more easily apply them to their own experiences. The angrier parts of Borderlands, however, are often ignored . . . In some way, I think you could call this selective critical interpretation a kind of racism” (232). She also voices a concern regarding the contemporary valuing of the work of postcolonial critics like Homi Bhabha, and his concept of hybridity, over the work of “internal exiles in our own country,” or the work of Chicana critics and writers. “We don’t receive much attention and often aren’t listened to at all” (244). For Anzaldúa, the space of twelve years (between publication and the interview) invite some reflection on the lack of specificity critics dedicate to her own argument, and while she does not necessarily reject the proliferation of border subjects and locations, her comments appear to indicate a concern with another potential erasure of her own voice. Critics advocate for attention to the ways geographic location can shape understandings of the border: in the interest of avoiding the re-marginalization, or the continued marginalization, perhaps, of the voices of the Southwest, they ask that we examine our reasons for expanding the spaces and places of the border.

Furthermore, Brady argues, we should rethink the concept of space entirely: “Chicana literature has consistently offered alternative methods of conceptualizing space not only by noting how social change must be spatialized but also by seeing and feeling space as performative and participatory, that is, by refusing a too-rigid binary between the material and the discursive” (Extinct Lands 6). As Brady brings the border under the lens of critical geography, proposing the recognition of counter-spaces to the dominant, often-invisible spaces constructed by those in power, we might recognize in her
arguments an implicit demand for an understanding of space as text. In his study of the
effects of the Treaty of Waitangi on the Maori, McKenzie makes a similar argument:

When the case for Aboriginal land rights is being most successfully made,
against the literally entrenched opposition of those with mining rights, it is
by virtue of the stories which the land holds, the codification in landscape
of a whole tribal culture. It is the narrative power of the land, its textual
status, which now supports a political structure dedicated to the belated
preservation of the texts which make up a culture. (41)

If we recognize space as textual and discursive, the call for critical attentiveness to space
and place in border literature can extend beyond its linguistic contents to include the
material elements that make up border books, the spaces they occupy, their multiple
temporalities, the agents of their production and circulation, and the places they are
found. Just as Brady notes that “even as space shapes sociality in powerful ways, spatial
processes attempt to keep that shaping power largely hidden, so that space is seen as a
background, a setting, rich and interesting, but not in any sense interactive or formative”
(8), we can begin to recognize the material as discursive (and vice versa), noting how
material texts similarly possess a shaping power that is too-often rendered as background.
If we relegate the material history and social life of texts to the “background,” we miss
how those histories and lives interact with and shape border literatures. Expanding the
scope of the definition of borders beyond, or perhaps between, the conflicts of physical
and metaphorical/identity-based emphases, the textual scrutiny of the material borders of
any work of border literature calls attention to the social lives of texts.

While most border critics in some way engage the above-outlined debates over
expanding or restricting definitions of border literature in terms of the US-Mexico
boundary, Kaup is one of the few who also tracks the increasing high-theoretical interest
in textual and material boundaries alongside these developments. She acknowledges, for example, Jacques Derrida’s essay “Living On: Borderlines,” in which he mounts two arguments – one in the main text and one as an extended footnote – and discusses the ways in which the material text itself frustrates its own boundaries, undoing our understanding of “the supposed end and beginning of a work, the unity of a corpus, the title, the margins, the signatures, the referential realm outside the frame, and so forth” (Derrida 69). Perhaps not surprisingly, she resists integrating Derrida’s work into her own study of borders, arguing, “As a broad statement, his comments certainly apply to the problematic of borderlines in Chicano literature. However, his comments on the textual border activity do not illuminate substantially more than what can also be learned from Chicano border discourse” (16). Defending this argument, Kaup again maintains the importance of geographic specificity, calling Derrida’s description “too unspecific,” particularly because “a major lesson of Chicano literature is that geopolitical position matters” (16).

In contrast, I would argue that Derrida’s “comments on the textual border activity” expand the horizons of Chicana/o border discourse in ways that ground the processes of book production, publication, and reception in a material history that emphasizes the politics of location. Such a focus exposes various moments in the social life of a text, demonstrating how political, social, and cultural forces shape the visible aspects as well as the interpretive possibilities of border literature. The similarity between Derrida’s concerns – a recognition of the formative nature of the relation between text and not-text, or art and not-art, or of how the porous and fluid nature of
border space is integral to interpretation yet nearly invisible – and that of so many border scholars is more than coincidental. I argue that expanding the scope of the study of the formative nature of border literature to include the evidence of its physical pages and print, its covers and prefaces, as well as the literal white spaces of the margins, extends the requirement to be attentive to space and place. In this case, the spaces and places the books themselves occupy, the shapes they take and the uses to which they are put can offer as much insight into the changing landscapes of the border as any other site of study.

Section Two: The Borders of Border Texts: Textual Scholarship in/of the Margins

In his conclusion to the groundbreaking essay, “What is an Author?” Michel Foucault proposes a new set of questions for scholars in the aftermath of the de-centering of authorship: “What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?” (230). Textual theorists and book historians in particular have for the last three decades argued for a broadening of our understanding of the social life of a text, from production to distribution to reception, recognizing the author as but one (significant) player in the shaping of texts. Alongside pioneering textual scholars including McKenzie and McGann who advocate a “sociology of texts,” Cathy N. Davidson explains in Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America, “History of the book largely comprises social historians and literature scholars, all of whom have a sense that there is something to be learned by what the other does if we are
to comprehend the material and social factors influencing how books are written, circulated (sometimes in manuscript), printed, distributed, and read” (42). Book history recognizes that all of the actors in the production and reception of texts have the potential to shape the interpretation of those texts.

In order to manage the wide-ranging topics of study that fall under the category of book history, Robert Darnton proposes the “communications circuit” as a way of establishing the connections between these different aspects of textual production, writing “It transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again. Book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and in all its relations with other systems, economic, political, and cultural in the surrounding environment” (11). Such a system proposes not only to study texts as historical artifacts, explicating the processes of publication and reception at various points in time, but also to trace the effects of a text’s material existence on interpretation. As Roger Chartier argues in The Order of Books, “variations in the most purely formal aspects of a text’s presentation can thus modify both its register of reference and its mode of interpretation” (11); covers and typefaces, glossaries and marginal notes might be considered worthy of study in order to more fully explore the impact of a text’s visual and narrative elements. Gerárd Genette began the exploration of these material textual elements in his work, translated as Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, in which he defines the paratext as that which “enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed
border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or – a word Borges used apropos of a preface – a ‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either steeping inside or turning back” (2). Included in his definition of the paratext are textual elements ranging from the title page, epigraphs, prefaces and introductions to intertitles, notes, and what he calls the “epitext,” or those textual documents that circulate around a text, including diaries, interviews, and letters. These elements offer insight into how the various actors involved the production of a text aim to present that text: their desires, interpretations, and assumptions shape the narrative from the edges of the text.

Jerome McGann expands on Genette’s concept of the paratext to include those elements even Genette ignores: recognizing ink, typeface, paper, images, illustrations, and other visual elements as integral to any interpretation of a text, McGann proposes a distinction between a text’s linguistic (narrative) codes and its bibliographic (visual) codes. He argues, “Literary works do not know themselves, and cannot be known, apart from their specific material modes of existence/resistance” (Textual Condition 11). Paul Gutjahr and Megan Benton aptly explain the significance of the paratext and bibliographic codes in Illuminating Letters: Typography and Literary Interpretation: “No matter how clear its glass, a window is perfectly visible when one simply alters one’s gaze” (6). What viewers “see” when they read a book depends largely on the shape, size, and quality of the window.

Critics who focus on these materials and their shaping effects acknowledge the text’s materiality as fundamental to interpretation. Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles write

---

3 Genette’s definition of paratext coincides neatly with Derrida’s parergon.
in *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America*, “Clearly, when we read books, we really read books – that is, we read the physicality or materiality of the book as well as and in relation to the text itself” (2), echoing Chartier’s claim that “there is no text apart from the physical support that offers it for reading . . . hence there is no comprehension of any written piece that does not at least in part depend upon the forms in which it reaches its reader” (9). Though “significantly informative readings may be recovered from typographic signs as well as verbal ones” (McKenzie 10), those typographic signs and other material elements often go unnoticed in examinations of border literature. Attending to the materiality of border literature’s texts offers an opportunity to locate narratives in the historical and political contexts in which they are produced and received. In particular, paratexts and bibliographic codes function as the border space between the text and the social world it inhabits. And border literature employs very specific paratexts: glossaries, maps, and the editorial apparatuses of recovery projects in particular function to highlight border texts as concerned with the spaces between languages, geographies, and temporalities.

Material elements like cover pages and introductory materials, as liminal or border spaces between narratives and the social world in which they circulate, are often sites in which authors, publishers, and editors contest for authority over the meaning of a text. Cover pages, attractive fonts, and reviewer blurbs attempt to entice and accommodate readers, often shading expectations and even interpretations of the texts they advertise. Introductions from well-known authors or the inclusion of a critical apparatus – notes from the editor, historical background, bibliography, etc. – all guide
readers in their understanding of a work and its place in academic and popular culture. But as Gutjahr and Benton write, “Strategies of production usually attempt to influence tactics of consumption, and sometimes they succeed, but they certainly do not control them” (4). Readers interpret the material text and the narrative it produces in a variety of ways, contributing in turn to the cycle of a work’s social life. Thus, McGann writes in “From Text to Work: Digital Tools and the Emergence of the Social Text”:

No book is one thing, it is many things, fashioned and refashioned repeatedly under different circumstances. Its meaning, as Wittgenstein would say, is in its use. And because all its uses are always invested in real circumstances, the many meanings of any book are socially and physically coded in and by the books themselves. They bear the evidence of the meanings they have helped to make. (Par 36)

That books are “many things” can be both oppressive and liberating: oppressive to those seeking to be heard yet subverted by the voices and intentions of others, and liberating to those who find ways to celebrate the communal nature of literary production.

The material evidence of the social lives of the border texts I study posits the spaces between the intentions of authors, publishers, critics, readers as sites from which to critique the notion of stable narratives, texts, and histories, demonstrating how that instability challenges border writers and texts as well as their readers. Border writers and artists often embrace competing narratives of history by countering, revising, or ignoring dominant narratives in their own work; they also often produce literatures that take on less “stable” forms: from the periodical to the story cycle, the telenovela to the comic book series, notions of the incomplete, the in-progress, the unstable abound. But despite this embrace of instability, Sonia Saldívar-Hull acknowledges that theorizing the border comes with its difficulties: she writes in *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender*
Politics and Literature, “Because our work has been ignored by the men and women in charge of the modes of cultural production, we must be innovative in our search. Hegemony has so constructed the ideas of method and theory that often we cannot recognize anything that is different from what the dominant discourse constructs. As a consequence, we have to look in nontraditional places for our theories” (46). One of the most important “nontraditional” place to look for theories of the border might be the material texts themselves.

Sensing the significance of the material text, some Chicana/o and Latina/o critics are beginning to incorporate book historical elements into their work. Projects such as “Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage,” founded by Nicolás Kanellos, have begun the long process of accumulating and cataloging an archive, at the same time engaged scholars question the shape and meanings of the archive itself. Kristen Silva Gruesz works to recover 19th century Latino print culture (primarily poetry) of the United States in Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing, asking, “. . . what does it mean to be an ‘author’ in a distinctly transamerican sense? The transnational exchanges within print culture can, of course, be described through the movements and actions of persons as well as material objects like periodicals, books, or the translation of a particular poem” (13). From critiquing those reviewers and jacket-writers who relate any and all books written by a person with a Spanish surname to magical realism, or at least invoke the comparison to Gabriel García Márquez, to demonstrating the common themes, colors, and images of book covers that allow readers to immediately identify works as “foreign,” “ethnic,” or “multicultural,” critics like
Manuel Martín-Rodríguez and Ellen McCracken work to expose the shaping forces of the paratext and bibliographic codes in an ethnic American context. But their focus has largely been on reader response and reception theory, and we have yet to adequately theorize the impact of the social text on our understandings of border literature, or to consider what we miss in our explorations of texts that pretend to divorce their materiality and sociality from our understandings of them.

In tracing the social lives of border texts through the material evidence of their paratexts and/or bibliographic codes, I find that this literature often uses its own material margins to render visible and tangible its own instability. McGann argues, “a great many writers, and all poets, appreciate the symbolic and signifying dimensions of the physical medium through which . . . the linguistic text is embodied” (Textual Condition 56); I believe that because of their particularly fraught relationship to the industries of book production and reception, border writers are perhaps even more keenly aware of “the symbolic and signifying dimensions” of instabilities of the material text. Thus, the texts I study in the following chapters all participate in what I define as “border textuality,” or the condition under which the material text renders visible the link between narratives of struggle over border identity and the very struggle to produce and publish those narratives, showing how a text’s social life informs interpretation in ways that materially reproduce that struggle. These writers create narratives that invite readers to reflect on the instability common to literary texts and border identity, and their books make that instability material. Literature that invokes border textuality not only narrates instability but materially instantiates it. This is not to say that writers of border literature are always
(or in some cases, ever) aware of and in control of the material transmission of instability: in some instances, writers’ texts participate in border textuality despite their best efforts to control and stabilize them in the face of perceived threats from publishers and readers. Instead of seeing “instability” as something to be celebrated or maligned, I highlight the ways the interdependent relationships between writers, publishers, critics, archivists, reviewers, and readers lead to the production of border textuality in their struggles for and against stability, and how those relationships are exposed in the material margins of the text. The struggle for border literature to be produced and received is always already being played out on the page; furthermore, as it intersects with border literary narratives of the struggle to construct an identity, it materially shapes the interpretive possibilities of the text. Border textuality demands that readers recognize instability in the narratives of border languages, geography, history, and identity by navigating the instability of the material text.

For the most part, the scope of this project is limited to those Hispanic and Chicana/o writers who are also (in some cases, arguably) border writers, making the U.S.-Mexico border a central figure in their work. This allows me to focus on the specific challenges to and opportunities for publication facing this already quite diverse group of writers, particularly as they are complicated by matters of race, politics, and language, which Anglo border writers like Cormac McCarthy likely experience in a fairly different way. Furthermore, only in the third chapter do I gesture toward the possibilities of adapting the concept of border textuality to other Latina/o texts, as the work of Junot Díaz so usefully demonstrates. Attending to the specificity of the U.S.-Mexico border
and those it affects, each chapter of the dissertation attempts to view examples of border textuality from a different phase of the communications circuit. Beginning with a focus on the author (Chapter 2), then the publisher (Chapter 3), followed by the editor/archivist (Chapter 4), and finally the reader (Chapter 5), I demonstrate how each phase offers a new entry points into understanding the production and reception of border texts. Yet as each chapter develops, invariably even these phases blend and blur: for example, the second chapter begins with a discussion of authorial control over multiple versions of a text, but quickly reveals how publishers exert their own control; the third chapter reverses the scenario by tracing the history of publisher/editorial control over the visual aspects of language in border texts, suggesting methods authors have used to wrest control back. Similarly, the fourth and fifth chapters begin with a focus on critics/editors and readers respectively, but develop into discussions of the potential for each to influence the other. Taken as a whole, it becomes difficult to separate these various phases of the communications circuit as they interact with one another, revealing the complex web of intentions and expectations that interact with one another and shape the social life of every border text.

Chapter two, “‘A Touch-Up Here and There’: Embracing Border Textuality in Revisions of Rolando Hinojosa and Ana Castillo,” begins with a study of the way authorial revisions of published texts introduce material instability into our understanding of border literature. I offer a reading of Rolando Hinojosa’s and Ana Castillo’s published revisions of their work as subversive commentaries on the notion of textual and narrative stability. Hinojosa’s *The Valley*, a 1983 translation and rewriting of 1973’s *Estampas del*
Valle y otras obras, and Castillo’s 1994 revision of 1990’s Sapogonia intentionally or unintentionally valorize border textuality, creating texts that are fluidly joined to yet separate from their revisions. The section on Hinojosa recognizes the author as actively supporting border textuality, initiating his own wildly revisionist translations, or “renditions,” of many of his novels from Spanish into English, and focuses on the material evidence of Hinojosa’s attempts to accommodate his English-speaking monolingual audiences. I review his revisionary decisions in light of their material impact on the text, from the maps that precede the text to the order and arrangement of his sketches, and trace how critics have embraced or ignored the differences between each of his versions of the text. Moving on to Castillo, I highlight an author who had significantly less control over the shape of the versions of her text, as the first was published by Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe without her knowledge and the second only moderately revised after it was sold to Doubleday. Concentrating on the complicated publishing history of Sapogonia reveals a certain reluctance on the part of scholars to study the significance of its multiple versions, even when those versions are demonstrated to narrate significantly different stories.

I argue that attention to the multiple versions of texts should be of special interest to border literature scholars, particularly those who emphasize the narrative role of oral, alternative, counter, and competing histories in border texts. Literatures of the border often advocate sustained attention to the instability of identity and history, asserting mestiza/o identity as a valorization of the spaces between traditionally conceived divisions implied by nation, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Border critics must
expand the field of inquiry to include the material borders of and between texts, beginning the important work of contextualizing the histories and politics of production, publication, and reception particular to border writers. Chapter two argues that both novels emphasize narrative instability, presenting shifting oral histories or multiple retellings of the same event from different perspectives, but furthermore that the effects of changing linguistic strategies in Hinojosa’s texts, and the differing effects of small and large presses on Castillo’s texts, create material texts that mirror those narrative concerns with destabilizing history.

The third chapter, “Translating in the Margins: The Shaping Forces of the Glossary and Typography,” demonstrates how editors and publishers have confronted the material challenges of incorporating Spanish into border texts, as well as how authors and readers react to the choices those editors and publishers make. While the previous chapter highlights Hinojosa’s attempts at accommodation of his monolingual English audience, here I outline varying strategies of resistance to publisher-impressed accommodations. Specifically, I analyze the imposition of the glossary and italicization in novels ranging across the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century by Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Jovita González and Eve Raleigh, Nash Candelaria, and Junot Díaz. Both the glossary and typography visually communicate theories of the relationships between Spanish and English and reflect the interests of the parties who insert them. Noting the ways that border textuality can arise from distinct differences in intentions and desires between publishers, authors, and readers, I argue that the inclusion of a glossary signals an attempted accommodation of
monolingual audiences that writers and the texts themselves often seek to subvert. For many Chicana/o and Latina/o writers of the border, language choice is complex, political, and often undercut by a glossary, which underscores the belief in a one-to-one correlation between languages, or by italicization, which creates a visual hierarchy between languages. The presence of unitalicized Spanish, untranslated or misleadingly translated words, editorial translation, authorial refusal to include glossaries, and readerly constructions of online comprehensive glossaries all serve as evidence of competing impulses regarding the presence of a “foreign” language in English-language texts.

The fourth chapter, “‘My Book Has Seen the Light of Day’: Recovery Projects and Their Paratexts,” shifts attention toward archivists, editors, and critics and their role in the communications circuit. It emphasizes the significance of “recovery” and “preservation” to the Chicana/o canon, exploring the material texts of recovery projects for evidence of how recoverers, editors, and publishers shape interpretation from the margins. In the first section, I navigate the critical discussion of one of border literature’s foundational recovery projects, Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don* (1885/1992), arguing that the presence of editors Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita as the paratextual gateway to Ruiz de Burton’s text has had a significant effect on the possibilities for interpreting the novel as Chicana/o or “subaltern.” I also study their editorial decisions, finding evidence of an attempt to assign stability to a text that was published in two different editions in the same year. The repercussions of this editorial decision, I argue, are found not only in interpretive possibilities in Sánchez and Pita’s edition but also in a subsequent edition produced by Modern Library Classics, a division of Random House.
Comparing the material texts of each of these editions, I demonstrate how this most recent double publication of *The Squatter and the Don* mirrors its double publication in 1885, repeating its instability.

In the second section, I discuss the role of translation in successful recovery projects of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century that have recuperated novellas including Aristeo Brito’s *The Devil in Texas* and Margarita Cota-Cárdenas’s *Puppet*. I demonstrate how the incorporation of English appears necessary to the recovery of these recently-lost texts for English readers even as both Brito’s and Cota-Cárdenas’s narratives embrace a English-Spanish bilingualism that loses its rich texture and variety in translation. By examining the material and paratextual elements of the bilingual editions of these texts for an understanding of their effects on interpretation, I show how despite efforts to preserve the content of the original majority-Spanish versions, in their introductions, cover pages, and even organization, the material texts themselves expose at the same time a hierarchy of languages and audiences and a deep ambivalence about such hierarchies. Again, these texts participate in border textuality by developing narratives that call attention to the instability of language at the same time the material text renders visible that same instability for readers.

The fifth chapter, “Writing in the Margins: *The House on Mango Street*,” shifts its attention to the reader and the effects of readerly marginalia on our interpretation of Sandra Cisneros’s widely taught story cycle, *The House on Mango Street*. Bringing marginalia studies, one of the newest branches of textual studies, to a text like *Mango Street* offers the opportunity to take seriously the words, phrases, comments, and
complaints readers feel compelled to leave in the margins. Darnton writes that the history of reading should “take account of the ways that texts constrain readers as well as the ways that readers take liberties with texts” (21); therefore, I read the marginal notes in ten used copies of Cisneros’s text for evidence of the kinds of dialogue readers are capable of engaging in from the literal margins of this border text. I show how the social life of Mango Street has involved a steady transition into “textbook,” theorizing how that transition alters the possibilities for interpretation, as evidenced by the proliferation of marginalia that mark Cisneros’s text with vocabulary lists, definitions, and excerpts of lectures. But furthermore, I take a preliminary step toward categorizing the kinds of marginalia found in my selection of used copies in order to suggest the variety of ways readers interact with the text from within its margins. Using examples of “comprehensive,” “interpretive,” and “interactive” marginalia, I demonstrate that here readers themselves participate in the production of border textuality: they speak from the material borders – the literal margins – responding to a narrative from and about the borders of identity.

Finally, the conclusion looks outward, suggesting areas of future research into the effects of the material margins on interpretation of border texts, an area that has too long gone unexplored. Many of these suggestions also extend to Chicana/o literature more broadly, and are thus outside the scope of this dissertation. For instance, I offer a number of possibilities for the future of book historical approaches to Chicana/o and Latina/o literature, including an exploration of the significance and impact of serial publication on Chicana/o literary production. Additionally, there is much work to be done on the
significance of visual art, or the relationship between image and text, in the work of writers ranging from Fabiola Cabeza de Baca to Oscar Zeta Acosta to John Rechy to Guillermo Gomez-Peña. And finally, an entire world of untapped potential for understanding the development of Chicana/o literature exists in the form of the histories of those publishing houses that served to generate and sustain what we now recognize as Chicana/o literature. Small publishing houses including Arte Público Press, Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, Quinto Sol, Chusma House, Wings, and Calaca, shaped and continue to shape our understanding of Chicana/o literature and offer plenty of room to consider how the relationship between an author and her publishing house shapes the texts that relationship produces. Conversely, the development of Chicana/o and Latina/o “lines” by major presses like “Rayo” from Harper Collins and Penguin’s “Celebra” presents us with an opportunity to reflect on how Chicana/o and Latina/o cultural and literary production is adapted and re-shaped for different purposes.

Michael F. Suarez writes, “because books cross borders, book history must do so as well” (149); this dissertation is a response to that challenge. Recognizing the material text as a space that reveals interpretation as continuously under construction by authors, publishers, critics, reviewers, editors, archivists, and readers, I find the stories told by the margins of the texts to be compelling evidence of the complex history of border literary production. Examining the social life of border texts exposes the struggle to publish, to keep in print, and to recover those works that didn’t stay in print. It also recognizes the meanings of border literatures as embedded in the very material elements of narratives of border identity: through paratext and bibliographic codes, the material text(s) of border
literatures shape our understandings of border identity. This study asks us to see authors in dialogue or even competition with publishers and readers regarding the shape and meaning of their narratives, as only part of the circulation of the text’s meanings. It also demands we link our own experience of texts to the history of border literary production, seeing ourselves as actors in the continuing narrative of border literature and culture.
CHAPTER TWO
“A TOUCH-UP HERE AND THERE”: EMBRACING BORDER TEXTUALITY IN REVISIONS OF ROLANDO HINOJOSA AND ANA CASTILLO

Chapter five of Ana Castillo’s novel Sapogonia begins with the line, “It wasn’t that he had fallen in love with her” (17). That is, of course, provided you are reading the 1990 Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe edition, which you probably checked out of a library or picked up at a used book store. Just as likely you are reading a newer copy of the 1994 Anchor Books edition put out by Doubleday, in which case chapter five begins by telling you, “Máximo lived in Barcelona for three months before he decided to look for his father” (16). Chapter five in 1994 reads nothing like its earlier counterpart, because in 1990 its contents would have been found in chapter seven. And the contents of 1990’s chapter five can now be found in chapter fifteen in the 1994 edition, nearly 100 pages away from its earlier home. Although the paperback of the 1994 edition does not hide the fact that it is a revision, most casual readers are likely unaware of the content and context of the substantial changes made to the novel over the course of its two separate publication dates.\(^4\) In fact, roughly half of the slim number of literary critics who tackle this novel are either unaware of those changes or judge them to have so little

\(^4\) The back of the 1994 edition’s paperback highlights its status as a revision: “Anchor Books is proud to present a revised edition of prize-winning poet and novelist Ana Castillo’s second novel, Sapogonia. Originally published in 1990, this newly edited version brilliantly demonstrates why she is one of America’s leading Chicana writers.”
impact on their investigations as to not even mention the two versions in a footnote.

Despite the fact that attention to the circumstances and content of Castillo’s revisions in many cases might further support their arguments, many critics maintain a sharp divide between the content of the narratives they study and the material makeup of their multiple formats and versions.

For many scholars, attending to the multiple versions of any one text means little more than a footnoted citation, an occasional nuisance that once dispensed with allows them to move on to their interpretations and arguments. But as John Bryant argues, most everything we read comes to us in multiple versions:

Consider the Bible, Qur’an, or any foundation text in its variously constructed and continuously translated forms; consider the matter of scribal invention in the variant Piers Plowmans or Canterbury Tales, or the record of performance versions in the quarto Hamlets, or the existence of two Lear’s (three if you count Nahum Tate’s revision, four with the scholar’s composite edition). There are ideological revisions in Paine’s Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence, three versions of Frederick Douglass’s life, two of Moby-Dick, and the manuscript and print revisions in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Whitman, Dickinson, James, Eliot, and Woolf. There is Ulysses in typescript, first edition, and a genetic edition. (19)

While not every critic is obliged to discuss in detail the impact of their text selection, quite often their arguments can hinge on that very choice. In “Witness and Access: The Uses of the Fluid Text,” Bryant demonstrates how critics of Melville’s Typee rely on textual evidence provided in a single, “definitive” edition to their detriment, using John Carlos Rowe as an example. Bryant argues that recognizing Typee as a “fluid text,” or a “written work that exists in multiple material versions due to revisions (authorial, editorial, cultural) upon which we may construct an interpretation” (17) would have
allowed Rowe to make a more convincing argument, particularly with regard to his emphasis on the language of the captivity narrative, which Melville in one version struck from the manuscript. Similarly, John K. Young, who focuses on the effects of the paratext on texts by African American writers, challenges those critics whose readings of Nella Larsen’s *Passing* rely on the final paragraph ending with the words “Then everything was dark,” which was not the final line in the first two printings of the 1929 novel. By ignoring the publication history in which an entire paragraph was deleted from the closing of Larsen’s text, Young asserts these critics “ultimately assume a textual certainty that is in fact absent” (645), arguing this has implications not only for critical interpretation but also in the classroom.

Both Bryant and Young are adamant that the practical problems of teaching or writing about “fluid” texts present opportunities to discuss the evidence of a text’s social life, of the impact of publishers, editors, and readers as well as authorial second-guesses on any text’s supposed stability. Bryant explains, “when we read a literary work as the fluid text it invariably is . . . we can see rhetorical strategies in the shape of revision strategies; we can witness more directly the interpenetration of writing and cultural processes, actual struggle, not allegories of struggle” (34). For Bryant, attending to a text’s revisions reveals that the “real” version of any text is more easily located in an examination of the relationships among its multiple material manifestations rather than in any one instance of it. In a similar manner, genetic critic Louis Hay argues, “we should consider the text as a necessary possibility, as one manifestation of a process which is always virtually present in the background, a kind of third dimension of the written
work” (75). Thus the work of genetic critics traces the multiple manuscripts of a published text for evidence of its revisions, additions, and deletions, creating editions that gather and present documentation of the process leading to and following the publication of a text. Scholars who foreground the instability of textual versions in the classroom allow students to recognize the social, historical, and political processes at work in the production of any text.

Furthermore, advocates of the social text like D.F. McKenzie and Jerome McGann have in various ways attempted to dispel the notion of the stable, coherent, singular, definitive text, instead focusing on the complex interactions involved in the production, transmission, and reception of texts. McKenzie emphasizes a “sociology” of texts that “directs us to consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission, and consumption. It alerts us to the roles of institutions, and their own complex structures, in affecting the forms of social discourse, past and present.” (6-7). McGann describes the (social) “event” of a particular text as part of a succession of texts in flux, arguing for more critical attention to the material aspects of book production, and for editions that are sensitive to both the lexical and the bibliographical elements of a text. McGann argues in *The Textual Condition*, “every text, including those that may appear to be purely private, is a social text. This view entails a corollary understanding, that a ‘text’ is not a ‘material thing’ but a material event or set of events, a point in time (or a moment in space) where certain communicative interchanges are being practiced” (21); meaning-making is affected by both linguistic and bibliographic codes. Because, as Bryant explains, “each new physical context is a different ‘event’” (*The Fluid Text* 50), critics and critical editions need to be attentive to both the words on the page and the pages on which we find the words. While genetic critics often favor editions that document the transmission of all of the manuscripts of a given text, McGann favors the wider scope of the “continuous production text” (30), which takes into account all of a text’s changes in the aftermath of publication as well.
linguistic and bibliographic codes of individual versions, and to study the relationships among them for evidence of the social forces at work in their production. Such a focus grounds our criticism in the material, political history of border writers and their work, highlighting the discourses of political power and authority as they are literally worked out on the page.

Even so-called “intentionalist” critics who emphasize the importance of locating and editing an eclectic text that approximates an author’s intentions, such as G. Thomas Tanselle, emphasize that whether one chases an author’s first or final intentions, editors make a choice to create an edition of a version out of many possible versions.\textsuperscript{6} And while in many cases literary critics continue to generate interpretations that assume and even rely on the fictive stability of the texts they work with, the creation of new media and electronic editions or archives that highlight textual multiplicity, polyvocality, and materiality encourages more and more emphasis on acknowledging the historicity and cultural context of a text’s narrative as well as its (multiple) material forms.

In their exploration of the shape and impact of the border, the concerns of scholars in the fields of textual studies and border literature resonate strongly. These ongoing critical conversations can be usefully brought together, bringing new critical

\textsuperscript{6} Claiming “we must have a standard, a guiding principle in mind” (70) when editing, Tanselle argues in \textit{A Rationale of Textual Criticism} that whose intentions scholars trace is less the point than that they choose and stick close by those intentions. Tanselle notes that often the most popular moment in a work’s history to reconstruct is that of the author’s. Claiming “the goal is what once existed in the author’s mind,” Tanselle argues the most reliable evidence of the intended work comes from the final manuscript, coupled with all reliable evidence of authorial revisions in later editions and versions – an eclectic text that takes the last or closest possible moment of individual effort as its foundation. As opposed to diplomatic or facsimile editions, which attempt to recreate texts as they once were, eclectic editions create texts that never really were, aiming for the ideal edition that an author would have wanted. While Tanselle calls eclectic editing “a more profound historical activity” (38), McGann argues that even the choice to present diplomatic texts alters the conditions for interpretation, the choice itself being an interpretive decision.
lenses to both fields. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa’s argument that “the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (19) can be usefully applied by textual scholars in ways that more clearly recognize the politics of location at play in the production of minority texts. Furthermore, textual scholar D.C. Greetham’s acknowledgment that the material borders, or margins, of a text “are indeed an inevitable topic in these days of ‘post’ (structuralism, colonialism, modernism, feminism, Marxism), of deferral and dispersion, of the edges and the interstitial” (5) offers border literature scholars an opportunity to consider the materiality of the texts and narratives they work with. Critical attention to the contexts in which texts were published, revised, and republished reveals yet another example of the complex negotiations of authority and power in literature of the borderlands.

Thus, instead of simply footnoting the presence of multiple versions of novels like Sapogonia: (an Anti-Romance in 3/8 Meter) and Rolando Hinojosa’s Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras (1973, 1977)/ The Valley (1983), critics ought to explore these authorial revisions for evidence of the particular nature and circumstances of border publishing, as well as for insights into the relationship between a text’s material embodiment – its social life – and our interpretation of its subject matter. On a narrative level, these two novels by Hinojosa and Castillo have quite a lot in common. Both writers create imagined geographic border spaces: Hinojosa renders his fictive version of the Río Grande Valley
as Belken County, often favorably compared to Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha.\textsuperscript{7} Castillo’s Sapogonia, “a distinct place in the Americas where all mestizos reside, regardless of nationality, individual racial composition, or legal residential status – or, perhaps, because of all these” (5,1) renders place in slightly more vague terms.\textsuperscript{8} Both novels are made up of often-short, episodic chapters or vignettes, and both offer multiple narrators and shifting points of view, while at the same time privileging two characters as the primary and secondary protagonists: Hinojosa gives readers Jehú Malacara and Rafe Buenrostro, while Castillo alternates between Máximo Madrigal and Pastora Velásquez Aké. But perhaps more importantly, both of these novels have been subject to substantial revisions after their initial publication. Hinojosa took up the task of translating and revising his 1973 novel in 1983. Castillo revised her novel when the smaller Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe sold the rights to Doubleday.

As I will demonstrate in what follows, in dealing with border texts with complicated publication histories, scholars must be attentive to those histories and the effects of material changes on interpretation. As they engage in dialogue with one another, supporting or refuting each other’s arguments, it is essential that critics recognize that their arguments are often built on fundamentally different texts. It is important, furthermore, to recognize how these multiple, revised versions undermine the sense of stability associated with print, demonstrating the relationship between a border

\textsuperscript{7} For instance, Mark Busby argues in “Faulknerian Elements in Rolando Hinojosa's The Valley,” “Hinojosa and Faulkner use mythical counties populated by characters that appear in various works . . . Both writers similarly highlight significant historical developments in their areas with a mixture of delight and sorrow” (103)

\textsuperscript{8} Any textual quotations will list the appropriate page numbers for both editions, where applicable.
text’s linguistic (or narrative) and bibliographic codes. For instance, the instability of story-telling as a topic in these texts is mirrored by the instability of these texts’ material social life, inviting readers to make choices about which version matters most. In this chapter, I explore Hinojosa’s and Castillo’s revisions in order to highlight the authors’ negotiation of a number of borderlands, including those between independent publishers and mass-market publishers as well as those publishers’ target audiences (what Manuel Martín Rodríguez refers to as the difference between la marketa and the market), as is the case with Castillo. I also focus attention on how border writers use revision to navigate the borders of language at different historical moments, as we see in Hinojosa’s favoring of Spanish at the height of the Chicano movement and accommodating English as the purposes and audiences of the longer Klail City Death Trip series evolved and shifted. In my examination of both Hinojosa’s and Castillo’s work, I trace how critics have handled or ignored the presence of multiple versions in their own arguments, complicating the social text by responding to, arguing with, or supporting the arguments of critics who use different versions of the text. I also show how both authors and their novels demonstrate a self-conscious concern with versioning, revision, bibliography, and multiple interpretations that links a postmodern understanding of the “textual condition” to the particularities of border consciousness, participating in what I call “border textuality”: these writers create narratives that invite readers to reflect on the instability common to literary texts and border identity, and their revisions make that instability material.
In 1973, Quinto Sol, a publishing house in Berkeley, CA, published Rolando Hinojosa’s *Estampas del valle y otras obras*, a collection of short sketches divided into four parts and translated from Spanish into English by Gustavo Valdèz and José Reyna. That same year, Hinojosa would be awarded the Premio Quinto Sol award for Chicana/o literary fiction, an award previously given to Tomás Rivera and Rudolfo Anaya. The letter from the editor, Herminio Rios, which precedes the collection and is also printed both in Spanish and English, acknowledges what the format and layout of the collection seems to imply:

Realmente tenemos en mente a dos públicos lectores. Primeramente, el público lector contemporáneo al autor, a la obra, y a los esfuerzos actuales del pueblo chicano no solamente en el ramo de la literatura, sino que también en todas las otras disciplinas del saber humano. En segundo término, el público del futuro que tratará de analizar y de entender nuestra lucha. Nuestra intención no es de entrar en una discusión sobre si hay o no hay literatura chicana, cuestión que aún hoy en día se discute en algunos círculos universitarios. (4)

We really have two reading publics in mind. First, the readers who are contemporary to the author, the work, and to the current efforts of the Chicanos not only in the field of literature, but also in all other disciplines of human knowledge. Secondly, the readers of the future who will try to engage and understand our struggle. It is not our intention to engage in a discussion as to whether or not Chicano literature exists, even though this issue is still being debated in some university circles. (7)

The collection of sketches, its four parts entitled “Estampas del Valle,” “Por Esas Cosas Que Pasan,” “Vidas y Milagros,” and “Una Vida de Rafe Buenrostro,” serves as the introduction to a number of significant characters and families from the fictional Belken County. Each of the first three parts is followed immediately by its English translation, “Sketches of the Valley” (translated by Valdèz), “One of Those Things” (translated by
Reyna), and “Lives and Miracles” (Valdéz). The final section, “Una Vida de Rafe Buenrostro,” also translated by Valdéz, is a series of paragraphs and extremely short vignettes, each small segment presented in Spanish at the top of the page and English at the bottom.

This first edition of the novel was plagued by editorial and printing problems. For instance, John C. Akers notes in “From Translation to Rewriting: Rolando Hinojosa’s The Valley,” “In the Spanish portion of Estampas, one of the vignettes, “Voces del barrio” did not print out. Surprisingly, Valadez’s translation of this vignette does appear” (92). The “Preliminary Note” and “Note of Clarification” were also missing, and pages 42-43, 46-47, 50-51, 54-55, 58-59 were blank. After Quinto Sol split into Editorial Justa and Tonatiuh International in 1975, a second edition which attempted to correct these mistakes was brought out under Editorial Justa in 1977, and a third edition appeared in 1980. But beyond correcting the editorial problems, Akers and other critics argue, by 1983 Hinojosa had more expansive plans for revising and rearranging his novel. Akers claims the combination of different translators for different sections, the different presentations of Spanish and English, and the title, Estampas del valle y otras obras, “indicate that originally Hinojosa did not envision Estampas as one novel but rather as a collection of four independent works where the translation appears at the completion of each” (92), but that in 1983 this had changed. Not only was the 1983 Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe edition – The Valley – published entirely in English, but Hinojosa had also reorganized, revised, and restructured a substantial portion of the text. Hinojosa’s new version aimed to
kill four birds with one stone: that is, rectify some of the inconsistencies found in *Estampas*, demonstrate and experiment with his writing abilities in English, project his newly found idea of novelistic cohesion, and then tie everything together henceforth in what has come to be known as a broad, changing, growing representation of place (whether in Spanish or English), his Klail Death Trip series. (Akers 94)

By the time *The Valley* was published, Hinojosa’s longer project of linked novels, called the *Klail City Death Trip* series, was already well underway. Five books in the series had already been published: *Klail City y sus alrededores* (1976) and *Generaciones y semblanzas* (1977) (the same Spanish-language book with two different titles), *Korean Love Songs* (1978) (written in English), *Mi querido Rafa* (1981) (written in Spanish and English), and *Rites and Witnesses* (1982) (written in English). A sixth, *Claros Varones de Belken* (translated by Julia Cruz as *Fair Gentleman of Belken County*), was already written and had been submitted to his publisher, but would not be published until 1986.9

Certainly, it would seem Hinojosa had an entirely new sense of what this version of the first installment could do.

Klaus Zilles points to the changing of the title and the addition of a new subtitle as the first clue that Hinojosa moves beyond linguistic translation and into the territory of what Manuel Martín Rodríguez calls a “transcultural version” (123). Calling it a “recast” of the first version, Zilles claims that Hinojosa “must have been aware of relinquishing to some degree the novel’s relationship with Spanish literary history” (9) by removing the word “estampas” and its associations with the literary form of character sketches.10

---

9 According to Klaus Zilles, Hinojosa does consider that book to be the fourth installment in his series, though five other books would appear in print before it was finally published (fn 1, 205).

10 Critics often note the influence of Spanish genres, both the estampa and costumbrismo, on Hinojosa’s Spanish-language version of the novel. Hector Calderón adds another layer of influence by arguing that
Hinojosa replaces the estampa with this subtitle: “A re-creation in narrative prose of a portfolio of etchings, engravings, sketches, and silhouettes by various artists in various styles, plus a set of photographs from a family album.” By shifting the focus from a character sketch to recreations of visual, material objects, Zilles argues, “[Hinojosa] achieves . . . the same objectivity and impartiality that one would associate with today’s powerful documents in photojournalism or with literary portraits in the Spanish medieval tradition” (10). Hinojosa’s change of the title reveals his attempts to make his work more appealing to an English-reading (and perhaps, a specifically American) audience and culture, but it also draws the reader’s attention to the book as a set of material objects “re-created in narrative prose” – his writing is already a revision.

Throughout the text of his English versions of the series, which he refers to as “renditions” (Zilles 4), Hinojosa attempts to adapt to a different culture by providing more relevant metaphors and examples, using more familiar colloquialisms. Martín-Rodríguez points out such a change in Klail City, Hinojosa’s rendition of Klail City y sus alrededores, wherein Hinojosa replaces a reference to El Cid with a mention of a limerick (122). Martín-Rodriguez writes, “It is obvious the text is courting a different public, and hence it has switched the parameters along which communication with that audience would be verified” (122); Akers notes evidence of the text “courting a different public” in The Valley, where “The emphasis is on English orality, not a translation of Spanish writing” (99), which results in among other details, “clearly fewer obscenities” (99) in the

__Estampas del valle y otras obras__ is not simply local color fiction, as the designation of costumbrismo would imply, but an updated version of the cronicón: “a fifteenth-century Peninsular form, the history of a kingdom told. . . through a series of biographical sketches, estampas and semblanzas, of illustrious individuals” (140).
English version. Hinojosa “modifies the discourse to adjust it to the different audience to which he is telling the story” both by adjusting the cultural references and completely rewriting the language of the narrative(s) in English (Martín-Rodríguez 29). Because of these adjustments, Zilles argues, the history of the series and its chronology are incredibly complex. When ordering the series, where do you place the translation – transcultural version, even – of the 1973 text? Right after it, or in the year it was published? Should a reader of the series read one, or the other, or both? For Zilles, “Hinojosa’s recasts must be . . . considered essentially new texts in their own right and are therefore counted among the fourteen installments of the KCDTS” (4).\footnote{Zilles only counts Hinojosa’s own translations and recasts as part of the total number of installments. Though he acknowledges the translations done by others, including Julia Cruz as well as Wolfgang Kerrer, who did the German translation of *Korean Love Songs: Korea Liebes Lieder* (1991), they do not appear to constitute versions in their own right, though likely many scholars of translation theory might disagree.} He helpfully offers a chronological map of publication dates for each installment, but then discusses texts and their recasts in succession so that readers have the opportunity to note the links, similarities, and differences between them. Such an approach acknowledges the multiple histories of the series and its individual texts one has to choose from when constructing a reading or an argument, offering a visual, progressive representation of Hinojosa’s publication chronology at the same time it provides other methods of organizing the series, both thematically and linguistically. Thus it also gives equal weight to the Spanish and the English versions by presenting them not simply as two sides of the same coin, but as evidence of conscious choices about Hinojosa’s own audience.
When Hinojosa first wrote and published *Estampas del valle y otras obras*, he wrote in Spanish admittedly because it served as a sort of comfort zone. In 1974 he claimed “the Chicano writer has been forced to write in English,” (Lee 50), and his preference for writing in Spanish aligned him with Tomás Rivera, whose... y no se lo tragó la tierra is considered one of the foundations of Chicana/o fiction. Of that novel, Hinojosa says,

People didn’t know where to situate it and by ‘people’ I mean academics. But our reality is the United States. That some may wish to place us with Mexico because it’s part of our patrimony, we can’t deny that, or that some wish to place us with Latin America or even with Spain because of the language usage is perfectly all right with me as it is perfectly all right with – I would imagine – men and women Chicano writers. It is an undeniable part of our lives, but the reality of it is that our culture – Chicano culture, etc. – is really an American culture... It was the dual language aspect that bothered a lot of people when it shouldn’t have bothered them. (47)

Joyce Glover Lee notes in *Rolando Hinojosa and the American Dream* that “there was some stigma attached to writing in English during the early days of the Chicano movement” (51), which may have supported and spurred Hinojosa’s choices. Choosing English could mean choosing assimilation, abandoning tradition.

However, a number of critics have noted the shift throughout Hinojosa’s *Klail City Death Trip* series toward a greater accommodation and use of English, again (and in contrast to Zilles) reading the series for signs of linear progress. Akers points out that the later novels *Rites and Witnesses, Partners in Crime*, and *Becky and Her Friends* do not have Spanish-language antecedents, while earlier *The Valley, Dear Rafe*, and *Klail City* each did. In fact, *Becky and Her Friends* was not only first written in English, but then recast into Spanish, effectively switching the “source” language for the first time in the
series. Hinojosa never entirely rejects the uses of both Spanish and English in his work; instead he argued for a more practical approach to the employment of either language in his texts. In the “The Sense of Place,” he describes the process of choosing a language:

> When the characters stayed in the Spanish-speaking milieu or society, the Spanish language worked well, and then it was in the natural order of things that English made its entrance when the characters strayed or found themselves in Anglo institutions; in cases where both cultures would come into contact, both languages were used, and I would employ both, and where one and only one would do, I would follow that as well; what dominated, then, was the place, at first. Later on I discovered that generational and class differences also dictated not only usage but which language as well. From this came the how they said what they said. (qtd in Espadas and Payne 72)

Luis Leal argues that although the people and culture of the Valley in *Estampas del valle y otras obras* managed to maintain contact with Mexico and its culture, “after a century of interaction with the Anglo-American culture some acculturation, however slight, has taken place” (107); while Hinojosa creates characters and stories throughout the series that navigate increased interaction with Anglo Americans and the English language, the texts themselves increasingly incorporate the English language.

> With the publication of The Valley, Akers argues, Hinojosa has “consciously stepped over the boundary demarcating translation and initiated a postmodernist literary pursuit into a virtually unexplored but growing area” (94); however, Hinojosa would be unlikely to call his work “postmodernist.”

12 Klaus Zilles devotes a good portion of *Rolando Hinojosa: A Reader’s Guide* to the question of whether Hinojosa’s work can accurately be characterized as postmodern. After tracing the commentary of numerous critics, Zilles makes a convincing argument that Hinojosa’s work is more closely aligned with modernism, showing that the close proximity of modernist and postmodernist elements of fiction often cause the two to be confused. However, when Zilles notes, “Each new form [Hinojosa] implements serves his quest for an adequate portrayal of his South-Texas Chicano community” (84), I also see evidence of a
natural order of things” as well as his repeated emphasis on the “reality” of Chicanas/os, (“our reality is the United States) hints that the linguistic variation and fragmentation often taken for granted as postmodern elements of literature are more likely signs that Hinojosa is attempting a form of realism. In the case of The Valley, perhaps “the characters strayed or found themselves in Anglo institutions” simply by being introduced to Anglo, English-speaking audiences. In any case, the material circumstances of Hinojosa’s changing audience have altered the possibilities for how we read and even categorize his work. At a time when “foreignizing” translations are gaining currency, translation theorists and border critics alike might fault Hinojosa for appearing too accommodating of English speaking audiences: he is certainly “unfaithful” in his translations, as he demonstrates by not only supplying an English version but completely changing and rearranging it to suit that readership. And he goes much further in accommodation than writers like Junot Díaz and Helena Maria Viramontes, who prefer to challenge readers to experience borderlands linguistic variety, or even writers and publishers who provide glossary translations, as discussed in the next chapter, to engage that readership in a different version of the text. But Martin-Rodriguez argues, “authors of transcultural texts . . . seem to be much more aware of their texts being different things to different people, as well as of their need to transcend barriers and borders that could impede the reader’s interaction and thus the need to come up with novel strategies” (123).

I argue that Estampas del valle y otras obras and The Valley are more than simply instances of linguistic segregation – separate-but-equal attempts to cater to two different realist aesthetic, one that aims for “nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material” (William Dean Howells, 966).
language reading audiences – but that they demonstrate the unique relationship between border literature and the concept of the social text. Actively pursuing linguistic borderlands results in the material multiplicity of versions, none of which can claim ultimate authority. It also replicates in a material way the narrative concern with the instability of identity.

Not every critic makes such strong distinctions between these two versions of Hinojosa’s novel. Among the number of changes Hinojosa introduced into The Valley, one of the first a reader encounters is the inclusion of an epigraph: a line from Matthew Arnold’s “Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse”: “Born between two worlds: one dead and one as yet unborn.” Citing Arnold might be read as yet another attempt on Hinojosa’s part to accommodate an English-speaking culture: opening with a quote from Arnold situates the text in an Anglo European canonical tradition. Although she claims her work “examine[s] the series thematically and structurally, while trying to preserve some sense of its historical chronology” (24), Lee refers to the Arnold quote as “an apt epigraph for the first novel in a sequence entitled the Klail City Death Trip Series” (6). Given that this epigraph does not appear in the 1973 Estampas del valle, Lee’s representation of The Valley as the first in the sequence disregards the Spanish version and also ignores the chronology of publication. She argues “the variety of titles for essentially the same material all confound the newcomer” (23), indicating an understanding of the English versions as replacements, rather than supplements or in any way separate from the Spanish language texts. Even critics who do acknowledge that the differences between the Spanish and English versions can have profound effects on the reading experience,
such as Wilson Neate, cite this epigraph and other elements not included in *Estampas del valle* in building their arguments about the text as though the two versions functioned as a coherent whole.\(^{13}\)

Another paratextual source of difference appears in the maps that accompany the 1973 and 1983 versions of the novel, though not many critics note it in their comparisons. Héctor Calderón explains the map that appears in *Estampas del valle y otras obras*:

> At the top portion of the map toward the left, hanging in space, Hinojosa situates Kobe, Tokyo, Panmunjon, Fort Sill, and Fort Ord with lines of relation to each other. These are the cities that throughout the Korean War will affect the Mexican families of Belken County. In the center there is also a list of states in inverted geographic order, with Texas in the north, followed by Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan to the south. On either side of the list are arrows pointing down and up. These states are well known to the migrant worker stream that flows back and forth on a seasonal basis from the Valley. These two schematic versions of the real world are juxtaposed against the expanding fictional world of Belken County. At the bottom of the map, near the international border with the Rio Grande flowing north (Hinojosa’s conceit), is the fictional Belken County. “The map,” Hinojosa informed me, “is fairly accurate, and the position of the river in relation to the town and small cities is realistic.” (148-149)

Calderón does not discuss the man’s face hovering between the maps of Belken County, the migrant stream, and the Korean War locations. The man, with glasses but no eyes, is not identified, and it is unclear who it might represent. For instance, Zilles identifies four male narrators in the entire series: Jehú Malacara, Rafa/Rafe Buenrostro, Esteban Echevarría, and P. Galindo. While the first two play major roles as alternating

\(^{13}\) Neate makes a compelling argument about the shift from Spanish mixed with English (registered particularly strongly in representations of legal documents in “Por Esas Cosas Que Pasan”) in *Estampas del valle* to English in *The Valley*, claiming, “A reading of the English text does not . . . reveal one of the levels of tension between the Anglo and Chicano inhabitants of Belken in terms of language itself” (101). *The Valley* renders some of the bilingual interactions of *Estampas del valle* entirely in English, erasing the complexity of much of the communication and documentation included in the collection.
protagonists, Echevarría “personifies the collective memory of the South Texas Chicano community . . . a mixture of respected sage and belligerent old drunk with a propensity to wildly hold forth against Anglo oppression and Chicano inertia in front of half-intrigued, half-scornful cantina audiences” (Zilles 104), and only makes a brief appearance in the *Aquí me quedo*, a bar where Rafa/e works in *Estampas del valle* and *The Valley*. P. Galindo, Zilles argues, “is at the same time inside the fictional Belken County world and in the real-life world of Chicano letters . . . functioning as a mediator between the Belken County community and the *KCDTS* readership” (104). Though Galindo does not appear in *Estampas del valle* or *The Valley*, the image might most accurately belong to him, the character who is both in and yet above the story of Belken County. Furthermore, the name is a pseudonym Hinojosa used when he published a parody of Ambrose Bierce’s *The Devil’s Dictionary, The Mexican American Devil’s Dictionary*, in 1976. As the character most closely related to the author – in perspective and in name – perhaps it is his face that hovers over the map.

In any case, the 1973 map indicates the complexity of mapping borderlands terrain, hinting at the complexity of characters whose lives depend on migration for employment and are then forever changed by their entry into war in service of the United States of America. José David Saldivar writes that *Estampas del valle y otras obras* “engages the reader in an alternative reconstruction of Texas border history” (178) that counters the narratives of early historians like Walter Prescott Webb, and it also presents

---

14 Zilles notes that the pseudonym was first used by the satirist José Díaz, a friend of Hinojosa’s, and is meant as a homophone for *pega lindo*, or “dead center,” from the phrase *pega poco, pero pega lindo*. 
for readers alternative understandings of the wide range of geography into which the borderlands extends its reach. Lee, in her attempts to “reclaim” Hinojosa’s work for American literature, reminds us that “Hinojosa, after all, is as much an American as he is a Texan, Texas Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, etc.” (2). Hinojosa introduces readers, from the opening pages, to a map in which “the signs, whether verbal or non-verbal . . . express ideological meanings. As such they can function as potent tools for political control or express political aspirations” (McKenzie 38).\(^{15}\) Mapping Belken County onto the Midwest, the nation, and the world invites readers to reconsider our conceptions of space and place, and to recognize how the nation and in fact the world function as borderlands.

However, the map disappears from the 1977 and 1980 editions of *Estampas del valle*, and in 1983 it is replaced with a different, more straightforward map of Belken County. This more recent map only plots the towns of Belken County and the national border, leaving out the north-south migratory pattern and the references to international cities. The mysterious face has disappeared. All in all, this map appears to aim at a more commonly understood realistic representation of a map of a fictional county, one slightly more recognizable than the multiple plot points and disparate geographic locations of the first map.\(^{16}\) And for many critics, it accurately represents Hinojosa’s blend of history and

\(^{15}\) In *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, particularly in his examination of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, McKenzie argued for scrutiny of all texts, including maps and even land, for evidence of the social interactions involved in meaning-making.

\(^{16}\) Again, Hinojosa’s own map is not necessarily “postmodern” by contrast. Though it offers a more complicated picture of the county and its national as well as global reach, Hinojosa’s description of it as “fairly accurate” and “realistic” are worth noting. Alluding to migrant streams and the paths taken by those
fiction: both Hinojosa and the map “present factual incidents yet within a fictional structure . . . which creates the illusion that history arises from the story and not vice-versa” (Neate 92). But it also communicates a different story about the relationships between the county and the rest of the country as well as the world at large.

As previously mentioned, critics have repeatedly noted the increased use of English as well as narrative interactions between the Chicana/o inhabitants of Belken County and Anglo Americans. Although this version was written and published after the series had already begun to expand in multiple geographic directions, and after Hinojosa had grown more accommodating of the English-speaking and reading parts of the United States, the map insulates itself from the rest of the world. Calderón notes that although Hinojosa drew the 1973 map, the map included in *The Valley* “was drawn by someone at Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe” (241, fn 14). The paratextual map sets a different stage for readers of the 1983 English version, one in which only Belken County matters. Although the narrative still references the migratory trips as well as the Korean War, those plot points are no longer geographically located on the map, and readers are encouraged to focus more closely on the community as rooted in a stable, yet also isolated geographic location. While the 1973 map plays with readers’ expectations for maps and legends, complicating the outlines of borders and boundaries with overlapping geographies, the 1983 map aims at a more conventional form of realism, asking readers to believe from the very first page that Belken County is a place one can travel to, with definitely drawn borders.

involved in the Korean War, or acknowledging the fluidity of space and place as it relates to Belken County is perhaps again an attempt at realism, at accurately recording those geographic relationships.
Other paratextual elements that have been visibly changed from 1973 to 1983 include the “Preliminary Note” and the “Note of Clarification,” which become “On the Starting Blocks” and “A Word to the Wise (Guy),” respectively. The “Note of Clarification”/“Word,” for instance, changes from “The people that appear and disappear in these sketches, as well as the events that occur in them, may or may not be real. The writer writes and tries to do what he can. Explaining all this is the function of others. I fulfill my obligation by writing without giving myself away” (“Note of Clarification” 54) to: “What follows, more likely as not, is a figment of someone’s imagination; the reader is asked to keep this disclaimer in mind. For his part, the compiler stakes no claim of responsibility; he owns and holds the copyright but little else” (“Word” 10). While the sentiment of each resembles the other, one could hardly call the second a re-translation of the first. The titles of the sections in Sketches of the Valley (1973) maintain a mildly professional and straightforward tone, mimicking the typical paratextual “Note,” while the recasts for The Valley (1983) – “Word to the Wise (Guy)” – appear slightly more playful. In addition, the role of the speaker has changed from “writer” to “compiler,” a move that reflects the shift from “sketches” or “estampas” to a “portfolio” of material objects. However, in reading across these versions of Hinojosa’s work, we might also see evidence of the interpretive force of an act like “compilation,” one that is not so far removed from the role of “writer” as we might assume. Both the writer and the compiler attempt to control readers’ access to Belken County.

Furthermore, the table of contents reveals that the four parts of the novel are slightly rearranged, beginning with “Sketches of the Valley,” followed by “Rafe
Buenrostro” (previously “Una Vida de Rafa Buenrostro”; also came last in 1973),
“Sometimes it Just Happens that Way” (previously “One of Those Things”), and “Lives and Miracles.” Ten stories that originally appeared in “Sketches of the Valley” have been moved to the end of “Lives and Miracles.” This reorganization of elements strengthens the focus of the third section on Jehú, rather than the community as a whole. As with the map that eliminates geographic locations outside of Belken County, the reorganization of narrative material asks readers to choose one character as the protagonist, perhaps more evidence of the accommodation of American audiences seeking stories of the triumph of the individual.

*The Valley*’s section entitled “Sometimes it Just Happens that Way” (1983), previously translated in *Sketches of the Valley* as “One of Those Things” (1973), and originally “Por Esas Cosas Que Pasan” (1973) in *Estampas del valle* also undergoes the addition of a cast of characters to its opening pages. Here the title is listed as “Sometimes it Just Happens That Way, That’s All: A Study of Black and White Newspaper Photographs.” The cast of characters orients readers to the story of a murder that is told in first person, by the murderer, Baldemar, to attorney Romeo Hinojosa, then related to Hinojosa by the murderer’s sister, Marta, and then related to the Belken County Deputy Recorder and represented as a deposition by Marta’s husband and Balde’s best friend, Beto. Critics have noted in both *Estampas del valle y otras obras* and *The Valley* Hinojosa’s use of multiple genres and modes of storytelling, including “discourses: letters, interviews, depositions, newspaper reports; genres: poetry, diaries, the detective novel; and literary models such as the ‘cuadro de costumbres’ and the picaresque”
The addition of a list of characters both aids potentially confused readers and confuses them further by representing the story as a play: a fiction within a carefully constructed fictional county located in the real world. As represented, the recorder of the events is attempting to recreate Baldemar’s story based on black and white newspaper photographs: it reveals itself as a fictional account. The list adds another layer of fiction, naming the involved individuals as “characters.” The changing maps and organization, the revised language and tone of the preliminary materials, and the additions of new generic constraints, from the cast of characters to the mention of black and white photographs, introduce and orient readers to a text that is fundamentally different from the 1973 edition of Estampas del valle y otras obras.

These kinds of changes, or repetitions with a difference, highlight Hinojosa’s preoccupation with versioning – the introduction of competing, complementary, or conflicting versions of narratives as another attempt at the realistic depiction of how stories are shaped by their tellers and hearers – on both a material and a narrative level. The opening sketch in both versions, entitled “Braulio Tapia,” enacts this narrative emphasis on repetition, in which Jehú Malacara’s grandfather, Jehú Villches, describes watching Roque Malacara (the younger Jehú’s father) walk up the steps of his home to ask Villches for his daughter’s hand in marriage, but also hints at the instability and revisionist possibilities of oral history. Villches narrates, “Turning my head slightly to the right, I catch a glimpse, or think I do, of my late father-in-law, don Braulio Tapia . . . don Braulio raises his hand to shake mine as he did years ago when I first came here to this house to ask for Matilde’s hand . . .” Who did don Braulio see when he walked up these
steps to ask for his wife’s hand?” (“The Valley” 12). Juan Bruce-Novoa argues that in this scene, “Continued observance of a traditional ritual proves the health of communal customs. However, when the old man wonders whom his father-in-law dealt with when he played the suitor’s role, we glimpse a potential breakdown in the oral tradition, a ritual as central to communal health as betrothal” (“The Topological Space of Chicano Literature” 155). The silence or gap in community memory that leads to don Braulio’s uncertainty also leads to mis-remembering, as evidenced by Zilles’s examination of referenced birth dates: for example, although Braulio Tapia is supposedly Jehú Malacara’s great-grandfather, he is only about fifty years older than him. Zilles argues that inconsistencies like this “must ultimately be attributed to a lack of precision in oral traditions or to the unreliability of the narrators” (109); rather than blame the author for a miscalculation of ages or genealogy, we can read the narrators’ memory as faulty, as inventing an alternative family tree (for which we have no original). Thus, a novel that appears to begin with a description of an unbroken community tradition carried out across generations, is upon closer inspection characterized by instability and confusion, changed or revised by each new speaker.

While Luis Leal argues for the importance of the stories in spite of their lapses and gaps, claiming, “Their stories become creative narratives that feed their imagination and that of the inhabitants of the barrio, however unreliable they may be to the professional historian” (105), I contend that it is precisely these confusions, multiple versions, and even what appear to be mistakes of memory that are at the heart of the narrative and its construction of border identity. Emphasizing fluidity, resisting linearity,
and pushing at the edges of fact and fiction, the narrative resembles its 1973 paratextual map, “realistic” in terms of its attempt to most accurately portray the complexity of border life. It is in these moments of confusion, the places where the numbers don’t add up, or the re-stitched seams of the story show through, that readers experience that instability, participating materially in the construction and re-construction of narratives that challenge traditional notions of history and progress. In a way, the multiple material versions of *Estampas del valle* and *The Valley* also participate in the proliferation of histories, generating additions and erasures that would frustrate any bibliographer.

Martín-Rodríguez begins to hint at this link between the narrative and its material manifestations, how altering one or the other changes the conditions for interpretation when he argues, “Hinojosa seeks to capture the essence of communitarian oral culture . . . but in the way he does it, Hinojosa acknowledges that his audience is now a readership, and he exploits in his text many of the strategies associated with print culture and reading” (30).

One of the more subtle ways in which Hinojosa “exploits” those “strategies associated with print culture and reading” occurs in the occasional footnotes and references to bibliography that appear in both versions of the novel. For instance, in the collection of recollections in “Sometimes It Just Happens That Way,” eyewitness statements and newspaper accounts are used to create a constellation of versions of the events surrounding a murder, drawing reader attention in particular to the stark differences between four versions of what happened: the lengthy, complicated descriptions offered by Balde, his sister Marta, and his best friend, Beto, and the tersely
worded newspaper stories that merely (and incorrectly) record the names of those involved in a fatal stabbing and the outcome of the trial. The multiple tellings, each with their own additions and erasures, complicate reader access to the truth of what happened and also draw a distinct line between the motivations, emotions, and details of the event and the institutional, bureaucratic enforcement of the law: Zilles describes this section as emphasizing “the indifference of Anglo jurisprudence towards Texas Mexicans” (186).

Furthermore, within this section are included two footnotes that communicate to readers that what they see is the transcription of cassette recordings from March 16 and 17, 1970: Baldemar and Marta speak their versions of the story into a recorder. These notes are from the editor, though it is not quite clear who the editor and compiler of these texts might be: perhaps Romeo Hinojosa, the attorney to whom each character speaks. Or perhaps this is an early incarnation of P. Galindo, not yet named in this novel, or the author, or editor. In any case, the presentation of multiple stories gives readers access to the complexities of narrating any event, and its repeated retellings provide a link between the narrative and its material manifestations. Just as the narrative describes to readers a community in which history and memory are unstable and fluid, the presence of multiple versions of the novel further involve readers in the sensation of the instability and fluidity of texts. The two versions of this novel multiply the numerous competing perspectives and stories found within the novel itself, blending fiction and reality by demonstrating the unreliability of both. Hinojosa tailors the Spanish version, in its three editions, as well as the English version, to different audiences, using different techniques (costumbrismo, cronicón, estampas vs. depictions of images in a photo album, providing casts of
characters) and telling the tales in different order to accommodate his readers at the same time he multiplies confusion.

Even the characters themselves appear concerned with multiple representations of texts, as when Jehú introduces entries from Victor Paláez’s diary. Jehú describes the man who took him under his wing after the death of his parents and offers the set of excerpts to the reader, claiming, “I assume full responsibility for its order (or lack of it) and for a touch-up here and there (commas and the like) although no changes were made in the content, which, after all, is as it should be” (*The Valley* 27). Akers recognizes the links between Jehú’s concerns and Hinojosa’s, claiming, “Whether Hinojosa was foreshadowing his own editorial prerogatives is not the issue to debate here; however, what is clear is that the author had thoughts about the issue of authorial responsibility in presenting versions of previously completed texts, be they diaries of don Víctor or Hinojosa’s own Spanish originals” (95). Jehú’s attempts to interfere as little as possible in the transmission of Paláez’s diary, when paired with Hinojosa’s willingness to radically alter a text in pursuit of accommodating different audiences, may not seem at all similar.¹⁷ But by offering readers a character and narrator who is aware of his own and others’ influences on texts, even in editing them in the slightest ways, Hinojosa also offers readers an opportunity to reflect on the relationships between the texts Jehú handles and the texts of *Estampas del valle* and *The Valley*.

¹⁷ While it could be argued that Jehú certainly doesn’t appear to mind interfering in the transmission of the words of the Bible as he sells them in Belken County in *Klail City*, even then he conveys an understanding of the impact of the material text (particularly on his sales): “good quality helps, too; solid buckram, good, clear paper, the ink black and uniform, nothing cheap, those Bibles” (99).
When they investigate the significance of these narrative repetitions and emphases on storytelling, critics often also cite the complicated, multiple, and varying forms Hinojosa employs in his sketches as representative of a larger theme or argument about the status of Chicana/o identity. For example, Torres claims, “The sense that there is no ending in The Valley is itself equivalent to the notion that that the Valley is becoming itself, and those Chicanos from that community are in the very process of living out the potentials of that region” (92). Zilles moves beyond Chicana/o identity to American identity, arguing, “The form seems to reflect the author’s literary agenda, suggesting that all textual fragments are part of a greater design, with elements drawn in and drifting apart at once, thus mirroring the disintegrating America of today, where groups and minorities circle in their very own orbit while forming an integral part of the large cosmos ‘America’” (Zilles xiii). Such arguments could be extended beyond the pages of one version of the novel: not only are elements “drawn in and drifting apart” within any particular version of the novel, but between those versions as well. Hinojosa complicates any readerly progression through a chronology of texts in his series, frustrates editorial endeavors by creating “recasts” rather than faithful translations, and emphasizes the relationship between borderlands identity and the borders of textuality.

Within the narrative of Estampas del valle y otras obras and The Valley, Hinojosa successfully shows readers how versions of a story are valued differently and reinterpreted by explicitly racist or indifferent institutions; versions of history that ignore the oral, ritual components of a community, as well as histories offered by mainstream media and the court system, share space with the tellings and retellings of the history of
Belken County by its own citizens. José David Saldivar has argued that the narrative of Hinojosa’s *Klail City Death Trip* series “counters historical amnesia by restoring to the materiality of its signifiers that buried reality of south Texas history” (175); Hinojosa’s texts unearth that “buried reality” by presenting not one but many histories that run counter to the progressive, Western traditional narratives of the border. But he also goes one step further by presenting those multiple histories in versions, ultimately testing how altering language and cultural references affects interpretation of this borderlands community. Readers and critics who confront the changes to the text – paratextual, linguistic, and lexical – are invited to participate materially in these repetitions with a difference, and therefore to participate in the construction and experience of counter-histories. Readers navigate three layers of unstable history: the multiple histories the characters find themselves navigating in an effort to preserve tradition, a counter-history to that offered by those in positions of power, and the multiple versions of that very story. Readers are asked to choose their version of the story, and to recognize that choice as political. In a similar way, Ana Castillo and her two versions of *Sapogonia* offers readers an opportunity to link the materiality of the text, as well as the attempt to accommodate multiple audiences, to narrative concerns with border identity. Yet, while Hinojosa appears to have gained and maintained a certain level of control over the publication of versions of his work, Castillo’s history with small and large publishers has prevented her from wielding a similar power. As she found her work published and shuttled between presses without her permission or prior knowledge, Castillo demonstrates that even authors themselves cannot entirely control the shape of their narratives.
Section Two: Ana Castillo and Sapogonia

Part One: “The Most Neglected One”: Tracing the Production, Publication, and Reception of Sapogonia

The material textual history of Sapogonia can be most simply summarized as “difficult,” though that may be putting it lightly. At each turn in the “communications circuit” – the cycle of participants in book production from author to publisher to bookseller to audience – Ana Castillo faced a set of complicating factors that have had major effects on the shape of her second novel. How do the interests, assumed audiences, marketing abilities, and even the popularity of two vastly different publishers shape the documentary, material, and interpretive possibilities of a work like Sapogonia? Is the structural complexity of the 1990 edition, which, as the back cover of the 1994 edition boasts, was “restructured and refocused” for Doubleday, related in any way to a press that might be more comfortable publishing experimental and/or nontraditional texts? And how should the fact that Castillo seems dissatisfied by both editions shape critical interpretation? Castillo’s dealings with her publishers, the audiences implied by multiple markets, and the critical reception of the multiple versions of Sapogonia reveals the complex historical situation that shaped and continues to shape our understanding of the novel.

Perhaps the most complicated aspect of Sapogonia is its publication under two different presses. Although Castillo initially published her two novels, The Mixquiahuala Letters (1986) and Sapogonia: An Anti-Romance in 3/8 Meter (1990) with Bilingual Press, Doubleday bought the rights to and re-released both novels and published some
future work, including her most successful novel, *So Far From God* (1993) in 1990 (Aldama 90-91). According to Samuel Baker, this sale occurred without Castillo’s knowledge: “This annoyed Castillo, who would have liked to have had more involvement in the publication (she eventually was able to make some revisions to *Sapogonia*). Her chief comment on the matter now is to urge young writers to have their contracts vetted, no matter how small and friendly the press” (59). This was not the first difficulty suffered by Castillo in her relationship with Bilingual Press: the 1990 edition of *Sapogonia* that was published by the smaller press came out before Castillo had any chance to make revisions.18 Furthermore, the version of the novel that did appear, Castillo claims, “did not get edited. When I saw that they were just going to publish it as it was, I tried to pull it out, but that wasn't possible. So it was published unedited. I felt very uncomfortable about that edition” (26). Elsewhere, Sara L. Spurgeon claims of that first version of *Sapogonia*, “Given the choice, [Castillo] says, she would not have published it as it was. Nonetheless, it succeeds in its own quirky way” (36). The publication history of *Sapogonia*, even after she was ‘allowed’ to revise it – Castillo says Doubleday “agreed to allow some minimal changes, so I gave it some liposuction and a facelift” (Milligan 26) – demonstrates the extent to which her control over the shape of

18 Though she wrote the novel in 1985, evidence from a talk Castillo gave to (and edited for) multiple audiences, entitled “In My Country: The Writer in Progress” (given at U.C. Berkeley, 10 Nov 1987) and then retitled as “The Evolution of the Chicana Writer” (given at Oberlin College, 19 March 1989), suggests the publication date was continually being pushed back. The typed draft mentions all of her current works, including *Sapogonia*, which she describes as “on publication with Bilingual Press, 1988,” though in her ink edits she has crossed out the 8 and replaced it with a 9. Publication would not occur until 1990.
the novel was nearly constantly thwarted by the needs of her publishers, both small and large.19

For Castillo, control over her work was precluded by the fine print of her contract. Given the limited access she had to the text of Sapogonia at both the small and large presses, critics need to seriously consider the impact of both publishing companies on the interpretive possibilities of the novel. Each press – Doubleday and Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe also caters to different audiences, publishing texts which Martín-Rodríguez argues in Life in Search of Readers can be distinguished in terms of “the market” and “la marketa.” He defines the market as “those works that are now directed to the literary establishment” and la marketa as “texts that are addressed to the (always elusive when it comes to definition) Chicana/o community” (110), citing Bilingual Review/Editorial Bilingüe as a top producer of books for la marketa.20 Castillo’s work has been distributed to both the market and la marketa, as she often shifts back and forth between experimental prose and poetry and more approachable texts with demonstrated mass market appeal.

Furthermore, Frederick Luis Aldama, whose focus in Brown on Brown: Chicano/a Representations of Gender, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in part centers on the marketability of Chicana/o homosexuality, sees Castillo addressing dual audiences within

19 Linking the material text to the body, Castillo’s description of her revision as “liposuction and a facelift” interestingly implies a feminized notion of the text, another “docile body” shaped by cultural norms. However, this procedure paradoxically involves intensifying the focus on the masculine characteristics of the novel by more clearly centering on Max’s character.

20 While la marketa also indicates a class distinction, Martín Rodríguez’s argument primarily centers on language use: the market is categorized as monolingual and unaccepting of the presence of Spanish or caló, while la marketa and the presses associated with it allow and encourage linguistic diversity.
each of her works, rather than in separate publications. Aldama cites Castillo as one of the few Chicana artists who is at home amongst more well-known writers like Sandra Cisneros and Denise Chávez, and less recognizable academic or political writers like Alice Gaspar de Alba and Terri de la Peña. Although he argues that writers like Castillo often function as “grist for the publishing mill that, in order to maximize profits and satisfy stock market goals, carefully determines which group of readers is willing to spend the most money on what book” (93), Aldama notes that Castillo has managed to offer a level of complexity to her readers. He claims, “Castillo uses a double voice – writing to and against the mainstream – in ways that make her fiction more appealing as crossover material. This does not mean to suggest that she ‘sells out’; her skill at crafting fictions that complicate and challenge at every turn is undeniable” (113).

While Martín Rodríguez addresses the market appeal of Castillo’s *So Far From God* in contrast to her work for *la marketa* as a sign of a shift from “well-known in Chicana/o literary circles” to “well-known writer,” and Aldama sees Castillo challenging two audiences in one text, neither considers the problem of a book like *Sapogonia* (or *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, for that matter), which has been produced for both the market and *la marketa* in two different versions. Though Aldama argues that “perhaps Ana Castillo is an example of an author who is constantly discovering new ways to negotiate the articulation of a Xicanista identity within the mainstream” (113), *Sapogonia* has yet to fully join that mainstream, even on the coattails of its successful younger and older
sisters, and even with its revisions. Instead, its multiple versions jointly occupy a border zone between the market and la marketa, defying categorization.

Castillo herself notes this complicated negotiation of the market and la marketa, saying, “The kind of literature I write is not directed for the mainstream, although So Far from God did very well, and I'm hoping that we're entering a new era now where it will be more and more the case that writers from the fringes occupy the mainstream” (Baker 59). Castillo identifies more closely with “the fringes” of literary production even in her acknowledgment of the wide success of the publication and reception of So Far From God: such a statement reveals the distance between author, publisher, and audience in terms of the goals and interests of each. The audience Castillo has in mind for her work changes once the publisher’s interests intercede; that new audience response feeds back to Castillo, who interprets her popularity somewhat optimistically. Yet it is important to recognize that readers are not simply responding to Castillo’s narrative, but the narrative as it is shaped by publishers, booksellers, and reviewers. For instance, the success of So Far From God likely had much to do with its promotion: Peter Carr notes,

Upon its release, So Far From God was heavily promoted – advertised on the cover of the Los Angeles Times Book Review of May 16, 1993, for example – and received widespread media attention. The Los Angeles Times called it the novel to read if Gabriel García Márquez seems too

---

21 Xicanisma is a word coined by Castillo in her collection of essays entitled Massacre of the Dreamers. Calling Xicanisma “a term that I will use to refer to the concept of Chicana feminism” (11), Castillo elaborates: “Xicanisma is formed: in the acknowledgment of the historical crossroad where the creative power of woman became deliberately appropriated by male society. And woman in the flesh, thereafter, was subordinated. It is our task as Xicanistas, to not only reclaim our indigenismo – but also to reinsert the forsaken feminine into our consciousness” (12).
complex, being a cross between *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the television soap ‘General Hospital.’ (24)

By contrast, *Sapogonia* received no such promotion, as its link to magical realism is tenuous at best, and reviewers would be at pains to describe it as a literary telenovela. Instead, while *So Far From God* continues to enjoy popularity, Marissa López notes that *Sapogonia* is “rarely taught and even more rarely mentioned in discussions of Castillo’s oeuvre” (147). The role of publishers, advertisers, and reviewers in the vastly different trajectories of these two novels cannot be overstated, though their decisions are also obviously largely shaped by the vastly different content in each novel.

Certainly in many ways *Sapogonia* is a more challenging read than *So Far From God*, not least because of its complicated mode of narration. Not only does Castillo weave together the stories of two characters as they drift in and out of each other’s lives, but she constantly shifts points of view, from first, second, and third person to multiple focalizations of the main and secondary characters. The novel tells the story of the relationship between Máximo Madrigal, a Sapogón who leaves his home for Europe, finds his father, and eventually finds himself in the United States (Chicago by way of New York), and Pastora Velasquez Aké, another displaced Sapogón, who is a musician committed to social uplift, and ends up spending time in jail for transporting illegal immigrants into the country. The two characters move in and out of each other’s lives, and their purely sexual relationship is frustrating to Max, who is more accustomed to

---

22 Martín Rodríguez comments on the repeated comparisons of Castillo’s novel to an easier version of García Márquez’s: “Castillo’s reputation is here transferred from her position as a leading voice in the innovative contemporary Chicana/o literary arena to that of an undemanding late offspring of the highly patriarchal Latin American magical realist trend” (127). Given the complexity of both *The Mixquiahuala Letters* and *Sapogonia*, celebratory blurbs like these simplify the relationships among Latina/o writers.
women developing attachments to him. From his perspective, Pastora is a witch, while Pastora argues, “Latino men always thought that a woman who allowed herself to be thought of sexually and denied any reason to feel shameful of it and had none of the inhibitions or insecurities with relation to commitments as it was considered women should – had to be a witch” (125, 1990). But the complexity of the narrative and its multiple modes of narration and points of view are hardly a compelling justification for the novel’s lack of popularity or critical attention on their own. In addition, the difficulties of categorization, the fluidity implied by multiple versions directed to multiple reading audiences and shaped by multiple interests, as presented by a text like Sapogonia may serve as a major reason why critics and readers have, for the most part, ignored this novel.

When faced with a text that reveals rather than conceals its material instability, making public the messy writing and revising process, perhaps we assume too quickly that the text is fatally flawed, in this case making Castillo’s dissatisfaction with Sapogonia our own. Spurgeon’s description of the book as “quirky” follows closely on Castillo’s own description of the book as “her middle child . . . the most neglected one” (qtd. in Milligan 26). Rather than confront the fluidity of the text, attending to the borders between versions as carefully as we attend to the borders between nations,

23 In 1994, this sentence is edited to read, “She said that Latino men always thought that a sexually open woman who had none of the insecurities with relation to commitment – as it was considered women should – had to be a witch” (161). The dreamlike, hallucinatory quality of some scenes does not aid readers in their deciding whether or not Pastora really is a witch or an incarnation of Coatlicue. For instance, Max wakes up one morning to see (or believes he sees) Pastora with a painted face, offering him tea, causing him to wonder whether she is a witch, or Coatlicue. When he asks her this question, she responds enigmatically, and tells him to leave. He experiences chest pains, calls out a name (Xalaquia), passes out, and wakes up in his own bed. The reality or unreality of this event is difficult to chart.
ethnicities, races, and genders, critics either ignore it or privilege one of the versions. Thus, though Angelika Köhler argues that because of the lack of revision, “The [1990] narrative partially seems to sound uneven,” she also claims, “my essay does not propose to foreground these technical problems” (103), assuming that the “technical” aspects of a text can somehow be separated from one’s experience and interpretation of it. Doubleday presents the revision as the replacement to the 1990 edition: the back of the 1994 edition’s paperback proclaims, “Anchor Books is proud to present a revised edition of prize-winning poet and novelist Ana Castillo’s second novel, Sapogonia. Originally published in 1990, this newly edited version brilliantly demonstrates why she is one of America’s leading Chicana writers.” Rather than ignoring its status as revision, Doubleday embraces it as an improvement over the implicitly inferior original, conforming to or creating readers’ expectations for one definitive version of a text. Supplanting one text with another, or ignoring the presence of multiple versions altogether, attempts to assign stability to Sapogonia. Castillo, her publishers, audiences, and critics all shape the production and continuing reception of Sapogonia in ways that assume a progressive improvement of the text in its revision(s). But what might happen if critics and readers engaged the instability of its versions instead?

Part Two: “Someone who Dominates”: The Effects of the Revision of Sapogonia on Interpretation

Although Castillo describes the revisions that resulted in the 1994 Doubleday version of Sapogonia as a sort of elective surgery, perhaps implying that surface problems have improved without addressing root problems, I believe not only that the
simplest changes to a text alter its interpretive possibilities, but also that the changes Castillo made actually significantly alter the reading experience. Perhaps the clearest example of such a change occurs on the very first page of the Prologue, in the description of Sapogonia itself.24 The Prologue itself gives us just a small sliver of an explanation of Sapogonia in 1990, describing the agricultural output, linguistic abilities, mannerisms, and features of the Sapogón. It was expanded in 1994 to include the following passage: “The Sapogón is besieged by a history of slavery, genocide, immigration, and civil uprisings, all of which have left their marks on the genetic make-up of the generation following such periods as well as the border outline of its territory” (1). This description adds violence and strife to the otherwise positive summary of Sapogonia and Sapogónes. By contrast, the 1990 Prologue only hints at conflict, burying it in a sentence in the concluding paragraph: “Due to present political conditions decreed by the powers that be, the Sapogón pueblo finds itself continually divided and reunited . . .” (2). Castillo’s revision is more emphatic and literal, inserting the political into her quasi-encyclopedic description of Sapogonia and its people.

A number of critics incorporate this new line into their arguments about the novel without ever acknowledging that it simply does not exist in the earlier edition. In the course of Socolovsky’s argument that “the protagonist of the novel, Máximo Madrigal, manipulates and borrows others’ spaces to form a memory of a myth which might serve

---

24 As a place, Sapogonia is difficult to pin down in description: Joy Lynch claims, “In Sapogonia, Castillo creates a mythological landscape which she endows with the qualities of a psychological imprint from a past denied integration into the present . . . [reminding] us of the ‘presence’ of the past in our present lives” (135), while Maya Socolovsky claims Sapogonia “merges the mythical Aztlán with the contemporary and argumentative borderlands” (76). Spurgeon grounds her explanation of Sapogonia in biography, pointing out that both Castillo’s parents’ homeland, Guanajanto, and Sapogonia, are said to mean “place of the frogs” in the local Indian dialect (36).
as a remnant of home from the past” (73), she claims, “the reader learns that the country has undergone slavery, genocide, immigration, and civil uprising” (76). It is quite likely that any number of readers of *Sapogonia* cannot learn those details, for they do not exist in the earlier version: in fact, some of the critics whom Socolovsky cites, including Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, Ibis Gómez-Vega, and Elsa Saeta, built their arguments around the 1990 edition which does not contain those lines. Thus, Socolovsky enters into a critical dialogue about one version of *Sapogonia* and generates an argument in response using an entirely different version. Socolovsky does not cite or reference *Sapogonia* as a revised text, and thus proceeds as though all editions are equal in this matter.

Similarly, López, who devotes quite a bit of text in “Chicana/o Literature: Theoretically Speaking, Formally Reading Ana Castillo’s *Sapogonia,*” to eviscerating Chicana/o literary critics for being too-often focused on representations of identity and cultural studies, and who “only want[s] to suggest that Chicana/o literary criticism can benefit from critical strategies that take account of a text’s literariness by granting full consideration to literary and textual elements, viewing them as vehicles for meaning” (147), does not consider the aforementioned paragraph’s presence or absence as necessary to discuss for its effect on the novel. Instead she cites that sentence in an effort to support her argument that “in this prologue we are confronted with a nation that has a border outline, but no boundaries” (149). Though López claims, “My reading foregrounds textuality” (154), it does so only to the extent that it considers the textuality of one particular version, in which one particular sentence was added, giving readers a false sense of the stability of the text. The fact that Castillo felt the need to add this
sentence likely indicates her feeling that it would clarify and deepen a reader’s understanding of her conception of Sapogonia; certainly critics have found their uses for it. But rather than simply incorporating that sentence into our work as it suits our needs and arguments, we might stop to consider the very act of emendation as amending our understanding of Sapogonia (and Sapogonia): in many copies of this book, that significant detail about Sapogonia simply doesn’t exist. Rather than casting the 1994 edition as the corrected 1990 edition, we might begin to consider how these two versions interact with one another, as surely the critics who work from different editions have begun to interact with one another. Theories of the border emphasize dissonance, instability, and identities in process; when we extend those theories to include the material text, we expose the border politics of publishing as a process that constantly shapes the interpretive possibilities of texts.

Beyond the introductory description of Sapogonia, the changes Castillo introduces into the 1994 version reflect the culmination of a series of changes to the character sketches that began in the mid- to late 1970s and resulted in the more fully-fleshed out Máximo Madrigal and Pastora Aké. The first glimpses of these two characters can be found (though, I argue, you have to be looking fairly carefully) in the pages of an initial

---

25 Neither Socolovsky nor López cite the existence of the 1990 version of the novel – their endnotes and citations proceed as though only the 1994 version exists, functionally erasing the early edition. However, this should not result in the assumption that all critics who have recently written on the novel have automatically taken the 1994 edition as their source text. Out of the 11 critics cited in this essay for their work on Sapogonia, 8 take their citations from the 1990 edition (3 because they were published before or near the publication date of the 1994 edition), with the most recent article published using the 1990 edition in 2006. Critics who are publishing in the same year as one another continue to choose different source texts, and yet also continue not to discuss the presence of multiple texts. This allows critics to pretend at the stability of the novel they discuss, at the same time their arguments might greatly benefit from a discussion of such instability.
draft of what would later be separated into *The Mixquiahuala Letters* and *Sapogonia*, though it bears very little resemblance to either work.\textsuperscript{26} The fourth chapter of this draft includes a description of a warehouse where a few artists live, which is vaguely reminiscent of the warehouse where Pastora and Perla meet, while another chapter references a sculptor named Sebastian who might be an early precursor to Max Madrigal.

But perhaps more significant are Castillo’s early character sketches of Max, beginning with “Death of the Chicken,” and including “For the Life in Her Artists” and “Antihero.” Each of these events concentrates on developing not only Max, but also his perceptions of Pastora, both of whom go unnamed in each of these sketches. Some variations of these scenes end up in the novel: Max’s adulterous tryst with Pastora which ends with him becoming violently ill, just before noticing a chicken buried head-down in the gravel outside his home, as well as Max’s reflections on and descriptions of Pastora as both a witch and Coatlicue both end up in the published version.\textsuperscript{27} But we also see Castillo honing and refining the specifics of her work: in two of the sketches as well as the published version(s) of the novel, Max toys with the idea of killing Pastora. Readers of the sketches can note the shift from Max’s employment of a pistol: “A gun to his head would cure him of his misery. But first, first he would manage the strength to walk all

\textsuperscript{26} Even this draft, in its status as a precursor to not one but two distinct novels by Castillo, hints at the complexities of exploring where a version begins and ends. Furthermore, like Hinojosa, Castillo’s characters reappear in other novels, such as when Max appears in *Peel My Love Like an Onion* as a flamenco guitarist.

\textsuperscript{27} Interestingly, on the back side of one of Castillo’s academic essays, “Sexuality in Chicana Poetry” (1986), printed and housed in the Ana Castillo Papers, one can find what appears to be a late manuscript version of chapters 21 and 22 of *Sapogonia* (1990). No changes appear to have been made between this scrap paper version of the chapters and their eventual publication. The chapters contain a reflection by Perla on whether or not Pastora’s uninhibited yet seemingly detached sexuality, coupled with men’s seeming addiction to her, is any indication that she’s a witch.
the way back if need be and put the first bullet into hers . . . (“Death of the Chicken” 2),
to his own bare hands: “I wanted to put my hands tightly around her bird-like neck and crush the delicate bones within. I swore that night it would be well worth it if I had to spend the rest of my days in prison. But of course, I didn’t do it” (2), and finally to the published version in which scissors from Pastora’s own sewing basket become the murder weapon. As Castillo tries on different homicidal scenarios, she is also trying on different motivations, increasing the symbolism of Max’s desire to kill Pastora with each new choice. Though Castillo may not have had the opportunity to revise her manuscript once it was sent to Bilingual Press, her character sketches demonstrate a process of shaping the characters of the novel in ways that would become even more apparent as it was revised between 1990 and 1994. Specifically, these changes involve a tightened emphasis on the distinctions between the primary and secondary narrators and focalizations of the novel.

As briefly alluded to in my introduction, every chapter present in the first version finds its way into the second version, but in a different order. The 1994 edition is broken into three parts, while no such divisions occur in the 1990 edition. Sentences are chopped or expanded, descriptions become more clear, but essentially, the chapters all make the transition from one version to the next relatively unscathed. As the sketches preceding the publication of the novel indicate, both Pastora and Max were at the forefront of Castillo’s narrative creation, but in those sketches, Pastora is almost always offered to readers through the lens of Max’s narration. However, while the 1990 edition of Sapogonia begins with Máximo’s story, it quickly shifts to Pastora’s concurrent story
in chapter 5. And though readers are again more frequently subject to Max’s perspective on events and characterizations, the novel also more frequently moves between the stories of Max’s and Pastora’s lives until their meeting. The revisions Castillo makes to the 1994 edition do more than simply re-organize chapters: they emphasize even more directly the importance of Max’s narration to the whole of the novel. Readers are not introduced to Pastora until chapter 15, meaning that the first 100 pages of the novel have been entirely dedicated to Max’s story. Again, the back cover of the 1994 edition claims Castillo’s revision “has captured even more vividly the struggle of Máximo Madrigal, an expatriate of Sapogonia, with his obsession for Pastora Ake, a woman of his native blood whom he can never control.”

Castillo herself would likely argue that Max is meant to be the primary character, as she has said in an interview with Héctor Torres:

> Coming from the early Chicano Latino Movement, which was dominated by men, I was compelled to understand the individual. I found him seductive and at the same time repulsive, but someone who dominates. It was very important for me, as a woman and as a feminist, to try to get into the workings of this kind of person’s mind and try to understand him. (184-185)

However, early commentaries on Sapogonia, which use the 1990 edition of the novel, approach both characters and their stories as equally important. For instance, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano argues in “The Multiple Subject in the Writing of Ana Castillo,” that “Sapogonia is a fascinating text that explores male fantasy, its potential for violence against women and the female subject’s struggle to interpret herself both within and outside of this discourse on femininity” (69), while Ibis Gómez-Vega claims Pastora is the hero to Max’s anti-hero, calling her, “the feminine force who forges connections with
other people as the only answer to the male anti-hero’s inability to connect” (244).

Perhaps in the version where both characters are introduced early on, critics can more easily identify and argue for the presence of a yin-yang of femininity and masculinity. The 1990 version, admittedly published without Castillo’s knowledge, offers readers an opportunity to locate a more balanced presentation of the two main characters. In some ways, it may offer readers a Pastora less shaped by Max’s perceptions of her, simply because readers get to know her more quickly.

On the other hand, critics like Socolovsky and López rely on the slightly more Max-centered 1994 edition, and their arguments follow suit: Socolovsky names Máximo as the sole protagonist of the novel and builds her argument around his character. And while López argues, “I don’t stop at noting Max’s machismo; rather, I ask what his use of the ‘I’ means in the context of shifting narrative perspectives” (154), she privileges Max’s modes of narration over Pastora’s. Though the opening and closing chapters of both versions bear quite a bit of resemblance to one another, tracing the development of the novels from early drafts to character sketches to published version and revision demonstrates an intensifying focus on the character of Max Madrigal as central and Pastora Aké as secondary. Furthermore, this reorganization of chapters orient a reader to each character in different ways: the duality or call-and-response qualities of the chapters between Max and Pastora give way to a more sustained attention to Max before introducing Pastora, reinforcing a concern for linear progress. Readers can more easily prioritize the narrators and storylines, perhaps at the expense of a more balanced exploration of the ways each character’s narration enhances or conflicts with the other’s.
Again, rather than casting Castillo’s revisions as improvements (though likely that’s how she might describe them), we might see them as opportunities to consider advantages and disadvantages of presenting the narrative in different structures of order. The presence of two published Sapogonias asks us to consider the question of competing narratives in a material way: the dissonance generated by critics and readers responding to different versions underscores border textuality. Just as Pastora and Max compete for a reader’s attention, twisting her version of events around his, the 1990 and 1994 editions of Sapogonia weave a double narrative, telling their stories from slightly different vantage points. In the spaces between these versions we find a valorization of the unstable, a call to reconsider the notion of the solitary, unified text from which we typically launch our literary analyses.

The narrative form of Sapogonia, in each of its versions, constantly embraces such instability. While the structural, organizational complexity of the competing narrations becomes somewhat streamlined in the 1994 version, the shifts in narration, not only from Max to Pastora and back but also between third, second, and first person, all arrive intact. A number of critics have focused on this aspect of the text in their explorations of the intersection of form and narrative content, emphasizing the difficult narrative strategy that frustrates a reader’s sense of real and make-believe, fact and fiction. Yarbro-Bejarano calls attention to Castillo’s “negotiation with and translation of male narrative form and male point of view” (68) and her assignment of the use of the first person only to Max, wherein he occasionally interrupts third person descriptions and reframes the narrative from his point of view. For example, the chapter that narrates
Pastora and Max’s first meeting (22, 20) shifts abruptly back and forth between third
person narration and first person, so that Max recounts of himself speaking, “Pastora let
me go on. I too, had been drinking, and I’m certain it won my personality no honors. I
was behaving boorishly, but I was too far gone. She had set something loose and I felt
bullheaded and justified” (132, 138). Moments later, “Pastora didn’t respond . . . Her
contempt welled up in a tightened mouth. Máximo didn’t notice, too preoccupied with
the display of his ostentatious footwear” (131, 139). Castillo’s play with point of view
alternately draws readers toward and pushes them away from Max. Furthermore, readers
confronting both Max’s narration and Pastora’s, among others, must make decisions
about the situatedness of the claims each make about the other.

By highlighting the fragmentation of narrative and subjectivities and the blending
of dream and reality, critics claim to focus on the instability of narratives and textuality.
But again, they rarely read beyond the pages of the edition they work with, closing off the
possibility of supplementing their arguments with a reflection on the material instability
of the texts. Too often, even when critics do acknowledge the multiple versions of the
novel, they treat it as a non-issue.\footnote{For instance, Spurgeon acknowledges both editions but provides only a citation for the 1994 edition at the end of her text; curiously, her in-text citations appear to be from the 1990 edition, which inadvertently blurs the texts and could potentially cause reader confusion.} Thus, although Saeta argues that in \textit{Sapogonia}, “It is
difficult to judge what is real or accurate when the whole structure of the game is
constantly changing” (69), and though she acknowledges the multiple versions of
\textit{Sapogonia} available, she does not make the link between the instability of the narrative
and the instability of the material text. Saeta notes at the beginning of her essay, “All
references are to the first version of *Sapogonia* published by Bilingual Press in 1990 not to the revised version released by Doubleday in 1994. Although textual changes have significantly altered the text, the core ideas under discussion in this paper appear to hold for both versions of the novel” (fn 1, 72). While she may be correct that the core ideas of her argument do hold for both versions, she does not consider that her argument might in fact be expanded and strengthened by a discussion of the significance of the competing versions, and the competing stories they themselves tell. If readers are confused, destabilized, or frustrated by the competing narrations of Pastora and Max, not to mention all of the other characters through whom the third-person narration is focalized, it’s likely those confusions and frustrations will be multiplied exponentially when faced with two versions of the same text. The two different versions tell the same story in two different ways, much in the same way we get two different versions of events within the narrative: Pastora’s and Max’s. Castillo’s two versions compete with each other in ways that require critics to develop a much more material investigation of the nature of story-telling, chronology, and versioning. In turn, those critics should make it clear for their readers which version of the text their argument depends on.

What, in fact, is the relationship between the competing stories being told within the narrative and the competing stories of these two versions? Like the 1990 and 1994 editions of the novel, Max’s and Pastora’s narrations of events do not differ vastly in content, but often in tone and in small details. The narrative and its material manifestations in print echo each other in ways that might be equally suggestive to readers of the instability of story-telling. The body of border criticism has often served as
a material performance of the arguments it advances: Américo Paredes discusses the counternarratives of border *corridos* in a text that is itself a counternarrative of traditional narratives of border history in *With His Pistol in His Hand*; Gloria Anzáldua defines the new *mestiza* in a text that, as Sonia Saldívar-Hull notes, “is itself a mestizaje: a postmodernist mixture of autobiography, historical document, and poetry collection” (70). Castillo’s two versions of *Sapogonia*, whether she intended them to or not, participate in that tradition of performing on a second level the subject of her narrative: the versions recreate on a material level the intersecting, competing, complex narratives that call into question any one story’s or story-teller’s hold over truth and reality.

Beyond the formal experimentation of her work, Castillo interrogates the stability of art through the character of Máximo. In the 47th chapter of both versions, in the aftermath of Max’s grandparents’ horrific death, Max relates how he used wood from his grandfather’s land to create his most recent sculptures: “the works I produced were indisputably my finest work so far. They were the beginning of a series that surpassed all my past work and I could never duplicate them” (234). When the sculptures arrive from Sapogonia, they have been completely destroyed: “What resulted was not from stupid handling from tossing about on a plane or down conveyor belts. They were hatefully smashed so that what was left could not be salvaged as the original piece” (234). And yet, as certainly as he claims they can neither be duplicated or saved as the original, Max decides “the work would be salvaged despite the vandals’ desire to destroy art” (234) and sets about creating new pieces of art “from what remained of my damaged pieces” (234). Socolovskiy argues for the significance of this moment, claiming “Max thus rewrites the
myth of an attachment to land by quite literally transplanting the land, and settling down elsewhere. His use of the ranch’s wood for his artwork demonstrates the way in which the place follows the migrant, rather than the migrant returning to the place and calling it home” (82). But beyond the significance of the origins of his sculptures, one is also reminded of the possibilities for imagining and reimagining art as it is reshaped by circumstances beyond our control. Max not only conceives of his work in terms of a series – not a solitary, stable object – but when faced with disaster, he also refashions his sculptures into something new, related to and yet distinct from their earlier forms.

Likewise, Castillo found herself with limited control over the shape of her text, both in its first and second publication; yet she worked within the text to create something new, a new version that bears a resemblance to but should never be mistaken for the old.

*Sapogonia*, in its multiple versions and with its multiple narrators and points of view, participates in border textuality by offering readers an opportunity to confront the material and theoretical instabilities of stories and texts and to see how these instabilities are mirrored in the text itself. Editors of a new edition of this text, should there ever be one, might consider placing the versions side-by-side to allow readers an opportunity to experience both chronologies as well as the insertions and deletions. Alternatively, they might at the very least provide an introductory page listing the original and revised chapter orders so that readers might hopscotch through the text in their preferred order, much like they can with *The Mixquiahuala Letters*. Such an editorial move would again remind readers of the instability of the text, enabling readers agency by allowing them to participate in altering its material shape and chronology. In a work that has undergone
such a complicated publication history, with the various pulls of author, publisher, and audience shaping its multiple versions, acknowledging the multiple possible versions encourages readers to envision themselves as part of the process that shapes our understanding of border literature. But even in the absence of an edition that attends more carefully to the two distinct versions of the novel, critics should acknowledge and begin to explore how their readings have been shaped by the version they’ve read, and whether the competing version might offer something to support or refute their arguments.

For those of us who find *Sapogonia* to be a moving reflection on the way stories are always told and heard differently from every location and point of view, exploring how the competing versions and the circumstances of their production replicate that narrative can help deepen an understanding of this process. Literature and criticism of the border has long championed the value of contesting dominant narratives of history, the politics of location, and the instability that undermines any attempt at defining a solitary truth. It has taught us to value identities in process: the contingent, the contradictory, the “act of kneading” (Anzaldúa 103). It can likewise teach us to value the instability of the material text, and to embrace the interpretive potential found in multiple versions of works of border literature. Our inability to define one version over another as more meaningful or useful suggests an inability to generate a dominant narrative; instead, each is valued in different ways by different readers for the kind of story it tells. The borderlands between the versions of *Sapogonia* serve as both a sign of struggle and subversion from the margins: Castillo may not have meant to create a novel with multiple
versions, but her interactions with textual versions in the borderlands between Chicana/o and mass market publishing houses need not be seen simply as corruptions or barriers in the way of her producing her intended text. Instead, they highlight the problems unique to an author navigating between the margins and the mainstream, and act as shaping forces in the possibilities for interpreting the text(s), making material the narrative concern with multiple sides to the same story.

By revising and reintroducing new versions of their novels, both Rolando Hinojosa and Ana Castillo offer readers texts that call attention to themselves as material objects and demand to be studied in the context of their publication histories. Hinojosa voluntarily revised his novel, creating a “transcultural version” that tests the notions of textual stability, the constraints of translation, and the efforts of editors and critics of his Klail City Death Trip series looking to pin down a chronology. Castillo, constrained by the needs and desires of both Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe and Doubleday, had less room to revise. While she likely envisioned her revision as a replacement and not a duotext, she nonetheless created competing versions whose paratexts and organization tell two slightly different stories. Many critics of Hinojosa are attentive to these multiple versions as such, though some confuse or conflate the versions in the way that many critics of Sapogonia do, generating arguments based on and responding to critics who operate from completely different versions of the texts. But perhaps most importantly, the availability of both Hinojosa’s and Castillo’s texts in multiple versions links textuality to borderlands identity: both novels emphasize the instability of Chicano history and storytelling via unstable material texts, highlighting the experience of borderlands
identity via characters concerned with versioning, revision, and remaking art (or texts) from elements of previously existing art. This concern with alternative and counter-histories is a political one: Hinojosa and Castillo both underscore the importance of narrative, editorial and even authorial power in the face of the version of Western history that attempts to speak for the borderlands rather than from them. Thus, revision is a powerful tool that aims not simply to correct the mistakes of past narratives, but to place new narratives beside them. To invite readers to distinguish between versions, to make a choice. As readers, we are meant to see not only the end product of those revisions and contestations of the dominant narratives of history, but also the subversive act of revision as it happens; or, as Bryant argues, “actual struggle, not allegories of struggle.” In these stories of revision, border writers, characters, and texts negotiate language choices, multiple audiences, the mainstream and the margins from within the narrative of the text. But those negotiations are also extended to the material text, where readers find themselves asking the same questions as the characters they read: which version of the story matters, and why?
CHAPTER THREE

TRANSLATING IN THE MARGINS: THE SHAPING FORCES OF THE GLOSSARY AND TYPOGRAPHY

In a consciously political act, what Gloria Anzaldúa calls ‘linguistic terrorism,’ I will not italicize Spanish words or phrases unless they are italicized in direct quotations. I invite readers not fluent in Spanish to experience a sense of life on the border as we switch from English to Spanish. (173)

Sonia Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border*

Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine. Spanish is not a foreign language to me or to millions of citizens of the United States; for that reason, I have not italicized Spanish in my text. (xix)

Héctor Calderón, *Narratives of Greater Mexico*

Contemporary critics and writers interested in investigating the complex interactions of material, social, political, cultural, ethnic, and racial border zones like the ones occurring in the spaces between the United States and Mexico often begin and end by confronting the problem of language. For writers and critics alike, the choice to communicate in Spanish or English simultaneously opens and closes doors to various popular and academic markets. As I began to show in the first chapter with regard to Rolando Hinojosa’s transcultural versions of *Estampas del valle y otras obras/The Valley*, Chicana/o writers, their publishers and readers have negotiated that choice in a variety of ways, employing a number of strategies for representing the interrelationship of Spanish and English on the page. Each of these strategies, whether occurring in the
form of glossary or direct translation, or “normalizing” (romanizing) the Spanish, or insisting as Dominican American writer Junot Díaz does that “Spanish is an American language” (qtd in Chi’en 204) and therefore leaving the Spanish untranslated, demonstrates a political choice. Such a choice reflects a writer’s understanding of her audience, as well as how hard she expects readers to work: to translate, to comprehend, to identify.

Reading the margins of the text closely, we find evidence of those choices in the work of literary critics themselves, who often place their theories of language in those margins. Saldívar-Hull places her explanation of her lack of italicization or translation in the first footnote, buried at the back of her work, while Héctor Calderón’s similar if simpler explanation of his unitalicized Spanish occurs at the end of his introduction. In these interstitial spaces, these flanking elements readers have learned to recognize as part of yet not quite the text itself, we find keys to understanding critics’ relationship to Spanish, and how they feel about their readerships. Their explanations are meant to both comfort and frustrate reader expectations regarding the visual hierarchies normally created in an English text that employs Spanish. On the one hand, they frustrate readers by subverting those expectations; on the other, they comfort those same readers by providing a coherent explanation for why those expectations are problematic in the first place. Reading the borders of these literary-critical texts, like those of many works of border literature, exposes the political nature of the relationship between a narrative or argument and how it is presented on the page. Border critics and texts render visible the margins of identity and textual production, directing readers to an understanding of
narrative that is always grounded in a recognition of the historical and institutional forces that aid in its own production and reception.

Critics and writers alike use the margins to call attention to the visual politics of language, expressed perhaps mostly famously by Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* through her concept of “linguistic terrorism.” In recent years numerous critics have joined the discussion of the effects of collapsing the border between Spanish and English, of “bastardizing” and revising English to more accurately reflect minority experience. Some have taken a more global approach, analyzing the impact of a number of immigrant writers and various languages as they come into contact with English. Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch’ien’s *Weird English*, for instance, examines the work of Vladimir Nabokov alongside Maxine Hong Kingston, Arundhati Roy, and Junot Díaz, arguing that in each case the writers participate in a “weirding” of English: “Weird English is the kind of language happening now – vernacular transcription that has a built-in self-consciousness of its political, social, and metaphorical implications, as well as aesthetic value” (10). Martha Cutter explains the significance of the trope of translation in *Lost and Found in Translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the* [29](#)

---

29 In an attempt to define “linguistic terrorism,” which Anzaldúa uses as the title of a section without specifically defining it herself, critics generally claim that it refers to the practice of “[using] our language differences against each other” (80). However, some critics lean toward arguing that speakers of traditional or formal Spanish and English (those who look down on Chicano Spanish or Spanglish) act as the practitioners of linguistic terrorism, stifling the linguistic freedom of those who occupy the spaces between (see, for example, Sheila Marie Contreras: *Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature*). Others argue that those who proudly speak such “bastardized” languages are themselves the linguistic terrorists. Anzaldúa’s phrase, “We are your linguistic nightmare” (80) is used to support either claim. Saldívar-Hull, in the quoted epigraph, appears to be among the latter group of critics, those who claim that linguistic terrorism is a political action taken by the likes of Anzaldúa in an effort to unsettle our relationships to language. It seems likely to me, however, that Anzaldúa’s larger point involves an understanding of the ways in which we all, on either side of or on the border, are implicated in a form of linguistic terrorism, one that unintentionally or intentionally excludes some listeners.
Politics of Language Diversity, arguing, “translation evokes a crossing of borders, a permeation of barriers erected between what seem to be separate and disjunctive linguistic terrains (the ethnic and the American) . . . it produces a new intercultural, interlinguistic entity that ultimately transmigrates tongues and transcodes ethnicities” (7). Discussing the interaction of Chinese, Japanese, Native American, and Spanish languages with English, Cutter argues that Chicana/o literature “engages in a more radical translational enterprise because it asks, and even at times forces, not only the character or writer but also the reader to assume a primary role in these processes of translation” (176). From Cutter’s perspective, Chicana/o writing involves readers in a much more challenging way than other “minority” writing.

While both Ch’ien and Cutter are careful to describe cultural differences and varying approaches to the relationship between English and other languages, the wide reach of these critics’ work tends to obfuscate some of the specific circumstances of each cultural interaction with the dominant language. For instance, Cutter’s chapter on Chicana/o writing and the trope of translation only briefly mentions in passing the mythology and symbolism of Malintzin Tenepal or La Malinche, the translator and mistress of Hernán Cortés, who has come to symbolize a variety of attitudes toward Mexican and mestizo heritage. Despite a specific focus on translation, Cutter has little space or time to consider the role of Malinche as translator, whether as historical figure or as prominent fictional figure in the works she discusses. Such a significant factor in the work of many Chicana/o writers, the figure of Malintzin/La Malinche tends to get lost in this wider scope.
In her study of the history and changing literary usage of the figure of Malintzin/La Malinche, “Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Representation,” Norma Alarcón describes the development of the competing female figureheads of Mexico between which the mestiza/o shifts, tracing how “Malintzin Tenepal was transformed into Guadalupe’s monstrous double” (58). Also referred to as *la lengua*, or “the tongue,” Malintzin’s subversive power rested in her ability to navigate between languages: her entire identity, in the absence of her own description of the events of her life, has become wrapped up in this shape-shifting, often seen as traitorous, characteristic. As Alarcón also notes, from the descriptions of historians and critics beginning with Octavio Paz, Malinche’s status as translator/betrayer is also a highly sexualized one: Paz links Malinche with *La Chingada*, and he and Carlos Fuentes “have patently sexualized Malintzin more than any other writers before them. In so doing they lay claim to a recovery of the (maternal) female body as a secular, sexual, and signifying entity. Sometimes, however, their perspective hovers between attraction and repulsion, revealing their attitudes towards the feminine and their ‘origins’” (68).

30 As Tzvetan Todorov has noted, Malintzin is the “first example, and thereby the symbol, of the cross-breeding of cultures; she thereby heralds the modern state of Mexico and beyond that, the present state of us all, since if we are not invariably bilingual, we are inevitably bi- or tri-cultural” (101). For border writers, inhabiting both English and Spanish can be a dangerous and yet incredibly powerful position: writers often describe being cast out or mistrusted by speakers on either side of the divide, feared by those who recognize their power to destabilize language, knowledge, even reality. They belong fully to neither language, but rather negotiate the boundaries between them. Border literature in particular relies on characters whose identities rest in the interstitial spaces, not only between country and culture, but language. Writers and characters hold a subversive power in their willingness to offer or withhold translation, at which point
readers must to some degree become translators themselves. Often, those readers exhibit a strong resistance to the presence of Spanish in English, and in so doing resist the identities of those whose lives are lived between languages. Frustrated by language, they close the book on border identity.

The choices of border authors to translate or not to translate, like those of Malinche, do not occur in a political vacuum. While Cutter is right that “translation evokes a crossing of borders,” those borders extend beyond language and culture to include the borderlands of the text. As a space where both oppressive domination and subversive resistance rely on the instability of language, the margins and borders of the text, both literal and figurative, provide great insight into the working relationships between author, publisher, and reader. In the material inerstices, the introductory pages, the fonts and styles, and the supplementary information flanking a text, we can begin to see the struggle between author, publisher or editor, and reader for control over the translating process. Often reflected is a fundamental mistrust of the translating ability and accuracy of the writer as well as the reader, and a desire to make the reading experience (and thus, the identification experience) easier. Like the historical Malinche, the border writer operates between languages in a volatile political context, caught

---

31 Although Gary D. Keller has argued that Chicana/o authors “take for granted that at least a substantial portion of their readership is English-Spanish bilingual. They assume that their readers are actively involved (or at least are linguistically competent to be involved) in the fusion of English and Spanish in order to derive novel effects” (139), I would argue that this construction of writers as insulated within and speaking only to members of the Chicana/o or bilingual community is growing increasingly outdated. Chicana/o writers employ a wide variety of techniques to accommodate monolingual readers in varying degrees; additionally, those who refuse to accommodate monolingual audiences do not necessarily reject those audiences but instead take for granted that those readers will be slightly disadvantaged in their access to comprehension of the text. For some writers, encountering this disadvantage is of extreme importance in the reading experience of the monolingual English reader: the minoritizing experience of being unable to read and understand the text acquaints readers with the position of the writer and/or protagonist, who often describe the difficulties of learning/living in English.
between the desires and the demands of the publisher and the reading audience, who similarly insist that she erase her own linguistic identity in favor of transparency. Border identity is enacted not only in linguistic choice, but in the material elements that support or supplant that identity, over which the author has less control. Although deciding when and how much to translate is not only a question of style but a question of how much to challenge readers to rethink the relationships between language and reality, writers are confronted with publishers and readers who seek difference only insofar as they never have to be uncomfortable. Demanding more avenues to direct translation, these audiences ignore the fundamental instability that characterizes linguistic identity for border writers and characters.

Critics who focus more closely on the role of Spanish in Latina/o or specifically Chicana/o works often take issue with those more global discussions of language contact and diversity precisely because they elide difference in the pursuit of common understanding. Arguing on behalf of cultural specificity, Alfred Arteaga states in “An Other Tongue,” “Mexicans negotiate the border like no others, north and south, south and north, realizing simultaneous fission and fusion. It is this border context that differentiates the styles of linguistic interplay of Chicano poetry from other styles of polyglot poetics” (10). Doris Sommer has also written on this issue in her work Proceed With Caution, When Engaged By Minority Writing in the Americas. Sommer’s work suggests that critics and readers eager to embrace, understand, and ultimately mitigate difference in an attempt at universalizing experience should reconsider their motives. For Sommer, many “minority” texts actually resist their readers in ways that reader-response
theories traditionally do not account for: giving the reader ultimate control over the text overlooks the moves the author made to prevent such ultimate control in the first place. Sommer wants to return some power to the author, to indicate the ways in which books do not always act in the service of their readers, and that some gaps and distances – especially those created by language – are not just creative play but strategic attempts to maintain a distance between the reader and the author, narrator, or experience. She distinguishes between “limits of intimacy and access” (x) and the textual “difficulty, ambiguity, or complexity that demand and reward interpretive labor” (x) which we so value now. She proposes a rhetoric of particularism, a plea for readers to confront and contemplate the strangeness, the distancing effects of such strategies, not to overcome them: “The point is that signs of refusal to fit into a reader’s agenda are transmitted, and we should stop to notice” (4).

But there are moments where “global” and “local” critics alike seem to resist considering the mediating forces between author and reader, the activities and persons or institutions that frustrate intention and reception. On the literal and figurative edges between “the text itself” and the mechanisms that convey the text to readers, we find border spaces in need of investigation. For instance, Cutter’s discussion of Nash Candelaria’s novel Memories of the Alhambra mentions briefly the presence of unaccented Spanish on her way to discussing his narrative techniques, without pausing to question why the accents were dropped or whose decision(s) led to their removal. Sommer’s work, which I find useful in its oppositional claims regarding the willingness of Chicano/a writers to be fully engaged/understood by their readers, also neglects any
discussion of the outside forces at work that often attempt to fill in those carefully constructed gaps, whether in the form of unauthorized prefatory material, glossaries, or cover design. Her argument, it would appear, depends solely on the author’s attitudes toward his/her readership, and not on the attitudes of anyone else involved in the production of a textual work.

As Sonia Saldívar-Hull notes in *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*, Chicana feminists “have to look in nontraditional places for our theories: in the prefaces to anthologies, in the interstices of autobiographies, in our cultural artifacts (the cuentos)” (46); when it comes to language, border literature writers and readers also find their theories in such “nontraditional places”: in the pages preceding and following a border text, in the visual and typographical vehicles that convey “the text itself,” we find a politics of language, a politics of engagement that asks readers to consider their role in the (literal and figurative) marginalization of Spanish. All of these spaces might be considered part of the borderlands, for as much as geography and language, they shape interpretation from the edges, from the margins. Sáldivar-Hull notes that the physical borders of texts are rich in theory; like those who write about the border, they benefit from their status as in between and can exhibit evidence of both the forces of domination and subversion. For example, Sommer deals with the importance of the textual margins in the work of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, the Peruvian writer and historian, claiming that “his genre is not history; it is ‘Commentaries’ on other chronicles” (75). El Inca, son of a Spanish aristocrat and a royal Inca, wrote his famous *Commentarios Reales de los Incas* in two parts: the first regarding Inca life, and the
second describing the Spanish conquest of Peru. In keeping with her larger argument regarding the resistant nature of many minority texts, Sommer argues that Garcilaso “performed wonders with prefaces. His magic was to multiply the conventional first move, adding one prologue after another to keep readers at the threshold” (xii). In the Commentarios, prefatory material and opening chapters pile one upon the other, delaying reader gratification by forcing those readers to follow along through digression after digression, but also supplanting traditional histories of the conquest of the New World. In so doing, El Inca uses the margins, the edges of his books to control reader understanding of the rest of his narrative, causing readers to question whether it is the history or the commentaries we should find of more interest.

Writers like El Inca, as well as critics like Saldívar-Hull and Calderón, use the material margins of the text – the paratext – exactly as Gérard Genette has described: as “a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text” (2). The language of Genette’s description of the paratext – as translated by Jane E. Lewin – depends heavily on a mixing of the material and metaphorical senses of the border that often occurs when discussing US-Mexico border literature.32 For Genette,

The paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or – a word Borges used apropos of a preface – a ‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an

32 For instance, Louis Gerard Mendoza reflects critically on the fluid use of the term “border” in Historia: The Literary Making of Chicano and Chicana History: “The of-used metaphor of the border (to refer to a site of cultural negotiation and exchange) is symptomatic of the capacity of this language both to offer insight and to obscure, for when it is used to speak solely of social and cultural relations, we too often forget that the border is a site of juridical control where people are policed, detained, and turned away – often violently – where people’s legitimacy, their very humanity is determined by their citizenship status” (250).
'undefined zone’ between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world’s discourse about the text), an edge . . . (2)

The “threshold” between text and not-text, much like the borders between the United States and Mexico and Spanish and English, is a space filled with activity and yet often elided in discussions of national and ethnic as well as linguistic difference. In the case of many works of border literature, paratextual elements are themselves a kind of border zone, providing insight into the working relationships between author and publisher, as well as a sense of competing interests in the representation of Spanish in predominantly English texts. Elements like glossaries and introductions as well as footnotes and maps shape interpretive possibilities by manipulating the role of Spanish in English (and vice versa) in a visible way.

And yet, there are limitations to Genette’s structuralist attempts to define the paratext: Genette’s contention that the paratext “is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author” (2) is perhaps not quite attentive enough to the situations in which publishers, promoters, and perhaps otherwise well-meaning intermediaries use paratextual materials such as introductions and editor’s notes as well as reviewer “blurbs,” glossaries and footnotes to shape, control, and often subvert the wishes of a writer.33 Furthermore, as textual critic and theorist Jerome McGann notes, “The text/paratext distinction as formulated by Seuils will not, by Genette’s own admission,

33 The issue of paratextual control is of particular significance when we consider the opportunities for publication of minority writers dating back to slave narratives. For a particularly insightful demonstration of the controlling forces of the paratext and the intersection of race and textuality in the work of Frederick Douglass as well as contemporary photography, see Beth McCoy, “Race and the (Para)Textual Condition,” PMLA 121.1 (2006). 156-169.
explore such matters as ink, typeface, paper, and various other phenomena which are crucial to the understanding of textuality. They fall outside his concerns because such textual features are not linguistic” (13). As McGann goes on to note, the visual features of a text, which he describes as its bibliographic codes, work in conjunction with its linguistic codes: “all texts, like all other things human, are embodied phenomena, and the body of the text is not exclusively linguistic” (13). Focusing particularly on minority writers, Ch’ien presents an alternative understanding of the link between linguistic and bibliographic codes: “language may become material geography or space for polylingual writers, spatial worlds which they navigate” (44). The prominence of language issues in border texts foregrounds the material, spatial, and visual aspects of those texts.34

This textual-critical emphasis on the bibliographic or visual codes of a text becomes incredibly useful when considered alongside the work of Damían Baca, whose *Mestiz@ Scripts: Digital Migrations and the Territories of Writing* explores the visual nature of mestiza/o writing in order to revise traditional notions of Mesoamerican literacy. He argues that “Mestiz@ scripts” work at the intersection of Western and Mesoamerican modes of communication, weaving together the alphabetic and the pictographic in ways that heavily rely on visual as well as linguistic interpretation.

---

34 The journal *Visible Language* has twice featured volumes devoted to the visual effects of bilingual literature. In their introduction to volume 21 (1987), Richard Hodgson and Ralph Sarkonak argue, “colliding languages are . . . to be taken literally in their visible form, both the material and the literary . . . What is at issue, then, are the visible, graphic aspects of language contact, and in particular the concrete manifestations of bilingualism in various national settings” (21). However, six years later, they again opened their introduction to the 27th volume by explaining, “Most studies on bilingualism tend to neglect the written manifestations of the phenomenon in favor of the psychological, social, and pedagogical dimensions of the problem as they appear in the spoken language” (7). Judging from the apparent lack of other work addressing the material aspects of bilingual, code-switching texts since those publications appeared, it would appear that critics of bilingual texts continue to neglect “the visible, graphic aspects of language contact.”
Arguing that “It is too often the case that efforts to clarify alphabetic literacy often overlook the pivotal role of illustration and image within language” (92), Baca’s interests intersect nicely with textual critic Johanna Drucker, who defines “‘writing’ as the visible form of language from the level of the marks to the letters and [including] all the characteristic features of the visible medium and [contends] that these features contribute to structuring the linguistic significance of the text” (232).35 In particular, Baca’s study of the 2000 publication of the Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol, a collaborative effort by lithographer Enrique Chagoya, graphic designer Felicia Rice, and poet and performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña, becomes an intriguing starting point for considering the role of the visual aspects of more traditional texts.36

The Codex, a work which combines illustrations of pop culture and Aztec as well as colonial pictography with the scripts of Gomez-Peña’s performances, also plays with type: “an amalgam of typography, typeface, and lettering weave between pictographs, bloodstains, and American cultural icons” (66). The book itself opens from left to right, revealing 21 accordion-folded pages filled with Gomez-Peña’s words slanting in multiple fonts toward an image of a Dia de los Muertos skull wearing Mickey Mouse ears, the face of George Washington on Spiderman’s body flanking illustrations of conquest and

35 Even as Baca explains the use of the @ in Mestiz@: “The reinvention of the typographic logogram “@” is primarily for purposes of gender inclusivity. “@” in this study is also a marker of communal subjectivity among Mestiz@ cultures, a subjectivity that should never be exclusive” (2), readers begin to sense the intersection between the linguistic and the graphic, the visual significance of letters.

36 The Codex Espangliensis relies heavily on the form of the Mesoamerican Codices, pictographic books produced by Aztecs, over 500 of which survived European conquest. Often providing historical accounts of conquests, festivals, and other major events, the codices mix drawings with Spanish and Nahuatl languages. The creators of the Codex Espangliensis translate the form into contemporary history, reflecting on border culture in the late twentieth century. The mixing of languages, fonts, images, and cultures implies a historical connection between the mestizaje of the 16th century and that of the 21st.
bloodshed, a coppery red river in the background. This blending of visual and linguistic modes, Baca argues, leads to these difficult questions: “What counts as writing and what does it mean to be literate? What does it mean to be civilized?” (92) The emphasis on the visual and structural-material aspects of border literature can help expose efforts to control the presence of Spanish in English-language texts, as well as attempts to subvert that control.

In the rest of this chapter, I argue that the fight for control over language takes place both within the narrative subject matter of border literature as well as on the material fringes, showing evidence of border textuality. The texts under investigation here all contain narratives of border identity, placing characters and situations on the borders between cultures and languages, developing plots and themes that push readers to pursue various constructions of linguistic identity. But a textual-materialist focus on the margins of the texts further reveals competing tensions between the narrative treatment of border linguistic identity and the way those terms and identities are worked out by authors, editors, and publishers on the margins of the page. The narrative – the subject matter, the linguistic code – is inevitably affected by the work happening in the margins surrounding it. Thus, the texts I explore are representative of a working out of border identity on two levels: the narrative and typographic. At times, these levels are antagonistic, driving readers to different conclusions about the relationship between languages; at other times, they work in concert to produce a coherent picture. But they are always influencing one another, always providing opportunities for readers to reflect not only on a character’s quest for identity, but also on the competing discourses of
identity at work in shaping the book they are reading. Border literature almost demands an attention to its material margins, constantly exposing itself as a product of the discourses on linguistic identity which it takes as its subject.

In the first section of this chapter, the interpretive effects of such border elements as the supplemental glossary will be explored in the works of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Jovita González and Eve Raleigh, and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, where Genette’s concept of the paratext will figure largely. Each of these texts incorporates glossaries supplied by the publisher which aim to guide monolingual readerships, but which also inevitably reveal tensions or gaps in the narrative itself, or between a writer’s desires and those of her editors and publishers. I trace the way that these elements are manipulated by authors and editors to ultimately frustrate desires for linguistic transparency, but also attend to the subtle ways in which elements of the glossary shape or shade interpretation in ways that often compete with authorial or narrative intentions. The second section of this chapter, devoted to more closely examining the role and effect of typography in the work of Nash Candelaria and Junot Díaz, will attempt to highlight the interpretive possibilities hidden in italics and accent marks as well as the growing political efforts to take control of those visuals. While on the surface the glossary and typography of a text might seem to have little in common, in this chapter I study them alongside one another in order to demonstrate how often-overlooked, though highly visual, elements of a text help shape a reader’s interpretation of the relationships between languages. In each case, some “normalization” of the included Spanish occurs, whether through glossaries or romanized print. However, as in Candelaria’s novel, that normalization results in
subordination of Spanish to the rules of English, and privileges a conservative approach to the inclusion of Spanish. In many places, narrative elements – plot, subject matter, and themes - and the politics of identity related therein are at odds with the publisher’s and editor’s typographical choices, creating competing discourses of difference. In more recent texts, writers like Díaz understand the influential effects of typography, leading them to assume strict control over it, though that does not prevent inconsistencies and competing discourses about the politics of bilingualism. Here I will rely on both Genette’s paratextual focus as well as McGann, Baca, and Drucker’s emphasis on the visual in order to expose the ways seemingly insignificant matters of type can structure readers’ understanding of and relationship to competing languages.

Section One: “The Gloss Indeed Destroys the Text”

In his introduction to the translation of Gérard Genette’s Paratexts, Richard Macksey writes, “This interrogation of the frontiers between the text and its public demands a dedicated reader, in the senses both of one widely read and of one alert to every artful disruption, intrusion, and lacuna,” calling Genette “the most intrepid and persistent explorer” of such frontiers (xii, italics mine). The language of the frontier, with its connotations of manifest destiny, conjures Genette as explorer/colonizer of textual margins, knitting together land, text, and language. Macksey’s words manage to maintain a hierarchy between what is traditionally conceived of as the center of the text – the linguistic codes – and the margins or paratext. But border literature and the borders of its material texts often startle that hierarchy in their navigation of multiple languages. Interestingly, in addition to works printed in serialized form and illustrations (with which
other critics have taken issue), Genette admittedly leaves out of his discussion the issue of translation. By so doing he also neglects to discuss the shaping effects of the glossary and its role in translating for readers the foreign words of the text. And while textual critics have long discussed the evolving usage of the marginal gloss as well as the footnote, little has been said about the bilingual glossary, or the process of listing foreign words and their dominant-language equivalent like a binary legend or key, an aid in mapping the linguistic territory of a literary work.  

The glossary, which sometimes precedes but more typically follows a narrative, alerts readers to the employment of multiple languages and defines a visible boundary line of white space between them where one might not otherwise exist. Opposing one language to the other suggests a clear-cut equivalency that distracts readers from the complexities of existing amongst languages. Works such as *We Fed Them Cactus*, the edited and re-published edition of *The Squatter and the Don, Caballero: A Historical Novel*, as well as Junot Díaz’s *Drown* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, demonstrate different usages and potential interpretive repercussions in the employment of a Spanish-English glossary.

In *We Fed Them Cactus*, published in 1954, readers sense through both the narrative and the selective glossary (as well as other paratextual materials including the preface, the later added introduction, and index) competing notions of the relationship

---

37 Numerous critics have begun to study the use of the marginal gloss and similar marginalia, from biblical scholars to authorities on Coleridge, including Lawrence Lipking and HJ Jackson. Anthony Grafton pursues an extended study of the footnote, in *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. Perhaps the most recent addition to this area of study is Robert Hauptman’s *Documentation: A History and Critique of Attribution, Commentary, Glosses, Marginalia, Notes, Bibliographies, Works-cited Lists, and Citation Indexing and Analysis*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008.
between Spanish and English, and a textual unwillingness to equate or supplant one with the other despite such paratextual attempts at control. The 1992 republication of *The Squatter and the Don*, which employs footnotes instead of a glossary in an effort to translate Spanish words and phrases, begins to demonstrate the shaping effects of contemporary editors on a century-old text. *Caballero*, a co-authored text written in the late 1930s and unpublished until its discovery and publication in 1996, whose Spanish and English glossary, coupled with the explanatory cast of characters which precedes the text, perhaps reflects the competing intentions and compromises reached by two authors with different interests and audiences in mind.38

And finally, in two texts that expand the early academic definition of border literature beyond the dividing line between the United States and Mexico, Díaz’s refusal to incorporate a glossary demonstrates a growing frustration with reader demands for transparency. Each text – *Drown* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* – relies on and undermines the sense of a one-to-one relationship between Spanish and English, challenging readers to participate in the translation process, as Cutter might argue, but also to recognize its limitations. While the borders between the Dominican Republic and the United States (as well as those between the D.R. and Haiti) present unique challenges

38 While the order in which I discuss these texts appears to be out of chronological order in terms of the time of their initial writing and even publication, I have chosen to emphasize the fact that recovery projects have played a large part in the current interpretive possibilities of these texts. Though written in the 1930s, *Caballero* was not published until 1996, and while *The Squatter and the Don* likely had an audience at the time of its initial publication over 100 years ago, the original publication offered no paratextual translation, while its most recent edition does. By organizing my argument with attentiveness to the circumstances of their re-(or in the case of Caballero, first) publication, I emphasize the complex history of Chicana/o border literature, which includes its silences and erasures as well as its recoveries, rather than attempt to arrange the history of these texts as they “might have been.” I also demonstrate the shaping effects of contemporary editors and critics on these older texts.
to the concept of the border, geographically as well as linguistically, culturally, and politically, Díaz’s confrontations with the borders of the text and his constructions of border texts offer insight into the material challenges and influences present in much of border literature. They offer points of comparison with the texts of the borders between Mexico and the United States, and at the same time they call for an attentiveness to cultural and linguistic specificity in exploring Latina/o and more expansively-defined border texts.

Fabiola Cabeza de Baca’s 1954 memoir of the New Mexican landscape of her youth tells stories of rodeos, bandits, and school-teaching as well as the drought of 1918 and its effects on the people and the landscape. Throughout, Cabeza de Baca maps the geography of her home: pointing out landmarks, explaining the genealogy of place names, and literally punctuating the text with line drawings of the llano created by Dorothy L. Peters, including the shelf and wide vistas as well as various plant and animal life: cacti and sheep, twisted branches and buffalo. As Tey Diana Rebolledo writes in her 1994 introduction to We Fed Them Cactus, Cabeza de Baca, along with other New Mexican writers like Cleofas Jaramillo and Nina Otero Warren, “wrote, in part, because they wanted to communicate their fear that their culture was somehow slipping away, that it was being assimilated through social and cultural domination” (xix). On the one hand, Cabeza de Baca wanted to present a picturesque vista to her mostly Anglo readership,

---

39 Cabeza de Baca’s text, while it continues to be in print, has suffered from the same neglect she strove to combat with its publication. Becky Jo Gesteland McShane notes in “In Pursuit of Regional and Cultural Identity” that collections dedicated to stories of the Llano Estacado as recent as 1990 and 1993 completely “ignore the presence of Hispanic women and Hispanic cowboys altogether” (196). That Gesteland McShane’s work appears in Breaking Boundaries: New Perspectives on Women’s Regionalist Writing in a section entitled “Expanding the Genre,” dedicated to “rescuing a number of overlooked texts” (11) further indicates the continued marginalization of Cabeza de Baca’s work.
validating her fellow Hispano people and demonstrating the peaceful, harmonious lives they lived. But as Becky Jo Gesteland McShane argues, “The Llano reality in de Baca’s text involves an ethnic unity, a collective regional and cultural bond, which also neglects class inequities inherent in the Hispanic ranching system (195); Cabeza de Baca’s text occasionally valorizes her class position. These moments where she indicates her own participation in class and color hierarchies often occur in the margins of her text. Thus, while Cabeza de Baca resists the domination of her people by Anglo influence, her text also struggles internally with competing presentations of her life and class status on the llano, a struggle that bleeds through in the margins.

Rebolledo argues that Cabeza de Baca registers her resistance of Anglo dominance in a number of subtle ways: quoting Genaro Padilla, Rebolledo echoes the need to “look for . . . momentary struggles in the narrative, revealed perhaps only in whispers of resistance, quelled immediately but signaling like a flash through the dense texture of language and reified memory” (xix). While she outlines a number of resistant strategies in We Fed Them Cactus, the two most significant to maintaining Spanish language use are those regarding Cabeza de Baca’s long discussions of Hispanic names (familial, geographic, and otherwise) and an argument that “all the preceding narrative strategies of resistance are not lessened by an implicit ‘translation’ from Spanish into English. In the translation exists a critique of Anglo culture, of the Anglo’s misunderstanding of Hispanic culture” (xxi). Rebolledo argues that hidden in the translating moments is a tone of condescension, of superiority implied by the ability to navigate between two languages. Monolingualism is represented as a sign of ignorance.
Cabeza de Baca certainly employs both resistant strategies in an effort to claim or reclaim not only the names of places and things but control over them: as in the aftermath of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo when land claims were stripped and former landowners became subject to the distant bureaucracy of Washington, de Baca’s story is one of the loss of land in the Dust Bowl, a natural phenomenon created in part by westward-expanding Anglos with little knowledge of the land. She writes,

The Hispano has almost vanished from the land and most of the chapels are nonexistent, but the names of hills, rivers, arroyos, canyons and defunct plazas linger as monuments to a people who pioneered into the land of the buffalo and the Comanche. These names have undergone many changes, but are still known and repeated. Very likely many of those who pronounce them daily are unaware that they are of Spanish origin. (66)

What follows is a lengthy description of a variety of place names and those they are named for throughout the Southwest, noting the presence of Spanish as well as Native American terms in all of the surrounding geography: “Corazón Peak took its name because its shape resembles a heart. Cuervo is the Spanish word for crow, and the creek received the name from the abundance of crows in the area. La Liendre was originally settled by a family who were small in stature, whose nickname was liendre, meaning nit. Las Salinas were the salt mines . . .” (66) and so on. For four paragraphs, she simply lists locations and the origins of their names. Cabeza de Baca uses moments like these to unsettle her readers and their understanding of English as it relates to the physical landscape, and she also attempts to remind readers – “Very likely many of those who pronounce them daily are unaware that they are of Spanish origin” – of the continuing presence of Spanish in English, at the same time she recognizes that for many it will
always go unrecognized. That presence cannot be entirely contained by the process of translation (Which words will your readers know? Will they know they were once Spanish? Does it matter?), much less the efforts at transparency implied by a glossary.

While Rebolledo’s efforts to outline Cabeza de Baca’s resistant strategies are extremely useful in terms of narrative, they do not go far enough in exploring the effects of narrative interaction with non-narrative elements such as the glossary provided in every edition of *We Fed Them Cactus*.\(^{40}\) She rightly points out that the translating moments arrive with an air of condescension, and that the narrative moments in which Anglos are revealed as ignorant for thinking “the only white people were those who spoke the English language as their mother tongue” (149) might be directed as reminders to readers who happen to think the same way. Despite her narrative efforts to present Hispanos to her larger Anglo audience as a harmonious group, the paratextual elements of Cabeza de Baca’s work undermine such aims. In her introduction she seems to valorize the riches that afforded her family a life of “splendor with many servants and slaves” (xii), favorably comparing life on the hacienda to a slave plantation. Here and in the glossary, perhaps in contrast with the whole of the narrative itself, readers are reminded that prior to the Chicano/a movement, many Hispanic and Mexican American writers classified themselves as Spanish or Hispanos, often horrified by the ability of Anglos to confuse them with their darker-skinned and more likely “mixed-blood” neighbors and servants. As Cabeza de Baca fights dual impulses to both defend and to

---

\(^{40}\) Perhaps part of the reason for the limited study rests with her own presence in the material spaces between Cabeza de Baca’s text and the reader. In fact, Rebolledo’s introduction, placed between Cabeza de Baca’s preface, written in 1950, and the text itself, interrupts even the writer herself with a description of her life and awards, her place in the canon of Nuevomexicana writers and her efforts to resist those who might otherwise contain her.
distance herself from her fellow residents of the llano, the borders of the text give her away. She cannot quite commit to a narrative of democracy, because she is in fact quite proud of her own material, economic, and “natural” superiority. Examining the glossary as a site of resistance in *We Fed Them Cactus* will not only bolster Rebolledo’s argument that translative moments are moments of critique, of creating situations in which “the Hispano comes across as admirable, while the Anglo is often ridiculed” (xxii), but also begin to address the competing narratives of unity and difference within Hispano culture.

Much like the narrative itself, on the surface the glossary appears to offer useful information to a monolingual audience unfamiliar with the terms. And yet, in a manner also similar to the narrative itself, what the glossary includes and omits signals a resistance, a withholding, and a refusal to explain all of the terms. The glossary, located in its traditional place at the back of the book, speaks even in its location of its relevance to the reader and its priority for the writer: less careful readers might not find it until they reach the end. Yet its presence even in the final pages inevitably shapes interpretation, particularly with respect to the relationship between the two languages. The glossary contains forty-five Spanish words or phrases and their English equivalent, many of them descriptors of jobs or status positions: “Agregado. Assistant, helper; Empleado. Employee, servant; Patrón. A landowner, employer or ‘boss’; Rico. A member of the wealthy class” (179-180). Despite narrative attempts at presenting ethnic harmony, the paratextual elements tell a different story. Cabeza de Baca’s desire not to be lumped together with members of the lower class thus appears most clearly in the glossary, where ease of distinction is initially implied by one-to-one translation, but frustrated upon close
reading. The glossary and its contents imply that it is relatively simple to distinguish one group of people from another, even as one moves across languages, but also that it is of utmost importance. Like her introductory remarks valorizing the plantation-like environment of the land owned by Hispanos, the glossary translations do more than simply offer English equivalents for Spanish words: they indicate a competing desire to maintain class divisions even as her entire community is put under erasure by increasing Anglo dominance.

Scanning the glossary, one also notices that most of the Spanish words are italicized, but not all. “Ceja,” “Llano,” “Los Gorras Blancas,” “milo maize,” “penitentes,” and “rodeo” are all translated words on the list, but none are italicized. The presence of these loan words highlights the in-between state of language, the usage in English of Spanish words that have become so commonplace that its users often forget their origins. They place Spanish and English in tension with one another, asking on which side of the binary such words should be placed. Like Cabeza de Baca’s narrative, by placing these non-italicized loan words on the Spanish side of the binary equation, readers are reminded of the borrowed nature of the English language while reclaiming the words for Spanish. Spanish and English are less distinct linguistic entities and more fluid than a glossary with its visual depiction of equal sides typically implies. The giving and taking, loaning and borrowing that occur on a daily basis, particularly in a border zone like the llano, cannot be adequately contained by the structural addition of a glossary that cannot accommodate such complexity.
Furthermore, a number of terms get left out of the glossary altogether, which leads one to wonder at the usefulness of a partial legend, a partial explanation for monolingual readers. At least 24 italicized Spanish words or phrases in the text do not make it into the glossary, including “compadres” (6), “desempeño” (33), “cabalgaba” (129), “curandera” (59), and “adios, hasta el año venidero” (43). Some of these words appear not to require glossary translation because Cabeza de Baca performs the function of translator immediately, privileging the functions of narrative translation over the visual simplicity offered by the glossary. Sometimes it is direct: “Each day José cabalgaba, mounted, each of the ten horses” (129); at others, it is possible to translate given the context: the phrase, “adios, hasta el año venidero,” (goodbye, until next year) said at the end of the hunt might be easily translated given the context of the paragraph, which references returning each year until there are no more buffalo to hunt. In other cases, direct translation is not as easy, and requires quite a bit of explanation: “This redemption was the desempeño. The desempeño usually was a promise of a dance at a fixed date” (33). “Desempeño” translates roughly as “performance,” which readers can gather based on what the promise entails, but in this case it has a meaning specific to the baile Cabeza de Baca describes, which involves “redemption” of any person dancing for the first time.

By eliminating or leaving these phrases and words from the glossary, the glossary itself is seen as provisional and incomplete, only part of a fragmented method of observing and translating the foreign words of the text. In the case of the desempeño in particular, though Cabeza de Baca works to explain its intricacies, the knowledge that there is no direct English equivalent for this word complicates any sense of one-to-one
translation, even as the glossary pretends to offer it. Both Cabeza de Baca’s narrative efforts and the glossary’s gaps and confusions encourage readers to remember or recognize the presence of Spanish in English, but also frustrate any attempts to be comprehensive in translation. Readers cannot rely entirely on the glossary, nor can they entirely rely on Cabeza de Baca’s own narration. Instead, perhaps they must live with the sense of being between languages, attending to the inadequacies in translation made all the more clear by an incomplete glossary.

The glossary also lingers as a reminder that Cabeza de Baca fights the dual impulse to celebrate the riches and class distinctions she benefited from while denying such class distinctions exist. The narrative itself attempts a portrayal of a classless, democratic portrait of Hispano society, as when Cabeza de Baca writes, “There may have been class distinction in the larger towns, but the families on the Llano had none; the empleados and their families were as much a part of the family of the patrón as his own children. It was a very democratic way of life” (60). But a glossary filled with class designations and titles, for example, would seem to contradict her. An attentiveness to the margins of the text, the borders between narrative and reader, rewards us with a contradictory portrait of class hierarchy on the Llano. Consideration of the incomplete nature of the glossary – its gaps and refusals – first reveals a text unable to make translation transparent. But further, by emphasizing and defining class divisions, the glossary reveals an ambivalence toward the classless society the narrative aims to describe. If critics and readers overlook or ignore the introductory material or the presence of the glossary, they overlook the places where the narrative exposes its own
constructed nature. The constructions of identity espoused by the narrative, with its emphasis on shared land and language, and the glossary, where one is what one does in a ranked hierarchy of owners and workers, call each other into question and compete for attention. Paratextual analysis brings these competing narratives of identity more clearly to the forefront, and demonstrates the inevitable effects of the material margins on the central narrative.

The second example of the glossary and its effects on interpretation demonstrates the role of the editor in shaping our understanding of the relationships between language. Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s 1885 novel, *The Squatter and the Don: A Novel Descriptive of Contemporaneous Occurrences in California*, was rescued from obscurity by the Recovering the US-Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, directed by Nicolás Kanellos, and edited by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita. The edited and republished text, released in 1992 with a second edition in 1997, has been heralded as a sign that the recovery and reintroduction of Chicana/o literary works into the canon of American literature is well on its way. The work has generated a fair amount of critical response, including a volume dedicated entirely to critical and pedagogical perspectives on her work. Many see the novel as providing insight into the previously unspoken or unnarrated histories of the Californios in the wake of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

And yet, as Manuel Martín-Rodriguez argues, “Recovered works belong as much to the time of their recovery as they do to the era in which they were first published or conceived” (156); it is important to consider not only the circumstances of this novel’s rediscovery and republication but the reasons for its success as well as the shaping forces
of the editors in ensuring that success. Furthermore, we need to always keep in mind the reasons for its loss, its near-erasure, and somehow attend to the near-century of critical silence on the novel in a way that recognizes its presences as much as its absence in attending to its history and place in American literature. Yet we can also trace some startling similarities between readerly expectations for linguistic transparency, as well as specific resistance to Spanish across centuries as we examine the historical context of the novel’s initial publication as well as its republication. The varying strategies Ruiz de Burton and her later editors employ in order to confront that resistance reflect slightly different attitudes toward accommodation: while Ruiz de Burton works to ease translation, she is never so helpful as the editors who recovered her work. The historical moments in which both of these textual versions were produced helps highlight the ongoing political, critical, cultural, and linguistic conversations into which they enter.

From the debates surrounding whether or not the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo preserved the rights of the conquered to speak and conduct business in Spanish, to the continuing pressures of the English-Only Movement, the role of translation in *The Squatter and the Don* is a significant one, and one that changes throughout history from its original publication to its recent recovery and republication. In either case, it is important to remember that California, the setting of Ruiz de Burton’s novel, first recognized Spanish language rights in 1849, but in 1878 rewrote the state constitution to indicate, “All laws of the State of California, and all official writings, and the executive, legislative, and judicial proceedings shall be conducted, preserved, and published in no other than the English language,” making it the first official English-only state. In 1998,
the California state legislature passed Proposition 227, a measure that devastated the state’s bilingual public education system by requiring all instruction be conducted in English. In both cases, Spanish speakers have been materially affected by the legal subordination of their language to English, and by increasingly narrow definitions of what it means to be an American. Ruiz de Burton’s novel appears both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries to address nativist concerns about the relationship between language and identity with varying levels of accommodation.

In “Portrayals of Spanish in 19th Century American Prose: Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s The Squatter and the Don,” María Irene Moyna argues that the novel reveals “a constant negotiation between the expression of bilingual identity and the proposal of a bilingual ideal, on the one hand, and the limitations imposed by the majority ideology, on the other” (236); Ruiz de Burton creates positive Californio characters who demonstrate bilingualism while negatively portraying Anglos as monolingual, yet uses Spanish sparingly in order not to lose her readership. Moyna explains,

Ruiz de Burton had to maneuver carefully in a linguistic marketplace where English was the undisputed dominant language and where there was little tolerance for linguistic and ethnic diversity. Her success as a writer and as an ideologue depended on social acceptance of her writing as authoritative. Representation of language in the novel was thus dictated not just by linguistic or aesthetic considerations, but, very centrally, by the power structure prevailing in late 19th-century California, where Spanish had been relegated to a subordinate position.

Thus bilingualism in the characters becomes a marker of upper-class education, a state differentiated from the monolingual Spanish of Indian characters as well as the monolingual English of the less educated Anglos. Moyna carefully outlines the distinctive usage of Spanish in Ruiz de Burton’s work: the method of meta-switching and
the use of calques, as well as using Spanish phrases likely to be familiar even to monolingual readers, all give readers the sense of mediating between languages without doing the work of translating or requiring actual knowledge of Spanish.

What Moyna does not mention is the role of the editorial footnotes which provide translations of some of the Spanish words and phrases throughout Ruiz de Burton’s text. Moyna, concentrating only on Ruiz de Burton’s novel and Ruiz de Burton’s intentions and audience expectations, ignores the new audience as well as the new intentions created by this edited edition and the additions appended to it, which substantially change the representation of Spanish within. Nearly a third of the footnotes (11, 12, 18, 22, 23-29, 33-35, 42-48, 50-51, 53-54, 60, and 63) contain one or more translations of foreign words and phrases. Four of these translations are from French (“muscadin,” “Pas si bête,” “mouchoir,” and “Assez de Bonaparte”), but the rest are from Spanish. Some of the translations are of longer phrases, or even excerpts of poems in Spanish, which Moyna notes may be a subtle hint to the reader that bilingualism is best, while nonetheless providing ample room for contextual translation. Moyna claims that one of the repeated phrases, “¿quien sabe?” an interjection translating to “who knows?” “was common knowledge among English speakers at the time” (246) of publication. Interestingly, the editors felt compelled to footnote the phrase and provide a translation not once but twice

---

41 Also interestingly, Moyna supports this claim by comparing the Spanish phrases of Ruiz de Burton’s text to glossaries provided in 19th century California newspapers for the benefit of newly arrived Anglos.
(footnotes 26 and 51), a move that gives us insight into the changing expectations for a late-twentieth and early twenty-first century readership.⁴²

Sánchez and Pita, along with the Recovering the US-Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, have recovered and re-presented Ruiz de Burton’s important work to a new audience with new expectations for the place of (pre-)Chicana literature amongst the larger canon of American literature. But in so doing, they cannot avoid fundamentally changing the work, particularly the rhetorical and narrative presence of Spanish in the English text. The editors made a choice Ruiz de Burton never made: despite all of her techniques to convey and explain the Spanish in the everyday life of the Californios she described, she never included a glossary, never included a footnote to explain or translate the Spanish. The 1992 and 1997 editions of The Squatter and the Don make very different uses of Spanish, and ask their readers to work a little less than even Ruiz de Burton ever did.⁴³ That the translations are confined to footnotes which readers may attend or discard more easily is certainly significant, but the very presence of the translations at all signals an interesting shift, perhaps from the expectations of a general, popular audience, to the increasingly monolingual audiences inhabiting a college

⁴² These same editors do not provide translations in their 1995 edition of Ruiz de Burton’s first novel, Who Would Have Thought It? (1872).

⁴³ Again, the moment of Ruiz de Burton’s recovery and republication arrives at a time when resistance to foreign languages – whether in social situations or in the classroom – appears to be on the rise. Ruth Sanders cites a 2002 MLA study of foreign language enrollments in higher education, which reveals that foreign language enrollments as a percentage of total enrollments has dropped by half since 1960, claiming, “American resistance to foreign language learning appears to be strong, and arguments based on internationalism, cultural literacy, multiculturalism, or business advantage have been insufficiently effective to convince even our colleagues in the educational establishment that foreign language study is not only desirable but central to a strong education” (44). Despite demonstrated values of foreign language learning, including cognitive and critical thinking benefits as well as strengthening one’s native language, what might be seen as a tool useful to any critical edition might also be material evidence of growing unwillingness to engage with a foreign language on the page.
classroom. Certainly, the fact that the Sánchez-Pita edition is a scholarly critical edition, aimed at furnishing scholars and students with a full contextual history of publication, an analysis of the narrative, and contextual notes, allows for a reasonable expectation that translations would be provided. However, even the fact that the book is worthy of critical interest reflects a change in its potential uses and alters the possibilities for interpretation: its very categorization as a critical edition structures a reader’s response to the text’s importance and meaning, as does the inclusion of translations in the footnotes.

By attending to the textual margins in the recovered edition of *The Squatter and the Don*, concerns about linguistic transparency, a reader’s ability to translate, and the different methods of achieving that ability become clear. Like *We Fed Them Cactus*, the narrative subject matter and the paratextual elements of *The Squatter and the Don* posit competing understandings of the importance of the ability to navigate between languages. While the narrative portrays a society in which bilingualism or even multilingualism is a significant marker of class status, and monolingualism is represented in regressive, uneducated, ignorant characters, the added editorial footnotes indicate that readers need not feel embarrassed by their inability to translate. Though they forego the list format for the footnote, the translations provided therein convey the same sense that English and Spanish exist in a one-to-one correlation with one another, and that a simple find-and-replace search will provide seamless integration between the languages. Whereas at the end of the nineteenth century Ruiz de Burton was arguing – however subtly – for readers to consider the mastery of languages a sign of a respectable person, by the end of the twentieth editors have taken to accommodating monolingual (if scholarly) audiences.
Focusing on these textual elements helps us track changes made to *The Squatter and the Don*, but also to locate the reasons for those changes in historical moments of nativism that eerily reflect the politics of language surrounding its original publication. The tensions between past and present, the changing attitudes toward accommodation—strangely, it seems, in favor of *more* of it—are made most visible in the borderlands between the text and its paratext, where each affects the other in innumerable ways.

While the history of the competing editions of *The Squatter and the Don* demonstrates different approaches to the relationship between two languages, an entirely new level of competition is added in a co-authored work like *Caballero, A Historical Novel*, co-written by Mexican American Jovita González and Anglo American Margaret Eimer, writing under the pseudonym of Eve Raleigh. María Cotera argues that the historical novel, which includes romances that cross ethnic boundaries at the risk of familial and patriarchal integrity, written in the mid-1930s but not published until 1996, “provides a literary counterpoint to the emergent myth of the Chicano ‘warrior hero’ who battles the forces of outside oppression ‘with his pistol in his hand,’ while maintaining a patriarchal code of oppression within the home” (340). Cotera’s overt reference to the title of Américo Paredes’s foundational critical work, *With His Pistol in His Hand*, calls attention to the dominant mode of critical discourse which privileged Chicano over Chicana interests and understandings of the relationships between Mexicanness and patriarchy, between tradition and suppression of the female voice. Since its publication in 1996, thanks largely to the work of Nicolás Kanellos and editors José E. Limón and Cotera, critics have begun to engage the text on a number of levels, interrogating its
revisionist history, its implications for Chicana feminism, and its depictions of the U.S.-Mexico border zone as a site of cultural contact. But perhaps the most significant aspect of this text’s social life is the hierarchies implied by its co-authored status, which in turn serve to sustain and subvert the hierarchies of Anglo and Mexican, Spanish and English. These hierarchies are reflected in Caballero’s title, byline, glossary, and cast of characters.

In “The Unsustainable Hacienda: The Rhetoric of Progress in Jovita González and Eve Raleigh’s Caballero,” Monika Kaup argues that González’s efforts to involve a nonnative co-author reflect a sensibility that recognized the success of writers like Cabeza de Baca, whose role as an informant to Anglo audiences and cultivation of “Spanish” (read: not Mexican) roots appealed to a popular reading audience. She claims, “The hacienda, an ancestral Mexican house form, is the central focus, and perhaps the real protagonist-hero, of González and Raleigh’s novel” (570). Kaup is echoed by Rosemary A. King, who argues in Border Confluences: Borderland Narratives from the Mexican War to the Present, “[patriarch Don] Santiago internalizes the significance of the hacienda as a Mexican place; his internal embrace of external spatial dynamics shapes the loyalties and allegiances in the novel in such a way that Santiago believes an acceptance of anything or any one Anglo is a rejection of himself and his authority” (25). However, the shortcomings of King’s argument, which appear when her discussion of space in the text does not extend to an examination of González’s drawing of a floor plan of the hacienda (included in the 1996 edition of the text), represent on the whole some of the limitations critics place on themselves by not interrogating the paratextual material
supplied by the two authors as well as their late-twentieth-century editors.44

Furthermore, King’s reference to 

While most other critics are more careful to mention the dual authorship of the work, they also note the problems encountered when attempting to categorize a work partially written by an Anglo American woman under the heading of Chicana literature. In his introduction to the text, Limón carefully outlines the limited knowledge we have of the working relationship between these two writers, arguing, “I strongly believe Eimer had a strong authorial hand in shaping the romantic plot development of Caballero but always with the active participation of González in the crafting process” (xxi). Limón cites letters in which González describes the production of the book using “we” rather than “I,” along with a letter from Eimer to González in which she describes being advised by a publisher to list her own name first on the title page, changing the order that was listed on the original manuscript. Again, Limón carefully notes that the manuscript he and Cotera used for their edition “does show Eve Raleigh as first author, but we have no record that González necessarily accepted this new arrangement” (xxi).

Recent critics have embraced the significance of dual authorship in their work: Kaup, for instance, argues, “Raleigh’s coauthorship of Caballero is no longer an opaque

44 Kaup’s article, on the other hand, cites the drawing as a feminist critique by González of the form of the hacienda: “Caballero rejects the Mexican house for not being a sustainable building: inflexible, mired in the past, isolationist, it will not adapt to change . . . according to Caballero, the hacienda cannot be modernized and make the transition to a more democratic era, where women, servants, and peons attain equal citizenship rights” (584).
and ephemeral feature, as seen from within a Chicano studies optic. Rather, the figure of ‘Eve Raleigh,’ about whose creative contribution little concrete is known except the fact that it was substantial, can appear as the gateway toward difference” (562). Mendoza, who like Kaup seeks “to illustrate that people of Mexican descent in the United States do not simply have a history on the one hand and a literature on the other; we also have a history expressed in literary form” (61), argues that the problem of dual authorship allows critics to ask difficult questions “that are not easily answered but nevertheless force us to confront purist and racialist notions about Chicana/o literature” (42). And while these critics are certainly right to examine the effects of dual authorship on the narrative itself, none has begun to examine or question whether the paratextual elements, particularly the glossary and the cast of characters as well as the title and byline reflect a similar attempt at compromise between Mexican and Anglo, between Spanish and English.

Both the “Characters” and the “Glossary” section of the work – one follows the other – are comprised of lists, with the characters and Spanish words running down the left-hand column in romanized print and the descriptions and translations in the right-hand column printed in italics. These visual parallels link language and characterization as aids to the reader, constructing border zones by highlighting areas of assumed readerly confusion. If we follow Limón’s argument that González was drawing on “composites and fictive renditions of actual Mexican personages from her familial ancestral background” (xx) and therefore was responsible for contributing the “specific narrative delineation of at least the Mexican characters – by far the great majority – in the novel and likely the Anglos as well” (xx), we might read in the “Characters” list a visual
representation of the communication between González and Eimer in the construction of
the narrative. An explanation of the mostly-Mexican cast aids the reader in keeping the
multiple names straight, and visually mimics the glossary’s word-and-its-English-
counterpart strategy of defining and re-defining each individual. Both the glossary and
the characters list assume that a reader who comes across a Spanish term or a name can
use these paratextual elements to find and replace, either with a translation or a
description, the difficult word. They alert readers, before they have even reached the
narrative, that such work may be necessary. Like signposts erected to highlight an
otherwise invisible national boundary, the glossary and the characters list both create an
expectation of a boundary line: one that leads to linguistic confusion, that assumes the
need to translate on the part of the reader.

Like Cabeza de Baca’s glossary, however, the Characters list is incomplete— a
section in the middle of the list names 7 men with no description of their title or
relationship to the rest of the characters. Unlike “Don Santiago de Mendoza y Soría /
patriarch, owner of Rancho la Palma” and “Doña María Petronill / his wife” (xxxi),
characters from José Antonio Carbajal to Juan de Cisneros have no descriptive
characteristics to aid readers in locating their place in the narrative. Most of these
caracters turn out to be some of Santiago’s fellow hacendados, who meet under the
cover of night to debate their options with regard to the encroaching Texas Rangers. And
yet in the absence of descriptors they blend one into the other, given less attention than
the 5 women listed as “house servant at Rancho la Palma” (xxxii). Perhaps there are no
words to adequately describe them, just as there exist in Spanish words with no satisfactory English equivalent.

Similarly, the authors’ glossary, which again appears to aid translation with its structural simplicity, also provides slightly misleading translations. For instance, the description of Luis Gonzaga as a “marica” is slightly fogged when readers turn to the glossary and see “marica” defined as “Milksop. An effeminate man.” As Mendoza notes in a footnote, “in common parlance, and in Spanish-language dictionaries, a marica or maricón is a gay man, a homosexual. Its contemporary English approximate as a derogatory term would be ‘fag’ or ‘queer’” (305). Though there may be many reasons for providing a more “genteel” translation of the term, the effect on readers is potentially great. The distance between someone who is “feeble, timid, or ineffectual” as the OED defines “milksop,” and one who is homosexual, is not automatically crossed given the definition of the word “marica” Gonzalez and Raleigh have provided. And though the narrative is not entirely coy with its subplot involving Luis running away with another man, this careful exclusion of reference to homosexuality reflects some inability to fully translate: whether that inability is imposed from without (perhaps they were seeking to avoid censorship?), less careful or knowledgeable readers will be fooled into a sense of transparency via a glossary that partially acts to obscure meaning.

Focusing for a moment on the glossary, one might note that the traditional format of italicizing the Spanish word, as is done throughout the text of the novel, has been reversed so that the translations, not the words themselves, appear in italics. Just as González’s incomplete character list frustrates attempts at coherence, the glossary not
only reflects a bicultural attempt to negotiate between English and Spanish, but a visual upending of the traditional hierarchy implied by the novel’s presentation in English. This visual reversal of the hierarchy of standard to non-standard typography puts into question the relative rankings of the two languages. Additionally, unlike Cabeza de Baca’s focus on titles and stations, this glossary explains phrases and expressions such as “¿quién sabe?” and “con diez mil demonios,” as well as the multiple meanings of a word: “posadas: Literally, an inn. As used: Services which are held from the sixteenth of December through the twenty-fourth in commemoration of the birth of Christ” (xxxiv).

Like Cabeza de Baca, the authors attempt to explain specific usages that confound one-to-one translation. The problems of co-authorship are visually represented in the list of characters and their defining characteristics, as well as the glossary of English and Spanish in ways that appear to divide neatly, but upon closer investigation reveal instabilities and incoherence. Despite the general appearance of balance on the “Characters” and “Glossary” page, each actually develops a hierarchy which privileges the Spanish over the English, which either leaves significant gaps for English-only readers (as in the “Characters” list) or trains their eyes to accept Spanish as the normalized language (as in the Glossary).

In addition to these markers of linguistic instability, few critics reflect on perhaps one of the most significant changes the editors themselves made to the text: the restoration of González’s name to the first line of authorship. The politics of the recovery project that allowed Caballero to be restored likely depended heavily on restoring, first and foremost, a minority writer. Limón argues,
I . . . believe that [Eimer’s] claim and role in the construction of the work are outweighed by González’s far larger role in the genesis and overall execution of the project. Thus, and in keeping with the early recognition of the authors themselves, in this finally published edition of *Caballero*, my co-editor and I wish to restore Jovita González’s name to the first-author status affirming what we see as her primary role in the production of *Caballero*. (xxi)

Though they include a facsimile of the original title page from the manuscript in their edition, listing Eve Raleigh as first author, as Genette notes, “Recording the name on the title page and recording it on the cover fulfill two different functions” (38). Genette could not have imagined this specific situation when he wrote that, but indeed the two competing beginnings to the book do fulfill different functions. The presence of the facsimile indicates a fidelity to history, to fact, and to the very specific (and only – all other copies have been destroyed or lost) title page found amongst González’s papers. Had the work been published in the 1930s as desired by the two writers, Raleigh would have been first author.

However, the editorial decision to alter the cover page of their edition, to “restore” or return to an ideal manuscript of which we have no evidence aside from the letter, attempts to right a perceived wrong in the hierarchy of authors’ names. Even in a collaborative effort, the editors argue, one woman must have done more (or at least more important) work than the other, and that woman is González. Following D.F. McKenzie’s dictum that “Editors make, as well as mend” (30), Limón and Cotera attempt to “generate the meanings that most matter to [them]” (30). Judging by King’s lack of reference to Eimer/Raleigh’s authorial presence at all, those generated meanings have certainly had an effect. Furthermore, as Mendoza points out, “If we accept that
*Caballero* is undoubtedly a work of Chicana/o literature, this assessment must be based on two criteria: its subject matter and the known identity and reputation of Jovita González” (42); listing González’s name first further ensures that claims of dual authorship don’t cloud claims of Chicana/o literary heritage. Just as the title of the novel shifts from a Spanish term to an English language descriptor (*Caballero, A Historical Novel*), the editors repeat the hierarchy of language and character with the “restored” primacy of González’s Hispanic name.

Exploring the textual margins results in a more complex understanding of a novel whose narrative often seems to vacillate between assimilation and a valorization of Texas-Mexican culture. As J. Javier Rodriguez writes in “*Caballero’s Global Continuum: Time and Place in South Texas,*” “The historical novel *Caballero* wants to follow the rules. It desires to be known, recognized, deemed worthy, and assimilated . . . But in its efforts at typicality *Caballero* never persuades” (117). In each element of the margins – the glossary, the character list, the order of authors, and even the title – a visual representation of assimilation is created but also undermined. Elements of language are organized into a hierarchy that appears to aid monolingual readers but in one way or another privileges the Spanish. The glossary aims at comprehensiveness but ultimately shifts italicization – “otherization” – onto the English translations. The character list, with its gaps and refusals to fully define all of the Spanish-surnamed characters, and the novel’s title, which does not translate but visibly preserves the Spanish word over and above the English subtitle (perhaps as often as Raleigh’s name is left out from authorship attribution, critics and reviewers elect to drop the subtitle) both point to attempts to erase
or supplant English with Spanish. This repeated visual hierarchy of language works in a subtle way, one that the recent editors become complicit in by reversing the order of authors.

The desire to accommodate monolingual or otherwise non-Spanish speaking audiences continues to be a source of struggle for living authors as well: Lourdes Torres notes in her work, “In the Contact Zone: Code-Switching Strategies By Latino/a Writers,” “recent Latino/a writers who experiment with language in more modest ways . . . have created a space for the publication of books that challenge linguistic norms for texts published in the US” (87). For example, while early British editions of Junot Díaz’s collection of short stories, *Drown*, included a glossary, Díaz has expressed frustration with its inclusion. In fact, he refused to allow a glossary in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, claiming the British publishers “knew I wasn’t playing” (qtd. in Jaggi par. 5). Though he does not make his subject the US-Mexico border, Díaz is often considered a practitioner of border literature under more broadly constructed terms and is an outspoken proponent of normalizing the presence of Spanish in English, especially while narrating the story of Oscar’s migrations between the Dominican Republic and the United States. He has remarked to those readers who clamor for a glossary, “If you want something easy, watch a TV show, but not all because some are really tough” (qtd. in Ashraf par. 13). And yet, readers insist repeatedly (often in online forums such as the comments section for the book on Amazon.com, or in their personal blogs) that “there
really should have been a glossary” (Hausman). Blogger Erin Judge relates the following instant messaging dialogue between herself and her mother as proof that a glossary would ease her mind:

Number1Mom48267: How about this: Dale un galletazo
me: dale un galletazo . . . give him/her some kind of chicken-related thing possibly a blowjob?
Number1Mom48267: oh
that's possible
it's all adolescent, sexually charged talk among friends
me: you hear this where?
Number1Mom48267: in the book I'm reading
one more: "without a speck of verguenza"
me: oh jeez are you reading junot diaz?
Number1Mom48267: yes, I am
me: verguenza is shame
as in what I'm feeling right now

So yeah. That's how it goes. It's like a bunch of seventh graders in East L.A. went to town on some Mad Libs and then my Mom found it and asked me to translate! My mom!!!

Not all readers merely complain: some go to great lengths to create glossaries for other readers. Kim Flournoy’s “The Annotated Oscar Wao” and Aliza Hausman’s “The Oscar Wao Dictionary Vocabulary Glossary” are two examples of attempts at comprehensive glossary and pop culture translation currently living on the web, a space which we might consider as an “unauthorized” part of what Genette calls the epitext: an area outside the main text which is nonetheless related to it, as in author interviews,

---

45 In turning to the somewhat non-traditional epitextual spaces of blogs and online reader reviews, I have found of wealth of insight into how a variety of readers approach a text like Diaz’s, which has received both critical and popular attention, and how they generate an impact on that text in turn.
Although Flourney’s project seems to approach the book as though Díaz created a puzzle for readers to solve, these ad hoc translators and commenters frequently express a sense that Díaz has failed them by not providing translations, and therefore blame him when they “[give] up at page 115” (McElhearn). For many readers, the sensation of occupying the borderlands between Spanish and English, in a place where they are not entirely comfortable or comforted by Díaz, is completely unbearable. Their attempts to chastise the writer for his seeming oversight rarely reflect on the possibility that they should experience discomfort as readers, that frustration is as much a part of the reading experience of border literature as enjoyment and identification. Instead, they seek out ways to “improve” Díaz’s text by demanding paratext, especially “if it wants to appeal to non-Dominicans” (Greenberg).

Both Díaz’s short story collection and his 2007 novel complicate matters of translation further by specifically incorporating Dominican and even geek slang that challenges even bilingual readers, drawing them into reflections on the differences within language and the heterogeneity hiding behind such catch-alls as “Latino” or “Caribbean.” Spanish phrases that elude dictionary or machine translation abound in the novel, frustrating Spanish speakers unfamiliar with specific slang. In fact, Judge’s above instant messaging translation of “dale un galletazo” is actually incorrect, something she later admits to:

> Turns out galletazo seems to mean an open-handed slap, so dale un galletazo means ‘bitch-slap him/her.’ I could have easily looked up such a

---

46 To date, I have yet to locate any attempts on the part of Latina/o readers to create similar annotative lists, though it does appear that they make contributions to them, particularly in the realm of clarifying translation.
thing in a companion guide. Instead, you, Mr. Diaz, you with your lack of a companion guide or glossary made me guess and say 'blowjob' to my Mom!!!! In conclusion, this is still all your fault.

Judge’s lighthearted tone notwithstanding, her experience of frustration while translating the narrative is perhaps one readers and critics should take more time to consider. The reading experience itself, and the vocal comments of those who struggle with it, indicate a specific desire on the part of readers for complete transparency. That these readers refuse to engage the borders of language, to investigate the places where their linguistic and cultural knowledge ends and another’s begins, only emphasizes the struggles writers like Díaz face in courting, maintaining, and satisfying an American audience. The problems of linguistic identity, explored in the subject matter of Díaz’s work, are also literally worked out in his specific typographic resistances as well as those resistances performed by the reader who closes the book in frustration. The narrative, a story of an outcast who speaks differently from others, cannot be reached by those who refuse to listen to a narrator who speaks differently from themselves. Díaz’s refusal to insert a glossary, to translate those slangy phrases, to aid those readers who clamor for transparency, is an effort to resist providing comfort for those readers, to force them to inhabit those border spaces by subverting their expectations for assistance from the material borders of the text.

In a similarly resistant approach to appeasing her readers, Helena Maria Viramontes has recently argued,

A few years ago a southwestern writer, Cormac McCarthy, wrote *All the Pretty Horses*. If I remember correctly, there were whole paragraphs in Spanish. Not one reviewer questioned it, not one reader said, 'I wish there was a glossary.' But if a Spanish-surnamed writer uses Spanish, it becomes
an issue. Readers feel purposely excluded, like, why are you keeping this from me? Well, I’m sorry. How could I not give integrity to the characters?” (qtd. in Torres 84).47

For Viramontes, the narrative and its characters lose integrity when the languages they speak must be explained or co-opted by the paratextual presence of the glossary. Authors like Díaz and Viramontes recognize the interpretive power hidden in these paratextual elements, and work to mitigate their effects by insisting either that readers work to understand Spanish on their own or learn to adjust to the sensation of being left out. Díaz notes, “The opaqueness of some of the language is the point; confusion is part of the game” (qtd. in Jaggi par. 5); by calling attention to the shaping forces of the border elements of the material text, writers create yet another space in which they challenge readers to reflect on border identity itself, or the places where competing ideologies, identities, and languages come into contact with one another. That readers often choose not to participate in such reflection is an unfortunate repercussion of that challenge: they ignore critical and authorial suggestions that the reading process is not always meant to afford an uncomplicated embrace of difference.

Section Two: Normalizing Spanish

Thus far, I have been investigating the paratextual attempts to render the Spanish of border texts transparent to readers, as well as efforts to avoid such transparency. While those conflicts often occurred in the pages and debates surrounding the texts, I’d like to move in a little closer in order to examine the very words on the page. In this

47 CormacMcCarthy.com, the “official website of the Cormac McCarthy Society,” contains on its “Resources” page links to translations of the Spanish used in Blood Meridian, All the Pretty Horses, The Crossing, and Cities of the Plain.
section, I investigate two examples of the typographic “normalization” of Spanish in English language texts (much like we saw in Caballero’s glossary), each with different goals and potential interpretive results. These typographic issues, or bibliographic codes, are certainly related to those of the first section, but they also zero in more closely on the smallest details, demonstrating the fuzziness of the distinction between text and paratext. The first example is a discussion of Memories of the Alhambra, a work from the US-Mexico border, while the second, most recent example extends the discussion of Junot Díaz to his political rhetoric of typography. Once again, this brief extension of the scope of my study beyond the US-Mexico border is made in an attempt to link and compare recurring issues of Spanish-English language diversity, to consider how the same language crosses different geographical and textual boundaries, and to theorize how US-Mexico border writers might be influenced by such a politics of typography. Both novels construct characters whose identities are bound up in language, whose status in between nations, cultures, and time zones are related in their varying degrees of comfort shifting from Spanish to English and back. Furthermore, these politics of identity are in turn extended to the reader, who must negotiate the “normalized” Spanish present in each. In each case, I underscore the significance of often-overlooked elements that structure our expectations of the presence of Spanish in English texts, almost invisibly directing the creation of linguistic hierarchies.48

48 In his article, “Bilingual Typography,” Alistair Crawford highlights the difficulties involved in selecting a typeface for bilingual texts: “In combining any two languages into one typographic harmony, the designer will have to deal with copy of different length (representing the same message) differing in size of the average word, sentence and paragraph; and differing in the incidence of certain letters of the alphabet, characteristic of each language . . . Each identical sound signal, accented letter, word picture and letter group has a different role in each language. The same letter shapes appear differently in different
Nash Candelaria’s 1977 novel *Memories of the Alhambra* follows José Rafa, a New Mexican in search of his Spanish roots in the wake of his father’s death. It provides an extensive interrogation of the practice of rejecting indigenous Mexican roots in order to claim a European heritage, which was fairly prevalent in the days before the Chicano Movement took hold. It interrogates identification with Spanish heritage to the exclusion of all others, and ultimately advocates a multicultural fusion that allows the next generation to identify as Chicano. Despite José’s constant refrain, “I’m Spanish. Pure Spanish. Son of conquerors. Architects of the New World. We beat the Indians. Conquered them” (163), he must eventually come to terms with, even embrace, his Mexican heritage. The confrontation and ultimate realization of his ancestry leads to his death, though his son Joe eventually learns to respond to the question, “Eres Mejicano?” in the affirmative (92), demonstrating Candelaria’s vision of the new Chicano generation’s embrace of its mixed heritage. Martha Cutter argues, “the father’s problem of ethnic definition is played out through the son’s struggle for linguistic identity” (192), noting that as Joe becomes more comfortable asserting his hybrid identity, his ability to translate and fit in with both his friends and his New Mexican family increases dramatically. This increased level of comfort at shifting between languages invokes a further sense of comfort in occupying the spaces between traditionally outlined cultures: American, Spanish, Mexican, New Mexican. Joe no longer questions which of these languages” (48-49). That even most typographers overlook the difficulties of working between two or more languages indicates the strength of the fiction that one language can easily replace another, both in terms of meaning and in terms of occupying the same visual space.
identifiers suits him and instead adapts to each specific situation, speaking Spanish in Spain and Spanglish in New Mexico, communicating with his children in English.

Yet despite Joe’s new comfort with the spaces between language, the visual representation of his evolution often develops a politics of conservative multiculturalism, or what Peter McLaren describes as the process by which “ethnic groups are reduced to ‘add-ons’ to the dominant culture. Before you can be ‘added on’ to the dominant United States culture you must first adopt a consensual view of culture and learn to accept the essentially Euro-American patriarchal norms of the ‘host’ country” (qtd. in Poey 203).

The question, “Eres Mejicano?” is significant not only in Joe’s new response, but in its punctuation: traditionally, interrogatives in Spanish are preceded by the “¿”, but here the graphic reminder of Spanish speaking is absent. Cutter parenthetically notes in her argument, “No Spanish-language accent marks and punctuation are used in Candelaria’s novel” (191), though she offers no commentary on why this might be the case. Likewise, in an early review of the novel, Paula Shirley writes, “Candelaria has the requisite ear for both Spanish and English to make Hispano and Anglo dialogue sound authentic. There are occasional misspellings (‘abrazzo,’ ‘pidgeon Spanish’) which are likely due to the fact that Cibola Press is a new publishing house. But these few lapses in spelling or punctuation do not interfere with one's reading” (101). Both the reviewer and the critic feel compelled to point out the typographical inconsistencies – as though these elements are unavoidably visible and therefore at least slightly jarring – but go no further than to

49 In the edition published by Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilúngüe, these misspellings and other mistakes appear to have been carried over, repeating what may have been a new publishing house’s faults in more recent editions and printings.
assert sloppy proofreading in an attempt to sort out why the text arrives to us in this form.

Manuel Villar Rasso and María Herrera-Sobek note that on the whole, California Chicano writers, including Candelaria, have published mainly in English due “in part to the lack of publishing venues for works in Spanish in the United States and in part to the lack of interest in Chicano literature in Mexico and other Latin American countries” (25). Yet even this information does not go far enough to interrogate the typographical issues that normalize the presence of Spanish on the page. On a visual level, the Spanish language has been incorporated as an “add-on” to English in an attempt at multiculturalism that in turn preserves the hierarchy and rules of the “host” language and orthography.

In an attempt to accommodate that host language, Candelaria practices a number of the strategies that Torres outlines in her work on code-switching strategies, including direct translation: “‘Eres Mejicano?’ Are you a Mexican?” (92). Cutter herself provides bracketed translation of every quoted Spanish word in her work, even those which Candelaria goes on to clarify in the text. Candelaria’s text also accommodates a bilingual reader in some places by leaving words and sentences untranslated but providing room for contextual translation: “Es verdad que no puedes hablar espanol [sic]?" (80). This question, while perhaps slightly unclear to a monolingual reader, can be parsed a few sentences later when the questioner scoffs, “Can’t even speak the language” (80). Candelaria never ranges too far into the territory of Spanish, which Torres calls practicing “radical bilingualism,” and thus appears to have a primarily monolingual readership in mind. On the one hand, the lack of italicization traditionally
associated with the presence of foreign words in English language texts works to level the
playing field, erasing visual distinctions between the standard language and the intrusive
Spanish. However, the assimilation of Spanish into an English standard of typography,
ignoring Spanish orthography and deleting interrogative and exclamatory marks, asserts
the primacy of English on both a linguistic and a visual level. Candelaria’s narrative may
in fact be advocating a politics of identity that embraces difference and allows for room
to reside in the spaces between cultures and languages, but the material borders of the
text, the spaces between the narrative and the material forms on/in which that narrative is
presented, demonstrate an embrace of difference that still subjects those who are different
to the codes and structures of the dominant culture. Perhaps these conflicts of politics
reflect the clash between a writer and his editor and publisher: Candelaria’s narrative and
identity politics must be subordinated to those of the publisher, whose house style reflects
– intentionally or unintentionally – the goals and visual characteristics of English.
Careful readers, then, are presented with competing ideas of the relationship between
Spanish and English.

Even the choice of spelling reflects a specific political and national perspective
that does not always match up with the narrative, creating the potential for interpretive
disjunction. The phrase, “Eres Mejicano?” again proves useful here, because the spelling
choice of “Mejicano” over “Mexicano” reflects a long history of the phonetic evolution
of the name of a place and its people. The word Mexicho derives from Nahuatl, a
language in which, as Baca notes, \textit{ch} is pronounced as \textit{sh}, which the Spanish
transliterated as Mexico at a time when the \textit{x} sound also mimicked the \textit{sh} sound, which
by the end of the 15th century also sounded like the Spanish j sound. Lack of standardization led to various spellings of Mexico and Mejico, and in the present day writers of Latin American and specifically Mexican Spanish use Mexico, while those from Spain quite often used to and still occasionally do use Mejico. By opting for the minoritized, but also European spelling of “Mejicano,” the text’s narrator potentially “speaks” the language of Spaniards. That the question comes from the mouth of a “Chicano from East Los Angeles . . . his nervous brown hand clasping and unclasping around a textbook” (92) potentially reflects a discord between the questioner and his recorder, with two different relationships to the Spanish language. Furthermore, it calls into dispute the nature of the question itself: is asking “Eres Mejicano?” the same as asking “Eres Mexicano?” Throughout the novel Joe is ridiculed by his extended New Mexican family for his “unaccented English” (96); despite his increasing success at using Spanish throughout the novel, the visual figures on the page tell another story: one of the continued domination of English over Spanish, of the erasing of difference in the interest of forging a coherent identity.

The investigation of typography does not always result in a narrative of assimilation and erasure; in fact, in the case of Junot Díaz, the insistent focus on the power of typography leads to its use as a political weapon. In an interview with Edwidge Danticat, Díaz says of the controversial language use in his 2007 novel, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, “I guess I’ve never really been one for comforting my readers.” Here and in other interviews, such as the one recorded with Diogenes Céspedes and Silvio Torres-Saillant, Díaz makes the case for the political importance of the
representation of Spanish in his works. The practice of normalizing Spanish becomes a method of validating border identity, of fusing diverse languages rather than marking the limits of each. In Díaz’s novel, especially at the typographic level, the emphasis rests not so much on language acquisition and loss as it is does on experiencing the simultaneity of competing discourses. Some critics have already begun to tackle the competing academic and, for lack of a better descriptor, “nerd” discourses with which the novel is filled; here, I’d like to briefly outline how Díaz’s arguments about typography, as well as the narrative of the novel, make the practice of bilingualism political.

It took ten years for Díaz to complete The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, a novel which ultimately concerns a character whose avid attempts at writing add up to very little more than a storage cabinet filled with unpublished work. Yunior’s writing skills seem to fare much better, as we are meant to believe we are reading the product of his labor. And yet, throughout the book the narrator and the narrative itself confess a fascination with and a fear of the página en blanco. At least five times throughout the text the figure of the blank page looms over the narrative, often to describe the silences and gaps in Dominican history in general and Beli’s story in particular. But one occurs in Oscar’s dreams:

An old man was standing before him in a ruined bailey, holding up a book for him to read. The old man had a mask on. It took a while for Oscar’s eyes to focus, but then he saw that the book was blank. The book is blank. Those were the words La Inca’s servant heard him say just before he broke through the plane of unconsciousness and into the universe of the Real. (303)
This focus on the blank page reflects the narrative concern with erasure of history, of individual experience, of meaninglessness, but it also emphasizes Díaz’s own understanding of the visual force of words on the page, as well as their absence.

Díaz expresses a keen interest in the physical and visual aspects of the page, claiming, “I even like the way words fall on the page. Literally, the physical way words look. If a sentence looks wrong on the page, I don’t care what it says, I change it” (Céspedes and Torres Saillant 902). Arguing that italicizing or otherwise visually drawing attention to the Spanish in his work would “other it . . . [and] denormalize it” (904), Díaz refrains from marking the Spanish of his work in any way. He politicizes his concern with the “look” of words by advancing the idea that Spanish and English must share the space of the page in the absence of a typographic hierarchy.

However, Díaz’s work does not simply erase typographic hierarchy; in fact it makes a great show of including dominant and subordinate narratives by incorporating footnotes. The footnotes often relate the history of the Dominican Republic under Trujillo with a sarcastic edge, such as when he describes “The First American Occupation of the DR, which ran from 1916-1924. (You didn’t know we were occupied twice in the twentieth century? Don’t worry, when you have kids they won’t know the U.S. occupied Iraq either.)” (19). Unlike his refusal to provide a glossary, which in some ways closes the text to those unfamiliar with Spanish, Díaz’s inclusion of the footnotes appears to offer readers some assistance, filling in the gaps of readers’ knowledge. But the footnotes also create room for the presentation of an alternate history, one to supplement or supplant traditional portraits of the history of the Dominican Republic, and Yunior’s
manipulation of that history demonstrates the instability of those kinds of narratives. While Yunior as a narrator expects his readers to be unfamiliar with that history, he goes to great lengths to create and control his version, explaining, “Rushdie claims that tyrants and scribblers are natural antagonists, but I think that’s too simple; it lets writers off pretty easy. Dictators, in my opinion, just know competition when they see it. Same with writers. Like, after all, recognizes like” (97). Under the thumb of Yunior, readers experience a narrative of Dominican history that is both unsettled and unsettling. His acerbic wit, the irony with which history and even the audience is treated, work to frustrate readers’ attempts to consume historical narratives of the Dominican Republic.

Beyond providing the sinister historical background, the footnotes themselves act as a meta-commentary on the act of attribution, on representations of authority and knowledge (perhaps in the way of David Foster Wallace, whose work Díaz’s is often compared to, much to Díaz’s chagrin), but they also visually represent for readers the domination and subordination of certain kinds of stories, of narratives that are often hidden, confined to smaller fonts and the bottom of the page. The footnotes provide a visually subordinated version of history, literally marginalizing Yunior’s own retelling of the events. That Diaz cultivates, even encourages the ability to ignore that history perhaps reflects an attempt to implicate everyone, even the casual reader, in the continued erasure of minority history.

Because footnotes can simultaneously signify the heart of an argument and the first thing to skip, depending on what kind of reader one is, Díaz’s novel challenges us to consider whether the footnotes matter as much as, or more than, the rest of the narrative.
On a visual level, readers sense the importance of one story over another; how they interpret that hierarchy may be different for each reader.\textsuperscript{50} Though it is possible to shift back and forth between the narrative and its footnotes in \textit{Oscar Wao}, many readers probably choose not to read them at all, further marginalizing the alternative history by ignoring it. When readers skip the footnotes, they resist interrogating the borders between text and not-text, between dominant and subordinate narratives. The literary border zones between narrative and footnote act as a visual reemphasis of the border identities constructed in the narrative within, as characters travel literally and figuratively back and forth between the DR and the US as well as between languages. The act of trying to read both the narrative and its footnotes, the impossible tension of shifting back and forth, of having to settle for some space between, is perhaps one more way for readers to experience something close to the ruptures inherent in border identity.

Paradoxically, the move to normalize Spanish, to erase any visual difference between it and the English words on the page, is to highlight, to expose, to render visible the history of separation, difference, and subjugation of languages implied by colonialism with typography in its service. Diaz argues,

\begin{quote}
By keeping the Spanish as normative in a predominantly English text, I wanted to remind readers of the fluidity of languages, the mutability of languages. And to mark how steadily English is transforming Spanish and Spanish is transforming English . . . When I learned English in the States, this was a violent enterprise. And by forcing Spanish back onto English,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} Theorists interested in offering competing narratives have employed such footnotes in their texts: Derrida’s “Living On/Border Lines” containing “a single footnote running the entire length of the 102 page work and telling a different story” (Hauptman 115), and Kristeva’s “Stabat Mater” splits into two columns, one poetically describing her experience as a mother and the other making a theoretical argument for the reconception of maternity. As many will note, it is impossible to read both at the same time, and readers are forced to choose according to their own interests which narrative will dominate.
forcing it to deal with the language it tried to exterminate in me, I’ve tried to represent a mirror-image of that violence on the page. (904)

In some ways, Díaz’s argument, the attempt to reverse or mirror the violence of language acquisition and loss, appears to engage in a dialectical understanding of language. Yet the visual and physical effects of his refusal to italicize, to subordinate or elevate one language above the other, and his comments about the mutual exchange between and fluidity of languages, indicate the possibility that the distance between languages is not so great. That for some, the two languages can assert themselves simultaneously.

Despite the political act implied by Díaz’s typographical choice, the narrative itself conveys multiple attitudes toward bilingualism, toward the distances between and the political ramifications of using Spanish and English. Torres places Díaz in the category of writers whose works gratify the bilingual reader, citing the lack of translation and italics as political moves intended to “provide special pleasure to the bilingual reader [while] monolingual readers may not have complete access to the text” (83). However, I would argue that Díaz’s narrative approach presents a slightly more complicated picture of audience access to the text, particularly with regard to the multiple narrators of *Oscar Wao.* In the character of Lola, a narrator with an even more fraught relationship to her bilingual heritage, Díaz presents a contrast to the more outspoken, code-switching Yunior. In Lola’s first-person narration, readers get the sense of a woman like the Garcia girls of fellow Dominican writer Julia Alvarez’s *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents,* struggling under the patriarchal demands of domesticity, of purity, and of

---

51 To be fair, this is not entirely an argument against Torres, whose 2007 article only discusses Díaz’s short stories. I only mean to suggest that Díaz’s longer work complicates the situation she describes.
language. She longs to get away from her family home, listing her chores: “I was the one cooking, cleaning, doing the wash, buying groceries, writing letters to the bank to explain why a house payment was going to be late, translating” (57). Her place in the family home forces her to live between languages, to be a constant translator, and she dreams “that life existed beyond Paterson, beyond my family, beyond Spanish” (55). Lola’s relationship to language, filtered through her gendered position in the family, places her at odds with Spanish and in search of a space in which she might be outside it.

While Torres is correct that Yunior as a narrator never translates, never explains, never feels as though his audience might misunderstand, in Lola’s narration we find one of the only instances of direct translation of a Spanish word. Its singularity is significant, demonstrating a narrative coherence: Lola, forever the family translator, looks at her body in the mirror and must translate for herself: “A tesoro, I repeated. A treasure” (73). That this translation occurs after a sexual act further drives home the links between her gender and her status as translator with a different relationship to the borders between languages. While Yunior’s sexually suggestive or even downright foul language almost always occurs in Spanish, in order to validate her experience, Lola must translate it into English. Furthermore, both she and the monolingual readers of her narrative benefit from that translation. Lola’s concern for being understood by an English-speaking audience stands in contrast to Yunior’s, and even Oscar’s.

It is perhaps in Lola’s narration, then, that the typography is at odds with the character. In all other places, Díaz is extremely careful to differentiate the languages of his various narrators and characters. In reference to the use of the word “nigger” in his
work, Díaz has argued, “There's a difference between representing a thing and endorsing it. The Yunior narrator feels comfortable using ‘the N-bomb’ but Oscar never would, not for anything, and I think it's important to remember that.” However, this attention to detail slips with regard to the presentation of Spanish in Lola’s narration. As a narrator and translator, Lola expresses a sense of distance between Spanish and English, and appears in some ways to subordinate Spanish to her life in English. We might ask why the visual effect of reading Lola’s narration, an effect Díaz clearly cares about, doesn’t mimic her occasional reflections on that distance, that subordination. Ultimately, depending on how far we take the conceit that Yunior has written the story we read, this lack of change in typography subordinates Lola’s narration to Yunior’s, or perhaps both are subordinated to Díaz’s politics. In any case, someone else’s degree of comfort with the cohabitation of English and Spanish dictates the representation of Lola’s own story. Díaz’s approach to the visual as well as the narrative effects of his work – particularly his quasi-dictatorial control over the presentation of Spanish – demonstrates a consistent attempt to engage readers on multiple levels in an interrogation of the spaces between two languages. Forcing readers to inhabit that space between by erasing visual markers of difference as well as encouraging them to alternate between the narrative and its footnotes, Díaz’s novel makes a point not only of linking identity to language, but also getting readers to inhabit their own version of a border identity. Díaz appears to be one of the first writers able to fully wrest control from his editors; the fact that readers often demand he give some of that control back (in the form of glossaries and companion
editions) or wrest it from him themselves (again, see the likes of “The Annotated Oscar Wao”) demonstrates the unlikeliness of his ever being fully understood as he intends.

In both Memories of the Alhambra and The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, typographic decisions can have a significant impact on linguistic interpretation. Often, the visuals function at cross purposes with the narrative, underscoring competing understandings of the relationship between Spanish and English on the printed page. For readers, the process of adjusting to Spanish, particularly when it is normalized on the page, can be a difficult one. Of 332 reviews for the book on Amazon.com, 137 readers mention enjoying the presence of or their frustration with the Spanish Díaz incorporates into his novel. The positive reviewers explain why and how it was easy for them to follow (they speak Spanish, they studied abroad, they had a Dominican friend, etc), while the negative reviewers almost always displace their lack of linguistic ability onto the author.52 One complains, “I have nothing against another language - I myself am bilingual - but I think the author/editors/bundlers/publishers/whomever, could have been more thoughtful towards the reader” (Avid Reader); this reader’s concern with authorial as well as editorial thoughtfulness demonstrates a continued desire for those involved in the publication of the book to separate Spanish from English, to accommodate non-Spanish speakers, to ensure readerly comfort. As writers continue to demonstrate an awareness of the effects of the often-invisible, normalizing and presentational aspects of a text, their struggles to maintain some control as well as their inability to do so will

52 Only one Amazon reviewer who complained about the Spanish managed some self-reflection, saying “perhaps herein lies the not-so subliminal message to me that I need to learn Spanish” (Kanigan).
continue to be worth investigating. To ignore the effects of typography is to severely limit the interpretive possibilities of these borderlands texts.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated some of the most minute aspects of border literature, mining the glossary and typography for insight into how writers, publishers, and readers visualize and understand the relationship between Spanish and English. What it uncovers is a series of competing desires. The first, a readerly desire to move fluidly and invisibly from Spanish to English, to acknowledge Spanish without having to learn it, is reflected in the inclusion of a glossary that offers a bridge between languages. It can also be seen in “normalized” Spanish that erases accent marks and orthography in the interest of accommodating the host language. Attempts to satisfy this desire, often made by publishers or editors with or without the consent of the author, work to give readers the illusion of translating without doing any work. When authors, editors, or publishers do not make such elements available, readers respond by faulting the book or author for making it too difficult to read. The second desire involves a growing insistence that readers meet an author or a text on its own terms and adjust to the sensation of confusion, distance, and the inability to completely identify. Authors often seek compromise, offering contextual or occasional translation but increasingly refuse to explain at all, exhibiting an unwillingness to satisfy demands for transparency, for ease of reading, and for more translation. It appears that those authors who are more reluctant to hold the hands of their readers find that readers grow more and more vocal about their demands for linguistic choices to conform to traditional expectations for “American” literature.
And yet, in either case, even as writers, publishers, and readers attempt to satisfy their own desires by incorporating or refusing to incorporate a glossary, or adding or dropping italics, the possibilities for interpretation still wriggle out of their grasp. Glossaries contain gaps, words go untranslated. Narrative elements like plot, subject matter, themes, and typography create competing discourses surrounding the relationship between Spanish and English. As sites which often reveal the negotiations of authors and publishers regarding language, paratextual elements and bibliographic codes inevitably shape border narratives, at the same time that those narratives often takes as their subject the negotiation of language. Characters and authors diverge in their understandings of language, and editors attempting to accommodate new readerships create new interactions between Spanish and English. The choices writers, editors, and publishers make do not limit but expand the possibilities for exploring the unstable relationships between languages.

In border literature, such instability is not merely a matter of choosing the right word, of finding a linguistic equivalent; it is another sign of the fundamental instability of border identity. Language is a political choice, as is the degree to which one wants or needs to translate. Rather than choosing one language or another, one culture or nation or another, those who embrace border identity, and/or mestizo/a identity, also embrace that instability. When readers reject narratives that shift between languages, they reject the politics of an identity that insists it is possible to live in those shifts, to exist in the interstice, and to speak from the margins with an authority neither supported nor rejected from either side of the line dividing Spanish and English.
Furthermore, as critics we cannot ignore the ways that the material margins of a text affect the interpretation of border literature. Whether they impose an unwanted system or conception of translation on a text, or serve as a space in which border authors and texts resist those systems, the literal and figurative margins – the opening and closing pages, the footnotes and glossary, the typeface and font size, as well as the reader reviews and author interviews – surrounding a border text represent a visual, material site on which political choices the narratives describe are enacted and rejected. Exploring the evidence of translating in the margins gives us greater insight into the struggles among author, publisher, editor, and reader over the construction and consumption of border identity.
CHAPTER FOUR

“MY BOOK HAS SEEN THE LIGHT OF DAY: RECOVERY PROJECTS AND THEIR PARATEXTS

In the course of the last twenty years, perhaps no project or work in Hispanic, Chicana and/or U.S.-Mexico border literature has had more of an influence on the field(s) than the Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, directed by Nicolás Kanellos. In 1993, Kanellos described the goals of the Project as “locating, rescuing from perishing, evaluating, disseminating and publishing collections of primary literary sources written by Hispanics in the geographic area that is now the United States from the Colonial Period to 1960” (13). The project has now compiled a list of over 17,000 publications (books and pamphlets) and published at least 30 scholarly editions of recovered texts, including the work of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Daniel Venegas, and Maria Cristina Mena. It has also published six volumes of essays, the first of which editors Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Genaro M. Padilla explain as “imagined and designed to provide both the expert and the neophyte with the most current and comprehensive assessment of Hispanic literature in the United States, illustrating its ethnic and national diversity, its regional variations, the scope of its genres, its canonic texts and its untapped potentials” (17). Its value to scholars interested in the cultural and literary production of Hispanic American authors prior to 1960 is immeasurable; its emphasis on the recovery
and preservation of texts previously lost or forgotten is necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of American history.

And yet it did not take long before scholars began critiquing both the project and the publications deriving directly from it. In “Grappling with the Archive of Mexican America,” José F. Aranda argues that the growth of the archive “represents the culmination of decades of dedication to the study of people of Mexican descent in the United States. While this fact is undisputedly good news, our newly expanded archive worries me, not for its content but for the fear that its content may languish for lack of attention for years to come” (67).53 Obviously the problem is not that critics find no value in the archive, only that its depth and breadth present real problems for critics interested in sorting through its contents. For instance, in “Remapping the Archive: Recovered Literature and the Deterritorialization of the Canon,” Thomas J. Kinney argues in favor of replacing the canon – another method of categorizing, sorting, classifying – as the object of study with the archive. Kinney suggests that traditional, revisionist, and even historicist approaches to canon formation do not acknowledge that “the aesthetic forms and universal values found in so-called classic literature are not always found in recovered texts, which usually exhibit different aesthetic forms and cultural values, and are often more concerned with domestic, regional, historical, and sociopolitical concerns” (65). But one of the problems of the archive that potentially

53 Aranda claims that the field has been divided into two branches, stating, “while the broader critical field of Chicano/Latino Studies was exploring keywords like postcolonialism, transnationalism, and postnationalism, as well as provocative phrases like “The U.S.-Mexico border es una herida abierta” (Anzaldúa), “imagined communities (Anderson), and “the scraps, patches and rags of daily life” (Bhabha), Recovery scholars were strategizing how to best conceive of the archive (71). This division may in fact lead to a continued literary-critical ignorance of the materials so newly made available.
inhibits critics from its use is confusion over what to do with it, how to organize the
unwieldy amount of information contained within its broad reach.

For instance, Manuel Martín-Rodríguez devotes quite a bit of time to the
problems of categorizing the archive. In *Life in Search of Readers: Reading (in)
Chicano/a Literature*, he traces the problems of various approaches to reconstructing
Chicana/o literary history. Of the attempt to order every element in the archive
chronologically, Martín-Rodríguez writes, “Chicano/a literary historians must be careful
not to do violence to a text’s multiple temporalities and historical contexts by ascribing it
solely to its period of composition or publication . . . Chicano/a . . . literature belongs to
all of those periods in which it has had relevance for its readers” (168). Martín-
Rodríguez suggests that the recovery of Hispanic and Chicana/o texts comes with the
challenge to recognize the borders between very different historical moments – of initial
publication, loss, and recovery – and that critics interested in recovery must respond to
that challenge, resisting the temptation to collapse those temporal borders. Attending to
the “multiple temporalities” of a given text means locating it in a border zone between
historical moments, recognizing the complexity of a text’s social life as it circulates in a
variety of material forms. Furthermore, Martín-Rodríguez makes a similar argument
regarding the attempt to fill in many or all of the historical gaps of Chicana/o literary
history, which he calls the “encyclopedic” approach: “instead of glossing it over with the
help of the newly recovered texts, Chicano/a (literary) history needs to record the sense
of loss and disjuncture that characterized its immediate past until recently” (154). He
also reminds readers of the complications inherent in determining inclusion based on
nationality: the shifting and alternately inclusive and exclusive definitions of “Chicana/o” and “Chicana/o literature” frustrate any approach to literary history that attempts such categorization.\(^{54}\) Border literature often complicates the archive by frustrating the construction of these temporal, national, and historical borders, forcing us to ask difficult questions about what exactly has been recovered, and why.

As solutions to such complications, critics like Kinney and Martín-Rodríguez offer a self-conscious approach, one that strives to attend to the complicated history of Chicana/o and Hispanic literature by making those complications visible. Kinney argues for a sustained “practice of refutation,” which “combines ideological awareness and ethical responsibility with the constant deconstruction of our values and assumptions. Such a practice corresponds to what Michel Foucault characterizes ‘as a permanent critique of our historical era’” (67). Martín-Rodríguez is more specific, defining a “a rhizomatic literary history” that would allow the historian to start, if s/he so desired, with the Chicano/a Movement (or with any other point in time) and then move backward (to situate the newly recovered texts in their original time, for instance), forward (toward post-Movement literature), sideways (toward Mexican or other relevant literatures) [and to] insert the recovered texts (for example) in at least two different temporal junctures: that of their production and early reception and that of their reappearance in our present Chicano/a literary world. (166)

\(^{54}\) The debates over the definitions of Chicana/o and Chicana/o literature are rooted in competing claims to authenticity. In an effort to combat these claims, Francisco Lomelí and Donald Urioste coined the term Chicanesque in 1976 to refer to literature written about Chicanos by non-Chicanos (Chicano Perspectives). Furthermore, Mexican-born writers like Daniel Venegas present a challenge to the definition of Chicana/o, as do those otherwise-qualified Chicana/o writers who flirt too closely with conservative politics (Richard Rodriguez), who do not directly address ethnic issues (Cecile Pineda, John Rechy), or even those who critique the foundations of Chicano Movement itself (Oscar Zeta Acosta). For a more detailed exploration of these debates, see Juan Bruce-Novoa, “Canonical and Non-Canonical,” RetroSpace: Collected Essays on Chicano Literature, Theory, and History. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1990. 132-145.
This approach is sensitive to the complications of Chicana/o and Hispanic literary history, acknowledging rather than erasing its spatial and temporal multiplicity. Taking Martín-Rodríguez’s call for attentiveness to the multiple and even conflicting histories of Chicana/o and Hispanic literary production one step further, I argue for the need to explore the material elements of recovery project editions for evidence of their social lives, of their multiplicity, and of the effects of changing material conditions on interpretation. This means studying the effects of editorial prefaces, introductions, and notes from translators, editorial decisions, and visual elements such as cover pages and organizational structures for evidence of how they negotiate textual, temporal, cultural, and historical borders.

Following all of those critics who have (almost from the inception of the recovery projects themselves) subjected themselves and their endeavors to self-conscious critique, asking how their own work shapes and is shaped by contemporary political, cultural, and social concerns, I want to ask, How do the material texts of recovery projects suggest we read them? How do those material elements alter the conditions for interpretation? Furthermore, how do critics, editors, writers, and readers use the paratext to negotiate or even obscure the fluid historical and temporal borders of their texts? And how do these recovery projects reflect our own present concerns with history, with language, with the archive, with the fight against loss, erasure, marginalization, forgetting? How do recovery projects participate in the social lives of texts? The rest of this chapter is divided into two sections: I begin with a study of perhaps one of the most successful and famous recovery editions in the Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage Archive:
"The Squatter and the Don" by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, recovered and edited by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita. With regard to this novel, Sánchez and Pita have been subjected to nearly as much criticism as Ruiz de Burton herself. While in the previous chapter I emphasized their role in translating Ruiz de Burton’s Spanish, in this chapter I focus on how critics demonstrate a concern for the specifically political ways in which Sánchez and Pita appropriate Ruiz de Burton and her text as “proto-Chicana” or subaltern. I explore the history of responses to Sánchez and Pita’s historical and critical introduction to the novel, arguing in particular that these responses derive from a concern that this specific introduction, in its material presence preceding Ruiz de Burton’s narrative, definitively shapes the interpretive possibilities for every reader of this edition in a way that underscores specifically late twentieth-century understandings of Hispanic and Chicana/o heritage. Furthermore, I examine the more recent Random House/Modern Library edition (with an introduction by Ana Castillo) in order to trace the different interpretive possibilities afforded by different material margins, but also to note the pervasive effects of Sánchez and Pita’s editorial and interpretive work on this popular edition.

The second section of this chapter works to acknowledge recovery projects of post-1960 works that have already been threatened with loss or erasure. In particular, I examine two predominantly Spanish-language works whose preservation for American and Chicana/o literature appears to have demanded translation, exposing the linguistic

---

55 As previously mentioned, Kanellos sets the end date for the recovery and archival project at 1960, and though he gives no explanation as to why. One might assume that he is attempting to maintain a clear distinction between “Hispanic” literary heritage and the literary production of the Chicano Movement.
sacrifices as well as the linguistic politics at play in the recovery of Spanish-language texts. I look first at the 1990 bilingual recovery edition of Aristeo Brito’s 1976 novella, *El diablo en Texas*, studying the editorial, translational, authorial, and organizational decisions that shape the presentation of the Spanish-language novella and its relationship to the English translation. I then turn to the 2000 bilingual edition of Margarita Cota-Cárdenas’s *Puppet*, originally published in Spanish in 1985. While the newer edition does not specifically label itself as part of a recovery project, much of the language of its foreword by critic Tey Diana Rebolledo casts it as such. Again, I explore the material elements of the text, including that foreword as well as its shape, organization, treatment of translation, and the author’s opinions of the translation. Because of the bilingual nature of both texts – both Brito and Cota-Cárdenas shift between Spanish and English in the original publications – the problem of how to treat a translation into English ultimately has interpretive consequences, and the editions themselves occupy a sort of borderlands existence, the “original” and the “translation” mutually dependent on one another and, in many ways, blurring the boundaries between the two.

By addressing recovery projects of both nineteenth- and late-twentieth-century Chicana/o or Hispanic literary texts, I hope to draw some useful distinctions as well as comparisons between how we approach the recovery of texts from different historical moments. I also hope to urge critics to recognize that the archive of “forgotten” or “lost” texts should not be closed off to those texts published in the years after 1960, to call attention to the narratives we have more recently marginalized, and to ask the same self-conscious questions of these recovery editions of more recent texts – for whom are we
recovering these texts, and why? And what effect does “recovery” have on interpretation? – as we have begun to do with those of much older texts.

Section One: Recovering Ruiz de Burton

Between The Squatter and the Don’s original publication in 1885 – first self-published, then published by Samuel Carson & Company later in the same year – and its recovery, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s name and work nearly disappeared. The Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage Project published its recovery of The Squatter and the Don in 1992, with a second edition in 1997. In addition, the editors of this novel, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, published Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton in 2001. In 2004, editors Amelia María de la Luz Montes and Anne Elizabeth Goldman contributed María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: Critical and Pedagogical Perspectives to the growing corpus of Ruiz de Burton criticism surrounding these primary sources. The book is now taught in a variety of literature courses and excerpted most recently in the 7th edition of the Norton Anthology of American Literature as well as the 6th edition of the Heath Anthology of American Literature. There is no doubt that the context in which the book is now taught and read is one vastly different from that in which it was published. Readers’ access to primary and secondary source material, a wealth of critical commentary, and editorial introductions all shape the potential for interpretation, demonstrating that Ruiz de Burton’s novel belongs as much to the late 20th and early 21st century in completely different ways than it belonged to the late nineteenth century. In its specific paratextual choices, the edition of The Squatter and the Don published by Arte Público Press (both the press and Kanellos’s
Project are housed at the University of Houston) and edited by Sánchez and Pita offers readers an entry into interpreting the novel in a way that reflects the specific concerns of contemporary Chicana/o politics and literary scholarship. The material evidence of editorial decisions that aim to merely recover and explain the significance of the novel at the time of its original publication also renders visible its participation in border textuality.

The first editorial decision a reader encounters in the recovered text of Ruiz de Burton’s novel is the altered title. In “The Squatter and the Don: Title Page as Paratextual Borderland,” James Diego Frazier presents a thorough study of Ruiz de Burton’s original title for the novel: The Squatter and the Don: A Novel Descriptive of Contemporary Occurrences in California. Frazier argues, “Ruiz de Burton wielded peritextual material to complement and extend her story, to effect a subtle but sharp critique of what many perceived as southern California’s invasion by Anglophone Americans, and to manifest a nascent Chicano identity” (31). He argues strongly for Ruiz de Burton’s careful choice of each word in the title and subtitle – he interrogates her choice of the words “contemporary” and “California” for evidence of her political perspective, for instance – along with her pseudonym (“C. Loyal”). This attention to detail further emphasizes the impact of the decision of the editors to drop the subtitle from the cover and title page of the recovery edition. While the recovery edition includes the “Original Title Page to the 1885 Edition” as part of the paratext leading into the text,
this “version” of the novel’s title has now effectively been shortened. Most critics (myself included) refer to this shortened title in their discussions of the novel, though Frazier argues that the fact that employing a subtitle was a fading practice even in late nineteenth-century American literature should lead to some critical consideration regarding why Ruiz de Burton might have employed a somewhat “outdated” element in her writing. The choice to drop the subtitle eliminates the opportunity for readers to explore its meanings, and reflects a concern for economy rather than fidelity.

But beyond the title and cover page, the element of Sánchez and Pita’s edition that perhaps most alters the conditions for interpretation is also the one that has received the most attention from literary critics: their introduction to the novel. The 49-page introduction presents a wealth of information regarding the history and circumstances of the novel’s plot and its publication, as well as the politics at play following the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. Gérard Genette would likely call this type of introduction a posthumous “allographic” preface, as it is written by someone other than the author of the text it describes and serves the function of “recommending” the book to readers (267). Furthermore, Genette explains, “the critical and theoretical dimension of the allographic preface clearly draws it toward the border that separates (or rather, toward the absence of a border that does not sharply separate) paratext from metatext, and more concretely, preface from critical essay” (270). Genette’s vocabulary underscores my argument that paratextual issues are also border issues: they complicate constructed distinctions,

---

56 Sánchez and Pita do not specify whether “original” refers to Ruiz de Burton’s self-published edition or the Samuel Carson & Co edition, though the lack of the publisher imprint on that title page likely provides a clue.
developing textual “identities” from the spaces between the text and the world. The textual border zone presented by an introduction is always under construction – it is never guaranteed to remain the same across editions – and is always shaping interpretation of the text. Thus, as Sánchez and Pita also present a reading of the power relations in the novel based on A.J. Greimas’s “semiotic rectangle” as a method of “recommending” *The Squatter and the Don* to readers, they operate in the borders of the material text, but also in the border spaces between author and reader, assuming qualities of both. As readers, they develop an interpretation, which they author and attach to the beginning of the text. In their reading, Sánchez and Pita argue, “While both sets of oppositions are suggested in the novel from the beginning, . . . the focus shifts from the first set of opposition (Squatter vs. Don) to the second set (monopolies vs. individual entrepreneurs) towards the end of the novel” (31). This exposition of the semiotic rectangle is accompanied by a variety of structuralist diagrams that map the oppositions and borders between squatters and rancheros, corporate capitalists and individual capitalists, governments and workers, and Anglos and Californios. The act of analyzing the text, and furthermore presenting the analysis prior to the text, has the effect of recommending the book to critics as worthy of reading. But furthermore, these diagrams, even as they acknowledge third terms (such as the Indian marginalized by both squatters and Californios), solidify “opposition” as a key term in interpreting the novel. As I believe the chorus of critics who have explored Sánchez and Pita’s introduction has demonstrated, some of the editorial attempts to underscore the role of oppositions in the novel have led to an over-enforcement of ethnic, racial, and national borders, and to an oversimplification of both the novel and Ruiz de
Burton’s intentions. Thus the problems of negotiating the borders of class, culture, race, and identity as topics in the novel spill over into problems negotiating those same borders in the process of editing and introducing the novel.

Critical response to Sánchez and Pita’s interpretation of Ruiz de Burton’s aims and the meaning(s) of *The Squatter and the Don* occurred as quickly after their 1992 edition as the 1993 second volume of *Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage*, a collection of essays dedicated to exploring critical issues surrounding various recovery projects. Critics have taken issue in particular with Sánchez and Pita’s claim that “Ruiz de Burton dialogues with a number of contemporary discourses – political, juridical, economic, commercial, and literary – both dominant and minority, all to voice the bitter resentment of the subaltern” (10). They argue that Sánchez and Pita incorrectly cast the novel as evidence of a proto-Chicana voice, the voice of the oppressed speaking out against Anglo oppressors. Toward the end of their introduction, Sánchez and Pita argue that despite the novel’s bleak conclusion, “despite the pauperization and proletarianization of the Californios and the subjugation of all Californians by powerful monopolies, there is also an implicit challenge in the novel, an interpellation of today’s readers, as citizens, or as descendants of Californios, to resist oppression, to slay the monster who has not ceased to be victorious” (49). Amelia María de la Luz Montes, though she does shy away from the label of “subaltern” for Ruiz de Burton, claims, “However, her transformation into American society subsumes her into an American subordinate class as both Hispana and a woman” (19). Also somewhat supportive of Sánchez and Pita, Marcial González seeks to move away from the term “subaltern” while
making a different case for Ruiz de Burton’s inclusion in the “Chicana/o” canon: “The Chicano-ness of Chicano literature has to do with its response, directly and indirectly, to the specific ways that the racialization of Chicanos has be constituted, to a large degree, by capitalist accumulation. Ruiz de Burton’s novels . . . initiate a tradition of novels that respond specifically to the racialization of Mexican Americans in the United States” (65). These critics attempt to make room for Ruiz de Burton in the canon of Chicana/o literature, even as they are, to varying degrees, cognizant of the instability of that same canon.

There are a number of very good reasons why critics shy away from designating Ruiz de Burton as “subaltern” and even “Chicana” (not least of which involves a recognition of the changing status of “Chicana/o” from term of derision in the early part of the twentieth century to term of self-identification and celebration); many critics are in fact deeply engaged in pointing out the potential problems of doing so. The main complaint is that such a move simplifies the history of Mexican Americans in California, ignores class issues, and asks a nineteenth-century novel to perform according to the standards of late twentieth-century literature and theory. This is a problem not just for Sánchez and Pita’s edition, but for Chicana/o and Mexican American literature in general. José Aranda addresses this problem specifically in “Grappling with the Archive of Mexican America,” asking, “While border studies, transnationalism, and postcolonialism might tell us a lot of our current neoliberal moment, how can these theories inform us of a past that has not been integrated into our present?” (68). John Michael Rivera frames the problem in terms of pedagogy in “Recovering Mexican
America in the Classroom,” claiming, “What we fall prey to is monologically situating these works within one tradition and worldview, presupposing that these ‘Proto-Chicano’ works only ‘speak’ to other Chicano texts and that a cultural purity in the body of these texts can be reified through a resistance paradigm” (94). In advocating heavily for the subaltern status of Ruiz de Burton and her novel, Sánchez and Pita appear to subscribe to the belief that anything worth recovering must resonate with the experiences of contemporary readers.

Already in 1993, Manuel Martín-Rodríguez was arguing against this presentation of Ruiz de Burton’s novel. In particular, Martín-Rodríguez and others take issue with the idea of either Ruiz de Burton or her novel as subaltern given Ruiz de Burton’s own biography as well as critical elements of the narrative. Though she died in poverty, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton descended from the Ruiz family, who were “related by blood and marriage to some of the most prominent families in Alta California” (“Contradictory Impulses” 556), and she married Captain Henry S. Burton, United States Army, who eventually became a Brigadier-General and died in 1869 after fighting in the Civil War. Sánchez and Pita cite Winifred Davidson who interviewed people in the 1930s who knew Ruiz de Burton: “True aristocracy she possessed and all the weapons of charm . . . her mind was richly endowed, though its cultivation began with her engagement to Col. Burton” (12). Much of the story of The Squatter and the Don, which deals with the dispossession of Californio lands in the aftermath of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, also bears a link to Ruiz de Burton’s biography, which Sánchez and
Pita trace in some detail. Her struggle to maintain the Jamul Ranch after her husband’s death most certainly informed her writing. But furthermore, Aranda notes,

As much as we, Chicano/a scholars and our allies, would like to read Ruiz de Burton as a prototypical Chicana feminist, resistance fighter, in-your-face Abraham Lincoln basher, and go-to-hell Supreme Court critic, she was none of these . . . her biography indicates that she saw herself as part of a white, educated elite – aristocratic in its origins and with a history in Alta California as colonizers – not as colonized. (554-558)

Martín-Rodríguez and others call even more attention to evidence in the narrative that the construction of the Californios as an oppressed minority is an oversimplification. In particular, he notes in “Textual and Land Reclamations: The Critical Reception of Early Chicano/a Literature,” “The narrator constantly reminds us of the Alamars being ‘Spano-Americans’ and she tirelessly insists on their white countenances when describing them” (47). Similarly, John M. Gonzalez notes, “the general invisibility of Indian labor in the narrative belies the degree to which the wealth mestizos and Indians produced also manufactured Californio whiteness before and after 1848” (164). Jesse Alemán argues, “In the end, the novel levels a scathing critique of US imperialism – not because it excludes Californios, dispossessing them of their land and livelihood, but because it does not include them in the privileged category of white class mobility in the first place” (67). These explorations of whiteness in the novel reveal a much more complex relationship between Anglo and Californio, and those categories erased by such a binary (both Indians and those Mexican Americans who don’t happen to belong to landed elite families). Thus, Vincent Pérez argues, “Even as the novel invokes the redemptive claims and

---

57 For a fascinating read on the link between whiteness and desirable sickness in *The Squatter and the Don*, see Tuttle, Jennifer S. “The Symptoms of Conquest: Race, Class, and the Nervous Body in *The Squatter and the Don*.”
conditions of separateness by establishing the boundaries of ‘true community,’ it simultaneously projects a desire for future Californio inclusion in the newly ascendant post-Reconstruction US nation” (37). The borders between race and ethnicity that Sánchez and Pita aim to construct are in many ways collapsed by Ruiz de Burton’s narrative as well as her biography.

Critics often blame Sánchez and Pita for the perpetuation of an understanding of *The Squatter and the Don* as representing the working class minority resistance that has come to characterize Chicana/o literature. Aranda claims in “Returning California to the People: Vigilantism in *The Squatter and the Don*,” “Sánchez and Pita’s gesture toward present-day ethnic politics invokes a populist Mexican American tradition of contesting big business that includes Cesár Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers Union, but this gesture with Ruiz de Burton as a figurehead is terribly misplaced and misleading” (15). Martín-Rodríguez describes Ruiz de Burton’s book as having been adopted “despite its marked elitism, which . . . contrasts with the more common working-class bent in twentieth-century Chicano/a literature, an aspect that has been often overlooked or avoided in the existing studies of this novel” (150). These critics react to Sánchez and Pita quite strongly with good reason: it is their long introduction which must be read, perused, or skipped entirely in order to reach the “text itself.” It introduces readers to a perspective on the novel that is shaped by twentieth-century concerns: the goals of the recovery project in some ways dictate that the novel finds a way to conform to what we now understand as Chicana/o literature. At the very least, the introduction attempts to pin down a singular interpretation, offering the illusion of narrative (and
political) stability by labeling it under one heading: subaltern. What various other critics have argued is that such an illusion of stability does a disservice to the complex, conflicted, and multiple political messages Ruiz de Burton’s text sends. In appropriating *The Squatter and the Don* for Chicana/o literature, Sánchez and Pita obfuscate the complex negotiations of race and class at play in Ruiz de Burton’s narrative. In recovering Ruiz de Burton’s novel for Chicana/o literature, they both reframe the history of Chicana/o politics, impressing it on a nineteenth century narrative, and introduce that nineteenth century narrative into contemporary debates about Chicana/o politics. The recovery project is always already a political project.

By proposing an unbroken chain between Ruiz de Burton and Chicana/o authors of the late 20th century, Sánchez and Pita’s introduction invites readers to surrender to the fictive stability of genre, themes, class, and politics across centuries and generations of Mexican American people. But beyond their introduction, other decisions made by Sánchez and Pita have had a lasting effect on the possibilities for reader interpretation of Ruiz de Burton’s text. These decisions have garnered less critical attention, though I argue they have as much of an effect on how readers approach and think of Ruiz de Burton’s text as a unified, stable text as the introduction. While the introduction proposes the historical stability of “Chicana/o” literature, their editorial decisions seek to assign stability and even singularity to the versions of Ruiz de Burton’s text. Although their introduction accurately represents the history of the publication of *The Squatter and the Don*, even including evidence from Ruiz de Burton’s letters regarding the difficulty she had in self-publishing her work, Sánchez and Pita’s editorial decisions don’t go as far as
they could in highlighting for readers the differences between the self-published and the Samuel Carson & Co-published editions.\(^{58}\) In one particularly important example, which I outline below, the Sánchez and Pita edition of *The Squatter and the Don* makes a choice for readers about which edition – the self-published or the Samuel Carson & Co. edition – matters more, and eliminates the opportunity for readers to recreate the other. This decision carries at least two implications: first, it effectively insists on a textual singularity rather than a multiplicity; and second, that embrace of singularity has not remained confined to the critical edition but rather likely influenced the shape of the more recently published “popular” edition issued by Modern Library Classics, a division of Random House.

In their discussion of *The Squatter and the Don* as both self-published and published by Samuel Carson & Company in 1885, Sánchez and Pita insert a footnote that explains the differences between the editions as such:

> The two editions are *substantially* the same except for the introduction to Chapter XXX. What began with a satirical portrayal of the image of the “Goddess of Justice” being defiled and prostituted by the likes of San Diego Judge Lawlack and lawyer Roper, is replaced in the second edition, published by Carson, by a less virulent and more general critique of bad judges. The first paragraph of Chapter XXXV in the Carson and present edition ends with a comment on the mockery of justice evident in cases in which judges, exposed for their corruption, sue their accusers for libel. This sentence *probably* reveals why Ruiz de Burton changed the opening page of Chapter XXXV. (346, fn. 23, emphasis added)

---

\(^{58}\) These references include Ruiz de Burton’s letter to George Davidson on 9 June 1884, saying “I have been writing a book, so I hope you won’t scold me for being indolent. I don’t know whether I shall publish it under my own name, so I want to keep the matter quiet yet. Only two or three friends know I am writing it. I want to publish it this fall, in September” (*Conflicts of Interest* 505) and, after a number of references to difficulties, a letter to M.G. Vallejo, “El libro ya salió a luz. Pobre hijito feito mío!” [“My book has seen the light of day. My poor little ugly child!”] (*Conflicts* 507).
This footnote leads to a number of questions for the reader, the primary one regarding what exactly were the contents of the first version of this paragraph. Turning to the chapter in question in the Sánchez and Pita edition, readers do find a description of the “Goddess of Justice,” her “white robes . . . begrimed and soiled . . . her . . . lofty dignity . . . thus lowered to the dust” (307) at the beginning of the introductory paragraph. Is this the “satirical portrayal” to which Sánchez and Pita refer? The paragraph does not specifically mention the names of Lawlack and Roper, so is this the “less virulent and more general critique”? The only reference Sánchez and Pita make at all to which edition they’ve taken this paragraph from describes only how the paragraph ends, and for that they follow the Carson edition. Does that mean the entire paragraph is from the Carson edition? Or have the editors conflated the editions, preserving what they think is most important from both and presenting them as an “ideal” text?

These kinds of questions reflect not only a fairly high level of confusion over which version of Ruiz de Burton’s text readers have in front of them, but also an insensitivity to readers seeking to put together the pieces of the multiple texts that make up what we now understand as The Squatter and the Don. One of the fundamental goals of textual criticism and the critical editions that it generates is to assist readers in recognizing which version of a text they are reading, and how that version differs from others, by supplying enough information to allow them to recreate that other version. Jerome McGann explains, “When preparing a critical edition the editor chooses one particular version as the basis for his reading text, and he lets the critical apparatus carry all the information necessary for the reconstruction of the other possible versions and
reading texts” (90). By not offering readers a transcription of the self-published version and/or the Carson version of that first paragraph, Sánchez and Pita’s edition makes a choice for those readers that obscures the other possibilities. The fact that it’s not entirely clear which version is actually presented, or whether it’s an eclectic version – one culled from multiple versions in an attempt to represent the author’s intentions – is even more problematic. Readers who notice the footnote may find they don’t know what they’re looking at, and readers who don’t notice the introductory footnote are presented a singular version of the text with not even an asterisk to hint that more than one version of this introductory paragraph exists.59

Not only does this lack of information throw up a roadblock for readers in search of understanding the differences between the two 1885 versions of the text, but Sánchez and Pita’s language reflects how much their editorial decisions shape readers’ relationship to the text. Calling the two versions “substantially the same” becomes a questionable judgment: in this critical edition, readers cannot judge the changes for themselves.60 Furthermore, Sánchez and Pita’s claim that Ruiz de Burton’s inclusion of a sentence referring to libel “probably reveals” why she took it out in the first place would certainly be a worthy argument which readers could respond to if they had the potentially libelous material in front of them. Instead, Sánchez and Pita perform the work of

59 The footnote which provides the information regarding these changes is linked to Sánchez and Pita’s introduction to the text, so the page on which the problematic paragraph appears is “clean” – no footnote or other mark references its instability.

60 In the process of my research for this chapter, I was unable to locate a copy of Ruiz de Burton’s self-published first edition of The Squatter and the Don, demonstrating the difficulty any reader would have in viewing this first text for comparison. By not footnoting their emendations, the editors of this edition participate in the limiting of access to the multiple versions of this text.
analyzing this textual decision for readers, which in itself is hardly a bad or even an avoidable move; that they do so without giving readers an opportunity to debate that decision becomes a problem. Editors of critical editions are no longer expected not to leave their fingerprints on their work, but they do a false service to their readers by not accounting for their choices. It’s important to consider why Ruiz de Burton wrote what she wrote when she wrote it, why she changed it, and to have a clear explanation of why the editors deem one of those versions more accurate, authentic, or important than the other. These changes not only highlight the instability of the social text – something Sánchez and Pita’s edition reveals even as it attempts to conceal it – but also tell us something about what they believe is important for us to read right now. Why do they value the Carson-published version over the self-published version? Perhaps they wish to remain faithful to Ruiz de Burton’s final authorial intentions; perhaps they see in this

---

61 In another publication of the Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, José Limón wrestles with the incomplete state of Jovita González’s The Dew on the Thorn, a set of sketches González meant to publish all together. Not only does the set appear to be 8 sketches shy of her intended 25, but as Limón details, some sketches are missing completely, others found elsewhere, and many are heavily marked for editing or deletion. Limón supports his choice to restore what González likely wanted to delete with an argument that it would “destroy the narrative movement of the book” (xxvi), and while we can debate such choices, he also clearly marks them in the text, setting them off with brackets. There is no denying that Limón has created a different version of The Dew on the Thorn that González herself would have published, but that he also attempts to remain sensitive to the differences between them.

62 The work of critics like Donald Pizer would likely support Sánchez and Pita’s decision to uphold the “self-censored” version of that paragraph: Pizer’s “Self-Censorship and the Editing of Late Nineteenth-Century Naturalistic Texts” argues that leaving out the censored material is necessary to an understanding of the historical context which shaped a text’s publication, suggesting, “When there is a degree of doubt in question of self-censorship, leave the text alone” (150). Using Theodore Dreiser’s heavily revised Sister Carrie, most recently “restored” to the pre-censored text, as an example, Pizer writes, “If we are to read Sister Carrie as a novel of 1900, I would prefer to read the novel that emerged out of the personal tensions, conflicting motives, and cultural complexities of that moment and that in the eighty years since its publication has accrued a rich public responsiveness and role. I would not care to read a Carrie that has in effect been created out of the textual editing controversies and theorizing of the 1960s and 1970s” (149). One could argue that Pizer’s preference has been shaped by those very controversies, but also that no edition can escape reflecting the “controversies and theorizing” of the time period in which it is produced. Problems arise when one aims to do so. Sánchez and Pita’s editorial decision is certainly a defensible one; however, in a scholarly critical edition such as this, some measure of reconstructability should be possible.
repetition of censorship an opportunity to emphasize Ruiz de Burton’s status as subaltern, unable to speak as she wishes. In making these choices, Sánchez and Pita’s edition of The Squatter and the Don joins Ruiz de Burton’s self-published and Carson editions as part of the complex net of versions that shape and are shaped by readers in a multitude of different ways.

In particular, Sánchez and Pita’s critical edition appears to have shaped the “popular” edition of The Squatter and the Don released in 2004 by Random House under the imprint of Modern Library Classics. With regard to the changed paragraph, editor Jennifer M. Acker explains in the preliminary “Note on the Text,” “As Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita write in their 1992 introduction and notes to the Arte Público Press edition of The Squatter and the Don, the two editions are essentially the same except for the first paragraph in Chapter XXXV” (xiv). Acker privileges the editorial decisions of Sánchez and Pita, adopting the less than precise language regarding the editions being “essentially the same,” though her editorial apparatus goes no further to establish this claim. She goes on to write that this edition is “set from the second edition of 1885” (xiv), thereby making the same editorial choice as Sánchez and Pita. In this “Note,” Acker both acknowledges the influence of Sánchez and Pita and perpetuates their oversight: despite extensive historical notes and a list of typographical corrections, the Modern Library Classics edition brings readers no closer to seeing the paragraph Ruiz de Burton eliminated from her first, self-published edition. Furthermore, the back cover of

---

63 It is only by comparing the Acker edition to the Sánchez and Pita edition that it becomes clear that the version of Chapter XXXV supplied in the Sánchez and Pita edition is unchanged from the 1885 Carson and Co. edition.
the paperback confuses matters by advertising its text as “set from the first edition of 1885.” Since both the self-published edition and the Carson & Co. edition were published in 1885, such a statement confuses the textual situation, but it also contradicts its own editor. Faced with both of these statements, and with no opportunity to compare differences, what are readers meant to believe they are reading? In effect, the competing assertions of the jacket and the editor’s “Note” expose the instability of the text in a way the rest of the text seeks to conceal (or at the very least to downplay). In yet another instance of border textuality, the paratext – the border of the text – insists on the fluidity of Ruiz de Burton’s material, its “errors” reminding readers that more than one version of The Squatter and the Don exists.

The paratext of the Modern Library Classics edition of The Squatter and the Don also asserts itself as a distinct “version” of the text that distinguishes it from the more overt critical edition edited by Sánchez and Pita. The Modern Library emphasizes its history in American publishing, claiming, “For decades, young Americans cut their intellectual teeth on Modern Library books. The series shaped their tastes, educated them, provided them with a window on the world” (“About Modern Library”). They market their “Paperback Classics” as both scholarly and popular, top-of-the-line and affordable: scholarly endnotes are followed by reading group guides, and the overall look of the text production highlights “values that emphasize superior quality and readability.” Identified as a “trade paperback,” the list price of $13.95 is just slightly lower than the most
recently posted average price for adult paperbacks (excluding mass market) of $15.64.\textsuperscript{64}

The text includes a biographical note on Ruiz de Burton, an Introduction, the aforementioned Note on the Text, a facsimile of the first title page, the text, extensive historical and textual notes, a short reading group guide, and concludes with advertisements for the Modern Library Classics imprint. These almost dual impulses toward “scholarliness” and “readerliness” are perhaps reflected most clearly in the choice of Ana Castillo to introduce the text of Ruiz de Burton’s novel. In contrast to the strict literary and historical criticism of Sánchez and Pita, Castillo also serves as a middle ground between scholarly and popular: novels like \textit{Peel My Love Like an Onion} and \textit{So Far From God} make her familiar to a popular audience, while her critical work – \textit{Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma} – as well as her more recent experimental work like \textit{Psst. . . I Have Something to Tell You} and \textit{Watercolor Women/Opaque Men} draw in more literary-critical audiences.

Recognizing and hoping to capitalize on Castillo’s popularity, The Modern Library Classics edition works hard to make this Castillo’s text as much as – if not more than – Ruiz de Burton’s. Though Ruiz de Burton gets top billing on the cover, “Introduced by Ana Castillo” closely follows her byline. Castillo’s name also makes an appearance on the spine, though in smaller font than Ruiz de Burton’s. On the back cover, however, Castillo’s name is mentioned three times to Ruiz de Burton’s one. Not only does the top of the back flap repeat that the text is “Introduced by Ana Castillo,” the

\textsuperscript{64} Trade paperbacks are the middle ground between hardcover and mass market paperbacks, typically distinguished from their less expensive counterparts by their size as well as higher quality paper. Brian Kenney reports the 2007 average prices of books in “Keeping Up with the Joneses,” \textit{School Library Journal}, 1 March 2008.
summary blurb first quotes Castillo, then describes Ruiz de Burton’s novel. And finally, after a paragraph break, instead of the traditional author summary, the publishers provide the following: “Ana Castillo is a poet, essayist, and novelist whose works include the recent poetry collection I Ask the Impossible and the novel Peel My Love Like an Onion. She lives in Chicago and teaches at DePaul University.” There is no similar blurb for Ruiz de Burton; the entire back cover is an advertisement for Castillo. Taken together, the paratextual elements of the cover aim to make Ruiz de Burton’s narrative contemporary by association. As Ruiz de Burton’s text undergoes a temporal dislocation from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, the methods by which publishers justify its survival in print construct new conditions for interpretation. This move to make The Squatter and the Don more appealing to contemporary audiences collapses important historical and social differences between 1885 and 2004.

Thus, in place of Sánchez and Pita’s claim that Ruiz de Burton “voice[s] the bitter resentment of the subalterm,” Castillo opts for, “call it what you will, but I’d say the woman had cojones” (xvi). Lest it be assumed that Castillo’s is a less rigorous introduction to The Squatter and the Don, however, I would rather argue that Castillo’s goals in introducing the text are simply far different from those of Sánchez and Pita. Where the Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage edition contains a long exposition of Ruiz de Burton’s text’s relationship to the semiotic rectangle, Castillo moves more quickly to address the aforementioned problem numerous critics had with that introduction: its lack of sustained attention to the role of race and class. Calling Ruiz de Burton’s novel “one truth among many of the social realities of that era” (xviii),
Castillo spends a good portion of her six-page introduction examining the racist attitudes of the novel’s heroes and tracing the complicated relationships amongst Anglos, Mexican elites claiming Spanish ancestry, and mestizos and indios. Writing, “No significant character [in the novel] seems above negating the basic human rights of people of color, in fact, in one or two instances, their very humanity” (xvi), Castillo insists that Ruiz de Burton’s goal was never to write the history of the working class. Furthermore, Castillo won’t waste time debating “whether or not its political theme really expresses the sentiments of the true underdog of that era, as has been debated by those interested in Chicano Studies” (xvii). Instead, Castillo recommends this book to readers in a way that asks them to consider its heroes and villains in light of a history more complicated than the dualities emphasized by Sánchez and Pita would imply.

Furthermore, Castillo continuously calls attention to our own historical moment, asking herself “how The Squatter and the Don speaks to the present” (xvii). In the midst of her introduction, such comments as “these are all logical questions for the student of democratic ideals today” (xiv) and “Currently, U.S. leaders are careful not to use the race card” (xiv) attempt to demonstrate the difference the distance of history has made. Elsewhere, her observations are less optimistic, such as in her claim that the beliefs of manifest destiny are also “principles that, in 2004, the current leaders of the United States, projecting itself today as the model of democracy, have brandished as a means to an end” (xiv). Castillo more overtly emphasizes the significance of this text to contemporary audiences and to contemporary history. I believe this is not only a move to appeal to audiences more familiar with current events with than those of over a century
ago, but also a sign of recognition of the unique politics at play in any recovery project. The Modern Library Classics edition of *The Squatter and the Don*, like the Arte Público/Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage edition, is a text that is a product of contemporary concerns, recovered for its ability to speak to them from the past. While Sánchez and Pita’s concerns were for recovering a proto-Chicana text, Castillo recovers a text that foreshadows a contemporary situation in which “An indio today has no choice but to submit to the New World Order or be exterminated like a diseased mosquito as the Spanish feudal lord in California was in the nineteenth century. I do not declare these sad realities. I only observe them” (xviii). The vastly different outlooks of post-Civil Rights-era optimism that seeks out and celebrates evidence of resistance, subversion, and survival — slaying the dragon — on the one hand and the post-9/11 cynicism that “only observes” the continued display of oppression and erasure on the other each shape *The Squatter and the Don* in their image.

In the closing lines of her Introduction, Ana Castillo writes of *The Squatter and the Don*, “that it has resurfaced more than a century after its original publication is a testimony to its worthiness to be read” (xviii); this statement attempts to imply that the text simply resurfaced unaided, reappeared of its own accord, insisting on its own survival. But the fact is that the circumstances of its recovery are fairly dependent on the goals of the Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, which are founded on a desire to retrace the erased history of Mexican and Chicana/o literature. Perhaps then Castillo does not give proper credit to those editors whose interests are so different from her own. Furthermore, the novel’s “worthiness to be read” is continuously being
reevaluated and reinvented by the editors and publishers who send it to press and the famous authors who introduce it. These editions teach readers how to read it, rescuing it from history for a variety of purposes. The recovery project itself conditions interpretation of the text, and both editions of *The Squatter and the Don* call attention to this fact.

*Section Two: Recovery and Translation*

Thus far I have argued that critical editions like Sánchez and Pita’s or the Modern Library Classics’ *The Squatter and the Don* participate in border textuality by shaping interpretation from the material margins of the text, adding to the text’s instability even as they attempt to conceal it. That instability only increases further when one is faced with the recovery of a predominantly Spanish-language text. Recovery editions of Aristeo Brito’s *El diablo en Texas* and Margarita Cota-Cárdenas’s *Puppet* are also Spanish-English bilingual editions, indicating that fundamental to the desire to preserve, maintain, and re-introduce these border texts to readers is an assumption that longevity more likely rests with English. A bilingual edition ensures that the text can more easily migrate between Spanish and English-language departments, courses, and syllabi; coupling the original version with a majority-English “translation” arguably only widens the scope of the audience and doesn’t erase the significance of that original. And yet, the choices made in the presentation of such bilingual editions ultimately highlight specific textual interpretations over others, and guide us to ask questions about which audience the recovery project itself exists for, and why.
That these texts were both published within the last forty years and find themselves in need of recovery is perhaps telling in itself. The parameters of a project like Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage necessarily elide texts like these, but they also hide the fact that the problem of losing works of Latina/o literature to lack of funds, of distribution, and of interest persists into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. And in some ways, the problems appear the same: the question of what’s worth recovering can’t easily be answered by any chronological, encyclopedic, or national categorization system. And the motivations for such recovery projects are likely similarly tied to pre-existing interpretive models for Chicana/o and border literature. But the problem of language is likely the largest challenge of all, as in this case it links the process of recovery, with its archaeological implications of merely dusting off and presenting, unchanged, a literary and/or historical artifact, with the fundamental linguistic changes to the text required of any translation. Martin-Rodríguez addresses this issue specifically, arguing,

*If they are not to be accomplices to historical processes of marginalization, Chicano/a literary historians must strive for respecting the original language(s) in which the different works are written and consumed by linguistically proficient readerships. If translations into any other languages are needed, they should not take preference over the original; Chicano/a literary histories should not suppress Chicano/a multilingualism for the sake of an academic community of readers that is mostly monolingual. (Life 169)*

It is his focus on “Chicano/a multilingualism” I’d like to pause on here, because one further complicating factor in the recovery and translation of both Brito’s and Cota-Cárdenas’s work is the not-quite-entirely-Spanish language of their original texts. Both authors depend on a multitude of languages and linguistic registers throughout their texts,
blending Spanish, Spanglish, English, and Caló, as well as a variety of dialects, to depict the multilingual experience of border communities and individual characters.

“Translation” implies a “turning from” one language to another, but in complex linguistic texts like these, that turning becomes a gesture toward both reversing and regenerating linguistic hierarchies: how do you go about producing a bilingual edition of a text that is already bilingual? Martín-Rodríguez’s caution that critics and translators exhibit great care when presenting English-language versions of *The Devil in Texas* and *Puppet* can be tied both to the decisions made about how to translate as well as how to materially present the process of those translations to a new readership.

Both textual and translation theorists have begun to explore the significance of how translations and bilingual editions affect (or as D.F. McKenzie might have it, effect) interpretation, most notably with regard to facing-page translations. Lance Hewson’s “The Bilingual Edition in Translation Studies” and Luigi Reitani’s “Face to Face: Hölderlin in a New Italian Bilingual Edition” approach the subject in a similar manner, noting the special status of a bilingual edition as something beyond both the “original” and its translation. Reitani argues, for instance,

> In the bilingual edition, the translation loses its autonomy. Its aesthetic and cultural value is based rather on the correlation it manages to establish with the starting text . . . Not only does the translation become functional to the reading of the ‘original,’ but the ‘original’ may help give a better understanding of the choices made in the translation. The starting text therefore also loses its autonomy: in bilingual editions it ‘lives’ by the translation. (591)

When applied to multilingual texts like those under discussion here, this loss of autonomy is all the more complicated by the presence of the same exact words, sentences, and even
paragraphs in both the “original” and the “translation,” as when the English strategically employed in the Spanish-language text is carried over into the “translation.” Hewson similarly argues, “the bilingual edition is a constant reminder of the differences between the source and target languages, and, paradoxically, of their apparent one-to-one equivalence . . . such an edition highlights the translation operation” (156); his discussion of the bilingual edition as one that visually and materially challenges readers to remember the role of translation serves the concept of border textuality quite well. However, neither recovery editions of Brito and Cota-Cárdenas employ facing page translation, so while Hewson and Reitani’s analysis provide a useful starting point for thinking about bilingual editions, the material presentation of each edition will need to be explored more carefully for signs of their effects on interpretation.

Part One: Aristeo Brito

Aristeo Brito’s 1976 novella, *El diablo en Texas*, takes place in Presidio, Texas. Despite being born in Mexico in 1942, the writer also claims this small border town, separated by the Rio Grande from its sister city of Ojinaga, Mexico, as home. Similarly, while the narrative makes mention of Ojinaga, and focuses particularly on the bridge and the river connecting and dividing the nations and towns, the majority of the plot takes place in Presidio. This insistent personal and narrative focus on the town that represents the “other America” might not seem entirely out of the ordinary, but combined with the heavy stylistic and thematic reliance on the work of Mexican writer Juan Rulfo as well as Brito’s use of Spanish as the primary language in the novella, it can also be seen as an attempt to redefine the linguistic and literary heritage of the United States.
more overt manner, critic Ramón Saldívar has called for exactly this kind of revision of traditional assumptions about American literature, particularly literature of the United States. He argues, “By placing the masterworks in a framework that includes the voices to which the master texts were covertly opposed, voices that were silenced by the hegemonic culture, we might indeed begin to formulate a truly integrated American literary history” (20).

To be sure, Saldívar may have been thinking of texts much older than the 1976 *El diablo en Texas*, though it certainly seems to be the case that Brito’s employment of voices in Spanish led indirectly to its (albeit temporary) silencing, though literary critics and historians like Dina Gutiérrez-Castillo blame “low distribution” for the disappearance of *El diablo en Texas*. Even Gary Keller’s introduction to the translated recovery edition explains that Brito’s text was “originally self-published in 1976. The book met with considerable enthusiasm from critics, some controversy among readers in Presidio, Texas, but mostly, unfortunately, was neglected because of lack of distribution” (v). However, in addition to seeking to overcome distribution problems, both Gutiérrez-Castillo and Keller also acknowledge Brito’s agreement to assist David William Foster in its translation into English as instrumental in its recovery. Keller explains the justification for its recovery and translation as such:

Clásicos Chicanos/Chicano Classics series is intended to ensure the long-term accessibility of deserving works of Chicano literature and culture that have become unavailable over the years or that are in imminent danger of becoming inaccessible . . . The series is designed to be a vehicle that will help in the recuperation of Raza literary history and permit the continued experience and enjoyment of our literature by both present and future generations of readers.
One might argue that Brito’s linguistic choices for his novella ensured that it was always already “inaccessible” to non-Spanish-speaking readers, and in fact that may have been the point. In his introduction to the text, Charles Tatum lauds Brito for his linguistic versatility, listing “standard Mexican Spanish; regionalisms; Texas English; Texas Spanish; the argot of the 1950s pachuco; and even an example of the Tarascan Indian group” (19) as appearing in Brito’s text. Tatum argues, “Brito was concerned about giving an accurate and authentic view of the border Chicano; the successful use of an authentic language to fit different individuals and situations aided him immensely” (19). And yet, curiously, the very next sentence Tatum writes is, “The publication of Brito’s novel in its English version is sure to capture the attention of a reading public eager to learn more about Chicanos in general and about our literature in particular” (19). The “authenticity” Brito strives for in his employment of various linguistic registers is sacrificed in order to appeal to an eager, albeit monolingual, audience. The dissonances generated by multiple languages and dialects are lost. Tatum’s about-face regarding the importance of language for Brito’s text serves as an apt representative of the competing intentions struggling to be harnessed between the pages of one book. He also more clearly imagines the audience for the recovery edition as “outsiders” to Chicana/o literature and culture.

In fact, the very first line of The Devil in Texas reflects the changes made in service of monolingual readers: originally published as “Yo vengo de un pueblito llamado Presidio” (121), the English translation renders it as “I come from a small town called Presidio, which means prison in Spanish” (23). The first sentence performs a
double translation: first translating the literal sentence that appears in Spanish, then going one step further to translate the implication behind naming a town “Presidio.” Readers have the work of translation explicitly performed for them, and the inclusion of the words “in Spanish” reinforces the more narrowly focused audience to which this version is directed. From the very first, the English translation is aggressively monolingual; this new emphasis cannot help but change the possibilities for interpretation. In this version, no matter his or her ethnicity or presumed linguistic ability, every character’s thoughts and words are rendered in English.

In contrast, Brito’s first version assigned bilingual and monolingual English and Spanish characters the languages they would presumably have spoken, of which Lewis Martin argues, “scene and situation are accurately reflected by language, thereby contributing to the novel’s verisimilitude” (249). For example, at one point the narrator turns the story over to old Mack, an Anglo storyteller who entertains the occasional tourist with tales of Presidio, and in both the original and the recovery/translated text this section, describing the villainous Anglo Ben Lynch (who adopts the name Don Benito around his Mexican American subordinates), is rendered entirely in English:

He was a well-respected feller by the community, and of course they couldn’t help it ‘cause he was kind to them. He gave ‘em work and food, everything, and of course they look up to him like a daddy. He learned how to handle ‘em and I say this ‘cause next ting, he own a hell of a lot of farmland and longhorns . . . Yup, Ben was a good old critter with a big heart; you have to admire a guy like him . . . He was hard-working, kind, law-abiding, etcetera, and all them qualities an hombre should have. (69-70 English; 164-165 Spanish)

While the first “Spanish” version of Brito’s text challenges readers in its bilingualism, the choice of an Anglo, English speaker who paints a flattering portrait of and otherwise
defends the man who exploits Mexican illegal immigrants and poor Chicanos resonates much more strongly: the linguistic choice is also a political statement. Given the events of the narrative which precede Mack’s speech, which include Ben inviting some of his workers to a reception and slaughtering them with cannon and pistol fire after he suspects them of stealing horses, readers of the original version of the text are asked not only to mistrust Mack and his narrative, but by association the language in which the narrative is spoken. The longest instance of English in the novella conditions readers to recognize the English language as a sign of disingenuousness, a voice that cannot be trusted. In a translation that makes no distinction between languages, this emphasis is lost. Code-switching texts like El diablo en Texas are not well served by translation because translation insists on linguistic singularity, a binary between English and Spanish that simply doesn’t exist in the original text. Martha Cutter writes, “In the zone of interlingualism, as the waves of Spanish and English crash into each other, power can recirculate and get reproduced in innovative forms” (“Malinche’s Legacy” 4); attempting to make a code-switching text like Brito’s “speak” one language is like attempting to separate one wave from another.

It can be argued that such sacrifices for the sake of an increased readership and longevity in print are worth making; it certainly seems to have paid off, as The Devil in Texas won the 1990 Western States Book Award. Gary Keller acknowledges this accomplishment as part of “the never-ending struggle to recuperate and maintain our culture, our literature, our heritage, and our identity” (vi). His use of the word “our” is curious here, given that Tatum’s introduction clearly invokes an “outsider” audience.
Though Keller calls the material history of *The Devil in Texas*’s transmission part of an “‘all’s well that ends well’ destiny” (v), the text that won the Western States Book Award is fundamentally different from the one originally published by Brito in Spanish. This is not simply because of the text’s translation; the paratextual materials including Keller’s preface and Tatum’s introduction also shape interpretation, often in ways that appear to run counter to the goals of the recovery project itself. For example, in the final lines of his preface, Keller writes, “And so for this century and into the next, le brindamos para nuestra querida raza esta bellísima y ahora, finalmente, consagrada novela del compañero y carnal, Aristeo Brito” (vi) [we bring to our dear people this beautiful and now, finally, time-honored novel of our comrade and brother, Aristeo Brito]. That Keller slips into Spanish in the final lines of his celebration of an English translation only reinforces the distance between Brito’s first version and its translation. His introductory insistence on communicating in Spanish, rendering comprehension difficult or impossible for English monolingual readers, reveals “la raza” (albeit the Spanish-speaking members only) as a second or competing audience for this text. More importantly, Keller’s introduction also performs what the translation itself cannot: a fluid embrace of the multiple languages of the text.

From the paratext readers receive conflicting messages about the value of this English version: it’s an award winner, it will appeal to outsiders, but when even its introducers use Spanish to laud its reemergence, we must ask ourselves, to whom are they speaking now? Tatum’s reference to the “eager” reading public, whom he hopes will be inspired to “go on to explore the great variety and inviting panoply of literary offerings
by other Chicano authors” (19) opposes itself to “nuestra querida raza,” the other audience of readers Keller acknowledges. Even the order of presentation makes claims about the centrality of the English version: placing the text of *The Devil in Texas* before that of *El diablo en Texas* literally makes the Spanish version secondary to the English translation. Tacked on to the end of the edition, the Spanish version nearly becomes a paratext itself. On the one hand its presence allows bilingual readers access to the original text, and also provides room for comparison, but its placement signals the English version as the improved successor, the primary language, and the English readers as the primary audience.

Thus the audience and intentions for this recovery text are pulled in multiple directions, its paratext revealing the instability inherent in the aims of a bilingual edition. It’s unlikely that Keller and Tatum intended to send such conflicting messages. Writing of editors, Gary Taylor makes a claim that also nicely summarizes the writers of these paratextual elements: “All such intermediaries pit transmission against transience; they mediate between the past and the future, the present and the distant, but attempt to do so in ways that render invisible their own acts of mediation and remediation” (96-97). But the arrangement of the text taken side by side with Keller’s and Tatum’s introductory materials reveal the problems of using language to dictate an audience – they bump up against each other, valorizing the English translation at the same time they aim to recover this Spanish language novella from the margins of academic and popular discourse. It is perhaps most appropriate then that Keller employs Spanish in the literal margins of the text.
Brito himself expresses a somewhat conflicted attitude toward the translation. In an interview with Rosamel Benavides, Brito explains,

Una obra traducida pertenece al traductor. El crea una obra autónoma que, a la vez, es la misma, pero es otra. El traductor es un agente selectivo, alguien que impone su propio punto de vista. En mi novela el punto de vista proviene del traductor David William Foster . . . Mira, yo también traduje la misma novela y si tú vieras mi traducción y la de Foster verías dos novelas diferentes. En algún momento pensé en transformar la traducción de Foster, pero no se puede, sólo algunas palabras, tal vez, pero oraciones y párrafos, no. Sintácticamente es imposible, porque su obra corresponde a una totalidad. Cuando me mandaron todo el manuscrito pude ver la unidad y eso ya era algo nuevo. De ahí que no se puede alterar. (184)

[A translated work belongs to the translator. He creates an independent work that, simultaneously, is the same, but is another. The translator is the selective agent, someone who imposes his own point of view. In my novel the point of view comes from translator David William Foster . . . Look, I also translated the same novel and if you looked at my translation and the one from Foster you would see two different novels. At one time I thought about transforming Foster’s translation, but I couldn’t, only some words, perhaps, but speeches and paragraphs, no. Syntactically it’s impossible, because his work corresponds to a totality. When they gave me the whole manuscript I could see the unity and that it was already something new. For that reason it can’t be altered.]

In his words are both an embrace of and a distancing from the translation as something new, something not his own. Brito accedes to Foster’s translation, but he still calls it “my novel,” complicating authorship and ownership of this translation. Furthermore, he says, “Todo el mundo me ha dicho ‘this is a good translation’ y yo también te aseguro que es una buena traducción, pero no es el espejo que yo esperaba” (184). [The whole world has told me, “this is a good translation,” and I too assure you that it is a good translation, but it is not the mirror I had hoped.] Brito’s own qualified or partial embrace of the translation reveals the disparity between his own expectations and what others (or “todo
el mundo”) expect from this text. Whether Brito had hoped for the mirror to reflect his Spanish text or the world of Presidio contained within is not entirely clear, but both have been fundamentally changed by this bilingual edition.

In its critical analysis of the text which it precedes, Tatum’s “Stasis and Change Along the Rio Grande: Aristeo Brito’s The Devil in Texas” focuses most of its attention on the symbolic characteristics of Brito’s novella, including his use of the devil. Brito describes the favorite joke of the devil, who assumes various forms including a snake and Ben Lynch himself, as “the cat and mouse playing the hide-and-seek game. The border patrol cat, his face furrowed, waits to pounce on the mouse, whose only defense is the hunger he carries in his stomach. The mouse jumps the puddle and begins the ridiculous flight, while the devil rolls on the ground laughing” (89). Involved in this particular border cat and mouse game is another symbol: the bridge over the Rio Grande between Ojinaga and Presidio. The bridge serves as an extension of evil when in the second section, “Presidio 1942,” Marcela, wife of José Uranga, dies in childbirth while crossing the river in an illegal launch. Tatum explains, “Up until the construction of the bridge, [Mexicans and Chicanos] had gone back and forth by boat with relative ease; now, suddenly, the Border Patrol began to prevent these ‘illegal’ crossings, thus channeling traffic through the regulated and controlled bridge access” (4). The bridge, which paradoxically represents the separation between towns on the U.S.-Mexico border, also serves as a useful metaphor for the translation itself. The bilingual edition, meant to be a bridge between the out of print Spanish version and the English translation by Foster, appears to enable fluid access to Brito’s story. Instead, paratextual elements maintain
tight control over readers’ access to the text: they decide who is meant to read it, directly the flow toward the English version (mostly). But just as the building and supervision of the bridge can’t prevent people from finding other means of crossing, moments like Keller’s use of Spanish in his preface and Brito’s own epitextual comments about the translation render visible the significance of Spanish to a narrative translation that nearly erases it. Such moments put the English and Spanish versions in competition with one another, forcing readers to recognize them as interdependent modes of access to Brito’s Presidio. The text of this edition of *The Devil in Texas/El diablo en Texas* taken as a whole demonstrates materially the complexity of languages in contact that Brito strives for in the narrative of his first version. As Tatum writes, “the U.S.-Mexican border is . . . a line created by treaties and regulated by national laws and international accords” (2); the border was called into being by texts, and through texts it is both reinforced and undermined. *The Devil in Texas/El diablo en Texas* speaks to readers from the margins, encouraging them to recognize in its material representation the simultaneous reinforcement and undermining of the borders between Spanish and English.

**Part Two: Margarita Cota-Cárdenas**

Margarita Cota-Cárdenas’s 1985 novella, *Puppet*, centers on the story of a professor named Petra/Pat Leyva, who attempts to write the story of Puppet, a young Chicano wrongfully killed by police. Petra/Pat’s double name most clearly attests to the internal conflicts she experiences in her relationship with the Chicana/o community while caught between action and inaction regarding the police cover-up of Puppet’s death.
Cota-Cárdenas’s style is fragmented and disjointed and Petra’s narration shifts forward and backward in time, incorporating fantasy and classroom discussion, playing with language and even typography as it aims to represent the chaos of Petra’s internal state as well as that of the Chicana/o community. The fragmentary nature of the text is perhaps underscored by Cota-Cárdenas’s previously published versions of Puppet’s story: Carmen Salazar notes that “some fragments were published earlier,” including the poem “Lápida para Puppet,” which appears in her 1975 collection *Noches*. Salazar explains that Cota-Cárdenas herself struggled with the telling of this version of the story, claiming, “el proceso fue largo, terrible y deslumbrante” (qtd. in Valenzuela 61) [the process was long, terrible, and overwhelming]. Though Salazar cites the publication date of “Lápida para Puppet” as 1975 and claims it took Cota-Cárdenas ten years to write *Puppet*, Cota-Cárdenas elsewhere explains, “Me puse a escribirla en serio en 1981 y no la pude terminar hasta 1985. Mi musa fue mi máquina antiquísima Underwood quien me ha inspirado sobre más de cuarenta años en mis creaciones. Le puse el nombre de Mali o Malinche.” (61) [I got to serious writing in 1981 and I could not finish it until 1985. My muse was my ancient Underwood machine that has inspired me for more than forty years in my creations. I named it Mali or Malinche.]

The lengthy writing process for such a short work – the bilingual edition runs at about 131 pages – only emphasizes the complexity of the story, while the story of its reception mirrors the difficulty of getting Puppet’s own story heard. Just as critics

---

65 Salazar notes that the poem “follows the form of the Mexican *corrido*, a type of ballad that is appropriate for its narrative qualities . . . the poem is a touching eulogy to the slain barrio boy (called Puppet), and is, ironically, an eternal marker, the ‘tombstone’ that Puppet did not get” (par. 16). This poem serves as the starting point for the novella, a retelling of Puppet’s story that circles around the very question of whether Puppet’s story can ever be accurately told.
described Aristeo Brito’s difficulties staying in print as related to distribution, Tey Diana Rebolledo acknowledges that “Because it was written in Spanish and published by a small press, *Puppet* had its distribution problems from the start. With no wide distribution system for sending out books, readership suffered” (xiv-xv). However, Rebolledo invokes a paradox regarding the novella’s previous status as both out of print and widely known and taught. Cota-Cárdenas published *Puppet* with Relámpago Press, a small press out of Austin, Texas, and while Rebolledo acknowledges that the book was rendered inaccessible to large groups of readers, she also describes it as an “underground classic” (xv), taught in Spanish-language classes, discussed at conferences and in critical essays, and widely anthologized. Thus, while the book appears to be academically well-known, until this recent edition it struggled to stay in print. Rebolledo acknowledges that a bilingual edition opens the text to a much wider range of readers.

The bilingual edition of *Puppet* seems to be a sensible solution to a number of issues – it maintains the original Spanish version and would seem to merely add the English version, potentially doubling interest in the text. But furthermore, the solution to the problem of keeping the book in print, as well as expanding the potential audience, mimics some of the narrative’s own preoccupations with and understandings of language, particularly Spanish. Just as Petra finds herself caught between English and Spanish depending on her audience – as when she realizes to herself “that when you pray, you pray in English” (107) – the bilingual edition finds itself negotiating two audiences, caught between representations of Spanish and English. As I will argue, the material presentation of this new bilingual edition is in many (though not all) ways reflective of
the narrative’s own discourse on the relationship between Spanish and English, deconstructing the hierarchy even as it participates in it. After examining critical and authorial responses to Cota-Cárdenas’s use of Spanish, I will turn to the bibliographic codes of the bilingual edition that shape readers’ understanding of the relationships between the two languages, demonstrating how Petra’s language problems become the readers’ problems as well.

Any exploration of Puppet compels critics to discuss the issue of language and its effects on the narrative. In his reading of the 1985 edition of Puppet, entitled, “En la lengua maternal: las escritoras Chicanas y la novella en Español,” Manuel Martín-Rodríguez attempts to answer two questions: why Chicana writers seem to be so late in the practice of novel-writing (compared to Chicanos), and why there is such an imbalance between the number of Chicana novels published in Spanish and English. Regarding the second question, Martín-Rodríguez notes that relatively few publishing houses would publish works in Spanish – neither Bilingual Press nor Arte Público would do it – leaving opportunities to publish in Spanish only to much smaller presses like Relámpago and El Norte Publications. But furthermore, he argues, we must contextualize the issue of language in terms of gender expectations: “Se trata de la creencia común de que las mujeres chicanas, “el soporte del hogar,” son las encargadas de preservar y trasmitir el español, la lengua materna, y con él los valores tradicionales . . . en su elección del inglés las novelistas chicanas están, precisamente, rechazando ese papel tradicional que las relega al silencio público y las condena a la servidumbre casera” (68). [“One is the common belief that Chicanas, ‘the support of the home,’ are the ones charged to preserve
and to pass on Spanish, the maternal language, and with it traditional values. In their choice of English, Chicana novelists are, indeed, rejecting that traditional role that relegates them to public silence and condemns them to servitude in the home” (68).

Regarding Cota-Cárdenas, then, Martín-Rodríguez argues that her choice to publish mostly in Spanish is not regressive but instead a sign of an attempt to move both women and Spanish out of the home and into the public eye. He argues, “De esa manera, estas novelas se proponen como modelos de un reordenamiento cultural y académico y como ejemplo de que la cuestión de la mujer y el español no se limita a ser un asunto de puertas para adentro: ahora la mujer chicana tiene voz pública en español y no es una voz quebrada o disminuida, sino una voz plural y rica, autoconsciente.” (71) “[“In this way, these novels are proposed as models of a cultural and academic re-ordering and as an example that the question of woman and Spanish is not a subject limited to behind closed doors; now the Chicana woman has a public voice in Spanish, and it is not a broken or diminished voice, but a plural and rich, self-conscious voice” (71).] While he includes a brief discussion of Petra’s navigation of both Spanish and English, noting her double name aligns her with Marina/Malinche, Martín-Rodríguez focuses most of his essay on the significance of Cota-Cárdenas’s choice to publish in Spanish. Of this choice, Rebolledo notes, “writing Puppet in Spanish was, at the time, a deliberate and, I might add, a political language choice for Cota-Cárdenas. When I asked her why she wrote Puppet in Spanish she said that for her there were many things she couldn’t say in English, many things she would hear in her memory, the joke, the dicho (saying). It was also a resistance to what she felt was linguistic and cultural annihilation” (xiv). More
might be said about how this choice to publish in Spanish aligns with or competes against her protagonist’s fluid shifts from English to Spanish depending on her audience.

Furthermore, we might consider how Martín-Rodríguez might respond to the publication of the bilingual edition: if Cota-Cárdenas’s choice to publish in Spanish is meant to reflect the assertion of a rich, public, Spanish voice, how should/do we read its translation into English? Does the translation force the Spanish back into the private realm, asserting that English will preserve the novel’s public reputation? Had the past 15 years dulled or even eased Cota-Cárdenas’s fears about ‘linguistic and cultural annihilation,’ or does the 2000 bilingual edition represent the culmination of those fears? Perhaps the answer is not as dichotomous as those options would suggest. But whether indoors or “underground,” as Rebolledo describes it, the Spanish of Cota-Cardenas’s 1985 edition at the very least appears to need the supplemental arm of English to see the light of day.

Most recently, Desirée A. Martín argues in “Multilingual Aesthetics and the Limits of Chicano/a Identity in Margarita Cota-Cárdenas' Puppet” that the novel demonstrates an interrogation of both fixed and fluid Chicana/o identities. Martín describes Pat as in search of an “authentic” Chicano identity at the same time the narrative highlights the impossibility of constructing a stable identity. She claims, Cota-Cárdenas’ novel both rejects the institutionalization of rigid Chicano/a identities and demonstrates a nostalgia for authenticity, fixedness, and monolingualism. While contradictory subjectivities and in-between spaces are explicitly rejected by most of the characters in the novel – especially by Pat herself – the language, form, and style of the novel explode strict boundaries at every turn, symbolically reflecting the transnational condition of Chicano/ as in the United States. (92)
The bilingualism of the novel, then, is often at odds with the characters’ own desires for stability: it refuses to make a singular choice. Similarly, in “Poetics of Hysteria: Political Consciousness and Insanity in *Puppet* by Margarita Cota-Cárdenas,” Xochitl Estrada Shuru argues the novel “utilizes a ‘poetics of hysteria,’ exemplified by narrative devices such as shifting subjectivities, abrupt changes in first and third person narrators, and frequent alternations between Spanish and English” (2) in order to compel readers to experience a version of the madness Petra descends into following Puppet’s death. Both Martín and Shuru implicitly or explicitly highlight the visceral experience of the reader as integral to interpretation of the text, acknowledging that the experience of abrupt shifts between languages as well as forms and styles compel readers to feel some sort of instability that mirrors Pat’s own experience. Yet neither fully engages the question of how that visceral or material experience changes depending on which edition, and furthermore, which language, the reader selects.

The 2000 bilingual edition complicates matters of reader response most clearly in its liberal use of the word “translation.” In fact, Martín does make note of the unique effects of *Puppet*’s translation, explaining, “While the bilingual edition of *Puppet* incorporates an English translation of the Spanish which remains interwoven throughout the text, both the version primarily written in Spanish and the English translation are and are not translations, since both are thoroughly multilingual” (93). Like Brito’s *The Devil in Texas*, Cota-Cárdenas’s 1985 novel incorporates vast amounts of English, while the

---

66 Interestingly, there is no critical consensus on which name – Petra or Pat – is the more appropriate designation. Martín-Rodríguez and Shuru both use Petra, while Martín opts for Pat. In her introduction, Rebolledo initially combines the two – Pat/Petra – but in ensuing references only describes her as Petra. I have shifted back and forth between the names, never settling on one or the other.
2000 translation into English also leaves phrases and sentences in Spanish. For example, compare the following excerpt, first in “Spanish,” then in “English”:

“Eres tú, Pat? Pues no más quería ‘ijirte que encontraron al papa del Puppet, con to’a y la familia . . . Ya vienen en camino . . . Al batito, lo vamos a interrar encima de la mamá . . . pues no podemos comprar otro plot . . . Puppet and his uncle had carved out a cross for the grave . . . pues a Puppet se le hacía feo que su mamá no tuviera . . . cómo se llaman? Lápida, that’s right . . . Pues, qué se le va a hacer . . . pues, con la misma cruz . . . A lo mayor el papá le va’ querer comprar una piedra . . . lápida . . . dijieron que he took it real hard . . . Veremos, verdad?” (16)

“Is that you, Pat? Pues, just wanted to tell ya that they found Puppet’s dad, con to’a y la familia . . . his family is on the way . . . We’re going to bury the kid on top of his mom . . . We couldn’t buy another plot . . . Puppet and his uncle had carved out a cross for the grave . . . Pues Puppet couldn’t stand it that his mother didn’t have . . . what are they called . . . lápida, a gravestone, that’s right . . . well what can you do . . . well with the same cross or maybe his dad’ll wanna buy him a stone . . . lápida . . . they said he took it really hard . . . we’ll see, huh?” (17)

In the Spanish version, English phrases like “Puppet and his uncle had carved out a cross for the grave,” “that’s right,” and “he took it real hard” stand out, and all remain in the English translation, though they no longer stand out when surrounded by other English words. Phrases like “con to’a y la familia” and the words “Pues” and “lápida” are transferred from the Spanish version into the English version as well, gaining new emphasis. And while Martín convincingly argues that both versions are “thoroughly multilingual,” I’d like to pause for a moment on the different way multilingualism operates in the predominantly English version.

Interestingly, the grammar of the initial version “he took it real hard” is corrected in the English translation to “he took it really hard”; another small shift in language use with the potential to alter our understanding of the character.
First, as this passage indicates, the amount of Spanish transferred to the English version is less than the English present in the Spanish version: there are 18 English words in the Spanish version, and 8 Spanish words in the English version. Additionally, the English version provides a direct translation of “lápida,” – a gravestone – not present in the Spanish version. In both cases, the speaker is at a loss for words, doesn’t know what they are called, but in each version the reason why he doesn’t know the word potentially changes. In the Spanish version, when the speaker asks, “cómo se llaman?” [“what are they called?”] and presumably learns the response “lápida,” he appears not to know the proper term for a gravestone. When he follows up with “una piedra . . . lápida” – either corrected by someone else or correcting himself – he is simply replacing the somewhat vaguer Spanish term with a more precise one. However, when the conversation is narrated predominantly in English, the focus of this search for words potentially becomes one of how to say the word in another language. Coupled with the direct translation of “lápida, a gravestone,” the presentation of “a stone . . . lápida” emphasizes a translation from English to Spanish rather than a shift from imprecise to precise terminology. Does the speaker know the word he’s reaching for in any language, or is it a matter of translation? Each version provides different opportunities for answering that question, and thus each presents a subtly different interaction between characters searching for the right words.

The shift to a heavier incorporation of English inevitably changes the interpretive possibilities of Cota-Cárdenas’s text. Thus, when Rebolledo claims in her introduction, “the English version has uniquely incorporated some Spanish so that the reader finds the
meaning through an immediate translation or by context. Thus, the reader is able to access Chicano cultural reality” (xv), she grants the incorporation of Spanish a bit more power than it likely deserves. Because the Spanish is used so sparingly, and because it is nearly always translated, the version of “Chicano reality” to which readers gain “access” is mediated by these accommodating measures. While it certainly is worth arguing that the English reader’s encounter with Spanish words on the page might highlight the importance of bi- or multi-lingualism to Chicano cultural reality, the experience of an automatic translation might also frustrate access to that reality. The immediate translation of Spanish words, as exemplified by “lápida, a gravestone” occurs frequently throughout the English version of the novella, and in many cases somewhat jarringly.68 Particularly when it appears in the midst of dialogue, this direct translation serves to create an understanding of the bilingual experience of language as one in which the speaker or listener is perpetually translating words into English. While the “translation” often maintains a lot of the Spanish vocabulary, its close phrase-following translations create a fascinating juncture of English interrupting Spanish mid-sentence, adding to the overall confusion of languages, lisps, colloquialisms and misspellings that fill the novella.

Rather than separating this additional layer of textual and material confusion from those more clearly intended by Cota-Cárdenas, we might ask what effects all of these linguistic choices combined have on our understanding of what Rebolledo calls the “cacophony of narration that even Homi Bhabha would be proud of” (xviii). For

---

68 See, for example, “Y no te pude dijir el otro día, Pat, I couldn’t tell you the other day” (100); “Ajá, pues cómo no ibanos a saber, of course we were gonna know!” (112), “No sé de qué, Memo, of what I don’t know” (130)
example, Martín writes of Cota-Cárdenas’s typographic choices, “utilizing different fonts and typefaces, such as bold letters, capitals, italics, and indented type throughout the novel . . . emphasize[s] emotion, memory, fantasy, and reality” (94). Readers certainly encounter a variety of visual choices with regard to the text, such as text in capitals, “TE NUNCA QUISISTE OIR, YOU NEVER WANTED TO HEAR, TE ACUERDAS? YOU REMEMBER? pues something bad is going to happen to you, SOMETHING BAD, ya verás, you’ll see” (7, English). Interwoven with those font choices are the visual representations of linguistic choice, which potentially jolt readers from the fantasy of the fictional world to the reality of the page. In Spanish/English Codeswitching in a Written Corpus, Laura Callahan notes the effects of such written codeswitching that occur “by virtue of its transmission via a visual channel. The most basic of these is the visible contrast between the two codes, which in turn focuses the reader’s attention on the language itself” (102). While the monolingual reader is gratified by instant translation (“TE ACUERDAS? YOU REMEMBER?”), the visual layout of the Spanish words followed by the English translation may disrupt the continuity of a conversation or a line of prose, causing a reader to pause. Does the speaker – here Petra’s internal voice – actually repeat herself in English? Or, more likely, does this change to the text function entirely in service of the monolingual reader?

These translations, even as they occur right in middle of the text, pretend to exist somehow “outside” the narrative itself, though they can’t help but shape the reading experience. If, as Rebolledo argues, “it is the reader who gradually, in the act of reading, begins to fill in and complete the words and sentences, becoming in this way a participant
in the dawning of consciousness” (xxi), what effect does the English version’s ready
supply of direct translations have on a reader’s “dawning of consciousness”? The
presence of direct translations certainly accommodates readers in a way that the Spanish
version does not, altering the linguistic responsibility one must take in order to
understand the text. But the experience of these manufactured pauses, the breaks in the
dialogue or prose that occur when one stops to consider who is “speaking” these
translations and for whom, might also have the potential to heighten readers’
consciousness of the interplay of languages. The breaks present an opportunity for
monolingual readers to reflect on their own relationship(s) to language and the text. Both
the English and the Spanish versions offer different kinds of opportunities for readers to
investigate their own ties to language. Petra’s own language issues are displaced onto the
reader in a material way, but the experience of linguistic confusion (as in the
predominantly Spanish version) or the pause for accommodation (as in the mostly
English version) gives readers very different experiences of the borders between
languages.

Much like Rebolledo’s paratextual introduction and the narrative incorporation of
Spanish into the English translation, the format and shape of the 2000 bilingual edition of
Puppet insists on the equal importance of the Spanish version even as it constructs a
hierarchy that accommodates and privileges the English version. Again, like the recovery
edition of Brito’s El diablo en Texas/The Devil in Texas, the University of New Mexico
Press edition of Puppet is not a facing-page edition: the two versions of the text are
entirely separated, one after another. In some ways, this presentation minimizes the
potential for reader interaction with and comparison between versions: readers must flip between large sections of the book to compare lines, paragraphs, or chapters rather than have ready access across the page. But in a novel approach to the presentation format of the edition, each version has its own front cover: read one way, the book begins with Rebolledo’s introduction and the English version of Puppet. But turn to the back cover and flip the book upside down, and the novella now begins with the Spanish version of Puppet. The English and Spanish versions of the text meet in the middle, a nice materially constructed metaphor for the contact between languages and versions. This construction also gives the illusion that each version of the text is deserving of being the first in line to be read, at the beginning, and that each version lives by the other. The format more forcefully places the choice of where to begin in the hands of the reader, drawing him or her into a reflection on border textuality.

But despite this attempt to eliminate the hierarchy of a text and its translation, a few key elements reinforce the sense that the English edition is the primary text. First of all, the copyright page and Rebolledo’s “Foreword” only precede the English translation, while the Spanish version simply begins without any intermediary commentary. Placing the foreword before the English version is not only practical, as it describes why the translation was needed, but also functionally chooses the English version as the beginning of the text in a way the cover pages refuse to do. The cover pages themselves

---

69 A number of children’s and beginner bilingual books employ this format. Perhaps most notably, a set of books produced by a company called Mandy and Andy Books, Inc. (with the tagline, “Books kids can flip over!”) offers titles such as Goin’ to the Zoo/Vamos al Zoológico and Visiting the Farm/Visitando la Granja in a format that allows readers to read in English, then flip the book over and read the same story in Spanish.
are not entirely identical either: the cover of the English version lists “Introduction by Tey Diana Rebolledo” vertically down the right hand side of the page, where it meets with the words “Translated by Barbara D. Riess and Trino Sandoval” which are typed across the bottom of the page.70 While the Spanish version’s cover appears to contain the same layout and portrait (of a graffiti-covered wall), Rebolledo’s name is replaced with “Photografía por Delilah Montoya / Diseñado por Linda Mae Tratechaud” [“Photography by Delilah Montoya / Designed by Linda Mae Tratechaud”]. Instead of translators’ names across the bottom, the following is provided: “University of New Mexico Press / 1-800-249-7737 / www.unmpress.com.” Both the inclusion of references to the designer and photographer, which are typically relegated to the back cover (and in miniscule font) and the address information of the publisher, help define the Spanish version as the “end” of the book. Furthermore, the Spanish version’s “cover” contains the bar code and ISBN number, another staple of the back of a paperback. These minor details give weight to the English version as the “real” beginning of the book. The spine of the paperback contains the words “Puppet” on the top and bottom, printed frontward and backward so that the title can be read at the top of each side of the Spanish and English versions. However, in the middle, “Cota-Cárdenas” is printed only once, in the same direction as the “Puppet” of the English version.

In addition, while the cover image – a photograph by Delilah Montoya – initially appears to be replicated on each title page, a closer look reveals that the photograph is actually a wide panoramic shot that stretches over one cover, across the spine, and onto

70 Although the copyright page references that the translators worked “with the author,” the cover page makes no reference to her assistance in the translation.
the other cover. The grayscale graffiti covering a wall draws the two versions of the text
together, joined by an image that is slightly different on both covers. Of course, because
the image is wrapped around the covers, it is also necessarily upside-down on one side:
the Spanish side. A quick glance at the cover would miss this detail; most of the graffiti
images on this cover are shapes and the upside-down letters look like hieroglyphics or
nonsense. But the very “top” of Spanish cover’s image reveals that it is the bottom of the
wall, with a patch of weeds and grass leading up to it. The image on this “front cover” is
upside down, particularly stark evidence of Reitani’s argument that “the starting text . . .
also loses its autonomy: in bilingual editions it ‘lives’ by the translation” (591). In many
ways, the choices of the photographer and designer seek to eliminate the linguistic
hierarchy of the Spanish and English versions, but even those choices reinforce traces of
that hierarchy: someone – whether it be the editor, publisher, or reader – always has to
choose where to begin. The Spanish version now not only comes second in this bilingual
edition, but it is also upside down, illegible to readers moving front to back.

One other change is made across the two different covers: the subtitle of the text,
originally “Una novela Chicana” has been changed to “A Chicano Novella” on the
English cover. Translating the Spanish “novela” into “novella” may make sense given
the length of Cota-Cárdenas’s text; however, “novela” more accurately translates to
“novel,” while “novela corta” is the more specific Spanish synonym for the English
“novella.” Perhaps the shift to “novella” is the more accurate word choice, but it is not
the closest match to the Spanish, even as its placement on both covers – which are
intended to act like mirror images – would lead one to believe. In addition, “Chicana”
gets replaced with “Chicano,” and while one could certainly argue that the “a” in the 
Spanish title only acts as a modifier of a feminine noun, it’s at least curious that the 
translators, cover designer, and/or publisher felt compelled to describe a novel written by 
a Chicana and about a female protagonist as “Chicano.” That they made the change from 
Chicana to Chicano could perhaps suggest an attempt to cast a wider net: coupled with 
the title, which readers soon learn is the name of a male character, the designation of the 
book as Chicano is both more inclusive and helps shift the focus away from the author 
and even Pat, the protagonist, and toward Puppet and his story. The change from 
feminine to masculine potentially indicates that this is not a book about women, but a 
book about the singular male: the feminine specificity of the subtitle is erased.⁷¹

Cota-Cárdenas herself is aware of the impact of the packaging of her work on 
interpretation (and, of course, sales). In an interview with Cecilia Yocupicio Valenzuela, 
she notes that the changes between her 1985 text and the 2000 version were few:

Con el original de 1985, ningún cambio excepto tal vez alguna corrección 
tipográfica. En la edición bilingüe de 2000, cambios tal vez de 
presentación solamente. Vimos que al libro lo cubrieron con una tela de 
plástico, se supone que para proteger la cubierta. Así, el lector/comprador 
en una librería (no las bibliotecas que pedían el libro por ya tener 
publicidad o pedido oficial de antemano), no tenía la oportunidad de abrir 
el libro para saber de qué se trataba. Pero cambios al relato, no, no lo 
cambiaria nada. Vino de mi pura alma; y no dije alma pura. (61)

[With the original in 1985, not one change except perhaps some 
typographic corrections. In the 2000 bilingual edition, only changes of 
presentation. We saw that they covered the book with plastic, supposedly 
to protect the cover. So, the reader/buyer in a bookstore (not the libraries

⁷¹ Interestingly, the 2000 version of Puppet is catalogued in Google Books, and it presents the English 
cover page as the first page, linking to text from the English version but not the Spanish. And yet, its title 
in the Google Books apparatus (as listed in the “Overview” and that which appears when one runs a search 
for the book) is Puppet: una novela Chicana. A search for a book with this Spanish title produces the 
bilingual edition with the edited title presented as the cover page.
that requested the book before it was published or officially ordered it beforehand) did not have the opportunity to open the book to know what it was about. But changes to the story, no, I wouldn’t change anything. It came purely from my soul; and I didn’t say my pure soul.]

Cota-Cárdenas easily recognizes that the plastic sheeting initially covering the 2000 bilingual edition might dissuade readers from buying a book they couldn’t browse through; I argue that the presentation of the novella/novel has a similar impact on how readers will interact with novel. While the plastic cover that prevents browsing is a useful metaphor for all of the other paratextual elements that can interrupt a reader’s engagement with Cota-Cárdenas’s text, it should be noted that the bilingual edition’s presentation of the two versions of the text and its attempts to dispose of the hierarchy of such editions are not simply “negative” effects that obscure the “real” version or meanings of the text. Instead this bilingual edition usefully reflects the complexities of bilingualism, translation, and the literary market in a way that makes Petra’s own navigation of language material to readers. It exemplifies border textuality by bringing readers into contact with the subject matter of the narrative – the lexical content – through the visceral experience of the material text. It’s no accident that Pat’s own introduction to the political ramifications of being between languages occurs on the physical, geographic, national border between the United States and Mexico: “my first words in English were back in Mexicali when my parents got to the border checkpoint . . . ‘American-born’” (14). For readers, the material text supplies another inhabitable border zone from which to question the relationship between a text and its translation, the inseparability of the Spanish and English languages into discrete versions. Examining the material text for evidence of its social life, we can assess the changes this “American-
born” novella had to undergo in order to have a better chance at being read as American literature.

The “recovery” of texts like *The Squatter and the Don*, *El diablo en Texas*, and *Puppet* is a major accomplishment for the future of Chicana/o, Mexican American, and border literature. Giving wider audiences access to these novels, editors and translators as well as those selected to introduce the text work in concert to restore what was once lost, whether hundreds of years or merely decades ago. But the choice of what to recover, and how to go about doing so, has lasting effects on the social lives of those texts. Those effects are visible in the material evidence of those recovery texts and the editions that have followed them. Often, editors and translators try to minimize the visibility of their choices, pretending to “get out of the way” of the text, merely setting the contextual stage of the text’s initial production and reception. At the same time, those introductory justifications, as well as the paratextual and editorial choices made in the text, can’t help but shape the text into a new version. These new versions reflect the current historical moment and its politics as much as those of the initial historical moments of the texts. Jerome McGann makes an argument that resonates with some of the editorial choices made by Sánchez and Pita, for instance:

The critical edition embodies a practical goal which can be (within limits) accomplished, but it equally embodies an illusion about its own historicity (or lack thereof). According to this view of itself, the critical text is reproduced with a minimum of interference by contemporary concerns on the one hand, and a maximum of attention to the historically removed materials on the other. The rules for producing critical editions place such emphasis on these matters that editors cannot be encouraged to reflect upon the contemporary motivating factors which operate in their work. (94)
Sánchez and Pita’s own critics were quick to point out those “contemporary motivating factors,” highlighting the way a need to justify Ruiz de Burton to the Chicana/o canon shaped their interpretation. In turn, that interpretation shapes new readers’ interpretation of the novel by preceding it. That Sánchez and Pita’s edition, as well as the Modern Library Classics edition, comes under scrutiny here is not meant to condemn their editorial choices; my goal is rather to emphasize how any paratextual choice has a shaping effect on the text. These particular editions reveal their own instability, exemplifying border textuality even as their editors attempt to conceal it.

The same is true for the more recent recovery projects that add the further complicating factor of translation. Aristeo Brito, Margarita Cota-Cárdenas, and their editors and translators have produced completely new versions of their novellas that only emphasize the effects of multiple languages on border identity and texts. They also exemplify the impossibility of full translation, both for the characters who inhabit Presidio/Ojinaga and Los Angeles and for the texts through which we meet them. Examining choices of paratextual presentation, we can begin to locate the politics at stake in these recovery projects, the hierarchies of language more or less concealed, the sacrifices required for survival. The bilingual editions reach a wider audience of readers, but in the act of recovery are fundamentally changed. The evidence of these changes is apparent from the margins and borders of recovery texts. The cover pages, introductions, footnotes, and other critical apparatus speak to readers of the complicated social life of the text that these versions now participate in. And in their contradictions, their errors,
erasures, and evasions, they reflect border textuality: they give readers a visual and material reminder of the instability of border politics, identity, and history.
CHAPTER FIVE

WRITING IN THE MARGINS: THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET

This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space.

bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness”

Since its publication in 1984 by Arte Público Press, Sandra Cisneros’s The House on Mango Street has enjoyed a steady stream of critical and popular success, becoming one of the most frequently taught works of fiction across elementary, high school, and college levels. Often celebrated for its deceptive simplicity, The House on Mango Street tackles such issues as poverty and abuse, ethnic and linguistic identity, education and social change from the point of view of a young girl named Esperanza Cordero in a series of vignettes. Now in its 25th anniversary edition from Vintage Contemporaries, a division of Random House, Cisneros’s story cycle has become one of, if not the most canonical examples of Chicana writing. In her introduction to the 1994 Knopf edition of The House on Mango Street, Cisneros reflects on the book’s popularity, writing, “The raggedy state of my books that some readers and educators hand me to sign is the best compliment of all” (xix). Referring to those books as “raggedy,” Cisneros critiques the premium many book-buyers and owners place on keeping their possessions neat and tidy, careful not to crease the spine or smudge the pages, suggesting that the material evidence of reading –

205
warped or dog-eared pages, torn covers, or notes in the margins – indicates that those readers engaged with her work in an active way. Cisneros’s embrace of readerly (mis)handling of her work offers an opportunity to consider more broadly the ways in which *The House on Mango Street* constructs its material borders as a space of communication and identification. Critical discussions of the work have highlighted and debated the relationships between *The House on Mango Street* and various generic and thematic borders and margins, how it manipulates and speaks from the margins of national, linguistic, and gendered identities. But few, if any, have considered whether and how *The House on Mango Street* teaches and encourages readers to speak from/in the margins, literally occupying the textual margins of the book with their own voice(s).

This chapter will explore the relationship between constructions of the border – from theories of the borderlands to the generic category of border literature, as well as those borders of identity highlighted in Cisneros’s narrative – and the material borders offered by the text of *The House on Mango Street*, arguing that the narrative’s structure as well as its valorization of marginality encourages readers to engage in speaking/writing from the (textual) margins themselves, using the ample white space of the page to write back to the text. Furthermore, these marginal notes provide insight into the personal and institutional uses to which *The House on Mango Street* is put, highlighting the successes and drawbacks of its transformation from a work of literature into a textbook. As it has grown in popularity, Cisneros’s text has increasingly been used as a tool for teaching literary vocabulary and analysis; instructors and readers who celebrate it for its approachability in this regard also sacrifice its complexity. Yet the
evidence of annotators across the country demonstrates that though *The House on Mango Street* may make for an appealing textbook, its readers continue to put it to a wide range of uses in their attempts to comprehend, interpret, and interact with it. Drawing on the work of a growing number of textual and reader response theorists who argue that marginalia can provide valuable insight into our understanding of the reading experience, I examine a number of marked up copies of the book collected from used book sellers around the country, exploring how anonymous readers occupy the margins of their texts.

In this case, I argue that many readers of *The House on Mango Street* demonstrate resistance not only to the taboos against dirtying the clean white page, but also to the idea of the page as a space occupied only by the author and her words. Cisneros’s text, which emphasizes the borders between the individual and community, invites their participation. These annotators adapt and respond not only to Cisneros and Esperanza, but also to their instructors and the language of literary studies. Seeing the work of Cisneros’s narrative and the efforts of her readers as intertwined, even dependent on one another, invites us to re-examine our assumptions about the borders between text and not-text, as well as between author and reader, even teacher and student, and to reconsider the dynamics of the power relationships between them. Works of border literature call attention to themselves as social texts – as shaped by the borders between those who write, publish, edit, read, and analyze them. In addition to the figurative constructions of the border they produce in their narratives, the material borders of the text offer a new space in which to construct the genre of border literature.
Though I argue that *The House on Mango Street* models and even makes possible the act of speaking from the margins, I acknowledge that those whom it encourages to speak often have varying degrees of familiarity with being marginalized in the first place. As I will demonstrate in more detail throughout, the status of *The House on Mango Street* as a “representative” or canonical text means it is often used as the (only) multicultural element in majority-white high school and college classrooms. While it is useful to discuss whether and how the narrative, by privileging the minority voice also gives majority readers a narrative as well as a material sense of existing on the borders, it is also important to recognize the dangers and possibilities of readers using those margins to “re-colonize” the text, though it is sometimes impossible to determine the status of those readers merely by judging their annotations. As bell hooks writes of those who attempt to co-opt minority discourse in “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” “No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority” (343). hooks argues that the margins – figurative and literal – constitute the space where forces of dominance and resistance meet, and where the potential for power is greatest and yet most dangerous as a space of near-erasure. In exposing the ways *The House on Mango Street* encourages shifts in the balance of power between author, teacher, and reader, I hope to continuously demonstrate how those shifts are also always complicated by issues of class, gender, and race.
In the sections that follow, I will first trace a number of arguments surrounding the definition(s) of border literature and discuss where and how *The House on Mango Street* fits into the discussion, and then add a new border zone to the mix: the material, textual margins. The second section will examine the growing textual-critical emphasis on marginal annotation as well as highlight the recent engagements of the margins by book historians, reader response theorists, and Chicana/o and border scholars, particularly in their work on Cisneros. The third and final section will delve deeper into the role of marginalia in *The House on Mango Street*, arguing that the prevalence of annotated copies on the used book market underscores its near-textbook status, and that an examination of some of these copies exposes evidence of the reading experience, with a particular focus on the ways it is taught in the classroom. This shift itself represents yet another border zone for Cisneros’s story cycle: as both pleasurable, even “simple,” reading and a literary textbook, *The House on Mango Street* offers itself up to multiple uses. Exploring eight annotated copies of *The House on Mango Street*, I demonstrate the ways it encourages writing in/from the margins, whether by simply providing ample blank space, serving as a textbook, or startling readers into conversation. By focusing on the way readers engage with and even ignore parts of Cisneros’s text, we can begin to uncover significant emphases in the ways they attempt to identify with and consume this border text.

*Section One: Cisneros and the Borderlands*

Critics often disagree about whether or not to categorize certain works under the label of border literature, particularly when it comes to a writer like Sandra Cisneros and
a text like *The House on Mango Street*, which is set in Humboldt Park, a Chicago Puerto Rican neighborhood. Monika Kaup includes in her own work a study of *The House on Mango Street*, arguing that Cisneros’s work is “relevant both for her critique of the home – traditional domesticity – as well as for the delineation of an urban, postnational equivalent of Chicano community and the Chicano homeland. Both themes are stated in the title: the house and the street” (247). The Chicago neighborhood becomes a transplanted Chicano community with strong ties to the geographic border despite its distance from it. However, Claudia Sadowski-Smith disapproves of the categorization of Cisneros’s work as border literature, saying critical willingness to label *The House on Mango Street* as such “exemplifies how the conflation of the border space with issues of Chicana/o identity and formal experimentation divorces symbolic concepts from the literal territory of the national boundary” (33). As Sadowski-Smith explains,

While Cisneros certainly uses these border tropes and the genre-crossing aesthetics of the short-story cycle, none of her work is explicitly located along the Mexico-US boundary . . . Cisneros’s work is considered border literature within a framework that permits the use of ‘the border’ in its symbolic meaning as a designation for questions of Chicana/o identity and aesthetics. In this sense the border tropes . . . could theoretically be found in much if not all Chicana/o literary texts, independently of their actual spatial or local focus” (33-34).

---

72 Kaup’s study makes no mention of the fact that Mango Street, a fictional street name, is based on a real Chicago street that runs through a mostly Puerto Rican neighborhood, and that most of the characters who are not specifically cited as Puerto Rican, such as Marin and her boyfriend, are likely of Puerto Rican descent. We might assume she is working with an expanded definition of “Chicano” community that includes all Latinos, but it is not entirely clear.

73 And in fact, according to the 2000 Census, the Hispanic population of Chicago is the third largest of any city in the United States (second only to New York and Los Angeles). In particular, the Mexican population of Cook County, Illinois is the third largest, behind Los Angeles County, California and Harris County, Texas, while the Puerto Rican population of Chicago is second only to New York City. Chicago serves as a Mexican, Chicana/o, and Puerto Rican border community that confounds the priorities of geography or proximity to the national border itself.
Sadowski-Smith’s argument gets at the heart of the problem of the genre definitions of border literature. Much like the debates over what counts as Chicana/o literature (must it be written by a Chicana/o? Or about Chicana/os? What if it’s one, but not the other?), the problem of categorization comes down to a question of what counts: the physical border between the US and Mexico, or the more metaphorical borderlands of adolescence, sexuality, language, and cultural identity that Esperanza more clearly faces? Cisneros attempts to complicate matters, drawing the physical, national borderline into psychology by insisting that Mexican Americans living in Chicago feel a closer relationship to the border than those who live there. In an interview, she claims,

In Texas, they are physically closer to the border, but emotionally they’re very far away. We in Chicago were physically farther, but emotionally closer to Mexico. We had relatives in the interior. We had ties to Mexico in a way we did not have ties to Illinois . . . I get emotional when I hear the Mexican national anthem. The Texans don’t . . . I feel very Mexican, but the Texans don’t feel Mexican. They’re not Mexican, they’re Texan. And that’s a real distinction, a real relationship. (Jussawalla and Dasenbrock, 295-296).

Here Cisneros’s comparison is complicated by the fact that she shifts the object of comparison from “the border” when speaking about Texans to “Mexico” when speaking about Illinoisans, but she nonetheless creates an opportunity to view border identity as

---

74 A number of critics explore the problems of inclusion and exclusion when defining Chicana/o literature, including Louis Gerard Mendoza and Marcial González. González devotes a chapter in *Chicano Novels and the Politics of Form* to the debate over the work of Daniel James, an Anglo writer who published a “Chicano” novel under the pseudonym “Danny Santiago” (a Chicano book with a non-Chicano writer) and another chapter to Cecile Pineda, a Chicana writer whose novels are not ostensibly about Chicana/os. González “challenge[s] the assumption that the Chicano-ness of a Chicano novel is necessarily dependent upon the ethnicity of the author” (7) as well as “the view that the works of Chicana writers should be deemed authentic only if the writing focuses on the experiences of being a Chicana” (157). We might find ourselves asking similar questions about border literature: Can one write a novel about the border if they’ve never lived there? Is the novel by a person living on the border necessarily and always border literature? *Send My Roots Rain*, a 1991 novel by Ibis Gómez-Vega (a Cuban American who grew up on and writes about the US-Mexico border) might be a good place to start answering these questions.
that which is felt even in the absence of a geographic border. Although we might read
this as merely a variation on “absence makes the heart grow fonder,” Cisneros argues that
proximity to the border does not necessarily imply increased nationalist feelings.  

The ways in which critics use Cisneros to develop strong arguments for exclusion
or inclusion into the canon of border literature locates *The House on Mango Street* on a
border of its own, straddling the margins between genre labels and definitions that define
the border itself in multiple different ways. Thus, *The House on Mango Street* stands as a
useful example of the problems of definition at the heart of Chicana/o border literature:
not quite inside or outside the traditional genre definitions, it challenges us to consider
the borders of the genre itself. In the struggle for definition, the question of what
constitutes a border becomes one of what constitutes the “right” border, the central or
foundational border, the primary border worth studying. Occasionally, in the interest of
strict definitions it seems that critics unnecessarily privilege geography and the specific
site of national definition, with all its attendant violence, to the extent of excluding these
other, more metaphorical or identity-based borders. But perhaps neither the exclusionary,
restrictive response of US-Mexico border critics nor the excessively liberal application of
the borderlands and border consciousness to any number of situations by postmodern
theorists are exactly the right response to the problem of definition. Instead it might be
useful to think about integrating the physical, the geographic and national boundary lines

---

75 Ana Castillo, another border writer who was raised in Chicago, voices a similar perspective: “I grew up
perceiving myself to be Mexican despite the fact that I was born in the United States and did not visit
México until the age of ten . . . We ate, slept, talked, and dreamed Mexican. Our parishes were Mexican.
Small Mexican-owned businesses flourished. We were able to replicate Mexico to such a degree that the
spiritual and psychological needs of a people so despised and undesired by white dominant culture were
met in our own large communities” (25)
into a network of other intersecting and interdependent borders. Such an approach would not ignore the problem of physical proximity to the national or other physical boundary lines, but instead highlight the relative distance in a way that recognizes patterns of immigration, migration, and the reconstitution of community that does not always measure distance from the border in miles or even hours. Sadowski-Smith may be correct that nearly all Chicana/o literature engages this more expanded notion of the border, and in many cases more attention should be paid to the important role geography plays in these works. But it might also be worth considering how the effects of one geographic location, the physical place of the border, lingers on, its residue traceable in the constructions of identities even as they are transplanted far from them. What new and different borders does a place like Chicago introduce?

The Chicago of *The House on Mango Street* may fit Anzaldúa’s broad definition of the border, as a space “where two or more cultures edge each other,” but Esperanza’s narration hints at the haunting presence of border geography and the national boundary as well. The border looms in small ways, referencing Alicia’s gift of a purse “with the word GUADALAJARA stitched on it, which is home for Alicia, and one day she will go back there” (106), and in large, such as the vignette entitled “Geraldo No Last Name,” in which the first-person narration drops away almost entirely to reveal hints of the story of Geraldo, “another brazer who didn’t speak English. Another wetback” (66). Here the realities of undocumented immigration are hinted at in the limited details, reflecting the absence of information: “No address. No name. Nothing in his pockets. Ain’t it a shame” (66). Geraldo may be at a far remove from the border, but Cisneros, in very few
words, insists on the importance of place, outlining the urban geography of border existence: “They never saw the kitchenettes. They never knew about the two-room flats and sleeping rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange” (66). The repeated insistence on Geraldo’s invisibility, unknowability, the absolute loneliness of an unmourned death, wrenches the politics of the national border further and further north. It also demonstrates that the problems of geographic and national boundaries continue to have an impact on the people in Esperanza’s neighborhood, even at such a far remove. In attempting to categorize *The House on Mango Street*, expanding the definition of border literature need not deflate the term, nor render it useless, so long as critics and writers remain sensitive to the significance of space and place and their interactions in the shaping of identity.

Thus far I have begun to demonstrate how *The House on Mango Street* acts as a liminal text, slipping in and out of the various definitions of border literature. Before examining in more detail the ways in which readers themselves approach the border spaces of Cisneros’s text, I want to turn to the critical discussion surrounding the paratextual borders of *The House on Mango Street*, as well as another set of debates about the margins occurring in the realm of textual studies and reader response criticism: specifically, the debates over the value and reliability of reader marginalia in the social life of a text. Attentiveness to geography, to space and place, is not only useful when thinking about the national border of border literature, but also for considering the impact of the material, textual borders on readers and writers. How do writers and publishers manipulate the space of the page? And what do readers do with those pages? Some
readers, like an annotator of a copy of *The House on Mango Street* from Bowling Green State University (BGSU), respond to the problem of space and place as depicted in Cisneros’s text by manipulating the margins for themselves. In “Laughter,” Esperanza describes seeing a house in her neighborhood that “looks like Mexico” (18); before her friends Rachel and Lucy can laugh at this odd simile, her sister Nenny responds, “Yes, that’s Mexico all right (18). The BGSU annotator notes the “cultural differences between Rachel’s/Lucy’s roots” and that “Mexico’ is significant to Esperanza’s family and ancestry” (18). In a narrative moment where two young girls redefine what “Mexico” is, what it looks like, where it can be found, speaking up and assuring one another of the validity of their claims, a reader writes himself or herself onto the page, staking a claim in the interpretation of the text. As the annotator acknowledges the significance of “Mexico” to girls who would otherwise be laughed at, he or she materially alters the conditions under which the text can be read and interpreted. What, if anything, does the dialogue occurring in the margins of the text tell us about fights for authority, for the right to speak, in border literature? Bringing Cisneros’s work of (would-be) border literature into contact with studies of its paratext and, more importantly, marginalia studies, sets the foundation for my study of reader responses to the text.

**Section Two: Margins as Borderlands**

Critical interest in the paratext of border literature has begun, predictably, with its covers. Cover pages function as legitimized margins, as “annotative” spaces where

---

76 From here, I will refer to the various annotated copies of the book I studied by referencing the state from which they were sold. My study currently explores copies from Maryland, Virginia (2) – referred to as Virginia and Blacksburg –, Ohio (2) – referred to as Ohio and Bowling Green –, Michigan, Georgia, and California.
publishers define and describe the text in an attempt to entice readers, their bibliographic codes shaping expectations about the content and quality of the narrative. Ned Drew and Paul Sternberger argue in *By Its Cover: Modern American Book Design*, “The cover is a book’s first communication to the reader, a graphic representation not simply of its content, but of its point in history – in the history of American design, in the history of American literature, in the history of American culture” (8-10); as a space between text and not-text, covers are themselves an expected component of any book, and often the primary site of revelation that the author’s intentions aren’t the only intentions that matter. Most recently, Manuel Martín-Rodríguez and Ellen McCracken have separately studied the covers of Chicana/o and Latina/o books, arguing the evidence on those covers demonstrates the degree to which publishers and marketers create and fit these works into pre-existing molds. Both Martín-Rodríguez and McCracken demonstrate that book covers often work at odds with the narratives contained within, serving as historical reminders of the struggles over identity and authority that occur in the publishing industry. They recognize how the margins between text and not-text such as cover pages aid in the construction of “Latina/o” in the national imaginary, fetishizing and exoticizing the literature it introduces.

In their studies of Cisneros’s work in particular, both critics note and critique the use of the artwork of Nivea Gónzalez to introduce readers to her texts. Martín-Rodríguez charts the changes made to the cover of *The House on Mango Street*, which in the Arte Público edition featured a “quasi-expressionistic drawing of an urban setting by Narciso Peña,” but was replaced in the Random House edition with Nivia Gónzalez’s painting of
three women “with their eyes and their mouths closed, clothed in pastel color shirts” (131). Calling the replacement cover much more “soothing and serene” (131), Martín-Rodríguez argues that the new cover participates in “a style of presentation that accentuates the childish, the naïve, the colorful (with frequent recourse to pastel colors) . . . to create an immediately recognizable, ‘culturally marked’ graphic image” (131). McCracken, who argues that writers like Cisneros “are foregrounded as exotic and different from the mainstream precisely as they are being integrated into the mainstream, primarily because sameness is not as marketable in current conditions as is difference” (5), notes that Random House uses another of Nivea González’s pieces as the cover of Cisneros’s *Woman Hollering Creek*. She argues,

> While serving as a positive source of identity for some Chicana readers, proud to see their art validated in this mainstream outlet, the cover is a polysemous text that simultaneously can work to confirm stereotypes of the Mexican woman as folkloric figure for other readers who lack in-depth contact with Mexican Americans. Together with the picture of Cisneros wearing a rebozo on the back cover, it can constitute a palatable multiculturalist frame of commodified ethnicity. (17)

McCracken further finds evidence of this “commodified ethnicity” in Random House’s selection of yet another of González’s paintings to grace the cover of a “minority” author, this time introducing Filipino writer Francisco Sionil José’s *Three Filipino Women*. McCracken expresses concern that “some in the mainstream engage in the rhetorical trope of what might be termed ‘minority metaphoricity,’ the substitutability of one minority for another in the marketing of postmodern ethnic commodities” (206).

Both critics argue that the line between multiculturalist celebration and commodification is as blurred as any other boundary, and recognize that writers like
Cisneros, “in order to reach a wide audience, [are] dependent on a mainstream publishing outlet bent on selling her as a minority commodity” (McCracken 15). Martín-Rodríguez points to the shaping forces of Random House as evidence of such commodification:

By reprinting books already published by Chicano/a presses and widely respected in Chicano/a intellectual circles . . . mainstream presses can claim to be interested only in facilitating widespread access to these texts, therefore denying any editorial interference with Chicano/a literary production. Yet by manipulating the covers and creating the homogenized style . . . the presses are already interfering with the literature they reprint by altering the material conditions of reception – creating different expectations in readers and appealing to a different cultural sensitivity, for instance. (135)

Though he makes a useful point about the role large publishing houses play in reprinting famous small press Chicana/o texts, Martín-Rodríguez’s concern over the editorial “interference” of mainstream publishing houses skirts the issue of how any publishing house, small press or large, alters the conditions of a text’s reception. He appears to presume the possibility that Chicana/o literature could arrive to readers in formats that do not affect interpretation, or that the choices small presses make about covers and other material concerns do not interfere with but rather support the intended interpretive possibilities of their texts. However, considering that the choice for the cover of the much smaller Arte Público Press edition did little to market the book to a wide enough audience to keep it readily in print, the niche market the press serves necessarily alters the conditions of reception and interpretation of the text. One might even go so far as to argue that the canonical version of The House on Mango Street is indeed the 1991 Vintage edition, cover page and all, as that is the one with which the majority of readers are familiar.
But Random House has introduced a completely new cover for *The House on Mango Street*, once again altering the possibilities for readers’ understanding of Cisneros’s text. This new cover, complete with a round, silver stamp indicating this as the “25th Anniversary Edition” features a childlike sketch of an orange dwelling complete with television antenna, the title in thick, yellow, bubble letters filling the rectangle of the home. Set against a blue sky, the emphasis on the house on this cover contrasts with Peña’s emphasis on the full neighborhood, though they both emphasize an urban context; the three women of González’s cover are replaced with a small drawing of a single girl’s prim face framed by a single window, though her eyes remain similarly closed.\(^77\)

Despite the withdrawn look on the young woman’s face, the color choices and font manage to “accentuate the childish, the naïve, the colorful (with frequent recourse to pastel colors)” in an even more emphatic way than the cover Martín Rodríguez takes issue with in the first place. Furthermore, the anniversary stamp visually confers canonicity on Cisneros’s text, conditioning even in that act the way readers relate to the text. Acknowledging the text as worthy of a 25th Anniversary Edition (and by printing this fact in a formal font that contrasts with the playful font used for the title and author) also manages to allow Random House to celebrate the book’s years in print even before the publisher owned the rights to it, erasing the book’s struggle to stay in print in the seven years before its

---

\(^77\) I also see a fairly decent resemblance between the image of Esperanza shown in this newest cover – the window doing double duty as a portrait frame around her withdrawn, muted face – and that of Marji from the cover of Marjani Sartrapi’s well-received graphic novel *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* published by Pantheon Books, another division of Random House. Another coming-of-age story that emphasizes a young girl’s search for independence, often also described as “simple” and “deceptively uncomplicated,” the images of the grim young women resonate sadly with one another. At least Marji’s eyes are open.
acquisition. No longer a neglected gem, *The House on Mango Street* is now introduced to readers as an unqualified success, a worthy read.

Although critics of Chicana/o and border literature have begun to incorporate analyses of how paratextual materials from book covers to book reviews affect the social life of the text, such work is still fairly rare. And while Martín-Rodríguez’s work, along with that of critics like Felicia J. Cruz and Delia Poey, does emphasize the perspective of reader response theorists, what has yet to be considered is the study of how readers physically interact with border texts, altering and adapting the materials to their needs. When a reader chooses to underline, highlight, or respond in phrases or long sentences to the words on the page, some critical issues involving our understanding of the reading process as well as our understanding of the reader’s role in the communications circuit suddenly arise. In the final pages of *The House on Mango Street*, a Georgia annotator highlights the repeated use of the words “One day I will” (110), permanently emphasizing the future that Esperanza “wills” into existence in a way that other copies of the text do not. Why did he or she feel compelled to highlight those words? How does the act of highlighting change them? By marking the repetition, the annotator participates in it, visually underscoring the emphasis on Esperanza’s mantra. Questions of “respect” for one’s (or a library’s) belongings – i.e., debates about whether or not one should “crap up” the text with annotations – couple with questions of respect for authorial integrity, edging up against questions about how the margins of the page are related to the
margins of identity and geography, as different kinds of spaces between. Though border critics have yet to begin to engage in studies of marginalia, I argue that this relatively new area of textual studies and reader response offers a number of opportunities for understanding whether and how border writers and texts encourage dialogue with their readers, and what those readers’ responses are.

A text like Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* can benefit from this postmodern approach to textual and literary studies, with its conception of the role of the reader as active respondent to the text and its author, particularly if we emphasize the relationship between material, textual borders and the borders of identity described and invoked in the narrative. As textual critics have shifted their focus toward textual margins, bibliographic codes, and the textual apparatus in what Greetham calls “a manifestation of a poststructuralist concern with the ‘supplement’ as against the formalist preoccupation with the ‘text itself’” (“Out of the Text and into the Margins” 2), they often do so without fully accounting for those whose relationships to texts have historically been shaped by the margins, both textual and cultural. An emphasis on margins and borders characterizes the work of both textual scholars, who direct their focus onto the literal margins of the page, and cultural critics, who emphasize the role of geographical as well as figurative borders and margins in the shaping of culture and identity. Examining these critical practices as related and complementary creates the potential for a complex dialogue between textual and cultural critics regarding the

---

Jackson recounts the story of Maurice Sendak’s experience at a book signing when one young boy begged of him, “Please don’t crap up my book!” (235) The concern for preserving the page presents itself at a fairly young age.
relationship of socially marginalized writers, publishers, editors, and readers to the margins of texts, as well as to the practices of textual studies itself.

Heather Jackson recognizes the interpretive potential in marginalia: early in her work on over 2000 annotated books from the 18th to the 20th century, Jackson notes, “Given the recent shift of attention from the writer to the reader and to the production, dissemination, and reception of texts, marginalia of all periods would appear to be potentially a goldmine for scholars. And so they are, but they are a contested goldmine” (6). She explains, “Critics disagree . . . about the reliability of readers’ notes, and consequently about the ways in which they might legitimately be used to reconstruct either a reading environment or the mental experience of a particular reader” (6). For many critics, readers’ notes possess little value unless they happen to have been written by a famous person, in which case they are valued very much, as the evidence they offer of his or her life drives up the asking price. Jackson herself argues to the contrary, “it is difficult to think of any kind of value attached to books that is not increased by the addition of notes” (265), emphasizing the sentimental and historical value of reader’s notes that can provide insight into reader responses at various points in the history of a text’s (social) life. She neglects, however, to mention that most general readers’ notes tend to decrease at least the monetary value of books on the used book market. But Jackson is right to emphasize the revelatory potential of marginalia: for many readers, annotation is an integral part of the reading process; for many scholars and critics, the evidence of understanding, interpretation, and even enjoyment offered by marginalia are an integral part of understanding the impact of a text on its readers and vice versa.
Textual scholars have somewhat recently become interested in the marks of the “ordinary” reader; while there has been a more sustained, longer-standing interest in the marginalia of famous writers from Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Samuel Clemens, a number of reader-response-oriented critics have begun to tackle less-than-famous and even anonymous writers of marginal notes. Critics like Alison Wiggins and Richard Kopley, for example, use marginalia to advance arguments about the reading environment of Renaissance and nineteenth century American readers, respectively. In “What Did Renaissance Readers Write in Their Printed Copies of Chaucer?”, an article which aims to gauge Chaucer’s post-medieval reception via marginalia, Wiggins outlines three possible approaches to studying marginalia: one can study multiple copies of the same book, create case studies of individual readers, or provide broad surveys of entire sections of major collections. Wiggins practices the first approach, and argues, “to call up each individual copy reinforces the point, which has been made elsewhere, that every printed book is unique. Copies are individualized not only by their annotations but also by their bindings and a variety of signs of use, abuse, conservation, and sophistication made over many years by different owners” (7). Highlighting the instability of the text, its changeability, Wiggins notes that critics can begin to examine the value readers place(d) on their books by noting the visible, tangible evidence of reading. Similarly, Kopley, in “Readers Write: Nineteenth-Century Annotations in Copies of the First American Edition of Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,” compares commentary found in the margins of first editions with early reviews of the novel, arguing, “Our understanding of the critical reception of Edgar Allan Poe’s only novel . . .
may be interestingly enriched by examining annotations” (399). However, just as Jackson opens up a range of possibilities for the usefulness of marginalia in generating an understanding of methods of reading, these arguments rarely extend in focus beyond the nineteenth century, reflecting a general sense of disregard for marginalia in twentieth-century texts.

The relative lack of studies of twentieth-century marginalia is likely due to current understandings of the place of reading in society: critics including Jackson detail the shift from reading as a social event in the nineteenth century, involving families or social circles sharing books and reading aloud, to reading as silent, solitary activity in the twentieth century. They view these changes as the result of technological advances that have allowed for the mass production of books coupled with changes in the practices of the teaching of reading. However, this shift, combined with the growing general abhorrence with which the practice of marking one’s books is usually treated, also indicates the degree to which many writers and readers not only think about books as private property, but also maintain a distinct division between the active authority of the author and the passive reception of the reader. As Jackson writes, marginal notes “introduce other facts and contrary opinions, the facts and opinions themselves being less significant than the demonstrated possibility of alternatives and opinions. They impose not just criticism but a critical attitude upon all following readers. Naturally book producers resent them” (241).

Casual readers and professional readers alike often demonstrate different attachments to their books, but each group is capable of espousing beliefs about
preserving the pristine white page or handling their books in a more utilitarian manner, as a space to ask questions, gather evidence, or note patterns. While it might be assumed that more casual readers would be less careful with their books, those readers often make distinctions between the practice of annotating one’s own books vs. annotating a library book, claiming (often, in the annotation-friendly comments sections of blogs) as one commenter does that “Anyone who intentionally defaces a book that isn't theirs should be summarily executed. Anyone who defaces a book that IS theirs should have to submit to extensive counseling” (“rushmc”). While many professional readers, including literary critics and writers themselves, make practical use of the margins (and often do so in university-owned library books, from what I gather), a few shudder at the thought. Most famously, Virginia Woolf detested the practice: in an unpublished essay, for example, she writes, “this anonymous commentator must scrawl his O, or his Pooh, or his Beautiful upon the unresisting sheet, as though the author received this mark upon his flesh” (qtd. in Jackson 239). Woolf presents the paradox of the active power of the author condemned to the passive resistance of the page, dramatically equating the material object of the book with the body of the author. Ultimately, whether readers claim to be casual or professional, they likely maintain strong opinions about how best to interact with books. Extensive debates develop around whether books are artifacts that must be preserved or the sum total of each reader’s cumulative reading experiences; readers often call marginalia distracting, inane, and ugly. Despite the opinions of many readers, who note their preference for clean copies, and while libraries maintain restrictions against marginalia and used booksellers severely mark down or even throw away marked up
copies of books, twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers continue to write in them. The rules, restrictions, and pointed opinions are in fact evidence of the continued practice of marginal notation, indicating that although they may practice silent reading, these readers in no way avoid engaging in dialogue: with the writer, with the text, with themselves. Critical attention to the way we read now can be just as useful as the study of reading in other periods.

This evidence of discourse from the literal edge, the margin of the page, takes on special significance when it occurs in the margins of texts concerned with the borderlands of space, place, and identity. Though Jackson claims that it is “inadvisable to take advantage of the politicized language of marginality, diversity, inclusivity, multivocality, interactivity, destabilizing, contestation, and so on to recommend a universal license to scribble” (243), she does acknowledge postmodernism’s and poststructuralism’s effects on our understanding of the value of marginalia. Critics like D.C. Greetham are willing to go a bit further in linking the current critical fascination with marginalized identities and the margins of the text: “these days the margins are a peculiarly privileged position, as the formalist concentration on the primacy and unity of text has retreated before a concern with supplements, frames, contexts – and belatedness” (4). Greetham not only edited a collection – *The Margins of the Text* – in which issues that have long been marginalized in the field of textual editing, including race, class, gender, and sexuality are placed alongside studies of textual margins (commentary, title pages, marginal notations and footnotes), but he also writes extensively of the relationship between his career as a textual critic and his marginalized identity. In “Text as Transgression, or How
I Came to Live on the Borders,” his introduction to *Textual Transgressions*, Greetham admits to “using the interstitial as the very mode and means (and justification) for one’s criticism” (32), arguing that his transnational status as a scholar moving between Britain and America, as well as between genres, time periods, and authors has proven to be a shaping force in his understanding of textual and material margins. As critics continue their investigations into the various ways textual and border scholars define the margins, both fields will benefit from an approach that recognizes the interpretive power at stake in the material edges of the page.

Again, as sites of potential oppression and resistance, the margins of a border text like *The House on Mango Street* can offer insight into Cisneros’s relationship to her readers, as well as readers’ relationship to Cisneros. The textual margins can expose evidence of students absorbing or resisting teachers’ lectures, of readerly confusion, frustration, or attempts at correction, of methods of summary, analysis, and direct engagement with the author, or even the reader herself. Drawing the study of textual borders into the study of other – geographic as well as identity-based – borders as they are presented in *The House on Mango Street*, I argue that Cisneros’s text offers readers an opportunity to engage in speaking – literally – in and from the margins. In its structure, style and subject matter, *The House on Mango Street* encourages readers to write back, and readers frequently use the margins to do so. This practice of annotation, particularly when it occurs in the margins of a book about “minority” or marginalized, Chicana identity, entangles readers in the experience of speaking from the margins, of grappling with authoritative power and the subversive resistance available in occupying the literal
borderlands of the text. Texts like *The House on Mango Street* participate in border
textuality by inviting readers to experience these borderlands on a narrative and a
material level, highlighting their own instability and offering up the margins as a site of
potential readerly oppression and resistance.

**Section Three: The Margins of Mango Street**

Much as the critical concern with textual margins and supplements has become
increasingly centralized, the once-marginalized *The House on Mango Street* has moved to
the center of academic and popular culture. Héctor Calderón acknowledges the book’s
uses for a wide range of age groups, as it is “studied widely in secondary schools and
across a variety of departments in the university curriculum” (171), while Felicia J. Cruz
notes, “Since its initial publication in 1984, the readership of *Mango Street* has expanded
beyond the pale of Chicano and Latino communities to include families and students of
all ages and ethnicities” (912). Despite its continued popularity on school syllabi and in
book clubs, including the city-wide One Book, One Chicago program in the spring of
2009, Martín-Rodríguez reminds champions that as “recently as 1989” (129), five years
after its initial publication by Arte Público Press, *The House on Mango Street* was nearly
invisible: at the time McCracken called the book “difficult to find in most libraries and
bookstores . . . well known among Chicano critics and scholars, but virtually unheard of
in larger academic and critical circles” (qtd. in Martín-Rodríguez 129). But, with the
1991 publication through Random House, Cisneros and *The House on Mango Street*
began their journey to the center of those circles. Martín-Rodríguez, who argues that
publishers play a large role in shaping the reception of a “multicultural” text, explains,
The tension between marginalization and commodification . . . is further problematized when books like Mango, originally celebrated for its contestatory and counterhegemonic impulses, are subsequently repackaged and reprinted for a larger market and when authors like Cisneros cease to be marginal and become central or, at least, evocations of the ‘presence of absence.’ (129)

Acknowledging that the changes Random House introduced to The House on Mango Street – primarily the cover as well as the inclusion of excerpts of critical reviews and an author bio – go beyond introducing the book to a larger audience and ultimately direct that audience’s response to and engagement with the text, Martín-Rodríguez makes the case for demonstrating how the material elements of a text expose underlying tensions between author, publisher, and subject matter over the construction and consumption of identity.

One of the problems of bringing a text both about and from the margins into the center, the mainstream, is one of over-simplification. The book’s approachable language, length, and young protagonist invite young readers, but many critics continue to argue for its complexity, highlighting the rewards of multiple readings. Evidence of the shift of Cisneros’s work from the margins to mainstream can be found in a number of critical articles dedicated to defending the literary merit of The House on Mango Street in light of its popular success. Cruz’s article, “On the ‘Simplicity’ of Sandra Cisneros’s The House on Mango Street,” and Delia Poey’s “Coming of Age in the Curriculum: The House on Mango Street and Bless Me, Ultima as Representative Texts” both hypothesize about why Cisneros’s text appears to be so accessible, and offer some warnings about that appearance, arguing that the book is more complicated than instructors and readers often acknowledge. Cruz argues that readers often recognize but do not examine the text’s
narrative simplicity: “On the whole, no single group seems inclined to focus on the book’s ‘simple,’ ‘direct’ language and messages as part of Cisneros's complex arsenal of sophisticated literary devices and nuanced rhetorical strategies” (926). Poey outlines a potentially more damaging use of the text as “representative,” or as a stand-in for the whole of Chicana/o literary production. Writing about both Cisneros and Rudolfo Anaya, Poey argues,

By isolating these texts from their discursive and historical contexts, they can also function as mirrors of the hegemonic and confirmations of stereotypic representations. Thus, it is not the texts themselves which are problematic, since they do engage in layered critiques and propose their own aesthetics. Rather, it is their acceptance as representative that is troubling, given that they do provide opportunities for easy incorporation which erases their transformative possibilities. (215)

Both Cruz and Poey explore the way in which readers do not give the text enough credit by ignoring its complexity. When readers approach and enjoy texts in terms of their ability to identify with main characters, they often simplify the text in order to do so.

This absence of reflection becomes increasingly paradoxical when one traces Cisneros’s arguments about the significance of that “simple” literary language: Cisneros has often argued that the narrative of The House on Mango Street owes more to Spanish than to a childlike voice. She explains,

When I wrote House on Mango Street, I didn’t know enough about mixing the languages. Also, I thought I was only a product of my English, but now I know how much of a role Spanish plays, even when I write in English. If you take Mango Street and translate it, it’s Spanish. The syntax, the sensibility, the diminutives, the way of looking at inanimate objects – that’s not a child’s voice as is sometimes said. That’s Spanish! (qtd in Torres 288)
The qualities of the text that make it so useful for teaching students literary terms – its abundance of metaphors, its fairly simple sentence construction, its narrative simplicity – are in fact rooted in a language many readers would otherwise encounter as foreign and strange. If, according to Cisneros, readers are navigating a novel written in English according to the rules of Spanish, the origins of those rules are never exposed within the text, and readers are completely accommodated in their consumption of “other” identities. Leaving aside the potential for infantilizing the language of Spanish by comparing it to a child’s voice, which critics of the Chicana/o bildungsroman have also highlighted, the gap constructed by the narrative absence of Spanish very often goes unfilled. Readers are very rarely challenged to negotiate multiple languages.

Interestingly, in one of the few instances requiring minimal translation, the previously-referenced Georgia annotator writes the word “wife” above “mamacita” (76) in his/her copy, a mistranslation that attempts to define the relationship between Esperanza’s neighbors. Furthermore, because the annotator does not attempt to translate the term “mamasota,” which appears in the next sentence, the play on words describing the (very large) woman in question is likely missed. Overall, readers rarely pause for reflection on linguistic identity, or at least make no notes of it, instead preferring to reflect on symbols and imagery, metaphor and simile, or instances of poetic language rather than the role of the Spanish language.

Yet despite the charges of simplicity, readers frequently take to the pages of *The House on Mango Street*, mistranslating, expressing confusion, asking questions, and even creating study guides, suggesting that the text functions in many ways to incite curiosity
and invite response. Annotators have asked a variety of questions from the margins of the text: is Cathy “friends with Esperanza?” (Virginia 22); “Is Alicia crazy or something?” (Michigan 32); is Marin involved in “prostitution?” (BGSU 26); “Earl has different ladies each night?” (Virginia 70). Do these questions make it into the classroom, or are they contained within these pages, safe from the possibility of embarrassment? Those same annotators have also responded confidently to the text, and often sympathetically: “those trees are like her only friends” (Virginia 75) and “it’s easy to naturalize oppression when they are oppressed” (Ohio 100). Just as often readers are decidedly less sympathetic: “she could have been someone but she let poverty get in the way” (Georgia 90). Each of these responses has an impact on the shape of the text, suggesting that the border between intention and interpretation is about as wide as the margins of the page. By writing themselves into the text, annotators engage in dialogue with the text, its author, their teachers, and even themselves, revealing that the full complexity of The House on Mango Street can best be detected when we consider it in the context of its circulations, its passing through the hands of readers.

The rest of this chapter will explore how the text invites readers to participate in the construction of this text, both broadly in terms of its genre and literal shape, but also narrowly by examining in detail the specific places where readers were unsettled enough to add their own comments, questions, or notes. I argue that this border text creates a material border space of its own, one in which readers visibly interact with the author, the narrative, its characters, and even their own personal lives. For Esperanza, whose story revolves around the desire for a home, “a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go,
clean as paper before the poem,” and for readers, the clean white space of the margins are an opportunity to write back.

Attempting to reduce *The House on Mango Street* to a specific, formal genre offers an opportunity to explore in a broad sense the way the text invites reader collaboration in its construction. Neither a short story collection nor a novel, sometimes referred to as a short story cycle or a novella, the text defies any of these specific categories. Martín-Rodríguez argues that the work is structurally shaped like a house, and “the question of whether to stay in a particular room or to occupy the entire house, so to speak, is entirely left up to the reader” (72). The offering up of the choice instantly entangles readers, asking them to make a judgment about the shape of the book, which the book itself refuses to do.79 Describing *The House on Mango Street* as a short story cycle, Poey argues, “as a critique of the novel and the social, economic, patriarchal structures which gave rise to the novel and which the genre in turn reproduces, the short story cycle relies on oral narrative traditions, matriarchal heritage, and community centered values” (213). For Poey, the story cycle structure allows “the text to ‘poach’ elements from the *Bildungsroman* while participating in a counterhegemonic discursive tradition which works to subvert the ideology of individualism” (213); *The House on

---

79 Here we might see a connection between Cisneros’s work and that of Julio Cortázar, the Argentine writer whose 1963 *Rayuela, or Hopscotch*, encouraged readers to read sections out of order, “hopscotching” around the text. Influenced by Cortázar, fellow Chicana writer Ana Castillo similarly cedes power to readers in *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, a 1986 novel that offers different reading paths for “the Conformist,” “the Cynic,” and “the Quixotic”, and that acknowledges that each is also a separate piece, for those “committed to nothing but short fiction.” While Cisneros’s challenge to readers is less overt, its borderlands state between genres offers readers an increased control over their reading experience: letting readers frame the text in terms of genre (short stories? Novel?) gives them an opportunity to shape the text as they see fit. For example, in my experience teaching this text, some students admit to reading the stories out of order, assuming there is no chronology to the text as a whole.
*Mango Street* is about both the protagonist Esperanza and the community in which she lives. The text invokes the generic bildungsroman in order to undermine it by emphasizing the importance of community, the fact that Esperanza *is* both an individual and Mango Street. It straddles the border between self and other, underscoring the importance of social justice.\(^8\) As Janet Zandy writes, “The fictional or autobiographical working-class bildung leads not to separation and alienation, but to a consciousness of connective tissue and multiple histories and lives that comprise the self” (qtd. in Tokarczyk 117-118); Esperanza is a product of all of those histories and lives on Mango Street. The title itself asks readers to choose how to read *The House on Mango Street*, both generically and in terms of selecting a protagonist: emphasizing either the singular house or the plural street.

Furthermore, the very structure of *The House on Mango Street* – the linked vignettes that comprise the narrative – suggests a specific concern for readers and an insistence on the material borderlands as inviting of reader response. Michelle M. Tokarczyk, who argues that “critics still have difficulty treating class *and* ethnicity, difficulty recognizing that working-class status crosses racial and ethnic lines, just as the middle-class status does” (13), and who focuses on *The House on Mango Street* as a classed text, argues that the short story aspect of the text is appealing to working class readers with little time for reading. Acknowledging the background of both writer and reader, Tokarczyk writes, “Her vignettes could be composed in short snippets as well as

---

\(^8\) Erlinda González-Berry and Tey Diana Rebolledo explore Chicana/o repurposings of the bildungsroman in “Growing Up Chicano: Tomás Rivera and Sandra Cisneros,” arguing that “While the protagonists of both narratives evolve in their journey or quest, beyond encapsulating cultural mores, both search in (as narrators) and return to (as authors) their neighborhoods for the human and historical materials of which their stories will be made” (115).
read in short sittings – an advantage to both readers and writers” (115). But beyond recognizing and accommodating readerly attention spans and schedules, the short stories and vignettes also invite reader response by virtue of their abundance of white space surrounding them. The 1984 Arte Público edition, as well as the 1991, 1994, and 2009 Vintage editions from Random House contain swaths of blank space – half and sometimes whole pages on which nothing is printed. Each story is visibly and materially separated from the other, adding to the sense that each is self-contained, but also providing ample room for reader response and reflection. Stories that could fit on one page, such as “Hairs,” “Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark,” “Four Skinny Trees,” and many others are flanked by incredibly large upper margins (as well as titles in fairly large fonts), thus causing the text to spill into the next page. The short story/vignette, when printed on the page in such a manner, allows generous space for readers to use as they see fit. Publishers add a bit of bulk to the otherwise slim text, and readers inclined to add their own notes benefit.

And readers often use that space, filling it with their own thoughts, questions, summaries, or unrelated conversations and reminders. In the more narrow and detailed analysis that follows, all of the examples of marginalia have been discovered in heavily marked used copies of *The House on Mango Street* from across the country, bought through the used book marketplace on Amazon.com with an eye toward a large geographic range. My selection criteria do not extend much further than that, for three reasons. First, my use of the online used book marketplace helps to underscore the contemporary and growing reliance of 21st century readers on this very marketplace. At a
time when new book sales are on the decline, used book sales continue to grow, even in a
down economy. 81 Part of the contemporary reading experience for many, then, involves
perusing the listings of booksellers who promise gently used copies for bargain prices, or
shopping the shelves of high school and college bookstores for the least rumpled, yet still
heavily stamped with the word “USED” copy of books they can find. 82 Focusing on
these copies also highlights the fact that unlike the close-knit circles of Romantic readers
that critics like Jackson study, contemporary readers are buying and selling books across
time zones and college campuses, their notes circulating nearly anonymously amongst a
much larger geographic expanse. Another of the many reasons I argue it is useful to
study 20th and 21st-century marginalia involves this very paradoxical contemporary
understanding of reading and book-ownership as a private, solitary experience alongside
the marketplace presence of used and often-heavily marked books. 83 Despite their

81 While it might be tempting to link the growth of the used book market to the recent decline in the
economy, researchers like Jim Milliot have been tracking that growth since the late 1990s. Indicating the
positive influence of the Internet as well as the growing desire to make environmentally conscious choices,
Milliot notes the negative effects of these cost- and environmentally-conscious decisions on the new book
market. In 2005, used books sales were already growing at a rate of 25% a year, while new books grew at
about 2% (Gardner par. 4). To trace the research on the used book industry, see Mutter, Milliot, and Holt,
For Worse, Used Book Sales Grow” (2007); Milliot and Nawotka, “A Good Time to Be Selling Used
Books” (2009).

82 There is, of course, also great potential for notable differences between the annotations found in campus
used bookstores and those sold through Amazon.com – different kinds of readers sell their books to these
very different institutions. Since my focus in this project was more on generating a general but also wide
geographic sense of annotation, I refrained from exploring campus bookstores, since books there tend to get
re-sold to students attending the same University, circulating in a much smaller environment. My study
barely dips a toe in the water of marginalia studies, but it is my hope that it will lead to other, more
ambitious projects that explore these different book-selling and book-annotating environments.

83 As briefly mentioned earlier, libraries appear to complicate matters of public versus private interaction
with books: temporary ownership of books often causes readers to leave their marks for future users, and
librarians are often charged with preserving the integrity of their materials, much to their dismay. An early
plan for this chapter involved searching the 1000+ copies of The House on Mango Street purchased by the
Chicago Public Library (CPL) for their spring 2009 “One Book, One Chicago” city-wide reading program
relatively low monetary value, the sheer number of marked copies of *The House on Mango Street* available in used book marketplaces indicates that readers not only feel less attached to their books, but also that they feel comfortable sending their notes and interpretations out into the world for others to see. Jackson argues that in the twentieth century, marginalia have become “secret utterances” (“Reader’s Notes” 145), but the sales of these marked copies indicate that to some extent readers continue to hold an understanding of their notes as “semi-public documents” (145).

Second, the glut of used copies, in particular those advertised as a “good reading copy” or with the helpful “vocab list on inside cover” also offers material evidence of the number of high school and college courses in which this book turns up, and it may be worth considering the ways in which books are treated differently when they are contextualized as high school or college course materials. What happens to a novel, or a short story cycle, when it effectively becomes a textbook? For one thing, students often seek out the most inexpensive, disposable copy available: that usually means it will be covered in notes. Catherine C. Marshall studies the relationship between public and private annotation in an attempt to theorize the relationship between the ways readers interact with paper and digital texts, and has studied annotations in books at college campus bookstores, along with student/buyer discussions of the relative merits of marked copies for evidence of reader interaction with this book. What I assumed might be a fruitful, if tedious, endeavor was advised against to the point of prohibition by library staff in charge of the program. Because the library buys so many copies of their program books, many end up donated to schools and other programs, but according to a staff member at the Harold Washington Library Branch, the marked copies are often removed from circulation entirely and even thrown away. When I asked if I could take those marked copies off the library’s hands, or at least see them before they were disposed of, I met with resistance from library employees who claimed that under-staffing and budget woes would prevent them from being of assistance to me. Despite the failure of this part of the project, the library’s policy regarding marked books demonstrates a continued distaste for marginalia that, although arguably carried out with the best interest of future borrowers in mind, works to erase evidence of reader response entirely from future readers’ view.
books. She explains, “We think of these annotations in textbooks as personal (and, therefore, private). But when they reach the used book stack, they change to a public form. Are they useful? Are they distracting? Do they inhibit subsequent readings?” (7).

Marshall notes that the college bookstore is one of the few places in which marginalia might be prized: for example, students looking for potential shortcuts seek out note-filled copies with the hope its previous owner had the same professor. But perhaps more importantly, a literary work that is assigned as a textbook is very likely used in different ways than if it were bought for private enjoyment: Marshall argues,

Learning material presented in a textbook or primary work can be contrasted with other kinds of intellectual engagement. For example, much advanced scholarly reading is integrative or critical – a scholar may attend to a work with an explicit sense of how it fits in with other readings. An intelligence analyst may look at a news wire, noting in particular where it contradicts his or her standing beliefs. A reviewer may read an academic paper, and mark spots where additional references are needed, or where the novelty of the work is especially apparent. An educational setting, however, is a nice (and, more importantly, accessible) example of a situation in which sustained attention and close reading is necessary, and annotation of materials is encouraged. (2)

Relying on one of the many sources of textbook buying allows me to explore the status of *The House on Mango Street* as a textbook, and how that status encourages writing in the margins, as a book to be worked with, puzzled over, studied from.84

And finally, just as Kopley argues for the significance of the individual copy of a book, its uniqueness and ability to offer insight into how readers value their books, I

---

84 Given the vast quantities of books sold every day on online marketplaces like Amazon or Abebooks.com (the latter, for example, comprises 13,500 booksellers from 57 countries and nets 30,000 purchases a day [Hutchison 568]), the number of books I study represents a miniscule slice of the reading and annotative experience of a book like *The House on Mango Street*. However, I believe this small-scale study demonstrates that each marked copy is worthy of scrutiny, and that it represents only the beginning of a much larger discussion of the shaping effects of the kinds of marginalia readers feel comfortable parting with on the reading experience.
argue these – or any – used copies can tell us quite a bit about the current state of readerly interaction with books. Agreeing with James Secord, who argues that “to learn what is really important about reading, the limited and partial evidence of the situated case . . . remains vital even when audiences number in the millions” (qtd in Jackson 137), Jackson notes, “statistics are only the sum of particular instances and statistical patterns may obscure or distort actual experiences as much as they reveal them. We suffer a loss of detail and of certainty in the process of generalization” (137). Thus, although any study of marked up copies of *The House on Mango Street* is necessarily provisional and will always remain incomplete, this particular study of these particular copies of the text is meant to be an entry into the conversation about how readers shape and are shaped by Cisneros’s work, to begin at a very preliminary stage to locate “common approaches and critical assumptions” (Jackson 147). This kind of work can help to further illuminate how *The House on Mango Street* is at this time being taught, consumed, and reshaped by readers.

Of course, even readers and buyers of used texts also resist the shaping effects of marginal notations. The taboos against marginalia which Jackson explores are undeniably visible in the prices and comments sellers provide to buyers in spaces like Amazon.com: the standard listing of used books, ranking used books from very good, to good, to acceptable often corresponds with the amount of use, wear, and marks visible on the copy. Sellers advertise books as having “minor shelf wear” or “NO marks,” as being
“gently used” or “Not pretty,” most offering their used copies for under five dollars. The premium is placed on “clean” “crisp” and “like new” conditions, conditions under which readers imagine themselves the first or the next in the line of conscientious, careful, and clean readers, all while buying a copy at a bargain price. Sellers of collectible editions, often early editions or first printings, display the same fascination with cleanliness, describing their copies as “immaculate” and “GIFT QUALITY!” However, the return of these texts to the marketplace, whether we see them as enhanced or defaced, indicates the ways in which readers fundamentally change the text itself for the next readers/owners, who must choose whether and how to navigate the more visibly polyvocal text in front of them. And while the majority of notes made in the copies of The House on Mango Street I study might otherwise be dismissed, merely a factor in the decreased desirability of that particular copy of the text, they all offer insights into the way readers resist the imperative of the clean, white page, and the ways the text encourages such resistance.

In the analysis that follows, I explore a set of tentative categories of marginalia that expose three kinds of dialogue with this border text: comprehensive, interpretive, and interactive. “Comprehensive” dialogue describes those annotations that indicate an attempt at basic comprehension of the text or even an instructor’s lectures: it includes

---

85 The jackets of the copies examined here, all listed as “First Vintage Contemporary Edition, 1991” advertise U.S. prices of either $9.00 or $9.95. Curiously, the two copies whose jackets differ from the rest – different reviewer blurbs, different spines, and marked at the lower price – are also the only two to cite Cisneros’s copyright date as 1989. The description a bit lower on the page explains that the book was originally published “in somewhat different form” in 1984 and revised in 1989. In a move that nearly erases the history of revision of the text, the other 6 copies, which presumably were part of later printings, list the copyright date as 1984 and make no mention of the 1989 revision, though they appear to match the 1989 text.
summary, vocabulary lists and definitions, and translations. “Interpretive” dialogue includes those notes which reflect a critical engagement with the text, including guesses, attempts at close reading and symbolic interpretation, and even readerly confusion. And finally, “interactive” dialogue designates those notes that show evidence of an engagement with the text on a personal level, or a performance of “writing back” to the text as well as fellow readers, whether in a sympathetic or resistant manner. Of course, there may be some overlap between these categories, and certainly other methods of categorizing these notes are possible. However, these three categories offer us an opportunity to discover the range of responses The House on Mango Street provokes, and to consider how teaching the novel as textbook (as evidenced by comprehensive and some interactive marginalia) encourages or even obfuscates the more personal, interactive responses that find their voice(s) in the margins of the page.

The ample white space, like “the page before the poem,” of The House on Mango Street offers a useful place to begin the discussion of comprehensive marginalia, as it is frequently occupied by extended summaries and notes from readers. The Michigan copy provides one such example from the chapter, “Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin”:  

86 In “Mango Street and Malnourished Readers: Politics and Realities in an ‘At-Risk’ Middle School,” a fascinating study of Latina/o, African American, and Caucasian students reading The House on Mango Street, M. Alayne Sullivan highlights a similar approach to categorizing the responses of the students: “We ask whether the literary reading process is primarily to be taught and researched from one of five perspectives or stances: (a) textual, (b) experiential, (c) psychological, (d) social, or (e) cultural” (154). Ultimately, Sullivan argues “students in ‘at-risk’ schools need literacy experiences that ennoble their backgrounds and abilities” (151).

87 The note above the title reads, “it seems like they live in a poor run-down Mexican/black neighborhood. She is just describing everyone that lives around her. Like a neighborhood that if you didn't know anything about, would be scary, like someone would jump you or something, but that's not really how it is (I don't think)”. And beneath the end of the printed text on 25: "I think she is deprived of a lot of things because things like the bike and the car were a big deal to her. it seems that the car was stolen". In any place where
The reader’s pencil comments fill the blank space above the beginning of the vignette, and the space below the end, summarizing the plot and attempting to get a hold of the characters: their race, class, ethnicity. Readers in nearly every examined marked copy perform the same sort of manipulation of blank space: afforded the opportunity to elaborate, comments expand across the page beyond the tentative question mark or two word comment. The annotator of the California copy, in particular, fills the entire space of nearly every chapter, sometimes summarizing the brief text with nearly as many words
as the original.\textsuperscript{88} The brevity of the reading material, combined with white space, allows readers’ thoughts to occupy a large portion of the page. While in the case of the Michigan copy the result is mostly summary, we can detect a certain tentativeness - “(I think)” – in the comments, repeating the word “seems” above and below, as though the reader might be confident enough to occupy the margins of the text, but not entirely confident in his or her own comprehension of that text.

Sometimes comprehensive marginalia offers summaries not of the text itself but of some instructor or lecturer’s notes. This might be as simple as the annotator’s note in the Blacksburg copy in the margins of “Hairs,” “Cisneros=Poet. Writing style is very poetic / personification / simile.” Such a note reads as a recording of key points, while others are much more detailed. For instance, above the table of contents in the Virginia copy, the annotator summarizes a few key points: “different role models of women in neighborhood - learns ways to be good/bad / book like beads on a necklace - put them all together you have a girls life story / she’s telling about who she is / bad role models - created this way b/c she needs to look past them - underscores she wants to be different.”

In the midst of his or her notes, the annotator mentions the “book like beads on a necklace,” which is a reference to Cisneros’s own description of how the stories of the book “tell one big story, each story contributing to the whole, like beads in a necklace;” an often-quoted summary found in her introduction to the 1994 Knopf edition (the annotation appears in a Vintage edition, which does not contain this introduction). The

\textsuperscript{88} Many times, the California annotator seems to be simply writing Cisneros’s words in his or her own hand: on page 13, for example, she writes, “Two girls raggedy as rats live across the street,” a line found in Cisneros’s text on page 12. What purpose might such copying serve? Perhaps the lines that get copied represent key ideas or favorite lines; in any case, in these instances the annotator’s and the author’s words blur together, as though the annotator were trying on the role of author.
annotator does not identify the phrase as a quote, but instead integrates it into his/her own notes – perhaps read somewhere else or heard by a teacher, the phrase indicates exposure to secondary sources at the same time it is not entirely clear whether the annotator herself is aware of the origins. The reader’s vocabulary expands to include these notes, increasing his or her comprehension of the text while offering the phrase to future readers who are just as likely to be unfamiliar with its origins.

Another element of comprehensive dialogue with the text can be found in evidence of more straightforward vocabulary-building. Although it cannot simply be assumed the marked up texts I examined were used in a classroom setting, some clues help support that claim. Most obvious are marks like the vocabulary list in the Georgia copy, listing words such as “alliteration,” “metaphor,” “anaphra [sic],” and “rhyme,” with corresponding page numbers containing good examples. In the relatively rare moments in which Spanish is used, annotators sometimes translate in the margins, such as when the BGSU Ohio annotator scrawls “the spirits” in the margins alongside the word “los espiritus” (62). These kinds of notes, meant to help students “translate” poetic and foreign languages, reflect an engagement with the text on its most superficial level. Instead of exploring the specifics of this text, these vocabulary lists act as a tool for readers to familiarize themselves with words or elements of fiction that they’ll be asked to identify in any number of other texts. Unlike those kinds of annotative dialogue which aim at comprehension of the text – summary of the text or secondary source material – using the text as a vocabulary list allows *The House on Mango Street* to become a handbook of poetic language, a reference manual of sorts. Comprehensive dialogue thus
moves out from the specificity of the text itself to comprehension of how creative literature works, its hallmarks and standard practices.

The Ohio copy is further evidence of the language of literary studies, and yet another example of an attempt at comprehensive dialogue. Like the annotator who tries on the language of the book “like beads on a necklace,” in the vignette “My Name,” the annotator writes, “way science works, a name like any signify as more than one signifier / identity is a kind of a performance, it can change/sense of who you are can change.” Though the annotator expresses the language of signifiers and performativity, the jumbled grammar perhaps indicates he or she is not quite comfortable with it. Elsewhere in the Ohio copy, the phrase “image of the grotesque” flanks the opening lines of “The Family of Little Feet,” with no elaboration, while in the Georgia copy the annotator has painstakingly gone through the text marking moments of “sup of women” – identified on page 42 as “suppression of women” – perhaps collecting them for a paper or noting repetition. In the Blacksburg copy, the annotator notes, “theme: waiting women” near the introduction of Marin in “Louie, His Cousin, & His Other Cousin” (23). In each case, readers appear to be trying on slightly unfamiliar language, adapting to and occasionally mangling definitions in an effort to see what others see in the book before them.

Comprehensive dialogue is closely related to interpretive dialogue, then, in its efforts to expose and consume a text’s meanings. While most of the comprehensive annotations suggest as a goal the accretion of data, however, interpretive annotations indicate the first signs of close reading, of making guesses about the meaning behind that data, those summaries and elements of fiction, the literary techniques. Interpretive
dialogue with the text suggests that as readers attempt to sort out meaning, they are compelled to ask questions and try out readings in a place they might consider safe. Sometimes, readers engaged in close reading and analysis of the symbols of *The House on Mango Street* begin to see symbols everywhere, making leaps and suggesting connections that don’t seem to hold up very well. The annotator of the BGSU copy is particularly zealous about symbolism: responding to the vignette “Louie, His Cousin, & His Other Cousin,” in which a young man steals a car and takes Esperanza and her neighbors for a ride in the alleys of the neighborhood, the annotator has circled the phrases “white rugs” and “white leather seats” which describe the car, as well as the description of the “little white cat in the back window whose eyes lit up when the car stopped or turned” (24). In the margins, the annotator writes a one-word question: “cocain [sic]?” The annotator moves beyond the evidence of the car’s status as stolen and uses available textual evidence to wonder at whether the cousin is a drug user/dealer. Such a move not only demonstrates what many might see as a less than acceptable interpretation (no other evidence supports this idea), but also potentially provides insight into the way this annotator has been reading the text: with expectations that the barrio described on Mango Street would include drugs, and further, prostitution. Not only does an annotation like this suggest the expectations for exoticism, violence, and drama a reader brings to *The House on Mango Street*, but the act of annotation also materially circulates stereotypes in a way authors and even teachers cannot control: he or she introduces onto the page topics Cisneros herself does not engage, and they alter the
discourse of the text in their insistence on forming the narrative into preconceived ideas of the setting Cisneros invokes.

In the following vignette, “Marin,” the same annotator underlines the statement that “Marin says . . . she’s going to get a real job downtown” (26) and circles the words “real job” – asking in the margins another question: “prostitution?” Again, in one way, the reader appears to ignore the evidence provided in the rest of the sentence: “because that’s where the best jobs are, since you always get to look beautiful and get to wear nice clothes and can meet someone in the subway who might marry you and take you to live in a big house far away” (26). Perhaps the conclusion of prostitution is not entirely far-fetched, but it is certainly the kind that makes both Louie’s cousin and Marin more stereotypical characters of the barrio, elevating and inserting drama that the text avoids. The annotator’s questions serve as guesses about the place of Mango Street, guesses that the text does not entirely support, and that in some ways indicate the reader’s frame of reference, the expectations he or she brings to the text. In this case, teaching students to “see” a story through the rudiments of literary analysis gets entangled in students’ visual and mental assumptions about cultural geography and identity.

And while the academic interpretive community might currently categorize such interpretive guesses as “inaccurate” if not “wrong,” the attempt to find meaning nonetheless allows us to examine how students engage the text beyond the level of comprehension and subtly shift the grounds for interpretation itself. Annotations that demonstrate interpretive confusion imply more than a mere failure of reading comprehension: these instances of uncertainty about the events of the text and their
meanings suggest that readers faced with the ambivalence of *The House on Mango Street* struggle to fill them in, to give voice to the story’s silences. “Geraldo No Last Name,” while only occasionally lightly underlined, is in one case the subject of such reader confusion. The annotator of the Virginia copy, having missed the cues at the beginning of the story, in which readers are told Marin “would be the last one to see him alive” (65), writes at the end, “did Geraldo hurt Marin and leave? Or was Geraldo hurt and Marin visited him?” The reader struggles with the meaning of this vignette, which shifts the narrative tone and point of view, and is itself a commentary on the silences and erasures surrounding the life of an illegal immigrant. “Geraldo No Last Name” offers up potential barriers to the consumption of identity seemingly invited by its narrative and linguistic simplicity: readers who have successfully identified with Esperanza’s awkward adolescence, with childhood friendships, games, and dramas, must now also navigate slightly more foreign situations: poverty and anger, undocumented immigration and death. That this section goes lightly marked in most copies is perhaps an indicator of an unwillingness to do so; annotative silence may suggest an alienation from the text.

Similarly, “The Red Clowns,” in which Esperanza is violently assaulted, though the language and details of the incident are not entirely explicit, creates confusion for a number of readers who seek not only to summarize a story’s events but interpret its meanings when they are not entirely clear. For example, the annotator of the Ohio copy scribbles at the end, “Did she lose her virginity?” which is followed beneath it by an answer, “She got raped.” The annotator of the Virginia copy effectively prefaces the vignette with the similar explanation, “She was raped” in the space above the beginning
of the vignette. That these readers took the time to fill in Cisneros’s constructed blank calls attention to that blank, and suggests that perhaps some readers needed multiple readings (whether self-initiated or prodded) to determine what actually happened. In addition, future readers of these copies are offered the answer without having to do the interpretive labor the text alone requires. Furthermore, because the text suggests but never explicitly states that Esperanza was raped, annotations like these potentially close off the interpretive possibilities for future readers.

From the margins, readers manipulate the textual center, their voices attempting to close the open text. But in the example in which the Ohio reader first framed the scene in terms of Esperanza “los[ing] her virginity” and then changed it to “rape,” we can begin to see the possibility of multiple interpretations competing for space on the page. On the surface, the annotator’s first choice of language might seem almost shockingly delicate, too poetic and ignorant of the violence involved, while the appended “she was raped” is more direct and clinical, a more specific acknowledgment of the details of the event. Though the critical, and even “canonical” reading of this vignette indicates Esperanza was raped, the introduction of this alternative reading via alternative language might force one to consider the ways in which violence, shame, and fear are, for some, assumed as a given in the event of losing one’s virginity.

For instance, we might consider the following: does the answer “she was raped” answer the original question, “Did she lose her virginity?” Given the instability of the word “virginity,” especially among rape victims, this question might be rooted in a
debate about various constructions of sexual identity. 89 Perhaps it could become another entry into considering Esperanza’s conceptions of sexuality in light of the heavy significance of the sexual purity associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe, and to considering whether “losing her virginity” might be considered more destructive, if not as violent as, the term “rape.” 90 Even instances of readerly confusion have the potential to produce new or more complex understandings of a borderized sexual identity as they are hinted at in the text. Cisneros’s constructed gaps encourage these kinds of questions, and future readers are further encouraged to agree or disagree, elaborating as they see fit. Even in their confusion, annotators offer interpretations that shape future readings of the text.

Studying interpretive annotation also requires studying the appearance of the varying levels of attention readers give to specific vignettes. As Jackson notes, when beginning to collate the data of a number of individual responses to a particular text, it is important to consider the question of “what aspects of the work do they tend to comment on and – this is harder to see but important – what not?” (“Reader’s Notes” 147). The copies I have explored, while all heavily annotated, all tend to decline in notation, which nearly disappears by the final third of the text. The last five to seven vignettes receive the

---

89 In “The Ambiguity of ‘Having Sex.’ The Subjective Experience of Virginity Loss in the United States,” Laura Carpenter presents her findings of a study of the influence ambiguous definitions of sex have on “conduct and identity” (127), and argues that “the ambiguity of virginity loss affords people some, if limited, discretion in constructing their sexual identities” (128). In particular, she highlights the almost 50/50 division among respondents over “whether virginity loss could or should occur only on a voluntary basis” (132), and notes that ¼ of the female respondents in her study had been victims of forced sex, and that none of them believed that virginity could be lost through forced sex (132).

90 For examples of the significance of the Virgin in The House on Mango Street, see Petty, Leslie: “The 'Dual'-ing Images of La Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe in Cisneros's The House on Mango Street.” MELUS 25.2. 2000. 119-32.
slightest attention, and are often left entirely blank. In addition, it also appears that some of the least marked sections are also those which students might find relatively more difficult, whether due to subject matter or change in tone or narration. It seems, then, that where comprehensive dialogue fails, most interpretive dialogue will also be nonexistent. For example, in addition to the already-mentioned “Geraldo No Last Name” and “The Red Clowns,” “Bums in the Attic” and “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes” – sections which critics often focus much of their attention on – go almost entirely unmarked. Perhaps the most significant annotative silence occurs in “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes,” which, in addition to being perhaps the most explicit example of metatextuality in the text, is also its conclusion. Here readers confront the idea that the story they have been reading all along is the story Esperanza sits down to write in the final pages of the text – the stories literally cycle around to the beginning as the opening description, “We didn’t always live on Mango Street” (3) is repeated. The generally unmarked state of the final third of most of these copies certainly could indicate a growing disengagement with the text, an annotative laziness or a new desire for the clean white page. One way to read this lack of interpretive dialogue suggests that the silence comes from a sudden unwillingness to crowd the pages with one’s own voice and to simply let the voices of Mango Street, of Esperanza, go unchallenged, uninterrupted. Though it’s unlikely that many readers actually find themselves thinking the latter, their lack of annotations on these final pages coincide nicely with the narrative’s developing focus on Esperanza and her voice, on her understanding of her place in the community and apart from it. The disorienting clatter of the voices and stories of the people of
Mango Street, combined with the underlining and highlighting and summaries and notations of “metaphor!” and “idea of postmodernism,” strewn about, all eventually become silent in the final two vignettes, “A House of My Own,” and “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes.” For future readers, Esperanza’s voice alone occupies the page – narratively and materially – as readers find her in the act of writing, and in fact writing the very book they’re reading. Annotators may gradually ease away from marking the pages of this book for any number of reasons, but the absence of those marks can also tell any number of stories. Here, the critic begins to investigate and interpret the annotative silences of readers, who in turn seek to interpret or “speak” the silences of the text, suggesting that *The House on Mango Street* is written as much by its readers as it is by its author.

Those readers who practice interpretive engagement with the text via close reading and analysis participate in a community of other readers offering competing interpretations that all circulate throughout the used book market. For example, nearly every annotator offers up a reading of the clouds described in “Darius & the Clouds.” Each of these annotators struggles to make sense of a somewhat dense vignette: a child who Esperanza calls “sometimes stupid and mostly a fool” (33) points at a cloud and tells people it’s God, which Esperanza finds wise. Beyond an opening description of how one can never have too much sky, readers are free to determine the meaning of such a statement with little to go on. Some, like the Maryland annotator, simply link “sky – freedom,” while the Ohio annotator merely lists “religion / hope.” Others are more specific, and see a negative connotation: the Virginia annotator thinks “the clouds are her
dreams floating away” and “freedom, hope, happiness (replace sky with these words).”

The California annotator shifts the focus off of Esperanza and onto Darius: “the sky to
him is a comfort.” The Georgia annotator sees the cloud as a “symbol that God is
imperfect.” Future readers confronted with these interpretations are then invited into
dialogue, not only with the text, but also with the community of readers struggling to
explain what it means.

If interpretive annotation suggests both a willingness to fill in the gaps and search
for the meaning “behind” or implied by the text, the final category of marginalia –
interactive dialogue – demonstrates evidence of readers’ willingness to bring their
personal experience to the text. Even as they summarize, analyze, and identify key
phrases, in places these annotators also push back against the idea of a textbook, of
literary analysis, in favor of identification. For instance, some annotators not only
perform interpretive tasks but also add their own judgments and opinions, such as when
the Virginia annotator responds to the end of “The First Job,” in which Esperanza’s first
employer behaves lasciviously toward her, “Ah, that old guy is a pervert.” Explaining
what the text’s narrator cannot, due to her age and naïveté, the annotator displaces the
shame Esperanza experiences over the events onto the appropriate character. The same
annotator writes in response to the vignette, “Hips,” “the girls are ready to grow up; they
want hips - i say wait and enjoy being little” (51). A relatively innocuous comment, the
reader takes on the role of advice giver, of someone old enough to recognize the value of
childhood. There is no analysis behind this remark, only an expression of personal
opinion, as though the children of the book could hear him or her. Similarly, the
annotator offers advice following “The Family of Little Feet”: “better to be wearing ugly clothes than to be wearing real pretty ones and have everyone come after you” (42). Not quite analysis, the comment reads more like a moral, or, again, advice offered to the fictional girls on Mango Street. Writing back to the text, the annotator nearly becomes another narrator of the text, another point of view for future readers to consider.

In a different interactive approach, the Ohio annotator writes at the end of “Sally,” “people were judgemental [sic] like Sarah” (83). There is no character named Sarah in the entire text; perhaps this reader is making some sort of association to his or her own life, linking the fictional events to personal ones. This sort of comment can’t possibly be useful for future readers who have no idea who Sarah is, but it does indicate the annotator him or herself might have found a personal use for the note, a method of identifying and remembering, recording one’s own moments of feeling like an outcast and linking them to literature. Here again, the annotator interacts with the text in a way that links it to lived experience, challenging readers to reflect on their own personal histories in relationship to the text.

And in one final example of interactive annotation, the Virginia annotator explores the complexity of ethnic identity, describing “a neighborhood clash of English and Spanish cultures” in “Meme Ortiz.” Again, most of the characters are Puerto Rican or Mexican, but perhaps here the annotator is trying to make a distinction between languages – linguistic cultures, even – not countries of origin. This same annotator also describes the neighborhood thus, “Everyone on Mango Street is mainly Hispanic except the TX family” (23), echoing the BGSU Ohio annotator who acknowledges, “‘Mexico’
is significant to Esperanza’s family and ancestry” (18). In a move that clearly engages with the politics at the heart of Cisneros’s text, the Virginia annotator also asks, “American or Mexican, what comes first?” (10) Here, the annotator asks a deceptively simple question that calls forth issues of ethnic identity, of immigrant and first-generation nationalist loyalties, the hierarchy almost necessarily implied by the order of identification, double-consciousness and borderlands identity. In asking this question, the annotator records the difficulties experienced by Esperanza, but also poses the question to future readers in a direct, matter-of-fact manner. Similarly, when Esperanza describes “what you remember most” about her neighborhood: a tree, “with fat arms and mighty families of squirrels in the higher branches” surrounded by houses and at the base of which “a dog with two names barks at the empty air” (22), the annotator from Ohio cautiously asks, “Could this tree be seen as the way the Latino community is portrayed?” (22). Interacting with the text in a way that suggests the question of identity is one not only for the characters on Mango Street, but one for all readers, these annotations write back to the text and the audience, underscoring a foundational question for both.

Exploring the material margins of this border text allows us to consider the uses to which The House on Mango Street is being put: for teachers and readers, the evidence suggests it represents a goldmine of easily accessible literary language. Examining the annotated copies of The House on Mango Street has opened up an investigation of the ways readers engage with and respond to the text, particularly in ways that shape it into a textbook used for the teaching of literature. When a work of literature like The House on Mango Street becomes a textbook, valued for its approachability and uses in teaching,
readers use the margins for mostly practical purposes, engaging in comprehensive annotation of the text. Annotative emphases and gaps reveal some of the ways readers use interpretive annotation to focus on the meaning of elements of fiction like poetic language, imagery and symbols, while demonstrating confusion or even materially avoiding commentary on some of the more “difficult” narrative explorations of issues relating to race, class, and sexuality. These interpretive annotations themselves are worth interpreting, for they give us insight into the changing contexts in which the novel is read.

Readers use the space of the margins, which are usefully large in ways that invite such commentary, to comprehend and to interpret, but also to engage the text on a personal level. In fewer but no less significant instances, readers also perform interactive annotation, identifying and sympathizing with the trials of adolescence, and even using the space of the margins to explore difficult questions of identity. The material shape of *The House on Mango Street*, combined with its narrative “simplicity” and its geographic remove from the physical, national borderlands, allows readers a sense of confidence and encouragement to engage in dialogue with this border text.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

I have been arguing for the significance of textual materiality to border literature, repeatedly emphasizing that the physicality of the text, its borders and margins, constitute a site of border textuality that dramatizes the complex relationship between the social lives of texts and narratives of border identity. But because this kind of approach, combining border literature with an emphasis on textual materialism, is relatively new in both branches of scholarship, it serves as only a first step in the direction of more fully accounting for the relationships between Chicana/o and border writers, their narratives, publishers, and audiences, and the way those relationships are exposed via material texts. “In the Margins” opens the door to numerous questions surrounding the history of border books; by approaching the broad topic of book history in border literature from a variety of vantage points and using different emphases, it offers glimpses at the wealth of material remaining to be studied. I conclude by exploring just a few of those possibilities.

The first chapter emphasized the degree to which border authors like Hinojosa and Castillo control or destabilize the meanings of their texts by introducing authorial revisions to previously published novels. But as that chapter reveals, the subject of authorship in border literature is complicated by discourses of authority and power, of control over one’s own work, and of the political ramifications to the poststructuralist
death of the author heralded by the 1970s and 1980s. Border writers confront the complexities of authorship in a material way, and examining the presence of revisions is only one way to explore how border writers position themselves as authors. Another way is to consider the lengths to which many border writers went to ensure that their works got into and stayed in print, even in the absence of publishers willing to assist them. Some of the writers discussed in this dissertation, including María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and Aristeo Brito, along with Raymond Barrio, resorted to self-publishing their works in order to introduce them to the reading public, or to keep them on the shelves. Given the long-term realities of those author’s works – recently recovered (Brito, Ruiz de Burton) or often-anthologized (Barrio) – studies of the historical conditions that produced these Hispanic and Chicana/o texts that survive in new forms in the 21st century seem paramount to an understanding of the material ways in which these writers claimed authorship and ownership of their work.

Linked to questions of authorship are issues surrounding those publishing institutions that have shaped Hispanic, Mexican American, Chicana/o, and border literatures by their decisions regarding who and what to publish, and for whom. The first chapter demonstrated that for writers like Castillo, control over one’s work is often subject to the publishing contracts and dealings of small and large presses alike. There is a significant amount of work to be done to reveal just how influential these publishing houses are in guiding readers to an understanding of Chicana/o literature, cultivating audiences, and molding the work of writers into products worthy of consumption. For example, a number of small and independent presses can likely be seen as providing the
foundation for Chicana/o literature. Research into the role of Arté Publico Press in Houston, Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe in Tempe, Arizona, and Quinto Sol in Berkeley, which later divided into two presses – Editorial Justa and Tonatiuh International – as major publishers and promoters of Chicana/o and border literature will likely yield new perspectives on how authors and publishers worked jointly and perhaps at times at odds with one another to produce now near-canonical works of Chicana/o literature. As Manuel Martín-Rodríguez has revealed, Quinto Sol in particular is responsible in part for ensuring the longevity of writers including Tomás Rivera, Rolando Hinojosa, and Estela Portillo-Trambley. It is in combination with Arte Público press that Nicolás Kanellos’s “Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage” reaches readers in print, and Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe is responsible for introducing Ana Castillo as well as Alma Luz Villanueva and Nash Candelaria, and for publishing translations of Alejandro Morales. The negotiations between authors like these and their publishers, perhaps found in evidence from authorial and institutional archives, would likely reveal conversations about the shape of these novels that in turn affect the shape of Chicana/o literature as a whole.

By comparing these presses to other, even smaller contemporary presses like Chusma House Publications (San Jose), Calaca Press (National City), and Wings Press (San Antonio), we can begin to recognize how a variety of publishing outlets continue to redefine this literature. Furthermore, an expansion of the scope of study to include the largest publishing companies and their respective “Chicana/o” or “Latina/o” imprints puts each of the presses in dialogue with one another, leading to questions regarding intentions
and audiences and generating a more focused understanding of how publishing institutions, in their own diversity, contribute to the diverse conceptions of Chicana/o and Latina/o literature. What were the impulses behind Penguin Books’ launch of “Celebra,” “the first imprint to exclusively publish mainstream Hispanic personalities”? How does Celebra define “mainstream”? And why do they define those personalities, as well as the target audiences for the line’s books, as Hispanic? How are those impulses and intended audiences different from those expressed by “Rayo,” the imprint of HarperCollins that produces Spanish-language titles from a variety of Latina/o authors? How is border, Chicana/o, and Latina/o identity written and revised in the literary production of these texts, and what roles do these intersecting and yet wildly different publishing institutions play in that production? Exploring the impact of publishing companies on our understanding of the texts they produce can help us develop a more nuanced view of the competing intentions at play.

In the border spaces between author and publisher, the material text often reveals those competing intentions. The second chapter itself attends to the smallest nuances of print, arguing that the visual impact of paratextual elements like glossaries and the bibliographic codes of typography attempt to dictate our understanding of border literature. But while this chapter looked at how such visuals condition or frustrate readers’ expectations regarding the relationship between English and Spanish, making material a hierarchy or refusing one altogether, so many border and Chicana/o texts make use of other kinds of visual elements. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca’s *We Fed Them Cactus* features a series of line drawings by Dorothy L. Peters scattered throughout the text,
while more recently John Rechy’s 2003 novel *The Life and Adventures of Lyle Clemens* features lettering and chapter illustrations by Donald Hendricks. Such illustrations, much like the drawings added to and deleted from Rolando Hinojosa’s *Estampas del valle y otras obras/The Valley*, may not appear to affect the meaning of the words on the page, but closer study of the use of such drawings will likely illuminate their impact on interpretation. Other writers, like performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña, more actively press the boundary line between word and image, whether in essay collections that feature numerous photos of Peña in various costumes, or in adaptations of the codex like the *Codex Espangliensis* mentioned in Chapter 2. The emphasis on visual aspects of border texts serves not only to demonstrate the impact of such nonlinguistic features on interpretation, but to reinforce the reach of border textuality, where texts narrate the struggle over border identity at the same time they render materially visible the struggle over literary production and reception.

For example, the text of Oscar Zeta Acosta’s *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* performs a similar interrogation of the spaces between seeing and reading in his work. In his 1989 introduction to that book, Hunter S. Thompson quotes from a previously published elegy, describing the long-missing Acosta as “too weird to live and too rare to die” (7). Thompson’s position as the paratextual gateway into Acosta’s autobiographical text appears on the surface to be both a moving reflection of their friendship and an attempt at subtle marketing of the book by “a writer whose reputation is more firmly established than the author’s” (Genette 268). However, in a textual space where Thompson’s words precede and shape readers’ access to Acosta, the complexity of their
intertwined writing and publishing histories – including Acosta’s role in the genesis of
gonzo journalism and the events that led to the shift in his status from co-author to
Samoan sidekick in Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* – cannot be ignored.
Acosta’s own tribute to Thompson, at least in the aftermath of that book’s publication, is
much less celebratory: “He has taken my best lines and used me.”

In this case, the paratext makes material the Chicano author’s dependence on
Thompson for literary survival at the same time Thompson’s presence threatens his
erasure. This paradox is further emphasized via the visual presence of cockroaches: the
cover page, a close-up portrait of a cockroach, overwhelms the frame surrounding it, and
every third or fourth page of the book features line drawings of cockroaches scuttling
across the corners of the page in ones, twos, and threes, peeping in from the edges, their
long antennae reaching toward the words. Inhabiting the spaces between text and not-
text, this repeated visual imagery serves as an aggressive reminder to readers of the
metaphor sustained throughout the novel of Chicanos/cockroaches as either a sign of
pestilence or perseverance. While Acosta’s cockroaches may have stood for Chicanos in
1973, from 1989 forward they also represent his own personal legacy, the very book they
crawl along: *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* is itself a survivor. Combined with
Thompson’s introduction, the paratext presents the novel itself as both plagued by and
resistant to the threat of erasure: it represents a rebirth after nearly 20 years out of print,
defiantly embracing the image of the un-killable insect, but it survives only in the
shadows of a figure like Thompson. The challenge to readers becomes one of
recognizing the materiality of the metaphor, but also the materiality of the text and its
history as part of the Chicano Movement. *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* demands that readers pay attention to the borders of the text, and in so doing recognize the material history of erasure and survival that continues to shape Chicano politics and literature.

The study of erasure and survival and their significance to border literature constituted the bulk of the third chapter, though as the archive grows increasingly larger, the possibility for debate about the politics and products of recovery projects only widens. One of the main issues to be treated in this chapter, as well as in sections on Hinojosa and Castillo in the first chapter, is the need to re-think histories as a web of intersecting and contested chronologies. Castillo and Hinojosa narrate competing histories, introducing orality, memory, and tradition as counterweights to mainstream histories (Hinojosa), or demonstrating the instability of masculine and feminine perspectives of events (Castillo). The historical narratives of the publication, disappearance from print, and recovery of texts like Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don* reflect competing political histories that claim Ruiz de Burton’s novel for the Chicana/o Movement (Sánchez and Pita) and contemporary political protests of the 2004 United States government (Acker/Castillo). In these texts and in their social lives, history is always incomplete, always fractured, always contingent. The study of the “incomplete” in border literature has yet to be fully explored. A good number of Chicana/o texts were printed in serial or excerpted formats before becoming novels. For example, John Rechy’s groundbreaking *City of Night* was published as a novel in 1963 by New York publisher Grove Press. But earlier excerpts had appeared in *Evergreen Review, Big Table, Nugget,* and *The London Magazine,* and Rechy writes that *Evergreen
Review “had largely created the interest in my work that others were responding to” (116). Furthermore, as he details the writing of the novel in “City of Night Remembered,” Rechy reveals that after going through 12 drafts of most of the chapters, when the proofs arrived, he began to edit until, “by the time I had gone through the galley proofs, the book was virtually rewritten on the margins and on pasted typewritten inserts” (119). Research might explore the differences between the excerpted and shorter materials and their appearance in the novel, both how they differ and how the context of different kinds of publication venues changes the possibilities for interpretation. But more fascinating still might be to look at those galley proof manuscripts as a book written and rewritten from the margins, further evidence of the multiple versions of City of Night that complicate our understanding of the author, his publishers (who accepted the changes even at that late stage), and the text.

This embrace of fluidity, incompleteness, and changeability is present in numerous works of border literature. In “Tlilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink,” Gloria Anzaldúa writes of her childhood: “huddling under the covers, I made up stories for my sister night after night. After a while she wanted two stories per night. I learned to give her installments, building up the suspense with convoluted complications until the story climaxed several nights later. It must have been then that I decided to put stories on paper” (87). From telenovelas to the Klail City Death Trip series, and from story and poem cycles to comics like Love and Rockets, twentieth-century Chicana/o cultural production has emphasized the series and the serial, highlighting narratives that often remain partial or incomplete for years at a time. Such literature makes material its
status as unfinished in order to render visible the conditions of incompleteness, fragmentation, and even seriality that are particular to the experience of Chicana/o and mestiza/o identity in diaspora. Sometimes that incompleteness is imposed upon from without, as in the case of Jovita González’s “incomplete” novel, *Caballero: A Historical Novel*, along with her “moderately unified set of literary, which is to say also fictionalized, sketches fashioned into a novel” (Limon xv), *Dew on the Thorn*. Both novels concern communities along the U.S.-Mexico border in the aftermath of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, a text that involuntarily shifted the ground under many Mexican and “Spano-Americans’’ feet from homeland to hostland, creating a diaspora that involved only the movement of national boundary-lines. Both texts have, in their recovery, been edited and presented in as close to “whole” condition as possible by José Límon and María Cotera. Paragraphs, sentences, and in one instance, a whole chapter go missing in these recovery editions, and Limon details his struggles to put together a clear reading text of both novels. His editorial choices shape the meaning of the text, but cannot fully complete it.

In other cases, writers like Rolando Hinojosa and Gilbert Hernández embrace the incomplete, insisting on seriality as a mode of expression. Hinojosa’s various installments of the *Klail City Death Trip* series now numbers 15, stretching from 1973 to 2006. The proliferation of texts of the *Klail City Death Trip* series explores a diasporic community that is always coming in to being, always being revised and reshaped, making that process material for readers. Employing the serial, the series, and the incomplete creates narratives in which, as Hinojosa argues, “the reader has to collaborate with the
writer” (qtd. in Jussawalla and Dasenbrock 274). This collaboration renders visible and material the unstable boundaries between author and audience, re-inscribing the destabilization of national, racial, ethnic, and political authority, the unbalancing of power brought on by diasporic communities.

Similarly, Gilbert Hernandez’s work on the *Love and Rockets* comic book series, particularly the “Palomar” stories, demonstrate that a multitude of formats opens up a multitude of possibilities for the construction of narrative as well as its interpretation. In addition to being published in serial format, allowing the story to unfold alongside competing and complementary narratives written by his brother, the Palomar stories have also been published in a variety of other formats, including a hardcover collection entitled *Palomar: The Heartbreak Soup Stories* and as part of a set entitled *The Complete Love and Rockets Library* which includes the volumes *Heartbreak Soup, Human Diastrophism,* and *Beyond Palomar,* which all deal with stories of Palomar’s inhabitants. Works like *Human Diastrophism,* which had previously been published as *Blood of Palomar* as a standalone graphic novel, add to the complexity of versions, all which tell a different story of Palomar. The proliferation of formats mimics the immense number of stories circulating that constitute the textual world of Palomar, allowing readers to experience different but always incomplete versions of the narrative. The materiality of the text shapes our understanding of that text, and in many cases, the incomplete and the serial render visible and palpable the sense of incompleteness that is common to the text and border diasporic identities.
The experience of readers – whether of incompleteness, linguistic frustration, or confusion – is another thread that is woven through a number of chapters but receives the most sustained attention in the fourth chapter, “Writing in the Margins: The House on Mango Street.” As readers attempt to wrest control over language and interpretation from writers like Sandra Cisneros and Junot Díaz, their manipulations of the page affect the shape of the literature they read. But what changes for readers when the very shape of books as we know them seems to be changing as well? In recent years the development and adoption of e-readers like the Kindle, Nook, and the iPad have caused scholars and journalists alike to consider how such technology will reorient our understanding of books and their material forms. Often written with a combination of nostalgia and anxiety, or what Bill Brown most recently called “the melodrama of besieged materiality” (26), essays and articles question the significance of textual materiality now more than ever. Readers themselves react strongly to the changing material forms of books.

For example, Motoko Rich writes in a New York Times piece that the advent of e-books limits the opportunities for readers themselves to advertise their books via cover pages and dust-jackets, noting that with e-books, “it is not always possible to see what others are reading or to project your own literary tastes. You can’t tell a book by its cover if it doesn’t have one” (par. 3). Bob Greene adds that the best book covers “become as vital a part of a book as the sentences on the bound pages” (par. 17). Despite comparing the future of the book cover to the album cover, which has shrunken to fit cassettes, CDs, and now serves as the small image in the lower left-hand corner of Itunes,
or considering how Facebook status updates might replace eavesdropping on your fellow commuters’ reading choices, an undercurrent of concern about these changes flows through both Rich’s and Greene’s essays. Greene treats the cover as a fundamental part of the reading experience, and writes, “if we do reach a time when the great majority of books are read on the screens of portable devices, something will be lost” (par. 11).

Similarly, Steven Levy writes for *Wired* on Amazon’s policy of addressing copy-editing and formatting errors in e-books by replacing the incorrect files with corrected files in the store, but only supplying those corrected files to owners upon request. Levy muses, “sometimes a book can stand a little mending. Consider the case of a copy-editing mistake that changes the meaning of a crucial sentence in a novel . . . And wouldn’t a travel book be improved if it reflected new places to visit and current phone numbers?” (49). But ultimately he hopes for “a user-controlled cryptographic lock that prevents any tampering” in order to more closely align e-books with those paper books “stamped indelibly with ink.” Levy writes, “otherwise, any book we buy in the digital age is potentially prone to unwelcome sniping” (49). Levy, Rich, and Greene share, in varying degrees, an understanding of print books as more stable than their e-book counterparts. Neither Rich nor Greene addresses the fact that many book jackets are completely removable from their covers, that they are frequently thrown away, and that cover pages change repeatedly across decades, publishers, and trends.  

Certainly Francis Cugat’s painting on the first cover of *The Great Gatsby*, one of the most famous

---

91 Some readers remove or even replace dust-jackets in order to avoid embarrassment over their reading choices: after the recent release of the latest of the Harry Potter books, the Subwayblogger noted that many New Yorkers were reading it, though “Most people took off the paper jackets on their copy, so all you could see was the orange and green hard cover. However, you still know it is a Potter book because people have them clutched to their chests as if they were made of gold” (“Harry Potter Takes Over the Subway”).
cover pages in American literature, survives in most circulating editions, but not all. Currently, the Penguin critical edition and Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations edition both select different cover art, suggesting that the potential for something to be “lost” is not specifically or only linked to new technology. Likewise, Levy’s claim that the idea of “tampering” with printed books after they’re bought “doesn’t apply” focuses on publishers’ authority but elides the power of the pen in altering those books, whether in the form of marginalia supplied by readers or in outright censorship applied, for example, by concerned schools and parents.92 Citing the variability of print, G. Thomas Tanselle writes, “No two copies of a work, then, can be assumed to be identical, even in an age of machine-produced books” (749). E-book technology does not instantiate textual instability, it only alters the conditions under which we recognize the instability common to all texts. Readers who recognize instability in one format can be challenged to recognize it in another.

Readers are not the only ones who must confront the changing landscape of textuality in the wake of new technologies. Border writers and their texts are already affected by these new technologies, but as with print, their relationships to new modes of writing and reading are nearly always political. In his 1997 essay, “The Virtual Barrio @ the Other Frontier (or the Chicano Interneta),” writer and performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña argues, “The utopian rhetoric around digital technologies reminded me of a

92 In 1992, students at the Venado Middle School in Irvine, California were given copies of Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451 with words considered to be “offensive” crossed out. More recently, in 2009, parents of students at Antioch High School in Illinois protested the assignment of Sherman Alexie’s The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. Specifically, Jennifer Anderson, one of the parents interviewed, explained that in an attempt to help her son understand the book, “[she] began reading, and [she] started to cross out sections that [she] didn't want him to read” (Fuller par. 8).
santitized version of the pioneer and frontier mentalities of the Old West, and also of twentieth-century futurism” (257). Certainly digital technology and e-books present an opportunity to re-think the archive, to expand and to preserve works that might otherwise be lost. But they also threaten erasure in a way that is uniquely felt by border and Chicana/o artists: for instance, in 1998, Gomez-Peña’s laptop was stolen, and in “Letter to an Unknown Thief,” he writes that he lost “At least five years of work – poems, performance texts, film and radio scripts, essays, personal letters, and several chapters of my next book. You don’t have the least idea of what this means to a Chicano intellectual who has been fighting the erasure of collective and personal memory” (261). Gomez-Peña connects his loss with the political history of the theft and erasure of Chicana/o memory. He writes of the lessons he learned from this experience:

I am beginning to feel strangely thankful, for you have forced me into many harsh realizations. First, that my LIFE cannot be trusted to high-technology. That airports are no less dangerous than, for example, South Central Los Angeles. And that I must always, ALWAYS be prepared to reconstruct the humongous puzzle of my already fractured self, and to edit out entire chapters of my life without fearing that the whole structure will collapse. So . . . gracias ladrón. (262)

For Gomez-Peña, the act of writing is materially and inextricably linked to the construction of a Chicano self-identity that is always “fractured,” and the loss of such material constitutes a challenge to that identity. The instability he senses in “high-technology” reinforces the instability of the story of his life.

But Gomez-Peña also demonstrates that his relationship to digital technology is not that different from the relationship of many works of border literature to their material or printed texts. He writes, “I resent the fact that I am constantly told that as a
'Latino,' I am supposedly ‘culturally handicapped’ or somehow unfit to handle high technology. Once I have the apparatus in front of me, however, I am uncontrollably compelled to work against it – to question it, expose it, subvert it, and/or imbue it with humor, radical politics, and *linguas polutas* such as Spanglish, Franglais and cyberñol” (“Virtual” 248-249). Whether supported by digital technology or the technologies of print, border texts will continue to question, expose, and subvert their materialities in service of calling attention to the complex political histories that shape their production, publication, and reception. As scholars committed to engaging with the texts of border literature, it is imperative that we do the same.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


VITA

Allison Fagan was born and raised in Calumet City, Illinois. Before earning her Master of Arts in English at Loyola University Chicago in 2005, she attended Saint Xavier University in Chicago, where she graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in English in 2004.

While at Loyola, Allison was elected President of the Graduate Student Advisory Council in 2009 after serving as a representative to the Council for two years. As President, she acted as the liaison between Graduate School administration and graduate students, representing their needs and concerns. She also chaired the Council’s symposium committee, most recently organizing the 3rd Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Research Symposium. In 2009, she was also awarded the Loyola University President’s Medallion for leadership, scholarship, and service.

Currently, Allison is teaching introductory literature courses at Loyola University Chicago and lives in Lakeview.
This dissertation submitted by Allison E. Fagan has been read and approved by the following committee:

Paul Jay, Ph.D., Director  
Professor of English  
Loyola University Chicago

Steven Jones, Ph.D.  
Professor of English  
Loyola University Chicago

Suzanne Bost, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of English  
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to the content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

___________________                     _______________________________________
Date                                                   Director’s Signature