INSIDE OUT: THE DIALOGICS OF CODESWITCHING IN ANA CASTILLO'S *SO FAR FROM GOD* AND IBIS GOMEZ-VEGA'S *SEND MY ROOTS RAIN*

by

CARLA L. DYE

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who have chosen la Travesía, whatever it may be.

Bienvenidos.

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis, I have had to find my voice. I knew from the outset that I wanted to focus on codeswitching, the use of words from one or more language in the same sentence or paragraph and explore the motivations for this practice in Chicana and Latina novels. The precariousness of this highly politicized act was exacerbated when I read that the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev had remarked that a writer who did not write only in his mother tongue was a thief and a pig. Reading these words produced feelings of guilt. I am not Chicana. I am not Latina. Spanish is not my 'mother tongue.' I found myself asking, "What legitimacy do I have to write about this?" My answer is that I am a woman who resides in and communicates through language. I am linked to these women writers through my many experiences as a woman, and my desire to explore the worlds of two languages, Spanish and English. Language is a choice. The words we use represent that choice. Words reveal, they illuminate, they broach, and they build a bridge. The bridge, the crossing over, the travesía, this is the intersection I have addressed.

The bridge I have built has not been constructed alone. There are many people who helped me through this process. William Arce was everlastingly patient with me through the writing process. His knowledge of Chicana/o Literature inspired me to delve deeper into this subject. Ken Roemer and Wendy Faris provided excellent suggestions during the editing process. Their knowledge is prodigious. Carolyn Guertin has continually motivated me to be better. My family has continued to support me. Sacha, Chaz and Sofi insured that I finish this project.

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Abstract

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Carla L. Dye, M.S.

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2013

Supervising Professor: William Arce

In the process of narration, codeswitching, the use of words from one or more language by the same speaker within the same speech situation, reflects certain resistant strategies within the written text, forging a bridge to introduce alternative or alien viewpoints. Because languages develop, change, and often merge over time, reflecting societal and political shifts, the practice of codeswitching in the novel opens new spaces for interpretation, expanding the dialogic interaction within the text.

Inside Out takes Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism with its centrifugal and centripetal influences, and examines Ana Castillo's novel *So Far From God and* Ibis Gómez-Vega's novel *Send My Roots Rain* advancing the theory that literature appropriates language by those intent on rebelling against stultifying monological stances. These authors' linguistic choices allow their characters to exercise codeswitching voices, overcoming overweening masculine authority. Moving beyond patrilineal arguments of male identity development, they portray a women centered journey of self-discovery. Additionally, the characters re-formulate the political in the private and public spaces of their reality. These two aspects of personhood reflect and

refract off one another, allowing for rich, rippling texts that explore lives caught between two cultures, reflecting Bakhtin's emphasis of the de-centered use of language.

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Introduction

> Las lenguas cambian de continuo, y lo hacen de modo especial en su componente léxico. Por ello los diccionarios nunca están terminados: son una obra viva que se esfuerza en reflejar la evolución registrando nuevas formas y atendiendo a las mutaciones de significado. (Real Academia Espanola)

As the recent article in the *Washington Times* entitled "Why English should be the official language of the United States" reveals, language and nation are two concepts that are closely associated but hotly contested (Brice 1). Though the terms 'nation' and 'national' elicit many emotional and impassioned responses stressing univocal solidarity, there are other ways to interpret these terms. In the Chicano movement of the 60's and 70's, Aztlán referred to the whole territory of the Southwest, which originally belonged to Mexico before the 1848 annexation. As Colette Morrow informs us, "The idea of Aztlán, a Chicano/a homeland was used to establish a much needed sense of political solidarity among Mexican-Americans" (63). Representing a theoretical nation to many Chicano/as, Aztlán was a uniting force for the Chicano Movement.[1] By appropriating Michael Holquist's definition of national language as "a traditional linguistic unity with a coherent grammatical and semantic system" (Holquist 430), both Spanish and English

[1] I have appropriated Colin Woodward's view of the shifting concepts of the term nation to extend the conversation concerning nation and national language. Beyond Chicana/os viewing the Southwest as the theoretical nation of Aztlán, others have characterized The United States as consisting of several 'nations.' Woodward postdates the concept of Aztlán as a nation with the concept of El Norte as one of eleven 'nations' in the United States. He contends that this area consists of the borderlands of the Spanish American empire, which were so far from the seats of power in Mexico City and Madrid that they evolved their own characteristics. He argues that most Americans are aware of El Norte as a place apart, where Hispanic language, culture, and societal norms dominate. He recognizes that the region encompasses parts of Mexico that have tried to secede in order to form independent buffer states between their mother country and the United States. For a more detailed explanation, see his article "Up in Arms" in the fall edition of Tufts magazine (Woodward).

hold this distinction in the American Southwest with this region's literature reflecting and utilizing both languages. On the other hand, while the terms nation and nationalism seem to be unifying terms, they are also exclusive. As Ana Castillo contends in an interview with Jacqueline Mitchell, et al., "'nationalism' always means someone is going to be left out; somebody will be oppressing somebody else" (Mitchell 150). Others have noted that culture and language form a bridge from one history to another.[2] For example, Ariel Dorfman, an Argentine-Chilean novelist, academic and human rights activist, explains when an ethnic group is forced to move, "something from the past endures and abides and permeates the present" (qtd. in Courtivron 29). A little further on in his article, he reminds the reader that "migrants through history have invariably transferred with them the syllables and significances enclosed in the language they learned as they grew, the language that gave them a slow second birth as surely as their mother gave them a relatively rapid first one" (30). While many promote the unadulterated use of the English language, Spanish resides here in the Southwest as well. Because Spanish was the first EuroAmerican language of the Southwest, it holds a legitimate space in its literature. When two languages continually rub up against one another in daily contact, they cannot help but influence each other. The literature of the border, *las fronteras*, reflects this reality. Here both Spanish and English develop, change and merge over time, often deconstructing into codeswitching, the use of words from one or more language within the same speech situation or utterance.

The U.S.-Mexico border has a strong literary tradition, where writers craft

[2] Ariel Dorfman in his article "The Wandering Bigamists of Language" relates a story told to him by García Márques where entire Colombian villages migrated as if they were birds. They literally took the bones of their ancestors with them. They also brought with them their language and culture (qtd. in Courtivron 29).

different and differing perspectives on this culturally rich border area. Many of these stories, appearing in both English and Spanish, highlight the racial and ethnic struggles of a people attempting to carve out a new niche, while they remain unacknowledged by dominant social and cultural groups. This tension increases with the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, when almost half of the Mexican nation is ceded to the United States after Mexico loses the Mexican-American War. With this ratification, these Spanish-speaking people become United States residents without conscious volition.[3] Initially, this does not alter the way they perceive themselves culturally and linguistically (Castañeda Shular, et al. xxvi). The reality however soon becomes radically different as neither land grants nor language are protected and honored. As Gloria Anzaldúa so poignantly says,

> The Gringo, locked into the fiction of white superiority, seized complete political power, stripping Indians and Mexicans of their land while their feet were still rooted in it. Con el destierro y el exilio fuimos desuñados, destroncados, destripados – we were jerked out by the roots, truncated, disemboweled, dispossessed, and separated from our identity and our history. (Anzaldúa 30)

Much of the literature that emerges from this area resonates with the struggles of many individuals. These writers create characters shaped though the multiple cultural and linguistic strands of an emerging nation. Their characters, in turn, reflect the competing historical strands of history where the choice of language and cultural allegiance can be a constant struggle. As a result of this collision of history and culture, the choice of which language to use and identify with becomes a political decision fraught with tension.

[3] These people could elect to "retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens" or "acquire those of citizens of the United States;" they retained property rights even if they elected not to become U.S. citizens; and those electing U.S. citizenship had "all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principals of the constitution." As noted, the reality was much different.

Just as Spanish has struggled to find a legitimate place in this literature, the Chicana and Latina have struggled as well. These women inhabit the unenviable position of being "twice a minority," representing a marginal group within a marginal group (qtd. in Herrera-Sobek 10). In the introduction to *La Chicana: The Mexican American Woman*, Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez reflect upon the realities of these women, stating they have the additional burden of oppression by a cultural heritage of male domination over women (12). The literature of the 1960's and 1970's reveals this marginalization; the majority of it was presented by and represented through male authors (McCracken 4). *Literatura Chicana: texto y contexto* is an example that reflects this reality. Published in 1972, it has approximately 140 entries, but less than ten percent are written by women. At this juncture, it is important to acknowledge that with the struggle for Mexican-American civil-rights, the needs of the Chicana were subsumed under the needs and desires of the Chicano. It has taken many years for the Chicana (and Latina) voice to emerge in literature.

"Literatura Chicana" and "Chicana Literature" are not the same, reflecting a subtle nuance of this codeswitched phrase. In the 1970's, no one had made, or at least not stated the distinction between the two. At that time, Literatura Chicana referred to Chicano Literature;[4] where the female author was encompassed in the masculine. Beginning in the 1980's and increasing substantially each decade, Chicana Literature, literature written by the Chicana, is no longer classified under the umbrella term Chicano, where the literature presents the many female voices emerging from their initial

[4] In the Spanish language, unlike English, the nouns are either masculine or feminine. The adjective usually follows the noun, and must agree in gender.

marginalization in both their public and private spheres.[5] This term comes to reflect the influences of the English language where *Chicana* becomes the focus and literature is something she crafts. These subtle differences reveal small linguistic anomalies between Spanish and English. In Spanish, the adjective usually follows the noun, while in English the adjective comes before the noun. Through the development of Chicana Literature, these writers explore the borders between Spanish and English as well as the nuances of the cultures. Many women writers of the Southwest continually strive to represent, renegotiate and re-imagine their position. While the representation continues to change, the initial peripheral portrayal of Latinas by Latinos and others has impelled many Chicana and Latina novelists to develop their own tropes and modes of language as a response to this double bind.

At this point, I believe it is important to elucidate the nuances between the terms Chicana and Latina. A Chicana, as defined by a majority of writers, is a woman of Mexican descent born in the United States. Karen Mary Davalos and Alicia Partnoy explain, the term is "rooted in the 'radical social politics' that emerged and flourished in the late 1960's, became a national movement by the early1970's, and continued to transform everyday life in the 1980's, inviting all to "recall and join in the struggle" (7). A Latina, someone from Latin America or of Latin American descent signifies, "the diaspora of Latin Americans in the U.S." (Davalos Partnoy 8). In this thesis, I examine codeswitching. I look at Chicana writer Ana Castillo, who could be seen to represent the local or inside, how she utilizes codeswitching in *So Far From God* to enrich her position

[5] As Gloria Anzaldúa states in *Borderlands*, registering the situation in an earlier period, "The first time I heard two women, a Puerto Rican and a Cuban say the word 'nosotras,' I was shocked. I had not known the word existed. Chicanas use nosotros whether we are male or female. We are robbed of our female being by the masculine plural. Language is a male discourse" (76).

of the validity of multiple languages, cultures and their literatures versus a monologic hegemonic cultural stance. I then explore how Latina writer, Ibis Gómez-Vega, who could be seen to represent the global or outside, the diaspora, uses codeswitching, in her case the soothing cadences of Spanish, as a bridge forging the gap between former homeland and new home. While the Chicana represents the insider due to her birth in this country, when speaking of language, the tables are often turned. Many Chicanas mature without knowledge of their 'mother tongue,' therefore they are outside the language. Latinas, on the other hand, speak Spanish from birth thus they are inside the language.

Whether coming from the inside or the outside, these women writers implement multiple tropes and linguistic variations as resistant strategies to underline the gap between word and meaning by emphasizing cultural differences. They employ codeswitching as well as embracing multiple cultures and beliefs. Codeswitching allows these authors to represent the cultural connections and disconnections their characters make through language choice. In my discussion of *So Far From God* and *Send My Roots Rain*, I will explore codeswitching and how it relates to each text in order to emphasize the multiple threads of subjectivity both authors employ.

Through these multiple threads, the hetroglossic voices (to use Mikhail Bakhtin's term) create tensions between the languages through applying competing cultural codes, which allows for multiple interpretations. The messiness of competing worldviews introduces a gap between these views where a new meaning is constructed. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the polyglossia of language affirms this gap. Through languages, the authors I discuss explore the multiple social realities of the world by the dialogue of their characters. As Bakhtin informs us, "All socially significant world views have the capacity

to exploit the intentional possibilities of language through the medium of their specific concrete instancing" (qtd. in Holquist 290). The question inherent but unspoken in that phrase is, who gets to decide which views are socially significant? Castillo and Gómez-Vega exploit language possibilities in order to reveal their vision of a vibrant feminocentric socially responsible worldview. Bakhtin argues language represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past (Holquist 290). By bringing the past into the present through merged myth and cultural traditions, these writers confound these contradictions. This conflation acknowledges oppositions and allows them to exist in an uneasy alliance that reflects the often fractured subjectivities of many Chicanas and Latinas.

I will focus on the forms and functions of codeswitching in *So Far From God* and *Send My Roots Rain*, demonstrating how the interaction between the dominant text and underlying scaffolding of coded switches, indicated by linguistic alterity, creates a new interpretive space, as well as a new vision of feminine identity. Codeswitching--as an acknowledged language choice by the authors of Chicana and Latina Literature--bridges the gap between past and present cultures, allowing us to reformulate the future through recognizing the past. It signifies membership in a specific group, creates a space of and for intimacy, as well as builds a bridge to introduce cross- cultural traffic with alternative and alien viewpoints. Codeswitching as a characteristic of and in the novel is developing because through this practice these authors have the capability of emitting many registers revealing the underlying emotions of the characters. I argue that the variance between the registers in these novels is a linguistic symphony in the making, enabling the many voices of these women to be heard and understood.

My aim in writing this thesis is to focus on codeswitching as a symbolic act. To facilitate the discussion, I will first examine oral and written codeswitching in order to give a context for the examination of the novels. I will then look at how the appropriation of language and culture, via such ‘switching,’ is the intentional and at times resistant act of the writer. I have chosen to examine and compare two texts, the Chicana text by Ana Castillo *So Far From God*, and the Latina text by Ibis Gómez-Vega *Send My Roots Rain*. These novels were not chosen lightly. The texts are contemporaneous. Goméz-Vega’s was published in 1991 and Castillo’s followed two years later in 1993. Both novels deal with similar issues and both authors codeswitch in their novels, but the results are radically disparate. In these novels, each author uses codeswitching differently, pulling from a variety of cultures and/or languages to weave the story. These authors reveal issues of and in the borderlands. They address what it means to belong. They address how religion intersects with daily life and how to resist hegemonic structures that impinge on life through language. While each author examines how to construct cohesive worldviews from the multiple threads of conflicting cultures, they each address these subjects through different lenses. In choosing these texts, I have several goals. Because codeswitching is the ultimate focus, I feel it is important to have texts that explore life on the border, where languages and culture vie for primacy. It is also important to choose texts that are feminocentric, that is to say, focus on the lives of women. This is because as I noted earlier, these women have had to struggle to be heard, to overcome the double bind of patriarchal and cultural strictures in order to be represented in and through literature. These women writers had to overcome their marginalization within the

Chicano movement and the patriarchy in order to be heard. I investigate these writers to see how they deal with the many issues of marginalization. It is my contention that their responses reveal the fortitude that comes from choosing the language they wish to speak and the cultures they choose to embrace; in short, the plethora of choices they find available to them.

While Castillo's novel deals with a specific culturally diverse Chicana family, Gómez-Vega's novel expands to include multiple Latina women and cultures. Through the exploration of these texts, I reveal the nuances of each text's codeswitching techniques, including the similarities and the differences. As an illustration, I study how the local--literature of the Chicana--informs the global--the literature of the Latina-- and vice-versa.

Codeswitching is a literary phenomenon that writers as diverse as Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa incorporate to reflect their hybrid reality. As Anzaldúa reveals, she wants an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, and Indian (44). Moraga claims that she is a woman in both-- "white and brown, Spanish-speaking and English." She refuses to split (50). I take the concepts of white/brown and the languages of Spanish/English and observe the strategies of Castillo and Gómez-Vega in which they incorporate codeswitching to further their views of the female subject.

In Chapter One, I focus on the novel *So Far From God* by Ana Castillo where she melds aspects of the Latin telenovela, as well as ancient myth, and new perspectives on the Catholic religion. In this novel, codeswitching carves out a new feminine space where this practice allows for multiple simultaneous stances. Each character navigates her

surroundings overshadowed by the male dominated world in which she lives. The characters' responses are rendered in English with important disjunctures of linguistic codeswitches, which serve to forge a new image of the Chicana: one in which her voice is no longer confined, but allowed free rein/reign to craft her reality in her own way. The homonym underlines my point. Through the act of choosing, Sofi comes to reign over her environment, where she is no longer constrained by some masculine structure, force or language. Each character confronts or confounds an androcentric, patriarchal, or hegemonic institution with varying levels of success. Through these characters, Castillo reveals the multiple linguistic and cultural sources available to them.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the novel *Send My Roots Rain*, by Ibis Gómez-Vega where she continually shifts the narrator's voice among her characters, women from multiple Hispanic and Latina countries. The author's codeswitching creates a symphonic melding of registers, realities, and languages. In the novel, Gómez-Vega explores such disparate issues as illegal border crossings, religious persecution, and homosexual love. She creates characters that contend with the static authoritative discourses of the Catholic Church as well as its stance on women. Through their codeswitching, the characters search to find the threads of meaning that will work for them.

Verbal Codeswitching

Codeswitching, the use of words from one or more language by the same speaker within the same speech situation or utterance, is not a new practice. Many disciplines and scholars have addressed this phenomenon through different perspectives, while much effort has been devoted to establishing characteristics that universally distinguish one type of language contact phenomenon from another (Heller 1). Laura Callahan, in her

book *Spanish/English Codeswitching in a Written Corpus,* argues that codeswitching is the use of words and structures from more than one linguistic language group by the same speaker within the same speech situation; where the forms of each language, though contiguous, remain discrete. Monica Heller, editor *of Codeswitching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* essentially agrees, insisting it needs to occur in a single communicative episode (1).

Codeswitching reflects different strategies of dealing with language and power structures, thus scholars approach it through several different lenses. Monica Heller focuses on the effectiveness of codeswitching as a boundary-leveling strategy as well as about the ways in which codeswitching becomes available in in-group talk. She places the practice in the "double context of the speech economy of a multilingual community and of the verbal repertoires of individual members of that community," where codeswitching reflects anthropological and sociolinguistic issues concerning the relationship between society and language in the interpretation of experience and the construction of social reality (2). That is to say, language choice reflects attitudes toward structures of power, where the decision to speak in the dominant language includes those in power and the decision to speak in the codeswitched language often excludes those in power. Linguists J.C.P Auer, Shana Poplack and Carol Myers Scotton explore spoken codeswitching, noting structural strategies of codeswitching are the same across languages, where situational codeswitching refers to speaking one language at home and another at work (Heller 16). As a conversational strategy, codeswitching can diffuse anger. Language use alternates depending on the situation, where speakers use one language with strangers, and another with close friends. In each of these situations, the

studies have focused on oral codeswitching.

Written Codeswitching

Because written codeswitching is the active choice of the author, the motivations concerning language and power structures become essential when approaching this phenomenon. Naomi H. Quiñonez, Chicana poet, educator and scholar, does not distinguish between bilingualism and codeswitching, claiming both are forms of language variance common to postcolonial writing (qtd. in Aldama et al 142). Through the variance of languages in the text, alternative threads of culture emerge. The play between the two legitimizes both. Laura Callahan, in her book *Spanish/English Codeswitching in a Written Corpus* examines codeswitching through the Myers-Scotten Matrix Language Frame (MLF), which was developed to observe oral codeswitching (11-16). Callahan then applies this framework to thirty texts with varying levels of codeswitching. She tabulates syntactic categories consisting of single lexical items, phrases and clauses, and then applies the MLF to the texts to determine how well it accounts for the phenomena. While her research is extensive, one can argue that using a system tied to oral codeswitching limits the potential of her analysis. Ernst Rudin in *tender accents of sound: Spanish in the Chicano Novel in English,* analyzes the Spanish-language elements in seventeen Chicano/a prose narratives in English published between 1967 and 1985. He acknowledges that the women writers engage in dialogue with both the "white ethnographic master discourses" as well as the "male tradition within their own literature" (183). His argument fails to analyze religious high impact terms. Terms he categorizes as invocations of the Virgin Mary, of a saint, or a phrase such as *Dios Míos*. With this study, I hope to contribute to the ongoing discussion by addressing the gaps

between the women and their use of these religious terms where the frictions leak through. I will address this link in both Chapter One and Chapter Two. While it is easy to identify these phrases as simple interjections, I will explore their function as markers. Through their alternate codes, these markers propel the reader into another world through the use of, not only another language, but another religion marked by specific cultural beliefs.

While Callahan and Rudin dissect codeswitching and codeswitching strategies in Chicana/o novels, several French feminists address the issue of codeswitching and translation through slightly different lenses. Translator Barbara Godard focuses on feminist discourse stating that it “works upon the dominant discourse in a complex and ambiguous movement between discourses. Women’s discourse is double; it is the echo of the self and the other, a movement into alterity” (qtd. in Guertin 132). Codeswitching reflects this doubling of language where the self reflects and refracts with multiple other selves, all represented through language. Susanne de Lotbinere-Harwood explores translation in the search for authentic voice stating, “It is because the body is foregrounded in issues of feminist translation as a performative act that practitioners ‘purposely employ the reclaimed female body to anchor a search for authentic voice through the subversion of codes’” (qtd. in Guertin 132). These women understand the push and pull of languages where “as women, we all inhabit a gap between languages, acting as translators of sorts between patriarchal codes, expectations and languages(s), and our own desires” (Guertin 132). Because so much language is masculine and reflects patriarchal stances, women must work harder to develop resistant strategies in language and culture that reflect their multiple fractured identities. In codeswitchng, there will

often be a residue of meaning that will not be reached, therefore this practice reveals a gap where these female writers are able to contest masculine dominant as well as gender normative stances (Schutte 56). They develop language to serve their needs appropriating Audre Lourde's well-known statement, "The masters tools will never dismantle the master's house." Because this thesis focuses on literature written by minority women writers, this point is doubly important. I will focus on the strategies two female authors develop to counter masculine and hegemonic stances.

As a literary device, codeswitching has varying levels of intensity. It can range from borrowing or loanwords to fully bi-lingual texts. Thus, these concepts belong on a continuum of language alterity. The definitions of each have been assiduously debated. Some question whether a single word qualifies as a codeswitch. Callahan distinguishes 'borrowing' as the process by which word forms from one language are introduced into another. These are very often words that do not easily translate: foods, social practices, and cultural modes. She believes borrowings can show phonological and orthographic modifications (6). As an example, she notes the difference between the English word hoosegow from the Spanish juzgado.[6] Paul Rudin takes a different approach. He designates loanwords as those that are listed in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, and have preserved their spelling. Therefore, words like ranch, cockroach or barbecue do not count because the spelling has been naturalized (116). Rudin continues his argument stating codeswitching can include loanwords, clichés, etymological pairs, and hermetic Spanish, where the first three are easily understood by the monological

[6] While Callahan does not speculate as to why the spelling changes, I would point out that English vowels are much more relaxed than their Spanish counterparts, thus the short vowels 'u' and 'a' of the Spanish word 'juzgado' are replaced with the long vowel 'oo' and the dipthong 'a□' of the English word 'hoosegow.'

reader, while hermetic Spanish if left un-translated will create tension in the text (122).

When two languages continually rub up against one another in daily contact, they cannot help but influence each other.[7] Cecilia Montes-Alcalá maintains codeswitching is a natural linguistic phenomenon in bilingual communities (qtd. in Roca 218). Situational codeswitching, where linguistic varieties symbolize social situations, is distinguished from metaphorical codeswitching where an "unexpected variety is a metaphor for the social meanings the variety has come to symbolize" (Heller 5). For instance, when a student, knowing the teacher knows her 'mother tongue,' asks a question in that language instead of the sanctioned language, the speaker breaks boundaries. The speaker breaks rules.

In a literary text, codeswitching both creates and reveals multiple registers in and of language. This is not a new phenomenon with writers as diverse as T.S. Eliot and James Joyce codeswitching in their texts. Rudin paraphrases both Bakhtin and Toderov when he states, "the perspective presented in a novel need not be consistent or exclusive and less so in a century in which the novel has been defined as 'a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized'" (63). In his theorizing, Tzvetan Todorov distinguishes between public discourse, used by television, radio, and the press, and private discourse, used at home among friends. He argues that private discourse is used wherever ideology does not enter and that unbounded polyphony leads to schizophrenia (qtd. in Arteaga 206). While schizophrenia refers to a specific disease, Todorov chooses to apply this term to language where the uninhibited mixing of languages leaves the speaker confused and

[7] Friction is also the word for lesbianism in a number of Middle Eastern languages.

without a 'linguistic homeland.' In internal dialogue, the role of the second voice when we talk to ourselves is representative of the social group to which we belong. If one belongs to two social groups with alternating beliefs, the internal dialogue loses its frame of reference and the speaker loosens his grasp on reality (Todorov 70). When the border between English and Spanish is crossed via codeswitching, the barrier between public and private discourse is blurred and broken, thereby exemplifying the shifting loyalties of language. Assia Djebar, in her article "Writing in the Language of the Other," agrees with this contention. She differentiates between *the language of here*, the language of the other, from the language of her parents *the language of elsewhere*, (emphasis in the original) the language of rupture and separation. Her sentiments echo Todorov's. She too feels the imbalance, the "insidious risk of vertigo-if not of schizophrenia" (qtd. in de Courtivron 23). Rather than adopting this limiting view of codeswitching, I choose to view this practice as Cherríe Moraga, a noted Chicana writer, playwright and activist does, not a tragic splitting of lives, but believing that "we have the power to actually transform our experience, change our lives" (Moraga, et al. xviii).

Others view codeswitching with varying degrees of acceptance. Estela Portillo Trambley supports the variation of languages stating, "I believe that the idiom of the Chicano finds its spontaneity in the natural combination of the two languages. Language reflects the human experience, and Chicanos do bridge the two cultures. It is a freedom a flexibility and a confidence" (qtd. in Bruce-Novoa 171). Almeida Jacqueline Toribio, in her study of Spanish-English codeswitching across fairytales, identifies her participants' "ability to draw on unconscious linguistic principles in distinguishing between permissible and unacceptable switches" (Roca 200). Others note the practice of flagging,

manifested in speech by a pause or change in intonation, and the use of metalinguistic signals such as “como dicen” ‘as they say’ to signal that codeswitching is about to occur (Callahan 9).

The practice of codeswitching often reveals the hierarchy of English over Spanish in language contact between Hispanics and Anglos in the United States (Rudin 7). While being able to navigate and negotiate in more than one language can create an opportunity for future economic opportunities, Gustavo Pérez Firmat, the Cuban writer and poet, argues that contrary to some reports, there is no bilingualism without pain (6). Throughout his book *Tongue Ties: Logo-Eroticism in Anglo-Hispanic Literature*, he reveals his strong bias for the purity and beauty of the Spanish language, exhibiting his own Iberocentricism. Further emphasizing this position, Pérez Firmat believes Latino writing caters to the limitations of its audience, where Spanish is the connotative language (141). He maintains that writers mobilize different languages for different purposes. He argues that for native Spanish speakers, Spanish is the language of the mother, the “powerful, deep-seated attachment that many of us feel toward our mother tongue,” while the use of another tongue sometimes allows a writer to grasp what his or her mother tongue was unable to say” (Firmat 1,6). Thus, codeswitching allows both the writer and her characters to go beyond accepted meanings and associations in order to dive into uncharted waters.

Embracing codeswitching in literature allows these Chicana writers to incorporate the words and rhythms that they grow up hearing, the words closest to them rendered ‘half in English, half in Spanish” (Moraga 47). Moraga embraces codeswitching to prove a point. In her text *Loving in the War Years; lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*, she

reveals that Spanish was not her first language, adopting the stance, "Language and survival. Is this not still the metaphor for our own survival, seeking out those whose language we can trust?" (Moraga 176). Though her mother was fluent in Spanish, her mother did not teach Moraga Spanish. Moraga reveals that it was through her mother's desire to protect her children from poverty and illiteracy that they were "anglocized" (43). As she puts it, she was "la güera"--fair skinned. Though she could 'pass' as white, she made the conscious decision to embrace her brownness and codeswitch in her writing. As she so poignantly states, "I have in many ways, denied the voice of my own brown mother, the brown in me. I have acclimated to the sound of a white language which, as my father represents it, does not speak to the emotions in my poems, emotions which stem from the love of my mother" (47). The two women writers I will discuss in the coming pages will focus their attentions on the differences between 'brown' and 'white,' 'anglo' and 'other.' Each writer will bring her unique stance to these dichotomies, revealing the inadequacies of these polar terms.

Beyond these opposites, there is also the place of the border, where languages rub up against one another, creating a "third space." In "The Location of Culture," Homi K. Bhabha discusses the space of writing that interrogates the third dimension, positing

> the priority (and play) of the signifier reveals the space of doubling (not depth) that is the very articulatory principle of discourse. It is through that space of enunciation that problems of meaning and being enter the discourses of poststructuralism, as the problematic of subjection and identification. (50)

With this statement, he reveals that meaning resides in-between the designation, the signifier, and the signified, as a slippery range of meanings, not one static and unchanging meaning. When another language is added, these interpretations increase

exponentially. Gloria Anzuldúa, noted Chicana writer and activist, also examines the concept of a third space, acknowledging the multi-lingual text does not easily admit those who refuse full engagement with the linguistic demands of border language (8). Moraga further explores concepts of language asking the question, "What are the implications of looking not only outside of our culture, but into our culture and ourselves and from that place beginning to develop a strategy for a movement that could challenge the bedrock of oppressive systems of belief globally?" (100). In *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*, Castillo reveals the cultural history of Mexic Amerindians,[8] vowing to show them, and us as reader, another way of seeing life and the world we live in now (6). These writers forge language to elucidate the multiple strands of the histories and myths that have informed their cultures. Following in their paths, Castillo and Gómez-Vega develop underlying structures of alternative realities through their codeswitching in which they focus on religious motifs to expose the spaces the hegemony of patriarchy has denied women. This creates new spaces for the feminine voice to assert her independence from the traditional and patriarchal norms that have limited her spiritual, emotional, and sexual growth.

[8] Castillo forges the term Mexic-American to reflect the mestizaje (mixture) of her characters' Mexican, American and Native American cultural threads.

Chapter 1

Codeswitching as a Strategy of Resistance

Many cultural critics have examined and dissected Ana Castillo's novel *So Far from God* due to its rich content and rollicking style. These foci range from religion and environmental responsibility to poverty and patriarchy. One of her unique contributions, however, is re-envisioning these issues through the lens of Chicana feminist perspective. In this text, Castillo, an internationally recognized poet, essayist, and novelist, challenges the hegemonic stances, attitudes, and language of the military and the military-industrial complex. She also contests the patriarchal underpinning of the Chicano family unit. Simultaneously, she explores Chicana identity formation through language and lifestyle choices.

Her outrageous yet poignant story focuses on a family living in Tome, New Mexico. The family members are the mother Sofia, and her four daughters, Esperanza, Fe, Caridad, and La Loca. *So Far From God* begins with the death of La Loca and her miraculous re-birth, which leaves her unable to stand the touch of anyone besides her mother. In subsequent chapters, Esperanza dies as a political prisoner in the Middle East and Fe's fiancé abandons her. After Fe marries her cousin Casimero, she slowly and painfully dies from chemical poisoning contracted at her job at a weapons manufacturer. Caridad first recovers from a bizarre unexplained mauling, only to die a mysterious death. Finally, La Loca, the youngest daughter, becomes infected with AIDS, though she cannot stand human touch, much less intimacy. Through it all, Sofi remains strong, first declaring herself the mayor of Tome, then forming the M.O.M.A.S., Mothers of Martyrs and Saints.

In this novel, Castillo creates a feminocentric space replete with creative linguistic and lifestyle solutions, which continue to enrich and begin to reflect the burgeoning Chicana experience. Castillo's female characters explore, implore, and exhort, reacting to and resisting hegemonic opposition in the "enchanted land" of New Mexico where they continue to search for agency and voice via their codeswitching. Her choice of New Mexico for the setting of this tale highlights the societal and cultural currents of a place originally settled by Spanish speaking inhabitants, and having a long history and tradition of Mexican, Mexican-American, and Native-American acculturation. When ensconced in this multi-lingual space, Castillo's characters reveal the multiple cultural and linguistic sources available to them.

Their lives and language reflect these cultural strands that inform them, from American, and American Indian, to Mexican, Spanish, and even pre-Moorish. As Castillo states in *Massacre of the Dreamers*,

> What we, who are oriented in Mexican Catholic culture have in common, above all, with the people of North Africa whose cultures predate both religions, is the historical seclusion/exclusion of woman from society's economic system of exchange and a longer tradition of female seclusion/exclusion at all levels of society. (70)

While Esperanza and Fe lose their lives in their quest for identity, as the other sisters do eventually, La Loca, Caridad, Sofi and Doña Felicia actively participate in the construction of their world, creating a female space that nurtures women beyond the constraints of any society, be it Anglo, Mexican, Spanish or Native American. These characters address abuses of power through the language choices they make, where the gap between linguistic utterance and the patriarchal structures the codeswitching resists

allows for a new linguistic, feminist stance. This gap appears in the subtle words and actions Castillo's characters chose to exert their agency.

Castillo develops her female characters by having them overcome passive roles in order to vocalize their needs. She adds her voice to first wave Chicana literature in which Mexican-American women explore issues of race, class, and gender through their portrayal in literature. As Naomi Quiñonez highlights, "The role of mediator, umpire, and interpreter are crucial features of first wave Chicana writers, as they identify, define, and reconcile cultural displacements and resist hegemonic control" (138). Castillo reveals the cultural and linguistic minefields these characters navigate in their search for voice. She portrays a women-centered journey of self-discovery that moves beyond patrilineal stances of identity development. Her characters' codeswitching, in both their personal and public spaces, introduces the construct of enabled enlightened feminine force. These characters not only resist traditional stances, but also forge new feminocentric bonds through their codeswitching. They negotiate their reality, highlighting many cultural inequities in a rippling text that explores life caught between two cultures.

Several Chicana/o scholars reference the in-between or *nepantla* state of Caastillo's characters. In "The Cultural Politics of Dislocation and Relocation in the Novels of Ana Castillo," Roland Walter effectively argues Castillo uses writing to reveal and change the subject position conditioned by racism and misogyny, countering the double sexism of being female and indigenous (82). This state of *nepantla* represents these characters' fluid hybridity where language choice reflects their multiple subject positions. Laura Gillman and Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas in their article "Con un pie a cada lado/With a Foot in Each Place: Mestizaje as Transnational Feminisms in Ana Castillo's

So Far From God," further this discussion by focusing on the concept of mestiza consciousness, *mestizaje*, developed by Anzaldúa. Their text then applies the five points of resistance developed by Chéla Sandoval in her text *Methodology of the Oppressed* to each of the five female family members; Esperanza, Fe Caridad, Sofi, and La Loca. By incorporating arguments from Anzaldúa as well as Sandoval, the writing team of Gillman and Floyd-Thomas highlights what Bahktin calls the dialogic reverberations in the analysis of this critical text.[9] While I acknowledge *So Far From Go*d is a text resistant to easy or linear interpretation, I see it as a literal and literary manifestation of Castillo's *Massacre of the Dreamers*, where she develops characters to further the arguments developed in this work. Castillo's characters rebel against patriarchy and hegemony with varying success. Most specifically, Sofi fully embodies the concept of *Xicanisma*[10] as she continues to develop and define her own feminine and feminist space.

Sofi first begins to embody a Xicanista when

> shooing away the moscas and saying to herself things like, "If that Domingo doesn't fix the screen door this week, I'm gonna have to do it myself; then I'll throw his butt out for sure; what do I want him for then anyhow?" and things like that, just before the old wringer went out with a big shake and clank (not too surprising considering its age; and she said aloud, "God damn…!" quickly pulling out her scapular from inside her white blouse and kissing it to heaven, that she decided she was going to run for la mayor of Tome and make some changes around there… (130)

With this passage, Castillo subtly reveals Sofi's rebellion against her husband and her religion, where Domingo, now rendered as inconsequential as the *moscas,*[11] is to be

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[9] A dialogic work carries on and continues to inform a dialogue with other works of literature and other authors where the dialogue extends in both directions.

[10] While the term Chicanismo had been used earlier, Castillo develops the concept of Xicanisma in her text *Massacre of the Dreamers* to refer to a Chicana feminism inhabiting as she says, "the work place, social gatherings, kitchens, bedrooms, and society in general."

[11] This term translates as flies.

shooed away. Sofi, though initially indoctrinated in the patriarchal belief that a woman is not complete without a man, vows to throw her husband out. This thought is followed by the use of a high impact religious term, this time rendered in English. In this case, Sofi does not offer a reverant *Dios Míos*[12] but a disrespectful God damn. While she does pull out and kiss her scapular[13] in a protective move against her irreverence, her choice to voice a 'God damn,' to take charge, to run for mayor, and to affect changes in her community reflects resistance to both the strictures of the Catholic Church and her husband's authority. She first understands that she does not need her husband and then curses the Catholic Church. Her decision to run for *la* mayor of Tome has Sofi's Spanish leak through and inform her English. This move reveals Sofi capability to use any language she deems effective to make the changes she feels are necessary. The fact that she informs her *comadre*[14] of her decision to run for *la* mayor of Tome in the kitchen reflects Castillo's stance that Xicanisma inhabits both the public and private spaces of these newly emerging subjects.

Castillo's female characters struggle to find their voice and agency, while grappling with deeply imbedded traditional customs. Initially, both Esperanza and Caridad are passive characters. For example, in the novel Esperanza earns a bachelors degree in Chicano Studies and a M.A. in communications, but cannot communicate with her college boyfriend Rubén. When they re-unite after his marriage fails, they meet every two weeks as Rubén sings and drums, "teaching her the dos and don'ts of his interpretation of lodge "etiquitte" and the role of women and the role of men and how

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[12] This term translates as my god or my goodness.

[13] Scapulars are primarily worn by Roman Catholics designed to show the wearer's pledge to a saint, or a way of life, as well as reminding the wearer of that promise.

[14] This term translates as friend, godmother, or neighbor.

they were not to be questioned"(36). Esperanza passively acquiesces. "And she concluded as she had during their early days, why not?" (36). Esperanza's desire to be in a relationship has her turn her back on her career aspirations and silence her voice. As she elucidates, "She was beginning to feel like part of a ritual in which she herself participated as an unsuspecting symbol, like a staff or a rattle or medicine" (36). Though Esperanza realizes that "some of her personal sense of displacement in society had to do with her upbringing" (39), she is finally able to resist Rubén. She accepts a job offer in Washington and informs him "it's better if we just don't see each other anymore" (40). Through these actions, Esperanza overcomes the Rubén's androcentric and limited worldview to embrace a Xicanista perspective.

The linguistic paucity of the male characters in this text acts as a counterpoint to the women's stances. In fact, the few male characters in this novel reside at the periphery of the storyline, existing as foils that reveal how women can survive and thrive on their own. Castillo eventually removes these male characters from the plot. Sofia's husband, Domingo, is banished. Rubén, with his androcentric Chicano stance, is resisted, and Casimero with his unfortunate habit of bleating like a sheep is revealed as linguistically challenged. Additionally, Francisco Penitente is revealed to recite prayers even while he sleeps, though he says nothing. While his actions eventually compel Caridad and Esmeralda into running, their "leap of faith" and return to Mother Earth allows for a reworking of a Native American myth, acknowledging females for their creatrix role. Afterwards, mournfully calling Caridad's name, Francisco hangs himself. Therefore, without the overweening presence of masculine authority, Castillo's characters find and exercise their voice through language.

In the analysis that follows, I will focus on Esperanza, Fe, and Caridad. Their inability to codeswitch-- floundering between language and cultures-- will result in their demise. I will follow by discussing La Loca. While she eventually dies, her character has flown free of the strictures of modern culture. I will then focus on Sofi, and the somewhat peripheral character Dona Felicia. Their ability to codeswitch allows them to survive, thrive, and enrich the community. I will then return to an analysis of the sisters focusing on how their return as "astral travelers" allows Castillo to 'codeswitch' between traditional beliefs and the multiple realities of the Xicanista effecting a crossing that merges these multiple beliefs and realities.

Castillo's discourse does not resist interpretation, but opens up a space for multiple and varied interpretations, exhibiting the text's polyphony. As Castillo asserts in an interview with Jacqueline Mitchell, et al, published in Mester, "…es cierto que nosotras, las mujeres, no pensamos linearly. We think in the spiral, or we think in circles" (155). By embracing this viewpoint, it is possible to examine the intertextuality of multiple dissenting narratives. Silvio Sirias and Richard McGarry contend La Loca's unexplained illness is one of the text's most subversive moments, causing it to resist interpretation (86). There is no explanation of La Loca's illness because Castillo leaves the portal open. Loca, as does her sister Esperanza the astral traveler, resides in and represents multiple locations. For example, as Loca weakens, "the Lady in Blue"[15] starts coming to visit her.

> This was not the woman Loca had known down by the acequia,[16] by the way. This lady looked like a nun. In fact, she was a nun. But she didn't

[15] The Lady in Blue refers to the mystical appearance of a Franciscan nun in the 1600's. She was known in Spain as Sor (sister) María de Jesús de Ágreda and her life and miracles are well documented. For the full story, please access: http://www.caminorealheritage.org/PH/0612_blue_nun.pdf

[16] Translates as irrigation channel or ditch.

> smell like nothing so Loca was not sure if she was a present nun or a past nun or maybe hasta una future subjunctive nun. Loca tried to find out by asking trick questions about la Esperanza, who also visited her occasionally, and questions about la Caridad and la Fe, who never did, but the Lady in Blue did not seem interested in talking about nobody besides La Loca and just making her feel better when she couldn't get out of bed no more. (Harden 244)

With this passage, Castillo has introduced an entity not well known outside of New Mexico offering yet another myth to explore. The Lady in Blue, beyond the New Mexican myth, exists in the interstitial imagining of Castillo as she furthers her circular representation by suggesting that this Lady in Blue is *hasta una* future subjunctive nun. With this codeswitched phrase, Castillo invokes Spanish grammer where the future subjunctive refers to a hypothetical future. This future is not named but left open for the reader to imagine.

Throughout this passage, Castillo has La Loca invoke the Spanish article *la* in reference to all her deceased sisters. It is telling that all her sisters are referred to with a lower case article, while she is referred to as La Loca. Just as La Loca has inhabited a special place in the home of Sofi due to her curanderic skills, it can be intimated, that through the appearance of the Lady in Blue and her moniker of La Loca, she will inhabit a special place in her next embodiment, wherever that might be.

"Saint-Making in Ana Castillo's So Far From God: Medieval Mysticism as Precedent for an Authoritative Chicana Spirituality," by Michelle Sauer associates La Loca with Christina Mirabilis,[17] where both are reborn and fly to the top of the church. She argues that La Loca's resurrection confronts and confounds the enslaving religious traditions of the church (73). While Mirabilis witnesses Heaven, Hell and Purgatory,

[17] Christine Mirabilis was a Christian holy woman born in Belgium who was assumed to have died. At her funeral, she arises and levitates to the rafters of the church, stating that she witnessed Heaven, Hell and Purgatory.

Loca calmly announces that she went to three places: “hell…*pulgatorio* and to heaven” (emphasis in the original 24). This term is initially confusing, because it is not a Spanish word. Upon reflection and through an exploration of Spanish linguistics, there is a process call "neutralización, and more specifically "lambdacismo" that refers to the neutralization of /r/ when it appears post-vocally (Azevedo 102). In the Caribbean and South of Spain, rural speakers often substitute /l/ for /r/ so "purgatorio" becomes "pulgatorio." Once again, Castillo reveals the strength and beauty of female agency where codeswitching allows the characters to embrace the cultural codes that work for them.

Castillo’s response in the interview with Jacqueline Mitchell et al, rendered in both Spanish and English, supports what I consider to be one of the most resistant facets of identity formation in the novel: the use of codeswitching to create a new innovative space that allows for the incorporation of myth and re-imagined history through language choice. Though Manuel Villar Raso and María Herrera-Sobrek, in their article "A Spanish Novelist's Perspective on Chicano/a Literature" assert that Spanish has been excluded from the public domain, and is unknown by many Chicano’s, Castillo’s incorporation of multiple languages in her novel reveals the changing realities of both her female protagonists and the Chicana community at large. Silvio Sirias and Richard McGarry in their article “Rebellion and Tradition in Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* and Sylvia López-Medina's *Cantora*," acknowledge the agility of Castillo’s codeswitching, asserting that this practice coincides with her goal of narrating the story of women intent on rebelling against the norms imposed on them by patriarchal society (95). The

mutability of language, exhibited through codeswitching, reflects societal and political shifts, expanding the dialogic tension within the text.

Mikhael Bakhtin's position that there is a pre-existing relationship between the word and the imagined response that consists of the multiple meanings, nuances, and graduation of the word as well as the possible interpretations and replies available (Holquist 273), allows for a range of interpretations of Castillo's text while also reflecting those multiple meanings. In "Queering Chicano/a Narratives: Lesbian as Healer, Saint and Warrior in Ana Castillo's *So Far from God,*" Colette Morrow argues Castillo lesbianizes Mexican, Mexican Catholic, and Native American discourses through ironic realism. She explores the radicalization of traditional narratives, where in an effort to assert their voice, Chicana writers re-work these narratives to gain agency (67). This demonstrates one of multiple portals opened for the exploration of identity, where the emphasis of Malinche's[18] role as Cortes' advisor and translator due to her multiple language fluency gives the modern Chicana a worthy role model (Morrow 65). Castillo's reworking of the myth of La Llorona, which is elucidated further in the chapter, is another reworking of an established myth. Ibis Gómez-Vega, in her article "The Homoerotic Tease and Lesbian Identity in Ana Castillo's Work," contends that Caridad's love for Esmeralda,[19] also known as "Women-on-the-wall," as well as Castillo's responses in an interview with Marta A. Navarro reflects Castillo's unease with lesbian relationships (81). She argues that the bulk of Castillo's work is a contradiction created by her "willingness to initiate a dialogue on Latino/Latina sexuality even as she censors

[18] Malinche was sold into the service of Western Europeans by her own family. She eventually became Cortes' advisor and translator. Her pejorative representation by male authors has rendered her an extremely negative figure to most Mexicans.
[19] This translates as 'emerald,' a precious stone.

her own work so that it will not shock her male peers into misunderstanding her intentions" (66). I reference Gómez-Vega's article here to forge a bridge to the next chapter where I will examine Gómez-Vega's novel *Send My Roots Rain*.

Castillo's acts of codeswitching emphasize the linguistic choices available to her characters while revealing the dialogic struggle between centripetal and centrfugal forces. In "Chicana/o Fiction from Resistance to Contestation: The Role of Creation in Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*," Ralph Rodriquez begins to approach my argument with his contention that textual examples can demonstrate the contestatory capacity of particular utterances (68). In yet another related thread, Wendy Faris' article "We the Shamans, Eat Tobacco and Sing," explores the magical realist elements in this novel that "uphold the particular syncretic amalgam of both Catholic and Native American spiritual beliefs that characterize the US Southwest" (Sandín et al 157). It is this syncretic amalgam, the blending of both Catholic and Native American spiritual beliefs, in which Castillo emphasizes codeswitching as the location where her characters cross over through language. Castillo's break with linguistic purity opens up a space for the Chicana feminist, the Xicanista, to construct a new reality replete with language choices versus mandated minimalism.

But first, I turn to Bakhtin for his use of the concepts of centripetal and centrifugal language because they are essential to the discussion of Castillo's novel as they reveal the struggle for dominance in language. As Michael Holquist, editor of *The Dialogic Imagination* by M.M. Bakhtin explains, centripetal discourse strives to make things

cohere and stay in place, while centrifugal discourse seeks to keep things apart and in motion (309). Within this definition, hegemonic discourse is always centripetal, while the voice of the ‘other’ and ‘others’ is centrifugal. For example, in Castillo’s novel Father Jerome, as a representative of the Catholic Church is one voice of the hegemony. When at La Loca’s funeral he decides to advise the mourners on proper funeral decorum with the words, “As devoted followers of Christ, we must not show our lack of faith in Him at these times and in His, our Father’s fair judgment,” (22) he asserts his control over the congregation and reflects the centripetal force of language. On the other hand, Sofi’s questioning “Oh why? Why?” reflects the centrifugal force of language, where the status quo is both questioned and resisted.

Bakhtin argues that any national language consists of a myriad of conflicting and competing social languages. While Bakhtin omits gender as a defining characteristic (Farmer 52), his theories remain relevant to the discussion of *So Far From God*. As Sue Vice argues, his notion of novelistic discourse as a struggle among social-ideological languages ‘unsettles the patriarchal myth that there could be a language of truth transcending relations of power and desire.’ Additionally, she agues “gender must have a shaping influence on discourse as it is a very clear instance of social differentiation within language” (4). With Castillo’s privileging of the female voice over the masculine and hegemonic forces, she simplifies the elements of this struggle. This simplification is evidenced by Sofi banishing Domingo and Esperanza resisting Rubén, and acts to silence the masculine while developing feminine and feminist threads. While the struggle still exists, Castillo clears the path of many masculine identified roadblocks. Halasek theorizes that the feminist can then view her work as centrifugal and subversive against

the centripetal masculinist dominant posture (Farmer 55). When Castillo creates a space for the previously disempowered subject to obtain her voice, while simultaneously silencing masculine discourse, she allows the centrifugal to become the centripetal. This displacement of the other into a place of prominence is a defining moment in the literary space of the dialogue, and works to create a palette of contesting voices.

Because Castillo's text illuminates the struggle between the feminine and feminist voice against hegemonic forces, practices, and structures, Bakhtin's emphasis on the perspective of language in the novel as a particular way of viewing the world in a socially significant way is especially relevant. Just as monologic centripetal language gives way to Castillo's centrifugal codeswitching, the terms 'dialogism' and 'dialogic' are extremely important concepts in Bakhtin that characterize the constant interaction between meanings, "all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (Holquist 426). Don Biolostosky refers to the dialogic event as "the impingement of one language on another in an effort to define the world or some topic in it" (169). This impingement of the 'national' language of English as well as these Chicana characters' 'mother' tongue, among others, focuses on the polyglot aspect of discourse, where these various registers continually battle for dominance within the confines of language. Esperanza's musings about her relationship with Rubén as well as her career highlights the disparity between the registers. As she admits, "She needed to bring it all together, to consolidate the spiritual with the practical side of things" (37). Her struggle to integrate these warring ideologies reflects the dialogic aspects of language.

Each register, both 'dialogism' and 'dialogic' typifies Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia where "each of these genres possesses its own verbal and semantic forms

for assimilating various aspects of reality" (Holquist 321). Bakhtin describes the living utterance as "woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance" (Holquist 276). This multi-faceted aspect of language reveals the strained relationship of the various registers, where phrases have multiple threads. In the text, when Caridad is miraculously healed, Sofi gasps "Dios mio"(37). This is not a simple re-signification of the daily because the reader is not told how she is healed. Castillo's refusal to attribute a reason reveals a space for the reader to fill in the words, to 'code' the experience with meaning. Immediately after Sofi's gasp La Loca whispers, "I prayed for Caridad" (37). Loca's agency is revealed when she returns from the dead and announces she has gone on a long trip to three places: hell, pulgatorio and heaven, and that she has returned to "pray for you all, o si no, o si no…" (24). Loca has traveled to places not known to those around her. After this experience, she is imbued with multiple talents. Castillo overcodes this experience with an eerie unexplained mysticism that defies rational explanation. Simultaneously Fe quits her incessant screaming and gently rocks her sister. Castillo has both sisters transform, leaving the reader to parse the relativity of the healings. While language seems to be unitary, in this instance, the various and variable nuances of given utterances and occurrences agitate and aggravate each other, creating gaps where multiple meanings reside simultaneously. By not explaining these miraculous healings, Castillo leaves a space where the author's "alien" word exposes the alternating value judgments and accents of diverse social and political camps (Holquist 290). Caridad and Fe's magical transformation as well as Caridad 's soundless walking across the room in what appeared to be Fe's wedding gown exhibits gap, in other words a crossing from one reality to another.

Bakhtin's concept of the polyglossia of language highlights the author's ability to explore the multiple social realities of the world through the dialogue of her characters. When Castillo chooses to incorporate the multiple registers of codeswitching, dichos, recipes, and curanderic remedies into her novel, she highlights the relationship between social, feminine, traditional, and indigenous languages, and how they reflect and refract off one another. Language choice is an ideological decision where the female characters refuse to have their language dictated to them. As an example, when La Loca refutes Father Jerome saying, "No Padre…Remember it is I who am here to pray for you" (24), she not only codeswitches between Spanish and English, but also claims the agency to make her own decisions regarding religion. In *So Far From God*, Castillo pits emerging Chicana voices and Native American practices against the patriarchal views of the Catholic Church and Chicano traditional family structure, allowing a new interpretive space to open up where women's stances vie for legitimate status. After Caridad's magical healing, Esperanza reflects on the search for meaning in her life. In high school she "was Catholic heart and soul," followed by a stint with Marxism, then atheism. Lately she prayed to Grandmother Earth and Grandfather Sky, but she also read self-help books" (38). Esperanza's search for meaning among alternating stances reflects the heteroglossia of her world. Esperanza's inability to incorporate the multiple threads reflects the difficulty she faces in cohesively coordinating the multiple aspects of competing cultures.

The polyphony exhibited by the double-voicedness of the narrator and characters creates spaces for multiple platforms that reinforces the many and varied stances in Castillo's text. Sofi, the voice of Xicanisma, Doña Felicia, the *curandera*, and the

collective voices of the *comadres* are given a platform in order first resist and then re-imagine the hegemonic voices of the Catholic Church, traditional family mores, and those social forces that attempt to silence the Chicana voice. In this newly imagined space, Sofia and her *comadres* actively participate in and create their reality, developing a new space where they are able to actively define their religious agency through the creation of M.O.M.A.S., Mothers of Martyrs and Saints. As Sofia and the *comadres* create their new space, Castillo intersperses her thoughts depicting the hybrid construction of double-voicedness allowing the language to take the flavor of multiple speakers, where "the boundaries between the two are flexible and ambiguous" (Holquist 308). Therefore, the words consist of a "double-consciousness," that of the speaker and the narrator, melding into polyphony. After Loca's death, and before the formation of M.O.M.A.S., "Sofi buried La Loca, or what was left of the body (it would be no exaggeration to say in this case the "remains")…(246). In this phrase, the reader gets two viewpoints. The reader first hears the recitation of the fact. She then hears the 'aside' by the narrator as she puts her spin on the situation. Gloria Anzaldúa explains this concept in an interview with Karin Ikas as,

> "Here you are, the person writing, the author, but in the back of the head there is somebody else out there, so it is like someone else looking on the scene. One notion would be Gloria Anzaldúa as the author writing this piece. Then there is the narrator, who is also Gloria Anzaldúa, and within that there is then maybe also a character, a protagonist which is based on me. So you have three frames. And behind all these frames there is some other power that is more than just a conscious ego. (Borderlands 240)

This explanation is important on two levels. First, it mirrors Bakhtin's stance of double-voicedness. As noted earlier, Bakhtin did not address a female register, thus when a Chicana feminist elucidates this double-voicedness, she counters Bakhtin's silencing

through asserting her voice and her argument. Her explanation exposes the multiple layers that exist in any text, where intercultural refers to how cultures relate to one another. Through their language choices, the writer, narrator and protagonists encourage ruptures that allow for new expressions, and thus new views of the world and the community. In Castillo's text these new worldview's are extraordinary because they resist simple or linear explanations. Through new combined shifting forms of codeswitching narrative, dichos, recipes, the words rub up against each other in new ways, creating a hybrid genre with new associations, new currents, and new energies.

Codeswitching confronts the masculinist patriarchal family structure of the Chicano, and the Catholic Church, as well as hegemonic government. Addressing these forces effectively requires a strategy beyond the accepted paths; thus, Castillo forges a new register for her characters that incorporates the language and myth of their heritage, Spanish and Mexic-Amerindian to confront the cultural constructions that have constrained the Chicana's experience by challenging "the authority and even the future identity of monocultural America" (Aldama 12). Her insertions of codeswitching remind the reader that these female characters inhabit an interstitial space where codeswitching helps to reify their life in the borderlands as one of infinite choice versus patriarchal stratification. In what other language would a person residing and resisting in the literal and linguistic borderlands choose to communicate and contest?

Castillo provides readers with the first example of codeswitching in the novel in the allegorical naming of the daughters, Esperanza (Hope), Fe (Faith), and Caridad (Charity), where their subsequent deaths, refashion the story of these martyred saints.[20]

[20] Saint Faith, Saint Hope and Saint Charity (whose mother was St. Wisdom—Sophia) were all said to have been martyred in Rome under Hadrian. This family is duplicated in the East (Attwater 127).

By incorporating these saints into her story, but naming them in Spanish, Castillo first comingles the languages and then re-appropriates the myth to protest the monological stance of the Catholic Church and the practices of the military-industrial complex that has injured or killed so many Chicanas. Castillo creates an allegorical tale where these idealizations die from their exposure to, and treatment from the hegemonic forces of the military and the military-industrial complex. As Silvio Sirias, and Richard McGarry note, the names of the first three daughters denote the three major Christian ideals, but sadly the destiny of each of these characters is the antithesis of the ideal the name represents (84). This triumvirate of biblical virtues embodies the daughters with the concepts of hope, faith, and charity. At first glance, the exploration of this allegorical structure kills off Hope, Charity and Faith, just as the martyred saints, but this reading is only is feasible if the reader insists on a traditional linear epistemology. Castillo incorporates and reworks indigenous and ancient mythic structures, in a journey that has Esperanza return as an Astral traveler, and Caridad welcomed into the soft, moist dark earth "where Esmeralda and Caridad would be safe and live forever" (211). In Castillo's space, Hope and Charity still exist. It is only Faith that dies not to come back, for as the narrator reminds us, "Fe just died. And when someone dies that plain dead, it is hard to talk about" (186). Because Castillo casts such a wide net, there are many ways to interpret these deaths.

Castillo reveals the multiple cultural choices open to the Chicana through Esperanza, Caridad and La Loca's journeys. Esperanza searches many places to find meaning. She looks to the Chicano movement, but this androcentric camp and her boyfriend do not allow her to participate in its rituals. Rubén enjoys her sexually and

takes her money, but he trivializes her careerism. She then embraces Marxism, but because the party does not address feminist issues, she finds it limiting as well. Esperanza then turns to Grandmother Earth and Grandfather Sky acknowledging her indigenous roots. These multiple strands contribute to her sense of self. Though Caridad is initially physically scarred by the Malogra, through the teachings of Doña Felicia she embraces curanderismo, finds focus and peace by following a new path and helping the community. Loca does not leave the house but she cares for the animals and helps Sofi with the chores. Throughout the story, the actions of the animals are intricately linked to these female characters. As Doña Felicia says "Los animales entienden más que la gente a veces" (44). The animals actions are never explained, and Doña Felicia's word are not translated. Castillo again offers a site of codeswitching, where the vortex of meaning leads the reader toward a centrifugal reading instead of the traditional centripetal reading of complete univocality.

Fe, on the other hand, fully embraces the "American Dream" where Castillo reveals the dream consists of the force and drive of capitalism. Through these associations, Castillo envisions then reveals a space where activism, economy, and culture co-exist in a mutually beneficial community that offers a choice beyond capitalism.

Fe and Casimero offer an intriguing counter position to Castillo's representation of multi-culturality. Though both he and Fe attempt to deny their roots, Castillo's portrayal of these two reveals her sustained argument that ancestry can be denied but not erased, and furthermore should be embraced. Though Casimero (translated as almost there) chooses to graduate from college with an accounting degree, he finds himself

unable to refrain from bleating like a sheep. After her fiancé, Tom abandons her, Fe resorts to one long unabated scream. Beyond being the representation of the ultimate temper tantrum, her actions result in her being nicknamed "*La Gritona*." This naming has specific repercussions. Gritona translates as vociferous, and shouting while also containing sexual overtones. The name also links her to *La Llorona*, the wailing one. While these names have specific Latin antecedents, they also have literary threads to the banshees, female spirits in Irish mythology and the sirens of Greek mythology. Banshees were known to be the harbingers of death while the sirens represented dangerous and beautiful creatures. These threads bring a richness and vibrancy to the text that extends beyond a single cultural influence, encouraging multi-cultural stances.

Through Sofi, Castillo constructs a model for Chicana independence whose language and lifestyle choices reflect the multiple belief systems of her culture. As a result, Castillo's codeswitching offers a portal to her readers in order to 'break the code' of patrimony and be transported to an alternate Chicana feminist reality. This alternate reality is replete with non-linear and at times non-logical permutations. In order to emphasize the radical nature of her imaginative possibilities present in the codeswitching, these permutations exhibit magical manifestations. As an example, when La Loca dies and is resurrected, both Sofi and Loca refuse to be marginalized. Their dialogic interchange with Father Jerome challenges his monolithic stance. After La Loca miraculously recovers her life and flies to the roof of the church, she informs the crowd that God has sent her back to help and to "pray for you all" (24). Loca speaks "within the limited ability of a three-year old's vocabulary, in Spanish and English" (23) when she replies, "Remember, it is *I* who am here to pray for *you*" (emphasis in the original 24).

Sofi, upon hearing Father Jerome's doubt in Loca's response retorts, "Don't you dare start this about my baby…And this is a miracle, an answer to the prayers of a broken hearted mother, hombre, necio, pendejo…" (23). In this interchange, Father Jerome represents the centripetal forces of language while both Sofi and La Loca's responses represent the centrifugal. Sofi's triple response in Spanish addresses Father Jerome as a man, not a priest. This strips him of his authority and emphasizes his mundane qualities versus his official position as representative of the Holy Trinity. While she responds with three small words, each word becomes less respectful and more derisive. This strategy allows her to resist him and the church simultaneously.

In this inter-change, Sofi represents centrifugal forces in two distinct ways. First, she challenges the Church's authority. Secondly, she challenges that authority in both Spanish and English doubling her personal power. The rebuttal from mother Sofi and La Loca signifies their multi-generational rejection of a stultifying patriarchal position. Their response to the priest's confusion when he asks, "Are you the devil's messenger or a winged angel" (23), emphasizes multiple linguistic registers. Their response also heralds the Chicana's awakening voice, now capable of questioning the Church's stance concerning her status. This realization reflects a newly burgeoning counter-hegemonic position.

The feminist response of having both mother and daughter resist Father Jerome in Spanish and English at the outset of the story refutes the traditionally mandated marginalized positions in which the patriarchy has placed them. This combined resistance sets the stage for others to follow. Codeswitching transforms Loca and thereby creates a new contestatory space within which she can take on and question Father Jerome. This

interlocution heralds Sofi and Loca's acknowledgement and subsequent rejection of the male dominated stances of the Church, and, as Castillo argues in her book, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*, the "overtones of female shamefulness that are imbedded in the Catholic Church's doctrine" (89). In that book, Castillo proposes calling forth the Virgen de Guadalupe/Tonantzin construct, the feminine principle residing inside the mestiza to receive courage (88). She argues for the Chicana to embrace this bricolage of myths as a source of inspiration and power to combat the rhetoric of the Church, state, and patriarchy. As she states in an interview published in Mester, "Porque la cultura que tenemos aquí como Chicanas es Mexicana y Mexicana-Americana" (Mitchell, et al 153). In *So Far From God*, Castillo incorporates multiple belief systems, myths, and languages to suit this in-between hybrid state.

It is only after Caridad's miraculous recovery that she embraces the multiple cultural strands of her heritage and gains agency by training as a curandera under the tutelage of the codeswitching *curandera* Doña Felicia. While Caridad initially chooses the traditional path of marriage immediately out of high school, this choice is not fortuitous. First, her husband abandons her. Then, she sleeps her way through the men of Tome before being mauled by a Malogra (an evil spirit). It is during a pilgramage to Chimayo that she falls in love with Women-on-the-wall.[21] Her story ends, or begins, with her flying off the mesa with her sister/lover Esmeralda as the spirit deity Tsichtinako guides the two women "deep within the soft, moist dark earth where Esmeralda and

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[21] Castillo introduces the character Esmeralda as Women-on-the-wall, the hyphenated name highlighting the character's indigenous roots. The effigacy of this term has been debated because it is a construct not used by Native Americans in their naming practices. When Caridad and Esmeralda take hands and run off the mesa, it is the Native American spirit deity Tsichtinako that guides them.

Caridad would be safe and live forever" (211). By invoking the Acoma spirit deity, Tsichtinako, Castillo unites the women in a hybrid reworking of this myth of origin.[22]

Doña Felicia embodies this hybrid state with a power that transcends multiple continents, belief systems and languages. Her happiness, *felicidad*. stems from her ability to construct her faith from numerous sources and reveals the power of codeswitching. Beginning as a non-believer in Mexico; suspicious of a religion that does not help the destitute despite their devotion, she eventually reconfigures her belief to reflect that nothing with regards to healing will work without first placing your faith completely in God. Doña Felicia sees no contradiction in holding the multiple beliefs of *curanderismo* and her version of Catholicism. Through her faith and 'wrinkled hands' she cures 'empacho,' 'bilis,' 'mal de ojo,' 'caida de mollera,' and 'susto.' Through their naming, these conditions are given legitimacy. By not explaining these afflictions, Castillo again offers a portal to new words, concepts and beliefs. Doña Felicia's blended hybrid religion allows her to take strength where she needs it, surviving multiple wars and husbands. She "learned to read and write in her native Spanish, but also in French during the Second World War and English as well. She usually mixed two or even three of the languages, still making herself somehow quite understood by all" (60). With this emphasis on language acquisition, Castillo forges a character capable of maneuvering multiple realities as well as foregrounding the importance of language acquisition. Doña Felicia remains strong and chooses to pass the indigenous knowledge of the curandera to another she intuitively reads as worthy of those skills.

[22] Please refer to The Lore of New Mexico by Marta Weigle and Peter White for the full myth.

Loca's character embodies facets of the traditional *curandera*, while reflecting a religious/cultural hybrid, an embodied codeswitch, if you will. Her representation opposes the monolithic, monological Catholic Church. She is equally proficient training horses, cooking, or playing the cello, though she is never trained or taught any of these endeavors. Mirandé and Enríquez argue her knowledge as a *curandera* approaches an "esoteric plane, giving her special knowledge and skills" (16). As Tey Diana Rebolledo imparts in her book *Women Singing in the Snow*, "The curandera possesses intuitive and cognitive skills, and her connection to and interrelation with the natural world is particularly relevant" (83). Loca does more than simply care for her sisters: "[H]ealing her sisters from the traumas and injustices they were dealt by society – a society she herself never experienced first hand – was never questioned" (27). Loca's skills are gifts handed down through the ages, not communicated through or sanctioned by some ordained interlocutor. In that respect, she represents a challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church. Her speech reflects this challenge. When told by the priest that if she does not honor the Lord's Day in his home she would surely burn in hell, she replies, "I've already been there," continuing with "[a]nd actually, its overrated" (221). In Castillo's novel, La Loca has literally survived hell. She now uses the language that she chooses, exhibiting her agency. Through her unwavering stance, affinity with nature and naturally given skills, she can be seen to represent one vision of a newly imagined Chicana: one who chooses which doctrines and disciplines she will follow. Her choices reflect the many cultural threads that inform her hybrid reality.

Just as Castillo has her characters talk in both English and Spanish, she also merges myths from Mexico and New Mexico, refashioning them to reflect alternative

views. This intertextuality reflects folklore from both cultures, melding the two to construct a newly imagined space. The inclusion of the Mexican myth of La Llorona with the New Mexican myth of la Malogra-- both known to frequent crossroads-- confronts the traditional stories that have saturated both of these myths with the supposed dangers inherent in the crossroads. By foregrounding the possibilities and potentialities of the crossroad versus the myth's Mexican and New Mexican focus on crossroad dangers, Castillo reveals a new potential vision of the power of the crossroad. Through incorporating these myths, Castillo locates the state of *nepantla*, the interstitial cross-cultural space Roland Walters argues is a "possible place of emergence, a prelude of crossing from darkness to light, invisibility to visibility" (88). Castillo supplants the manifestation of the crossroads as a patriarchal wasteland with a touch of magical realism where the occult and the mundane meet, creating a subversive text where its "in-betweenness, [its] all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures" (Zamora et al 6). Through this re-imagining, she creates a space of infinite possibilities.

Castillo negates the long held myth of the crossroads as a place of danger and dismemberment by emphasizing the potentialities of the crossroads. She refutes "the historical crossroad where the creative power of woman became deliberately appropriated by male society" (Massacre 12). Hekate, was a nocturnal goddess known to frequent crossroads, Her position as the triple faced goddess who looked in all directions reveals the initial female agency represented by the crossroads. She was the goddess of hearth and home, as well as associated with the moon, magic, and witchcraft. Hekate was one of the main deities worshipped in Athenian households, was the mother of Angels and the

cosmic world soul. Man was known to anoint the stones at the crossroads to appease the ghosts thought to inhabit the space (Felton 5). Unfortunately, through time La Llorona's limited agency replaces Hekate's power. While Sofi hears the story of La Llorona from her father in his attempt to re-inscribe the culturally laden figure, she exhibits her agency with the decision not to saddle her daughters with La Llorona's limited representation of womanhood. By having La Llorona reveal herself to La Loca, Castillo takes the myth and reworks it to suit her argument, modifying the story of La Llorona-the weeping woman who kills her children to be with her man-forced to spend eternity caught between the spirit and real world searching for her children. In Castillo's reworking of the tale, La Llorona shows up at the ditch behind their house, frolics with La Loca, and communes with the ectoplasmic Esperanza. Though Carmela Delia Lanza argues once Esperanza becomes a spirit, she is no longer a victim, but instead belongs in the spirit world that Gloria Anzaldúa reminds us "the whites are so adamant in denying" (qtd. in Lanza 69)

> [w]ho better but La Llorona could the spirit of Esperanza have found, come to think of it, if not a woman who had been given a bad rap by every generation of her people since the beginning of time and yet, to Esperanza's spirit-mind, La Llorona in the beginning (before men got in the way of it all) may have been nothing short of a loving mother goddess. (163)

La Llorona's rapport with the otherworldly but still in this world La Loca, as well as the Astral traveler Esperanza, allows for both a restructuring of the myth as well as the terms and beliefs needed to redefine the Chicana's life and location. Castillo's manipulation of this myth give the Chicana, as well as all women, back the power through its reworking. No longer bound by male-defined parameters, the feminist is able to take what she chooses from each myth, reworking it to serve her needs.

Castillo strengthens her codeswitching with intertextuality. She takes the New Mexican myth of the Malogra and re-imagines it as the embodiment of the hegemonic structures that have constrained the Chicana's advancement. Folklorist Aurelio Espinosa describes it as

> …an evil spirit which wanders about in the darkness of the night at the crossroads and other places. It terrorized the unfortunate ones who wander alone at night, and has usually the form or a large lock of wool or the whole fleece of wool of a sheep. (qtd. in Alarcón)

Castillo's account is similar, but she incorporates substances of sharp metal, splintered wood, limestone, gold and brittle parchment. In her rendition, the Malogra holds the weight of a continent and is indelible as ink, centuries old and yet as strong as a young wolf. The Malogra embodies an unnamed hegemony. Caridad herself realizes that one-day, "she would wrestle it to the ground, that wicked wool spirit, at the crossroad where she knew it still waited with nothing better to do" (78). By having Caridad not only survive this attack, but be miraculously healed, later to withstand the efforts of Francisco el Penitante and his cohorts with "passive yet herculean strength" (87), Castillo again opens up a space for others to imagine overcoming the power structures that have limited the Chicana's choices. Through Caridad's miraculous healing, and resistance, she develops courage against the Malogra. She defeats the Malogra. Then she embodies it in a new feminine form. Castillo takes the myth and inverts it, transferring the Malogra's strength to Caridad. She is then transformed, open, and able to magically fall in love, for "*that* was something else altogether" (emphasis in the original 80). Castillo appropriates and re-imagines the myth. In her magical portrayal of what many consider the mundane

aspect of love, Castillo borrows from magical realism. This borrowing incorporates yet another codeswitch. This crossing reveals lacunae where anything is possible.

Castillo foregrounds codeswitching situations throughout the story to reveal the many choices these characters have on their road to expression. The Malogra's attack, requiring a tracheotomy on Caridad, represents a brutal example of society and hegemonic government's attempt to silence the Chicana. Castillo then aligns modern medicine's inability to cure Caridad with the unexplained magical realist cure upon her return home. After Fe recovers from her year as *La Gritona*, creating yet another link with *La Llorona* through name association (Martinez 221), her voice is so damaged that her responses are filled with silent gaps, successfully killing her chances for advancement at the bank. "You _ you're a woman now, _ you?...The charm's worn _. All that eccentric behav_ _yours! And _ don't _ wear any sho _? You got _ with not _ _ _ go to school. Well, __ __ pretty smart _ you back _, but how __ __ gonna keep up _ act, Loca" (156). Fe's speech becomes a code that the reader must decipher. While certain words exist, the rest of the sentence must be constructed by the reader. The reader must construct the rest of the sentence/utterance through active involvement with the text. This action breaks the boundary between text and reader, where the reader must now actively interact with the text she is reading. This break in the boundary, where the activities of reading and writing converge, creates yet another example of a hybrid text. While the youngest daughter, Loca, is fully vocal, her aversion to humans renders her voice limited to the household and thus seemingly ineffectual for the greater good of the community. Sofi's character and voice reflect the choices the Chicana has. Sofi runs for Mayor and actively work for community improvement-- breaking the traditional masculine mores. Through Sofi,

Castillo reveals her underlying belief in the strength of Xicanisma, the power of Chicana feminists to change the status quo for the better.

Beyond the obvious codeswitches between English and Spanish, the text is full of switches between alternating concepts, realities, religious beliefs, and myths of origin, all exhibiting multiple female voice and roads to identity. Castillo masterfully identifies the gaps, the spaces numerous masculine arguments have insisted are not valid. As Terry Gillman and Floyd-Thomas so skillfully delineate, Castillo combines the movements of Xicanisma, mestizaje, and mujerista theology to reflect the oppositional stances the Xicanista often inhabits (160). The belief systems, myths and languages Castillo incorporate reflect a non-linear path, allowing Castillo to cross more than linguistic barriers. While on the surface this subject matter might seem to fit better in a telenovela, Castillo, through ironic humor, is highlighting the paucity of socially mandated choices offered to Chicana.

Codeswitching reflects the many voices and directions Xicanistas have and deploy in their search for meaning. Through this practice, Castillo incorporates language to undermine the status quo. As she states in her interview with Elsa Saeta, "you undermine it by virtue of the language that you've chosen to write in" (141). Later in the interview, she reminds us that language is alive and usable, and thereby suitable to change the injustices that so many face. Through the play of language, she broaches inequalities. Employing humor, Castillo focuses on the contradictions of life (146).

Castillo debates the practices and prejudices of the Catholic Church. She argues, rightfully so, that the privileging of the masculine deters the agency of the feminine.

Chapter 2

"Sometimes the American Dream is written in Spanglish" (Firmat)

The Emergence of the Synthesized Syncretized Feminine Subject

Send My Roots Rain[23], Ibis Gómez-Vega's first novel, deals with issues of displacement, doubt, and second chances. These themes are all communicated through multiple narrative voices, codeswitching in the languages of Spanish and English, which propels her characters to develop their subjectivities. Because Gómez-Vega, a respected novelist, professor, and critical essayist, was born in Cuba (San Antonio de los Baños), before immigrating to the United States, she has dealt with these issues firsthand. This awareness enables her to endow her characters with poignant perspectives. By setting the novel in the mythical desert town of *Pozo Seco*[24] near the Guadalupe Mountains and the Texas / Mexico border, one can argue that Gómez-Vega reproduces a liminal space where hope and reality meet. She creates a literary space for the dislocated by crafting a language that emphasizes that dislocation from mainstream culture. This space explores issues of the border and belonging, as well as the fraught permeable relationship between the two. That is to say, while a border can close and divide, it can also open, allowing for language, ideas, and cultures to flow through. The setting then becomes a stage where her characters develop emotional bonds and gain positive self-images. As Evangelina Enríquez and Alfredo Mirandé argue, "landscapes or settings can be a more symbolic fabric against which characters and situations are played rather than real geographic entities" (179). Gómez-Vega's choice of a setting in a town named 'dry well,' while

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[23] The phrase "Send My Roots Rain" is one of the final lines in the poem "Thou are indeed just, Lord, if I contend" by Gerard Manley Hopkins.

[24] This translates as 'dry well.'

isolating her characters, allows them to explore their options removed from the voices, stresses, and edicts of hegemonic forces. They inhabit a space outside. Because there is no other, they then become the inside. This inclusion allows these women the possibility to envision a new crossroads of mutual admiration and self-determination, replacing their lives of quiet desperation.

The book focuses on the female inhabitants of *Pozo Seco*, and their persistent struggles to achieve the dreams that have been incubating for so long. Carole,[25] the agnostic artist traveling from the north, and invited by the local priest, has come to paint the Stations of the Cross in the local Catholic Church. She laments her choice to travel to this town, wishing she "hadn't made that turn off 180," suggesting the chiasmus "making a 180 degree turn" (from the Greek: χιάζω, chiázō, "to shape like the letter X). The introduction of this chiasmus is a stroke of brilliance on Gómez-Vega's part. *Pozo Seco* marks the spot.[26] It is the codeswitching crossroads where Carole Rio will fill up the dry well of *Pozo Seco* with newfound faith. Quite obviously, for her, there is no turning back. She is traveling to the area to get a sense of the ancestral past of her Mexican-American father. Another character, Maria Soledad, has fled Brazil after the politically motivated brutal murder of her mother and female companion, leaving her adrift and without purpose beyond the raising of her child Zemi conceived in a brief but loving encounter with a fellow traveler. Cora, her Latin American homeland unidentified, travels to Texas and the United States to begin again. In *Pozo Seco*, she survives working as a prostitute. Secretly though, she harbors dreams of becoming a painter like Carole. She agonizes over the decision to bring her daughter to the states to escape a life of poverty and prostitution

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[25] Carole should be pronounced with three sylables "the proper Spanish way."
[26] This also invokes the crossroads, as in Castillo's novel.

at the hands of the grandmother, who turned Cora out on the streets to earn her own way at an early age. Miriam is the curandera of *Pozo Seco* whose religious beliefs blend *curanderismo* and Catholicism, incuring the censure of Father Arroyo. His refusal to allow her into the church creates tension in the household where Maria acts as his live-in maid.

Through the process of rebuilding the church, and painting the Stations of the Cross, Carole develops personally and professionally. First, she hones her skills as a painter. Then she becomes a mentor to Cora. After she gains confidence in her professional life, she is able to face her personal demons that manifest as lions, and find love. Father Arroyo reaches a new understanding of the inhabitants of this town, as well as an acceptance of Miriam and her beliefs, while the town reestablishes its sense of community through the rebuilding of the church.

While the novel has an underlying theme of lesbianism portrayed through the burgeoning relationship of Carole and Maria Soledad and the rekindling of Miriam and Maria Selene's affair, these relationships even more accurately reflect the awesome power of the feminine to define her private space. They portray a new cohesive image of family beyond the stereotype, exhibiting what Sonia Saldívar-Hull, a leading Chicana, Latina and feminist theorist, sees as an alternative feminine space that disrupts "the static notion of a monolithic *familia* as a refuge from outside racism and class exploitation" (qtd. in Fregoso 85). In place of a 'monolithic *familia*,' Gómez-Vega constructs a hybrid space where women codeswitch to reflect their shifting and multiple subjectivities; they speak in English and bond through their Spanish.

In this chapter, I argue that Gómez-Vega offers a new feminine model of hybridity by her characters' codeswitching: through the shifting loyalties of homeland and new home, a synthesized syncretized subject emerges. That is to say, each character learns to combine her beliefs, languages, and cultural practices from both her past homeland and her new home in *Pozo Seco* instead of rejecting uncomfortable fictions. They meld their past and their present to create a more hopeful future. Gómez-Vega chooses to have her characters come from different places, lifestyles and situations. Though they come from disparate places they are connected through their language-- Spanish-- and new home. While their continued displacement and oppression have them experience what Karen Mary Davalos et al, refer to as both the absence and presence of a homeland" (8), they have created new lives in the border town. They establish ties and memories through their culture and language and, by incorporating codeswitching, they pay homage to their heritage while also acknowledging their new home and language. Therefore, through their codeswitching language and lifestyle choices, the women of this community represent the new mestiza who rejects social marginalization. Instead, she chooses to construct the future through the development of her language. She acknowledges both her mother tongue and the language of her new home simultaneously.

The female characters in the novel exhibit strength and indomitable spirit, for many of them have survived male violence and sexual domination. Cora is raped by the coyote she hires to navigate her journey across the border. The local priest has sex with another character, Maria Selene, resulting in a trifecta of changes: the birth of Luz, his banishment, and the arrival of Father Arroyo. While Maria Soledad had feelings for the father of her daughter Zemi, his abandonment leaves her penniless and alone, until the

curandera, Miriam, takes her in and cares for her. Through the depiction of each of these characters, Gomez-Vega highlights their strengths and fierce determination.

In the analysis that follows, I will focus on Gómez-Vega's female characters whose codeswitching exhibits a method of expression that encompasses the multiple and myriad nature of their languages and cultures. Their codeswitching is important because, through this practice, Gómez-Vega's characters find a common united ground though they have such different histories. In this sense her story "goes beyond the local and contemporary, [embracing] a common denominator" of acceptance and cohesion between cultures, religions and languages" (qtd. in Bruce-Novoa 172).

Carole and Maria's burgeoning love story reflects influences of the Latin American telenovela, which developed from the radio novelas first produced in Cuba in the 1930's and 1940's (Angeleri 2), and allows Gómez-Vega to present a Cuban influence in her novel, creating a cultural tie to her original homeland. Echoing these telenovelas in which social commentary often focuses on the plight of poor rural workers, these women characters from multiple Latin American countries enhance their community through their combined efforts to improve themselves and their female compatriots. I consider their collective experiences a series of 'texts' that inter-relate, creating affiliations through the new associations. Through this focus, it is possible to view these characters' experiences as forming plurality of texts, where each experience or text informs the other. When viewed in this way, French literary theorist Roland Barthes' concept of the subject as constituted by "the texts of his/her culture, where the 'I' is

already itself a plurality of other texts, of *codes*" (my emphasis qtd. in Alfaro 278) exponentially increases, echoing Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. Each character's story adds narrative threads to the text. Gómez-Vega creates shifting narrators and displaced characters whose codeswitching dialogues reflect heteroglossia and the dialogic aspects of language, emphasizing the varietal profusion of available perspectives her female characters have at their disposal.

The strong female characters impel a positive feminist reading where the characters' codeswitching reflect alternating parts of their subjectivites. In *Called to Healing: Reflections on the Earth's Power in Women's Lives,* Jean Troy-Smith focuses on the powerful feminine and collective energies of the text. She explores the differences, as she defines them, between the 'self,' the mundane ordinary subject that operates as a part of society. In Gómez-Vega's text when the inhabitants choose to converse in English they are choosing this subject position. When Cora relates her conversations with Carole to Maria she shares, "I don't know what to do when I'm with her. I have to speak good English, which I don't even know, and I have to say something. It's strange"(123). A few minutes later, she admits that she went to mass on Sunday. All these actions are an attempt for her to unite her warring sensibilities into a cohesive if uneasy alliance. For many of female characters of *Pozo Seco* the 'Self,' the essential core that is each unique individual (11) is represented through Spanish, reflecting the characters' shifting language loyalties. Carole voices this ambivilence when she tries to explain "what it meant to have no ancestry" (68). As she tells Maria, "The problem is, I can't be sure of anything. I speak Spanish with a Spanish accent, although I've never been to Spain, and I know I'm Mexican American, but I don't know from where" (68). Troy-Smith asserts

that "Carole is on the kind of journey that seems contradictory; it is a journey to find meaning in her life as a woman in the patriarchy as well as a journey to find her power as a women through discovering the missing piece to her 'Self' by searching for her paternal ancestral roots" (144), reflecting this confusion. Troy-Smith acknowledges the importance of all of the female characters, using the analogy of 'weave' as both a noun and a verb to explain their relationship stating, "Gómez-Vega gives the many women characters in her novels the same kind of equal responsibility for the successes of each other's lives as the weaver does the threads of the weave" (145). While Troy-Smith has touched on important aspects of the novel, I would like to draw attention to a theme not addressed in the critical literature. Most specifically, I will focus on how Gómez-Vega's practice of linguistic codeswitching challenges the status quo of hegemonic and patriarchal privileging of English and reveals the multiple realities of these women's lives.

Gómez-Vega's Cuban-American heritage coupled with the Texas border town setting of her novel complicates the implications of both space and time in the novel by destabilizing the motivation for codeswitching. Although many Chicana writers have focused on the border and border issues revealing their often marginalized position as border subjects, having a Latina choose this area as the setting for her novel cross-pollinates the conversations between the writers and the languages they choose to incorporate. While Gómez-Vega is a Cuban-American, she blends elements of Spanish, Mexican, Mexican-American, as well as multiple Latina cultures into the story. She simultaneously focuses on many of the women's similarities instead of their differences. Davalos and Partnoy connect the subjectivities of Chicana and Latina, seeing them as "a

foothold of a bridge, an intellectual and creative grip that joins parallel and complementary histories, bibliographies, methods, and experiences " (8). The connection between the two is an association closely linked by language and cultural similarities. Through the female characters' actions and interactions, they exhibit the characters' multiple subjectivities, moving from the local to the global, and back again, constantly and consistently acknowledging the memories and experiences of each, through the practice of codeswitching.

While I discussed heteroglossia in Chapter One, Gómez-Vega focuses on a different aspect of this concept. She emphasizes the changing subject positions of the women in her novel. She highlights these changes by shifting the narrator and her voice, where each character exemplifies another register. In the opening scene, we are introduced to Carole, the painter. The narrator then shifts to the young girl Zemi without any warning. The next shift, the interchange between Zemi and her mother, Maria, reveals Maria's Spanish with the simple phrase "Si, mi hija" (5). Gómez-Vega continues to acknowledge the multiple subject positions of her characters through language choice. Later Cora is speaking to Maria and simply says "Carole." Maria responds with "¿Que?..." "as if she had just been awakened from a dream" (122). In each instance, the language reflects codeswitching that resists the traditional monological language of the hegemony. As Bakhtin explains,

> When heteroglossia enters the novel, it becomes subject to an artistic reworking. The social and historical voices populating language, all its words and all its forms, which provide language with its particular concrete conceptualizations, are organized in the novel into a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch. (300)

The painter, the daughter, the mother and the aspiring painter's assistant reflect the different social positions of the characters.

The narrators' ongoing discussions with the priest focus on the disparate registers within the community. This practice gives the previously marginalized characters both a voice and a platform for that voice. By shifting the narrator as well as the languages, multiple subjectivities reveal the cultural and social lacunae of and in this community, the locations of discord as well as concord. Allon White, a well known literary and cultural critic, posits languages are socially unequal, thus heteroglossia implies dialogic interaction in which the prestige languages try to extend their control and subordinated languages try to avoid, negotiate, or subvert that control (qtd. in Vice 19). By creating a largely Latina feminine space, as well as silencing many of the hegemonic and masculine voices in the community, Gómez-Vega removes certain aspects of this dialogic tension. With this practice, she succeeds not in being anti-masculine, but pro-feminine.

Gómez-Vega's strong female characters combine aspects of their mixed and multiple cultures in a move that underlines Bakhtin's concept of hybridization. This concept in which two social languages mix within the limits of a single utterance, acknowledges the presence of two linguistic modes of being (Holquist 359). After Carole faints, Maria responds to Zemi with "Sí mi hija. Gracias." Then Maria turns to Cora without taking a breath and asks "You're gonna call Miriam?" (5). The fluidity between the two responses elucidates many of Gómez-Vega's linguistic maneuvers. The female characters' codeswitching challenges the hierarchy of a hegemonic language by easily navigating between Spanish and English. Though often small linguistic representations, they speak literary mountains, for they represent "the mixing, within a single concrete

utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousnesses, often widely separated in time and social space" (Holquist 429). When Cora says "Gracias a Dios," "and "where's the good father?" the narrator informs the reader that she is faking religious fervor. Her next irreverent comment comes when she learns he is picking up supplies for the church. She crosses herself, bows her head and says, "A saint" (59). These small phrases reveal the frictions that exist between the female inhabitants, the priest, acting as God's representative, and the Catholic religion. In addition to speaking derogatorily about Father Arroyo, Cora challenges the priest's authority by sometimes celebrating mass with Miriam the *curandera* and other times celebrating with the father. Sue Vice explains that Postcolonial studies developed the analogous term 'hybridity' to refer to a person, character, or writer who "is already open to two worlds" (Vice 64). Cora's decision to vary the site of her religious observance reveals her fluid hybridity.

In Gómez-Vega's text, not only do the characters exist in worlds represented by Spanish and English, but also the two 'worlds' of heterosexual and gay relationships. These worlds refute one another, and refuse erasure by remaining present through the characters' language choices. Cora is obviously heterosexual. Carole is obviously gay. Maria is confused. Gómez-Vega's characters' codeswitching reveals their linguistic landscape, and their awakening responses to each other. To quote Patterson, "the novel does not consist of words and statements, but is rather made of a combination of discourses and of the responses to those discourses" (131). The hybrid sentences and dialogues of Gómez-Vega's text emit an effusive richness, acknowledging both worlds and allow multiple registers to co-exist simultaneously. When Carole first meets Maria, she believes that her and Father Arroyo are lovers. When Maria slips off to Miriam's

house in the desert to discuss Carole's suspicions, and how she got the wrong idea, she is confused stating "All I did was wash her and dress her and feed her. Things anyone would do" (30). What she does not tell her is that when she removed Carole's clothes "some kind of emotion rushed through her body, and she had to stand back to recover and reason through her embarrassment" (6). Of course Miriam as a *curandera* has the gift of second sight, though she allows Maria to reach her own conclusions. When Miriam asks "¿Cree que eres su amante?" in Spanish, she re-introduces the previous register and reveals each character's fluency in both.

Cora's and Miriam's interactions with the women of the town are often rendered in Spanish reflecting the pervading existence of the language. In an exchange between Martica and Cora, they discuss Maria and Carole's relationship. Cora tells her "¡Pero me vas a decir a mí que las conozco! *You're going to tell me about it when I know them.* They're smart in the head, I tell you, but the rest of them is silly" (120). When Miram and Maria Selene speak, they always speak in Spanish. As Gómez-Vega reveals in our interview, "I thought of Miriam and Maria Selene as older than the others and more resistant to the influence of English, but they are probably bilingual in their own fashion" (Dye). Gómez-Vega decides to have certain members of the town exhibit "situational codeswitching," again adding to the heteroglossia of this text.

Though Zemi is proficient in English, Cora's daughter has just arrived in Pozo Seco, so she is more comfortable in Spanish. To oblidge her, on the picnic they all go on for Maria's birthday, the girls converse in Spanish. Speaking of the flowers Zemi want to pick for her mother, she says "Si las arrancamos, se van a morir" (150). So the monological reader will not be left out, Gómez-Vega then offers the translation in italics.

Because Gómez-Vega's female characters have traveled from Spanish speaking homelands, and now live in *Pozo Seco*, they can be said to be simultaneously living in two linguistic worlds: the Spanish of their homelands as well as the language of their new home, English. Therefore, they incorporate codeswitching in their communication to reflect their fluid and fractured essence while resisting the language of the hegemony. I say fluid because the women codeswitch depending on their focus, and fractured because they are torn between their shifting subjectivities. As an example, Maria speaks one way to her daughter, one way to Cora, and another to Miriam. In each instance, she is aware of her position and her place in the language. She says "mi hija" (5) to her daughter, "Jesús" to Cora (8), "I'm glad you came" to Miriam (8). Whenever Maria refers to her daughter, she always says "mi hija" re-enforcing that Spanish is her 'mother tongue.' Because she is often irritated with Cora, she vents her irritation through "religious high impact terms." As discussed in Chapter One, the insertions of these terms reflect the uneasy alliance these women have with their Catholic religion. Eventually, both Carole and Maria finally find the strength to stand up to Father Arroyo.

Codeswitching allows the characters to navigate in and reconstruct their worlds according to *their* language and rules. Therefore, instead of remaining passive pawns of society, they incorporate their past into their present and future through the utilization of their 'mother tongue'—Spanish. Through this practice, the memories of home are allowed a voice, for, as Bakhtin argues, "it is impossible to represent an alien ideological world adequately without first permitting it to sound, without having first revealed the special discourse peculiar to it" (Holquist 335). The Spanish words remind them of home

while forging a new life within their new language, English. The inclusion of poems, dichos and song lyrics, as well as dialogue, allow other English and Spanish texts to enter the novel. These allusions to alternative texts and points of view are what bring vibrancy and shifting meaning to the text--all facets of Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. As Gómez-Vega states in her interview, "I wanted to make it clear that these people came from Spanish, not just from Spanish speaking countries, that language is a place that we inhabit" (Dye). She goes on to say, "The text was written in English, but I wanted it all to feel like Spanish."

Gómez-Vega's dialogism, first exhibited by her characters' allegorical names, reveals an additional underlying narrative, which unfolds through these codeswitched names. A young girl named Luz (light), fathered by Father Leal (loyal) and parishioner Maria Selene, dies in a fire that burns down the church. This sets off a series of events. The disgraced priest, who has proven himself disloyal, is banished and Maria Selene 'casts' a curse on the town. This curse 'dries up' the spirituality of the town, evidenced by it name *Pozo Seco* (dry well). Though the town receives a new spiritual leader, Father Arroyo (rivulet or gully), he is unable to get the inhabitants of the town to join with him to rebuild the town's church. In his personal life, Maria Soledad (loneliness), takes care of his house. Maria Soledad's loneliness exists because she is living in a false facsimile of a family. It is not until the arrival of Carole Rio (river), that the town overcomes its 'dry spell,' and flows together in harmony to build the church. Gómez-Vega, in a counter intuitive move, has the river refresh the rivulet and refill the well. Carole's arrival provides the impetus Father Arroyo needs to rebuild the church, as well as begin to view life, religion, and the townspeople in a new integrative light. Carole will also release

Maria from her loneliness. Thus, the allegorical names act as scaffolding, revealing the bare bones of the narrative. As described, the bare bones of the narrative exist in the allegories suggested by the names of the characters.

The cultural diversity and dialogic interaction of the women, revealed through Gómez-Vega's 'authorial speech," presents a vision of border living where the women's collective strength emerges through their language choice. When Maria Selene arrives back in *Pozo Seco* and sees Miriam for the first time she says, "*Tengo tanto que decir te,* and words she never thought she could say spilled out of her mouth into Miriam's ear" (98). Through these words, Gómez-Vega first reveals the hybridity of the text with both the character and the narrator speaking in the same sentence. Then, Gómez-Vega's alteration of Spanish and English as this important juncture gives Maria and Miriam privacy through language. Gómez-Vega informs the reader that, "words she (Maria Selene) never thought she could say spilled out of her mouth into Miriam's ear". This coding, rendered in English, though Miriam and Maria are more comfortable with Spanish is a beautiful gift that Gómez-Vega gives them. This gap allows Maria to share her feelings with Miriam, but not reveal them to the reader. In this manner, they are kept private between the reuniting lovers.

The energy and ancestry Carole brings to the town reflects the polyglot aptitudes of the female inhabitants who reveal daily the linguistic choices, the heteroglossia, available to them. Carole's heritage of maternal Spanish Sephardic Jew, and paternal Mexican-American Catholic, coupled with her experiences in New York allow her to bring multiple cultural and lingual registers to the town. It is significant that the women of the text engage in the majority of codeswitching, for along with manipulating the

language, they learn to manipulate their surroundings for their personal and collective benefit. As Gómez-Vega reveals in her interview, "All of the people in this novel turn what other people would consider a negative, like the desert, into a positive, a place where they can create and live their lives. This is pretty much what the Little Prince finds out, that life is what you make of it, usually through love" (Dye).

Through the friendships these women develop, they come to realize then vocalize that love makes a person responsible for the beings that one loves. In the novel, Gómez-Vega keeps returning to the story of the Little Prince.[27] Just as he learns important lessons about love and life, so must the women in this town. Love and language increase and multiply the choices available to the women in this town. Maria's platonic love of Cora motivates Maria to urge Cora to become Carole's assistant, "So tell her, Cora, and ask her about teaching you" (124). Maria Selene's love for Miriam motivates her to return to *Pozo Seco*. Miriam sits and waits for Maria Selene to arrive though she worries that Maria will think she is still mad. "*De estamanera, va a pensar que estoy brava, aunque le dije en mis cartas que no lo estaba. Nunca lo estuve. Si alguien podia comprender su dolor"*(97). Carole not only falls in love with Maria, but gets involved with "Cora, Clarita, Zemi, and now Miriam and Maria, whom I didn't even know, not to mention all those women who came to look at the church" (99). The inclusion of multiple references to the little Prince's story increases the intertexuality of Gómez-Vega's story.

Another example of intertextuality is reflected through the character of Maria Soledad. She is of Brazilian ancestry with a college degree in philosophy. These features coupled with the political activity of Maria's mother and female companion bring, among

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[27] *The Little Prince* by Antoinne De Saint-Exupéry

others, the specter of Paulo Freire and his theories of the word and education into the novel. To elucidate, Bakhtin argues, “Between the word and speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other alien words about the same object, the same theme” (276). In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire contends,

> Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, and in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. (87)

Before Carole arrives in town, Maria, Cora and Miriam are living lives bereft of reflection or action. Carole’s arrival acts as a mirror, reflecting an exterior view that reveals their frozen stasis. Her presence becomes the impetus for change. Maria rekindles her desire to get a house for herself and Zemi telling Miriam, “I’ll have a place of my own, and you’ll be able to come whenever you want” (10). Maria also redoubles her efforts to convince Cora to learn to read and send for her daughter, saying “The real difference between people lies in whether or not we do something to get what we want instead of just sitting around and feeling sorry for ourselves” (46). This echoes Freire’s contention that the oppressed “will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it” (45). Maria’s mother was in a brothel trying to organize a union when a man gunned her down. She was living Freire’s argument that, “[c]ritical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation.” The footnote of this quotation is chillingly ominous considering the fact that Maria’s mother is gunned down. It states, “Not in the open, of course; that would only provoke the fury of the oppressor and lead to still greater repression” (65).

While all of this passage is rendered in English, other languages exist in the periphery. As Maria tells Carole, "The Portuguese and the French will come later" (67).

Gómez-Vega's decision to limit Father Arroyo's speech almost exclusively to English, though he knows Spanish, as well as having Carole's father reject his Latino surname and language act as counterpoints to the women's language choices. The men shrink their linguistic repertoire, while the women embrace their multiple choices. In this novel, Gómez-Vega takes "words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve [her] own new intentions"(Holquist 300). By this practice, she melds words and cultures to forge a new vision of feminine solidarity through the celebration of hybridity.

Gómez-Vega challenges the privileging of Anglocentrism by codeswitching and the primacy of the Catholic religion by syncretizing Catholicism and *curanderismo.* She presents shifting feminine and feminist dialogic threads through the multiple narrators. These threads combine to form a polyphonic intermingling of language and culture, which represents multiple social and cultural strata. The characters' language reflects this by shifting between Spanish and English. These language choices reveal the character's hybridity. With the simple utterance "*De nada, mi hija*…but come over tomorrow after she's awake," (10) Miriam exposes her love for Zemi's mother as well as her fused reality where the two languages reside side by side. Just as Maria calls Zemi '*mi hija'*, Miriam's term of endearment for Maria reveals her love as well as her motherly instincts. These women codeswitch with ease reflecting the fluidity of their subjectivities. Additionally, Miriam practices a syncretic religion. Her ability to see the future reflects

her *curanderismo*; her weekly observance of the Sabbath reflects her Catholicism. Her lifestyle and her language represent her reality where elements of each form the fractured essence of her being. Gómez-Vega further challenges the primacy of English through the speech of Zemi, Maria's daughter. Upon learning Carole's father changed his name and dropped the language, to 'get ahead,' Zemi asks, "How can you get ahead if you can't speak Spanish?" (67). Her mother, Maria, then informs Carole that Zemi will eventually know Spanish, English Portuguese, and French. Gómez-Vega highlights the significance of language acquisition through Maria's desire to teach her daughter multiple languages, suggesting that while English is important, it is not preeminent. Thus, through this dialogue Gómez-Vega creates a text resistant to hegemonic Anglocentric stances as well as creating a space where the women of this "*pozo seco*" find nourishment and sustenance through their language and lifestyle choices.

Gómez-Vega's codeswitching, which represents the double-voiced dialogism of the novel, strategically emphasizes the multiple linguistic and cultural registers available to these women as well as creating a unifying space. At a wedding reception for young newlyweds, Carole and Maria bond through the Spanish song "*Noche de Ronda*." While the lyrics are in Spanish, Carole's renders her thoughts in English, followed by the translated text of the song, exhibiting the double-voicedness of the text. Carole remembers her mother and grandmother singing the songs, while Maria admits she grew up with them too. Later in the novel, after Carole offers Cora a job as her assistant and Cora is skeptical of Carole's knowledge of Spanish, they also bond while singing "*Noche de Ronda*." Carole believes that Maria Teresa Lara, a woman, wrote the song, though there's "a lot of confusion" about it (130). Because Carole, the openly gay woman

questions the authorship of the song, the ambiguity of this statement suggests the deconstruction of fixed sexual identities. Thus, through this song Gómez-Vega represents multiple codeswitching dialogic threads. These threads transcend generations and national borders. They create links. They establish relationships. These threads weave a tapestry of feminine strength, solidarity, and creativity. The song develops many unifying elements. Carole loves the poignant song. She romantically connects with Maria when they dance to it. She and Cora also connect through Carole's offer of apprenticeship. The duet they sing to "*Noche de Ronda*", and the professed hope that the song was both written and inspired by a woman all act as unifying elements in the novel. The song represents ties to the past, to family, and to language, varying in meaning depending on who sings. Through this strategy the word becomes translinguistic, focusing on the intersection of meanings rather than a fixed point or single meaning" (Lechte 10). The ebb and thread of the song weaves its way among the characters binding them closer. As Gómez-Vega states in her interview

> When I was growing up in Cuba, I heard music from Spain, from France, from Italy, and from Argentina, and every other place except contemporary music from the United States of course, because of the political issues. Being able to share that music created a connection, a cultural connection. My friend Mariana is from Chile, but she knows the same music I know. That's what I was going for, the commonality in our cultures. (Dye)

The women unite through their language and the music of their cultures. Spanish, French and Italian are all Romance languages all derived from Latin (Portuguese is as well). Through a musical forum, the characters are able to bridge their differences, overcoming them through their underlying commonalities.

Gómez-Vega challenges Father Arroyo and what he represents through codeswitching, where other registers and other rhetorics represent conflicting discourses. As an example, Father Arroyo's language represents the monologic Catholic Church and supports its doctrine. He touts the "party line,"(15) and reflects this through his speech and his stance, "The word of God isn't flexible" (112). Carole, Maria, Miriam and Cora, on the other hand, use both English and Spanish to question the church and its importance constantly. Carole and Miriam question the need for a representative of God on earth, which challenges the very existence of Father Arroyo. Cora invokes the double negative of Spanish and reveals her religious ambivalence, when she speaks about Carole saying, "But she don't need no religion…She's a white girl with an education and a car" (24). Both Carole and Maria resent the Church's attitude towards women. Maria's retort "The world isn't made out of white men who hate women" (112), reveals her antipathy towards the church's fathers, and explains why she observes the Sabbath with Miriam in the desert, not with Father Arroyo. Finally, when Miriam visits the church to have a conversation with the painter, Carole realizes "she was looking for the right English word to say what she came to say"(108). Though Carole responds to her in Spanish, Miriam questions her ability asking, "You speak Spanish?" Carole's response, "*Me enseño mi madre*" explains her competency. The conversation continues in Spanish until Father Arroyo's arrival spurs Miriam to tell him "I'm fond of your devils" "in her best English, almost defiantly" (110). As Gómez-Vega states in her interview, "I had a priest in the novel, so I couldn't let him and what he represented get by without being challenged. In fact, that is one of the reasons why he is there to begin with" (Dye).

In *Send My Roots Rain*, Gómez-Vega incorporates codeswitching to highlight the importance of the phrase and the speaker. When Miriam walks by Father Arroyo, he softly murmurs "*solavaya*" (34). Carole questions the meaning of the phrase though she is fluent in Spanish. When Maria explains that the phrase means to go alone, Carole then remarks that people in Spain used the term in reference to the Jews in Spain and that her mother detested that phrase. This conversation reveals the word's dialogism. In Gómez-Vega's representation of the word, it references *brujas* in Texas, and Jews in Spain. In both instances, the term is derogatory. In addition, by using the subjunctive form of the verb 'ir' meaning to go, Father Arroyo subtly reveals his desire for Miriam to go away. He cannot not command her to leave, but he can wish that she does so. The subjunctive form is used to express a desire. Father Arroyo's condemnation of syncretic religious practices is foregrounded through his language choice. He does not approve of Miriam, thus he uses a language he considers substandard. Gómez-Vega does not allow him to speak in Spanish because he does not have enough respect for it. As Gómez-Vega says in her interview, she "couldn't give him Spanish as a gift until he worked to deserve it" (Dye). Initially he sees English as the language of enlightenment, while Spanish is the language of the indigent and ignorant. Through his conversations with Carole and Maria, he begins to understand and empathize with these women. While Father Arroyo's utterance of those two terms reveals his bias and his weakness, through the intervention of Maria, he will change his stance. Gómez-Vega discloses in the interview, "To his credit, he evolved, but only because Maria Soledad confronts him. Women had to set him straight" (Dye).

Cora's codeswitching reflects her competency to 'read between the lines' even though she cannot actually read while also revealing her position as cultural insider in this novel. During the courtship of Carole and Maria, Cora first realizes their attraction for one another. "[I]f I didn't know better I'd say she was jealous, thought Cora, and grinned to herself. "Ay, pero que zorrita!" *What a fox she is* (61). Cora also realizes Maria's precarious position in the priest's house. When Maria urges Cora to "Go ahead…Tell…I want a reputation," Cora responds "Yeah? The good Padre would put you 'de patitas en la calle'" (24). When Maria questions who would cook for the priest, Cora exclaims, !Pues, la güera!" (24). Though Cora is uneducated; she would like to learn. She says "Religion's for people who don't have nothing else." Later she wonders what it would be like to "have a feminist mother and know about that Karl guy" (25). Through these ruminations, she reveals her thirst for knowledge. Through Maria Soledad's urging and support, Cora will learn how to read from Maria and how to paint from Carole.

On the other hand, though Carole and Father, both speak Spanish, they are the outsiders and thus represent 'the other,' where the multiple references to Carole as "*güera*" mark her as 'the other." Her comment, "I speak Spanish with a Spanish accent although I've never been to Spain, and I know I'm Mexican-American, but I don't know from where" (68) reveals the presence of another language though the conversation is rendered completely in English. Codeswitching also exposes the stresses that develop when one knows the language, but is denied the culture.

On the other hand, in *Send My Roots Rain*, Carole's lions act as another type of code, interrupting the narrative with an additional thread, a

> traumatic kernel that effectively curves the space of fictional description and tears at the very fabric of its form to reveal a series of identificatory, social, and historical meanings released through seismic irruption and interruption, providing a deeper understanding of a violence otherwise covered over, contained, repressed or dismissed. (Sandín et al 3)

Carole's lions appear at times of insecurity, ready to pounce on her, exhibiting what Amaryll Chanady calls "the amalgamation of a rational and an irrational world view" (qtd. in Sandín et al 67). As Gómez-Vega shares in her interview,

> Carole came to Pozo Seco as an angry, displaced person who had finished a university education but had lost her mother and her bearings in the process…Carole would have been concerned with the things that she thought she could not give her mother, like a grandchild, but perhaps more importantly she was at that time feeling sorry for herself because she could not find anyone to love her. (Dye)

Carole's concerns manifest themselves as lions. It is not until she makes her journey into the desert, just like the Little Prince, that she conquers them thereby finding the faith to love again.

Through the interplay between these characters, heteroglossia, the internal differentiation common to all language characterized by qualities like perspective, evaluation, and ideological positioning develops as a result of the women's codeswitching. As the discussions between the priest and the women portray, the established position of the Catholic Church collides with the mestiza's following of c*uanderismo*. Through the development of the story, Gómez-Vega positions the traditional stance of the Church against Miriam's syncretized folk religion, where each one refracts off of the other, allowing for a hybrid view of religion that eventually allows

both an equal space. These dialogic threads consisting of the polyphonic intermingling of language and culture, allow Gomez-Vega to present her protagonists among multiple social and cultural strata. She both literally incorporates both languages into the text, and suggests the Spanish language through her images of languages. In one instance, when Maria speaks to her daughter, she replies, "*Mi hija, who's dead*" (3)? In another instance Cora claims, "*She's traveling escondida*" (8). These phrases reflect the multiple subjectivities of these women and the ease in which they can navigate between them.

Codeswitching in this novel allows these women to first reflect upon the commonalities they have. They are then able to move past their differences in order to band together for the betterment of all.

Conclusion

Female Subjectivity: Why Codeswitching Matters

"Women's discourse is double; it is the echo of the self and the other, a movement into alterity." (Godard)

In this thesis, I examine the phenomenon of codeswitching in Chicana/Latina novels set in the American Southwest. Most specifically, I concentrate on two novels, Ana Castillo's Chicana text *So Far From God* and Ibis Gómez-Vega's Latina text *Send My Roots Rain*. As noted in the introduction, I feel it is important to look at novels of the border, written by women, in order to discover the feminine language that resides in that interstitial space. I chose a Chicana text and a Latina text in order to see if one informed the other or if they had competing aims. I chose these two novels to see how Chicana and Latina authors used codeswitching as a language of resistance and to explore the terrain of their different approaches. My intent is to map both the similarities and differences in codeswitching techniques.

In Chapter One, I focus on Castillo's use of multiple registers. Through dichos, recipes, and curanderic remedies, she highlights the often fraught relationship between social, feminine, and indigenous languages and cultures. Through Castillo's commitment to Xicanisma, she envisions a new Chicana that first resists and then re-imagines her religion and her reality. My research reveals how Castillo merges languages and myths from multiple cultures. By re-appropriating these cultural indicators, Castillo re-infuses them with feminine power. Thus, through these multiple strands, the codeswitching reflections and refractions open up a space for feminist empowerment.

In Chapter Two, I focus on Gómez-Vega's multiple narrative voices and languages and how these multiple constructions both reveal and develop the characters' subjectivities. In this Chapter, I note how Gómez-Vega chooses to emphasize the permeability of the border where ideas are allowed to cross-pollinate the languages and belief of the individuals. My research reveals how Gómez-Vega develops a new feminine model of hybridity that synthesizes and syncretizes beliefs, languages, and cultural practices from both her past homeland and her new home.

This research also reveals many threads that exist between these two novels They inform and enrich one another. Obviously both novels incorporate codeswitching in their narratives. They both resist the patriarchal stances of the Catholic Church while embracing a syncretic amalgam of *curanderismo* and Catholicism. Both novels have elements of the telenovela. Furthermore, they both have ties to *Don Quixote* by Miguel De Cervantes. Through her long title chapters, Castillo echoes the long titles of the chapters in Cervantes influential work. When Carole discerns a windmill beyond Father Arroyo's black robe she says, "You remind me of mirrors" (70). Gómez-Vega reveals in her interview that she had just read *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (Dye). The idea of someone being reflective of something, or reflecting herself interested her.

Castillo, as a Chicana writer intent on highlighting the importance of Xicanisma, incorporates codeswitching in her character's language in order for her characters to resist the hegemonic patriarchal forces in her text. Gómez-Vega, a Latina exile from Cuba, incorporates codeswitching in order to traverse the silent gaps in and between languages. She continues to elevate Spanish to a position above the crossfire between the two languages. As she states in her interview, "Even Maria Soledad, whose language is

Portuguese, not Spanish, participates in this inhabiting of the Spanish world because she speaks to the other women in Spanish. I wanted the world of the novel to feel like Spanish" (Dye).

Chicana authors have overcome many obstacles in the search to find their voice and have her stories told and published. Forging her voice, Castillo develops strong characters whose refusal to be silent creates a vibrant literary strain where the fusion of past and present meld to create a promising literary view of the future. Through her struggles, literary and otherwise, the Chicana has forged and is continuing to forge a respected and growing place in the American literary canon.

Through years of emigration, many Latina women have come to live in the United States. Latina writers have illuminated multiple issues these women have faced and many choose to incorporate codeswitching in order to illuminate the link between and make visible the gap codeswitching, with or without translation allows. While the histories of Chicana and Latina women vary deeply, many are bound together by their mother tongue, Spanish, as well as their quest for a new life the United States. Language is one of the bridges that unite these women writers. The codeswitching and intertexuality of both texts discussed in these pages create new spaces of liminality opening the door to yet another conversation with past and future texts.

In looking to the future, I see women writers incorporating codeswitching, the use of multiple registers in their novels, to explore the lacunae where multiple meanings exist. Instead of being limited by masculine and hegemonic constructions, women writers will continue to find their own language and change the landscape of literature.

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Bibliographical Information

Carla Dye is a Masters student at University of Texas at Arlington. Prior to completing her Master's Degree in English Literature at the University of Texas at Arlington, she earned a B.A. in English Literature at the University of Texas at Arlington. She also earned a B.A. in Spanish from the University of Texas at Arlington, graduating Summa Cum Laude.

Carla's research interests are Chicana and Latina literatures, Mikhail Bakhtin and Martin Heidegger.

She has presented at ELVA, the First International Conference on Electronic Literature and Virtual Art in Alcalá de Henares, Spain in 2012. She has also presented at the North Texas Graduate English Conference in 2013.