

Todas las voces que me hablan simultáneamente: Anzaldúa's Voice from the Borderlands

Patrícia ALVES LOBO

Universidade de Lisboa
Departamento de Estudos Anglísticos
patricia_aclobo@sapo.pt

ABSTRACT:

This article analyses how Anzaldúa uses language intersections to underline the hybridity of Chicano women in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). It starts by reflecting on how Anzaldúa exposes the use of language as a source of segregation and bias in the dominant society, as well as among Chicanos themselves, as the author reveals a connection between linguistic oppression and patriarchal values. Then it focuses on the way Anzaldúa uses language in her work in order to validate her own experience between worlds and to induce a social paradigm shift, by the deconstruction of pre-established dogmas and confrontation with alterity. Different languages in this work convey a parallel message to the content of the text, proving not only that language barriers can be converted into a fluid space of inclusion, but also that the U.S. reality incorporates the sounds and voices of minority groups often ignored and oppressed, sounds and voices which are in themselves an U.S. idiosyncrasy. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* announces that the future depends on the disruption of fixed paradigms and must be built beyond borders, acknowledging the hybrid identity together with the resulting hybrid linguistic expression.

Keywords: Anzaldúa, Chicanos, linguistic oppression, linguistic hybridity, social segregation.

In 2015, almost three decades after the first publication of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), contemporary societies are still trying to understand not only the complexities of ethnic, racial, cultural and gender intersections, but also those of languages within nations.

This article aims to examine how Anzaldúa uses language intersections to underline the hybridity of Chicano women in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. It starts out by reflecting on how Anzaldúa exposes the use of language as a source of segregation and bias in the dominant society, as well as among Chicanos themselves, as the author reveals a connection between linguistic oppression and patriarchal values. Then it focuses on the way Anzaldúa uses language in her work in order to validate her own experience between worlds and to induce a social paradigm shift, by the deconstruction of pre-established dogmas and the confrontation with alterity. Different languages in her work convey a parallel message to the content of the text, proving not only that language barriers can be converted into a fluid space of inclusion, but also that the U.S. reality incorporates the sounds and voices of minority

groups often ignored and oppressed, sounds and voices which are in themselves an U.S. idiosyncrasy.

Anzaldúa devotes the chapter “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” to matters of language, revealing the centrality of this theme to *Borderlands/La Frontera*. In both form and content the text is permeated with the concept of language as a tool for struggle as well as for resistance, inasmuch as ethnic identity is interwoven with linguistic identity. Thus, English and Spanish are used in a single discourse where direct or contextual translations are not always feasible. The author, simultaneously living inside and outside Anglo-American and Mexican cultures, challenges the stability of the dominant language. Anzaldúa abolishes linguistic boundaries which are conventionally demarcated, reinforced and maintained, casting light on instances of linguistic hybridism. Hence, by drawing attention to the multiple intersections between race, class, gender, sexuality and language, her discourse represents the complexity of Chicano experience, with all its inherent ambiguities and struggles, as well as the necessary negotiations of daily life.

Indeed, reading *Borderlands/La Frontera* unaware of its different linguistic codes implies the dismissal of a considerable number of excerpts in Spanish, Nahuatl or *Spanglish* which might be deemed irrelevant, thus distorting the message or failing to understand it in all its breadth. Nevertheless, the author’s hybrid discourse is not unproblematic, since language has been repeatedly used against women by their own community, and the typical language of Chicanos is regarded as incorrect by both the Anglo-American society and the Chicano community, where it is represented as a “linguistic aberration” (Anzaldúa 1999: 80).

Through the telling of Anzaldúa’s life story in *Borderlands/La Frontera* it became abundantly clear that from an early age Chicano children have felt a keen sense of self-awareness regarding their status – as immigrants and outsiders, who thrive in the negotiation between two realities and in a constant process of cultural translation. The home/school dynamic, initially imagined as the key to social progress and the acquisition of new skills, turned instead into a stage demanding endless affective and social negotiations where the children of the Chicano diaspora learned to transform themselves on a daily basis according to their milieu. School therefore played a central role as the migratory space where the center/fringe dichotomy was played out in the everyday lives of Chicano children, who learned strategies for adaptation and survival as a result of their constant struggle with an ethnic otherness compounded by social class and, in the case of women, gender. It was also the place where simultaneously the economic and cultural inequalities of ethnic minorities were replicated, while the means to overcome them were put forward, as access to education was regarded as an escape route from problems which were endemic to Chicano communities, i.e. social exclusion and the vicious cycle of poverty.

The first obstacle stemmed from a lack of fluency in English, since the language which is spoken at home is Spanish. Students with a limited command of the

hegemonic language were often regarded as less intelligent by teachers and peers. On the other hand, the learning process was necessarily slower, which further emphasized these disparities. Accordingly, they felt powerless, frustrated and ashamed, and these feelings were reinforced by the punishment they underwent whenever they used their mother tongue. Chicana's texts abound in first-person narratives which depict the failure of educational institutions to acknowledge the validity of Chicano biculturality, for example, by helping students to eradicate "all traces of Spanish accent" (Saldívar-Hull 2000: 6). Anzaldúa reveals:

I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess – that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for 'talking back' to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name. 'If you want to be American, speak 'American'. If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong' (1999:75).

In several schools, Spanish had been banned both within the classroom and at recess and, up until the 60s, punishment was regularly meted out to offenders. The campaign *English Only*, which had began in the 19th century, aimed to restrict the use of minority languages to family settings, whereas English would be the language of public discourse. There has been some backtracking, for instance the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, which asserted students' right to an education in their own language and which became highly popular in the 20th century. As recently as 2001, the policy *No Child Left Behind* required English-language assessment as a measure of academic achievement, with the purpose of allocating federal funds and, in 2008, only nine states met the requirements for bilingual education (Hualde 2010:486). In *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983), Anzaldúa claims that school is unsuccessful because it fails to acknowledge any use in learning the language of minority cultures or in becoming aware of the features of their identity, which undermines the children's confidence in their own abilities and the legitimacy they have to use them (165). In these institutions, as in others, language represents power even before it strengthens social ties, by means of greater empathy or intimacy. For this very reason, the acquisition of the hegemonic language is a vehicle for social mobility and assimilation and, as a result, many parents decide to use English at home, in a deliberate attempt to prevent their children from perpetuating their own educational backgrounds or from feeling marginalized. On the other hand, there is often an emerging ambition among Latino children to break away from the socioeconomic failure they experience in their communities, thereby distancing themselves from the Spanish language which they associate with poverty and social collapse.

Prejudice with regard to the use of Spanish or *Spanglish*¹ often cuts across the whole of academia, which often considers speakers who blend linguistic codes to be proficient in neither language and are therefore reproducing incorrect versions of English. They hence fail to understand that this is a creative and dynamic manner of expression, springing from the experience of living in the interstices between two cultures and which presents itself as a reflection of that very reality. The Chicanos' use of the language may be a conscious act, namely a point of resistance to the dominant culture. Whereas for them it is a sign of identity affirmation, for Anglo-American society it is equated with threat, lack of will, or effort to adapt, and accordingly they are expected to change their speech habits in order to achieve respectable status within the host culture. Therefore "immigrants who look and sound different are often regarded as threatening by majority group members whereas speaking good English has been regarded as a sign of successful assimilation" (Holmes 2002: 52). As a result, the use of a different linguistic code or the maintenance of cultural practices outside the Anglo-American mainstream are not only perceived as a form of disrespect, but are also viewed as harmful and a challenge to the established hierarchy.

This being said, linguistic difference leads to exclusion, but it is also a framework for identification and political resistance among Chicanos who, when facing linguistic oppression, or what Anzaldúa calls linguistic terrorism², can react in two ways: either they submit to English as the standard language of the society where they live, thus conceding that bilingualism is a cause of non-assimilation and a decrease in the likelihood of economic success, or they reject Anglo-American attempts to impose a single language and a single Eurocentric vision of culture. In the second half of the 20th century, when Spanish was reduced to a peripheral language

¹ The existence of a linguistic variant commonly designated as *Spanglish* is a matter of intense debate. Its detractors argue that the distortion of the phonetic and morphosyntactic patterns of both English and Spanish delays the assimilation of Hispanic-Americans, confuses children in the process of language acquisition and fosters the segregation of an ethnic minority already besieged by socio-economic problems. Its defenders highlight the fact that the use of *Spanglish* is a cohesive factor among its speakers, that it reinforces their sense of community and that it plays a major role in the construction of their identity. Furthermore, the linguistic context of this variant is heterogeneous, insofar as it not only reflects the immigrants' country of origin, but also their social class and educational background. It is therefore difficult to obtain a dialectical classification as there is no defined variant in each region, and there are even loan words which are representative of certain areas, depending on the languages in contact. (Hualde 2010: 483)

² Anzaldúa uses the term linguistic terrorism to draw attention to the violent repression of the Spanish spoken by Chicanos, by both mainstream Anglo-American society, as well as by members of the Chicano community against their peers. Conversely, this same concept can be used to define the mongrel (or "mestiza") language used by Chicano women in a willful way, i.e. as a reflection of the specificity of their own experience.

and English was granted official language status in several American states³, Spanish speakers were compelled to learn English not only to avoid a life on the fringes of society, but also to exercise their citizenship so as not to be trampled on by the system.

If a shared language is a catalyst for social cohesion, to the extent that it provides and highlights national and ethnic identity by establishing ties between dominant and subordinate groups, then government measures to uphold English as the official language and hence maintain Anglo-American hegemony in the USA, can be regarded as racist, since they have tangible implications for the lives of minority communities, such as the Chicanos. Such decrees forget, on the one hand, that prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), large expanses of American territory were in fact part of Mexico and so then Spanish was the official language; and, on the other hand, that language is a part of identity, thus linguistic repression is also the repression of identity. To forbid someone from speaking in their mother tongue is to deprive them of being in touch with their roots. However, as has already been mentioned, these policies are still being carried out.

Linguistic oppression, justified by the incompatibility of traditions and lifestyles, exposes a segregationist tactic wielded by the dominant culture in order to create barriers and exclude minority groups. Nevertheless the more excluded they are, the more they tend to keep Spanish alive amongst themselves. Language is therefore an enabling factor in social stratification, as it lays bare the acknowledgement of who is privileged and who is segregated. Like skin color, it makes plain the difference between minority groups at the heart of the dominant group. This question therefore originates from the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, i.e. it reflects the existing power relations between the two groups. Whereas the acceptance of a minority language is interpreted as an attack on the unity of the American nation by foreign elements, when “the government itself accepts bilingualism it can be seen by many Americans as a surrender of a key constituent element of nationality to an alien influence.” (Romero 1997: 288-289)

In spite of all this, there are certain factors which have contributed to linguistic change, such as the fragmentation of Hispanic communities and the generation gap, inasmuch as US-born Chicanos have little contact with new arrivals and inevitably undergo a process of acculturation that facilitate the mixture of English and Spanish in their interaction with dominant groups/institutions. Anzaldúa acknowledges that this is a late 20th century trend despite the fact that Latinos constitute a large minority in the USA. Even so, she relates her Chicano linguistic identity to her ethnic one,

³ In 2010, thirty states had already opted for legislation which established English as the official language, thereby intensifying the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of this decision, i.e. if this would be an enabling factor in the assimilation of minorities, or if it would consist of a means of discrimination against the millions of inhabitants who do not speak English, which calls into question the very concept of democracy in which American society is rooted.

expounding her need to freely rejoice in the way she uses the language so that she can feel proud of herself, as “ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity” (1999: 81).

Linguistic oppression is not solely perpetrated by the hegemonic group on minority communities. Amongst the Chicanos, this is the kind of violence enacted by males on the female members of the community, who should be kept under control so as not to speak too much and to accept their passive role in society. Anzaldúa proclaims: “*Hocicona, repelona, chismosa*, having a big mouth, questioning, carrying tales are all signs of being *mal criada*. In my culture they are all words that are derogatory if applied to women - I’ve never heard them applied to men” (1999: 76).

Anzaldúa asserts that among the Chicanos, language is synonymous with male power and female humiliation as “language is a male discourse,” (1999: 76) which can be proved by the lack of use of the pronoun *nosotras* in Chicano Spanish, thus reflecting the subordinate role of the female gender. The author states: “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’re male or female. We are robbed of our female being by the masculine plural” (1999: 76). Consequently the use of the language reinforces social repression, acting as an extension of the stereotypes of the community as conveyed by the way men and women use it. The use of a language founded on sexist beliefs is an effective means of passing on values and attitudes from one group to another, from one generation to another, as Holmes acknowledges: “Language conveys attitudes. Sexist attitudes stereotype a person according to gender rather than judging on individual merits. Sexist language encodes stereotyped attitudes to women and men” (2002: 305). Accordingly, the way men and women express themselves reinforces their respective positions in society: the former cling to their position of dominance while the latter remain subordinate whenever they use verbal strategies associated with those roles. Generalized stereotypes of gender differences in communication further enhance this state of affairs.⁴

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa uses the language used by the dominant culture to ostracize the Chicano people and by the community itself to silence women as a source of power instead. The author analyzes the linguistic hierarchy of the different varieties of English and Spanish spoken on the border (1999: 77), although she highlights the fact that language is not only a vehicle of national expression, but also a form of self-determination and, since its free usage has been denied to women, their personal freedom has been seized and done away with. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, the author lays bare the fact that whenever the woman transforms silence into discourse, she is transgressing. Speaking, by verbalizing opinions and desires, or

⁴ In *An Introduction To Language And Society* (1995), Montgomery confirms that historically there was a tendency to accept gender stereotypes with regards to how both elements used the language, insofar as several studies drew on notions of masculinity which were regarded as models (151).

merely asking questions, is regarded as disrespectful, insofar as it represents the subversion of the Chicano traditional feminine ideal – purity, generosity and submission to masculine power (1999: 76).

Chicano women are constrained to the silence imposed on them by their communities, when at the same time it is imperative for them to use another language to survive in the dominant society – a different code which often entails opposing ideologies. Consequently, they are engaged in a struggle for their right to expression, which is not only one of silence/speech, but also of one of their very choice of linguistic code. Using English as a neutral language can be problematic, as it can be viewed as a betrayal of their own race by individuals from their own community; moreover, Chicano women who don't speak Spanish or those who do so with an English accent may be accused of not being authentically Chicano. As Anzaldúa states: “we're afraid the other will think we're *agringadas* because we don't speak Chicano Spanish. We oppress each other trying to out-Chicano each other, vying to be the “real Chicanas”, to speak like Chicanos.” (1999:80) As a result, many of them feel pressured to learn Spanish when they are adults, as a means of creating proximity to their roots and avoiding judgments of inferiority or disloyalty on the part of their community.

To categorize someone as a true or false Chicano because of their language proficiency is to affirm the interconnectedness and interdependency of language and identity, but in fact, our accent, our choice of vocabulary and language are just a few components of our identity. According to Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, there is an institutionalized belief that the Spanish spoken by other Chicanos is wrong or poor, owing to the disregard for the fact that border citizens speak a different variety (1999: 77). Indeed, Chicano Spanish encompasses several varieties, not only for geographical reasons, but also due to social class, or even to dependency on the native language, just as languages are subject to change when interacting with a range of factors. Thereafter the Spanish used by Chicano speakers differs from the standard variety espoused by the Real Academia Española, not only due to interference or the existence of English⁵ and Nahuatl loan words, but also as a result of the typical *code-*

⁵ English loan words are much more widespread in the Chicano variety of Spanish than in any other owing to the geographical contact between the USA and Latin America. Insofar as the dominant society embraces English as the official language, all the information provided in English is converted into Spanish through morphological and phonological adaptations, e.g. English verbs are adapted by attaching Spanish affixes and English nouns are given Spanish gender. The use of loan words may lead to the broadening of their semantic field, since the speakers, who are unaware of the meaning of the word in its standard variety, adapt the English word to their own uses (an example is the literal translation of verbs + preposition combinations), or might derive from rules and linguistic patterns (such as the omission of *que*, the use of gerunds as adjectives, or even the use of the passive form in contexts which would be less common in Spanish, but are far more widespread in English). Accordingly, Chicanos often produce utterances which are the result of translations which would make little sense to speakers of Spanish from other countries.

*switching*⁶ of multilingual speakers. Despite the fact that it may be classified as incorrect, and the prejudiced view that its speakers have mastered neither English nor Spanish, the truth is that a certain degree of proficiency and command of linguistic codes is required.

In addition to this, Chicano Spanish has a dual social role, which is to aid the construction of relations insofar as it promotes cohesion within the community, while at the same time providing information about the sociopolitical identity and economic status of speakers – thus functioning as an enabling factor in the boundary generated by the dominant society/minority society dichotomy, because it reinforces social roles. In one way or another, it is a vital discursive resource which represents Chicanos at a cultural level. It can also assert itself as a counter-discourse, which in a roughly subjective manner draws attention to a *mestiza* language suspended in the limbo between Spanish and English. It is within this framework that Anzaldúa operates, with her use of multiple languages alluding to multiple personalities, and where the linguistic code is not only a feature of identity, but also of resistance to Mexican and American communities. As she states in an interview:

My use of both languages, my code-switching, is my way to resist being made into something else. I'm resisting both the Spanish-speaking people and the English-speaking white people because I want Chicanos to speak Chicano Spanish, not Castillian Spanish. We have our own language, it's evolving and it's healthy. A lot of stories I'm writing use Spanglish, also known as Tex-Mex or caló, a pachuco dialect. This resistance is part of the anticolonial struggle against both the Spanish colonizers and the white colonizers. (Anzaldúa 2000: 246)

Anzaldúa's meticulous use of different linguistic codes in *Borderlands/La Frontera* not only conveys her awareness of different power relations embodied and expressed by language, but also chronicles her struggle to prevent the reduction of Chicano identity to a simplistic paradigm. The text affirms that to limit language to a single category is to foster an illusion of homogeneity, insofar as language, like the border, is a fluid space in constant evolution and negotiation. Therefore Anzaldúa uses what she considers to be her language, i.e. the language of the Borderlands, "the switching of 'codes' from English to Castillian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all these" (Anzaldúa 1999: 20). To read *Borderlands/La Frontera* is thus to gain simultaneous access to three languages, in forms which deviate from their standard varieties, and to witness the decentering of language and the new representations on display. Linguistic variations become

⁶ The blending of English and Spanish in the same discourse is a typical feature of Chicano speech. The shift in linguistic codes is left to the discretion of the speaker, although there are certain phenomena which do not occur. For instance, one does not blend morpho-phonological patterns of both languages in the same word and the linguistic leverage points should match in word order, i.e., there might be changes in analogous sentence structures, but not in completely different ones.

essential to understand the work, as they mirror life between two cultures. As well as underlining ethnic identity, alternations in language draw attention to the content of the message, i.e. they have an affective and referential function. Anzaldúa can blend languages to bring her multiculturalism to the fore, using “a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both” (1999:77). Furthermore, the use of written language is the means by which the author breaks free of the female prison of silence, where the act of speaking is regarded as a transgression. The linguistic issue is interwoven with questions of identity proving that linguistic boundaries can be contested and transcended, as “the voices of Latino writers are powerful examples of how geographic, cultural and language borders are being transgressed” (Acosta-Belén 1998: 38).

Chicano writing is bound to be considered subversive, as it is a (re)appropriation of the language of the colonizer in order to accuse him of the oppression to which Chicano people were subject. At times it seeks to use the dominant language, perverting it, as a means of validating an heritage directly linked to the Chicano experience and to force dominant society to come to terms with otherness, thus imprinting the narratives with political meaning, since “the choices made in narrating a story allow narrators to represent themselves in a certain light, and to evaluate other people and events in the story” (Mesthrie 2002: 191). Accordingly, *code-switching* is on the whole a conscious political act and this is a particularly salient feature in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. By eliminating italics or translations of Spanish utterances, the writer invites readers, even monolingual English-speaking Chicanos who lack fluency in the language to experience the feeling of living between borders. These texts are particularly demanding for most readers, because they assume that they are knowledgeable about the linguistic, cultural and historical contexts of the Chicano people. The author challenges the dominant language and identity in the U.S.A., calling on the readers to meet her halfway and to break with familiar patterns of perception of reality. The experience of simultaneously reading ideas and sentences in Spanish and English draws the readers into both Chicano and North American reality, thereby triggering a process of negotiation of dichotomies and translation of multiple cultures which stems from this contact with different linguistic, cultural and historical experiences provided by opposing contexts. We can infer that in *Borderlands/La Frontera* the author seeks more than a simple validation of her language or point of view: linguistic variations are a message in itself leading the readers to discard simplistic beliefs about their role in the world.

Despite being challenging, Chicano texts such as *Borderlands/La Frontera* are capable nonetheless of creating an intimate bond with readers in a culture where English is considered the “official” language. The polyglotism of Chicano texts creates an intimate bond between the author and the readers, as it produces a familiar and confidential discursive effect. Readers participate in the text since, ultimately, they are the agent of the inclusion/exclusion movement which is under construction;

they inevitably bring their own experience to the reading process relating the narrative to their own reality and thus extracting their own personal meaning. Anzaldúa refuses to make translations solely for the sake of the readers' comfort and well-being, although she acknowledges their active role in the elaboration of the ultimate meaning of her discourse, as she points out:

It is the reader (and the author reading as reader) who ultimately makes the connections, finds the patterns that are meaningful for her or him. [...] In this way the reader brings into the text her own experience.

The reader co-creation of the book makes me, the author, realize that I am not the sole creator. There are certain things that the author sets up for the reader, but the reader is, to some degree, a co-author. (2009:190)

The readers inevitably undergo a transformation during this process, i.e. although they start off by feeling alienated, lost and uncomfortable, they are also jolted into accepting the challenge to live on the borderlands, and as the reading draws to a close they are prepared to experience a reality approaching the hybrid condition. At last, they should understand that there are features of minority cultures within the USA which cannot be expressed in English without loss of meaning and that linguistic variation is not a sign of lack of fluency in these codes, but rather a strategy which is carefully deployed by the author in order to educate the reader to “reconsider our basic notions about the relationship of language and cultural identity” (San-Miguel 2008: 75).

This constant process of translation which the readers carry out is vital to understand the different levels of meaning in the text. However, linguistic articulation has a broader scope than mere translation, insofar as the interdependence of the languages in play renders some passages of the text nearly untranslatable and there is no attempt to maintain two distinct and separate linguistic codes, but rather to create a space of interconnection, resulting in a new code where meanings have deviated from those of purer linguistic forms. Thus, the linguistic transculturation which Anzaldúa puts forward is in essence that of the Chicano people, with all the linguistic and cultural consequences it entails, namely a language/culture which thrives, blends, collides and reinvents itself. A translation grounded in the choice of only one of the linguistic codes would erase the implicit messages from the author to her reader, as well as eliminate the means by which the latter gains access to the work itself: shock, acceptance and evolution. Moreover, it would clash with the author's refusal to translate her own linguistic, cultural, identity and gender difference, when she claims “until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate [...] my tongue will be illegitimate” (1999:81).

Anzaldúa, like other Chicana writers such as Moraga or Gaspar de Alba, has merged untranslated poetry and prose in the same work, which might be viewed as an attempt to restrict its appeal to readers with the necessary cultural and linguistic skills

to deal with the text on its own terms. However, this choice is no more than a reflection of its pursuit of authenticity. Accordingly, the author argues that the history of American literature should incorporate other kind of discourses, fragments and codes belonging to other ethnicities, i.e. a deeply intertextual literature, with influences from both U.S. and Latin American cultures – a literature without borders, hovering between historical, geographical, cultural, racial and sexual worlds, engendered by a history of conquest, confrontation and colonialism. From the author's point of view, prejudice against the literary work of Chicana writers is rife in both cultures and is partially due to the characteristic blending of linguistic codes, which is rejected by the "true" culture of the country which filters out what it perceives to be ethnic through its biased perception as a dominant society:

A lot of what passes for ethnic writing or ethnic art or ethnic thinking is actually regurgitated white stuff. What writers call ethnic is really Eurocentric. What they call Mexican is really whitewashed agringada kind of concept. (...) I have to be careful in my writing that I acknowledge that the white community, the white world, the white ideology is also part of my world. I write in English as well as in Spanish. (Anzaldúa 2000:230)

Even though nowadays there is a more receptive public and an emerging interest in the way Latino writers construct and reinforce their cultural identities, as well as a certain tolerance of the linguistic exchanges and influences which are typical of their work, this literature is still positioned in the tensions between resistance to the dominant society and the construction of Chicano space. Chicano literature is still an integral part of the Chicano struggle for their own cultural expression, namely the existence of a transcultural dimension founded on the abolition of standards with which they do not identify.

Almost three decades after *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Chicana writers still draw attention to the segregation they suffer, including the prejudice against their linguistic code and the oppression against the female gender. To these authors, the act of writing continues to be a way of operating in such context: a space of resistance, self-definition and self-determination and with a clear purpose of social change. This is evident in Gaspar de Alba's *Desert Blood* (2005), Ana Castillo's *The Guardians* (2007), and Cherríe Moraga's *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010* (2011). Like Gloria Anzaldúa, these writers employ different languages, aiming not only to validate their own identity, but also to act upon society changing a paradigm based on Eurocentric dogmas, an objective in which the reader actively participates. In fact, Chicana's texts still prove that language barriers can be challenged and transcended, as much as the American culture is not built only by Anglo-Americans, but incorporates sounds and voices of subaltern and marginalized minorities, as women and Chicanos.

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