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TOWARD TRANSCULTURAL RHETORICS: A VIEW FROM HYBRID AMERICA AND THE PUERTO RICAN DIASPORA

by

Louise Marie Rodríguez Connal

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH A MAJOR IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
in the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1999
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Louise Marie Rodriguez Connal entitled Toward Transcultural Rhetorics: A View from Hybrid America and the Puerto Rican Diaspora and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date 12/4/99

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Tilly Warnock
Dissertation Director
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Statement by Author

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Louise Marie Rodrigo Connal
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Dedication

Principalmente, dedico esta obra a mi Madre. Sin ella no hubiese tenido los principios importantes de character y amor a la familia que tengo. También dedico la obra a mi Padre y a las familias cuyos apollo me suportaron durante el tiempo que tomé para escribir.

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Abstract

I theorize about cultural hybridity; specifically, I theorize about transcultural rhetorics to consider the positive capabilities those rhetorics encourage in students within composition classrooms. People in our society frequently ignore and devalue hybridity and multiplicity, which are facts in our culture. Therefore, minority students, who are more likely to display transcultural elements in their rhetorics, also face devaluation of their use of language. People associate minority members of society with poor language use because their rhetorics "differ" from the USAmericand standard. This contributes to dismissal of transcultural rhetorics in classroom settings. Teaching standard uses of language negates other possible language strategies. Yet transcultural rhetorics provide a means to encourage students to value their potential and contributions to the communities with which they engage. I argue that teaching language and writing skills should use multiple approaches and encourage students' abilities to negotiate multiple discourse communities. Allowing people to move and to fit into more than one or two cultures will enhance success and survival in both dominant and non-dominant cultural groups. I use discussions by and about women-of-color to illustrate some of the real and significant issues revolving hybridity and acculturation/assimilation practices. Doing so helps to illustrate the psychological, social, and other political issues surrounding hybrid-USAmericans as they engage with education.

While an increasing number of writers and teachers value and use rhetorics that represent multiplicity, teachers and writers need to understand and address the political and psychological processes hybrid people experience. The fact that many teachers
encourage the kinds of writing research that I advocate does not negate the need for broader use of transcultural rhetorics. I present various ways that teachers can teach and encourage transcultural rhetorics within the dissertation. Although transcultural rhetorics can work for all teachers and all students, I focus on Latina writers because they frequently need greater understanding of their literate foremothers and the value of their Latina skills in USAmerican education. The work that follows urges teachers of composition and their students to use the transcultural rhetorics as one of many possible ways of transforming the world of academia and beyond.
INTRODUCTION

I theorize about the effects of culture, particularly hybridity of culture and language in order to consider the positive qualities of multiplicity. Theorizing on issues related to transculturation, such as hybridity, is important because hybridity and multiplicity are facts often ignored or devalued. The increasing numbers of students, whose cultures are hybridized feel the stigmatization of their multiplicity, especially in language learning and writing classes. Therefore, I argue that the academy should accept the reality of changes within society. It should do this by teaching and embracing changes in the discourses that reflect the multiple ways that people create knowledge.

Being open to changes could prove to be a boon to academia, as well as to bi- or multicultural students, for engagement with diverse methods for creating and communicating knowledge would enhance the work of academia. In addition, transcultural rhetorics would make academic work utilize the creativity and knowledge bi-lingual or bicultural students bring to the academy. All too often, we readily label minority students as deficient because we evaluate them with academic or other lenses. Such a view overlooks many of the non-academic linguistic skills students bring to colleges or universities. Teachers could build on these skills instead of ignoring them. Bi-lingual or bicultural students, rather than being molded to fit only the constraints of academia by
denying the transcultural rhetorics they bring, could be free to move between various discourses, including those of the academy, contributing to the varied fields of knowledge in newer and perhaps more creative ways.

Such bold changes will not occur overnight if they occur at all. Therefore, I argue that teachers of college composition teach transcultural rhetorics. Transcultural rhetorics can be a way to help students to develop the writing and thinking skills they will need in their cultural, academic, and professional locations. I foresee development of writing skills that aids students to engage the various academic and non-academic discourse communities they will ultimately encounter.

I came to the topic of transcultural rhetorics, or, I should say, it came to me when I reflected on my life experiences and linked theories from various disciplines to them. I am both Puerto Rican and US American. Early in my life I experienced multiple language learning, along with learning to adjust my language to fit the different contexts of my life. By the time I was three, I read in Spanish and English. By the time I was eight I functioned as family translator, especially for Aunt Eufemia, who spoke no English. Later in life, my education progressed steadily, although I changed high schools often. Afterward, I began my college career, which took a turn from Liberal Arts to a vocational training program to become a medical office assistant. Life’s demands for getting a job forced the decision. At that time, I had not encountered Latina writers.

I re-entered college much later, and, when I entered graduate school, having discovered writings by women-of-color, I focused on language and cultural issues. Because of my interest in the differences between the ways that people speak, write, and
the ways that people express ideas, I sought to find theoretical frameworks that would help me understand my transculturation. I felt that understanding my transculturation would lead me to consider ways that could help my composition students. First, I had to gain insights that would be helpful to me, for I did not understand the nature of my own rhetorics in the way that I understand it now.

Throughout *Toward Transcultural Rhetorics: A View from Hybrid America and the Puerto Rican Diaspora*, I will use features of transcultural rhetorics. These include code- and genre- switching and non-linear presentation of illustrations that support my claims. Sometimes I will not translate the ideas written in Spanish. However, I believe readers can infer the texts' meaning from their context. These are but a few of the transcultural rhetorical practices that readers can find in my work.

Composition teachers can teach their students to use their native languages and other genres in their academic writing. Other aspects of transcultural rhetorics involve creating new rhetorical gestures, coining new words, or otherwise demonstrating the hybrid nature of those kinds of rhetorics. I use a synthesis of the knowledge I researched. This synthesis woven with my own experiential knowledge runs through this work, for much of the personal knowledge finds support from research materials. Transcultural rhetorics involve choice from available strategies. More importantly, transcultural rhetorics allow for creative linguistic and rhetorical constructions; these depend on what I call "rhetorical intelligence." I intend to practice this in my writing and in my teaching by providing guidance for those whose cultures differ from mine; however, occasionally the text will meander before returning to the main point. Such textual wandering
represent my Latina rhetorical gestures. Sometimes my writing look and reads like Leslie Marmon Silko’s web metaphor. I illustrate meaning between or among “tangential” points with “web-like” connectors. However, because not all readers appreciate the side trips, I worked to purposeful and effective. This, also, is a part of my transcultural rhetorics.

The idea for transcultural rhetorics developed from many disciplines of study. Studying other cultural rhetorics provided insights into my own. The cultures who most influenced my thinking were Native American, particularly studies by and about Navajo, Western Apache, and Oglala Sioux. African American writers, such as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Toni Cade Bambara, and James Baldwin, demonstrated the incorporation of their African and USAmerican cultures in their poetry, fiction, and essays. More importantly to me, Latina writers provided me with models of writing with which I identified. Among those I read are Nicolasa Mohr, Judith Ortiz Cofer, María Lugones, Helena María Viramontes, and translations of Puerto Rican writers: Rosario Ferré and Julia de Burgos. Their practices of personal testimonios, addressing multiple audiences, non-linearity, code switching, and genre-switching contribute to my growth and to my understanding of transcultural rhetorics.

I argue that those of us who are bicultural must use our “New Mestiza Consciousness” in our rhetoric as Anzaldúa advocates. The new mestiza consciousness is a part of what hybrid people experience. Therefore, we cannot teach transcultural rhetorics without exploring what it means to be hybrid. We need to understand the social issues affecting hybrid people. I argue for using knowledge of hybridity or new mestiza
consciousness to aid students, who enter school feeling different, diminished, or misunderstood. Teachers must help our students develop self-knowledge and writing, and speaking skills that allows them to break through silence. However, as I argue elsewhere in this work, I caution people about teaching transcultural rhetorics in order to appropriate a perceived “colorfulness” or “exotic” way of writing. I refer to Bizzell’s College Composition and Communication Conference article, “Rhetoric and Social Change.” In it she argues for teaching hybrid discourse as if by code-switching, genre switching in public discourse we can also teach the lived experiences that lead to the new *mestiza* consciousness for which Anzaldúa argues. Bizzell sees the product, the seemingly fluid method of *mestiza* writing, and she concludes that teachers of composition should teach these aspects of hybrid discourses. However, she does not address the political and psychological processes that hybrid people experience. She minimizes all the experiences that contribute to transcultural (hybrid) lives. If we merely study and/or teach the structures of hybrid discourses without understanding the circumstances that contribute to their development and use, we truly cannot teach a hybrid discourse as admirable as Bizzell asserts. Moreover, a more genuine approach would be to teach rhetorics that engage people across cultural boundaries, rather than a discourse that claims hybridity without reflecting the lives of people living *mestiza* existence.

Scholars such as Anzaldúa, Lugones, Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan, Zentella, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tartule, and Gil and Vazquez provide insights to psychological and sociological issues women, particularly Latinas, must deal with.
Latina's realities involve the factor of patriarchy in two cultures. Historical and cultural influences still affect the ways we acculturate and are important to consider when reflecting on our lives or on our writing. Anzaldúa's arguments for a "mestiza" consciousness support my argument for using transcultural rhetorics. Women-of color can use transcultural rhetorics to break silence and reclaim their subject position. Because of Latino/a American cultural subjugation of women, such a reclamation of subjectivity requires overcoming the fear of speaking out and much courage to face changes in our lives and cultural viewpoints. Latinas comprise one group of hybrids that need to travel across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Therefore, we must counter stereotypic cultural views on our histories and our intellectual and linguistic abilities as Latinas in prior generations did. One example is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

To understand transcultural rhetorics we must understand concepts that contribute to their definitions. Those of us who live with transculturation see it as a process that includes bicultural changes, multi-linear synthesis of our experiences, and methods for expressing them. Reflection on my life led me to think about the ways I have been able to navigate among the currents or strands of life with which I engage. Those of us who identify with multiple languages and cultures experience the negotiation with language that allows us to engage with more than one cultural group. As a matter of survival, we must learn Standard USAmerican English and rhetorical strategies, for there are times when the power relations between the dominant cultural group and other cultural groups necessitate the use of dominant rhetorical gestures. For many of us, the novelty of our language use comes from these endeavors. Transculturation becomes our process
wherein we hybridize cultural differences. According to Octavio I. Romano’s contribution to an online publication, “Transculturation, a process of hybridization, is a product of an unanticipated, continually changing and synthesizing middle and lower class, which metamorphosed into a mestizo culture. It represents the conquered and its varied mestizo manifestations” (Romano, Octavio I. TQS Publications online). Octavio Romano’s definition incorporates components of a fuller definition that I develop more fully in later chapters, specifically in the first chapter.

Hybridity, historically, has a negative connotation, one associated with impurity. I use the term in positive ways for two primary reasons. First, I believe that “hybridity” demonstrate the changes found in USAmerican society or elsewhere in the world where cultures encounter and engage one another. Second, “hybridity,” as I view the term, serves as the impetus for the creativity that occurs in the process of transculturation. Note Romano’s definition. It, like my definition, reveals qualities such as synthesis and metamorphosis. Transformation or change is a natural result of cultural and language development, especially when cultures and languages interact with one another. While it is true that people view “hybridity” as a mixing or blending of people, cultures and languages, I use the term to indicate the creative and conscious selection from elements of our hybridity. In advocating for the element of choice, I add to other definitions of hybridity. This aspect of my definition of “hybridity” contributes to my arguments for transcultural rhetorics because it helps me to distinguish transcultural rhetorics from multicultural rhetorics, as I view their definitions. Rather than having two, three, or more languages, literatures, or cultures placed side-by-side, I argue for teaching rhetorics that
allow selection of rhetorical strategies found in two or more languages and "hybrid" interactions of those languages. The strategies from which bi- or multicultural people select come from the elements that contribute to their cultural, social, and psychological constructions. I argue for teaching rhetorics that allow selection of rhetorical strategies found in two or more languages. Transcultural rhetorics become a means for expressing the "hybrid" consciousness.

My definition of "hybridity" underscores the relationship between it and transcultural rhetorics. Hybridity ensures that definitions of transcultural rhetorics are not limited to traveling rhetorics or rhetorics which cross into other cultures wholly without changing to meet the demands of new rhetorical situations. In this regard, my definitions add to instruction in rhetoric and composition praxis. I argue for awareness of composition elements (audience awareness, rhetorical gestures, etc.) from a transcultural perspective.

My argument for transcultural rhetorics is not a call to teach hybrid discourse. It is, however, a call to teach rhetorics that contribute to students' language skills through use of transcultural rhetorics. Therefore, students can become conscious of the variety of rhetorical approaches in academic and social contexts. Language awareness facilitates the development of these skills.

In the following section of this introduction, I outline the chapters of Toward Transcultural Rhetorics: A View from Hybrid America and the Puerto Rican Diaspora. In exploring and developing transcultural rhetorics, I do not argue for displacement of academic discourse. I argue for the valuation and use of transcultural rhetorics within
academia and across its various fields of study. Teachers skilled with various rhetorics become better guides as they help their students to engage with writing.

Throughout the dissertation, I draw on personal, historical, cultural, and rhetorical analysis to support my argument that we teach transcultural rhetorics in composition classrooms.

Chapter 1: Transcultural Rhetorics: Through Hybrid Cultures and Codes

While discussing transcultural rhetorics, I found it important to review the definitions of rhetoric, from Aristotle’s “discovering the best available means of persuasion” through Burke’s concept of persuasion through identification. Identification with our cultural constructs contributes to the lenses we use not only to persuade but also to understand the worlds we live in. We identify with people and with values of taught by our cultures. We must identify with people in order to persuade or be persuaded by them.

Because hybridity contributes to transculturation, I examine postcolonial definitions of hybridity and identity. I do so because colonization contributes to transculturation and hybridity. Theories about hybridity by Robert J. C. Young, Gloria Anzaldúa, Mary Louise Pratt, and Homi Bhabha form the framework for linking hybridity to transcultural rhetorics. I begin with Robert J. C. Young’s discussion of the history of the term. (See Colonial Desire) The history serves to explain the context for the development of the concept “hybridity.” During the times in which the concept of hybridity developed, specific political, social, and scientific changes took place. These took root alongside the development of the term, and contributed to the connotations of
hybridity. The connotations of the term still influence people's attitudes. The history also demonstrates that hybridity is necessary for change. This insight supports my uses of "hybridity" in positive, creative, and transcultural rhetorics. Mary Louise Pratt, Homi Bhabha, and Edward W. Said inform my understanding of the social and political consequences of hybridity. The discussions of contact zones and interstitial interactions illuminate the cultural and language exchanges and conflicts that lead to hybridity. In my view, these situations call for transcultural rhetorics.

In addition to exploration of hybridity and transculturation, I also provide an example of transculturation. I furnish this in the form of an overview of Puerto Rican history.

I did not learn Puerto Rican history until this project began. My cousins in Puerto Rico shared their history books written in Spanish. These books include much of the same USAmerican ideology found in books written on the USAmerican mainland for USAmerican history courses. Paradoxically, Puerto Ricans maintain pride in USAmerican citizenship while maintaining nationalist pride in being Borinquenos. Historians from whom I draw information are Kal Waggenheim, Olga Jiménez Waggenheim, Arturo Morales Carrión, and Juan Flores. Other articles also contributed to the section that demonstrates transculturation on the island from its indigenous past, Spanish colonialism, and USAmerican takeover.

Gender issues and colonial issues merge in the discussion that follows the Puerto Rican historical overview. Puerto Ricans immigrated to various parts of the USAmerican
continent. The immigration led to cultural changes that affected the role of women and the ways they used language.

In the remainder of the first chapter, I argue for the use of transcultural rhetorics to give voice to women as they reclaim their lives from patriarchal and cultural discrimination. Latinas live with strong influences to conform to traditional Latina roles, yet we live in the USAmerican landscape. In this new landscape, people expect Latinas to behave and think in non-Latina ways. For many, the adaptation to USAmerican culture represents the loss of integral parts of us. The sense of loss leads to internal conflicts that need to be worked through until we can balance the varied beliefs, goals, and roles of our lives. These issues involve transculturation.

During the process of writing, I became increasingly aware of gendered and cultural influences in my writing—indirection, hedging, submissive poses. In Chapter 1, I draw from Ana Celia Zentella’s studies of Puerto Rican women. I also draw from Carol Gilligan’s studies of minority women in New York and Belenky et al’s study, along with Anzaldúa’s, Lugones’, and other writers’ calls to become conscious of our “mestizaje.”

When I reflected on students in my classrooms, I saw cultural conflicts in student writing. I began to reflect upon the phenomenon of capable, bright students, who had difficulties with writing. Some had difficulty adapting to writing in general; others had difficulty with argumentation. Speaking to students with these particular difficulties led me to conclude that orality and cultural teachings from home prevented many from entering a culture of writing and argumentation. Yet, many successful writers from the
cultural groups my students came from are successful writers. My question became how
to teach students to cross into the discourses of the academy.

Chapter 2: Countering Rhetorics of Crisis with a Personal Transcultural Narrative

In this chapter, I review rhetorics of crisis because they intrude on the ways
USAmericans view language instruction and because they heighten fear of changes that
occurs when cultures interact. I begin the chapter with a discussion of rhetorics of crisis
because they ignore the fact that transcultural rhetorics and transculturation exist and will
continue to develop and change as the USAmerican population grows and changes.

I also discuss my literacy narrative for it stands in opposition to the rhetorics of
crisis which would devalue sustaining connections to home cultures and languages. My
parents, like the parents of many other minority students, struggled so that I could have a
USAmerican education. As the chapter demonstrates, the education of Louise Rodriguez
included my father’s efforts toward my assimilation into USAmerican culture and my
mother’s drive to keep me connected to Puerto Rican culture—my family. In essence, I
had two contradictory sets of instructions.

Our educational system always undergoes scrutiny. This leads to negative
rhetorics about the demise of “good” education. Chapters 2 and 3 expose these negative
rhetorics for what they are—futile attempts to undo changes that have already taken place
in society. Rhetorics of crisis attempt to affect public perception of the public school
system in negative ways. The rhetorics of crisis impact minority students negatively, for
rhetorics of crisis contribute to the discomforts minority students feel about their bi- or
multi-cultural state. Often rhetorics of crisis contribute to making minority students
scapegoats for problems in education. Therefore, some of these students seeking to become part of USAmerican society willingly attempt to shed ethnic cultures and languages, erroneously believing the gloom and doom rhetorics which diminish their cultural knowledge and rhetorical expertise.

Teaching students language skills without inculcating low self-esteem or loss of cultural pride requires using assignments that encourage students to use knowledge they bring to the classroom, along with materials that represent the realities of their lives. However, teaching "transculturally" will encourage self-reflection and critical thinking. These practices will help students connect their cultural strengths to academic discourses taught at universities. Learning to write in multiple ways can help students to develop rhetorical consciousness that allows them to select appropriate rhetorical gestures for varying rhetorical situations. Transcultural rhetorics allow for development of conscious selection from various rhetorics. They also allow for creative language use. Transcultural rhetorics, specifically, validate people's various ways of learning and using language—written and oral.

Chapter 3: Bilingual Education and Transcultural Rhetorics: Toward Blending Public and Private Language

Reading others' literacy narratives and critiquing them contributes to self-awareness and to the development of transcultural rhetorics. In this chapter, I draw from my literacy narrative as it contrasts with those of Victor Villanueva and Richard Rodriguez. I provide an argument for an alternative to assimilation practices through studies of Rodriguez' biography, Spellmeyer's analysis of Rodriguez, Richard Hoggart's
Uses of Literacy, and Villanueva’s Bootstraps: From an Academic of Color and "Whose Voice Is It Anyway?: Rodriguez' Speech in Retrospect."

Clearly, research of workers in bi-lingual education contribute to good pedagogy that teaches our students to write in ways that contain their individual voices. They can do so with the effectiveness those transcultural rhetorics provide students, helping them to contribute to and become a part of our collective culture. Chapter 3 further develops my argument for transcultural rhetorics by looking at beliefs about assimilation and acculturation that affect education of hybrid-US Americans. Of necessity, I explore issues of language instruction from scholars who work with students learning English as a Second Language, such as Krashen and Terrell, because they help create varied approaches to language learning. However, because I seek to develop a concept of transcultural rhetorics, my exploration of ESL scholarship is specific to my argument.

Bilingual education informs us that teaching should begin with knowledge and skills that students bring with them into our classrooms. Having a strong sense of who they are and how members of their group use language should not undermine their abilities in second language use. Studies by Cummins, Krashen, Terrell, Zentella, Urciuoli, Ferdman, Weber, Reder, and Ramirez support my argument which counters Richard Rodriguez’s views on education.

Chapter 4: Seeds of the Past in Latinas’ Writings: Rhetoric of Submissive Subversion

Chapter 4 explores the roots of rhetoric of submissive subversion that Gloria Anzaldúa, Lugones, and I must contend with as we negotiate toward more assertive ways
of writing and presenting ourselves in public. Teresa of Ávila's story resonated with me, for I heard my mother's and the Catholic Church's teachings in her writings. Later, I studied and analyzed Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz' well-known Respuesta, her argument for the rights of women to obtain an education. Although their approaches to writing differed in subtle ways, these subtleties are worth understanding, for they reflect current influences in many Latinas' lives. After reviewing Teresa of Ávila's biography, I rhetorically analyze the work of Alison Weber. Her work analyzes the biography and writing of Teresa of Ávila whose work serves to illustrate the scholarship on language use that I find useful for Latinas. We must understand the roots of our own language uses across many eras.

Both Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz use what I call rhetoric of submissive subversion. Using a submissive pose, self-deprecating comments concerning their status as women or their abilities to reason and communicate, they, nonetheless, communicate the very ideas suppressed by those in power in their society. Other scholars have used the phrase rhetoric of self-abnegation or self-deprecation; however, I chose submissive subversion because that term more accurately conveys the purpose of the use of self-abnegation or self-deprecation. This is an important idea because it allows us to see the use of seemingly contradictory gestures used by writers to assert their arguments.

The most interesting person to me because of her effective use of submissive subversion is Sor Juana. Her argument for women's rights to an education is a model of transcultural rhetorics. In order to illustrate her work, I rhetorically analyze Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop of Puebla. I find much of the posturing of self-abnegation and the
indirect circular, repetitious moves that women have used when confronting persons with power. The usefulness of rhetorical gestures in specific circumstances should be taught, to today’s Latinas and other students, for issues of power are still prevalent in the world.

The subtleties found in Sor Juana’s and Teresa’s writings point to possibilities in our teaching. I do believe we can teach people to write more assertively. Such writing would come with learning more assertive ways of living. As teachers, we provide environments for our students to gain their writing voices, to break silence, and in many instances to understand and subvert the institutional influence, that would silence them. We also must become aware of the timing for students to enter the fray that is part of public discourse in the USAmerican contact zone.

My primary argument throughout the dissertation is that we need to acknowledge transcultural rhetorics so that we can maintain classroom environments that encourage multiple approaches to writing and speaking—transcultural rhetorics. Transcultural rhetorics aid teachers meet their students’ needs; transcultural rhetorics inform an understanding of cultural differences and influences on one another. Therefore, transcultural rhetorics provide a powerful way of using what already exists in society to teach our students better.
Chapter 1

Transcultural Rhetorics through Hybrid Cultures and Codes

The United States is a hybridized nation, yet it is a nation uncomfortable with its hybridity. Its social, educational and cultural policies reflect much of its discomfort with perceived and real differences among the various groups that constitute its citizenry. These show that the United States has not come to terms with what it means to be a hybrid and diverse society. Hybridity is a complex and important concept that occurs when languages and cultures meet. It results from colonization or other human enterprises, such as trade, travel, or migration. Indeed, whenever a society embarks on a colonial venture, as the British and United States have, or whenever a country opens its doors to people whose cultures and languages differ from its culture and language, cultural conflicts occur. Since hybridity is part of the process of transculturation, we see hybrid people engaged in what I call transcultural rhetorics. Some acts include code-switching or rhetorical gestures appropriate to one culture but used in another. Hyperbole, repetition, excessive politeness, and pronunciation of words that demonstrate the lingering sounds of two languages also contribute to transcultural rhetorics. Also, I notice that transcultural rhetorics demonstrate a fluidity of movement between two languages.
My hybridity led to my research. As a person influenced by both USAmerican and Puerto Rican cultures, I experienced situations where I selected rhetorical gestures from both languages. I also presented the hybridized viewpoints these languages can create. Navigation between two cultures and languages allows me to establish a means of communication between them and contributes to the development of transcultural rhetorics. Whether immigrant or second, third, or fourth generation, USAmericans from other cultures learn about the need to address multiple audiences. I, like many other hybrid USAmericans, have multiple or hybridized viewpoints that enrich my understanding of the world. Hybrid USAmericans like myself also understand, perhaps more consciously during interactions with authorities, the need to draw on our understanding of language within the contact zone that Pratt discusses in "Arts of the Contact Zone." Bhabha’s The Location of Culture, Said’s Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism, and my experiences, also inform my understanding of transcultural rhetorics in the contact zone.

Teachers should acknowledge the fact that transcultural rhetorics exist in society, and they should validate transcultural rhetorics in their classrooms for the purposes of helping their students to learn other forms of discourse, including academic discourse. One reason to teach transcultural rhetorics is to aid students’ development of self-reflective skills. These allow students to understand, acknowledge, and use rhetorical strategies they already know. A second benefit for teaching transcultural rhetorics, the subject of this chapter, is for teachers to have their students’ record their own cultural history. Students gain knowledge of differences between home and standard rhetorics,
history, and point-of-view. Such awareness leads to critical inquiry and insights useful in other areas of their lives. As I gained knowledge of Puerto Rico’s history, my understanding of transcultural rhetorics grew. Learning transcultural rhetorics could develop what I call “rhetorical intelligence” which encourages shifting among rhetorical gestures according to the needs of the rhetorical situation. In many ways, such a practice allows students to grasp the importance of concepts such as audience and context along with diverse rhetorical gestures.

Aristotle, Burke, and the Contact Zone: Expanding Our View of Rhetoric

Our current situation requires a review of rhetoric’s definitions so that we can understand the transcultural nature of what I seek to do with this term when I add the term “transcultural” to it. I contend that in the same way that scholars view rhetoric as a means of producing meaning within their cultural contexts, hybrids create meanings that reflect the multiplicity that makes up their individual construction and means for producing meaning. Because rhetoric, hybridity, and identification contribute to theorizing about transcultural rhetorics, I review early definitions of “rhetoric” before providing the historical development of the concept of hybridity. Rhetoric has changed its meaning from Aristotle’s definition to Kenneth Burke’s model. Kenneth Burke in *Rhetoric of Motives* links persuasion and identification.

Rhetoric, though widely understood by people to relate to politicians’ empty promises, has historically meant persuasion. George A. Kennedy states the following in

Books 1-2 discuss the means of persuasion available to a public speaker from logical argument, the presentation of the speaker's character, and moving the emotions of the audience. Although this part of rhetoric has come to be known as "invention," Aristotle himself offers no general term for it until the transition section at the end of book 2, where he refers to it as *dianoia,* "thought." Throughout books 1 and 2, understanding the available means of persuasion is treated as constituting the whole of rhetoric, properly understood; and until the last sentence of 2.26 there is no anticipation of discussion of style and arrangement in book 3. Books 1-2 are a unit and probably made up the whole of the *Rhetoric* as it once existed. (25)

Kenneth Burke, in *Rhetoric of Motives,* refocused the definition of rhetoric to mean persuasion through the act of identification. In the introduction to *Rhetoric of Motives,* Burke tells us that in studying the texts he selected he seeks to do more than to discuss them as "pure poetry" (xiii). He seeks to study the process of identification's relationship to persuasion. Using the concept of "identification" Burke seeks to mark off the areas of rhetoric, by showing how a rhetorical motive is often present where it is not usually recognized or thought to belong. In part, we would but rediscover rhetorical elements that had become obscured when rhetoric as a term fell into disuse, and other specialized disciplines . . . came to the fore. (xiii)

Burke's focus on "identification" helps those of us in cultural or literary studies to understand the relationship between the seemingly natural rhetorical gestures that we use to persuade others and the cultures that produce the literary texts he studies. Burke indicates that our cultures influence the lenses or viewpoints with which we form identification and express them. This is due to the cultural contexts in which those acts are embedded. Identification with cultural ideas and symbol making obscures the
ideological connections between culture, identification, and rhetoric. In other words, the relationship among these elements seems "natural." The fact that these connections are not absolute but are based on cultural and political motives obscures the function of language in creating the identifications we make. I use the concept of "identity" to mean two things. The first involves the ways that we connect to or willingly affiliate ourselves with a particular group, person, or culture. "Identification," as I understand it, draws from this. The second way I view identity involves the actions, perceptions, and representations that people use to define themselves. For example, I am a Puerto Rican, USAmerican woman, teacher, etc. I define myself with the terms that I feel best represent me. In other words, I define myself with groups and constructs with which I share, mingle, bond, or affiliate. The sharing, mingling, bonding, etc. provide areas of "oneness" or commonality that lead to group cooperation, despite any individual differences of the individual members of the group. Burke's discussion of consubstantiality, which I do not repeat here, illustrates this aspect of identification (21). Thus identification is of utmost importance for my work, and Burke's uses of the term with rhetoric furthers my understanding of each concept. Burke's reclamation of the term "rhetoric" requires a new approach to persuasion. It requires that we consider those ideas with which we identify and which we find persuasive.

Burke also seeks to develop his subject by reviewing texts that demonstrate how identification, not persuasion in the older sense of the word, operates in texts. He seeks to develop his subject beyond the traditional bounds of rhetoric:

Traditionally, the key term for rhetoric is not "identification," but "persuasion." Hence, to make sure that we do not maneuver ourselves
unnecessarily into a weak position, we review several classic texts that track down all the major implications of that term. Our treatment, in terms of identification, is decidedly not meant as a substitute for the sound traditional approach. Rather, as we try to show, it is but an accessory to the standard lore. (xiii-xiv)

People use identification to persuade by using the language, images, and concepts familiar to the particular culture in which rhetoric is situated. I find that those of us who are bicultural or multicultural identify with more than one cultural ideology. This causes us to select or create new, hybrid images in our rhetorics. The newly created image or images allow us to negotiate meaning through our identifications.

Hybrids interpret and create a synthesized meaning of cultural texts, laws, rituals, or gender role expectations that they experience. This allows hybrid people to combine the diverse aspects of culture with which they engage. Thus, I contend that transcultural rhetorics involve more than moving from one context to another. Hybrids create meanings that reflect the multiplicity that are elements in their individual yet cultural construction. Transcultural rhetorics involve a creative blurring of selection from and synthesis of dual or multiple identities and rhetorics. Learning transcultural rhetorics benefits others in this diverse society. In order to understand and engage with people whose home cultures differ, all students can learn about different rhetorics, and transcultural rhetorics can facilitate that understanding. Since language contributes to our learning, understanding transcultural rhetorics can help us to understand that the learning styles, like the differing rhetorical styles, are positive features of the USAmerican landscape.
Reconstructing Hybrid Identification through Language

Acknowledging and encouraging a reconstruction of our identities through our language contributes to the creative processes of transcultural rhetorics. Another often-neglected aspect of transculturation involves the reclamation of cultural histories and identities that Anzaldúa writes about in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. If a person has a *mestiza* identity, she should have access to rhetorics that reflect the histories and cultures that contribute to her identity. Transcultural rhetorics, as I use the term, takes on a more political meaning. I use it to add to the way we teach language, literature, and identity in our schools, for we should teach rhetorics with which a diverse student population can identify.

For example, because I am Latina, I study the ways that Latinas take on the role of subjects, storytellers, or historians of their cultures. In other words, I look at how using transcultural rhetoric works in the enterprise of speaking out, among us and to or with other groups. Anzaldúa’s views on breaking the *mestiza*’s silence support my view.

Like Spivak, Anzaldúa is aware that people-of-color are rendered invisible and silent. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa advocates an assertive stance, one that allows for chaos, subversion, and control of self-representation. Anzaldúa advocates that we take pride in our heritage and speak out for ourselves. She says,

> At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly ‘crossing over,’ this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollinization, an ‘alien’ consciousness is presently in the
making—a new mestiza consciousness, una conciencia de mujer. It is the consciousness of the Borderlands. (77)

Many of us can reclaim our heritage and take our place in the “contact zone” through the languages we choose and the rhetorical gestures that reflect our cultures:

For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castillian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither espanol ni ingles, but both. (55)

Anzaldúa teaches us that we must resist and defy cultural losses by using the languages that contribute to our multiplicity.

The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out . . . nothing abandoned. . . [S]he turns ambivalence into something else. (79)

The new mestiza re-constructs her identity by taking stock in what she inherits from both cultures and making selections appropriate to her needs for survival and growth. In doing this, she practices transculturation. When she speaks or writes from a position she reconstructs, she practices transcultural rhetoric. This concept is important because it reveals the creative practice that, in fact, is a part of the oral and written composing processes we teach in our composition classroom. However, what a new mestiza composes are representations of herself, her worldviews, or her history. Instead, of
composing an essay that meets course requirements, she composes representations that reflect her needs for the survival of those aspects of herself that constitute her identity.

Anzaldúa notes the difficulties of self-representation. Within her, she finds resistance to knowing, changing, and letting go of what is familiar (48). In this, she is not unlike many Latinas helped by Gil and Vazquez. However, Anzaldúa urges herself and other *mestizas* to continue to learn, to cross into the alien territory of conscious knowing. To do otherwise is to stay still. “But if I escape conscious awareness, escape ‘knowing,’ I won’t be moving. . . . ‘Knowing’ is painful because after ‘it’ happens I can’t stay in the same place and be comfortable” (48). The pain comes from various places.

Finding out how to acculturate is problematic for newly arrived Latinas. For Latinas born and raised within the USAmerican landscape, pain comes during the process when she tries to make sense of what she must do to cross boundaries into new territories. The new *mestiza* “has to ‘cross over,’ kicking a hole out of the old boundaries of the self and slipping under or over, dragging the old skin along, stumbling over it” (49). The struggle for knowledge must continue into new territory,

dragging the ghost of the past with her. It is a dry birth, a breech birth, a screaming birth, one that fights her every inch of the way. It is only when she is on the other side and the shell cracks open and the lid from her eyes lifts that she sees things in a different perspective. (49)

The new perspective leads the new *mestiza* to make the connections that lead to new insights (49). If she does not change, the *mestiza* will be forced “into the fecund cave of her imagination where she is cradled in the arms of Coatlicue, who will never let her go. If she does not change her ways, she will remain a stone forever. *No hay más que*
cambiar" (49). In terms of the standards of her life, not changing adds to the problems she faces (Gil and Vazquez 15).

Another writer, María Lugones, articulates what many of us know from experience—there are difficulties with our multiplicity. She speaks about the intricate nature of the concept of cultural identification, which she claims is complex. Lugones says, “As I uncover a connection between impurity and resistance, my Latina imagination moves from resistance to mestizaje. I think of mestizaje as an example of and a metaphor for both impurity and resistance. I hold on to the metaphor and adopt mestizaje as a central name for impure resistance to interlocked, intermeshed oppressions” (458-9).

Lugones points out the futility in what she calls the “exercise in purity,” because it hides the relationship between impurity and resistance (458). No language is unaffected by the other languages or cultures in the contact zone. Like Anzaldúa and Bhabha, Lugones argues for resistance through hybridity/mestizaje (459). In Lugones' example, she likens language and cultural influences not to a contact zone in the way that Pratt does or the interstices about which Bhabha speaks. She uses a description of a kitchen activity—the separation of the white from the yolk of an egg. No matter how great our effort at separating both parts of the egg the white sticks to the yolk. Likewise, the influence of each language lingers on the other. I believe the same difficulty with separation occurs both in the lives of those of us caught between two or more cultures and languages and in the emerging writing from those of us who experience transculturation. Yet as Anzaldúa, Lugones, and Bhabha point out, hybridity allows for
creativity in negotiating the differences of the interstitial places or the contact zones.
Moreover, hybridity can lead to resistance and subversion of the demands of assimilation.
We can more easily see these linguistic encounters when studying the structure of language. Similar events in the lives of people do not show up as easily.

Transculturation means that I select from two or more cultures when acting as subject in my life. It means that I acknowledge my situation as being between two worlds, two languages, and two ways of viewing womanhood. Most importantly, transculturation is a process whereby I consciously, or unconsciously, move between or among two or more languages and cultures. For me, transculturation is a two-way street. I do not believe that the dominant culture remains unaffected by the language and culture that it dominates. Moreover, I do not believe that whatever language or culture is dominant remains so or remains so to the same degree. The cultural influences overlap and influence me strongly, particularly in relation to my views of what it means to be a mother, daughter, or woman.

The concept of hybridity, what Anzaldúa calls _mestizaje_, contributes to an understanding of transculturation. Therefore, I present the history and development of the term below.

**Definitions of Hybridity Inform Current Theories of Culture and Identity**

In *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*, Robert J. C. Young tells us that the need for “organic metaphors of identity or society implies a counter-sense of fragmentation and dispersion” (4). Fragmentation takes place within the contexts of
the lives of people whose countries are colonized by another country. It also occurs in situations when people migrate to other countries. Survival dictates acquisition of “new” or “colonizer’s” languages and obedience to laws and customs associated with a colonizer. Likewise, migrating people must acclimate to new contexts. Yet fragmentation between new and old customs and languages remain. Hybridity allows for a response to conflicting identities or the concepts of national narratives discussed in other post-colonial writings. Discussions of hybridity present us with the counter-paradigm that grew alongside a sense of fragmentation.

Young’s review of the concept of hybridity in culture, quite naturally for his purpose, follows the progress of global colonization by Western Europe of countries in the East. Although the global, imperial, and capitalist powers imposed a single unitary economic system, it did so at the expense of local cultures and the dislocation of those cultures and peoples (Young 4). Spain’s treatment of its colonies also fits the descriptions provided by Robert J. C. Young and postcolonial theorists. Composition of populations changed and economies changed. Yet, as I mention in my review of Puerto Rican history later in this chapter, hybridization of cultures contributes to the preservation of at least some aspects of the colonized culture. It is important to understand the various forms of hybridity of which Young speaks, so that we can see the various ways hybridity can be used among cultures.

Young’s work presents a clear historical overview of definitions of hybridity. Young points out that concepts of hybridity were caused by the “mechanics of the intricate processes of cultural contact, intrusion, fusion and disjunction” (5). These
historically receive little attention. Young cites findings in other areas of study, such as archeology, where intrusions of what we call cultural contact and conflict are studied by paradigms that diffuse, assimilate, or isolate aspects of culture (5). Some of the areas Young lists include “exchange of commodities, of diseases, of healing systems and of religions” (5). Young finds, however, the area of language and sex or fertility useful in developing a paradigm for studying hybridity. Both language and sex produce what are regarded as ‘hybrid’ forms (Creole and pidgin languages and miscegenated children) which embody threatening forms of perversion and degeneration and become the basis for endless metaphoric extension in the racial discourse of social commentary (5). Each model, language and sex are perceived to share the same outcome: hybridity. The hybridization of the mixed races takes place after all in the womb (19).

I use Young’s discourse on hybridity because I see the history of the development of science and colonial enterprise connected to hybridity (5-12). The connection remains a factor in today’s world. I find that many aspects of culture besides music, dance, and religion affect cultures. Science, currently valued highly in our culture, also affects our views of the world. Young finds that principles of Darwinian theories, among others, influenced the beliefs held by colonizers of the superiority of some species over others—of some cultures over others. Therefore, Young’s use of multiple definitions helps me and others clarify the roots of hybridity, racism, identity, and other cultural issues. When he refers to the biological and botanical roots of the term and later to anthropological uses of the term, “hybrid,” he links the social and political aspects of hybridity. During the time that colonization was on the rise, the field of scientific study also grew. We can see
the ways that the concept of purity has been applied to colonizers, giving them the more sought after qualities and instilling a sense of inferiority among those whose lives and practices reflect cultural hybridity. Such a view of "purity" as that possessed by colonizer fits with current ideas of the superiority of one language over others in a multicultural country.

Beginning with the *OED*, Young cites the Latin origins of the term "hybrid" among animals to be "offspring" (6) through its changes in different centuries to nineteenth century scientific inquiry. It is in the nineteenth century that Europeans apply the concept of mongrel, taken from biological processes, to cultures, and people who are not European. Thus, the concept of hybridity contributes to the diminution of the results of cross-cultural marriages or languages. Yet, while Young finds many other definitions, which I believe to contain the negative connotations associated with hybridity, he also points out that there have been instances where people acknowledged that progress would come from the "heterogeneous" (4). I believe there are positive aspects to hybridity of cultures. As things change, those changes need not be destructive; indeed, hybridity can contribute to preservation of aspects of culture that would be lost to changes created by war, disease, or other unforeseen events. Young says, "by the 1850s there were already those such as Herbert Spencer who were asserting that "progress consists in a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous"" (4).

Young furthers the argument for hybridity by pointing out the uses and categories Bakhtin finds for it. The issues Young raises coincide with transcultural practices of hybrid people. Since hybrid language practice describes the ability of language to be the
same while being different, it explains part of the double-voiced nature found in dialogue, such as Bakhtin discusses in *Dialogic Imagination*. While double-voice can be found in literature, it can be found in real people’s discourse. Arguments calling for all USAmericans to have one identity ignore the double-voiced realities of people, their ability to identify with two or more cultures and to use double-voiced speech. Bakhtin says, “Unintentional, unconscious hybridization” is one “of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages” (358). Unconscious hybridization “gives birth to ‘creolization’ of languages. It occurs without a conscious political purpose. Young stresses the value of unconscious hybridity by emphasizing the creative aspects of hybridity.

For this kind of unconscious hybridity, whose pregnancy gives birth to new forms of amalgamation rather than contestation, we might employ Brathwaite’s term, ‘creolization’, or the French *métissage*, the imperceptible process a new mode. (21)

New forms indicate the creative consequences of hybridity. Whether we use “creolization,” “*métissage,*” or *mestizaje,* the concept represented by these words underscores the value of movement between two or more cultures with amalgamated or newly created ideas.

However, many of the internal dialogues in which hybrids engage result from the conflicts, social or political, they experience with the dominant culture. As in my case, conflicts of women’s roles in the two cultures that influence me create the internal dialogue. Others who experience conflicts, quite naturally, need to organize with others for political redress. Bakhtin says,
As with carnival and heteroglossia, it is the organizing intention of the artist that dialogizes hybridity: 'Intentional semantic hybrids are inevitably internally dialogic (as distinct from organic hybrids). Two points of view are not mixed but set against each other dialogically'... In organic hybridity, the mixture merges and is fused into a new language or worldview object; but intentional hybridity sets different points of view against each other in a conflictual structure, which retains 'a certain elemental, organic energy and open-endedness. (Bakhtin 360-1)

These categories of hybrid allow us to see the synthesis and creativity of transcultural rhetorics at work in the writing of double-voiced, politically charged writers creating points of resistance to counter the dominant discourses with which they must contend. Since language can be seen as living, organic, growing, and changing, the writer can creatively construct her systems of viewing the world. Hence, hybridity is seen by Bakhtin as being “an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another” (361).

Hybridity and Identification: Bhabha’s Approach to Subversion

In order to develop rhetorics that use elements that engage minority students and that provide writing role models for minority students, we should understand how hybridity provides ways for people to identify with non-dominant ways of writing. We should also study how such rhetorics provide the means for subverting educational systems that stifle the multiple views that hybrid Americans provide. Bhabha’s work enhances such a discussion of hybridity by adding the concept of identity, an important element in discussions of rhetoric. Identity, as I understand the term, indicates how a person defines herself. I identify with both Puerto Rican and USAmerican cultures; hence, I claim both for my self-definition. Identification, how I identify with specific
groups, influences the way we think, speak, write. Hence, rhetoric that excludes the
ability of the audience to identify (to make a connection) with texts or discourse falls
short of effectively persuading audiences who cannot see themselves or their ways of
viewing the world. Hence, much attention to creation of identification is found in
discussions about culture and language. Bhabha through the use of a visual image
allows us to see the interstices where cultural conflicts and/or exchanges take place. In
other words, there are places in society where marginalized people live. Marginalized
groups can meet to subvert or challenge an oppressive system. In Homi Bhabha’s
interrogation of “cultural hybridization,” he argues that the interplay among cultures
takes place in the in-between places of society.

Bhabha’s metaphor focuses on interstitial places. Bhabha says they are the
in-between spaces [that] provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of
selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and
innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the
idea of society itself. (2)

This model demonstrates the interplay between cultures. Such interplay among cultures
allows for transcultural rhetorics. The use of transcultural rhetorics allows for strategies
that not only represent language use with which people identify but also create new ways
of using language. These new ways may mingle or blend the rhetorics from which the
speakers can select. They can also be places where political and cultural subversion work.
Chapter four of this work demonstrates two cases of such subversion.

Bhabha’s use of the image of stairwells in a building creates and contributes to the
hierarchical representation of his theory. These stairwells mirror the positions of power
in society where those with power are at the top. Yet in these in-between places questions of identity and survival are asked:

How are subjects formed? Or How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared values, meanings, and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable? (Bhabha 2)

Bhabha and Pratt claim cultural values are negotiated through the interplay between or among cultures. The interplay among cultures leads to negotiation of cultural values, such as gender roles, child to parent roles, or the importance of religion. Anzaldúa’s discussion of *mestizaje* comes to mind again. She and other women-of-color subvert the system by keeping cultural characteristics that are important to them. They do not create a hierarchical image that would lead to categorizing one of their cultures as superior to the others. Bhabha’s concept constructs the movement between cultures; however, the hierarchical nature of his discussion is countered by women-of-color in their discussions of subject formation or self-representation.

Bhabha makes certain to indicate that minority groups must contend with cultural authority in the interstitial places where negotiations occur. That is they must not essentialize or expect a set of “pre-given” traits to represent minority groups in the “ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities” (2). This concept is important for an on-going debate among members of minority groups, for these groups are not monolithic. For example, many of us share some traditions but have distinctions among us. What, for example, constitutes a Latino community? Which Spanish unites us? How do our experiences either in relation to the colonizers or singularly distinguish us from one another?
Bhabha points out, “Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are signs of emergence of community envisaged as a project—at once a vision and a construction” (3). We must consider many factors before ascribing a definitive traditional identity to any group in the contact zones. Bhabha points out the distinctions between authorized power and received traditions.

This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a ‘received’ tradition. The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public; high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development. (2)

While a minority group may be “contesting” the dominant culture for political benefits, it may also be jockeying for cultural authority. Bhabha demonstrates the complex nature of borderline or interstitial cultural activity.

Interestingly, Bhabha uses metaphors that indicate the concept of movement or fluidity that occurs in cultural exchanges. He does this in his discussion of theoretical frameworks that focus on the “beyond.” For not only do cultural minorities want to move out beyond subjugation, many want to move beyond boundaries set up in previous eras (4). This accounts for generational differences within groups. Bhabha’s theories provide the politicization with which people from non-dominant groups must engage. One can see the movement of the different groups who seek movement out or beyond what is known, what is expected, or what is revered:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. (7)
Hybridity allows for the emerging differences among members of society, yet difference should not silence people. For as we see in Young’s discussions of hybridity, the imbrication of race, culture, difference, and language have contributed negative consequences to “different” members of our society. Bhabha, Said, Anzaldúa, and others point to the need to understand and use language in ways that resist political and historical inequities.

Currently, many United States citizens feel a sense of fragmentation and dispersion that leads to the need for fixed identity. In the United States, the diversity of people creates a sense of fragmentation. This leads people to feel a loss of control over the culture and to call for English-Only and other measures that provide a sense of unity. Naturally, this feeling leads to public policy debates that attempt to affect educational systems and other social institutions. Yet, as Robert J. C. Young says in Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race:

Fixity of identification is only sought in situations of instability and disruption, of conflict and change. Despite these differences, the fundamental model has not altered: fixity implies disparateness; multiplicity must be set against at least a notional singularity to have any meaning. In each case identity is self-consciously articulated through setting one term against the other; what has happened is that the hierarchy has now been reversed. Or has it? (Young 4)

The model of fixity that Young writes about plays out in the United States context. Many USAmericans desire and embrace the notion of a “single” culture—a oneness that excludes the changes wrought by the assimilation, acculturation, and multi-cultural practices in the society.
As I discuss in subsequent chapters, the need to deal with diversity has led to a reaction or move to go back to a "standard" or a "fundamental model [of life, of education that] has not altered" (Young 4). Additionally, the move toward "fixity" has led to increased calls for education that assimilates. The combat and conflict of cultures and languages that Mary Louise Pratt addresses in "Arts of the Contact Zone" are either unknown or not discussed by the very people who determine education policy. More importantly, they do not see that change in language is inevitable. I believe this is especially true when one language is imposed on people through the process of colonization and education that acts to assimilate.

I find it important to add Said’s discussions of Orientalism, colonialism, and/or the "Other" to the USAmerican landscape. Many of the ideas found in his work operate and affect minority groups within the United States in ways similar to colonized people about whom he writes. For example, Said claims in his introduction to Culture and Imperialism that American identity is hybridized from its inception:

Yet the ideological concern over identity is understandably entangled with the interests and agendas of various groups—not all of them oppressed minorities—that wish to set priorities reflecting these interests. Since a great deal of this book is all about what to read of recent history and how to read it, I shall only quickly summarize my ideas here.

Before we can agree on what the American identity is made of, we have to concede that as an immigrant settler society superimposed on the ruins of considerable native presence, American identity is too varied to be a unitary and homogeneous thing; indeed the battle within it is between advocates of a unitary identity and those who see the whole as a complex but not reductively unified one. This opposition implies two different perspectives, two historiographies, one linear and subsuming, the other contrapuntal and often nomadic. (xxv)
The fact that USAmerican identity is "too varied to be unitary" suggests multiplicity in USAmerican identity. It also suggests contention between the need to unify and the need of minority voices to assert their points of view.

My understanding from both personal reflection and readings is that USAmerica has colonized others in two ways—through immigrants who must assimilate and through conquest of territories following various wars. Said says the United States through those in power has an imperial agenda that seeks to exert its perceived cultural, military, and political superiority over other countries. From the imperial enterprise all cultures taking part in the enterprise are "involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (xxv). Thus, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said points to the importance of hybridity in post-colonial experience and theory. Hybridity subverts the notion of purity and allows for the means of resistance. Said asserts, "Never was it the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-Western native; there was always some form of active resistance" (xii).

In my observations and readings, I find that people resist in various ways, from small transgressions against laws imposed on them to transcultural rhetorics and transculturation. For in the interstices of society, through discussions among themselves, marginalized groups seek and find ways to express themselves. Transcultural rhetorics provide a way of using the ability of engagement with multiple cultures. They also provide a means of subversion that Anzaldúa and Said call for through the power to narrate one's own stories. Transcultural rhetorics allow us to do so in ways nations do to
maintain identity and can be used as a means of throwing off imperial subjugation (xiii). Reclaiming our histories, those of our home countries, as well as our personal narratives, becomes an act of including ourselves in the national story. Such histories and personal narratives become transcultural acts. Keeping silent for too long blurs the histories, as Olga Wagenheim de Jiménez claims in her research of *El Grito de Lares*. These blurred histories must be clarified. Said’s assertions are indeed a part of transcultural rhetorics that need to be explored so that history of events important to us do not become opaque or forgotten.

**Mestizaje Born of Imperialism and Assimilation**

Power and control of colonizers are evident in the colonizers’ histories. Within the USAmerican landscape, I see more than one cultural group. However, most of the sub-groups’ histories and contributions to the United States are glossed over in classes throughout the nation. Studying USAmerican history demonstrates power issues. All we have to do is study a few of the interactions between USAmerican-Europeans and Native Americans to understand the uses of force, militarily and politically, in suppressing Native American self-determination. Edward W. Said’s discussions of Western Europe’s subjugation of the “Orient” apply to my argument because the concept of “Other” that Said develops can be found in contexts outside the “Orient.” While many people have indeed come voluntarily to USAmerica, many of us have a history of lost lands and cultures at the hands of USAmerican-Europeans.
Said’s discussions in both *Orientalism* and in *Culture and Imperialism* inform much of the discussion of cultural subjugation, integration and conflict, and hybridity. However, not wishing to leave his discussion solely a critique of the “West,” Said expands it to those inhabiting both Eastern and Western countries. Like Anzaldúa, Lugones, Villanueva, others, and me, Said’s experiences with hybridity and the politics toward “Others” are based on firsthand experiences, as well as scholarly research. Having grown up in France, Britain, and USAmerica’s spheres of influence Said feels at home in all three countries, enabling him to be a native from the Muslim and Arab world. Thus, his theories open discussion on the influence of imperial cultures on natives—an exchange that contains the concept of hybridity. Said’s claim that he “feels at home in all three countries” fails to address hybridity in the way I think of it. While we are outside our home culture on a day-to-day basis, we retain knowledge, feelings, and attitudes from the native country. Our contacts with the other cultures and/or countries to which we “affiliate” contribute to our hybridization. This hybridization changes nuances of understanding and identification with the cultures to which we affiliate.

It would be easy to dismiss Said’s discussion as applicable only to the kinds of imperial practices resulting in acquisition and control of other countries. However, the same patterns of control over language and cultural practices exist within USAmerica that we see in colonization, of India, Africa, and other countries. I call this “internal colonization.” Therefore, I find it important to extend Said’s discussions to the USAmerican landscape because many of the ideas found in his work operate and affect minority groups within the United States. Said claims that American identity is
hybridized from its inception. However, USAmerica's identity excludes many people. These people are defined as "Other." Although these "Others" contribute to the fabric of USAmerican society, members of the dominant group do not recognize their contributions, treat them as inferior people, and in some instance use them as scapegoats to real or perceived problems in society. Thus, hybridization has led to conflicts over what constitutes USAmerican identity. Should English be the national tongue? Alternatively, should German be the national tongue? Should we exterminate the indigenous people from the continent? On the other hand, should we assimilate them into mainstream culture? Should there be bans on inter-racial marriages? Or should integration among races and languages prevail? "The ideological concern over identity is understandably entangled with the interests and agendas of various groups—not all of them oppressed minorities—that wish to set priorities reflecting these interests" (Said xxv). Historically, USAmericans have had to contend with opposing, merging, or collaborative forces—the consequences of colonization—whether military or political. All cultures become "involved [with] one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (xxv).

The lack of purity and unity of cultures, races, and languages or the perceived lack of unity or unifying elements in a diverse society contributes to the discomfort that many USAmericans feel about today's multicultural society. This discomfort in part comes from not understanding hybridity, what it is and how it functions. In The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art, James Clifford attempts to answer some of the questions above. In doing so, he provides
teachers and students alike with a starting point toward understanding the ideas posed by Said and other post-colonial scholars. This leads me to question the reason that we should study hybridity. Indeed understanding hybridity allows us to understand the complexity of identity issues that trouble US Americans and the minority groups living in the United States. In gaining education and understanding about hybridity, teachers, participants in public discourse or other areas of public life, can ease the discomfort many people feel.

Clifford points to examples of changes in modern US American cultures. In the introduction to his book he refers to a poem, "Pure Products Go Crazy." by William Carlos Williams (Puerto Rican doctor and poet) which reflects on the poet’s discomfort with changes in social mores and traditions. James Clifford claims that William’s discomfort is akin to that of many in current society because Williams finds himself off center among scattered traditions. Modernity, and the condition of “rootlessness” and mobility he confronts, is an increasingly common fate. According to Clifford,

"Elsie" stands simultaneously for a local cultural breakdown and a collective future . . . . This feeling of lost authenticity, of “modernity” ruining some essence or source is not a new one . . . . Again and again over the millenia change is configured as disorder, pure products go crazy. (3-4)

However, the image of Elsie suggests a new turn. Elsie, the housekeeper for whom Williams writes the poem, represents to him or becomes symbolic of the ways that hybridization subverts establishment views of order.

The pure products of America
Go crazy———
And promiscuity between
Devil-may-care men who have taken
To railroading
Out of sheer lust for adventure—
And young slatterns, bathed
In filth
From Monday to Saturday

To be tricked out that night
With gauds
from imaginations which have no
peasant traditions to give them
character
but flutter and flaunt

Sheer rags—succumbing without emotion . . .

which they cannot express—

unless it be that marriage
perhaps
with a dash of Indian blood

will show up a girl so desolate
so hemmed round
with disease or murder

that she'll be rescued by
an agent—
reared by the state and

sent out at fifteen to work in
some hard pressed
house in the suburbs—
some doctor's family, some Elsie—
voluptuous water
expressing with broken

brain the truth about us—
her great
ungainly hips and flopping breasts

addressed to cheap
jewelry
and with rich young men with fine eyes . . .

as if the earth under our feet
were
an excrement of some sky

and we degraded prisoners
destined
to hunger until we eat filth . . . (qtd. in Clifford 1-3).

Hence, the poem also points to the fear among USAmericans of anything that disturbs perceptions of idealized views of USAmerican life. Within the poem Williams calls the following images to my mind: illegitimate births, poverty and squalor, welfare, and child labor. For the dominant group’s point of view, these conditions reflect situations in life that evolve from changes that occur when new groups enter the USAmerican landscape. Hence, dominant culture’s fear of change and hybridization increases.

The concept of hybridity as it engages with the concept of identity is relevant to the development and interruption of hierarchies among cultures. Dual points of identification provide a person with myths of cultural origin, which frequently conflict. The hybrid can accept either or neither or create a new myth that represents the hybrid experience, which becomes a point of natural existence. Hybrid identities frequently conflict with either or both cultures that construct the person. Anzaldúa alludes to this in Borderland/La Frontera, and I, too, have experienced this. Furthermore, such conflicted identity leads many of us to use our hybrid identities in ways that provide us a means of political action. In The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin say, national identity is
often based on naturalised myths of racial or cultural origin... it was a vital part of the collective political resistance which focused on issues of separate identity and cultural distinctiveness. (183)

The fact that hybridity of post-colonial cultures responds to concepts of separate and pure identity, demonstrates how hybridity contributes to creation of resistance. Other aspects of the usefulness of hybridity in discussions of language and cultures are found through the flexibility created by or through the hybridization processes:

Most post-colonial writing has concerned itself with the hybridised nature of post-colonial culture as strength rather than as weakness. Such writing focuses on the fact that the transaction of the post-colonial world is not a one-way process in which oppression obliterates the oppressed or the coloniser silences the colonised in absolute terms. In practice it rather stresses the mutuality of the process. It lays emphasis on the survival... of the distinctive aspects of the culture of the oppressed, and shows how these become an integral part of the new formations which arise from the clash of cultures characteristic of imperialism. Finally, it emphasises how hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen to be the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 183)

Hybridity, therefore, can be seen as a means of resistance to duplicating colonial models by the colonized who blend colonial models with their own cultural performance, language, or values.

La Historia de Borinquen—La Isla del Encanto

Reclamation of histories erased by dominant or colonizing countries remains another aspect of transculturation. In many of my composition classes, I ask students to research the histories of their ancestors and to use the research within explorations of themselves and the contributions to USAmerican history by their countries of origins.
The challenge grudgingly accepted at first leads to interesting papers and more important to student interest in their projects. Interestingly, all students whether or not they come from ethnic backgrounds gain an appreciation for their cultures, histories, and they gain expanded knowledge of the contributions of their ancestors to USAmerica. As a Puerto Rican USAmerican, I, too, needed to learn about Puerto Rico’s history and relationship to the United States, for it influences me.

Puerto Rican history, often overlooked as a subject in USAmerican schools, provides a model of transculturation and hybridity. While we often cannot see hybridity in our own cultural contexts, we can frequently see it in other cultures. Thus, I include a discussion of Puerto Rican history in this discussion of hybridity. Borinquen’s colonization by Spain evinces aspects of current colonization by the United States that I explore later in this chapter. Puerto Rico’s relationship with the United States, for purposes of my argument, exemplifies some of the issues of hybridity within its nation. Much of the Puerto Rican experience on the mainland affected my parents who influenced me. In addition, my hybridity consists of other influences besides Puerto Rican culture. I refer to traditional Catholic education that also contributes to the person I am. However, I do not wish to limit my discussion to my experiences. As I demonstrate below, in my discussion of Victor Villanueva and Richard Rodriguez, my experiences do not represent the entire history of cultural imperialism and cultural hybridization that takes place for those Puerto Ricans who live in the United States. However, my family’s roots lie en la isla del encanto, which has been colonized by the United States for the past one hundred years. Before its current 100 years of colonization
by the U. S., Puerto Rico endured 400 years of colonization by Spain. During that time, Puerto Rico gained transculturation, for indigenous, African, and Spanish cultures met, hybridized, and evolved on the island.

Its relationship to the United States complicates Puerto Rico's hybridity. The United States invasion of the island in 1898 created both advantages and problems for Puerto Ricans. With respect to cultural contact, Puerto Ricans exhibit many adaptations of USAmerican culture and language mingling. While Spanglish can be found in USAmerican cities highly populated by Puerto Ricans, Spanglish and other forms of linguistic hybridization are found on the island. Puertorriqueños regresando a la isla del encanto traen las costumbres de los estados unidos a la isla. Así es que hoy en día hay una buena hibridacion de las culturas. The back and forth migration patterns of Puerto Ricans between the island and the mainland add to the hybridization of culture on the island. Many USAmerican ideas, many concerning politics, changes in customs, etc, come from Puerto Ricans returning to the island after years on the mainland. These combine with and change the ideologies gained from indigenous and Spanish ancestors.

Like many Puerto Ricans living on the mainland, I never knew the history of the island. I knew little of its customs on a national level. Of the continuing contributions of the original indigenous groups to the hybridization, I knew less. Had knowledge about the effects of colonization come at an earlier time in my life, I would have developed greater insights into my behavior, thinking, and language use. Understanding the nature of my hybridity and the construction of Puerto Rican hybridity would have led to my understanding that historical events contribute to construction of hybrid cultures. In
addition, had I known about or been aware of Puerto Rico's history, I might have been able to use my hybridity more effectively earlier. I believe that others in my position could also learn to become aware and skillful in their use their hybridity.

A person can gain education outside educational institutions. This is true of how I learn about many important issues including my study of Puerto Rican history. In the process of exploring my history, beyond that of my family, I began in Puerto Rico. While on a visit there three years ago, I commented to my cousins that Puerto Rico appeared passive in its acceptance of USAmerican colonization. My cousins were surprised at my ignorance of Puerto Rican history, adamantly claiming that Puerto Rico had, indeed, resisted colonization. In order to educate myself, I sought books written by historians to learn more about the episode Socorro and Benicia cited. After working my way through Puerto Rican history books written in Spanish, I determined to buy my own when I came to the United States. Several months later I had several resources. I special ordered books on Puerto Rican history, anthologies of Latino/a writers, and other material that could inform me of Puerto Rico’s cultural, literary history, as well as its political history.

The Historical Development of Hybridity in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico demonstrates language and cultural hybridity. I see indigenous, African, and Spanish cultures within the overall Puerto Rican culture. I use the following sources: Arturo Morales Carrión’s *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History*, Kal Wagenheim’s and Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim’s *The Puerto Ricans: A Documentary*
History, and Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim’s *Puerto Rico’s Revolt for Independence: El Grito de Lares.* As I read Morales Carrión’s work, I read without understanding about *El Grito de Lares.* Therefore, I searched for a work that focused on that event. All the works on Puerto Rican history illuminate facts, which those of us in USAmerica never learned, and indicate the unexplored resistance to colonization about which many of us had not heard. The elision of Puerto Rican history from Puerto Ricans living on the USAmerican mainland creates problems for many Puerto Rican students. Ignorance of their identity, Puerto Rican national identity, and shame for allowing colonial status to persist contribute to the conflicts Puerto Ricans on the mainland feel.

Long before Spain took possession of the island, indigenous people migrated from the northern part of South America through the Antilles. Puerto Rico is the largest of the Lesser Antilles. Over many centuries many groups settled, warred, or migrated through the island. Many European nations, Spain, Holland, France, and the United States have used it as a base of operations. Interestingly, indigenous people used the island they called *Boriquen,* later known as *Borinquen,* as a stop over between Florida and Louisiana and the northern parts of South America, such as Venezuela. We know that many of the indigenous people’s languages and customs influenced the inhabitants of the island before and during the period of Spanish Colonization. There are currently, for example, many words from the indigenous people surviving in Puerto Rico. *Bohíos, Jamaca,* *maracas,* and *güiros* are but four examples. Many cities still have indigenous names. *Humacao, Caguas, Mayagüez,* and *Utuado* are some, and foods such as *yuca,* sweet pepper called *aji,* and breadfruit called *panapenes.* In addition, many tools and music
instruments also survive the passage of time (Carrión 6). Furthermore, archeologists, among them Ricardo Alegría, theorize based on their findings that people from both South America and the southern part of Florida interacted with native people of the Antilles. Personal interaction with people from northern South America today reveals many cultural elements held in common. Foods, languages, and beliefs fall under this claim by archeologists. This is true of other Caribbean islands such as Hispaniola (Haití and the Dominican Republic) and Cuba, which have the same mixes of cultures. Cuban friends and I know by heart a quote by Cuban philosopher, José Martí who says, "Puerto Rico y Cuba son dos alas de la misma paloma." The merging of two or three distinct cultures and languages contributes to the development of transcultural rhetorics. The ability to select from more than one cultural perspective and language allows these rhetorics to occur. In order to survive conquest, people developed strategies for engaging with their conquerors. Understanding Puerto Rico’s historical events provides a partial explanation to the “why” of transcultural rhetorics.

Many Puerto Ricans on the mainland do not know that there were times when their ancestors revolted against their Spanish conquerors. One event occurred in Lares. Jiménez de Wagenheim asserts this moment can be understood best by understanding the two phases of colonialism imposed by Spain. The first phase occurred long before El Grito de Lares. Spain used Puerto Rico primarily as a military post and paid little attention to its internal structure and economy. According to Jiménez de Wagenheim, policies that “Spain adopted after the 1760s . . . explain the changes the society underwent and the colony’s increasing dependence on Spain” (xvi). Eventually, the
oppressive nature of Spain's policy led to the revolt in Lares. Jiménez de Wagenheim says that on September 23, 1868, between 600 to 1000 men from Lares revolted from Spanish oppression. Although this event did not succeed in liberating Puerto Rico from Spain, Wagenheim de Jiménez considers the event pivotal in the development of Puerto Rican national identity. Years later (1930) El Grito de Lares' contribution to the development of Puerto Rico's Nationalist Party became more evident (Jiménez de Wagenheim xiii).

Policies initiated to change the nature and number of Puerto Rico's population went hand-in-hand with Spain's design to make Puerto Rico's agrarian economy more successful. When Spain needed more workers, Spain provided grants of land to loyalists from former colonies willing to migrate to Puerto Rico. Those willing to bring slaves received greater concessions than freed Blacks or poor mestizos. By the 1860s, Spain's policy led to unrest and the revolt at Lares. Jiménez de Wagenheim asserts this history helps to explain the reason Puerto Rico remained a Spanish colony long after Spanish American colonies obtained their independence.

Puerto Rico's second colonial period began later than in other Spanish American colonies. Spain's initiative to change the make up of Puerto Rico's population resulted from Spain's desire to change Puerto Rico's economy. These changes led to power in the hands of Spanish loyalists because they were rewarded for following Spain's edicts concerning economic and other issues. I note that USAmerican imperialism works in the same manner today. Puerto Rican economy today remains dependent upon the United States, its corporations, and agricultural incentives in the same way that Puerto Rico's
economy depended upon Spain during the second phase of Spanish colonization. For example, while the United States can make decisions affecting Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico does not have representation with authority to vote on those decisions. Unfortunately, the inequality between the two nations adds to conflicts Puerto Ricans experience both on the island and on the mainland.

Spain's imprints on Puerto Rican culture are far ranging. Beyond language, folklore, dances, and art reflect the hybridization of indigenous and Spanish cultures. *Flamenco, danza, and danzon* play side by side with *aguinaldos, seis Marianda, Bolero, Llanera, Plena, Cantos, Merengues*, and other music genres. Latin Jazz and/or Salsa are musical representations of cultural hybridity developed and experienced on *Borinquen*. The sounds of hybrid musical roots are evident in many of these musical genres.

The Spanish experience also helps to demonstrate the process of biological hybridization because as the Spaniards conquered the land, they engaged in personal relationships with indigenous people that led to the mixing of people—what some call races. This biological blending of people led to cultural blending (Morales Carrión 3-8). In fact, transculturation resulted in the survival of some customs and traditions, and people. The historians cited above point out that the cruel treatment of the indigenous people led to their mass destruction. However, the biological merging of people in some way precluded the total annihilation of cultural practices and worldviews held by those who were colonized. Therefore, the children who resulted from Spanish and indigenous people, plus those born of African people brought over as slaves to the island, further contributed to hybridization of Puerto Rico's population and culture.
According to Puerto Rican historian Arturo Morales Carrión, in 1898, few of the conquering USAmericans knew or cared about the existence of la isla del encanto. Geologist of the time, Robert T. Hill, claimed that USAmericans knew less about the island than they did about “Japan or Madagascar” (Morales Carrión ix). One hundred years have passed and the status of knowledge about Puerto Rico is beginning to change. It is important to learn more about Puerto Rico’s history to understand its evolving cultural and national identity. The history of pre-Columbian history and the archaeological studies of Ricardo Alegria provide the necessary information to lead people to understand the traces of indigenous people’s cultures. Morales Carrión praises and uses Alegria’s work because Alegria has uncovered the influence of indigenous people on the evolving Puerto Rican cultural identity.

Few realize that Puerto Rico has had a long past as one of the earliest European establishments in the New World, that its evolution is closely linked with power struggles which have taken place in the Caribbean from the time France and England challenged the Spanish claims to make the region a Mare Clausum, a sea closed to outsiders, to the contemporary American concern about Soviet penetration in what the United States has considered its own “backyard.” (ix)

As I indicate above, there has been little study of Puerto Rico as a country with its own cultural identity prior to its conquest by USAmericans in 1898:

1898 was not simply a tabla rasa, in spite of the efforts undertaken at what President William McKinley called “benevolent assimilation.” The crucial cultural forms prevailed, including the language, for by 1898 a people composed of nearly one million inhabitants of variegated ethnic extraction had already emerged with a budding sense of its identity. Puerto Rico in 1898 had not only a population density but a historical density as well. (Morales Carrión x)
However, recent changes in global politics have diminished the need for Puerto Rico to function as a base from which to protect USAmerican national interests. Still the integration of USAmerican culture, economics, and forms of government are not the only sources of transculturation en Puerto Rico.

**Americano si o no? Puerto Ricans as Partial USAmericans**

The beginning of Puerto Rican as USAmerican officially began in 1917 with the passage of the Jones Act. From 1898 through 1917, when the United States passed the Jones Act, Puerto Ricans experienced difficulties because of the uncertainty of their citizenship. Their citizenship was not yet in place. However, when World War I broke out, citizenship was granted to the islanders, many of whom were inducted into the USAmerican Armed Services. After three years of trying to settle the Puerto Rican issue, Congress passed the Jones Act, which granted citizenship and removed the possibility for independent home rule in Puerto Rico. This act of granting citizenship led to current dependence on the USAmerican government policies. It also led to transculturation that blends U.S. culture and language with the varieties of Spanish spoken in Puerto Rico. Kal Wagenheim and Olga Jimenez de Wagenheim say,

> In the summer of 1898, when American troops first raised the Stars and Stripes on Puerto Rico’s southern shore, their commanding general promised the natives the “advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization.” (ix)

The general, speaking in English, reveals imperialist attitudes as his statement denies or minimizes the existence of civilization that existed on the island prior to the landing of USAmericans on the island. This act of power over a people is part of the colonial problem that still exists on the island, for issues of language, of traditions, mode of
government, and ways of life have been influenced by the invasion. Subsequent years have confirmed the emptiness of the general's promises. The invasion of Puerto Rico ended four centuries of oppressive Spanish colonial rule, only to replace it with a subtler brand of colonialism that still exists (Wagenheim & Jimenez de Wagenheim ix).

Furthermore, citizenship did not keep Puerto Ricans who came to the mainland from experiencing racism and other forms of marginalization. Their *ingles* was not USAmerican flavored, and all Puerto Ricans, whether white or black, were racialized—that is they were treated as colonized "Other."

Understanding the effects of history on the lives of students, sociolinguist Ana Celia Zentella includes an overview of the history of Puerto Rican migrations to the United States. In “The Language Situation of Puerto Ricans,” Zentella seeks to explain the distinctiveness of their experiences and the consequences on not only economic factors but also on literacy education and practices. Her historical overview links the changes of Puerto Rican economy after its conquest by the United States to that which the United States and Puerto Rican workers, especially during the 1945-1955 era following World War II, became involved in:

> [t]his push-pull, between hardship conditions that push Puerto Ricans out of either the United States or Puerto Rico on the one hand and the promise of better opportunities, which pull them toward the other shore, is shaped by the economic forces set in motion in Washington D.C., which create favorable or unfavorable working and living conditions in the metropolis and the colony. (140).

Zentella’s findings about Puerto Ricans help those of us interested in studying language codes across cultures. Her findings highlight the transcultural rhetorics among
Puerto Ricans. She says, “They soon feel attacked because they speak Puerto Rican Spanish, because they speak black English vernacular or Puerto Rican English, because they want to speak Spanish and English too, and because they speak both languages together” (Zentella 158). Teachers, whether in monolingual or bilingual classroom settings, unaware of the features of the particular Spanish and English spoken by Puerto Ricans unnecessarily stigmatize them (158). Hence we as teachers are obligated to “become aware of the factors that determine language choice . . . in the community and of the discourse strategies accomplished by code-switching” (Zentella 158).

Transcultural rhetorics require that we become aware of our language patterns. The study of the linguistic patterns and codes used by our students becomes essential in composition classrooms. Teaching transcultural rhetorics in ways that require self-reflection and critique contributes to extending our linguistic, cultural, and cognitive experiences or practices in our lives and in the endeavor to communicate with others—across cultures.

In the United States, the desire to integrate immigrants into the social and cultural landscape leads the impetus for a standardized, unifying language. This desire leads to problems concerning how to educate minority or poor students, for Zentella’s studies indicate that many students from blue-collar families do not speak or write in US American Standard English Dialect. Thus, even in a situation that does not involve military takeovers, issues of language dominance take place. The justifications posed by dominant groups do not, however, take into account the realities of those not in power. Moreover, if we allow a limited view of writing and speaking to be “professed” in our
schools, we are silencing people whose use of language differs from that used by the
groups or people in power.

The New Mestiza: Reclaiming Subject Positions

There are women historically and in today's society for whom writing, or the
concept of writing, politically or otherwise, still does not occur as easily as our needs
indicate it should. We who are hybridized "USAmericans" encounter conflicts with
acceptance of our "transcultural" ways of thinking, perception of the world, and our
writing. Many of us are not aware of writers whose backgrounds are similar to our own,
for such writers are unknown or untaught in our schools or in our homes.

The conflicts in these women's subject positions both within USAmerican culture
and their immigrant or ethnic cultures highlight rhetorics of indirection or rhetorics of
survival or, as is found among earlier writers, a rhetoric of submissive subversion. Jan
Swearingen using what she calls an "archeology of ideologies concerning educated and
rhetorical women" (Swearingen 4) calls such rhetorical gestures "tropes of self-
abnegation" and "ironic self deprecation" (Swearingen 5). Although some scholars such
as Swearingen and others look upon these as sincere expressions of the writers of past
eras, I see them as submissive gestures that women used for their purposes in the past.
These can work in today's world. Swearingen claims submissive strategies are born of
frustration of intellectual and creative minds finding ways of expression and engagement
with the worlds they lived in. While Swearingen's archeology of cultural ideology dips
into the past, I note that students from Latina backgrounds share in rhetorical self-
deprecation or self-abnegation.
The strategies of submissive subversion and indirection that Latinas use, though not always valued in our direct, to-the-point style of writing culture, can teach us much about those students who knowingly or unknowingly use these writing strategies. While sometimes these strategies are used because women must engage with cultural authorities, at other times the rhetorical gestures allow them to engage with their hybrid cultures by addressing two or more audiences. Mothers pass down cultural and linguistic “styles” to daughters before formal education insists on a different academic rhetorical style. Additionally, such women’s understanding of racial, as well as gendered issues in their lives make them reticent to “speak out;” therefore, their writings require closer readings. In addition to the cultural crossings many of us engage in, we also, as bell hooks points out, deal with patriarchal structures across two cultural systems. For example, because mothers are responsible for teaching cultural values and roles to their daughters, we frequently see a generational conflict. For women-of-color, whose mothers espouse patriarchal ideals, the problem magnifies as seen in the Taylor, Gilligan, Sullivan study. Olivia one of the participants in the Taylor, Gilligan, Sullivan study provides us with an example.

In Olivia’s interviews there is a clear tension between her mother’s cultural values and her own thinking. . . . With passion and a well-developed contempt for “falseness” in relationships, Olivia describes how her mother suffers because of her “niceness” and “goodness.” (83)

The context of the study demonstrates the values that the mother learned. She wishes to pass these along to her daughter. These values include being of service, smiling even when not desiring to do what people in authority ask the mother to do. However, the
study also demonstrates that Olivia’s Americanization creates conflicts for her. She sees her mother as a doormat whose “niceness,” “goodness,” or service-oriented actions are “false.” Therefore, Olivia does not speak of these concepts or qualities in the same terms and meaning as her mother. The problem for Olivia and other girls like her lies in the need to fulfill her own potential in an environment alien to her mother while being a compliant daughter (85). While the Taylor, Gilligan, Sullivan study focuses on mother-daughter relationships, we can see the need for girls in such families to develop different ways of speaking, thinking when they are at home and when they are away from home. This is where the multiplicity begins.

Although they may seem less willing to share their experiences, these women possess rhetorical strategies that serve their entry into public discussions. For example, the subjects of the study found in *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* articulate their hesitancy for engaging in public discourse.

Being Spanish, ... you’ve got to watch yourself, you’ve got to, because a lot of people misinterpret Spanish people. A lot of people are different, they have these ways of thinking about these people, they think they know about these Puerto Rican people and stuff like that, and Salvadoran people too, ... (Taylor, Gilligan, and Sullivan 83)

Please note the need for Puerto Rican girls to identify themselves as “Spanish.” All of my life, I have understood this to mean that in the eyes of many Puerto Ricans the term “Spanish” connotes a higher social status, one encumbered with less racial stigma. Within Puerto Rican culture, to be Spanish is to identify with the former ruling class on the Island. Hence, to be Spanish is to identify with a non-racialized group, one perceived as
"superior" and one with social standing. The young women in the study are as aware of their place in USAmerican society as were women of previous eras.

In our efforts to learn reasons for women’s reluctance to speak out politically in current composition classes, many who teach composition have studied the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tartule. We may find facile comparisons between the women depicted in Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind and Latinas in composition classrooms. However, other factors, such as race and culture, add to Latinas’ hesitation to write or speak out. For some teachers, it may seem as if Latinas’ writing demonstrate rhetorical gestures that correspond to the categories found in the Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule’s work. However, women-of-color have complex reasons for non-linear rhetorical approaches. Many Latinas feel that they do not fit in to the dominant cultural landscape. Experience of cultural colonization may also create resistance or hesitancy to write. The conflicts of living in two cultures and addressing two or more power systems complicate lives of women-of-color. Yet, the complication challenges us to find ways to write or speak out—break silence in ways that use our cultural identities.

Transcultural Rhetorics for Composition Classrooms

Those of us in Composition Studies frequently encounter the conflicts associated with hybridity. Seeking to address the issue of hybridity and composition, Patricia Bizzell presented her views at the College Composition and Communication Conference in 1997. I support many ideas in Bizzell’s paper, “Rhetoric and Social Change.” For
example, she suggests the use of historical case studies and the importance of rhetoric to change social issues. Her call for compositionists to use these approaches to teach writing lends itself to good pedagogy that crosses cultures. However, not addressing the concerns and political plight of minority groups while attempting to use their *mestiza* practices, smacks of appropriation of those about whom she speaks admiringly. Her call to teach a hybrid language would do to the dominant society what many would do to minority language speakers. It would impose one kind of language to replace Standard English. In other words, hybrid language would become the standard and those who do not develop the skills with hybridity could face the same predicaments language minority students currently face. Transcultural rhetorics ask why not teach more than one form of English, whether it is standard or transcultural?

In “Rhetoric and Social Change,” Bizzell has two purposes. One is to call attention to her perception that compositionists do not teach rhetoric and to explain how they might. The second purpose is to pursue the notion of teaching hybrid discourse or language. It is this portion of her paper with which I disagree for several reasons. Primarily, I fault a lack of discussion of the political plight of the minority women whose writing she uses as her frame of reference. Bizzell rightly notes the seeming ease with which hybrid USAmericans move from one language to another. This belief leads her to claim that one hybrid language be taught. As I mentioned previously, this approach negates the language diversity found in the contact zone. This diversity, formed from the diverse language communities, needs diverse expression. That is, diversity in language use more naturally mirrors the communities, experiences, and political status of citizens.
in the contact zone. I want to develop transcultural rhetorics so we can teach them in our composition classes. Transcultural rhetorics allow teachers to teach the skills needed to move from one discourse community to another. Furthermore, transcultural rhetorics allow the writer or student to develop the ability to decide what to do in particular contexts. More importantly, transcultural rhetorics allow speakers or writers to create new uses of language and rhetorical gestures within old contexts, as well as in new ones. It would underscore the importance of changing rhetorical gestures according to one's audience. Transcultural rhetorics allow us to create and use gestures that meet the needs of multiple audiences. It would do more than teaching one hybridized language would do. Most importantly, transcultural rhetorics would not antagonize those making public policy as much as teaching a hybrid language would because “Standard Language” would still be taught. Too many people still look at hybridity as mongrelization. Failure to address both the purpose and use of hybridity in order to claim that we should teach a hybrid language minimizes the complexities of hybridity and its function within the USAmerican landscape. More importantly, Bizzell's idea for teaching hybrid discourse ignores transcultural rhetorics, which give a writer or speaker more choices. The choices in part provide hybrid USAmericans with ways with which to subvert linguistic codes, sites, or contexts not useful in the process of reclaiming stories or histories and systems that oppress women' and minorities' cultures.

Women-of-color have a response to Bizzell. In their discussions of language, particularly writing, they demonstrate the importance of maintaining their identities and of crossing into other cultures and mediums of communication for expressing their
identities and experiences. Trinh T. Minh-ha and Gloria Anzaldúa point out "a multitude of dialects interweave to form a generally comprehensible linguistic continuum" (39).

Members of society must use language education that relates to their realities. Additionally, writing is important for those who must negotiate cultural and linguistic differences. Writing and differences in "englishes," as pointed out by Bhabha, are important elements in the construction of a means with which to engage others' points of view and methods of representing diverse experiences. Writing provides one method for accomplishing a transcultural experience. Trinh T. Min-ha states:

> Writing, in a way, is listening to the others' language and reading with the others' eyes. The more ears I'm able to hear with, the farther I see the plurality of meaning and the less I lend myself to the illusion of a single message. (Native Woman Other 30)

In Reclaiming Medusa: Short Stories by Contemporary Puerto Rican Women, Diana L. Velez in describing the artistic production of the anthology, explains the multiple approaches and languages of the anthology's contributors:

> Writing is a complex working out of wishes, and since daydreaming and artistic production both stem from the same source, all art may best be described as serious play. Thus, as the writer inscribes her desire through the symbolic order of language, she weaves narratives, which, in their imaginative relation to her life, undercut its suffocating reality. (ii).

Thus, Minh-ha and Anzaldúa, among other women-of-color, demand we use our hybridity to explore our "mestiza" imaginations. We should not develop a hybrid language as Bizzell suggests. However, when dealing with political issues in our lives, we should select from the dialects available to us. We should write in ways that confront and challenge issues that oppress us as the authors of Reclaiming Medusa and others have done.
When we demand a certain language, a certain dialect, and a certain rhetorical manner in using that dialect and language, we're working counter to the cultural multiplicity we seek.

Victor Villanueva, Jr.

Chapter 2

COUNTERING RHETORICS OF CRISIS WITH A PERSONAL TRANSCULTURAL NARRATIVE

When I was growing up, my parents dealt with many of the issues that arise from being a hybrid USAmerican without the benefits of the insights that I gain from my current studies. Concepts such as hybridity, language learning across cultures, and post-colonial and feminist theories inform much of my current scholarship. However, after studying various concepts and theories, my pride in my parents’ choices for me increases. Their use of their intuitive and experential knowledge led to choices of schools and the kinds of learning I would experience. I am an only child and thus my parents were able to spend much time with me. My parents knew that in the United States the way they educated me would differ from their education in Puerto Rico. The fact that they could only get factory or labor intensive work when they came to the United States led them to value education as a means for a better life for me. Therefore, they took pains to begin my literacy education at home and provide me with access to education unlike their own experiences. My first exposure to learning came from my parents, although each had different views about what was important to learn. Papi, for example, took it as his duty to teach me the alphabet in both ingles y español. Mami wanted to pass down lessons from her mother and family traditions and history through the stories she told. Therefore, my earliest education reflected their differing but important viewpoints.
I review my literacy narrative because it helps me to demonstrate several things. First, it helps me to connect my experiences with the theories I study. Second, my literacy narrative addresses the conflicts discussed in education policy debates. In many ways, each of my parents' views on education resembles the schisms created by rhetorics of crisis. Thus, I tell my literacy narrative to counter arguments of the rhetorics of crisis that abound in public policy debates. My literacy narrative also serves to highlight the difficulties of growing up with what Freire calls the “banking method of education.”

The arguments of rhetorics of crisis imply that past educational practices are better. The particular difficulties I experienced, specifically with writing, argue against these claims. Those of us interested in teaching must consider new curriculums and approaches to teaching. I would like us to consider the context of our students' lives as we guide them through their education. Teachers interested in acknowledging and teaching transcultural rhetorics could include activities that ask students to explore their literacy narratives. The literacy issues discussed in public debates could also become assignments. Students could also write personal reflective arguments that address both their literacy journeys and their analysis of current issues in education. Critical analysis of positions taken by public officials and educators provide valuable lessons for our students. Indeed, asking for their input would lead to interesting proposals to problems about which educators and public policy makers speak and write.

The use of innovative approaches can help our students engage with Western or Euro-American educational goals, while engaging with or integrating students' identifications or affiliations with their home cultures. The goal to engage with teaching
that allows for multiplicity also addresses complex and problematic issues within and outside academia. Bloom, in the *Closing of the American Mind*, continues to propose the "banker's model" critiqued by Freire and later by Berlin in his works, *Rhetoric and Reality* and *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*. Yet, Bloom's position still retains cultural capital; thus, it has not lost its appeal. Public policy debates constantly recycle Bloom's ideas concerning literacy.

Living in a world that changes, some of us would like to teach students reading and writing skills that embrace differences, otherwise known as "contraries" by Peter Elbow. (See *Embracing Contraries: Explorations in Learning and Teaching*). Many of us recognize that what we teach should have meaning and relevance to our students' personal, as well as academic lives. Therefore, we value and valorize a curriculum that includes language and literature that moves beyond the canon. We must not be coerced by a false sense of patriotism, which excludes the diversity that challenges the United States. Some of us, aware of differences among us, want to teach in ways that bridge difference and take into account different ways of learning, thinking and writing.

During the past twenty years, discussions revolving around issues of education have cyclical reappearance in our public discourse. These discussions influence the quality of education. More importantly, the self-esteem of poor and minority students because they emphasize one standard approach of teaching and learning that does not always fit the ways minority students learn or the ways their cultures write. Frequently, needed solutions are overlooked while inflammatory rhetoric that raises problems takes
up too much time and public space. In the following sections, I reflect on the ongoing public policy debates and follow with my literacy narrative.

Bloom, Will, and Bennett believe the learning that took place in their times to be superior to the quality of learning in today’s education environment. They appeal to a nostalgic past. As a result, Bloom’s arguments are good for setting up counter arguments. Richard E. Miller’s work, *As If Learning Matters*, points to the weakness in Bloom, Will, and Bennett’s arguments and stresses the importance of what Geertz calls local knowledge. Miller emphasizes that education works best when it addresses local needs. For that reason, he suggests we overlook rhetorics of crisis, for they do not address local issues (17). I do not wish to limit myself to disagreeing with Bloom et al. I consider the consequences to students in order that I may meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student population. Are we aware of the divergent views within differing ethnic groups who seek to join the dominant culture without losing important aspects of their ethnic identities? Or as Edward W. Said points out, in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, do we tell our students and our general constituency that we defend the classics, the virtues of liberal education, and the precious pleasures of literature even as we also show ourselves to be silent about the historical and social world in which these things take place? (3)

Cultural elision has an ongoing history. In a story, “The Boy without a Flag,” by Abraham J. Rodriguez, many boys are excluded from the fight. Indeed, many have lost the flags that represent their cultures and feelings for their *mestizo* cultures. A resurgence of the rhetoric that devalues public education affects women and minorities. Such rhetorics make women and minorities groups feel they are part of the problem because
they have different needs. This occurs just as women and minority groups succeed at entering higher education. I am frequently uncomfortable in discussing and challenging others because I learned early from the two cultures, Puerto Rican and USAmerican, the lesson that women do not question authority or speak out against it. However, I must practice transcultural rhetorics. To do this, I must consider the arguments made by Susan Jarratt in “Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict.” I must overcome what Susan Jarratt calls, “a strong resistance to conflict” (106). Therefore, I set out to present an overview of rhetoric of crisis arguments and responses from Richard E. Miller, John Trimbur, and James Berlin and others. I have elected to use these scholars’ works along with Said’s postcolonial arguments. They recognize the need for changes in English Studies, including Composition, to become more inclusive and to address students’ needs. John Schilb’s “Cultural Studies, Postmodernism, and Composition” addresses the possible contributions of Composition:

Because the field currently comprises diverse topics an methods and has ties to numerous disciplines, it can analyze broad social questions better than literary studies can. . . . Furthermore, because composition deals with a range of texts besides traditional belles lettres, it can better resist the temptation . . . of equating culture once again with Matthew Arnold’s version of it. (176)

If writing teachers can look at their teaching as something more than teaching grammar, punctuation, or style, they can help their students explore the “broad social” questions affecting their students’ lives. Moving beyond “traditional belles lettres” addresses the problems in Bloom’s arguments. Schilb’s ideas reflect much of the non-postcolonial scholars whom I include in this chapter. Following the arguments concerning literacy
crisis, this chapter moves to the more personal literacy narrative, which, as I mentioned earlier, refutes many of the claims made by those involved in public policy issues.

Colonization in USAmerican Education

Since the 1970s there have been many cyclical debates about literacy, the literary canon, and other aspects of education. As the numbers of students from non-white and working classes increase, the rhetoric of education’s decline increases. Richard E. Miller questions the value of the rhetorics of crisis. He indicates that their value is limited beyond stirring academics’ beliefs and producing books. Of Allan Bloom, E. D. Hirsch, and William Bennett, Miller states:

> There can be no question that these men and their ideas have garnered a great deal of attention in the media and in the academy. Indeed, it is easy enough to believe that these reformers embody the zeitgeist of the Reagan-Bush era, for it was during this time that Bloom and Hirsch both produced best selling books about the crisis in the academy’s values and that Bennett came to power as Reagan’s polemical secretary of education. And to this day the work of these three men continues to symbolize the conservative threat (or promise) to put an end to academic freedom, affirmative action, critical education. (11-12)

But of what value are these men’s words? The changes in society are in place and cannot be undone. Similarly, the changes in speech, writing, or traditions created by language and cultural hybridity cannot be undone. Once the changes become part of the fabric of the culture, it is difficult to unravel the various elements to reconstruct the language or culture in its previous form. Therefore, rather than treating change as an evil within society, we all should learn to negotiate the changes. For this to occur, we need to ignore arguments against change.
Trimbur rightly points to the power of the phrase “literacy crisis” to excite people into frequently thoughtless actions that ignore varying cultural contexts, backgrounds, and needs. Many politicians use the phrase to plant fears in voters’ minds. John Trimbur further evaluates and responds to accusations of literacy crisis. In “Literacy and the Discourse of Crisis,” Trimbur states:

The resonance of the two terms—‘literacy’ and ‘crisis’ have taken on a certain formulaic, self-explanatory quality. Just to utter the phrase is to perform the act, putting literacy in crisis by releasing diffuse but widely shared anxieties about deteriorating educational standards, drops in test scores, the permissiveness of the 1960s, black English, the effects of television and video games, John Dewey and progressive education, and the failure to compete economically with the Japanese. The rhetorical power of the phrase ‘literacy crisis’ resides in its ability to condense a broad range of cultural, social, political, and economic tensions into one central image. (277)

Fear and elitism underlie this rhetorical approach and discourage reasoned approaches to many students’ educational needs. Those philosophies articulated by Allan Bloom nostalgically beckon to a time already past. Richard E. Miller summarizes these as follows:

As of this writing, all we do know is that Bloom called for a return to the Great Books, Hirsch for the abolition of cafeteria-style curricula, and Bennett, most famously, for the elimination of the Department of Education he once headed—and that, so far, not one of these reforms has come to pass. (12)

The proposals Bloom suggests run counter to the needs of many school districts. Over years scholars from across the curriculum work at local levels to meet the needs of their students. Scholars like Bizzell, Berlin, Schilb, Harkin, and Jarratt argue for teaching that responds to traditional curricula with new approaches and with non-traditional texts. Still Bloom’s influence looms over the political and educational spectrum.
The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed

Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students reveals generational and cultural differences. He bases his argument, that current education corrupts our young, on his nostalgia for a world that existed primarily for white males. This nostalgia clouds his vision and undermines his argument. Others have taken up Bloom’s position and the rhetoric of the canonical debates, once limited to literature, is now impeding other important areas of English Studies.

Bloom, Bennett, and Will see current education as indoctrination against the history they most admire without acknowledging their own educational indoctrination. When Bloom says “[Education] wants to produce a kind of human being” (26), he fails to see that his education produced a “kind of human being” with his particular beliefs and knowledge. Bloom’s failure to reflect on the reasons for change and the needs of the new generation undermines his arguments. He presents greater possibilities for all changes as precluding working for the common good. His arguments against public education are a response to open enrollment policies begun in the 1970s. He blames openness and liberal education for eroding civic education, and he concentrates on unity or homogeneous society that his remembered curriculum inculcates (29). These claims reveal an inability to address changes in society.

Yet others, teachers and scholars from across the curriculum point out, along with Richard E. Miller, that changes must be situated within local schools. Changes should not be the result of rhetoric that desecrates the work and the needs of people at local levels. The Nation (February 17, 1997) featured arguments and propositions for solving
the underlying problems of education. Many of these problems are based on economic and other social issues not addressed by the abstract arguments over the canon or the language to be used for teaching in our public schools.

One of the changes ignored by Bloom’s rhetoric concerns the changes in the composition of student populations. Therefore, post-colonial theory provides a lens through which we can contest Bloom-like political arguments. The experiences of the colonized reveal acculturation at work, deepening the rift between Bloom’s reality, which sees assimilation as the only response to the diversity, and the multicultural/transcultural realities of acculturation in the United States. These experiences point to the need for transcultural rhetorics and cast a light on the denial of current status of the population within the USAmerican landscape. Post-colonial theory, then, moves us closer to transcultural rhetorics.

**Educational Perspectives through a Post-Colonial Lens**

Because of their attention to the needs of our diverse student population, I include Berlin, Miller, and Trimbur with Edward Said. All recognize difference in learning styles and the importance of looking beyond a canon or a methodology that ignores students’ needs.

In his ground breaking work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said defines *Orientalism* as “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience” (Said 1). The Orient does not merely reside adjacent to Europe; it is a site of cultural contestation that parallels debates about what should be
included in or excluded from USAmerican education (1). The Orient, colonized by Western countries, is a place where cultures meet, grapple with one another—frequently in terms of unequal power. Debates within the United States regarding education illustrate aspects of power wielded by ruling classes, policy makers and all those making decisions for those considered "Other.” As in the relationship between Europe and the "Orient," self-definition takes place by juxtaposing non-Western and Western. Said points out that the Orient is an “integral part of European material civilization and culture” because of the shared history and cultural exchanges created before, during, and after colonization of Middle Eastern and Eastern countries (2).

I draw from post-colonial theorists because they discuss issues of difference, power, and hybridity that, in fact, constitute the elements of public debate in the United States. In very real ways, those of us who are “different” can be viewed as the “Other” depicted in Orientalism. We come from oral traditions and families whose learning styles differ from USAmerican approaches. Those of us who are bicultural or multicultural approach social, as well as educational, situations differently. We frequently have the highest levels of failure in USAmerican schools, further separating us from traditional students. Our differences are not valued. The need for United States public policy to “melt us into the pot” constitutes an ideal oneness that lead to an internal colonization process.

Colonialism limits cultural expression by virtue of the imposition of “new” languages and ways of viewing the world. A parallel occurs in USAmerican education for those of us whose cultures and home languages differ from Standard USAmerican
English. The aforementioned debates testify to this. People with political agendas use their status to indicate what should be taught, and, whether or not these ideals are acted upon, there is a degradation of the perception of what education should consist. Berlin brings the discussion of power and authority to the subject of rhetoric and writing in *Rhetoric and Reality* (20-31). Berlin's discussion, like those of Miller and Graff, begins with the history of English Studies in the United States. Within this historical overview, he points out that many elements of elitism found in the Great Works debates are evident in the relationship between perceptions of the study of literature and the study of rhetoric. Berlin highlights issues of power. In his discussions of the arguments within academia's English Departments, he addresses the problem of exclusion—exclusion of competing codes. In addition, he points out that focusing on teaching "how to read" literature ignores the production of texts—writing. For too long, teaching the aesthetics of the written word while overlooking rhetoric and its association to political discourse created an attitude that ignores the political in both literature and writing that is not conceived as literary. Said's work addresses issues of power and aesthetics. "[T]he realities of power and authority are realities that make texts [that we are to study] possible (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 7)." Said's point is that critics (or educators) should pay attention to the realities of power and authority in texts and between cultural enterprises. Said's definition of culture allows for studying various aspects of ideology and power struggles that cultures display.

I shall use the word culture to suggest an environment, process, and hegemony in which individuals (in their private circumstances) and their works are embedded, as well as overseen at the top by a superstructure and at the base by a whole series of methodological attitudes. It is in culture
that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases belonging to or in a place, being at home in a place. (9)

For those of us whose backgrounds are mestiza or non-Western there is a struggle to fit into the patterns of culture and agency that members of the dominant cultural group claim as their own. For some of us who are required to assimilate, it means understanding Said’s reference to Foucault concerning culture. In *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Said says:

> We have learned to see culture as an institutionalized process by which what is considered appropriate to it is kept appropriate, we have also seen Foucault demonstrating how certain alterities, certain Others, have been kept silent, outside or . . . domesticated for use inside the culture.

> Even if we wish to contest Foucault’s findings about the exclusions by classical European culture of what it constituted as insane or irrational, . . . we cannot fail to be convinced that the dialectic of self-fortification and self-confirmation by which culture achieves its hegemony over society and the State is based on a constantly practiced differentiation of itself from what it believes to be not itself. And this differentiation is frequently performed by setting the valorized culture over the Other. (12)

Said’s criticism directly addresses Bloom’s arguments for a Classical education. He criticizes the academy for turning its back on the historical contexts of literature or other texts. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said tells us that the world has changed from the time colonialism was at its height. These changes “have alarmed, metropolitan Europeans and Americans, who now confront large non-white immigrant populations in their midst, and face an impressive roster of newly empowered voices to be heard” (xx).

As I argued previously, we must have approaches to teaching that include not only literatures by people-of-color; we must aid our students to become empowered. We must do so directly, without devaluing or otherwise hiding the narratives that lead to de-
colonization. Within the USAmerican context, this means using transcultural rhetorics that reflect the realities of minority and immigrant students. Said buttresses my claims when he reminds us that distinct differences exist between the realities of the students entering our schools and the standards set by our schools. He says, “A precious jargon has grown up, and its formidable complexities obscure the social realities, that strange though it may seem, encourage a scholarship of ‘modes of excellence’ very far from daily life in the age of declining American power” (5). Said’s cultural views of culture are necessary corrections of Bloom’s because Said brings forth the significance of political and cultural connections to ideals of the kind of education that should take place in USAmerican schools.

I understand the reasoning used by Bloom et al as it concerns a standard that unifies the citizenry. However, overlooking all the languages, arts, and traditions that contribute to USAmerican culture creates a standard that is incomplete. Additionally, the ideology of USAmerican superiority over Others, which Said has critiqued in his major works, and, which Bloom, Bennett and others ignore, is equally important to the fabric of USAmerican society and its institutions. In other words, when the ideology reflects the beliefs, languages, and values of the dominant culture, it is perceived as natural and true. Those in positions to make public policy ignore or devalue the immigrant, hybrid, or minority “Other.” In Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies, Berlin adds:

A literary studies based on the poetic--rhetoric bifurcation found in English studies serves the interests of a privileged managerial class, while discriminating against those outside this class. Furthermore, it does so through cruelly clandestine devices, refusing the political in the service of
an aesthetic experience that implicitly reinforces discriminatory social divisions. (14)

Within the same work, Berlin clearly states that English studies in particular serve “as a powerful conservative force, all the while insisting on its transcendence of the political” (15). He makes this claim because of still persistent notions of what he terms “invidious division” of aesthetic from the political, “of the literary from the non-literary” (15). This serves to perpetuate standing or power to those who already possess it while keeping people out of power “disempowered” for not having access to “the sacred literary text” (15). Berlin’s argument, along with Said’s arguments, and arguments by Miller, Trimbur, Bizzell, Jarratt, Villanueva, and Schilb, underscore the political nature of education, particularly that of the study of English within the United States. Quoting Wallerstein’s work, Berlin reminds us that “university professors occupy a strategic place in the distribution of cultural capital” (15). As teachers, we become providers of skills and information that many students and their parents desire as symbols of upward mobility. Education represents improvement to many. People, rarely satisfied with what they have, want a better situation and education for their children. Hence,

[c]ultural capital thus becomes a commodity that can be passed on to children in the forms of dispositions and practices learned at home (for example, the aestheticizing of experienced discovered by Bourdieu) and the certifications acquired through advanced education. (Berlin 15)

Unfortunately, if we follow Bloom’s formula for education, much of the burden would fall on English teachers. Berlin states in his work *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies*, “English teachers are the bankers, the keepers and dispensers, of certain portions of this cultural capital” (15). All too often English
departments occupy the position of conveyers of "cultural traditions" to their students. The position or value to society that English teachers occupy depends upon how well they reproduce this cultural capital (15).

Trimbur turns the discussion specifically to USAmerican concerns. He points out the rhetoric of crisis surrounding arguments about literary canon, literacy, and other issues on education serves "as strategic sites for what Gramsci calls the 'reorganization of cultural hegemony'" (280). Trimbur explains that cultural hegemony consists of two interrelated processes. One is "the consolidation of political authority by the state through consent . . . and the establishment of leadership of one particular group in relation to other classes and political groups" (280). The representations articulated by dominant culture also foster what Stuart Hall calls "forms of consciousness which accept a position of subordination" (qtd in Trimbur 280). When literacy issues arise in a site where cultural hegemony is negotiated, we cannot dismiss the rhetoric of crisis. "To see literacy crises as negotiations of cultural hegemony means, for one thing, that we cannot dismiss them, as leftists sometimes do, simply as hoaxes, manufactured events, plots by the ruling class and its house intellectuals" (281). Trimbur reminds us that talk of literacy crises, whether or not falsely portrayed, represents attempts to resolve in imaginary ways actual tensions, anxieties, and contradictions. The tensions and anxieties do not only reside with minority students. Teachers must contend with bureaucracies, their students' needs, and other issues, such as adequate materials with which to teach. To think of literacy crises as ideological events is to think rhetorically. We must see literacy crises as a conjunction of ideas, as strategic pretexts for educational and cultural change that
renegotiate the terms of cultural hegemony, the relations between classes and groups, and
the meaning and use of literacy (Trimbur 281).

Trimbur’s position refocuses the debate onto a stronger understanding of the
causes of literacy crises in the United States. Trimbur says, “The historiography of
literacy crises in American history remains in a rudimentary and impressionistic phase”
(281). He points out that those who study literacy crises cannot agree on the causes, the
number of crises that have occurred, or on ways of defining literacy. In other eras,
simply knowing how to read made one literate, while in other eras reading “high” or
canonical literature made one literate. Berlin points out that prior generations were
“prepared in the production of political texts that would enable them to take their rightful
place as leaders in their communities” (3). While currently students are “rigorously
exercised in the aesthetic and putatively disinterested interpretation of literary texts said
to be above the conflicts of politics” (3). The idea of what it means to be literate has
undergone changes. Without consensus, these discussions contribute to ongoing conflicts
about the quality and content in our educational system.

More of us entering the field of English Studies understand that a simply aesthetic
approach to any writing denies the ways that culture imposes its view of what is good or
what is beautiful literature. Berlin’s discussions remind us that rhetorical analysis or
deconstruction of texts and culture help us to understand what we read and what we
produce in terms of the social construction of reader and writer. This requires thoughtful
reflection on both the contexts of readers’ lives and on the culture of the writer and the
text. Berlin’s point to be self-reflective is well made because self-reflection could lead to
solutions to problems within English departments. Input from students, teachers, administrators, and other literacy workers could address the difficulties in teaching writing. Within English departments views of what and how to teach reflect the conflicts in public debates. While indicating the need to consider culture and politics, Berlin does not clearly delineate a methodology. However, not providing “a” definitive, standard methodology allows for local solutions for local needs.

All of this discussion brings me back to issues raised in public policy debates. The politics of education exclude much of the progressive discussions on teaching writing to students whose class, gender, or ethnicity do not mirror those with political or cultural capital. The insistence on standardization of teaching content and teaching methods ignores much of what Said, Berlin, Rose, and others propose. The quest for truth(s) if it ever concerned some politicians, lies by the wayside. For instead of depending upon a rhetoric that helps us to arrive at solutions, politicians and educators seem entrenched in an ongoing contest that leads nowhere.

In the meantime, the consequences are heavy for those most affected by rhetoric of crisis. I have met many Latinos who were discouraged from keeping their home languages. School districts actively campaigned to have all students learn English-Only. The stated premise of such a stance falls back on a myth of English-Only proponents—learning more than one language undermines students’ academic progress. Of course, there are political agendas that underlie anti-bilingual education stances.

Bloom, Will, Bennett, and others link the phrase “English-Only” to the rhetoric of crisis in literacy to mobilize forces that support their “patriotic” agendas. Furthermore,
casual observation demonstrates that the volume of the public debate increases as the numbers of immigrants increase. The United States’ rhetoric according to Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, indicates to some of the recent responses by many in the United States:

> An alarming defensiveness has crept into America’s official image of itself, especially in its representations of the national past. Every society and official tradition defends itself against interferences with its sanctioned narratives; over time these acquire an almost theological status, with founding heroes, cherished ideas and values. (314)

Not only does the call for English-Only affect thinking about languages used in our classrooms, it silences the multiple narratives that in fact have contributed to the United States. The increases in immigration cause defensiveness, as we emphasize US American myths, such as the melting pot and the pull yourself up by the bootstraps stories. According to Said the explosion of “specialized and separatist knowledge” (320) is another cause for the call to one unifying language and curriculum. The specialization to which Said refers, counters Western views of culture and history. Economic changes worldwide create “the continuity of the ideological need to consolidate and justify domination in cultural terms” (284). Like many countries, the United States has constructed or invented a history that aggrandizes its status.

> Paradoxically, the United States, as an immigrant society composed of many cultures, has a public discourse more policed, more anxious to depict the country as free from taint, more unified around one iron-clad major narrative of innocent triumph. This effort to keep things simple and good disaffiliates the country from its relationship with other societies and peoples, thereby reinforcing its remoteness and insularity. (Said 315)

Changes in economics lead to the United States’ desire for cultural domination. I see that the educational system receives pressure from business to provide future workers for
the USAmerican economic enterprise. Those who differ or do not fit a standard find difficulty in bringing their cultural differences to the culture. Whether or not this economic factor underlies cultural imperialism, the results in our educational system must be questioned. The United States’ traditionally xenophobic worldview conflicts with its positions with other countries. While passing legislation to facilitate commerce with several nations, the United States English-Only and anti-bilingual education postures, limits access of many immigrants’ children in schools.

**Conflicted Identities, Rhetorics of Crisis, and Borinquenos’ Experiences**

Within the USAmerican landscape, people must defy the rhetorics of crisis to teach immigrant, minority, or working class students. There has been an increase in the number of students whose roots lie in South America or other Spanish speaking countries. These students increasingly seek to maintain connections to their cultural roots while acculturating to USAmerica. Bonnie Urciuoli in *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class* discusses the political nature of discussions of language in the contexts of immigrants. Puerto Ricans use English, Spanish, and Spanglish. She chronicles Puerto Ricans’ work to gain access to the dominant culture. The conflicts experienced by those in Urciuoli’s study are not dissimilar from those experienced by other people-of-color. Reflection on my literacy journey demonstrates the value of studying, evaluating, and validating my experiences. I also validate all those cultural parts that contribute to my mestizaje. This allows me to see the consequences of not assimilating to USAmerica.
There are positive aspects of *mestizaje* experienced by Puerto Ricans that are ignored by English-Only proponents. Aurora Levins Morales’ poem, “Child of the Americas,” reveals some of them:

I am a child of the Americas,
a light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean,
a child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads.
I am a U.S. Puerto Rican Jew,
a product of the ghettos of New York I have never known.
An immigrant and the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants.
I speak English with Passion: it's the tongue of my consciousness,
a flashing blade of crystal, my tool, my craft.
I am Caribena, island grown. Spanish is in my flesh,
ripples from my tongue, lodges in my hips:
the language of garlic and mangoes,
the singing in my poetry, the flying gestures of my hands.
I am of Latinoamerica, rooted in the history of my continent:
I speak from that body.

I am not African. Africa is in me, but I cannot return.
I am not Taina. Taino is in me, but there is no way back.
I am not European, Europe lives in me, but I have no home there.
I am new. History made me. My first language was Spanglish.
I was born at the crossroads
and I am whole. (qtd in Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle 396-7)

Unfortunately, many people, educators and politicians included, forget or deliberately overlook the historical convergence of cultures and languages that have created many of the students they teach. Yet greater focus on the different histories and cultures within the United States would provide greater insights and solutions for problems in education and would provide genuine responses to the myths of the United States.
From Boarding Schools to Transcultural Awareness

During a presentation at the 1995 College, Composition and Communication Conference, I indicated that the cultural conflicts concerning my roles as daughter, mother, and teacher paralleled culture conflicts portrayed in Pratt's "contact zone." Of course, instead of an exterior conflict between politics, languages and cultures, as in borderland situations, my experiences are internal, although issues of culture and gender lie at the source of the conflicts. Some of the conflict began before I was born, for my parents, immigrants to the United States from Puerto Rico, had opposing views as to how they would rear me here in the United States.

When I was five years old, I went to the first of two boarding schools, St. Vincent De Paul, a boarding school in Tarrytown, New York. The school and the town (which looked to me like a replica of a colonial Dutch village) were located outside of New York City in Westchester County along the Hudson River. Although I was not born on the farms that my parents knew on their island of enchantment, the locations of the schools outside the city gave me a love for the country I might otherwise not have acquired. The schools situated as they were along the Hudson provided me with places for hiding, dreaming, and solitude that suited a part of me. I learned English at St. Vincent's, but because the nuns spoke to the students in French, I also learned French. During weekends at home with my parents, I would confound them by speaking three languages not two. Later, when I attended Sacred Heart Villa in Dobbs Ferry, New York, I heard Italian spoken by the nuns, whose founder Frances Cabrini came from Italy.
I began my introduction to culture crossing both at home and at the schools I attended. It seems my parents found a way to acculturate me to the United States, Puerto Rican and other immigrant cultures through their attempts to teach me to read, the schools they selected, and the social gatherings at home. Without any advanced planning, they effectively introduced me to four languages.

At the second boarding school I attended, I gained additional positive experiences that encouraged my development as a young scholar. Much was due to my first memorable teacher, Mother Theckla, whom I met when I was eight years old when Mathilda, a worker, who cleaned and lived at the school, brought me to Mother Theckla, my fourth grade teacher. Mother Theckla profoundly affected me during my elementary school years.

"The Villa" was the second boarding school I attended, but I still felt pangs of anxiety over the separation from my family. However, Mother Theckla engaged me in conversation, and soon she had me laughing. She was the first teacher to make me laugh, so I told her, "You're so funny you should be a comedian. You know, like Bob Hope." Mathilda, aghast at my impertinence, made a move to take me away; however, Mother Theckla intervened and personally showed me around the school. I came to know this person well over the next five years. Her kindness, good humor, dedication to teaching, and willingness to address my needs and those of her other students comforted me and have remained characteristics I appreciate in my teachers. Since that time, I have met many teachers; but Mother Theckla stands out because of her kindness, discipline, and encouragement. She impressed upon me that for her teaching was a calling.
Under Mother Theckla's tutelage, I earned awards for my work in history, geography, religion, and spelling. However, as I piece together my literacy narrative, I find that I underwent a firm education modeled on the "banking method" Freire discusses in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Much of the learning involved memorization and repetitious and non-creative writing. Writing to inform the teacher that we knew the content of the lessons formed the greatest part of those repetitious assignments. I honestly do not recall learning to write compositions, poems, stories, or anything other than answers to questions contained in the textbooks used for various subjects. As a matter of fact, I have painful associations with the writing process. Writing was taught as penmanship, at which I did not excel. Another reason for associating pain with writing comes from the fact that the greatest amount of writing that I or any other student at the Villa did involved copying Church laws and the Ten Commandments from the *Baltimore Catechism*.

Study hall hours began one hour after dinner. During that time, we worked on math, spelling, geography, history, and so forth. However, religion was the most tedious subject because we had to copy entire chapters at least three times. It was indoctrination by repetition. Another favorite use of writing was to make us write over and over again, "I shall not . . . ." These "I shall not" phrases were given if we spoke out of turn, if we were rude to other girls, or if we did not do our homework. In one instance, the older girls developed a marriage game wherein some girls played the roles of men, one the dad, a son, a daughter etc. Although in this instance I was innocent because I had not participated in the game, I participated in the punishment. This involved writing the
chapter on the sacrament of marriage fifty times (at least it felt like fifty). Naturally, this took many, many days to accomplish. For me it was pure torture because I had not done anything wrong, my penmanship was clumsy, and I preferred reading. That punishment did nothing to endear writing to me. However, the punishment and subsequent writing practices helped me to learn English and religion in ways that differed from mi Mami's lessons. Her lessons were informed by oral teachings of both the church and her mother. Upon reflection on this part of my literacy journey, I understand that I absorbed the differences and understood the contexts of the lessons taught at school and by mi Mami.

At the Villa, we also copied historical information and spelling words and their meanings; thus, the writing I did was tedious and repetitive. Such writing is an anathema to what I have in recent years learned to enjoy. It represents the "banking method" of teaching which my personality, perseverance, and engagement with good teachers and other people in my life's journey countered. Fortunately, I liked to learn, and I liked to read. Therefore, I do not remember my early education as tedious. Furthermore, the encouragement from my parents to do well instilled in me a strong desire to succeed at school. I had not yet awakened to the politics of education that devalues multiplicity. Later, as a re-entry college student, I discovered that my education was incomplete in two ways. First, I had not been taught the "canon" of Western Literature, and, second, I had not read from World Literatures.

The next phase of my education led me to materials that helped to ease my desires. I looked for writers whose experiences mirrored my own. During my early years as a freeway flyer in California, I discovered a poem that demonstrates the effects
of rhetorics of crisis on Latinas. The responses to the rhetorics of crisis differ as Teresa and Inés demonstrate.

"Para Teresa," a poem that I discovered as a teacher, highlights the reasons why many of us from mixed heritages seek education as a means of subversion. They use their skills to demonstrate to dominant society that minority students are not only as competent as non-minority students, but that they are in fact better. Furthermore, the poem contrasts Inés' pride with Teresa's. Inés goes to school and conforms to the expectations her family has for her. Teresa does everything possible to go against school and family rules and expectations. Written by Inés Hernandez, a Chicana writer whose cultural experience are similar to mine, the poem affects me viscerally. Its message strikes chords I still relate to deeply.

The poem is an open letter to a school companion who defied authority, while Inés complied with it. Yet, as the poem reveals the goals of the two were the same—to show that Latinas, in Inés' case, Chicanas were as good or better than the Anglos who judged them. Teresa resented the "good student" actions of Inés. She judged them to be the actions of someone who "kissed up to" the teachers and the system. Inés' point was to use education for betterment for her own sake, for the sake of her family, and for the sake of her people.

Although I did not experience the rebellion that Inés and Teresa did, I, too, learned from my father and mother to value education. Like their parents, my parents thought that learning would improve my life. Their judgment on education was not based on an overtly political stance. My father wanted me to have all the benefits of those
USAmericans who were fluent in English. While my mother also wanted me to succeed, she worked very hard to teach me traditions that would acculturate me to Puerto Rican culture. Eventually, the double-dipping into both USAmerican and Puerto Rican cultures allowed me to acculturate, which to me means that I can live in either culture.

"Para Teresa" illustrates two positions from within the Chicano and Mexican-American groups. While each group wants education for its children, people within each group have different opinions of the best ways to obtain it. There are those who want immigrants and their children to leave their languages and cultures behind. Others realize the difficulty of dropping a home culture and advocate the process of acculturation, which allows people to maintain home culture while adapting to the new culture and language. In my case, the rift between my parents' ideas of assimilation and the acculturation I would actually experience mirrors the rift between Inés, the author of the poem, and Teresa, the rebellious Pachuca girl to whom Inés addresses the poem. In "Para Teresa" we hear Inés speak:

I was to be like you
I was to play your game of deadly defiance
Arrogance, refusal to submit.
The game in which the winner takes nothing
Asks for nothing
Never lets his weaknesses show.
But I didn’t understand
My fear salted with confusion
Charged me to explain to you
I did nothing for the teachers
I studied for my parents and for grandparents
Who cut out honor roll lists
Whenever their nietos names appeared
For my shy mother who mastered her terror
to demand her place in mother’s clubs
For my carpenter-father who helped me patiently with my math
For my abuelos que me regalaron lapices en la Navidad
And for myself.  
Porque reconoci en aquel entonces
una verdad tremenda
que me hizo a mi un rebelde
Aúnque tu no te habías dado cuenta
We were not inferior
You and I, y las demás de tus amigas
Y los demás de nuestra gente
I knew it the way I knew I was alive
We were good, honorable, brave,
Genuine, loyal, strong
And smart.
Mine was a game of deadly defiance, also.
My contest was to prove
beyond any doubt
that we were not only equal but superior to them.
That was why I studied.  
If I could do it, we all could.  (qtd in Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle 555-6)

Although my parents did not have the political inclinations reflected in Hernández' poem, the truth contained within it was apparent to them. In order to succeed in the United States, I would have to have an USAmerican education to help me in USAmerican society.

Despite the fact that I, along with many other Latina/os, gained an education here in the United States, our experiences are as varied as the colors and sizes we come in.

Unfortunately, too many lived through negative educational experiences. All too many Spanish-speaking people have had to give up Spanish as the price of their education within the United States. Why does this happen? In many instances, it is the mythology of the melting pot that leads to demands for education that simulates homogeneity. Fear among non-minority people with the rising tide of immigrants from Spanish speaking countries. Those in power fear the loss of their cultural and social preeminence. In areas
of the United States, where the Spanish-speaking populations are large, such as California and Texas, we see struggles over culture and language. In these areas, there are many Inéss, Teresas, and Louises. The Teresas among us are the rebels. They want to exhibit cultural pride by rebelling against dominant USAmerican cultural and political institutions. These Teresas refuse to assimilate or acculturate.

Yet, refusal to acculturate increases the calls for public policy that affects education in ways meant to foster assimilation. Education is an important means for gaining access to the cultural knowledge necessary for perpetuation of social goals and cultural and political ideology. Still there are newer voices eager to have input in the materials and methods used for teaching. Consequently, divergent, sometimes contentious, views concerning the materials and language to be used for instruction create conflict among politicians and educators. The contentious arguments that arise from public policy debates on education lead people to believe a particular set of standards in curriculum and teaching practices should be established. When the standards set are perceived to be exclusionary, the public policy debate becomes more like a schoolyard fight. Such fights concern territory and supremacy. The difference, in my mind, is that the rhetoric used in the public debates has powerful consequences on important issues of cultural identity. If we study our school systems around the country, we find a replication of cultural imperialism taking place in the form of debates on public policy.

The Louises, Teresas, and Inéss among us experience the consequences of public policy on education. As I indicated earlier, my early education did not include the history or literatures of Latinas, although during my early education I was introduced to the
contributions of Irish, Italian, Jewish, and other European people to the United States culture. There was a celebratory tone to the histories told. I remember learning about the cultures of these immigrant groups too. I remember songs, dances, and stories. Yet, I never learned about Latin American contributions. I now see how the omission had a subtle affect on my psyche. All too often, those of us most affected by the omissions of what we learn become invisible—silenced.

From the 1970s through the present, increased numbers of immigrants from Mexico and other South American countries entered the United States. This fact, added to the changes in the United States’ economic stability, led to an environment hostile to Spanish-speaking immigrants. We see this particularly in California where only recently it has begun to reverse the consequences of the recession. Overlooked, except as scapegoats or objects of blame to perceived problems, they are rendered silent. It has become fashionable in recent months to attack the underemployed, the undereducated, and others who do not have a middle-class background for any problems they may have. Likewise, the poor, the brown, black, and others hear a recitation of the rags-to-riches, pull yourself up by your bootstraps stories. These are supposed to be true for all. Once again, a colonizing mentality emerges. Thus, the victimization of people who have not achieved the mythological USAmerican dream continues.

I use the word “victimization,” fully aware that people opposed to many social justice issues have turned the word into an indictment of people who bring up injustices for discussion and action. Turning the meaning of victimization around helps the “haves” further silence the “have-nots.” While there are instances where the change in meaning
can be useful, it also functions as a method for accusing people without political or economic power for not doing enough on their own behalf. People view the “victims” as irresponsible about their lives and as not doing enough to make the “USAmerican Dream” come true for them. These newcomers become scapegoats for many social ills—including those involving education.

Rhetoric of the importance of education increases in the United States because of the belief that education is the primary source for improving people’s lives. This belief does not solve problems, for schools do not provide solutions in other realms of people’s lives. Those who have “pulled themselves up by their bootstraps” silence those who are unable or unprepared to make use of the educational system. This silencing reflects what occurs elsewhere in our society.

Education changes lives, but it does not always cure the problems our society experiences or the problems of students with the greatest needs. As a teacher and as a learner, I need to understand how to use my own approaches to writing, those of “other” students and teachers, and those developed by theorists and practitioners of composition instruction. I desire to teach transcultural rhetorics in ways that engage rather than alienate a large number of our students. The gaps within theoretical arguments leave room for rhetorics useful to the multiplicity within society. For this reason, I argue for transcultural rhetorics and hybridity.
Chapter 3

Bilingual Education and Transcultural Rhetorics:

Toward Blending Public and Private Language

We teach transcultural rhetorics when we teach students to research their personal and national histories and the connections of these histories to the United States, as I did in the first chapter. We also teach transcultural rhetorics when we write and share our personal literacy narratives, as I discussed in the second chapter. An additional approach is to critique these shared literacy narratives, our own. This should teach students to draw from their own experiences as well as from the experiences of others. More importantly, understanding the contexts of others’ lives demonstrates the contextual nature of rhetoric, for each of our lives, although lived within the USAmerican landscape, differ to varying degrees.

Not all Latinos have the same experiences with assimilation. However, most of us agree about the importance of education. Richard Rodriguez, Víctor Villanueva, and I are examples of that fact. Yet, valuing education leads many to experience its consequences. In too many instances, education leads to assimilation. While some Latino/as see assimilation as the way to it into USAmerican culture, others feel that acculturation works best for them. These are Latino/as who relish their connections with their Latino/a cultures. Víctor Villanueva and I have the similar beliefs about assimilation; Richard Rodriguez’s viewpoint differs from ours. This chapter addresses
the literacy narratives of three Latino/as to demonstrate the effects of assimilation and acculturation in our lives.

Throughout this chapter, I weave Richard Rodriguez’s and my literacy narratives in various sections along with my commentary of issues raised. I begin with Victor Villanueva’s scholarship and experiences. The disagreements between Richard Rodriguez and me concerning assimilation and acculturation issues illustrate my argument for transcultural rhetorics. To present support for my positions, I link findings by bilingual education scholars, such as Krashen, Terrell, Cummins, Zentella, and Urciuoli, to my literacy narrative. These counter arguments against bilingual education.

In his talk at the 1997 College Composition and Communication Conference held in Phoenix, Arizona, Victor Villanueva asked us to consider what it is we are asking of ourselves and our students when we engage in literacy education and practices. He asks us to consider the sensibility that people-of-color have with language use. Villanueva also asks that we consider the consequences of forcing “dialects upon America’s people-of-color, . . . [of forcing] particular ways with language—rhetorical patterns—patterns that help to maintain American racial, ethnic, and cultural stratification, as well as gender and class” (4). Villanueva reminds us of his earlier findings about Latina and Latino writers’ rhetoric, their history and ways with language. Many of the features Villanueva discusses embody my dis-ease with academic discourse:

The Latina or Latino is given to stylistic repetition—repetition of words, repetitions of syntactic strategies, repetition at the discourse level: *amplificatio*. The Latino or Latina writer is also given to the metaphorical, the poetic, the florid. And he or she is given to a kind of linearity, seeming digressions from the line of logic with which to underscore an argument. The Latina and Latino reflect a long line of colonization:
Spain's conquest of the New World, Spain's having been conquered by the Moors, themselves conquered by the Byzantine as well, their conquest by Greece—their colonial heritage all linked by a way with discourse that is sophistic. (5)

We should heed Villanueva's argument favoring Latino/a rhetoric to counter the negative consequences of literacy practices that dismiss the rhetorics of others. Silencing people whose rhetoric seems to differ from that taught in schools reduces the potential contributions these people can make. We cannot hear the sophistry, the wisdom, of their viewpoints if we devalue their approaches to writing, speaking, or thinking. Furthermore, devaluation of multiplicity ignores findings found by scholars concerning the meta-cognitive abilities of people whose bilingual language learning occurred in the early stages of their lives. In addition, such negative attitudes and approaches to education devalue many bi-lingual/ bi-cultural students.

We, those of us who are hybrid-Americans, should not lose the multiplicity of language or approaches to arguments we make, nor must we lose elements that contribute to our individual and cultural constructions. Spellmeyer, in his book *Common Ground*, argues for a pedagogy that requires a dialogue among disparate styles, languages, and dialects as a means of addressing our students' needs. Hybrids among us like Villanueva, Anzaldúa, Lugones, and others teach me the importance of claiming, varying, and restating my history. The education of a USAmerican should include the history and contributions of all whose ancestors have contributed to the United States. For example, I look at Richard Rodriguez's literacy narrative.
Richard Rodriguez, a writer, popular essayist on PBS, and circuit lecturer, is the son of Mexican immigrants. In his arguments supporting assimilation and monolingual education, Rodriguez overlooks the geographic closeness of many Latin American countries, such as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica etc, to the United States. He fails to look at the personal impact that assimilation has on Latina/os’ need to maintain connections with their families. This factor leads most families with the need to maintain Spanish fluency. For Latino/as are known for their love of and closeness to family. Rodriguez also ignores or does not get the political consequences of being a member of a minority group in the United States of America. Rodriguez counters Victor Villanueva’s and my views on language learning. Victor Villanueva and I feel it is important to keep our identities, cultures, and languages while becoming a part of USAmerican society. We do not believe that the home language need be sacrificed in order to become useful members of USAmerican life. In other words, we do not have the need to assimilate and lose our connections to our families’ customs, histories, and language. Richard Rodriguez’ views lead to support of English—Only positions. Later, we see his arguments against bilingual education.

Minority, Immigrant, Assimilation/Acculturation, and Language Policies

Victor Villanueva critiques Rodriguez’ arguments against bilingual education. In “Whose Voice is it Anyway? Rodriguez’ Speech in Retrospect,” Villanueva explains how Rodriguez having accepted the ideology of middle-class USAmericans cannot see assimilation’s violent consequences on him and his family. Thus, Rodriguez
unquestionably accepts the violence of the nuns’ actions. Rodriguez’ autobiography indicates the value he places on “public” language, yet he seems to devalue the “private” language of the home. Without understanding the significance of private or local language and knowledge in acquiring the public language and public knowledge that he advocates, Rodriguez would use his experiences as a model for all other minority students. In saying this, I am recalling the persona Rodriguez recreates—the person who fits uneasily in neither world. Villanueva says,

Richard Rodriguez [in a speech to NCTE in 1986] told the teachers to continue to be sensitive but to forget about doing anything special. The old ways may be painful, but they really are best. There is a kind of violence to the melting pot, he said, but it is necessary. (17)

Richard Rodriguez uncritically accepts the call for assimilation. By this term, “assimilation,” I mean to submerge one’s identity into a larger society. The process of assimilation, as I define it, means to lose one’s identity to the identity of the society in which it is submerged. Those who accept Rodriguez’s immigrant’s story without accepting the underlying motivations against minority families’ lives, values, and psychological-identity add to the problems minorities face.

Rodriguez ignores the realities of minority people’s lives because he does not identify with them or their situations. Rodriguez’ examples negate the realities of minority groups like Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and so forth. Moreover, as Victor Villanueva explains:

Rodriguez confuses the story of the immigrant and the story of the minority. And it is this confusion of immigrant and minority in Richard Rodriguez with which we must contend. His message rings true to the immigrant heritage of his audience because it happens to be the immigrant’s story. It is received as if it were a new story because it is
confused with this story of the minority. The complexities of the minority are rendered simple—not easy—but easily understood. (19)

The confusion leads to understating the needs of each group. The minority story, unlike the immigrant story, speaks of the effects of racism, lack of access to education, and other social concerns. People in dominant culture, especially those whose ancestors immigrated from afar, embrace the immigrant story as it is familiar and adds to the USAmerican myth of the melting pot. The up by your bootstraps myth added to the melting pot myth raises expectations of all minority and immigrant people and effectively silences those whose success is less than stellar. These myths contribute to limited interaction of minorities and immigrants with the public domain that Rodriguez strongly advocates.

While the concept of immigrant has cultural capital, the concept of minority does not. Classification of people as “minority” indicates, for many of us, significant colonization of our cultures, as well as our ancestors’ lands. Specifically, the classification of minority renders us “Other” or less valuable than the dominant culture. Stories such as Rodriguez’s immigrant story appeal to USAmericans for they support the valued USAmerican Myth as the country that welcomes people from other lands into the bosom of its society. Depending on the circumstances of their arrival here, we find differences in the treatment these immigrants or minorities experience. Therefore, we should study the distinctions between immigrant and minority that Villanueva points out:

The difference between the immigrant and the minority; a difference having to do with how each, the immigrant and the minority, came to be Americans, the difference between choice and colonization. Those who emigrated from Europe chose to leave unacceptable conditions in search of better. Choice, I realize, is a tricky word in this context: religious
persecution, debtor's prison, potato famine, fascism, foreign takeover, when compared with a chance at prosperity and self-determination doesn't seem to make for much of a choice; yet most people apparently remained in their homelands despite the intolerable, while the immigrants did leave, and in leaving chose to sever ties with friends and families, created a distance between themselves and their histories, cultures, languages. There is something heroic in this. It is a heroism shared by the majority of Americans. (18)

Villanueva further explains that the histories of the Spanish-speaking minority differ from those of many other immigrants. Mexicans living in the United States lost their claims to citizenship with Mexico, land, and other positions in society through the Mexican-American War. The United States claimed Puerto Rico as a "spoil of war." "There is something tragic in losing a long-established birthright, tragic but not heroic—especially not heroic to those whose ancestors had fled their homelands rather than acknowledge external rule" (Villanueva 18). The specter of tragedy fits uneasily with the image of being a minority USAmerican. Furthermore, tragedy exists where cultural and historical exclusion exists.

Language is an important part of culture, and it is important to minority students' sense of identity. The consequence of loss of family interaction weighs heavily on my mind. I do not want to teach students that their culture is less than USAmerican culture. Therefore, we must evaluate proposals to have minority or immigrant students lose fluency with their home languages, for they consistently exclude the realities of linguistic achievements of people who have multiple languages and cultures. These realities can include lack of literate role models, poverty, and a sense of family responsibilities that differs from others. These realities affect their educational needs. Yet, despite efforts to the contrary, many of us are bilingual or multi-lingual. Our parents taught us home
cultures, family histories, and language of the home. However, in the effort to achieve the “U.S. American Dream,” our parents aided our assimilation into U.S. American education and society. For example, Richard Rodriguez’s family stopped speaking to him in Spanish, and mine taught me to read and sent me to private schools, while teaching the values of their home. The consequences of our experiences differ because of the different approaches to acculturation that we underwent. Consequently, our opinions and interests in language acquisition and use differ.

How minorities and immigrants arrive at either assimilation or acculturation informs my concept of transcultural rhetorics. I developed transcultural rhetorics for myself when I learned English while maintaining my first language, Spanish, and my ties to my family. Richard Rodriguez did not do either. If we are to teach language-use and rhetoric that is transcultural, we must discuss the distinctions each of us contributes. That is, we must teach students the importance of what they know from their home environments. More importantly, we can highlight the varieties of the sounds of public discourse. “A truly public language can never exist in any definitive form, but is perpetually under construction through our ongoing social life” (Spellmeyer 7). Our social life includes diverse accents and language dialects. People whose use of English does not sound “standard” often shy away from entering discussions with others in society. Thus, it is important to teach all students about the variety within public discourse.

Looking at my literacy narrative and Richard Rodriguez’, I see the importance of family participation in education. My remembrances of language and learning fall under
family or informal education while Rodriguez’s focus is primarily on separation from home and concentration on learning for the Irish nuns whom he admired as representatives of speakers of the “public” discourse. While the nuns who taught Rodriguez succeed in teaching him English-Only, the nuns who taught me exposed me to other languages. I internalized Catholic education, and Rodriguez alludes to a separation from Church, as well as family. My attachment to family and the education I received at home and at school further highlights the differences between Rodriguez and me. I would never critique my parents’ accents or stop speaking to them in Spanish. Rodriguez’ attachment to his teachers’ values led him to approach reading differently from my approach to reading. He read to impress his teachers, to check off the titles of “Great Works” that he read. I approached learning and reading quite differently. I learned for the joy of learning. The metamorphosis Rodriguez underwent led to his observations and discomfort with his parents’ use of English, especially in public discourse. The differences between his teachers, other public speakers, and his parents contributed to his desire to distance himself from Spanish. His is the story of the immigrant student who silently listens in classrooms unable to participate, yet eager to participate and understand. Mine is the story of a woman with curiosity about differences among languages and cultures, a woman who seeks to engage with multiplicity.

Richard Rodriguez: A Case Study for Monolingualism

Teaching language in today’s classrooms frequently ignores differences in linguistic choices and rhetorical expression because lessons are decontextualized from
cultural uses of language. Bonnie Urciuoli in *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class* tells us “How languages figure into processes of symbolic domination must be accounted for ethnographically” (5). The situations Urciuoli presents demonstrate that minority language speakers display an understanding of variation of language use based on changes of contexts. Richard Rodriguez and critics of bilingual education ignore this factor and its corollary that language education be built upon knowledge students have. Despite the fact that they are minority language speakers, they demonstrate rhetorical strategies, which I believe form a basis for further language instruction. Some of the discussions about bilingual education ignore the distinctions between ESL issues and minority language issues. As I will discuss later, arguments about the “how” to teach language ignores the needs of minority language students who are bilingual or multilingual.

Rodriguez’s education represents the “immersion” model of language learning. My parents, without knowing it, used a variation of bilingual education called a “natural approach.” They taught me Spanish and English. One language was not sacrificed for the other. Yet, Richard Rodriguez contends that maintaining the private language retards or eliminates the possibility of mastery of public language. In this part of his argument, Richard Rodriguez conflates the meaning of “public” language with English and “private” language with Spanish. Yet, we should not reduce each term’s meaning. Each language, like other languages, functions in public as well as in private. Politics underlie Rodriguez’ conflation of terms.
Rodriguez and I agree about the significance of language in our lives. Interestingly, there was a time when he, like I did among my family members, enjoyed the intimacy of family stories. As a silent boy, he observed people's responses to those who had not mastered English, the "public" language of power. He, like me, became an avid reader, though he read to say he had read the "great works" and does not seem to read to integrate what he learned into the person he would become. He writes that his work is about language:

This autobiography, moreover, is a book about language. I write about poetry; the new Roman Catholic liturgy; learning to read; writing; political terminology. Language has been the great subject of my life. In college and graduate school, I was registered as an "English Major." But well before then, from my first day of school, I was a student of language. Obsessed by the way it determined my public identity. The way it permits me here to describe myself, writing. (7)

Yet, the description Rodriguez provides reflects a person obsessed with the distinctions between the intimate and the public. Because he tells us the immigrant's story, he concentrates on the language of power; hence, his concentration is on public identity. However, not all immigrants and minority language students view language exclusively in terms of public identity. When speaking of the first impressions he has of language, Rodriguez addresses his conceptualization of public and private language. He stresses this throughout the chapter, "Aria:"

In my case such bilingualism could not have been so quickly achieved. What I did not believe was that I could speak a single public language. . . . But I would have delayed—for how long postponed?—having to learn the language of public society. I would have evaded—and for how long could I have afforded to delay?—learning the great lesson of school, that I had a public identity. (19)
Further in the chapter, Rodriguez adds,

> Once I learned public language, it would never again be easy for me to hear intimate family voices. More and more of my day was spent hearing words. But that may only be a way of saying that the day I raised my hand in class and spoke loudly to an entire roomful of faces, my childhood started to end. (28)

Rodriguez reveals the losses he experienced through the process of education and assimilation, but he does not reflect on how it may be different for others. In addition, he does not consider the political implications for non-immigrant, i.e. minority children. His discussion depends, not on researching others’ lives and the politics of racism in the United States, but on his experiences and belief in the ideology contained in USAmerican myths. These myths underlie discussions of USAmerican values and the need to learn English-only. He fails to consider the politics of public identity from a perspective beyond his own.

While I, too, have conflicting problems with identity, I do not deny the political issues that affect my life. I resist the idea that I must give up Spanish in order to be proficient in English. My resistance stems both from my experiences and from my education. Throughout the country, while schools led many minority and immigrant families to refrain from using their native languages at home, my father and mother did the opposite. In his highly accented English, my father introduced me to the alphabet and the meaning of common items in both Spanish and English. Furthermore, he and my mother introduced me to songs in Spanish. According to Tracy Terrell’s work, “The Natural Approach to Bilingual Education,” Papí practiced the “Natural Approach” to bilingual teaching. It is true that my parents sent me to private schools away from home
for various reasons (among them the desire that I fit in to the public community in the
United States about which Rodriguez writes). Yet, my parents encouraged a connection
to the family and home culture. I recall many of the "pre-language acquisition" strategies
Moskowitz tells us we engage in during our infancy and early childhood. For me this
meant songs, stories, games, and family gatherings—all in Spanish. The bilingual
component of my language learning came later when my father taught me to read in
English and to know the names of familiar things in English.

Such was not the case for Rodriguez. His writing reveals a person distant from
family life. Perhaps the appearance of the nuns at his home heightened his sensitivity to
the different accents he heard. His parents’ highly stiff or accented English contrasts
with the language he associates with public identity. This event must have made a deep
impression on young Rodriguez. Of his own experience, Rodriguez writes:

Three months. Five. Half a year passed. Unsmiling, ever watchful, my
teachers noted my silence. They began to connect my behavior with the
difficult progress my older sister and brother were making. Until one
Saturday morning three nuns arrived at the house to talk to our parents.
Stiffly, they sat on the blue living room sofa. From the doorway of another
room, spying the visitors, I noted the incongruity—the clash of two
worlds, the faces and voices of school intruding upon the familiar setting
of home. I overheard one voice gently wondering, "Do your children
speak only Spanish at home, Mrs. Rodriguez?" While another voice
added, "That Richard especially seems so timid and shy."... With great
tact the visitors continued, "Is it possible for you and your husband to
encourage your children to practice their English when they are at home?"
Of course, my parents complied. What would they not do for their
children's well-being? And how could they have questioned the Church's
authority, which those women represented? (20-1)

Some people, like Rodriguez's family, feel that they must comply with people in
authority. They do not believe that they can challenge authority figures. Parents during
the times about which Rodriguez writes would have questioned the wisdom of the nuns’ request. Therefore, they obeyed; they showed respect. They agreed to speak to Richard only in English. Rodriguez’ parents’ response to the Irish nuns reflects two important features of Latino culture that underlie much of the behavior of Latinos: respect and obedience. When people feel pressured to conform to standards not familiar to them, they become silent.

Compliance with the request made of Rodriguez’ family is not wholly negative. Rodriguez achieved success in public discourse. He has achieved much of the trappings of middle-class success with which he identified. Yet, as he indicated during an interview with Terry Gross on National Public Radio, Rodriguez now longs to engage with his cultural roots. *(Mi madre diria que la sangre llama.)*

Introspection leads Rodriguez to focus on change and separation. As he does, he finds a book that contains a definition that he applies to himself. Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy* analyzes what he calls the “scholarship boy,” a term that Rodriguez aptly applies to himself. In the passage to which Rodriguez refers, Hoggart illustrates one of the consequences of education for students from blue-collar classes.

He longs for the membership he lost, “he pines for some Nameless Eden where he never was.” The nostalgia is the stronger and the more ambiguous because he is really in “quest of his own absconded self yet scared to find it.” He both wants to go back and yet thinks he has gone beyond his class, he feels himself weighted with knowledge of his own and their situation, which hereafter forbids him the simpler pleasures of his father and mother. . . . (qtd in Rodriguez 69)

Education changes people. Rodriguez begins by confessing “a primary reason for my success in the classroom was that I couldn’t forget that schooling was changing me and
separating me from the life I enjoyed before becoming a student” (45). Yet, Rodriguez fails to consider the political motivation underlying the education system. Nor does he consider other possible remedies for his “difference” in the family context. In other words, his self-reflection does not move outward to social arenas.

Spellmeyer points out that the changes Rodriguez notices as taking place within him are symptomatic of the educational system. Spellmeyer further points out that the manner in which this alienation or change occurs “brings to fulfillment John Dewey’s worst forebodings. The story of Rodriguez’s schooling begins and ends with alienation, with an asceticism he represents as the obligatory price for knowledge itself” (Spellmeyer 30).

Rodriguez acknowledges the consequences of education—its ability to change, alienate, or distance a person from her or his roots. Entering the priestly, privileged realm of academia reinforces the schism between Rodriguez and his family. Later, he left the academy to pursue his writing career. Though well educated, he loses the ability to communicate well with his parents as he experiences shame over their language use. “Identifying more closely with the culture of his teachers than the values of his home, he corrected his parents’ grammar and pointed out to them with guileless pride that he had nearly lost ‘all trace of a Spanish accent’” (Spellmeyer 32). Rodriguez acknowledges the changes created by education. Reading Hoggart’s book, he notes:

Leafting through Richard Hoggart’s The Uses of Literacy, I found, in his description of the scholarship boy, myself. For the first time I realized that there were other students like me, and so I was able to frame the meaning of my academic success, its consequent price—the loss. (Rodriguez 46)
Spellmeyer adds,

Rodriguez appeals to those readers who became accomplished by deliberately forgetting the worlds in which they once lived: professionals like ourselves who have risen to positions of authority through the more or less unsparing ordeal he names "self-reformation." (30)

Hoggart's book also focuses on class related identity issues affected by education. This identification with class identity issues mirrors the identification Richard Rodriguez makes with the middle class and its values. It also underscores the consequences of education on those who come from the culture of blue color or working classes. Rodriguez identifies not only with Irish nuns who teach him but also with the middle-class students with whom he associates.

When I was in high school, I admitted to my mother that I planned to become a teacher someday. That seemed to please her. But I never tried to explain that it was not the occupation of teaching I yearned for as much as it was something more elusive; I wanted to be like my teachers, to possess their knowledge, to assume their authority, their confidence, even to assume a teacher persona. (55)

Rodriguez may indeed speak for people who move from one class to another through the educational process. However, he fails to speak for "Others," those who, as Spellmeyer says, "never advanced to the role of scholar or professional, never took their place, a consequential place, in public life. Often spoken about, they never speak through the voice of Rodriguez's persona" (30). Instead Rodriguez clings to and uses Hoggart's description of a "scholarship boy"—a boy to be someone who "progressively cuts himself off from the ordinary life of his group" (Hoggart 225). Rodriguez states, "What [Hoggart] grasps very well is that the scholarship boy must move between environments, his home and the classroom, which are at cultural extremes, opposed" (46). Yet
Rodriguez does not truly “move between environments, his home and the classroom” (46). Identification with members of middle-classes, non-minority Euro-Americans, loss of fluency in Spanish, and belief in the greater importance of public discourse separate Rodriguez from his family and their community. He keeps to himself and is unable or unwilling to move between the two cultures to which he belongs. He remains “steadfastly oblivious to the real conditions of their social lives; lives, like our own today, distinctly unfree—distinctly subject, that is, to forces beyond their control” (31).

Rodriguez’s discussion of the consequences of education belies an ability to move between or among cultures as he states a scholarship boy must do. “What he grasps very well is that the scholarship boy must move between environments, his home and the classroom” (Spellmeyer 46). Home values and the desire to follow the new codes of behavior conflict. Rodriguez does not see or understand that feeling shame over his family’s accents and dialects also plays a role in the literacy practices of other minority language students. He does not analyze the psychological consequences to minority students who are shamed for speaking, looking, and writing in “non-standard ways.” He is unaware of the fact that through shaming, the dominant society exercises power and control over minority groups. In other words, Rodriguez does not analyze identity politics at work through the educational system. While he yielded to shame, others do not respond as he did. Unable to deal with loss of self-esteem, other children are more conflicted in their use of English.

The nuns’ silencing of Rodriguez’ father and mother upset me palpably. I see the cultural self-erasure that Spellmeyer mentions. Silencing the father, to me and to many
of my Latino students, indicates a loss of respect. Latino/as value *respeto* and its loss indicates another disconnection from Latino/a culture. Such a scene reveals the losses Rodriguez talks about, and it also reveals losses to the family. In an era where the term "family values" has come to be the mantra of many in our country, it is ironic that imposition of language codes leads to the silencing or diminishment of relationships within a family.

Yet, I can understand Rodriguez's experiences. Lack of authenticity—a lesson gleaned from Rodriguez's autobiography—shines through his education narrative. Why is this important in discussing transculturation, assimilation, or other educational processes? My response comes from Rodriguez's story. Rodriguez does not take risks, he imitates people with whom he identifies, and he loses the ability to form an integrated "authentic" self. Like the "scholarship boy" Hoggart writes about, Rodriguez is "obliged to imitate his teachers, the experts, and he must continue in the discipline of imitation until he becomes an expert as well. . . . A hunger of memory will compel him to seek the restoration of his past, but the past will be lost beyond retrieval" (34).

Rodriguez never learns to do what Spellmeyer advocates—engage with a more authentic learning process. He never engages with social issues and public discussions. Spellmeyer's definition of learning would have Rodriguez move from merely recognizing and understanding the public significance of private experience toward gaining an involvement with the social life necessary to make that kind of understanding possible. That involvement is missing from Rodriguez's account (38). Rodriguez, unable to maintain a dialogue between the private and public self does not achieve genuine learning
(Spellmeyer 38-9). Dialogue between the private and public languages would have generated greater understanding and knowledge for Rodriguez. Spellmeyer further states:

Had Rodriguez been more willing to reject the construction of himself as “disadvantaged” and “powerless” (as he was willing to resist the Chicanos who branded him a pocho or cultural turncoat), he might have become more directly aware of the contradictions underlying the two worlds he uneasily occupied. And from the moment he began to suspect that neither world truly offered him an undivided unity, the language of one could be “dialogized” by the language of the other—placed at risk and made the subject of an urgent interrogation; not a search for truth, but a search for his truth, in his own time and place. (52)

Throughout his narrative, we see Rodriguez not as a risk taker, but as one who would play it safe. He does so by imitating those he supposed have power in the public domain he seeks to enter. Unfortunately, his disconnection from the experiences of others undermines any “truths” he professes—limiting them to a story of one life. This self-disclosure contains no analysis of the effects of traditions or ideologies on the “one life.”

The Politicization of “Good English” for Immigrants and Minorities

In order to succeed in mainstream U.S. culture, people, including immigrants and minorities, know that they must learn English. Yet, because newly arrived people have a difficult time learning English, many people believe they must be induced or coerced to “drop their cultural baggage (and language) in order to learn the dominant discourse and customs. This stance leads to psychic violence to the newly emerging students who choose (even if they do so tacitly) to maintain connections to their learning styles and languages as they enter the dominant culture.
Immigrants believe U.S. ideals of freedom, beauty and other cultural values. They want to learn “Good English,” but they are made to feel that their own native or home languages or dialects are inferior to English. In “Good English as Symbolic Capital” in Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class, Urciuoli discusses the concept of “Good English” and its significance to bilinguals.

Good English is not a clearly definable object. It is however, a powerful social fact. When people talk about good or correct English, they refer to language forms (words and sounds) in ways that highlight their nature as cultural capital, that is, as skills and knowledge through which people can enhance their social situation. Using such forms should bring people symbolic capital in the form of prestige and material rewards (Bourdieu 1991). . . . For the people in this study [Urciuoli’s work among Puerto Ricans in New York], good English means having the right words and saying them clearly. The payoff is to gain respect and escape race/class stereotyping. The problem is, using the right words and accent cannot guarantee respect because one might also be judged by one’s skin or name. (107)

Bilinguals and other minority language students are aware of the necessity of “Good English” for success in the public sphere about which Richard Rodriguez speaks. Bilinguals and minority language students, according to studies conducted among Puerto Ricans by both Zentella and Urciuoli, demonstrate rhetorical skills devalued by monolingual educators. The studies demonstrate that Puerto Ricans are aware of the rhetorical contexts for code-switching, when and how to address people of authority, as well as when to engage in playful aspects of their social lives. Yet, according to Legarreta-Marcaida’s work “Effective Use of the Primary Language in the Classroom,” they must fight the myth that “bilingualism is . . . a handicap” (83). Furthermore, because intelligence tests are administered in the second or weaker language, minority language
students must fight the myth that they are less intelligent than native speakers of English (83). Legarreta-Marcaida cites findings of research on the effects bilingual education as it relates to the intelligence of bilingual people (84). “It appears that recent research indicates greater cognitive flexibility, rather than lessened cognitive functioning in bilinguals” (84). Such information, together with anthropological linguistic, ethnographic, and linguistic studies by Zentella and Urciuoli support my belief in the importance of bi- or multi-lingual skills. I argue these skills help us operate transcultural rhetorics necessary in a multi-cultural society.

Teaching students in their native language so that they do not fall behind in all subjects remains a primary aim of Bilingual Education. However, some politicians have declared bilingual education unnecessary. Siding with those who stand against bilingual education, Rodriguez says:

I hear them and am forced to say no: It is not possible for a child—any child—ever to use his family’s language in school. Not to understand this is to misunderstand the public uses of schooling and to trivialize the nature of intimate life—a family’s ‘language.’ (12)

But Rodriguez, perhaps because of his own experiences, feelings of shame, and identification with white, middle-class USAmericans, does not see the value of using private languages in public arenas.

Rodriguez assumes that learning school subjects in the stronger language somehow precludes students from developing competence with the second language, English; thereby, limiting future opportunities in the dominant society. He further assumes that Spanish is not important in “public” uses—that it is limited to “private” communications. Urciuoli presents many instances where bilinguals code-switched
depending on context when dealing with authority figures or people from they wished to conceal their meanings. Citing a study by Fishman, Cooper, and Ma in 1971, Urciuoli studies code-switching between Spanish and English of their subjects. The review of Puerto Rics in Jersey City indicates that code-switching “English clauses or phrases” is a complex mode of language use that integrates relations among those who do it and consolidates their identity. . . (5). She also claims:

The study assumes the existence of discrete domains in which the use of English or Spanish correlates with institutionalized roles and activities. This assumes a functional compartmentalization of code, without which, Fishman argued, a bilingual situation cannot remain stable. . . As Zentella’s (1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1997) East Harlem work shows, the Puerto Rican lived experience of Spanish and English represents a range of language varieties and social relations. The cultural meanings of English or Spanish depend on the ways in which English and Spanish varieties are institutionalized and sanctioned. How children grow into bilingual communicative competence is embedded into their perceptions of themselves and the people they talk to. As children grow into code-switching, they first learn to judge who they are talking to and what language is appropriate (see also Genishi 1981; Huerta-Macias 1981; and Romaine 1989:205ff for literature review). In short, English and Spanish cultural meanings are mediated by how people classify relationships, which is in part an issue of social development. (5-6)

As translator for the family, I developed code-switching skills like those mentioned above. I learned to express my knowledge of English in public places. Whether shopping with my mother or functioning as an interpreter for my Aunt Eufemia, I developed an instinct for gauging the rhetorical context and I code-switched accordingly. I remember one instance when my mother and I were shopping at a supermarket. She and I chattered in Spanish about the various prices of the items for which my mother searched. Mami noted that some people were looking at us; therefore, she switched to
English and asked me to switch to English too. This arose from her feeling that she was
looked down upon.

*La Hija de Doña Escolástica y Don Ernesto Llega a la Universidad*

In the following sections, I include my literacy narrative and the scholarship of
bilingual educators to counter the opposition to bilingual education and to argue for
transcultural rhetorics. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the pedagogical strategies
called “The Natural Approach” contains two principles. One is that speech is not taught
directly. It is acquired by through “comprehensible input”. This means that for learning
to occur low-anxiety level environments are necessary. A second principle is that “speech
emerges in natural stages” (Terrell 119). Terrell distinguishes acquisition and learning in
the following ways. “The term acquisition will refer to development of language
proficiency without conscious recourse to rules, while the term learning will refer to
development of language proficiency through conscious, directly accessible knowledge
about language rules” (Terrell 119). As I discuss below, my parents helped in my
acquisition of two languages. Furthermore, they did so without any training in
pedagogical approaches. They did what most parents do in regular language acquisition
processes. Some of the conditions that my parents set up for my language acquisition and
learning are not dissimilar from findings by Krashen as reported by Tracy Terrell. Terrel
reports that Krashen’s findings include that the acquirer hear or read language at levels
that they understand. While a word for word understanding of the language is not
necessary, the “essential meaning of the message communicated” must be understood.
Also, there must be meaningfulness in the message to be communicated i.e. a meaning and purpose. The last condition for optimal acquisition is that of low-anxiety environment (Terrell 119-20). My parents’ instruction in Spanish and English met all of the conditions discussed by Terrell. This accounts for the difference between my process of assimilation and Richard Rodriguez’. The efforts my parents made as my first teachers enable me to navigate between Spanish and English languages and customs.

From family activities, such as stories about family history and folklore and singing Puerto Rican songs, I learned language skills in low anxiety environments. Similar activities at school kept me engaged with language learning. I soon learned to distinguish required activities for different contexts, such as school, family gatherings, or playing with friends. Unlike Rodriguez, I do not recall judging the difference between the nuns who taught me in a formal system and the parents who taught me in the informal environs of the home.

Family lore tells me that Papi would sit with me going over alphabet and words in both Spanish and English. “A-E-I-O-U mas sabe el burro que tu.” Oreja-ear, boca-mouth, nariz-nose, and so on. Papi, who’d not completed high school in Puerto Rico, spent a great deal of time at the task of teaching me language, as did my mother. When riding subways and buses in New York, I read the advertisements. One that comes to mind included a friendly policeman, pictured for the Police Association League. When I went to school at age five, I had been reading for two years. The works by Terrell and Cummins inform us that the materials used to teach me are the kind they recommend. They are playful, yet instructive, and provide engagement with learning through rhymes
for alphabet acquisition and other engagement with learning. I recall reading cartoons in the Sunday papers and going to the movies with my mother—we would see Spanish-language films. I also enjoyed music in both Spanish and English. As a teen-ager, parties I attended or held included a system of playing our records “bilingually.” We played one record in Spanish followed by one in English throughout the event. These memories of language differ from Rodriguez’s memories. I was a participant both at home and at school. Yes, I liked going off to read on my own, but I enjoyed the social aspects and occasions where language played important functions in my life.

Knowing about the organic nature of language and its function in differing social contexts enriches rather than diminishes education. There are varieties of rhetorical approaches that function in the public sphere, yet too many people believe that only one language and rhetorical structure should be for public use. This belief has hurt the needs of students and minority groups in the USAmerican landscape. Kurt Spellmeyer states, “Whereas no person or groups speaks the public language, we can each enter the public dimension whenever we affirm the communality of our worlds and the merit of exchanging our dissimilar ways of regarding them” (7).

In addition to the findings of bilingual education scholars, I argue that scholars in related fields of study focus on the need to use hybridity, which is an important concept for developing transcultural rhetorics.
Socio-linguistic Findings that Lead Us toward Transcultural Rhetorics

Zentella, Urciuoli, and others interested in sociological consequences of language learning explain that we must continue to explore issues of language hybridity, language acquisition, and language use in new cultural contexts. Using native speakers’ language, context for rhetorical choices, and other pedagogical praxis in bilingual education can be found in transcultural rhetorics. These points will be made below.

One of Zentella’s findings that I find particularly useful involves gender roles and language development. Girls were more likely to continue to have fluency in Spanish than boys because of their socialization into their roles as “women” while boys in their process of gendered socialization were less likely to maintain fluency in Spanish (Zentella 152-3). This socialization, a part of home education, is important, for we must remember that our first education occurs in the home. Maintaining fluency in both languages gave me a “practical” or “real” purpose for maintaining them. There was a practical aspect that I could apply in particular contexts. An example of such a context took place when I translated for my Aunt Eufemia, a particularly timid spirit, who had many appointments for prenatal care. Thus, I was able to practice one of the lessons my mother taught me. The lesson in question concerned being of use or service to others and using the two languages I had mastered.

Concerning the development of my literacy skills, Mami was also very instrumental. Mami’s role, in addition to the obvious one of modeling my role as a Puerto Rican female and storyteller, was to teach me letter writing, for she is and always was very close to her family. During the years I was growing up letter writing was her
only means for communicating with her parents and siblings who remained on the island. The letters, as I now recall, were formal and formulaic. They would begin like this:

Queridos Abuelos,

Dios quiera que al recibir estas lineas se encuentren bien de salud. Mami y yo estamos bien. Gracias as Dios y la Virgen.

A variation of the letter’s beginning would be: “Espero que al recibir estas letras se encuentren bien de salud al igual Tia Faustina...” One can see how each of my parents fulfilled the responsibilities Terrell mentions as necessary for the Natural Approach to bilingual language acquisition. As I grew, my parents created purposes for the communication they asked me to produce. Whether I translated or wrote letters to relatives in Puerto Rico, there was a context for the linguistic act I they asked me to produce.

I never saw myself as a writer when I was a child, but I read for the pleasure reading provided and for the pleasure of learning. At Sacred Heart Villa I used “free time” to go to the gazebo overlooking the Hudson to read or daydream. I found the attic that ran the length of the school a perfect hideout when I wanted to finish a Nancy Drew mystery or later the history books I borrowed from the school library. I recall reading historical novels because they integrated history with adventure and romance. How unlike Rodriguez’s passion for the “great books.” I also read the classics; however, I initially encountered them in a popular format of the time—classic comics.

Only one area of reading escaped me during my growing up years—written works by Latina writers. For that matter, I never found books or discussions of works by
Nor do I recall hearing my parents speak of Puerto Rican writers. I sometimes wonder, if I wouldn’t have become more engaged with a love for writing if I had been exposed to the writings of Latino/as. I believe that there is a correlation between becoming a writer and identification with the writers whose works speak to one’s experiences. The writers and the characters of the books I read had few connections to my life or experiences. Nor did they have skills I possessed. They did not code-switch between English and Spanish. On the other hand, I had to try to figure out—if I could—the French or German I encountered in some of my reading materials. Furthermore, I did not find the style of writing that I now associate with Latina/o language use. In retrospect, I understand the significance of the struggle, I, as a reader, had in negotiating meaning and in negotiating a means of engagement with the text.

In my master’s thesis, *Implications of the Use of Nonsexist Language for the Teaching of English*, I explored the issue of the impact of reading materials on people who are not positively re-presented in them or who are excluded. I learned that many studies found that “sexist language creates misleading images of the roles of women and men” (19). In the same way that readers are influenced by not seeing member of one’s gender in the role of protagonist, not seeing members of groups similar to one’s home culture obscures those groups in the cultural landscape. Either the “ethnic” voice is stereotyped or it is silenced as Morrison, among others, claims in *Playing in the Dark* (1-28). My formal education did not provide me with materials that reflected my home life. Significantly, the historical contributions of people from non-European backgrounds were not valorized. More significantly, as I pointed out above, works by people from
Native American, African American, Latino/a writers were not taught. The focus then was on the importance of USAmerica and USAmerican writers. As a result, the concept of Latina/os as writers was unfamiliar to me. The absence of Latina writers during my scholastic development influenced my image or definition of “who” writers were. Clearly, I did not see myself in the definition of “writer.”

After completing my undergraduate coursework in English Literature at California State University, San Bernardino, I began studies in rhetoric for the Master of Arts program in Rhetoric and Composition at the San Bernardino campus. Despite all the time I had spent in educational systems, I still had not found hybrid American writers to whom I could relate. Until six months prior to my entering the doctoral program at University of Arizona in January 1992, I had not known about Latina writers, other than Inés Hernandez.

My introduction to Latina writers came through Professor Walter Oliver at California State University, San Bernardino. I told him I was headed to the University of Arizona to commence the doctoral program in Rhetoric and Composition, when he asked me to follow him. “Come to my office. I have a book that will interest you.” The little book he shared was a revelation. Woman of her Word: Hispanic Women Write, edited by Evangelina Vigil was my introduction to a kind of writing I that touched on issues and experiences I could relate to—being a woman who is Latina and American. Wow! Through their stories the writers spoke about transcultural experiences I recognized. I experienced strong feelings as I read from the borrowed book—shame and anger. Shame at not knowing about these writers prior to Dr. Oliver’s generous loan and anger that late
in my life and educational experience I finally learned of these Latina Women Writers’ existence. Afterwards I read other works by authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa, María Lugones, Nicholasa Mohr, Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Helena Maria Viramontes, and many, many other Latina writers.

At The University of Arizona, I began to focus my inquiry into the contacts between the colonizing and colonized, for the women’s writings discussed issues concerning cultural expectations from two or more cultures. Thus, discovering what Latinas said, I chose to study and re-discover the function of social institutions, such as family and schools, to affect the identification and affiliation to two or more cultures. I further saw but did not understand how to achieve expression for myself the kind of writing that more closely resembled my own experiences. Through the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Nicholasa Mohr, and Maria Lugones, among others, I could see the cultural crossings that are a common experience for me. The means for negotiating the linguistic currents necessary for cultural travel are evident in their work. Yet, their rhetorics fit uneasily in the discourse of the academy. Their stories, however, are necessary whether or not their rhetorical style or stance fit easily within academia. I have come to see the value of reflecting on my life. I also see the importance of telling the story of that life as a way to understand the social and cultural influences that both construct and disturb my personhood. There is value in using the knowledge I acquire to theorize about different ways of writing, thinking, and exchanging knowledge.

The idealization of things USAmerican that my parents taught me was an unreflective act. My parents did not understand the conflicts that arise from the cultural
melding they initiated. But now I understand that they did not want me to suffer the stigmatization they felt when interacting with los Americanos who looked down their noses at Mami's y Papi's Puerto Rican accented English. They learned to hide by saying they were "Spanish" to some of the persons they spoke to in English, instead of saying they were Puerto Rican.

I use the intersections of Puerto Rican, Catholic, and American cultures as places where I create/invent the hybrid identity that I experience. For me the cultural synthesis creates conflicts concerning where I felt I "fit in." Hence, my need to make my own place and to present that non-pure identity to the various situations I encounter. I knew/saw the pride my parents, along with other relatives, both in New York and on the island, had in being Borinquenos. When we were at family gatherings or other Puerto Rican social events, I felt what my cousin Carmen Socorro calls "El perfume del amor de la familia." I realize that there are many areas where I do not "fit" neatly within the family sphere, but that is due to many experiences both within and outside of academia that are not connected to my linguistic virtuosity.

As more of us who are bicultural and bilingual articulate and share our stories of assimilation/loss, we can select, use, and validate alternatives to a mono-cultural or monolingual impetus currently resurgent in our society. Rather than shaming students because their English differs from the "Standard," we can encourage multiple language learning.

The epigraph, at the beginning of this chapter claims that mono-linguism is a curable disease. I would add that we can cure the disease and the attendant problems
associated with it through transcultural rhetorics and cultural awareness of the benefits of multi-lingualism.
De mi tierra bella, de mi tierra santa,
Oigo ese grito de los tambores,
Y los timbales al cumbanchar,
Y ese pregón que canasta un hermano,
Que de su tierra vive lejano,
Y que el recuerdo le hace llorar,
Una canción que vive entonado,
De su dolor de su propio llanto,
Y se le escucha penar

La tierra te duele, la tierra te da
En medio del alma, cuando tú no estás
La tierra te empuja de raíz y cal
La tierra suspira si no te ve más

La Tierra donde naciste no la puedes olvidar,
Porque tiene tus raíces y lo que dejas atrás.

Estefán for “Mi Tierra” album
Gloria Estefán

Chapter 4

Seed of the Past in Latinas’ Writings:

Rhetorics of Submissive Subversion

Women-of-color must use rhetorics that represent their multiple cultures. While reading about Latin American Women writers, I found evidence in Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay that Latina writers use indirection and gestures of humility in their work. I observe these gestures in my writing and in the writings of other Latinas in the United States. Although many would attribute these rhetorical gestures to all women who are oppressed, I focus on Latinas because of the lack of attention to their writing, the erasure of the history of Latina writers, and the needs of Latinas today. In order to determine the genesis of the gestures of the rhetorics of submissive subversion, I evaluated the writings of Latina women from the 16th and 17th centuries. Teresa of Ávila’s writing and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’ writing demonstrate that they use rhetorical gestures similar to those used currently by Latinas. As I theorize about transcultural rhetorics, I argue that their rhetorics classify as transcultural. These women
engage the cultural patriarchy of their times with rhetorical gestures that allow them to communicate their ideas. In their way they subvert women's role expectations and gain voice for their points of view. I judge the effectiveness of their writing by the responses their writing engendered during their life times. In addition, their works still communicate their messages and present the gender and cultural obstacles they overcame in their writing. They consciously used strategies of submissiveness and self-abnegation to allow expression of their ideas. These strategies can be found in studying the writings of both Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. However, these women lived in different eras; therefore, their rhetorics appear more extremely subservient than the rhetorics of modern Latinas do.

The rhetorics of Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz are riddled with excessive hyperbole and ironic self-deprecation or self-abnegation. These features in writing are due to influences of the Catholic Church. Interestingly, it still influences many modern or current Latin American women, those of us whose roots lie in either South America or Spain. Other cultural influences, as I indicate throughout chapter 2 of this work, are the result of cultural expectations for Latina women. Most frequently, we take on the abject or self-deprecating beliefs promoted by our cultures.

In the first chapter, I presented concepts of hybridity because they are a part of transculturation. Hybridity allows women to move in the interstices of cultural discourse where they can contribute to the intellectual, social, and cultural practices of societies in which they live. In this chapter, I explore the distant, yet still potent connection between Teresa of Ávila, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and contemporary Latina writers seeking to
subvert the cultures that influence their lives. Using the writings women from the past, I, as the title of this chapter indicates, link the past to the present.

The effort to raise consciousness of us as literate women includes recovering the knowledge of women writers from other eras of history whose cultural roots extend to the present. Such an effort demonstrates an act of transculturation and a model for teachers to use in their writing classes. Such projects expand perspectives of the history of Latina writers while providing Latinas with insights into the reasons for the cultural conflicts they experience.

**Studying the Past Helps Us Understand Our Present**

Latinas, especially those of us reared in the USAmerican landscape, do not have knowledge of writings by Latinas. Furthermore, the history of Latinas as writers needs to be taught to dispel the idea that Latinas in past eras did not write or that their writing was unimportant. I limit my discussion to an exploration of women’s writing among Spanish and *mestiza* writers by specifically examining the rhetorics Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana. Each woman displays elements of transcultural rhetorics, and each shares similar rhetorical strategies. However, Sor Juana wrote and read on a greater range of topics and genres. I study the cultural contexts of these women’s lives to demonstrate how, through the centuries, much has remained the same for women. In our postmodern contexts, we continue to seek ways of giving voice to our experiences, knowledge, and other contributions to society. I learn from the ways women in the past used knowledge of their audiences to their advantage. Studying their work reminds me of the importance of
audience awareness and helps me understand the presence of submissive subversion in my writing and the writing of other Latinas. Although their writing seems restrained and indirect, they are heroes. They were able to communicate ideas that society would have repressed for the sole reason that they were “unworthy women” with limited intellectual and literacy rights.

Writing a dissertation requires focus. Therefore, when I felt a need for balanced energy, a friend advised me to read materials dealing with spiritual practice. This advice led to Teresa of Ávila’s *The Way of Perfection*. The text teaches meditative practices. As I perused the first few chapters, I heard my mother, my early teachers, and others’ admonishments concerning womanly behavior. Teresa’s words echoed messages I had learned during my childhood. In the first chapter of *The Way to Perfection*, I read, “I acted, in short, like the weak and wretched woman that I am” (36). A later passage read, “And, seeing that I was a woman, and a sinner, and incapable of doing all I should like in the Lord’s service” (36). Other chapters contained many more statements of self-deprecation that seemed consistent with earlier eras of Catholicism. I felt that there was a definite link between the humility the church and my mother expected me to assume and the pose Teresa of Ávila adopted in her writing. Instinctively, I felt that Teresa adapted a pose, for the fact that she wrote and that her writings survived the Spanish Inquisition proved to me that either she had extraordinary luck or she possessed superior rhetorical skills. I stayed at the bookstore, The Book Mark, and found another work, *The Interior Castle*, by Teresa of Ávila.
Many of Teresa's ethical appeals remind me of injunctions made by the Catholic Church and by mothers of Puerto Rican girls in the study I cited above. Therefore, I sought more information to confirm the connection I saw between earlier generations of Latinas and current ones. I explored Teresa of Ávila's rhetoric to see how closely her rhetoric resembled rhetorics used by contemporary Latinas. A work by Alison Weber provided the key. *Teresa of Ávila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* addresses the historical and rhetorical strategies employed by Teresa of Ávila in ways useful to an understanding of the roots of many current rhetorical practices by Latina writers.

After reviewing the lives and works of St Teresa and Sor Juana, I noted that the uniquely European institution—the convent—influenced the their lives. According to studies by Margaret L. King in *Women of the Renaissance*, from the beginning of the medieval period [and subsequent eras], "[t]he men of medieval Christendom availed themselves of an institution unknown to antiquity, to Asia, or to Islam for the control of a surplus of female population: the convent" (81). This institution grew from the need of wealthy families to secure their families' wealth. For a "supernumerary daughter could be prevented from alienating their fathers' resources if they were contained in a place reserved especially for the pursuit of celibacy: the nunnery" (82).

Teresa was born in 1515 and canonized in 1614. The period for her writing encompassed the 1550s. For a woman with a true calling, such as Teresa of Ávila, the convent provided her with work to reform the convent system that had degenerated into holding cells for women of social standing. Women of social standing were usually recruited, and the system allowed servants and visitors, both male and female, to frequent
these women's rooms. The concept of celibacy weakened and reformers like Teresa of Ávila brought back an idea of using convents for developing a spiritual life.

The case of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz differs from Teresa of Ávila's. Sor Juana had lived in court as maid and confidante to a Marquise, and in her lifetime people considered Sor Juana the tenth muse for her skill at writing secular plays and poems. Sor Juana was born November 12, 1648 and died on April 17, 1695. It was an era when a woman without money or social position could not remain unmarried and on her own. A woman of Sor Juana's era needed the means for living independently. Without such a means, such a woman entered the convent. Sor Juana entered the convent as a way to continue her intellectual pursuits. She differs from Teresa of Ávila in that she did not write to teach. Her Respuesta, a response to a bishop's admonishment against her education, teaches us a powerful rhetoric that outlives the poems she wrote prior to entering the convent. They survive because of the strength of her defense for women's rights to gain access to an education. Hers is a defense that current Latinas should keep in their minds and hearts as they encounter modern institutions that oppose their progress in our society, or worse, denigrate and exclude their rhetorical styles.

St. Teresa and the Golden Pen

I use Teresa of Ávila for several reasons. I recognized the cultural prescriptions for female behavior. She found a way of writing that accomplished her goals to reform prayer life while under Church scrutiny; her submissive rhetoric and use of ethical appeals interested me; and she addressed multiple audiences. Another important reason
to use her writing as a case study lies in the fact that while working within the Church, she countered Church teachings through personal prayer practice and her writings. I include Teresa of Ávila because her works provide insights to her purposes for writing and a context for the obstacles she surmounted. Therefore, I begin the following section with a review of Teresa of Ávila’s life.

Teresa of Ávila was born in Avila, Spain in 1515. Teresa’s family prospered in Avila. “Her father was a prosperous cloth merchant whose own father had converted from Judaism to Christianity” (Van de Weyer vii). She entered Avila’s Carmelite convent in 1535, and in 1562 founded a reformed order of nuns, the Discalced Carmelite nuns. The new convent provided an environment conducive to a spiritual life that more closely mirrored her beliefs in a strict contemplative rule of life. “She combined a contemplative and very active life, encountering many obstacles to her reforms, partly because of her Jewish background and partly because of entrenched opposition to reform in general” (Scott 222).

Before founding the reformed order of Carmelites, Teresa of Ávila wrote her first work, an autobiography focusing on her growing emphasis on mental prayer. Her method of prayer moved away from the church sponsored oral prayers, to more personal, non-oral, mental prayers. It is important to point out that Teresa aimed her writings to more than one audience. On the one hand, she wrote them in obedient response to requests that she write about her concept of mental prayer. Her confessor ordered her to write and he and members of the Inquisition comprised one of her audiences. On the other hand, she aimed both The Interior Castle and The Way of Perfection toward the nuns under her
charge. These were Teresa’s second yet primary audience. Knowing that Church officials would read her writing led Teresa of Ávila to exercise caution, as will be made clear later in this chapter. Teresa utilized rhetorical strategies that presented her as a servant of God; at the same time, she introduced a form of prayer, which the Church did not sanction. In the appendix found in the essay “La gran turba de las que merecieron nombres,” Nina M. Scott says of St. Teresa: “her writing exhibited a ‘complex mix of submission and subversion’” (Arenal and Schlau 1989, 10). As Weber’s analysis of Avila’s rhetoric shows us, Teresa was an astute rhetorician whose works influenced women of later generations. “Because of her rapid beatification (1614) and canonization (1622) her fame spread and her Life became a model for many other spiritual autobiographies, both in Spain and in the New World” (Scott 222). In fact, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz refers to Teresa of Ávila as her “mother.” Sor Juana saw Teresa of Ávila as a role model of women’s writing.

Submitive postures allow Teresa to successfully maneuver through the obstacles, some of which could have cost her a death sentence, placed by elements of the social and political milieu of her times. The introduction to The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself illustrates Teresa’s awareness of her predicament.

It is a piece of candid self-revelation, written in the liveliest and most unforced conversational prose. The saint herself states that it was composed in the first place at the request of her confessors, who required some account of her rare experiences to be circulated among those religious of a like bent, and who needed it also, in a day when accusations of heresy were frequent, as proof positive of her complete orthodoxy and utter obedience to the teachings and dictates of the Church. (Cohen 9)
According to biographers and St. Teresa’s writings themselves, the topic of mental/personal prayer, in addition to Teresa’s gender, led to scrutiny, for bishops or priests could not “read” the minds of those engaged in mental prayer.

Yet, Teresa’s writings, though not intended for public consumption, have grown in popularity in Spain, both during her lifetime and later. According to translator J. M. Cohen, the autobiography reveals a “remarkable woman’s entry into the religious life” (9). Moreover, it is a “literary masterpiece that is, after Don Quixote, the most widely read prose classic of Spain” (9). Unlike other women who follow in later eras, Teresa of Ávila was not a well-read woman. “Teresa was a woman of little reading. The Imitation of Christ and Saint Augustine’s Confessions were two of the few books that she knew well” (Cohen 11). Teresa minimized the importance of her writing skill. However, Cohen and others note that despite protestations to the contrary, Teresa of Ávila was a remarkably gifted writer; Cohen calls her a “natural” writer. Hence, the Church associates her with the title of “golden pen” associated with her name and the icon in the portraits of her. Teresa of Ávila possessed personal eloquence and writing skill. Although she protests that she lacked the time and leisure for her unwelcome task, she was undoubtedly a born writer to whom words came freely and fast, and who took a craftsman’s delight in them (9).

Teresian scholars acknowledge difficulties with Teresa’s rhetoric. It is personal, filled with errors, and sounds spontaneous—almost “arhetorical” because her arrangement seems sporadic. As a reader, I found that the problem came from a different source. I found disturbing her constant submissive pose, self-deprecating
comments, and claims of writing as an act of obedience. Her obedience, her stated reason for writing her work, made me feel uncomfortable and angry. Her latter claim disturbed me because it presented the idea that Teresa wrote without having an agenda, which she in fact had. Thus, she undermined a connection with me as a reader outside her historical era. However, her comments do underscore her awareness of both her times and her target audience, the nuns for whom she writes instructions on mental prayer. As a result, upon considering the context of her life, I had to rethink my judgment.

In the sixteenth century, women who either taught or who practiced “mental prayer” were suspected by Inquisition members of possible possession by the devil or worse—heresy. Her desire to communicate to her nuns, largely uneducated women, her experiences with prayer led to what Weber calls a “poetics for women” (11). Weber defines this as rhetoric based on Teresa’s understanding of the ways women were perceived to speak. In other words, Teresa exploited the stereotypes about women (Weber 11). Therefore, one cannot take Teresa’s self-deprecation at face value. Teresa of Ávila’s choices, beyond being poetics aimed to women, are poetics for survival. In other words, while appearing to be submissive to the church, Teresa fulfills her agenda—dissemination of information that the church would otherwise have quelched (Weber 11).

*The Way of Perfection* is an ideal text for examining Teresa’s style, since she revised it extensively. The first version of the text, conserved in an autograph manuscript in the library of the Escorial, was begun between 1562 and 1566, quite probably after the second version of *The Book of Her Life* in 1565. Although Teresa tried repeatedly to
secure Bañez' authorization, he refused to approve a work in which Teresa had obviously exceeded the limits originally proposed (Weber 78).

Teresa’s personal history may have added to the need for a submissive rhetoric.

“Teresa’s debased style was an expression of her alienation from the educated theologians rather than an imitation of illiterate peasants” (Weber 9). Quoting Americo Castro’s historiography, Weber further claims that:

Teresa’s racial caste (was) a crucial but unconscious determinant of her style—her mysticism: alienated from a world of racial o’sessions and patent injustice, converso mystics like Teresa, Saint John of Ávila, Saint John of the Cross found refuge in exploring their own individuality. By rejecting false worldly authority and affirming their intimacy with God, they thus compensated for their lack of socially esteemed lineage. (9)

Teresa of Ávila’s rhetoric took into account the precarious nature of her situation, the politics of the church, and her lack of “socially esteemed lineage.” She claimed that she did God’s will through her writing. Teaching people to pray in a personal way was God’s will. Teresa claims that God gives her the authority to write. We can see her claims as appeals to “Ethos.” Embedding her teachings of mental prayer within claims of being an instrument of God represents one of the ethical appeals found in Teresa’s writings.

While Alison Weber claims that we can view Teresa’s work as rhetoric of femininity, I claim she uses rhetoric of submissive subversion; for while writing, she subverts the teachings on the role of women in the sixteenth century Catholic Church while posing as an obedient and submissive woman.

Traditional criticism of Teresa’s works emphasizes her “anti-rhetorical, subjective spontaneity” (5). There are oral elements in her writing and, according to Weber,
associations to Teresa’s personality, for Teresa of Ávila was known as a spontaneous, charismatic person. Early scholars associated discussions of her style to her person. Victor Garcia de la Concha claims that “Teresa was not always a careful writer but (de la Concha) insisted that she was, nonetheless, a talented rhetorician” (Weber 10). Her style reveals its oral elements because it is conversational. The writing contains sentence fragments, interjections, asides, and digressions. (5). Furthermore, we see “diminutives” (an aspect found in my families’ direct address to its members), “superlatives” (hyperbole) “and low-register, colloquial turns of phrase” (5). Additionally, her informal spelling or rather misspellings “implies a conformity to oral pronunciation rather than written norms” (Weber 5).

Weber found the following rhetorical figures: alliteration, antithesis, catalogue, or etymological repetition” (7). In addition to her use of the rhetorical figures listed above, Teresa of Ávila had a sense of conscious knowledge and use of rhetoric. The fact that Teresa took an active part in revising her texts points to her conscious use of language. The act and art of revision is an important indicator of Teresa’s conscious use of language. Weber points out differences between the two versions of the Way of Perfection and the letters between Teresa and her confessor, Bañez, reveal conflicts between author and church authority.

When Teresa recopied the original manuscript, sometime between 1566 and 1569, she did much more than omit censored passages—she reorganized chapters and headings and eliminated many imaginative comparisons, exclamations, references to her personal experiences, and caustic comments about anticontemplatives and the Inquisition. Other changes can only be described as stylistic. (79)

E. Allison Peers in his introduction to The Way of Perfection adds:
There are a considerable number of emendations in this text, most of them made by the Saint herself, whose practice was to obliterate any unwanted word so completely as to make it almost illegible. [Referring to various editions of the work.] None of such words or phrases was restored in the autograph of Valladolid—a sure indication that it was she who erased them, or at least that she approved of their having been erased. (Peers 18)

In reviewing Teresa of Avila’s writings, it is important for me as a Latina to see how a woman in the sixteenth century used the rhetorical gestures of her society to teach meditative practices important to her. She managed to integrate important aspects of her personality into her writing. Initially, the submissive poses in her writing irritated me. However, I must remember to acknowledge the cultural contexts of such gestures. I must also acknowledge the effectiveness of her strategies in the context of sixteenth century Spain. Lastly, I note similar cultural influences in my experiences and my students’ experiences.

Teresa’s writing focused on spiritual matters. While these still hold great significance for Latinas, spiritual matters do not represent the sole area of interest for Latinas. Therefore, a writer like Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz offers teachers and scholars a model of writing that engages in transcultural rhetorics. Sor Juana crosses into the “culture” of men by her assertive engagement with intellectual interests and her writings on both the secular and non-secular topics. She demonstrates aspects of transcultural rhetorics by her conscious selection from the “feminine” rhetorics of her day and those rhetorics associated with men. However, the engagement with intellectual pursuits had a price. Sor Juana’s Respuesta created consequences to the quality of her life. A summary of her life and an analysis of her famous letter to the Bishop of Puebla illustrate these consequences—to her and for women who follow in the wake of her life.
The Significance of Sor Juana's Defense

Sor Juana's writings and life reveal frustrations similar to those frequent found in the lives of today's Latinas. We owe her a great deal, for she models for us today ways to use today's greater freedom for women. She developed a rhetorically astute defense of women's rights. Moreover, she challenged a man in authority over the quality of her life, the Bishop of Puebla. She did so at a time when women did not challenge authority directly. Sor Juana, thus, represents women who willingly use language to cross into the world of men, to challenge the oppression that women face, and to create their interesting and valuable self-representations.

The Bishop who lured Sor Juana to critique Father Antonio de Viera's homily in turn admonished her intellectual work. He published both Sor Juana's critique and his admonishment. However, he never published Sor Juana's Respuesta. That act is the ultimate betrayal by the Bishop of Puebla, for the publication of the critique placed Sor Juana in a vulnerable position without benefit of her self-defense. Within a few months, Sor Juana, in obedience to the Bishop, dismantled her library and stopped writing. She no longer had anyone's support. Within two years of the Respuesta, Sor Juana died. Biographers say she died of flu while tending to other sisters who were ill. I am not alone in conjecturing that Sor Juana's spirit died due to the loss of activities dear to her—reading, writing, and studying—activities that were part of who and what she was. Soon afterwards, she died physically.

Paz points out that Sor Juana, who was well known throughout her lifetime for her writing, was ignored within one hundred years of her life. For women like me,
Latinas raised in US America, having knowledge of women writers who share a cultural background is important. Using the experiences of other Latina writers helps to illustrate the shared or common cultural influences that inform writing of current Latina writers. Overlooking or burying the skills of these women hurts us because we need to have writers as role models. We need to understand our ways of writing and the reason our writing differs from what schools try to teach us. In a world eager to denigrate our work, we need people with whom we can identify. We need people to validate our ways of writing.

I focus much time and space on Sor Juana because with few exceptions her life reflects the lives of many modern Latinas. Many Latinas today struggle to break into areas of work that have been out of bounds to them because of cultural focus on male accomplishments. Latinas must fight through fears of challenging their cultural contexts and many must struggle to gain the education that they want and need. Sor Juana’s life and writing point to a need for fearlessness that they can imitate.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, nee Juana Ramirez, wrote in the century following Teresa of Ávila. In her lifetime, 1648 to 1695, Sor Juana achieved great fame for her intellectual and literary skills, yet “[f]rom the middle of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz suffered the same neglect and indifference that obscured almost all the great poets of the baroque period” (Paz 63). Rhetorics of subversive submission link Sor Juana and Teresa of Ávila. However, they differ greatly in their life circumstances, inclinations for reading, writing, and life within their respective convents. For example, while Teresa of Ávila read a limited number of books,
preferred other activities to writing, and entered the convent out of a sincere calling by Christ, the same cannot easily be said of Sor Juana. Sor Juana read many books on a variety of subjects. Because of limited opportunities for unmarried or poor women, Sor Juana entered the convent in pursuit of her intellectual life. Sor Juana's love of the intellectual life and talent for writing motivated her desire to gain an education and to write. Her writing took a variety of forms, such as plays, poems, and essays. As I discuss below, the secular nature of most of her work places Sor Juana’s position in her society in jeopardy.

Sor Juana: A Profile in Fearlessness

Sor Juana’s intellectuality, taking place as it did in Mexico during the seventeenth century, presented problems for Sor Juana. Her rhetorical choices allowed her to engage with members of the Church, who had power and control over her thinking and writing. Furthermore, those rhetorical gestures link her to women writers, such as Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana “Guitar of God,” who wrote in Spain during the same century as Teresa of Ávila.

My argument depends upon understanding the effects of gender, lack of power, and genius for communication in a human life. Sor Juana because of the fact she is a woman had to develop ways of communication that crossed gender constructions of her time. *La Respuesta al obispo de Puebla*, utilizes “feminine” and traditionally “masculine” rhetorical strategies. Understanding her life, psychological need for learning, and skill as a writer helps us to begin to comprehend the nature of her success in
a world created for males. For the world she lived in did not look kindly upon women intellectual work. Her argument for the rights of women to be educated reveals not only her skill as a rhetorician but also the depths of her intellectual prowess.

According to Octavio Paz, Juana Ramírez de Asbaje was born in San Miguel Nemantla, a village in the foothills of Popocatepetl. Juana Ramírez entered the world on November 12, 1648. She was the third of six children. Through her writing, an adult Juana Inés presents the picture of the younger Juana Inés. This Juana enjoyed childish games, was both serious and passionate about life, enjoyed little girl games of skipping, singing and also of listening to stories “of the maids and the legends of her elders” (Paz 72). From an early age, her curiosity shone through with her intelligence. Juana Inés’ grandfather’s library provided Juana with materials that could engage her rapidly growing intellectual abilities. The books that Juana Inés read as a child confirm her intellectual qualities. Juana Inés’ proclivity for study encouraged her development of the skills she needed to pursue her independent life through study and writing. Juana Inés engages with words, language or signs and the reality represented within the world of ideas she embraces. (Paz 79) Sor Juana’s life on the whole reveals the challenges that women with great talent must overcome in a world hostile to women’s intellectual growth. It also demonstrates the importance for women to find ways to develop those talents. In Sor Juana’s life she used her grandfather’s library, the support of the Vicereine, and later, the convent. She used her entry into the convent as a means to pursue an intellectual life.

Octavio Paz points out:
Implicit in Juana Inés’ childhood situation were the events of her adult life; renunciation of marriage, the cell-library of the convent; rebellion against authority; and even the argument of First Dream. I am not suggesting a rigid psychological determinism but pointing to the conjunction between character and social circumstances. This conjunction does not exclude freedom, although within fairly narrow limits; we are the critics as well as the accomplices of our fate. The life and work of Juana Inés can be summed up in a single sentence: knowledge is a transgression committed by a solitary hero who then is punished. Not the glory of knowledge—denied to mortals—but the glory of the act of knowing. Transgression demands masculinization; in turn, masculinization resolves itself into neutralization and neutralization, as we have seen, into a return to femininity. Sor Juana’s ultimate victory is to adopt the Neoplatonic maxim: souls have no sex. She arrives at this victory by the same process that leads her from self-contemplation to self-knowledge, from the mirror to the book, and from the book to writing. (Paz 85)

Before Juana Inés completed her journey to writer and later to nun at the convent of San Jeronimo, her childhood underwent some unusual changes.

A biographer, Father Calleja, tells us she went to Mexico City at age eight to stay with “wealthy relatives” (87). Later, she met members of the Marquis de Mancera’s household, where she gained the mentorship of the Viceroy and his wife, Leonor Carreto. Although, through her intellect and writing, Juana achieved success at court, she eventually became convinced by her confessor, Jesuit Antonio Nunez de Miranda to enter the convent. “[H]e was the one who had persuaded her to choose the path of religion, and . . . on the day she took the veil he himself had lighted the altar candles” (Paz 426).

Both Octavio Paz and Alan S. Trueblood indicate that Father Antonio never actualized his goal to redirect Sor Juana’s love for learning and for writing to prayer and religious practices. He had hoped that she would overcome the “temptation” of desiring to pursue an intellectual life and to write poems, plays, and other forms of expressive
(secular) writing in order to live as the other nuns. He obviously did not understand the true “nature” of Sor Juana’s calling, intellect, and talent. He misled her by promising that she would be able to continue her studies and writing. Yet in the end, these forms of expression and intellectual pursuits were taken from her. Eventually, after the publication of the critique of Vievra’s homily and the publication of Sor Filotea’s response to her critique, she lost the support of her confessor Father Antonio and the Bishop of Puebla. This led her to dismantle her library.

Octavio Paz in *Sor Juana*, Nina M. Scott in *Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender, and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America*, and other scholars speculate about Sor Juana’s death. They speculate that silencing Sor Juana led to her death. Although the cause of death was listed as plague she contacted while caring for the sisters in her convent; however, one must realize that she accomplished a great deal for a woman of her era. She wrote many plays, poems, and letters. She acquired the support of prominent people (members of the secular world) for her work. In fact,

> [t]he Countess de Paredes had carried Sor Juana’s manuscripts with her to Spain, and it is almost certain that she assumed the costs of printing; the book was a homage to her and to the house of Laguna. It is more credible to attribute the editing of those texts to one of three people: Father Luis Tineo, author of the imprimature; Father Diego Calleja, who wrote a second and briefer imprimature; or the anonymous author of the “Prologue to the Reader.” I incline toward Calleja—with scant reason, I confess, but guided by what he would later write about Sor Juana and by his long-continuing interest in her. (Paz 199)

Despite objections from the clergy, the support of socially prominent people helped Sor Juana’s writing. In view of the times she lived, her rhetoric of submissive subversion in
the reply to Sor Filotea was most appropriate (See Paz and Trueblood). The convent became a place where she continued her work, despite the obstacles placed by the clergy.

**Sor Juana: A Pawn between Two Bishops**

It is during the period when her supporters in the court left that her friend, Manuel Fernandez de Santa Cruz, Bishop of Puebla, lures Sor Juana into his ongoing rivalry with the misogynist Archbishop of Mexico, Francisco Aguiar y Seijas. Both Paz and Trueblood point out that Bishop Manuel Fernandez encouraged Sor Juana’s analysis and disputation of a homily given forty years earlier. Unfortunately for Sor Juana, the homily had been given by an eminent Portuguese preacher, Antonio de Viera—a Jesuit, much admired by Archbishop of Mexico, Francisco Aguiar y Seijas (7). Had Manuel Fernandez kept Sor Juana’s critique private, Aguiar y Seijas would have remained unaware of the critique. But the Bishop of Puebla published Sor Juana’s analysis or disputation of the homily, further angering Bishop Aguiar y Seijas, who already held Sor Juana’s secular writings against her (Trueblood 7). Both Trueblood and Paz claim that the publication of Sor Juana’s writings was an indirect attack on the austere Seijas. This act violated the trust that Sor Juana held for her “friend” the Bishop of Puebla. In her reply to Bishop de Santa Cruz, she indicates her surprise at the publication of her disputation, which was written at his behest. Furthermore, her “friend’s” letter published with Sor Juana’s critique damages Sor Juana’s position. “Santa Cruz was indirectly attacking the Jesuit archbishop” (7). Ironically, the Bishop of Puebla used a pseudonym, Sor Filotea (which means Lover of God), in the cover letter to Sor Juana’s critique. This
move is seen as a means of "covering his traces, perhaps with intentional transparency, in
the prefatory letter" (Trueblood 7).

If one accepts the concept of a rivalry between the two bishops, one can clearly see how Sor Juana, a self-educated woman who took pride in her abilities to perform intellectual "gymnastics," could be lured into the rivalry between two powerful men. Trueblood, however, points out that a second reason may have been that Sor Juana's strong support from the viceregal court no longer existed. The Bishop intended his cover letter to act as a "lightening rod intended to deflect the thunderbolt he saw coming from the archbishopric of the capital city" (8). He intended to stop her intellectual pursuits. Sor Juana's response to the Bishop was not published. Perhaps the subject, a defense of women's rights to education, caused him not to publish the Respuesta.

I find it interesting that the Bishop of Puebla, known to support the instruction of women within convents and a supporter of Sor Juana, did not publish Sor Juana's response to his cover letter, "Admonishment: The Letter of Sor Filotea de la Cruz." While the letter contained praise for Sor Juana's discussion of the quality of Christ's love, Bishop of Puebla also criticized Sor Juana for her pursuit of knowledge and particularly for her secular writing.

Sor Juana's response to the Bishop's letter, "Admonishment: The Letter of Sor Philotea de la Cruz," demonstrates her powers of persuasion—her rhetoric. "The Reply to Sor Philothea" contains the rhetorical gesture I call "submissive subversion," but Sor Juana's skills go beyond dependence on use of submissive poses. Sor Juana's response is a testament to her intellectual and rhetorical virtuosity.
Rhetorical Analysis of “The Reply to Sor Filotea de la Cruz”

In the following analysis of Sor Juana’s rhetoric, I add the comments by Sor Juana scholar and champion, Octavio Paz. His book, *Sor Juana*, presents the historical context and an understanding of the value of Sor Juana’s work. While Sor Juana used rhetoric of submissive subversion, her argument responds to ideas in society that were against women’s intellectual pursuits. The pose of submission gains her entry into the discussion. Once she establishes her position as a lowly woman, she presents formidable analogies, historical references, and other rhetorical strategies to make her argument. In “Methinks Sor Juana Doth Protest too Much: Tropes of Apology, Self-Deprecation, and Self-Abnegation in Seventeenth Century Women’s Rhetoric,” Swearingen adds that the tone of Sor Juana’s response points to the subversive quality to her writing. Sor Juana’s *Respuesta* demonstrates transcultural rhetorics as a means of subverting the cultural obstacles in her life and the lives of other women.

This response provides us with the few glimpses into the mind and spirit of a pugilistic writer. For Sor Juana argues that despite the misinterpretation of Paul’s Epistles, women can, and indeed should learn. She says of herself,

My whole wish has been to study so as to be less ignorant, for, as Saint Augustine has it, some things are learned with a view to action, others only for the sake of knowing: . . . So what is there so criminal, considering that I refrain even from what is legitimate for women, which is to teach through writing, knowing that I do not have the background for it, and following the advice of Quintilian: Noscat quisque, et non tantum ex alienis praeceptis, sed ex natura sua capiat consilium [Let everyone learn, and not so much through the precepts of others as by consulting his own nature]? (Qtd in Trueblood 236)
Her arguments increase her ethos. She claims that her gifts, cultivated by her, align her with God’s design. Throughout her argument, Sor Juana acknowledges her natural inclination toward learning and writing.

My analysis follows Sor Juana’s argument closely because I want to show the circling and layering of her argument. In order to allow readers to see the context and content of the argument, I return to the beginning of her response to the Bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernandez de Santa Cruz, for Sor Juana’s combative rhetoric guised as feminine submission begins there.

In the salutation and throughout the first paragraph, Sor Juana addresses the issue of her delay in responding to Bishop Manuel Fernandez de Santa Cruz’s “Admonishment.” Her claims of being dumbfounded into silence are rhetorical gestures to indicate the difference of status between herself and the Bishop (206). In addition to indicating surprise, her words, “in reality I know nothing worthy of you,” indicate her conflicted feelings of pride, anger, and betrayal. She had written the critique at his behest, confident in the privacy of the communication between herself and the Bishop, yet he had published her work and although he praised her work, he criticized her for it. Using the submissive rhetorical strategies found throughout the letter, which Swearingen labels tropes of self-abnegation or self-deprecation, Sor Juana begins by enumerating reasons for delay in responding to the Bishop. These include her “poor health” and “bungling pen” in addition to allusions to other historical figures who delayed in responding to important issues of the past. She includes Saint Thomas in responding to Albert Magnus, Quintillian whose quote reinforces her submissive rhetorical gesture
while ingratiating herself to the Bishop. The translation given of Quintillian’s quote, “The glory of good deeds may be enhanced by the smallness of their resources,” indicates that the “smallness of her work” is enhanced by the perceived favor from the Bishop, who published her work. Furthermore, she alludes to others muted by astounding news. She cites Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, who, upon seeing her cousin Mary, found that her mind had gone blank. She was unable to find the right words. Other biblical allusions found in other parts of the letter include references to Saul, Moses, Teresa of Ávila and others. Such allusions used in different places of her argument strengthen her contention that women have a right to an education.

In the introduction of her argument, she consistently uses submissive gestures as she engages with the objections the Bishop made about her inclination to write and her inclination toward an intellectual life. She thanks him for calling her response to Antonio Vieria’s sermon “Athenagoric” or worthy of the wisdom of Athena. Her claim that she burst into tears at hearing this praise intends to portray her humility. Yet students of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz know that she was proud of her ability to write and to reason. She knows that her writings must be of some import since the Bishop praised and published them, yet she addresses them as “my poor scribblings” (205). Therefore, we can view her claims of humility and her use of hyperbole as irony meant to deflect attention from her pride, even as she alludes to others she has studied and aligned herself with.

When Sor Juana leaves the introductory gestures of humility or of submissiveness, she enters a combative subversive pose and demonstrates her ability to use multiple approaches to argumentation. Sor Juana tells the Bishop that she considers
his publication of her critique as permission to speak freely. She assumes he will give her “safe conduct” to speak at his “good will” (208). “Like another Ahausuerus, you have given me the tip of the golden scepter of your affection to kiss as a sign that you benevolently grant me permission to speak and declare my thoughts in your venerable presence” (208). Then Sor Juana engages the issues raised by the Bishop’s contention that women should not have rights to an education nor to write. Sor Juana tackles the issues and argues them point by point, but in a most indirect manner.

The first admonishment she tackles is the criticism of Sor Juana’s secular writings: “I shall receive in my soul your most holy admonition to apply my study to the Sacred Books” (208). She then gently rebukes the Bishop for making such a criticism,

I take no little comfort in the thought that my obedience seems to have anticipated your pastoral suggestion, as if at your direction, as may be inferred from the subject and proofs of the Letter itself. I well recognize that your very sage advice does not apply to it, but to all those writings of mine which you will have seen on human subjects. (208)

Building an ethical appeal that associate her inclinations as coming from God, Sor Juana deftly moves her argument to her claim that sacred texts require much preparation. In essence, her claim is that the secular studies are a means to lead her to greater understanding of the more important sacred texts.

Coming down to particulars, I confess to you, with the ingenuousness owed to you and the truth and clarity natural and habitual with me, that my not having written much on sacred texts is not from disinclination or lack of application, but from an excess of awe and reverence due those Sacred Letters, for the understanding of which I acknowledge myself so ill-equipped and which I am unworthy to treat. (Trueblood 208)

She notes that even “learned men” were forbidden to read sacred texts. The secular works she read were tutorials, preparing her for understanding sacred texts. How could
she approach sacred texts without developing skills to do so? Sor Juana adds that she
does not have the same problems when engaged with secular texts. There are no
problems of heresy associated against art, which is what she writes. The only censure she
faces with secular writing is the disapproval of “the intelligent and the censure of the
critical” (209). Further, she has no need to be specially prepared when dealing with
secular writing. She adds a claim similar to one used by Teresa of Ávila at this juncture
of her argument. In other words, she wrote the critique in obedience to the Bishop’s
request. She does not write to boast about her skills.  

And in truth I have never written except when pressured and forced to and
then only to please others and even then not only without enjoyment but
also with actual repugnance because I have never thought of myself as
possessing the intelligence and educational background required of a
writer. (209)  

This claim is partially true, for Sor Juana, even as a child, was very hard on herself. This
was true, especially in her pursuit of the great love of her life—learning. “I am ignorant
and I shudder to think that I might utter some disreputable proposition or distort the
proper understanding of some passage or other” (209-10). Following this sentence Sor
Juana makes her great personal claim for learning: “[S]tudying makes me less ignorant.
This is my reply and these are my feelings” 210). To this simple statement, Sor Juana
makes an ethical appeal—the love of learning coming from God, a higher source than the
men who judge her. “[I]n His goodness, [God] has favored me with a great love of the
truth” (210). She reveals that from her earliest days she experienced this inclination
toward letters. She documents the steps she took during childhood to gain knowledge.
She follows with a recital of her claim that God planted the seeds of love of learning and of writing within her.

Sor Juana then reminds Bishop de Santa Cruz (addressed as Sor Filotea) that her reasons for entering the convent were known to him and to her confessor Father Antonio Nunez de Jiranda, S. J. She claims that it is her nature to love reading and studying.

I became a nun because, although I knew that that way of life involved much that was repellent to my nature—I refer to its incidental, not its central aspects—nevertheless, given my total disinclination to marriage, it was the least unreasonable and most becoming choice I could make to assure my ardently desired salvation. To which first consideration, as most important, all the other small frivolities of my nature yielded and gave way, such as my wish to live alone, to have no fixed occupation which might curtail my freedom to study, nor the noise of a community to interfere with the tranquil stillness of my books. (Trueblood 212)

This passage demonstrates Sor Juana’s true purpose for joining the convent, and she follows this passage by discussing how “learned men” convinced her to enter the convent despite the “temptation” which her nature or inclination to study presented to the purposes of becoming a nun. For the communal life frequently intruded on her scholarly pursuits.

I now return to the rationale for learning that she claims. Sor Juana makes the following claims because her audience is the Bishop. While arguing for her inclination toward learning, she presents her inclination toward learning as a means for honoring her place in the convent and in the Church. She says, “Still I happily put up with all those drawbacks [life in the convent], for the sheer love of learning. Oh, if it had only been for the love of God. . . . [A]s a daughter of Saint Jerome and Saint Paula, it would be a great disservice for the daughter of such learned parents to be a fool” (212-13). Subsequent to
this claim, Sor Juana returns to an earlier claim: that she learned secular subjects on her way to approaching the greatest of all subjects—Sacred Studies. (Trueblood 213)

Following this claim, she uses repetitions and rhetorical questions, such as:

I went on continually directing the course of my study, as I have said, toward the eminence of sacred theology. To reach this goal, I considered it necessary to ascend the steps of human arts and sciences, for how can one who has not mastered the style of the ancillary branches of learning hope to understand the queen of them all? How, lacking logic, was I to understand the general and specific methodologies of which Holy Scripture is composed? How, without rhetoric, could I understand its figures, tropes, and locutions? (213)

The list of rhetorical questions includes many of the subjects that Sor Juana studied. Throughout the process, she relates each subject to her understanding of lessons presented in the Bible (213). Indeed, she goes on to link pursuit of knowledge to religious practices.

In sum, how to understand the book which takes in all books, and the knowledge that embraces all types of knowledge, to the understanding of which they all contribute? After one has mastered them all (which is evidently not easy nor, in fact possible), a further circumstance beyond all those mentioned is required: a continuing prayer and purity of life, so as to be visited by God with that cleansing of the spirit and illumination of the mind which the understanding of such lofty matters demands, in the absence of which none of the rest is any use. (Trueblood 215)

In this section of her argument, Sor Juana once again makes an ethical appeal equating the discovery or encounters with books to—Divine Providence. In other words, her love for learning comes from God.

She inserts submissive postures such as “How then, could I remote from virtue and learning, find the strength to write” (215)? She remains aware that such posturing
can obscure her pride. She attempts to hide the fact that she, a woman, presents strong arguments and that these facts model what the clergy would forbid.

One passage that I find personally interesting because it reveals a good pedagogical insight is the following:

For my own part I can attest that what I do not understand in an author writing on one subject, I can usually understand in one writing on another seemingly far removed from it, and that authors, in developing their thought, will come up with metaphorical examples from other fields, as when the logicians say that the middle term is to the other two terms as a measuring rod is to two distant bodies, with respect to determining whether they are equidistant, and that the logician’s sentence proceeds in a straight line, taking the shortest way, while the rhetorician’s moves in a curve, taking the longest, but that the two end up at the same point; and when it is said that expositors are like an open hand and scholastics like a closed fist. (216)

Many times we need to study one author to understand a second or third. Reading the interpretations by one person can lead to formation of one’s own thinking.

In her argument, Sor Juana points out the distinctions between logicians and rhetoricians as a means of excusing the hardship of her “poor mind” in engaging with diverse subjects and approaches to learning. Due to her circumstances, she admits that curiosity guides the subjects she studies. Acknowledging that her method for study is “unsystematic,” she also points out to the difficulties of studying without the interaction with a teacher and with fellow students. Sor Juana, though widely read, had no teachers. This leads to the next point in her defense of women’s rights to learn.

This section of her argument supports the need for interaction, cooperation, or even collaboration with fellow learners with whom she can test ideas and expanded upon them.
What I might point out in self-justification is how severe a hardship it is to work not only without a teacher but also without fellow students with whom to compare notes and try out what has been studied. Instead I have nothing but a mute book as teacher, an unfeeling inkwell as fellow student, and, in place of explanation and exercises, many hindrances . . .

(Trueblood 216-17)

She lists all the interruptions of communal life such as sisters entering her rooms to gossip or calls to prayer. She mentions these to claim that the life of an intellectual within convent walls is quite difficult.

In order to disarm an argument against her based on jealousy, Sor Juana utilizes another rhetorical strategy: allusions to ancient Greece that support her claim that people who are especially gifted by God must endure much. “[F]or it may be a maxim of that godless Machiavelli: hate anyone who stands out because he tarnishes the luster of others” (Trueblood 219). In the line that follows, Sor Juana seems to equate the persecution she endures with the argument Jesus had with Pharisees, a subtle alignment of herself with Jesus (219). Sor Juana alludes to others respected by the Church, such as Teresa of Ávila, but it is her alignment with Christ that is most provocative.

In another section of her argument, after she has made other allusions to the bible and the Classic era, Sor Juana once again aligns herself as Christ. The scene she refers to is where Christ has been mocked as “king of the Jews” and given a “scarlet robe and a hollow reed and a crown of thorns to crown him king in jest” (221). She maintains that only the crown was made to physically hurt Christ.

[Because the sacred head of Christ and His divine brain were a storehouse of wisdom, and in the world it is not enough for a wise mind to be scorned; it must also be bruised and hurt. Let the head that is a treasure-house of wisdom expect no crowning other than the thorns! (221)
Sor Juana, in the more rambling section of her argument, wants to reinforce the
difficulties of following one’s God given inclinations in a world that belittles women’s
desire to learn. “In all I am saying, venerable Lady, I do not mean that I have been
persecuted for being learned, only for my love of learning and letters, not because I have
been successful in either” (223). This last phrase is another submissive gesture that
underscores the argument she makes that obstacles in her attempts to learn relate to the
fact that she is a woman who desires knowledge. Another subtle allusion to her
alignment with Christ comes in a section where she says that Christ was wisdom which
was desired and pursued by Peter, for, as Sor Juana says, wisdom had won Peter’s heart
(224).

Sor Juana explains she has kept from her studies in the past. Upon her abbess’s
orders, she refrained from reading and writing. However, her natural affinity for learning
interfered with her obedience. During the time, she did not read or write, her mind was
all the more active—finding lessons in all daily activities. She ends by claiming that had
“Aristotle been a cook, he would have written much more” (226). Nature and working
with foods in meal preparation led to interesting experimentation and “knowledge.” On
other occasions when she was told to stop studying for her health, Sor Juana found that
not studying led to worsening of her condition. Neither Church nor other inducements
kept her from learning.

The next phase of her argument points out the difference between herself and
male counter-parts. “Even if these studies were to be viewed, my Lady, as to one’s credit
(as I see they are indeed celebrated in men), none would be due me, since I pursue them
[studies] involuntarily” (226).

If people find her aptitude and inclination toward learning censurable, they should
not blame her (226). People who oppose her learning, of course, would not blame God,
who gave her the skills and inclinations to learn.

While she leaves the final judgment as to whether or not she should continue her
studies in the Bishop's hands, she continues her argument by first citing a list of Biblical
women who were wise and literate. These include, “Debora,” the Queen of Sheba,
Abigail, Esther, and many others. Sor Juana next lists wise women from the “secular”
world. These include the following:

Sybils, chosen by God to prophesy the principal mysteries of our faith . . .
. Minerva, daughter of the first Jupiter and giver of all the learning of
Athens. I see a Polla Argentaria helping her husband Lucan write the
Pharsalian Battle [Statius asserts that Polla Argentaria assisted her
husband, Lucan (A.D. 39-65), in correcting the first three books of his
epic, Pharsalia]. I see divine Tiresias' daughter [Manto, a seer like her
father], more learned than her father. . . . An Aspasia of Miletus, teacher
of philosophy and rhetoric and instructress of the philosopher Pericles,
(227)

and many other women from history.

We see the strength of character and the self-esteem that Sor Juana possessed as
she proceeds in her argument, for next she takes on an argument used by the Church and
uses it in her favor. As Swearingen says, “Juana confronts her accusers with brilliant
displays of legal and doctrinal argument that must have been infuriating to male prelates
and inquisitors” (6). Although she weaves submissive subversive gestures throughout her
argument, one can see a “dangerously arrogant” tone that Swearingen questions as
perhaps being part of “self-annihilation” (6). In confronting Dr. Arce’s arguments, which had been used by the Church, Sor Juana uses his words against him. “He finally decides, in his judicious way, that to lecture publicly in the classroom and to preach in the pulpit are not legitimate activities for women, but that studying, writing, and teaching privately are not only allowable but most edifying and useful” (Trueblood 229). In fact, she claims that men who are considered inept should also forbidden from interpreting the bible.

For there are many who study in order to become ignorant, especially those of an arrogant, restless, and overbearing turn of mind, who are partial to new interpretations of the Law (where precisely they are to be rejected) . . . Of these the Holy Spirit says: In malevolam animam no introbit sapientia [“For wisdom will not enter int a malicious soul” (Wisdom 1:4)]. (Trueblood 230)

This argument as it continues intends to equalize the genders because of a previous claim Sor Juana makes: people who are endowed by God with the virtue for learning must study (Trueblood 229). It is a subtle way to convey the fact that some women may be endowed by God with gifts men do not possess, yet even foolish men are given the right to approach learning while wise women are denied such rights.

She cautions students to size up their abilities and the topics or areas of study with which they wish to engage (231). At the end of this admonishment, Sor Juana proposes a more daring, perhaps dangerous, idea to the Bishop of Puebla. Sor Juana argues for women to teach younger women to avoid harm to daughters.

Oh, how much harm would be avoided in our country if older women were as learned as Laeta and know how to teach in the way Saint Paul and my Father Saint Jerome direct! Instead of which, if fathers wish to educate their daughters beyond what is customary, for want of trained
older women and on account of the extreme negligence which has become women's sad lot, since well-educated older women are unavailable, they are obliged to bring in men teachers to give instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, playing musical instruments, and other skills. (232)

She supports this argument by pointing to the illicit unions that result when men are left to teach young, innocent girls. The consequence of course is that fathers end any education for their daughters leaving them “barbaric,” and “uncultivated” (232).

Using a series of rhetorical questions, she pressures the establishment about the value of having men educate women while jeopardizing the women’s reputations. She argues that wise women would not compromise the virtue of their charges. In response to the Bishop’s and others' admonishments against women’s education, Sor Juana suggests delving deeper into the subject. Such admonishments must be re-evaluated because Pauline doctrines have been misinterpreted. Therefore, she argues for her interpretation of Pauline doctrines to show that they have been sadly used against women. She goes on to explain that all who sit in church should sit in silence if they are to learn. The admonishment is not exclusive to women. Additionally, she does not exclude learning in other venues. Speaking of interpreters of the passage quoted above, Sor Juana says, “they must understand it either as referring concretely to pulpits and clerics’ chairs, or immaterially to the whole multitude of the faithful, which is the Church” (235).

Sor Juana questions injunctions against private study undertaken by women, when women already are kept from preaching in Church. Additionally, and I believe most effectively, Sor Juana points to the hypocrisy of the Church. “[H]ow is it that we see the Church allowing a Gertrude, a Teresa, a Bridget, the nun of Agreda, and many more to
study” (236)? Claiming that these women are saints, does not invalidate her argument, according to Sor Juana because Saint Paul’s affirmation included saintly women of his times, too. These included Jesus’ mother, the holy women who followed Jesus, and other women in the early Church. Yet the Church of Sor Juana’s time, began to allow women to write and she cleverly juxtaposed their names in order to highlight the hypocrisy of the Church. Claiming she only wants to study, and using a submissive posture that is pure hyperbole, Sor Juana claims,

Writing requires greater talent than I possess and a great deal of thought. My whole wish has been to study so as to be less ignorant, for as Saint Augustine has it, some things are learned with a view to action, others only for the sake of knowing: . . . So what is there so criminal, considering that I refrain even from what is legitimate for women, which is to teach through writing. . . . If she with her most holy authority does not forbid my doing so, why should others forbid it? (236-7)

Reclaiming Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana Inés for Today’s Latinas

The acculturation of Latinas demonstrates the difficulty many have in writing in a direct, non-repetitive, and assertive manner. Latinas’ writing reflects the lack of overt assertiveness expected of women in today’s society. My exploration Teresa of Ávila’s writings and my rhetorical analysis of Sor Juana’s famous Respuesta demonstrates issues of power. These ideological, religious, cultural, and gender issues inform the approaches to writing that Latinas make. They inform Latina writing style. Moreover, my examination of their rhetorics demonstrates the effectiveness of submissive rhetorics when they are used well. Exploring their work as case studies also demonstrates transcultural rhetorics in action.
Today'sLatinas come from diverse countries, classes, and educational levels. Yet, many experience the shared sense of belonging to changing and multiple cultures when they live in the United States. The assimilation or acculturation into the USAmerican culture seems seamless for some women. For others, however, the seams are more visible. In order to survive sanely, Latinas must learn to change from familiar ways of living, thinking about or speaking out on issues important to their lives.

Writers like Anzaldúa encourage mesizaje in Latina writing as ways to validate the lives of Latinas. Studying Anzaldúa encourages me to develop courage for entry into the USAmerican landscape. Latinas must develop courage to engage with multiple cultural expectations and multiple ways of meeting those expectations. Indeed, studies by Rosa María Gil, D.S.W. and Carmen Inoa Vazquez, Ph.D. in their book The Maria Paradox: How Latinas Can Merge Old World Traditions with New World Self—Esteem point to Latinas' need for courage and understanding of the bicultural influences on their lives. These influences can impede successful acculturation with the USAmerican culture. While their studies point to many areas of cultural interactions, throughout this work I focused on language use—writing.

Gil and Vazquez mention the identity crisis that leads to inappropriate marianismo practices which stem from our historical and cultural roots. Identity crisis creates a fear of loss of Latina identity within the USAmerican culture. However, as Gil and Vazquez point out, accommodating the multiple cultures at appropriate times can diminish the fear and lead to success in both cultures. Without crossing into unfamiliar
territory, a person freezes or turns to a stone. If she does not change, Coatlicue will capture her and turn her into stone. (49) Anzaldúa says:

_Voy cagándome de miedo, buscando lugares acuevados._ I don’t want to know, I don’t want to be seen. . . . I descend into miktlán, the Underwood. . . . Behind the ice mask I see my own eyes. They will not look at me. _Miro que estoy encabronada, miro la resistencia_-resistance to knowing, to letting go, to that deep ocean where once I dived into death . . . . Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a _travesía_, a crossing. I am again an alien in new territory. And again, and again. But if I escape conscious awareness, escape “knowing,” I won’t be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me conscious. “Knowing” is painful because after “it” happens I can’t stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before. (48)

Latinas must take chances; they must move forward into the mestiza opportunities. The conflicts and forward movement Anzaldúa calls for are necessary for us if we are to grow as individuals and as members of a diverse society. Yet, we must study ways of communication that do not destroy our identities within our cultures. For lack of communication and action could lead to personal loss such as experienced by many Mexican-Americans and Puerto Rican-Americans who practiced assimilation strategies in place of acculturation and transcultural practices.

**Transcultural Rhetorics: Toward Gaining Voice in Public Discourse**

Although many centuries have passed since Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz wrote, many modern Latinas use the same or variants of the transcultural rhetorical strategies that they used because women’s status in many societies has not changed. Culturally conditioned to put the needs of others before their own, many Latinas perform rhetorical gestures that make their points in indirect, submissive, or
otherwise abject forms. Because I draw from post-colonial theories that deal with power relations between colonized and colonizer, my discussion includes other people-of-color. Power issues underlie the historical and current issues affecting Latinas. Moreover, since current Latinas are living in a world that differs from their ancestors, it is important that they find ways to tap into the richness of the cultures affecting their lives.

Teachers of writing need to teach their students to be self-reflective, to study and give voice to their own literacy and life experiences, and to analyze other people’s literacy narratives. These skills are part of transcultural rhetorics, and they help hybrid women learn skills to engage public discourses. Other skills, one of which was the subject of this chapter, include analysis of historical and cultural influences on current writing traditions and current life experiences. Transcultural rhetorics, of course, include other skills, some of which I have discussed in prior chapters—code-switching, genre-switching, etc. Teaching the various elements of transcultural rhetorics counters the devaluation of multiplicity that many of us experience. Using the rhetoric associated with Latinas together with rhetorics taught in USAmerican classrooms constructs another aspect of transcultural rhetorics. Teresa of Ávila and Sor Juana each performed this act by crossing into the linguistic arena reserved for men in their times. Today we can speak out by countering current social and political injustices. We can seek to use language to address past wrongs, or to reclaim the history for the group to which we identify. Some immigrant and/or minority groups, such as Mexican-American, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Hawaiians, Native Americans, or women-of-color, can use transcultural rhetorics to speak out.
Having had dominant culture and history thrust upon us, Latinas have the need to study our histories with a more inclusive viewpoint. Part of the difficulties for Latinas is our need to build our self-esteem within the many contexts of our lives in the United States. History that validates our cultures is one step toward helping ourselves validate the multiplicity of our lives. Teaching students to study and validate their histories in a classroom setting can help reduce the internal conflicts Anzaldúa, Gil and Vazquez, and others write about. Speaking out about issues concerning their realities presents a problem, the lack of political authority, which Spivak addresses in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

We must developing skills in transcultural rhetorics serve us as we seek to overcome silence. Then we must develop not only the authority to reclaim our place in the public arenas of our society but also the means of speaking out. The lack of authority for women to speak creates problem that can be addressed in our composition classrooms. Classrooms can be places where students acquire authorization to speak their histories, worldviews. As they become conscious of who they are and what their needs are Latinas learn to negotiate between speech and silence. Pratt tells us of the necessary chaos of the contact zone, and many women-of-color enter our classrooms with conflicts connected to the contact zone. Many entering our classrooms are silent. Therefore, writing about and contending with ideas that challenge their customary ways of living and thinking can be problematic, although very necessary. As a writing teacher, I must find ways to guide silent students through the challenges they encounter, so that they can write with authority and in their own voice.
Classrooms can be sites that function as the “contact zone.” They can and must be both “safe houses” and places of conflict and contention. In other words, bell hooks’ call for consciousness raising can and should occur in the classroom; however, women must feel “safe” as they acquire knowledge and ways for communicating their ideas. Women and minorities need these places to develop confidence and expertise in speaking out—breaking silence of their experiences. Otherwise the response to the question posed in the title of Spivak’s essay is NO.

As Spivak rightly observes, “NO” stems from her observations that a subaltern’s speech frequently is misread because of her political powerlessness. The subaltern is not in a politically viable position to make her voice heard. What she says is likely to have little or no effect, if it is heard at all. Spivak points to an important point. Subalterns, those coming from countries perceived as third-world nations, must resist definitions of third-world women created by “the first-world.” Otherwise, the “first-world” and the perceived or inscribed definitions of the subaltern constructed by the “first-world” define the subaltern. These misrepresentations skew the context, stories, and meanings a subaltern presents.

Until the subaltern can move into a position where she has some political standing, she will not be able to control the interpretation of her message. However, for the subaltern to remain mute or not break through the mis-representations of the “first-world” leads to the assumption that the “first-world’s” views of the Other are, indeed, correct. In order to resist this mis-reading, we must speak and write our representations of our lives, beliefs, and histories.
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