“OUR FEET IN THE PRESENT AND OUR EYES ON THE DESTINATION”:
A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE TEMPORALITY OF INTERNAL
COLONIALISM THROUGH THE WORKS OF GLORIA ANZALDÚA AND
JOHN PHILLIP SANTOS

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Abstract

In 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo allocated half of Mexico to the United States, thousands of Mexicans suddenly found themselves displaced and living in a new country. Because culture, language, and identity all had to be reconstructed, this created a distinct shift in the literature that came out of the Chicano/a community. I examine two such works of literature: *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* by Gloria Anzaldúa and John Phillip Santos, respectively, specifically how each work deals with the concepts of borders and memories, code-switching, and exile. Using a lens of internal colonialism, I explore the interrelation among these ideas and how their combination constitutes a small reflection of Chicano/as today. In essence, I argue that Anzaldúa and Santos represent internal colonialism as temporal, both in the sense that it is connected across time to the past, present, and future and that it is a temporary condition for those who live in the United States. Although internal colonialism typically acts as tool of oppression, using a long-term focus, both authors represent it as a means to empowerment as well.
“Our Feet in the Present and Our Eyes on the Destination”: A Literary Analysis of the Temporality of Internal Colonialism through the Works of Gloria Anzaldúa and John Phillip Santos

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Introduction

Although Chicano/a literature has been written for hundreds of years, the recognized creation of the broader field of Chicano/a studies in the United States began barely four decades ago. On August 29th, 1970, when a peaceful Vietnam War protest ended in the death of journalist Ruben Salazar, it became for many the event that “marks the beginning of the end for the Chicano/a movement and the end of the beginning for Chicano/a studies” (Noriega ix). Shortly after, the Chicano/a Studies Research Center at the University of California, Los Angeles printed the first edition of *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano/a Studies* which allowed many scholars to publish their work for the first time. Since then, the field has steadily grown in both breadth and depth.

The United States’ changing demographics reflect the steadily growing importance of Chicano/a studies. The 2000 and 2010 census data shows that the U.S.’s self-proclaimed persons of Mexican origin rose from 7.32 percent of the total population to 10.3 percent in ten years (“The Hispanic Population”). Additionally, the 70% of the Latino/a population that voted for Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential election demonstrates that this is not only a rise in numbers but a strengthening of a political voice. These are only two of many indications that the study and understanding of Chicano/a literature is becoming increasingly crucial as time goes on.

Despite this importance, the growth of Chicano/a literature has met with frequent protest from traditional disciplines in academia. Author Claire Joysmith, for instance, describes her work in Chicano/a studies: “I encountered ‘resistance reactions’
on the way, ranging from being snubbed and targeted as anti-academic for teaching dubious literary subjects such as Chicano/a literature to near-erasure of the initial postgraduate comparative Chicana-Mexicana literature course” (71). In their essays, she and other authors cite how many of their projects have received pushback from faculty members and administrators who fail to see how the work meaningfully contributes to scholarship. Part of the reason behind this derives from its minority status, while others criticize it for its characteristic emphasis on the personal, an approach some view as having little place within the logic of academia (Hurtado 53). Alongside the disapproval, though, those attracted to Chicano/a studies have increasingly found a way to resist suppression by moving to different universities, surreptitiously teaching the discipline along with the official curriculum, or finding a different editor to publish a work.

Within this vast collection of writing, I will focus on two works: seminal Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* (1987) and the memoir *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* (1999) by John Phillip Santos. Though writing out of different decades and of different relationships to the United States – Santos being native born and Anzaldúa immigrating at the age of ten – both authors write about South Texas, explore similar motifs, and approach their work from a largely autobiographical stance. *Places* is Santos’s first-hand account of his journey to rediscover his family’s history and heritage, much of which had been lost when they moved from Mexico to the U.S. in 1914. The story of Santos’s grandfather on his father’s side, Juan José, for instance, had been particularly shrouded in mystery when
he was growing up, because, as Juan José’s death was ruled as a probable suicide, speaking of him was largely taboo. In an attempt to reclaim his grandfather’s story and those of his other relatives, Santos reconstructs the literal and spiritual journey his ancestors made through a series of personal and familial accounts. “Part treasury of the elders, part elegy, part personal odyssey,” (Penguin Group, Inc.) Places is a story of reclamation, a tale of preservation, and a testimony to the rich legacy of memory frequently left behind in Chicano/a immigration. In Borderlands, Gloria Anzaldúa bears witness to the many injustices that have been imposed upon Mexicans and Chicano/as over the past several hundred years. Beginning with the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish in the 1600s, she continues to the deep rift that was drawn in Mexican culture and memory after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo allocated half of Mexico to the United States, and ends with a message of future resistance: Chicano/as, she says, will endure while Anglos will die out or move on. Using a mix of poetry and prose, as well as a healthy blend of English, Spanish, Tex-Mex, and Nahuatl, Anzaldúa tells a compelling and often painful story of forced assimilation, lost heritage, and denial of self. Highly autobiographical in parts, Borderlands urges its readers to cast off the bonds of imposed ideals and accept their true heritage instead of settling for a false approximation.

In chapter two of this paper, “‘Memory as a Form of Repression and Resistance’: An Examination of the Relationship Between Borders and Memory,” I examine how both authors weave literal and metaphorical borders into their depictions of memory. When the cohesiveness of Mexico was shattered in 1848, a distinct
historical dividing line was drawn: suddenly, literature, history, and memory were all defined as either being pre- or post-1848, with little overlap between the two. Anzaldúa and Santos both attempt to bridge this deep divide by reclaiming personal and collective memories, and in doing so, claim a liberating power for themselves that subverts this division. In this chapter, I explore how they express this power of reclamation particularly in poetry and how the fluidity of the medium contributes to the fluidity of surpassing borders.

In chapter three, “‘Seeing Reality From All Angles,’: The Effect of Anzaldúa’s and Santos’s Code-Switching Techniques,” I move toward a linguistic analysis to examine the authors’ use of code-switching, or shifting among multiple languages, in their works. Although Anzaldúa and Santos use both English and Spanish in their writing, they take vastly different approaches to doing so: in *Borderlands*, there is hardly a page that does not have a healthy mix of Spanish, English, Tex-Mex, and even Nahuatl, while Santos uses Spanish more sparingly. Rather than engaging in a strict textual analysis of these techniques, I concentrate on the effect these switches in language have upon a reader, specifically a monolingual English reader. While many critics assume that multilingual literature is likely to have a deterrent effect on monolingual readers, I explore the ways that Anzaldúa and Santos use their own code-switching to effectively aid, rather than inhibit, such readers’ understanding of their texts on multiple levels.

The history of exile is long and often tied to political movements and individual acts of governmental resistance. The 1848 division of Mexico, however,
created by default a condition of exile for an entire people. In chapter four, “‘The Tug of the Universe Expanding’: An Analysis of the Circularity of Exile,” I use a lens of internal colonialism to explore how Anzaldúa and Santos reflect the relationship between Chicano/a identity and various concepts of homeland and geographical division. Far from being representative of the entire Chicano/a population, both authors write from highly specific and personal positions of self-imposed exile; rather than trying to draw sweeping conclusion about the current exilic condition in the United States, then, I explore how each author uses this lens and what effect it has upon their individual accounts of this condition in contrast to more mainstream portrayals. In essence, I argue that by embracing exile as a self-imposed status, Anzaldúa and Santos claim a power over space that would otherwise be denied to them.

Since both *Places* and *Borderlands* both largely fall into the genre of autobiography, it is upon this last commonality that I will focus first: from well-known autobiographies such as Richard Rodriguez’s *The Hunger of Memory* and Norma Elia Cantú’s *Canicula* to José Antonio Villarreal’s semi-autobiography *Pocho* and various authors’ essays and poetry that contain highly personal elements, autobiography plays an important role in recent Chicano/a writing. Though not unique to Chicano/a literature – indeed, “Because of its fundamental tie to themes of self and history, self and place. . . autobiography is the form that stories of emergent racial, ethnic, and gender consciousness have often taken in the United States and elsewhere” (Ramono
154) – it does work to combine the academic and the personal, a combination not often found in other literary genres.

Many of the autobiographical writings that appeared shortly after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and well into the middle of the next century had a relatively limited sphere of influence (Martín-Rodríguez 10), and, indeed, authors knew they were most likely writing for an entirely local audience. Some attempted to compensate by explaining references to Latino/a culture and history to make their work more accessible to the general public. As more publishers began to publish Chicano/a literature, though, and as the genre began to be incorporated into education systems, writers were able to reach a wider readership without compromising their work. As a result, the commonly employed technique of first person writing began to become more prevalent, for “By using ‘I,’ the Chicano scholar made particular claims within a field of study or discipline, often in sharp contrast to the general and more stereotypical arguments put forth by some non-Chicano scholars” (Noriega vi). First person connoted resistance and autobiography became “another symbolic form of Mexican ideological resistance to American conquest” (Kaup 32). In spite of – and perhaps because of – mainstream academia’s hesitancy to accept its place as legitimate, scholarly work, autobiography and memoir has continued to grow. Most impressively, although “there has always been a defensive tendency among those who champion autobiography as a literary or scholarly form. . . in looking at Chicano studies. . . we see something different: autobiography without apology” (Noriega vii). The still-ongoing process of producing, claiming, and expanding the reach of personal writing
has gathered strength from its seminal works, allowing more recent literature to gain wide renown.

Within the broad category of autobiography emerge the sub-categories of semi-autobiography, memoir, personal narrative, and testimonial, though the definitions for each are highly subjective. Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, for instance, explains that with his own memoir writing, “what I wanted to do was show my part of the world with its complex history and the often one-sided telling of that history” (70). For him, memoir is admitting – even embracing – the fact that one’s story is only one small representation of a time, geographic place, or event. Memoir is not catered toward a specific audience but is written by the self, on the self, for the self. What ultimately ends up being included is “from experience, blended somehow with wide reading, observation, and daily living” (71). It is the self manifested in story form. Events and viewpoints are portrayed far from objectively, for the point is not to be objective but to capture the whole of a person at one point in his or her life, no matter what form that may take. Santos’s book is officially classified as a memoir, but he pushes against the confines of this category, alleging that it contains “a more mysterious theme than my life” (Personal interview). Because he engages in in-depth explorations of as many familial as personal elements and closely follows the events of his grandfather’s death, he argues the merits of the term with his editor: “I said to them, if it’s a memoir, then we should break ranks with all of these books that are coming out that people are into now. We should call it a book without a subject” (Personal interview). In his attempt to capture a variety of elements – his life, that of
his family, Mexican history and legend – he worries that readers will fail to appreciate
the complexity of his discussions if they read with pre-conceived ideas of what
memoir should entail.

In contrast, *Borderlands* is most often classified as testimonial writing, arguably the category that stands out the most from the others for presenting not only
an author’s story, but a deliberate depiction of an event or time period to be preserved
in public memory. For Anzaldúa, this is the ancient history of the Aztecs, their
homeland of Aztlán, and the effects of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Without
these narratives, such events are frequently in danger of being largely forgotten except
by those who directly witnessed them. Unlike memoir, then, this form of
autobiography takes on a complex relationship to the reader: not only must an author
write from a personal standpoint to those who would directly see themselves reflected
in the story, but those who stand completely outside of the depicted events must be
considered as well. The very nature of the testimonial form demands not only a
balance of personal and cultural stories, but also a balance of flexibility – so as to be
able to be read by a widely varied readership – and rigidity – in order to function as a
medium of staunch remembrance. These simultaneous and often contradictory goals
create a narrative that has, in the words of Chon Noreiga, “a complicated relationship
to the truth” (ix). Theresa Delgadillo argues, however, that although similar to the
testimonial form, Anzaldúa’s genre is one of her own making: “autohisteoria” (2). As
the name suggests, this “self-history” is neither the placement of a personal story into
the folds of history nor the application of history to an individual narrative, but a blend
of the two that also has a close connection to both personal and collective memory (20).

To understand the significance of this narrative form, it is necessary to briefly explore various views of the role of history in Chicano/a literature. In the opinion of Helena María Viramontes, the author of *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *Their Dogs Came With Them*, “I believe profoundly in the fact that writers do have to engage with their historical moment [because] we’re interested in putting the reader into the moment so that the reader can experience it” (83). In Chicano/a literature, history helps the reader understand the contextual significance of the story no matter their previous knowledge. A narrative without historical context risks depriving the reader of the opportunity to gain a meaningful understanding of the story.

However, many argue that looking too far back in history can be damaging. As Monika Kaup explains, “Looking and ‘understanding backward’ is at odds with living forward” (83). The “new order of American conquest and colonization” (28), for instance, is too new to be taken too far outside of the current moment. Kaup argues that this restriction should not only be acknowledged but accommodated. Moving the beginning of present Chicano/a literature up from 1848, for instance, allows narratives to be given a more specific, detailed, and accurate moral and historical framework through which a work can be read. María Montoya adds that, with the writers of the current generation reflecting a far different perception of history than those of even the last half century, it may soon “become difficult to define exactly what we mean by Chicano history” (184) at all. Setting a piece of literature
pre-1848 could divide the field at a time when it instead needs to be connected. Because of all the sweeping changes that have occurred in recent Chicano/a history, a deeply historical framework cannot easily be cross-applied to the present day.

Autohisteoria exists between both of these views. Like the first, it acknowledges history of long ago, such as the existence of the legendary, long-ago Chicano/a homeland of Aztlán; like the second, focusing strongly on the self within this framework uses a present moral context through which current events can be read. Unlike testimonial, which places a story into an historical framework, autohisteoria uses a circular structure to draw from history, apply it to the self, and then contextualize the self in that history.

Apart from discussions of the genre of her writings, the scholarship surrounding Gloria Anzaldúa’s literature broadly takes the form of either traditional analysis or personal essay (though there is a great degree of overlap between the two). As Anzaldúa is one of the seminal authors from the last forty years of Chicano/a literature and as her works *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) and *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) greatly opened up the field for her contemporaries, it is only fitting to examine the large array of responses she has received. Mary Pat Brady, for instance, in her article “Intermarginalia: Chiacana Spatiality and Sexuality in the World of Gloria Anzaldúa and Terri de la Pena” argues that *Borderlands* has “a keen investment in understanding spatiality” through its discussion of “border meanings and effects” (83). Focusing particularly on the poem “Interface,” she describes it as a quest to find hidden spaces between two pieces of substance and the attempt to journey into that
space for the sake of new self-discovery (85). This focus remains a connecting thread through much of the related scholarship.

Spatiality and the discussion of dually existing in two places, though, goes by many different names: AnaLouise Keating devotes an entire book, *EntreMundos/Among Words*, to this subject under the five names of autohistoria, nepantla, nos/otras, conocimiento, and El Mundo Zurdo/new tribalism (5). Within this fourth category of conocimiento, Jane Caputi explores Anzaldúa’s portrayal of shapeshifting, a concept that in other contexts is seen as inherently evil. She argues that readers must reject this common perception and accept that Anzaldúa’s “shapeshifting consciousness conceptualizes identity as something fluid and larger than the individual self” (188) and is therefore an integral part of her philosophy. Caputi connects this idea to biologist Rupert Sheldrake’s theory of “morphic fields,” “fields that by nature change their shape throughout time” (189) but retain a memory of their past form. In this way, “the past is present in that the field . . . guides the habitual repetition of that same pattern” (189, emphasis original). For her, Anzaldúa’s transformations are much the same: she may change shape, may shift her spiritual energies, but she remembers her past form and, in doing so, efficiently connects the past to the present in a seamless loop.

However, people are just as likely to write about their personal experience with Anzaldúa as they are about her literary technique. According to Keating in her book *Bridging*, one of the main ideas in Anzaldúa’s work is “risking the personal” (2). She explains that Anzaldúa draws heavily from her own life experiences, frequently
speaking about her early menstruation, diabetes, racism, poverty, and father’s death to act as a bridge to connect with her readers. Keating was especially drawn to this idea after Anzaldúa’s death, so she sent out a call to authors around the world to write essays about the woman and her work – the main requirement being that they follow the spirit of Anzaldúa by also “risking the personal.” The result was *Bridging*, a collection of essays that includes writing from authors of many different countries – Mexico, Italy, Canada, the U.S. – and various fields of study, including Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, and Ethnic Studies, all explaining that Anzaldúa made a significant difference in their lives and work.

One of these essays, “Making Face, Rompiendo Barreras: The Activist Legacy of Gloria E. Anzaldúa” by Aída Hurtado, presents three lessons that she believes Anzaldúa left with her and others. She explains that directly after Anzaldúa’s death, “With the outpouring of grief came the testimonials of what Anzaldúa had left behind through her writing, her art, and her life” (50) so that the time was bittersweet: a time of mourning, yes, but also a time of discovering what she had left behind in the world for people to remember and live by. Like Keating, Hurtado imparts the first lesson as “disclosure of self,” for “[s]he believed deeply that one could not have access to knowledge, much less produce it, without disclosing oneself in one’s work” (52). Hurtado urges readers to resist the convention of distance that editors try to force upon writers and instead use the self as a central point of focus, disclosing that when she herself was attempting this for the first time, it was a book of interviews between Anzaldúa and Keating that gave her confidence that what she was doing was possible.
From examining the personal comes greater understanding of the self, not for the sake of having it, but for writing it, sharing it, using it to connect to others. Anzaldúa’s second lesson, then, Hurtado explains, is to cross borders, no matter what the risk. Even though society is obsessed with assigning labels, Anzaldúa “reminds us that we are not alone, that we can form alliances with others similarly injured” (55-56) and by doing so, render the labels obsolete in favor of self-assurance. The third lesson is “living in kindness through commitment to social justice” (56), one that Hurtado emphasizes Anzaldúa enacted through both her writing and the way she lived her life. “Whenever she would do a guest lecture or a conference keynote,” for instance, “she thanked the organizers, the students conducting registration, and the service workers alike” (57), accentuating the connection between humans that she held dear.

This pattern is characteristic of many of the personal essays written about Anzaldúa: the author describes which aspects of her work touched them and changed them most deeply, how they incorporate her work into their own, and how others can use the same lessons in their own lives. Partly because of the strength of her work, partly because Anzaldúa emphasizes the personal so much in her own writing, many have a very intimate connection with the author. As a result, this has created a body of scholarship that is emotionally rich as well as analytically sound.

Though not as widely known as Anzaldúa, John Phillip Santos already has considerable credit to his name. Besides being the first Mexican-American Rhodes scholar, his memoir, *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* was a National Book Award finalist, and he has published in major periodicals such as the Los
Angeles Times and the New York Times. However, there has been very little scholarship written about his work to date. One of the main articles, Elizabeth Hayes Turner’s “John Phillip Santos and the Creation of Sacred Memory,” focuses particularly on the autobiographical aspect of Santos’s memoir, arguing that it is different from most southern autobiography because it is not a coming of age story nor is it written chronologically. Her isolated categorization gives her free reign to consider Santos’s presentation of memory in context only of itself. Hayes frequently walks a fine line in her analysis, for she admits both that unrecorded memories are unheard memories (thereby emphasizing the importance of memoirs) but that memories still exist without someone to remember them. Indeed, repeatedly in her exploration of Santos’s work, she emphasizes that the two ideas should not be thought of as being mutually exclusive, but rather that the two can exist simultaneously, that neither scenario is entirely positive or negative, that one can lead to the other, and that when one disappears, the other may yet remain.

Hayes further argues that the preservation of memories directly connects to the idea of female divinity by pointing out that Santos repeatedly seeks connection, protection, and stories from his grandmothers and great aunts. Another unique element of his memoir, she claims, is that Santos not only allows the presence of female mysticism but embraces it, an approach that lies in contrast to the common southern literary discussions of religion and morality. By placing the power of mysticism in his female relatives, he effectively grants them a connection beyond that of mere human memory that resembles divinity. This, Hayes explains, is the key to
sacred memory, for without this self-divinity, real or fabricated, recollections are precarious. They depend upon weak channels of human communication, so by elevating their status to divine remembrance, Santos grants a permanence and a gravity to his writing that would not otherwise exist.

Besides Hayes’s article, very little has been written on Santos, and what does exist also mainly focuses on memory. My own analysis will work to fill that gap by concentrating on less-explored elements in his memoir, such as code-switching, literal and metaphorical borders, and exile. Santos’s literature shares many elements with Anzaldúa’s: both are set in the borderlands in southern Texas, both authors take a very personal approach to their work, and both write in poetry. Therefore, placing it in conjunction with this seminal text can only prove beneficial for increased understanding.

Another major element for Santos and Anzaldúa as well as a variety of other Chicano/a authors and critics is the manufacturing of space along the U.S./Mexico border. After 1848, land, instead of being taken for granted as the site of home, community, and livelihood, was suddenly “produced space, social space, inscribed with ideologies and the site of social conflict” (Kaup 29). Quickly, Chicano/as “translated their understanding of their spatial dispossession into a weapon of protest, a spatial poetics and politics of resistance” (29). Much of this resistance takes the form of writings, whether essays, poems, or novels. As author Santa Barraza explains, “My artistic vision comes from this timeless land. It comes from looking at the South Texas horizon line and observing the land melting into the sky – the two merging
together in infinity. I am entranced by the combination of these opposing forces” (19). For her, as two separate entities that come together in one place to blend, the land and the sky represent Chicano/as: half indigino, half Anglo, Mexican-Americans are a parallel manifestation of the literal border. Her focus on the place where these elements come together as both division and union allows her to move past discussions of dichotomy and instead focus on diversity and nuances within those separate elements.

The border has also developed a variety of metaphorical meanings over the years apart from its literal presence, being presented as not only as a divide between countries but between the self. Viramontes explains that no matter where you go, “You carry the border with you. You don’t have to be near the borderlands to understand that transgression, that violence, in terms of the mind, the heart, and the imagination” (85). Her border is the violence with which Chicano/as are always faced, the self-hatred they are taught and the internal divisions between cultures that many often cannot move past. This border relationship frequently happens in the south but can also occur in California or anywhere in the northern half of the country. By writing metaphorically, Chicano/a literature developed simultaneously into a protest, a cry for help, and a celebration. Theresa Delgadillo even goes as far as to suggest that the border can represent “the age of globalization, the conditions of the world and its people” in microcosm (5). Anzaldúa metaphorically captures the essence of the borderlands when she incorporates a “mestizaje of genres, including poetry and prose, historiography, autobiography, ethnography, and utopian discourse” (Kaup 37), and
indeed, “Chicano writing from South Texas is a showcase of... blurred genres” (36) in general. As John Akers argues, however, “Fragmentation does not signal chaos or disintegration in Chicano/a literature; to the contrary, its development is a reflection of a consciously chosen path to bring readers to a deeper experience of the unique cultural identity of the Chicano” (qtd. in Martín-Rodríguez 26: 124). While discussion of borders may be a form of resistance against Anglo ideals, it is not necessarily a criticism of their existence; rather, authors use this fragmentation to communicate a vital, deeply-rooted, and accepted part of the Chicano/a culture: that even though duality of identity may create division within a person and a culture, that division is an integral part of being Chicano/a.

There are some authors, however, who warn that border writing should not drift too far into the metaphorical, cautioning, “I want people to see the border as a real place and not just as a metaphor. I really very much resent it when it is just a literary trope” (Sáenz 52). Even though bridges, divides, and borders are appropriate imagery to discuss divisions between communities and individuals, and even though those divisions may exist away from the U.S.-Mexico border geographically, the importance of the literal border should not be diminished. As much as the cultural richness, complexity of border identity, and border violence may exist elsewhere, the physical location is necessary to capture the essence of these realities.

Another pair of elements that is frequently discussed is the dual use of languages, particularly English and Spanish. Viramontes explains that even though she herself does not speak Spanish, she still uses it in her novels because her
characters – and therefore her readers, after whom they are modeled – would. Even though the linguistic inspiration does not come from her person, the obligation she has to reflect her readers gives her a natural understanding that Spanish is a necessary part of her writing. Without it, her work would reflect too much of herself and not enough of her audience. Benjamin Sáenz, author of *The House of Forgetting* among other works, feels similarly compelled to include both languages in his work. Being bilingual, he describes his use of Spanish as more instinctual, saying, “it comes to me when I am writing. I never go back and put it in, never. That would ring false to me” (58). Rather than the reader, his main inspiration for writing in both languages derives from his philosophy that “language is untranslatable” (48). Although there are equivalents for different words, he believes, because so much cultural connotation is lost between those equivalents, direct translation is impossible (48). Being able to use both languages allows Sáenz a wider selection of connections to straddle both cultures without compromising either. Similarly, he is also staunchly against italicizing the Spanish words he includes because “you italicize a foreign language, and for the author, Spanish is not a foreign language” (58). He believes that using a different format for Spanish than for English favors the latter both linguistically and culturally, so in his mind, doing so is best avoided.

Lourdes Torres argues that “code-switching is an artistic choice with political ramifications” (76). For her, code-switching rebels against mainstream publishers and Anglicized ideals that constantly attempt to assimilate Chicano/as and suppress their Spanish. Like the borderlands, “code-switching in literature is not only metaphorical,
but represents a reality where segments of the population are living between cultures and languages; literary language actualizes the discourse of the border and bilingual/bicultural communities” (76). She divides the levels of code-switching that occur into three categories: using Spanish words commonly understood by monolingual English speakers, providing varying degrees of translations, and inserting Spanish at will regardless of the level of reader comprehension. Torres admits that the first two have the potential to capture a portion of Chicano/a culture but also argues that Spanish words can be used in Anglicized ways that reinforce people’s mainstream perceptions and understanding of that culture. She advocates for the last because it preserves both Anglicized and Chicano/a heritage in equal measure and makes it difficult to translate to either English or Spanish without losing a vital element of the text.

Despite the rejection of the above dichotomies within Chicano/a literature, one of the main criticisms by Chicana writers in particular has been that female voices have been stifled within the structure of male patriarchy (Kaup 41). Noriega emphasizes one aspect of this structure in the linguistic distance female identity takes in Chicano/a culture, pointing out that the terms “indigenas, mestizas, Chicanas” (21), all necessitate emphasis of the femininity of the subjects to whom they refer. Further, because the ideas of home and homeland are central to Chicano/a literature, the literal structure of a house with set gender rules has made the transition to literature as well. Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* exemplifies this concept perfectly, for she structures a series of vignettes around a house in which her many female figures
feel trapped. Even the name of the book ("Mango Street" = "Man Go Street") makes it clear that men move around freely outside, but women are placed in the structure of a home. In reality, this rigid structure makes it difficult for women to deal with their own complicated identity within a configuration that is not designed to accommodate them.

Recently, Chicanas have made a deliberate effort to counter this, and once again, Anzaldúa has contributed largely to this effort by inserting herself so prominently and so boldly into the male canon (Kaup 41). In opposition to previous male structures, Chicana feminism counters nationalism by doubly displacing. Because the house is a place of male rule, they must first divorce themselves from their home before distancing themselves from their culture (81); additionally, in *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa explains how she had to leave home in order to discover herself, because since in her previous environment her gendered and sexual identity were neither accepted nor understood by others, she, too, was unable to understand them. By leaving, she recreates not only herself, but the relationship that Chicanas can have to their homeland: “To carry home on her back means that home belongs to the mestiza, rather than the mestiza belonging into the home” (86), a concept that in turn opens the way for a geographical remapping of what ‘home’ means entirely.

Additionally, exile is another concept that Santos, Anzaldúa, and many others explore in depth. In writing on Santos’s memoir, *Places*, one writer comments that “a powerful and distinct Latino voice has emerged, testifying to the Latino condition as one of perpetual exile” (Agosín). Indeed, this is only a logical conclusion to draw
based on the wealth of Chicano/a literature that explores this very concept.

Viramontes reflects on a conversation she had with a fellow Chicano/a writer and how he told her, “Helena, you’re an exile. You are writing like you are an exile.” It made me laugh, and I said, ‘Well, what do you mean?’ She said, ‘Everything is so minute. Everything is so detailed. That’s the way the exile remembers,’ and I thought, ‘Well, maybe I do feel like I am in exile in Ithaca, New York!’” (82). Born and raised in Los Angeles, Viramontes’s insight that she feels out of place in New York, that she feels herself an exile, only makes sense. Writing about topics that live far away from the northern end of the country, it is natural that she would feel cut off from her roots and her past. Significantly, however, Viramontes emphasizes that she was not only willing but eager to spend time on the other side of the United States, because she can write more effectively about her past the farther she is from it. This self-imposed exile allowed her to reflect more completely on conditions that would have been too close to see fully if she had remained in Los Angeles, so while this time in exile separates her, it also brings her closer to herself.

Raúl Homero Villa explores some of these ideas in Viramontes’s short story, “Neighbors,” arguing that the main character of Aura experiences an exilic condition both through her literal living space and through the more abstract cultural connections from which she lives apart. As he contextually explains, “the juggernaut of Los Angeles’ postwar development effected its devastations upon a wide cross section of the Chicano community” (111) by dividing it neatly in two, and in doing so, diving people between themselves. By living separate from much of their formerly
cohesive society, Chicano/as would inevitably feel something missing from their lives. Often, this division would manifest itself in the writing of authors who lived in such a scenario. In Viramontes’s story, “As with so many other barriological expressions, the telling (anti-)monument of these hegemonic spatial practices is the ubiquitous freeway system cutting through the barrio” (125-126). Villa does not go so far as to say that the location of the highways was decided for the purpose of dividing the Chicano/a community, but he does imply that the division was no large concern of the designers. In the story, Aura lives her life largely alone, respecting what she perceives to be her neighbors’ boundaries and in turn expecting people to respect her own. In doing so, she effectively completes the self-suppression of exile that the freeway system began by creating even deeper metaphorical and literal borders both within herself and between herself and others. Indeed, “Viramontes’ words and scenes point out the near impossibility of escape from residential containment and social death-in-life for residents of the contemporary barrio” (121-122), all because of the highway design. Though Viramontes sets her story on the east side of Los Angeles, Villa argues that its ideas can be cross-applied to the borderlands and any other location where a Chicano/a community resides. Inevitably, some division will occur, whether it be as concrete as crisscrossing streets or more subtly manifested from without or within, and in this division comes the unavoidable imposition of exile.

While other approaches to Chicano/a exile are widely varied, what remains consistent is a parallel between literal exile (that centered around the southern United States border) and metaphorical (that expressed as internal self-division).
Because academic attention to Chicano/a literature has been relatively new, the literary theory applied to it has developed fairly recently, mostly in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the rise of the Chicano/a movement. One major theory, as Octavio Romano explained in 1969, is “cultural nationalism” (37). Under this category, the first widespread sub-categorical theoretical approach of “historical confrontation theory” was postulated by Americo Padedes in his book *With a Pistol in His Hand*, “dedicated totally to the study of a Chicano/a literary subject” and “based on the theory that literature should be studied in a social context” (Leal 108). Padedes’s work particularly applied to poetry, but his stance that social context is integral to understanding Chicano/a literature no matter the genre persisted and has been used as a foundation for many literary theories since its original appearance in 1958. This idea argues that even though current social context is important to the process of understanding literature, without historical context of the events and ideas as well, the current aspect means little.

In the last fifty years, though many critics have incorporated historical confrontation theory in their work, out of this approach has risen the debate of indigenismo vs criollismo, the former the “investigation and reclamation of the indigenous ancestry of Chicana/os” (Pizarro 62) and the latter focusing on the European heritage. The following for criollismo never reached the numbers that indigenismo attracted, but for a decade it attempted to explain many of the elements of Chicano/a literature as mainly deriving from Mexicans’ Spanish ancestors. In contrast, indigenismo was appealing for a wide variety of critics and still retains a small
following today who wish to study Chicano/a literature through the lens of the influence of Mexico’s original inhabitants. This debate continued throughout the 1960s, with indigenismo continuing to draw larger amounts of critics, until it began to be considered a separate theory entirely. However, although it was treated as a separate category, it mainly acted as a literary category; others theories of the time had strong cultural ties that manifested in everyday life, but the acknowledgment of indigenous cultural and historical influence operated more in academia. It received criticism for this disconnect as well as for its emphasis on the past. Scholars argued that although the origins of Mexican culture should be understood, using historical context as the primary lens through which to view literature detracted from current social issues (Leal 110).

As a result of this criticism and conflict, both indigenismo and criollismo were consolidated around 1970 into the still prevalent theory of cultural mestizaje that accepted both indigenous and Spanish cultural influences. Cultural mestizaje appropriately places equal emphasis on elements from both continents as well as the new components that resulted from the mixing of the two. Conversely, this mixed nationalism is sometimes described as being neither indigenous nor European but as the legendary nation of Aztlán. For example, the poem “Canto espiritual de Aztlán,” presented at the First Chicano Youth Conference in 1969 by its author, Alurista, equated Aztlán to the Southwest, and in doing so, established a nation independent of Mexican or European geography if studied through the lens of cultural nationalism.
Hight 28

In general, instead of treating cultural elements as entirely deriving from the past, cultural nationalism adds a context of current cultural connection as well.

Another theoretical approach to Chicano/a literature popularized by Tomás Rivera and Manuel M. Martín-Rodríguez around 1971 was the theory of reader relations. As Rivera argues, “Chicano literature should help the reader or the listener to understand herself or himself” (114). Though relatively little has been written specifically on the concept of author-reader relationship – one large exception being Martín-Rodríguez’s book *Life in Search of Readers* – because Chicano/a literature is so often autobiographical and takes into account which readers will encounter the work in order to reflect them within it, Rivera and Martín-Rodríguez both advocate for more writing to be studied through this lens of readership (Rivera 114; Martín-Rodríguez 1). This theoretical approach contains two distinct elements: how the author caters to the reader to create literature with a unique blend of author and potential readership; and how the reader responds in turn to the literature produced.

Even in autobiography, many authors also consider their readership a crucial element to be taken into account. As Ramón Saldívar explains, “Even in its most private and self-indulgent confessional style, a published autobiographical is after all addressed to a public, historically real readership” (160). However, this writer-reader relationship is not a one-way transfer. Instead of the author simply acknowledging the reader, in the process of writing, the author becomes his or her readership, who then becomes part of the author to create a circular relationship between the two. In Chicano/a literature, “to focus on the self is not a selfish act” because the self is
collective (Noreiga vii) and simultaneously, “to be for the collective meant also to be for oneself” (Saldívar 169). The author writes not to the reader, but about the reader, and by reading these stories, the audience also absorbs a part of the author.

Viramontes explains that a contract exists between an author and her readers (89) and that as a result, not only does each party take on characteristics of the other, but the effort of the novel does not entirely lie with the author. Instead, in the process of reading, the audience must reflect back a piece of the writer whether by making an effort to understand the deeper nuances of the work, making a linguistic compromise, or accepting an alternative perspective. Simultaneously, “The intent of much of the poetry, drama, and prose of this period is to get the reader/listener to be able to rejoice in the recognition of his/her own life and cultural experience as portrayed in the literary works” (Martín-Rodríguez 16). When a Chicano/a author considers his or her readership, then, the ultimate goal is to both challenge and celebrate them. This theory is one of the newest in Chicano/a studies and is still growing in scope.

A last major approach to Chicano/a literature is the concept of internal colonialism. This idea applies the traditional elements of colonialism to the relationship between Chicano/as and the United States government and society, arguing that Chicano/as occupy the same space that a colonized nation would under colonialism. As Gilbert González explains, “It is really the structure of oppression that is the essence of the internal colony situation” (155) and pieces of literature are “conscious attempts to control [class conflict and imperialistic] struggles” (154). This theory gained widespread precedence in 1969 with Robert Blauner’s groundbreaking
article, “Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt.” The next year, Joan Moore applied the model specifically to Chicano/a studies in her article, “Colonialism: The Case of the Mexican Americans.” There, she breaks down internal colonialism into three main categories: classic colonialism, conflict colonialism, and economic colonialism that she loosely describes as operating mainly in New Mexico, Texas, and California, respectively (463). Internal colonialism gained momentum for the next decade, but “by the 1980s, the theory had been critiqued and dismissed as inadequate for ignoring class and gender among other matters” (Chávez, “Aliens” 786). Though the use of the terminology remained widespread, critiques using internal colonialism as a main lens for viewing Chicano/a literature largely died out.

Recently, however, the model’s persistent existence and accuracy has attracted the attention of scholars who have postulated that it should be re-examined in light of today’s social and political context (797). Priscilla Lujan Falcón’s 1995 article, “The Doorkeepers: Education and Internal Settler Colonialism, the Mexican Experience,” for instance, frames internal colonialism in terms of U.S. education policy. In it, she argues that the lack of balanced racial and ethnic teachings are not merely the result of strained resources, but a deliberate effort to “to reappropriate identity, history, culture, and nationhood – all of which lead toward the full development of the person in their rehumanization from the state of dehumanization under colonialism” (119). Under this model, dropping out of school is frequently considered a form of resistance to such colonial teachings by redefining priorities. Unfortunately, distancing oneself from the educational system allows it to continue its current practices, which creates a
self-perpetuating cycle of internal colonial suppression. Falcón goes so far as to term this “cultural genocide” (125), for there is no official medium through which Chicano/a culture is conveyed in its entirety. John Stone widens this lens to apply to the world economy, arguing that internal colonialism models inevitably have various deficiencies when applied to regional economies alone (281). Viewing the overall Chicano/a economic condition in worldwide terms, however, makes it apparent that more parallels exist between them and third world economies than with the economy of the United States.

Once again, though, other critics are pushing back against this model, arguing that it is outdated and prohibitively limited in its scope. In her 2000 article, “Beyond Internal Colonialism: Class, Gender, and Culture as Challenges to Chicano Identity,” María E. Montoya explains that as the classic term “Chicano experience” is a misnomer in light of the broad variety of backgrounds that exist today, internal colonialism is too homogenous to effectively deal with this diversity of experience. Giving Chicano/a studies separate models of analysis is, she finds, regressive in the sense that it continues to view Chicano/a history as separate from American history, setting up an “‘us versus them’ model of Anglos against Chicanos” (186). Some of the most pertinent issues that need to be explored, then – namely class, gender, and cultural diversity – are ignored in favor of a one-size-fits-all approach, severely limiting the insight that can be gained. Instead, Montoya encourages her readers to branch out of this model that and indeed, out of Chicano/a studies as a whole, to reject
the constraints that have been imposed upon them and to connect with a wider variety of people outside the discipline.

Despite its criticisms, I have selected the internal colonialism model for my own analysis, for I find it provides a useful framework for my examination of borders and memory, code-switching, and exile. I acknowledge its limitations by allowing it to structure my exploration of Anzaldúa and Santos’s works without driving it. As a result, I argue that from the perspective of these authors, internal colonialism, rather than solely inhibiting the freedom of individual and collective Chicano/a identity, allows it to grow and expand. Although it is a theory grounded in the power of space, I explore how it is applied to time as well: from reclaiming memories of the past, to bridging multiple divides through code-switching in the present, to embracing the de facto exilic condition as a way of moving forward into a new literal and metaphorical space, internal colonialism can act as a means of empowerment as easily as a tool of oppression. Though this empowerment does not apply to all situations and has a long-term rather than a short-term focus, through the following chapters, a reader can begin to understand how Anzaldúa and Santos directly challenge traditional notions of internal colonialism and reshape it for their own ends.
“Liberation comes with the knowledge of who we are, what we are, where we came from, and where we are going” (Benavidez 1).

The ancient land of Aztlán, “the Edenic place of origin of the Mexica” (Chávez, Lost 8) is a constant fixture in Chicano/a literature and folklore. As legend goes, the Aztecs (literally meaning ‘people of Aztlán’) lived in this paradisal land for tens of thousands of years. They began migrating south “into what is now Mexico and Central America” (Anzaldúa, Borderlands 26) around 1000 B.C. with the last of the people leaving in 1168 A.D. and eventually settling in Mexico City. They stayed there until the Spanish attacked in the 16th century. After this conquest, “Spanish chroniclers, relying on native informants. . . placed Aztlán in the Southwest; in fact it was probably in Nayarit, only four hundred miles northwest of Mexico City” (Chávez, Lost 8). When the Chicano/a movement rose to prominence in 1970, however, the theory of Aztlán as the southwestern United States became politically useful, for it reinforced the belief that this land belonged to those of Mexican descent rather than Anglo settlers and became a rallying point for many involved in the movement. Today, the name “Aztlán” is still frequently invoked in literature, scholarship, and politics.

Indeed, the concept of Aztlán is so strong that it essentially acts as collective memory, despite the inexact knowledge of the specifics of its location. When viewed through the lens of internal colonialism, where one lays claim to the land upon which one lives by ancient birthright, the memory that exists as a part of it becomes even
more tangible. As Benavidez’s epigraph illustrates, within such memory and knowledge of the past also comes a freedom to claim or create individual and collective identities, a freedom that allows us to stop perpetually asking questions of who we are and where we are going, and start providing answers to those questions.

In *Borderlands* and *Places*, Anzaldúa and Santos, respectively, investigate the nuances of the possession of or lack of memories within the Chicano/a community, specifically of those who live within the borderlands near the United States-Mexico divide. Although their works are different in form, as the former is mainly comprised of Tex-Mex poetry and political essays, and the latter is a memoir, both authors frequently speak to similar themes, despite their dissimilar methods for conveying their messages.

In exploring his familial memories, for instance, Santos opens his memoir with a question from his great-aunt Madrina: “Have all the Santos already died?” (*Places* 3). Initially, the inquiry seems almost comical, for as she directs this question to a member of the Santos family, it seems to answer itself. Of course the Santos have not died; there is one in the room with her as she asks. The actual response she receives from Santos’s aunt Connie, though, is “Si, Madrina, ya se murieron todos los Santos. All of the Santos have died” (4). Santos engages his first chapter in pondering this answer, wondering who he is if all of the Santos are indeed dead, how or whether he is connected to his ancestors, and to what extent his own effect on the future will be different from that his family members had on the past. These questions drive his subsequent exploration into his family’s history across both Mexico and the United
States, leading him to closely examine to what extent the apparent divide between him and his ancestors actually exists and how it affects his own identity.

Anzaldúa, too, integrates history into *Borderlands* early on, but of a larger variety: “The oldest evidence of humankind in the U.S. – the Chicanos’ ancient Indian ancestors,” she explains, “was found in Texas and has been dated to 35000 B.C. . . In 1000 B.C., descendants of the original Cochise people migrated into what is now Mexico and Central America and became the direct ancestors of many of the Mexican people” (*Borderlands* 26). This historical context prefaces her account of how Anglos took over much of Mexico in the 1800s, stealing not only the land but also the people’s culture, language, citizenship, and political power and leading to the marginalization of Chicano/as that still permeates U.S. society today. Anzaldúa argues that, in essence, by displacing Chicano/a history with their own, Anglos effectively denied them a meaningful place in society, for as she explains in an interview, “You’re given only two choices: assimilate completely or separate out completely” (Lara 51). This forced choice inevitably leads to a suppression of a significant part of Chicano/a identity, no matter which choice people make in that binary.

However, as Mariana Ortega argues, “We are multiplicitous beings with inner borders that confuse us, betray us, but also empower us” (83). Similarly, both Anzaldúa and Santos acknowledge the inherently divisive nature of borders, but they further argue that this divide provides a space to claim a degree of power, not in spite of the division, but because of it. In this chapter, then, I will examine how each author
explores the power within that divide. Specifically, I argue that one of the most direct ways to assert that power is through the reclamation of memories, for the self-understanding that comes about as a result first leads naturally to individual liberation, and finally to personal and cultural empowerment.

Before delving into his own reclamation of memory, Santos establishes how, as a child, the past was constantly being snatched away from him. In the first chapter, his relationship to his past is briefly symbolized by a wooden star of his grandmother’s “that had a different swatch of old Mexican fabrics glued on each facet” (Places 7) that he discovers as a boy. Knowing little else about the star except that his grandmother had presumably brought it with her from Mexico, Santos associates the object with the mysteries of his ancestral past, believing that it could help to satisfy at least some of his unanswered questions. When he asks his grandmother if he can have it, however, she refuses, and he never sees the star again. For Santos, her act of taking the star away denies him not only the object, but significant knowledge of the past as well. There are very few items in their family that were brought over from Mexico, and the star is one of the only physical connections he has to that time. “The multicolored curiosity smelled like Mexico,” he explains, “all cumin, wild honey, and smoky rose, and when you shook it, a small solitary object rattled inside” (7). It communicates Mexico to him in a multisensory experience that makes both the object and the country more tangible. He sees it for years, drawing a little closer to it every time, but the moment he tries to claim it, it is taken away.
Because the past is so frequently denied to him, Santos initially tries to hold onto it all the more firmly. Even as a child, he rebels against any historical divide: whenever his family made the trip between “the Guerra ranch, Rancho Los Generales, in the Serrania del Burro, near where the Garcias and the Santos come from in Coahuila. . .”, he explains, “I’d bring back some rocks and twigs and flowers from the ranch to toss out of the car windows onto Texas earth as we entered San Antonio. In this way, I thought I could begin to sew the two worlds together again” (58). Through his actions, he rejects his family’s interpretation of their move from Mexico to the United States as a break from their past lives. Similarly, when his great-aunt asks the question, “Have all the Santos already died,” he is initially puzzled. Santos sees himself and the rest of his generation as part of the “same great tapestry of a tale begun long, long ago” (4), and any break in the line as antithetical to this image. Gradually, though, he realizes that several members of his family are willing, if not eager, to forget the past, to push it down and refuse to pass it on until it is lost for good. By denying Santos access to family heirlooms and stories, for instance, they create a sharp divide between himself and anyone who has memories of living in Mexico, partially burying the past. Simultaneously, though, he impresses upon his readers that in the attempt to reclaim his past by exploring Texas and Mexico, he realized that “in the timeless language of stone, river, wind, and trees. . . the land remains, as the original book of the family,” and that it “was always meant to be handed down” (9-10). In the traditional sense, then – in the vein that his great-aunt Madrina asks the question – he is not a Santos. He and his generation have not been given the applicable
memories, heirlooms, and experiences of past Santos, so the old family line as it existed is dying out; however, although Santos lives at the beginning of a new era, he has still been given the tools to connect to past generations.

To frame this idea, Santos opens his book with a poem, the first lines of which read, “I learned to breathe this way/when I left that body made of ashes, river water, copal, and huisache flowers” (n.pag.). Here, as he frequently does, he is referring to his grandfather, Juan José, who drowned before Santos was born. Although much of memoir is designed around Juan José’s memory, significantly, these opening lines are the only place in the poem that Santos refers directly to the man; the rest is spent in explaining parts of himself, the land, and his family as a whole. By placing the only direct reference to death right at the beginning, Santos rejects the common trope that death is an ending, implying instead that it holds a beginning, not necessarily in the sense that the spirits of the dead begin everlasting life, but that each death renews those who are still left on earth and gives them a new beginning perspective. Indeed, Santos only “learned to breathe this way,” – this way being “When my breath was South... My eyes were mirrors, my heart was wind,” – after his grandfather died. Throughout his memoir, as Santos reveals the stories surrounding Juan José one by one, he implicitly explains that this line between life and death is not just a border between physical and spirit worlds, but a turning point in the lives of those affected by death. For Santos, his grandfather’s death acts as a catalyst for his lifelong pursuit of familial and historical exploration, providing the initial step for him to connect to past memories.
Even more significant is his emphasis of borders between life and death in his shift between “ashes, / river water, copal, and huisache flowers.” First, dividing the lines between ‘ashes’ and ‘river water’ gives both Santos and the reader a slight pause between the two. For a moment, they hover on the first word and the ideas associated with it that are both symbolic of death – but the pause is just long enough that readers have a brief moment to remind themselves that ashes can also indicate new beginnings (such as forest fires that clear the old, underground brush to make way for new life or volcanic ash that enriches soil). The phrase ‘river water’ also embodies these dual sentiments. On the side of death is Juan José’s demise in a river, but on the side of life, the deeply-rooted association between water and renewal. ‘Copal,’ a word appropriately derived from Nahuatl, quite literally embodies two ideas, for it is the intermediate stage in the transformation between soft resins and hard amber. Finally, huisache flowers have a natural resilience that allows them to continue returning to full strength no matter how many times they have been disturbed. Though they may be taken close to death, they will nearly always return back to life.

His order of these four concepts is very deliberate. Arguably, the harshest connotation of the four words lies in ‘ashes,’ for it speaks primarily of death while the other three allude to nature. ‘River water’ also contains an immediate connection to death through Juan José, though, because this connection is present only if viewed in context of the memoir, the connotation is lighter. This gradation continues through the other two terms, ending on huisache flowers, the most celebratory of life out of the four for its incredible resilience. In the course of these two lines and four words,
Santos makes a rapid but smooth transition from death to life. The border between the two is not distinctly apparent, but it is there nonetheless. Santos’s use of these particular four concepts, then, is by no means accidental: all contain dual elements that emphasize the border between life and death, a border of transformation, but by being embodied within the same object, they also connect the two sides of the border by virtue of being self-contained.

Santos follows this same shift from death to life in his larger exploration of familial history. In one way, he has had a friendly attitude toward death from a young age, for as he explains,

I never understood people’s fascination with immortality. The idea of life without end gave me chills. Even as a kid, I wanted to be among my family and my ancestors, walking through our short time together, fully knowing it will end. I wanted to bind Texas and Mexico together like a raft strong enough to float out onto the ocean of time, with our past trailing in the wake behind us like a comet tail of memories. (5)

Although he does not specifically elaborate on this sentiment, within context of the chapter, it communicates a realization that Santos makes as he travels between Mexico and Texas: that sometimes, memories should not be passed down. By denying him stories or heirlooms, Santos’s ancestors provided a means for him to discover his heritage for himself in his own way, which allows his discoveries to become more tangible. Immortality would create a straight, unbroken line of memory without any need for reclamation; similarly, unbroken communication between generations would eliminate Santos’s desire to knit the two countries together. When his aunt Madrina asks if all the Santos have died, then, she is only questioning whether her era has come
to an end. By the end of the chapter, in his realization that inherited memory has little meaning while rediscovered memory is infinitely more precious, he reflects her way of thinking, saying, “All the Santos have died. I am one of their survivors” (26). This statement no longer holds confusion or his previous slight resentment, but is rather an expression of pride.

Anzaldúa, too, uses her exploration of the connection between borders and memories to bridge traditional divisions. In her exploration of *Borderlands*, Jane Caputi explains that the etymology of the word ‘shape’ “derives from a group of words that mean to ‘form’ and to ‘create,’ and, curiously, to ‘scratch’” (190). She then argues that Anzaldúa makes great use of this etymological connection through her frequent discussion of shapeshifting, a transformation which requires starting at the beginning “from scratch.” Because Anzaldúa also encourages this shapeshifting as a way to move forward, Caputi further points out that within this link between ‘shape’ and ‘scratch’ is also a connection between past and future. These ideas can be understood through context of the poem, “*Canción de la diosa de la noche,*” or, “Song of the goddess of the night.” In this poem, Anzaldúa describes an imaginary journey from the moon in the shape of a vine to the earth, where she is given a human body, with a final resting place in the depths of the ground.

In the poem, Anzaldúa takes on the persona of this “goddess of the night” and through her, undertakes several physical transformations, one of which (vine to human) occurs within the first two stanzas:
I am a vine
creeping down the moon.
I have no keeper.

I fall into this world.
The Mother, catching me in her net,
entangles me in human flesh. (*Borderlands* 218)

Identity transformation is frequently viewed as a change that occurs gradually along one’s life: each lesson learned, each new experience shifts one’s viewpoint and therefore one’s personality in a distinct direction, slowly covering up the old by creating a layer of new. This continues throughout life until, at the end, a person is theoretically layered from old to new, and by pulling back the newest layers, what previously existed can be found underneath. Anzaldúa challenges this straightforward theory of transformation. Rather than being cloaked, covered, or clothed in human form, she is intricately entangled in it, her previous vine-like form intertwining with her new humanity. Peeling back layers to see what came before would be impossible, because there are no layers; rather, to discover her previous form, one must undertake the more complicated task of understanding the relationship between vine and human and how one leads to the other. Further, Anzaldúa also combines nature (in the form of the vine) with humanity with goddesses, both through her reference to “the Mother” and through her own character of “the goddess of the night.” Caputi explains that “[a] shapeshifting consciousness conceptualizes identity as something fluid and larger than the individual self. By definition, it acknowledges the elemental identity of all being, the intrinsic, original, and ongoing wholeness, interconnection, and transformation of being” (188). By combining these three elements, this is precisely the consciousness
that Anzaldúa communicates. The goddess she personifies in the poem is not a separate entity from the human or from nature, but so intricately combined that it is impossible to tell where one stops and the other beings.

Anzaldúa continues this motif of identity interconnectedness with the lines, “To cast out the brute, / I shake earth, air, fire, and water/in the lunar sistrum” (Borderlands 218). Important here is her use of a sistrum, an ancient Egyptian instrument often played to honor Hathor, the goddess of femininity and death. When shaken, the metal rings on a sistrum clang together, creating a pleasant cacophony. Here, the four elements embody the rings, and the sound they make together is dependent upon the deliberate action of being played by a goddess for a goddess. Tellingly, the line directly after is, “I devour the roses of Isis.” Isis, another Egyptian goddess, is often used interchangeably with Hathor, a connection that makes the rest of the elements of the poem up to this point suddenly clear. Directly before she shakes the sistrum, Anzaldúa’s persona is being threatened by a “brute” whose “horns pin me to the ground” (218), but she drives him off by shaking the sistrum. In that moment, she is a goddess whose tangled form encompasses both nature and humanity; she invokes two other goddesses, Hathor and Isis, who blend together in close proximity; and she does it all by combining the four elements into one unifying sound. Essential in this moment is not any false separation between these entities, but that the combination of all of them in the same moment acts as the empowering mechanism that Anzaldúa uses to drive off the attacking brute and reclaim her chosen interconnectedness.
Of further significance are the lines, “I pass / through the gate, / come to the path on the left” (219). The first item of note here is that Anzaldúa’s use of ‘the gate’ signifies a specific location, though no location is explicitly given. A reader can note, however, that this gate and the nearby path have no direct spatial relationship. She does not come down the path to the gate, nor does she step onto the path from the gate; rather, the path is simply near the gate. Since these items are deliberately placed together in the poem, though, it follows logically that the two items, plus the implied fence (for what use is a gate without a fence on either side?) are related by purpose if not by spatiality. One credible conclusion is that the gate and fence are in place to keep people separate from the path; nonetheless, Anzaldúa defies this attempted separation and approaches the path. Secondly significant is that she specifies that she approaches the path “on the left.” Alone, this path would have no hard and fast direction, no forward or backward, no right and no left, its direction rather being conditional depending on the perspective of any travelers upon it. By matter-of-factly stating that she does indeed approach it from one specific direction, Anzaldúa communicates to the reader that there was never any choice in which way to travel down this path, at least for her. Left is the only possible option, she implies, lending a deterministic twist to the poem. Thirdly, when taken in context of the rest of *Borderlands*, a reader can rationally conclude that “the” gate and “the” path are no hypothetical creations, but rather representations of the very real U.S./Mexico border, its checkpoints, and the trails, metaphorical and literal, that lead away from it. The initial direction that Anzaldúa would have been traveling in, then, would be north.
Upon hitting the path, she turns left, or west, and shifts from traveling along a north-south line to a symbolic east-west trajectory. Near the beginning of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa describes a period of monumental change in her ancestors’ lives, the time when the Aztecs left their land in 1168 A.D. and traveled to the place (that later became Mexico City) where an eagle with a writhing serpent in its beak perched on a cactus. The eagle symbolizes the spirit (as the sun, the father); the serpent symbolizes the soul (as the earth, the mother). . . The symbolic sacrifice of the serpent to the ‘higher’ masculine powers indicates that the patriarchal order had already vanquished the feminine and matriarchal order in pre-Columbian America. (27)

In the poem, Anzaldúa’s shift in direction from north to east acts as a symbolic reclamation of the previously lost matriarchal order, for not only is left typically associated with the feminine, but Anzaldúa travels toward the direction of the setting sun – toward the coming of night and the presence of the moon, another feminine symbol. In doing so, she travels a literal path that many before her have walked – from Mexico north to the United States, then east or west, depending – but because she walks it in the context of reclamation, where her feet touch, the path is created anew. If we accept Caputi’s idea that an organism’s identity is found not in its shape but in its pattern of life (Caputi 189), then what matters is not whether Anzaldúa travels the path in the form of a vine or a human, but that by traversing it with deliberate intention, she both continues and changes the meaning of the path for her own purposes.

The last poem in the book is a work entitled, “Don’t Give In, *Chicanita,*” written for Missy Anzaldúa, a girl jointly raised by Anzaldúa, her sister, and her
Anzaldúa deliberately ends with this poem, for in it, many of the ideas Anzaldúa has previously discussed come together. Of particular importance is part of the first stanza:

Your lineage is ancient
your roots like those of the mesquite
firmly planted, digging underground
toward that current, the soul of tierra madre –
your origin. (Borderlands 224)

This first vivid image of roots constantly digging ever deeper does not remain isolated to the stanza, but rather subconsciously continues in readers’ minds as they progress through the rest of the poem from past to present. Similar characterization is not uncommon in Chicano/a literature: the long-ago past is often viewed as a better time, not without its trials and suffering, of course, but a time before half of their homeland was yanked out from under their feet, and therefore one of a more complete wholeness. In contrast, the present for Chicano/as is one of split identity, of stolen lands, of a perpetual battle of history and modernity. At a quick glance, Anzaldúa seems to be following this same general trajectory, because from her initial discussion of lineage, she moves on to the present time, lamenting, “yes, they’ve taken our lands. / Not even the cemetery is ours now” (224). It would seem as though hers is a typical expression of frustration, for she contrasts it directly after with a show of the strength that resides in Chicano/as nonetheless (“But they will never take that pride” [224]) – another typical literary trope – except for the presence of the original image of roots. Far from leaving readers, this image has continued to grow and expand in their minds throughout the second stanza, so when they reach the mention of the cemetery, it holds
a far different connotation than it would out of context. That even the possession of their dead has been taken from many Chicano/as is still infuriating, yes, but it is overshadowed by barely concealed triumph: by this time, the roots have grown so long that they reach far deeper than the deepest grave in the cemetery, and where they touch, they claim the earth for their own. To be in possession of those roots is to trump possession of the surface of the land, which in comparison seems laughably shallow. Even the deepest earth that can be taken from them is only six feet down, and thereby easily surpassed by the lineage that resides even deeper.

The larger message that Anzaldúa communicates both in this comparison and throughout the poem is that one path to empowerment is to focus on the immaterial over the physical. As she further elaborates in the third stanza, “Hard times like fodder we carry / with curved backs we walk” (224). Coming directly after her discussion of the cemetery as it does, Chicano/as’ perpetual possession of their intangible “hard times” stands in distinct juxtaposition to the very material land. However, despite the “curved backs” that these hard times create, Anzaldúa also deliberately describes them as providing her and other Chicano/as with food and sustenance as well, allowing them to endure in face of the harsh conditions. This is the lesson that she attempts to pass onto both her niece and her readers: that frequently, the more tangible source of strength exists within the intangible. As Caputi explains, “for this way of thinking, imagination intimately coexists with reality, for the imagination is the source of realization” (187). In this way, the simple of act of imagining creates a bridge between the worlds of the tangible and the intangible, with
knowledge of one fueling the knowledge of the other. Essentially, it creates a separate borderland of its own, but one that empowers by virtue of realization instead of one that divides. By her encouragement of this path through her emphasis on hard times, Anzaldúa recognizes that embracing this secondary borderland provides an avenue to control over the first. Because this bridge between the physical and the immaterial is one of personal creation, there is no division but of one’s own making, and by mastering this division of self that exists nowhere else but in the imagination, one can “realize” how to gain the same level of possession over the physical divide.

A subset of this idea occurs within Anzaldúa’s discussion of the historical expansion of time. As previously mentioned, she begins with her past lineage, progresses to the current Chicano/a situation, and then ends with what she believes the future will entail. “When the Gringos are gone. . .Perhaps we’ll be dying of hunger as usual,” she muses, “but we’ll be members of a new species. . . with the power to look at the sun through naked eyes” (Anzaldúa, Borderlands 224-225). In these lines, she encompasses both the change she expects to occur and what will remain constant despite that change: tellingly, hunger, the same idea earlier symbolized by “hard times.” In essence, Anzaldúa is sending the very clear message to her niece Missy that no matter what changes occur to the Chicano/a condition, they will inevitably still have to bear a burden. Instead of that burden being purely hardship, however, it is actually the source of their strength, and as such, she should not give in, tighten her belt, and endure (224). By accepting that this intangible possession will remain a constant factor in their lives, Anzaldúa connects the past, from where those original “hard times”
came, to the present load she bears, and on to the future state of being. By doing so, she claims a strength not only in the fodder her load gives her, but in the connection of that sustenance to previous generations and generations to come, ultimately creating an overarching protective shield that, by virtue of its perpetual presence in their lives, lends them an otherwise nonexistent strength.

Taken together, these two poems create a strong call for reclamation of the past feminine ideology in application to the present circumstances for the purpose of progressing to the future with a stronger, more deliberate purpose. “That sleeping serpent, / rebellion, (r)evolution, will spring up,” she reminds her readers and “Like old skin will fall the slave ways of / obedience, acceptance, silence” (225). Despite its long-ago existence, the past has not been lost. The previous matriarchal order may have been consumed by an eagle bearing patriarchal dominance nearly a millennium ago, but the serpent, Anzaldúa reminds us, has simply been biding its time. If we repossess its former legacy, it will wake up, and once again continue along its former trajectory. The way to do so is to temporarily ignore the pressures of the current dominant culture, to cast off the burden of the physical, to reach into the immaterial world, to the past, and to cover oneself in the inner strength and resolve that one finds waiting there, for that is the birthright of Chicanas. To do so may look like revolution, but it is in fact the natural, inevitable continuance of the human trajectory: mere evolution. Anzaldúa includes this linguistic play of “(r)evolution” not to provide reassurance to any readers who may be alarmed by her call to action, but to emphasize
its inescapable certainty, for just as the serpent has only been sleeping, so, Anzaldúa reminds her readers, have we.

Anzaldúa also communicates methods of bridging the cultural and geographic divide, but in a less straightforward manner. In the section entitled, “Intimate Terrorism: Life in the Borderlands” within her essay, “Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan,” Anzaldúa engages the intersection between lack of control over one’s cultural and history and the simultaneous ability to choose to accept or not accept that imposition, asserting, “[a]lienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can’t respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits” (42). Anzaldúa’s first play on words between ‘alienated’ and ‘alien’ communicates to the reader the intimate connection between literal and figurative inhabited space. By being physically alienated from Mexico, if by nothing else than the border of the Rio Grande, the Chicana is additionally isolated socially, drifting in cultural purgatory, unable to be Mexican because of the physical separation, and unable to be American because of the metaphorical distance between her and mainstream culture. As Anzaldúa explains, “The knowledge you bring in with your body and your soul and your spiritual practice are not accepted” (Lara 51). The Chicana, rejected for her dual knowledge, remains stuck between two times and two cultures, unable to move forward or backward to claim either one. This forced stillness also stifles her memories, because by necessity, memories require lateral movement: after all, the significance of memories derives
from an ability to come out of the past into the present, and to then move forward into
the future. By being stuck in one place, the Chicana is unable to embrace any
memories other than those in the immediate present, and so remains motionless in that
aspect, too, cruelly self-contained and unable to connect to anything external.

However, within that purgatory, Anzaldúa does acknowledge a degree of
choice, for although many do end up in isolation, they are not entirely blameless for
that destination: “We are not assigned place, position, or borders, we assume then, we
relinquish assumptions, or we continue and respect the borders others take on, but no
one but ourselves can define place, position, or power” (Maracle 212). Anzaldúa
reminds us that ‘responsibility’ literally means “the ability to respond” (Borderlands
42) and when “cultures take away our ability to act” (42), they also absolve
responsibility, and by extension, blame. While Chicanas may not be able to assert
control over their ultimate destination, she argues, they can choose to what degree they
accept certain roles. For “there in front of us is the crossroads and choice: to feel a
victim where someone else is in control and therefore responsible and to blame. . . or
to feel strong, and, for the most part, in control” (43). Here, Anzaldúa not only lays
out two possibilities, but engages a second play on words with her use of ‘responsible.’
In the first scenario, the Chicana metaphorically gains a modicum of control by
accepting responsibility, or the ability to respond, and therefore asserting the at least
theoretical power to move forward by her own volition; however, in doing so, she
accepts the burden of a victimhood and blame that is out of her control because
imposed upon her. In the second, the opposite: she loses the control engrained in the
ability to respond, but gains the power of strength by rejecting her status as victim. Neither situation is ideal, for both require a sacrifice of a sort. Within this choice, though, Anzaldúa includes yet another deeper layer. “I don’t think the problem [of a set identity] will ever be solved because life transforms all the time, so of course categories only work for so long” (Lara 42), she explains. Therein lies the crux of the matter: the point is not to choose one crossroads or the other, because neither, being strictly defined, will ever hold up for long in an every-shifting world. Rather, the point is to embrace the possibility of choice, for even though one does not have control over the effects of one’s choice, she does have complete control over the choice to constantly choose. To embrace the shifting boundaries and accept a perpetually changing, multiplicitous identity – that is where one strikes the balance between autonomy and connection while rejecting the imposition of blame.

Both authors premise their works on an act of resistance: individual and cultural forces in both of their lives attempt to deprive them of memories, thereby forcing them to define themselves only by their immediate surroundings, but both subvert these efforts by claiming these memories regardless. In doing so, they claim a power over themselves that acts as a natural stepping stone to claim a strong place in a larger societal context as well. Significantly, both Anzaldúa and Santos largely establish this path through poetry, a fluid medium that allows them to create a natural and efficient transition through this path of reclamation. Although actual and metaphorical borders may often seem too strong to cross, using the medium of memory reclamation provides a subversive way to resist such barriers.
“Seeing Reality From All Angles”: The Effect of Anzaldúa’s and Santos’s Code-Switching Techniques

In the early 1990s, a series of parallel projects, such as Operation Gatekeeper and Operation Hold the Line, were implemented in various major cities to inhibit south-north traffic across the U.S./Mexico border. While the effectiveness of these measures is still being debated, one unexpected result is quite straightforward — literally. The meandering banks of the Rio Grande do not provide conducive topography to make a straight barrier, so much of the now nearly 700 miles of fence has ultimately been “constructed north of the river — slicing off part of a nature reserve here, a few holes of a golf course there and cutting a university campus in two, [causing] United States citizens stranded on the ‘Mexican side’ of the interior divide [to] wonder if they now live in Mexico” (Dear). This border fence that in effect “splinters lives and scars landscapes” (Dear) acts as an effective metaphor for another unnatural characteristic that many try to impose upon the borderlands: a strict divide between Spanish and English. After the wave of immigration in the early 1900s during the Mexican Revolution, public education was a main source of assimilation and Americanization, which, for many Mexican-American children, resulted in “erasing their culture, language, and values and replacing them with Anglo-American culture, language, and values” (Acuña 146). Although such practices “caused considerable cultural conflict for the Chicano,” they also “resulted in . . . many Chicanos accepting the values of the colonizers and rejecting their own heritage” (146). Some view this attempt at linguistic control as one of many effects of internal colonialism. In the words of Helena María Viramontes,
the worst kind of colonized imagination is when. . . you become your own worst enemy and destroy yourself – that is when colonization is truly effective. . . That’s why in colonization the first thing you want to destroy is the language of another people, the libraries of another people, the artists and the writers, and the intellects of another people. Then you can use the body.

By relentlessly favoring formal English over Spanish or any variation thereof, the education system produced a generation of Chicano/as who were too frequently ashamed of their heritage.

Since the 1970s, however, there has been a growing reactive wave against linguistic assimilation practices, and the current generation is striving to reclaim their culture and language. One effort to counter this divisive effect is the practice of code-switching, or “the alternation of two [or more] languages in a verbal or written text” (Torres 76). This is a frequent characteristic of the conversations that occur along the border, and hearing both Spanish and English used within the same sentence is not uncommon. Chicano/a authors, among them Anzaldúa and Santos, also often make use of this practice in their work. As Anzaldúa explains, “The use of Tex-Mex and Caló (Chicano/a slang), English phonemes with Spanish gerund or verb endings to form a word is one of our ways of resolving the conflict of languages” (“Pre-draft” n.pag.). Writing that merges multiple languages pushes against favoring one at the expense of the others, countering assimilation while allowing authors to more fully express their thoughts.

The linguistic and literary analysis of such writing, however, too frequently dichotomizes the effect of code-switching depending on whether an author’s
readership is presumed to be bilingual or monolingual: in the former case, code-switching is viewed as affirming the reader, of providing them a deeper and more authentic insight into the text and the author’s mind; in the latter, it is often assumed to be off-putting. Lourdes Torres, for instance, argues that “texts which cannot be translated into either Spanish or English without losing the essence of the intercultural message, are not easily decipherable by monolinguals” and that the “degree to which monolingual readers will accept this challenge to endure partial exclusion cannot yet be known” (90). She assumes that (typically monolingual English) readers will be “frustrated” (84) if they cannot understand Spanish references or puns, for “When reading texts by cultural others, mainstream readers expect to gain access to other worlds, not to be made aware of their limitations” (82). Torres and other critics, then, spend much effort determining how much code-switching can be included in a work before monolingual individuals will be deterred from reading it, and it is often construed as a boundary that can easily inhibit a reader’s understanding. Although she does admit that “the monolingual experience may be richer because the monolingual reader has to work harder to understand the text’s meaning” (91), there remains an implicit assumption that a lack of understanding of the Spanish words necessitates a limited understanding of the text itself. I argue, however, that especially in the cases of Anzaldúa and Santos, this view is overly simplified and that code-switching can attract and aid the comprehension of a monolingual reader just as easily as a bilingual audience. In essence, in *Borderlands* and *Places*, code-switching acts as a multi-dimensional bridge, connecting not only multiple cultures and languages for authors
and their characters but providing a link between author and reader, between separated literal and metaphorical spaces, and between the past and the present.

The study of code-switching only began to gain widespread academic legitimacy in the late 1960s and early 1970s, around the same time as the rise of Chicano/a studies. Exploration of this phenomenon – academic and otherwise – is particularly important in Chicano/a literature because it counters internal colonialism’s attack on the language and libraries of a people. In the early to mid-1900s, “a ‘no Spanish’ rule... was imposed on the Chicano/a, which actually punished him for speaking his native language on school grounds” (Acuña 146). Viramontes explains the effect this practice had on her personally: “I’m indignant with the fact that my language has been stolen from me, not only my Spanish but my indigenous languages as well. I have been censored, and the only language that I have is English right now, and that infuriates me” (88). For that reason, she uses Spanish in her novels despite her lack of fluency because her characters would speak it. She wants her monolingual readers to at least have to go to the effort of picking up a dictionary (89), so she strikes a linguistic compromise that is most appropriate for her background. Anzaldúa observes a similar phenomenon, explaining that after the release of *Borderlands*, many people wrote or spoke to her in frustration for the large amount of code-switching in which she engaged, but the heart of their frustration was directed at the United States for suppressing their language in their childhoods. Others went in the other direction, criticizing Anzaldúa for not using enough Spanish and Tex-Mex, arguing that her texts should not be accessible to monolingual readers at all (“On the Process” n.pag.).
Curiously, the term “code-switching” itself is a double misnomer, for it involves neither code nor switching. As Penelope Gardner-Chloros explains, “‘Code’ was originally taken from the field of communication technology” and has little to do with language, referring instead to the transfer of signals on a molecular level (11). “Switching” derived from the assumption that when people alternated between languages, “something similar to flicking an electric switch went on” (11). However, more sophisticated experiments have determined that the actual transition is less cut and dry and that a more likely division in types of signals lies between people’s efforts of listening and understanding versus speaking rather than any two languages they may use. Despite its misleading terminology, code-switching remains a rapidly growing linguistic field around those who live on the border between two cultures, develop several different distinct dialects in their speech, or learn another language for professional or development reasons.

Although often, “In the context of Latino/a texts published by mainstream presses, the reader is largely imagined as a monolingual English speaker” and “Questions of italicizing Spanish, providing translations, and adding glossaries must be negotiated between authors, editors, and publishers” (Torres 77), code-switching has been an integral part of Chicano/a literature, especially during the last forty years. In his analysis of code-switching in Chicano/a narratives (both oral and written), Dale Koike explains that depending on the context, switching can be used to signal a break in the discourse, to create emphasis, for different parts of a narrative progression, for personalization versus objectification, to contrast foregrounding with backgrounding,
or for a variety of other narrative elements (150-152). In short, “we see evidence that code-switching occurs along narrative boundaries” (152). Naturally, then, this is a prime technique for writers in the borderlands, such as Anzaldúa and Santos, to begin to capture the essence of Spanish, indigino, and Anglo cultures and languages.

Torres provides a useful framework for contextualizing various degrees of code-switching within literature: the first, she explains, involves only using words that are well-known to monolingual English speakers or easily identifiable from context. In such cases, “Usually the Spanish words are italicized and marked as foreign” (Torres 80). This technique is frequently employed when the author has a monolingual audience in mind or wishes to make a work largely accessible. A second approach is to include more complicated Spanish (or Tex-Mex or Nahuatl) but directly or indirectly translate it into English immediately after. The effect this has upon the work is to make it appear more “ethnic” while still remaining highly accessible. Although many applaud these two uses of code-switching for creating “one more public site where Spanish shares textual space with English” (81), others worry that “such Latino/a texts reinforce monolingual complacency” (81). By having such ready access to Spanish within literature, readers may develop a false sense of understanding of Chicano/a culture and language and remain uncompelled to increase their knowledge because the work in front of them presents no immediate need to do so.

A third approach attempts to remedy this by catering mainly to the bilingual reader. This can take several forms: first, an author can simply refuse to italicize any Spanish in the text. By doing so, he or she places Spanish and English on the same
level by not otherizing the former. Next, writers can also provide translation, but do so in such a way that it is clear that it is a literal word-for-word translation. This frequently creates phrases that read oddly to the monolingual reader but preserve meaning for bilingual readers in the original Spanish. Torres deems the final tactic “radical bilingualism” (86) and describes it as either using less mainstream forms of Spanish (such as Tex-Mex or colloquial dialects) or as simply writing in long passages of Spanish without translation. Such an approach makes these texts not only partially inaccessible for monolingual readers but difficult to make accessible at all, because any attempt to translate into either Spanish or English eliminates a crucial element of the text.

At first glance, Santos would appear to fall entirely into the first two categories. In his opening poem, for instance, he includes phrases such as, “Our legacy is papaya, is frijol” (n.pag.) and in the first chapter, “Have all the Santos already died?” is quickly translated as “¿Ya se murieron todos los Santos?” (3). He also makes frequent use of commonly known Spanish words such as “tío,” “abuela,” and “vaquero” and takes care to explain any significant cultural references, such as the history of the Voladores ritual. In short, there are no sections of Places that are left inaccessible to the monolingual reader. Santos explains his decision for doing as much, saying, “I was really interested in finding the most expeditious way for the reader to get through to the core content, so not to be distracted by anything stylistic, anything in terms of vocabulary” (Personal interview). Along the way to achieving this balance, he rejected several other approaches, such as including a glossary in the back of the book:
“rather than appending anything that would be explanatory by the words. . . I wanted to try to just contextualize definitions, so, you know, to give a kind of fairly light-handed way of rendering the words for the English reader so that there wouldn’t be an issue. They could come into the world of the books more fluidly, more transparently” (Personal interview). For him, any division between his language and the meaning he intends to convey, even the act of flipping to the back of the book to decipher a word, inhibits his readers’ understanding.

Significantly, though, he partially breaks away from these stock approaches by not italicizing words that he believes will already be familiar to readers, such as ‘barrio’ and ‘familia.’ At times, this trend continues to such lesser known words as ‘cerveza’ and ‘hermano’ whose sounds may resonate with monolingual readers but whose meaning may temporarily escape them. Santos explains that, originally, he italicized these words as well but eventually rejected the approach because “the page looked weird, because it was full of these little islands of italics” (Personal interview). To compromise, his editor suggested that they undo the italics for the words that possess Latin or Roman cognates, an approach that he describes as “a kind of metabolism” by “metabolizing Spanish into Roman fonts and into this kind of new style” (Personal interview). As a result, Santos’s work remains highly accessible to all monolingual English speakers, as he intended, but it also carries the underlying implication that Mexican and United States culture are rapidly blending together and that no distinct dividing line can be drawn between the two. Although words such as ‘barrio’ and ‘vaquero’ may not be used as readily as ‘fajita’ or ‘siesta’ by English
speakers, they have successfully integrated into the language to the extent that they are no longer recognized as foreign. Santos’s own progression from rejecting the most otherized version of presenting Spanish words (a glossary), to italicizing everything, to italicizing and translating only those words that are not readily recognizable parallels the broader cultural and linguistic amalgamation that is occurring. Readers can only assume that this progression will continue to occur even more thoroughly in the future.

Conversely, Anzaldúa utilizes all of these tactics in at least one point of *Borderlands* but largely adheres to the last “radical” approach. From the first page where she includes an entire verse from the conjunto (a south Texas style of music) band “Los Tigres del Norte” with no translation, Anzaldúa refuses to compromise with monolingual readers to make her writing more accessible. In the second half of the book, poems such as “Martriz sin tumba o” and “Yo no fui, fue Teté” are written entirely in Spanish. Anzaldúa recognizes that “even Spanish speakers sometimes feel uncomfortable because I’m not using Castillian, I’m using Chicano Spanish” (“On the Process” 4) along with Tex-Mex and Nahuatl. The only points at which she provides translations are the poems which are written mostly in English but with a sprinkling of Spanish phrases, for which she includes a brief glossary for each. Unlike Santos, who views using a glossary as an unnecessary inconvenience and another level of othering, for Anzaldúa, this is the most expeditious way to preserve the original meaning and spirit of each poem while still providing a level of accessibility. Both Anzaldúa and Torres view this tactic of including minimal translation as “an artistic choice with political ramifications” (Torres 76). As Anzaldúa explains, “I was never taught
Spanish in the schools; it was something that I just learned by reading. You know, we were punished for speaking Spanish, physically punished. . . So the kind of Spanish I use, you know, the people in the Spanish and Portuguese department, some of them look aghast, at this in horror because of the Chicano Spanish” (“On the Process” 24). Code-switching allows Anzaldúa to “traffic back and forth between the two worlds, switching from one mode of consciousness to the other” (“La conciencia” 65) and in doing so, capture all the diverse elements of herself and her variety of cultural experiences. Simultaneously, she uses it to send the political message that she refuses to assimilate to Anglicized ideals in order to publish.

Some authors, such as Benjamin Alire Sáenz, use code-switching instinctually. As he explains, “it comes to me as I am writing. I never go back and put it in, never. That would ring false to me” (58). In contrast, Anzaldúa edits freely between languages, often writing in Spanish and then translating it to English or vice versa. For her, the most important aspect of code-switching is its function as “a tactic to resist acculturation to the white dominant culture and the English language as well as traditional Spanish” (“Internal Exile” 2). This approach is one that sets her apart from other Chicano/a authors: while most simply switch between Spanish and English, Anzaldúa makes full use of Tex-Mex, Nahuatl words, and various Spanish dialects. In her opinion, one damaging effect of internal colonialism is that young people of Mexican descent often claim the title “Hispanic” over “Chicano/a” or “Mexican” in order to favor their Spanish over their indigenous heritage (“La conciencia” 56). “The Chicano who is proud of his Spanish descent,” she argues, “has forgotten that our
ancestors arrived from New Spain as Mexico was called then, and not directly from Spain” (56). Further, many do not know that “Indian blood. . . predominates in their veins” (56). The effect of her multilingual writing, then, is not to favor Spanish, Tex-Mex, or Nahuatl over English but rather to remind readers of their individual multiplicity. In doing so, Anzaldúa also creates a new space where traditional boundaries are broken and such diversity can be embraced. As she explains, “In combining the English and the Spanish (which contains many Nahuatl words) we not only form a bridge between the two cultures but give our ‘dialect’ a flexibility and an elasticity that permits evolution. A static language becomes a dead language” (“Pre-draft” n.pag.). In her code-switching, then, she maintains all the diverse aspects of her own person, but she also makes an investment in the future. By combining so many elements, she allows others to follow in her lead, and alongside Spanish, English, Nahuatl, and Tex-Mex, allows a new literary language to grow as well.

Arguably, then, Anzaldúa’s code-switching is largely political in nature, for by incorporating so many languages and dialects, she is visibly challenging the assimilationist practices that have been forced upon her. Conversely, one reviewer of Santos’s *Places*, concludes that, “Unlike some contemporary Latino writers, Santos does not have an ideological or political ax to grind. While his subject matter is most definitely the lived experience of Latinos in this country, his take on that reality is filled with awe and gratitude and not with anger” (Deck 37-38). Indeed, Santos consciously separates himself from the “code-switching around writers’ work who come out of street culture and capture the real street Spanglish,” explaining that his
middle-class upbringing inspired him to instead “create a literary version of the hybrid language that we grew up hearing. . . one where English and Spanish more or less existed in a kind of reconciled parallel style or rhetoric” (Santos, Personal interview).

One concept to which he does provide a degree of pushback, however, is the imposed description of parts of his work as “magic realism.” As more Chicano/a works have been published or republished by mainstream presses in the last several decades, degrees of commoditization have occurred in their packaging, descriptions, and reviews. The element of the fantastic, for instance, is often disproportionately emphasized in this process. As Manuel Martín-Rodríguez explains, “The label ‘magic realism’ routinely applied to most Chicano/a texts that enter the mainstream is, in fact, the single most important solecism currently haunting the marketing of Chicano/a texts, as it works to reduce these texts to a quaint, facile imitation of what was a booming, revolutionary literary movement a few decades ago” (125). Magical elements become the sole selling point for many works, which has the effect of condensing them into a simple, homogenous, and, most importantly, exotic genre of literature. Santos particularly resents this packaging not only because of the larger cultural implications, but because many of the scenes in his memoir that could be construed as magical realism are actual, realistic portrayals of events as he or his family members experienced them. In one memorable story, his mother’s side of the family had just moved to the northern side of the border and was experiencing some difficulty in adjusting to a new farming lifestyle, once even being forced to leave behind the entirety of a season’s crop. As his Tía Pepa explains, in the midst of this
trouble, however, they “received a sign. . . that the Garcias were on the right path” (Santos, Places 102). One night while they were sleeping outside, “the moon seemed to open up, like a yucca flower throwing out its seeds” (102) and began to rain pears:

The pears filled the air around them, bringing a sweet scent of the fruit as they drew closer. Then, one pear passed with a whisper through the netting above her, and when Pepa put her hand out to touch it, it passed through her hand as well. The immaterial fruit seemed to rotate slowly as it passed through her nightshirt and into her chest above her heart. She looked again to see her sisters and brothers, and the pears were descending out of the sky and passing into each of them as well. . . That was the night she slept her first real sleep since leaving Mexico. (103)

To a reader, this scene could easily appear unrealistic, and the assumption could quickly be made that Pepa had merely dreamed the occurrence. Santos, however, knows that since she “had the capacity to live those experiences maybe more powerfully” (Personal interview) than others were able to appreciate, he had the obligation not only to write the story as fact, but to convince his readers of its authenticity as well. Indeed, many such stories “had been so much in the family’s repertoire that nobody said, oh, it must be a dream” (Personal interview).

Code-switching is one of the primary techniques Santos uses to impress the legitimacy of various scenes upon his readers, for it allows them to enter into the reality of his own perspective where they may not have discovered it otherwise. In this way, he is like Esmerelda Santiago, who explains that “Any word that’s in Spanish in my English texts is not there by accident, or because I couldn’t figure out how to translate it, but rather because it has a resonance that it doesn’t have in English” (qtd. in Torres 81). Santos, too, has many key concepts that he deliberately introduces
in Spanish. In chapter five of *Places*, for instance, he introduces the chapter with a discussion of how his grandmother Margarita had studied “Via Rosae Crucis,” the “Way of the Rosy Cross” (86) from a young age. “The Rosicrucians,” he explains, “sought to reconcile the pre-Christian traditions of magic and exoteric studies with the evolutions of Christ. . . Central to the teaching is the knowledge of a hidden wisdom in the world through which it is possible to learn, and live by, the secret essences of things” (86-87). As he moves on to discuss the Tolteca Indians who predated the Aztecs, his family’s initial arrival in San Antonio, and the lack of Mexicans’ history that he was taught in Texas schools, the Rosicrucian discussion casts an aura of mystique over the entire chapter. Just as Margarita learns “How everything in the universe is inscribed with mystical invisible letters that could be read and understood” (87), the reader instinctually feels the inherent connection between the family history that Santos describes and the larger history of Mexico, and that by looking at the former, the latter can be understood.

This comprehension, though, is founded not on the mere explanation of Rosicrucian studies, but rather the fact that Santos initially outlines it by both its Spanish and English names: “Via Rosae Crucis” and “The Way of the Rosy Cross.” In this way, “combing the English and the Spanish. . . not only form[s] a bridge between the two cultures but give our “dialect” a flexibility and an elasticity that permits evolution” (Anzaldúa, “Pre-draft” n.pag.). Santos’s dual use of languages as a framing device acts as a bridge between himself and his monolingual readers, allowing them to not only make the leap to understand the actual Spanish words, but inviting
them to embrace the cultural elements he is describing as well. By doing so, he creates “meaning not as a hidden content in the text that the reader has to ‘find’ or decode, but rather as something that is created in the process of reading” (Martín-Rodríguez 113). This pattern continues throughout the chapter every time Santos mentions Rosicrucian studies, Margarita, or Madrina and Pepa (who also studied Via Rosea Crucis): “Mal aires,” for instance, “the evil airs, might enter your body through your uncovered mouth or head” (Santos, Places 101) is explained in both languages, as is “a malicious look from a stranger, el mal ojo, [that] could kidnap your soul forever” (102). Further, the Rosicrucians’ idea that everything is connected and that one part of the universe can be understood by examining another is at the heart of Santos’s book. Though his own approach to this topic is more frequently framed in terms of memory and history than religion or spirituality, this side approach is simply another bridge that his readers can cross to reach the same conclusions.

Strategically, the sections specifically dealing with the Way of the Rosy Cross are placed right at the beginning of the chapter. Each chapter of Places begins with an individual anecdote or series of anecdotes that Santos describes as “rhapsodic sequences” that involve “encounters with ghosts and dreams and strange moments” (Personal interview). The scene of the initial inquiry, “Have all the Santos died?” is one such section, for instance; another involves a vision Santos has at his first communion of “A place of nothing, as old as creation. . . a place beyond time and the world” (Places 140) that momentarily consumes him before he returns to awareness of the church around him. The surreal nature of these sections almost creates a separate
storyline, for although they are connected to the other events of the book, there is a feeling of perpetual tension within them in relation to the rest. As Santos elaborates, “they were written almost in a separate space from the rest of the book. The voice is different, they’re italicized, and they have this kind of slightly more oneiric quality to them” (Personal interview). They are not only different in content, then, but also visually different. In fact, the italics mark the entirety of each section as a kind of alternate code-switching, one that strikes a balance between foreignness and familiarity to the reader. Just as the “the words that remain in italics tend to be the words that are less recognizable to the English reader” (Personal interview) in the Spanish-English code-switching, the ideas that are likely to be less familiar to readers are italicized as well. In the former case, Santos provides translations to aid comprehension; in the latter, he uses the spatial organization of the book to form a bridge between the two. The Via Rosae Crusis that he initially discusses is brought up again directly before the end of chapter five, neatly encompassing almost the entirety of the ideas contained within. Santos does make his readers take one leap of faith, though: the one story that remains outside of this framework is the last scene with Pepa and the pears. This last story, which might otherwise have been dismissed by readers despite its essentialness to Santos’s family history, is ultimately more easily accepted because Santos has created both linguistic and cultural bridges through his dual uses of code-switching. He builds the bridge; all his readers have to do is cross it.

Although Anzaldúa frequently stands in contrast to Santos regarding the degree and extent of her translations, she does strike a compromise in one passage
where she uses a series of Nahuatl words: “For the ancient Aztecs, tlilli, tlapalli, la tinta negra y roja de sus códices (the black and red ink painted on codices) were the colors symbolizing escritura y sabiduría (writing and wisdom)” (Borderlands 91).

The only Nahuatl words she uses here are ‘tlilli’ and ‘tlapalli,’ meaning ‘black’ and ‘red,’ respectively, or in conjunction, ‘writing.’ Curiously, though, instead of just translating them into either Spanish or English, she does both, which at first glance creates the repetitive effect for the bilingual reader that Anzaldúa so stringently avoids throughout most of the book. A possible explanation as to why she makes an exception in this case can be found two paragraphs down in the same section: “An image is a bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge; words are the cables that hold up the bridge. Images are more direct, more immediate than words, and closer to the unconscious. Picture language precedes thinking in words; the metaphorical mind precedes analytical consciousness” (91). Here, her content describes the ancient Aztec belief that poetry and metaphor are the most efficient means of communication with the gods and that together, they could create a bridge between the gods and the world of the dead. Its implicit meaning, however, additionally points to the words ‘tlilli’ and ‘tlapalli’ as an immediate example of how this can be achieved. As few speak Nahuatl apart from the Spanish words that derive from it, without context, the words’ direct meaning would be largely lost on the reader. While this has the potential to inhibit understanding, it also provides an opportunity to strike a balance between linguistic meaning and fluid imagery. By breaking down the dual meaning of the Nahuatl into two separate phrases, Anzaldúa provides a linguistic
separation; translating into both Spanish and English contributes to a further breakdown of the concept while also including the entirety of her readership. In short, she gives her readers all the “cables” they need to establish the bridge imagery that ‘tlilli’ and ‘tlapalli’ invoke. The reader indirectly understands the precise meaning of the words, yet has enough spaces left between the linguistic connections to draw a separate and vivid image as well. While code-switching can frequently detract from an author, a reader, or an idea, in this case, it does nothing but add to all three.

The black and red imagery that she establishes remains metaphorically significant throughout the rest of the chapter as Anzaldúa describes her own writing process: “I write in red. Ink. Intimately knowing the smooth touch of paper, its speechlessness before I spill myself on the insides of trees. Daily, I battle the silence and the red. Daily, I take my throat in my hands and squeeze until the cries pour out” (93-94). While the presence of black ink as an integral part of writing is self-explanatory, here, Anzaldúa elaborates upon the significance of red. Metaphorically, she spills her blood essence onto the paper every time she writes, mixing red into the black. However, there remains yet another vivid aspect of the imagery that is implicit but unstated: the whiteness of the paper. Anzaldúa leaves it to readers to discover the presence of this whiteness, this blank space that is an omnipresent background of the picture to which she leads them. She is aware that because “using only words, you recreate the world inside your readers head by giving new sensory information,” one should “[p]resent only the significant details – the ones that reveal the essence of the person, object, action, or situation” (“Pre-draft” n.pag.). Through her translation, she
lays the path to understanding the connection between the colors and their significance in writing; by providing only two words to translate in the first place, she reveals another key element of the image by omission. Finally, all of these elements explode into an even larger metaphor with the following line: “Living in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland, is what makes poets write and artists create” (*Borderlands* 95). The whiteness, then, is not just the paper upon which she writes: it is also the silence that the borderlands imposes upon her and many others (as demonstrated by her need to move away from them before she could write effectively), and indeed, the borderlands themselves. This multiple meaning is the final piece to the conclusion to which she leads her readers throughout this entire section: that although the borderlands may impose silent control over those who live in them, that can also act as a tool of empowerment to speak all the more loudly. By embracing the image that Anzaldúa establishes through code-switching, they can bridge the silence, spilling both red and black onto the white in a vivid display of color that can never quite be captured in words.

In chapter three of *Places*, Santos takes a slightly different approach: instead of using code-switching to bridge to a cultural element, he designs the entire chapter around several images of actual bridges: “The two giant bridges into Manhattan – the garish Triborough and the medieval stone bridge at Hellgate on the East River” (46-47). Upon seeing them, his uncle Raul comments, “It’s a good thing to live some place where you can see a bridge” (47). This exchange occurs in the separate, italicized space of the chapter, which heightens its significance: essentially, by placing
an initial emphasis upon them, Santos is asking his readers to pay attention to the other bridges throughout the chapter. In terms of actual bridges, he does not disappoint: the first time his family set foot on the northern side of the border, for instance, involved his Uncle Frank “walking across the Rio Grande on a high, creaky swinging wooden bridge” (50). More broadly, he also structures the entirety of the world as a bridge, explaining how the “whole landscape becomes a bridge into the empire of the spirits and the time of the ancestors” (49).

This last idea is the most significant, as it provides a framework for understanding the rest of Santos’s imagery surrounding space, time, and bridges. In this chapter, four key geographical features emerge: ‘El Inframundo’, ‘el Valle de Silencio’, ‘la Loma de los Muertos’, and ‘El Valle de los Ancianos’. Here, Santos follows his pattern of introducing each of these concepts, translating them into English, but then referring to them by their Spanish names in each subsequent instance. Per his discussion of Via Rosae Crucis, then, each idea acts as a connecting point to pertinent cultural elements. Though all four draw a general association between space and time, the “Valley of Silence” after which the chapter is named is the most important. A story that comes from Santos’s aunt Madrina, the Valley of Silence is “a valley in Coahuila, somewhere near their town of Palaú” where “[i]f you stood in particular clearings, or specific gullies and hills, no sound of birds could reach you, no sound of wind, no loud, coarse donkey’s bray. . . this was one of many such places around the world that God had, for some unknown reason, left unfinished at the time of creation” (54-55). This is a place where, when people enter, they are plunged back to the
beginning of creation and become the first and only person in the world. The silence is that of emptiness, for there are no stories yet to be heard, but also one of potential and expectation of what is to come. In a perpetually changing world, it provides a degree of continuity, for “forevermore, until the end of the world, there would be no sound in *el Valle de Silencio*” (55). The silence of the valley adds yet another layer to Santos’s code-switching, for it creates a space in which spoken language is not only unnecessary, but impossible. Similar to that of Pepa and the pears, this story is one that Santos knows that many will write off as “magic realism” but he attempts to guard against this possibility by framing it around a concept that everyone can understand, for the language of silence is universal, both across space and time.

Highly similar to Anzaldúa’s “bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 91) is another of Santos’s elements: El Inframundo. This place “includes Tlaclocan, the place of the underworld, and the paradisal Tamoanchan,” and “In the *Inframundo*, you communicate with the spirits of the dead, with the spirits of animals and all created things, and sometimes with the gods themselves” (Santos, *Places* 49). While Santos describes the ancient sorcerers who could enter this place by putting themselves into a trance, his Uncle Raul outlines a more commonly accessible path: praying. As his own prayer goes, “Mariposa. Canela. Atole. Huisache. . . Tranquilidad. Bendiciones y bendiciones. Siempre. Siempre. Siempre” (48). His words are “a prayer against our forgetting. . . But the prayer is as long as time, so you can never be done with it. It just goes on and on, forever” (48). This prayer is not a narrative nor even a complete expression, but a
long string of words. However, these words still invoke images and emotions, perhaps even more strongly than complete sentences would, and in doing so, act as a connective tissue between worlds. Like the valley of silence, this prayer will always be unfinished as each generation passes it down to the next to impress its own images and memories upon it. In this concept is the true meaning of code-switching: not a dual use of languages – which, again, is a misnomer – but working on either side of the gap between listening/understanding and speaking. The prayer bridges this gap by allowing the two to merge. A person can tell a story of the current time by speaking, yes, but those words are simultaneously connected to the generations of words that have come before and those that will come after, providing an implicit understanding of those times.

This is why a reader is given the initial images of bridges: because one should always have a literal bridge nearby to serve as a reminder of the metaphorical bridge that each person is always building. Indeed, this is what Santos is doing in telling his own story. From listening to and understanding the stories of his past, he is able to speak them while we listen to capture our own degree of understanding. As a result, we are then better suited to tell our own stories, creating a cycle of listening and understanding that naturally connects the two.

Anzaldúa ends *Borderlands* with the poem “No se raje, chicanita,” and its translation, “Don’t Give In, Chicanita.” Although the first is largely in Spanish and the second in English, there are several phrases in each that she leaves in the other language. In the first, they are all in the same stanza: “*con los* horned toads *y los*
largartijos / survivors del First Fire Age, *el Quinto Sol*” (222). Anzaldúa’s code-switching here has several effects: first, as this is the only time in the poem that she uses English, it draws the reader’s attention to this stanza above all others. Appropriately, it contains the most important idea in the poem: urging her niece not to give in to the societal pressures around her because she has a lineage that is made to endure. By holding onto the idea that Chicano/as will last long beyond the current time, Anzaldúa gives her niece a reason to hold her head high. Second, the code-switching is a literal demonstration of the split that Anzaldúa anticipates will occur during “el Quinto Sol.” Santos, too, brings up the age of “the Fifth Sun, our time, which . . . it had been foretold, would end in famine and a violent shaking of the earth” (*Places* 62). Anzaldúa clearly expects Chicano/as to survive and Anglos to perish (“And when the Gringos are gone – / see how they kill one another – / here we’ll still be” [*Borderlands* 224]), and the mix of languages signifies such a split. Contextualized in the entirety of the poem, Anzaldúa sees the current Anglo influence, symbolized by her use of English, as simply one small part of a much larger history. Although there may be a power imbalance now, Spanish and Chicano/as will win out in the end.

It is slightly counterintuitive that the last poem in the book is one primarily in English, for one would expect Anzaldúa to end with a strong political message written entirely in Spanish to emphasis one more time her refusal to compromise. A hint as to why she would do so, however, is engrained in two lines: in the Spanish, they read, “Como cuero viejo caerá la esclavitud / de obedecer, de callar, de aceptar,” (223) but
in the English, “Like old skin will fall the slave ways of / obedience acceptance, silence” (225, emphasis added). The last two concepts are switched in the second, creating an entirely different emphasis for the sentence. In the first, the most important idea is refusing to accept cultural imposition, assimilation practices, etc. Such refusal is largely an internal idea, for in denying acceptance, the offending practices do not automatically fall away, but one does create a personal barrier against them. This last stanza of the Spanish version, then, is about storing internal strength, in adjusting mindsets, in gathering collectively. Conversely, the emphasis in the second is on not remaining silent. Now, not only will Anzaldúa not accept the conditions around her, but she will articulate them, shout to be heard if she must, speak up until they change. This line is a call to action. Far from lessening the impact of her words by writing in English, then, Anzaldúa actually strengthens them by sending a subtle message to the bilingual reader of the shift that must occur within each of them. Most likely, monolingual English speakers will not notice this subtle difference between the two lines, but the bilingual reader will. By ending in English, Anzaldúa communicates that despite the imposition of this language, it is not entirely the tool of the oppressor. First, Chicano/as must refuse to accept any control it has over them by keeping the words but casting out the structure; next, by speaking up, they can use the words of the colonizers against them and by doing so, make them their own. This is the bridge that Anzaldúa establishes by her code-switching both within and between the two poems: that the two are connected, but not the same; that
one naturally leads to the other; and by recognizing and embracing a similar structure, her readers can build their own bridges to the words that they will then speak.

In both *Borderlands* and *Places*, the inextricable connection between code-switching and bridging is undeniable – indeed, perhaps a more appropriate term for the concept would be “code-bridging” – not only in its power to connect Anglo and Chicano/a cultures, but also on a variety of other levels across both space and time. Santos focuses his own switching between English and Spanish on key cultural elements that create a foundation for many of the main ideas in his book while also allowing them to converge on and support each other and at many points become one and the same. While Anzaldúa initially appears more “radical” in her switch between multiple languages, she, too, creates a harmonized balance that invites all of her readers, not just those who are bilingual, to explore the significance of her ideas. As she notes, “Code-switching: this is where our promise lies in seeing reality from all angles. Focusing from different perspectives: lo indio, lo mexicano, lo anglo” (“Pre-draft” n.pag.). If both authors’ readers approach code-switching similarly, then culture and language will continue to merge, inspiring increased understanding and building multi-dimensional bridges that would have never otherwise existed.
“The Tug of the Universe Expanding”: An Analysis of the Circularity of Exile

“she conceived of an equitable world with beauty and magic where the oppressed were no longer oppressed, where no one was oppressed and she called it El Mundo Zurdo for the left side, the side nearest to her heart, the side associated with women. To her the rejection of the darkskinned by the whites and the queer and the female by all cultures made her a stranger, an ‘other.’ Exiled. And so she sought to connect with both groups without being rejected by the one or the other. Only then could she and the darksinned and the queer and the female dispel their isolation, only then could she nourish her soul. She wished to connect with others without being swallowed, or assimilated” (Anzaldúa, “Pre-Draft” 227).

When the United States completed its takeover of Mexican territory in 1848, the 100,000 Mexicans who found themselves on the north side of the border were forced to make a choice: whether to move south and leave the place where they had been living behind, or remain in the U.S. at the expense of solidarity with their country and their people. 2000 made the difficult trek down to the recently reformed land of Mexico, while the rest made the possibly more difficult choice to remain in a country that was becoming increasingly Anglicized, risking being swallowed by the swift change occurring around them. Both, however, made choices of exile: those in the former group became geographically exiled from their land, while those in the latter suffered cultural exile. In a sense, this preserved the entirety of the Mexican people, but at the expense of the creation of a de facto diaspora, each side retaining a piece of the past but existing in what Edward Said describes as “a fundamentally discontinuous sate of being. . . cut off from their roots, their land, their past” (Reflections 177).

Rodolfo Acuña explains the political and social effects upon those who stayed in the United States through the lens of his internal colonialism framework: “In reality,
there is little difference between the Chicano’s status in the traditional colony of the nineteenth century and in the internal colony of the twentieth century – that of master-servant. The principal difference is that Mexicans in the traditional colony were indigenous to the conquered land” (4, emphasis in original). Though useful as a foundational structure, the lens of internal colonialism is also limiting in this case. Acuña’s argument that Chicano/as’ status remained the same before and after 1848 has its merits, but it is just as vital that the changes in their position be carefully examined. Among other factors, “Chicano memory of being natives in their homeland, of life in pre-1848 ranch society on Mexico’s far northern frontier, gave rise to an acute spatial sensibility after the American conquest” (Kaup 29). It is this heightened awareness of space that has produced works of Chicano/a literature that wrestle with the intricacies of the exilic condition, among them being Borderlands and Places. Though Anzaldúa and Santos do not discuss exile from exactly the same perspective, nor do they even always talk about the same kind of exile – indeed, with Santos being born in the United States and Anzaldúa immigrating at the age of ten, such is to be expected – it remains an essential motif for them both.

A variety of theoretical and practical discussions reinforce this multiplicity of exile. Soheil Najm, for instance, divides it into “two faces – internal and external,” describing the former as “an alienation from society and culture, and a profound contemplation of the self which is due to the different perspectives and others’ perception of it which leads to a feeling of unique difference,” and the latter as “the severing of a person from his origin and his emotive geography” (n.pag.). Such a
division is particularly applicable to post-1848 Chicano/a society, for the undermining of cultural solidarity and the loss of their land occupied these two spheres, respectively. However, this dual loss did not just occur on a national level; additionally, each community, family, and individual experienced an inherent personal divide as well, for they had been split between themselves, one foot in the old land and one in the new. To explain the different nuances between these levels of the exilic condition, Said, for instance, introduces the idea of intellectual exile, or “restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others” (“Intellectual” 373), while for Barbara Harlow, “Exile can be flight, nationalist separation, or simply a different medium through which to undergo a continuing struggle” (158). All of these various perspectives are largely applicable to Anzaldúa’s and Santos’s approach to the concept, but there is one underlying notion that both authors distinctly challenge: that exile is a one-way transfer, a state of being here instead of there, cut off from the past (Said, Reflections 177). Both admit that the loss of the past is very real, yes, as is disconnection between past and present, but they challenge this assumption with the notion that as well as living in a “discontinuous state of being” exiles also live in a circular one. Indeed, as Anzaldúa and Santos make evident, it is this circular nature of the exilic condition that provides a source of strength and continuation where otherwise there would be none, and circularity that allows for a deeper understanding of one’s own relationship to exile.

Rather than writing from the standpoint of the classic political exile, of being separated from one’s homeland and forbidden to return, both authors establish a
relatively non-traditional dialogue of self-imposed exile. Santos refers to the three years he spent in England on a Rhodes Scholarship as his own exile within his larger family context, for “as great as getting the Rhodes Scholarship was, I was at that moment at the peak of my Tex-Mex nationalism. I really – I wanted to be here, I wanted to study Tex-Mex border ballads, corridos. . . there were periods where I felt super remote from this world” (Personal interview). This heightened sense of separation inspired the chapter in *Places* entitled “Exile.” Similarly, when Anzaldúa traveled to Vermont to teach at Norwich University, she felt largely out of place with the orderly way of life, so “Because of that homesickness I started writing *Borderlands*” (“On the Process” 1). Both express their ability to write more fully and develop greater insights into their own persons when they are away from home, so their periods of exile foremost act as a time of self-discovery and self-reflection.

The first indication of Santos’s circular presentation of exile is the name he gives to the larger section within which “Exile” is contained: “Voladores.” The Danza de los Voladores (“Dance of the Flyers”) ritual begins with four dancers and one musician perched at the top of a tall pole. The musician remains here throughout, playing a flute and dancing precariously, while the four dancers slowly spin around the pole to the ground over a span of approximately twenty minutes, attached to the top by only one ankle. Santos’s frequent mentions of this ritual make the entire book’s structure “self-consciously circular, returning to images of the *Voladores*. . . who represent ties to both Santos’s youth and to the ancient wisdom of Mexico”
(Holdridge, n.pag.), but using this image specifically in conjunction with exile lays the groundwork for other presentations of circularity throughout the chapter.

Though this chapter begins with Santos leaving for England, the remainder has very little to do directly with his time in that country, rather skipping among various familial and personal experiences. Despite the seemingly unsystematic combination of anecdotes, upon closer examination, several broad motifs begin to emerge within them. The first is life’s persistent ephemerality: as Santos prepares to leave for England, he is torn between his loyalty to academia and the inherent attraction he feels toward the culture of his family and their history in Mexico, and he is forced to choose which he prefers, at least for a time. In an attempt to provide perspective on his decision to move, his uncle Beto explains, “Everything finishes. Everything is extinguished. . . People move on. People die. Then, people move on even further. Eventually they die, too eventually they are extinguished. You can be sad about this, but it wouldn’t change anything” (Places 196). Significantly, in recording his uncle’s words, Santos takes care here to twice alternate between the phrases “move on” and “die.” If he were describing one person’s journey, each phrase would only be used once (because, of course, one person cannot die twice), while the repetition contextualizes the discussion in the family’s larger cultural heritage. Here, then, Beto is comparing Santos’s move to his own journey out of Mexico and affirming that, far from forsaking his cultural heritage, Santos is actually continuing it. His stay in England is only the next natural geographic expansion for their family.
The larger implication of Beto’s words is that not going to England could be construed as a betrayal of the family’s future. After all, Santos’s plan that would have replaced England – studying Tex-Mex border ballads in graduate school – preserves and carries on past traditions, giving them new meaning in present contexts, but counter-intuitively, also limits the family legacy. Although he writes, “As a Chicano of Spanish and indigenous heritage, I was aware that part of my blood was new to these lands” (194), the opposite is also true. For his Spanish ancestry, “this was a kind of homecoming” (194). Within Beto’s words, then, lie both a comfort and a warning: that by creating a connection to the family story, by extension he could ease his apprehension, but that if he does not move forward in his own way – literally or figuratively – his understanding of his family’s history would be limited.

To deepen his reflections on impermanence, Santos tells the story of the time he and his cousin Chickee were coming back from visiting a mountain ranch being run at the time by one Don Tiburcio. As they rode back, they stumbled across “a medium-sized speckled doe stepping out of the bush just ahead of us, staring impassively in our direction” (200). Don Tiburcio had been lacking meat for several months prior to their visit, so both men felt obligated to at least attempt to shoot the deer for his sake. Santos describes the moments that followed as he pulled out and assembled his rifle, saying,

the doe did not move, did not seem to even blink. . . when the shot pierced the air with a fiery crack, the echoes bounded off in all directions, scattering birds and sending snakes into their holes. We watched the bullet hit its mark, leaving a small red smear on the breast. But the deer did not fall, only. . . looked back at us as if utterly resigned to its own sacrifice, as if there were some inexorable outcome to our meeting. (202)
At the heart of this story is Santos’s instinct that this doe is a symbolic message, sent to him to remind him of the transience of both his own life and all the events of the universe. In her sacrifice, she represents all the individual lives which must be extinguished to fuel others. Additionally, she also signifies the way of the ranch that is dying as well. Santos is willing to shoot the deer for Don Tiburcio, but the action unto itself feels unnatural to him: his rifle is almost jokingly small and light, it squeaks when he puts it together, and he implies that if the doe had not held so still, he would not have been able to shoot anything. Bringing down the deer despite this set of conditions is, for him, similar to the demise of the old, ranch way of life. It was already dying, already ready to go down without a fight; all he had to do was point and shoot. Although he accepts this natural continuation of the world, there is also a taint of resigned despair as he ends the story with his uncle’s words: “Todo se acaba. Todo se extermina” (203). Everything is finished. Everything is extinguished.

Coupled with Santos’s stories of life’s fleeting nature are tentative expressions of its perpetual newness. Directly before the story of the deer, he describes the obligatory large baptismal party for the daughter of the ranch foreman, Alejo, “a mainstay of Norteño tradition” (200). This was Alejo’s seventh child (out of an eventual ten), and for a moment, it appears as though Santos is going to comment on the persistent power of life despite the death surrounding it; however, this story, too, launches into a commentary on life’s brevity, for the party ends when three inebriated brothers interrupt the celebration by starting a violent fight. To protect his family, Alejo shoots the men, killing one (200). The news of this man’s death holds a greater
impact because it is juxtaposed so closely with a new birth. Similarly, another anecdote – one of the few that actually takes place in England – describes his observation of a nuclear disarmament march that takes place in downtown London “in protest against the Americans placing nuclear-tipped cruise missiles on planes stationed at bases in Great Britain and Europe” (204). Assumedly, the demonstration is populated with people who desire the reduction of nuclear weapons possession to lessen the possibility of eventual mass destruction. Santos’s description of the event, however, implies that such destruction is already present:

A constant, flat droning hum of far-off bagpipes was in the air as the punk band Killing Joke took the main stage at the demonstration with a paralyzing electric screech, beneath a massive banner with an image of the head of a screaming baby in a seething red mushroom cloud. The drum battery exploded and the crowd was already heaving forward as the caterwauling guitars began to shake the paving stones. I thought to myself: This is what the end of the world will feel like. (205)

Besides the clear contrast between Santos’s impression of the day’s events – made all the stronger by his intensely evocative description – and the subject material of the protest itself is the interesting underlying message that, in his opinion, the end of the world will feel like people protesting the end of the world. This sentiment is a significant step for Santos in accepting his uncle’s mantra that “everything finishes.” A large contingent of the world fights this inevitability, trying to travel backwards by holding onto the past. All the while, though, the destruction of the world is upon them, not necessarily in the end of it in its entirety, but in the constant cycle of loss that causes much of the world to slip through people’s fingers. Apart from this protest march, though, is Santos: observing, but choosing to remain aloof. More than
anything, this decision is symbolic of his at least partial acceptance of Beto’s words. He will not protest the natural progression of life but rather look on acceptingly.

Of course, one could argue that Santos’s actions derive from the news he received several days before: that his great-uncle Frank had died, the first in his family to go “after the great despedida of las Viejitas six years before” (205). The loss of his uncle would understandably taint his viewpoint of the events – after all, why protest the potential for widespread destruction when everything is going to end in death regardless? Whether his viewpoint derives from acceptance or despair, however, is largely beside the point. Rather, the significance of the story lies in the coupling of his acceptance of ephemerality with another realization: “In that rumbling din, you could feel the tug of the universe expanding, aging by vast degrees, here, in a fragile world we were ourselves prepared to obliterate, all of it making the end of the world feel palpably imminent” (205). In this moment, Santos imagines the end of the world, but he also feels an infinite number of new beginnings as the universe continues to expand in size; conversely, this expansion causes him to even more tangibly feel the end of the world. For him, both occurrences exist not only simultaneously, but codependently, each causing the other in an endless cycle of death and rebirth. How he feels about this relationship is secondary (for as Beto told him, “You can be sad about this, but it wouldn’t change anything” [196]); rather, he devotes his entire energy to self-discovery and understanding, and, in doing so, he comprehends the entire universe and his own place in it.
Santos combines an earlier foreshadowing of this epiphany about the universe with subtle implications of the inherent presence of circularity at the beginning of the chapter: “Our vast galaxy is itself in perpetual motion, spiraling further outward in the chill vacuum that creation first exploded into. We have left our past – the journeys, marriages, and deaths along the way . . . scattered randomly across those vast arcs and loops, traced through millions of years, spun out across the void” (187, emphasis added). In this short paragraph, three words suggest the circularity of the universe as a whole: spiraling, loops, and spun. Once again, within the process of expansion is a circularity of being, the impossibility of moving entirely in a straight line as one travels through space and time. In conjunction with Santos’s words, one of Said’s comments about intellectual exile strikes home: “Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation” (“Intellectual” 373). In exile, both the mind and the body are in perpetual limbo, for a final destination lies neither behind nor in front of them. While for Said, this condition seems to be a regretful one, for Santos, exile does not hold a negative connotation but rather allows him greater clarity of vision about himself, his family, and his cultural history (Santos, Personal interview). When one has arrived at or is under the illusion of having arrived at a particular destination, one spends incredible energy focusing on the present, fulfilling one’s place in it, understanding and working for it. Exile frees a person from these obligations.
Though certainly Santos concentrated on his graduate work while in England, the knowledge that this was only a temporary destination for him allowed him to develop a clarity of understanding from a relative distance, to exile himself intellectually as well as physically and, in doing so, expand his vision to simultaneously see the past and the future, using his condition to understand the relationship between the other two.

Indeed, including the galaxy anecdote at the beginning of the chapter implies that Santos knew this lesson all along, but it took going into self-imposed exile for a time to realize it. Even his own understanding, then, is circular. His first conscious step toward this realization occurs at the nuclear weapons protest, but it only emerges fully when he visits Oxford’s Bodleian research library to view ancient books about the history and genealogy of the Mixteca Indians of Mexico. These manuscripts, rare survivors from the mid-1600s, had come out of Mexico and to Oxford from an unknown source, and Santos had been planning his visit to see them for two months. As he lays eyes on them for the first time, the realization strikes him that

There was a futile, ironic feeling because the books dealt repeatedly with the memory of a place of origin, and all the setting out and wandering in the world, guaranteeing that everything would be remembered, that the knowledge of the past would not be lost. Yet their testimonies were preserved but untranslatable, memories without a remembered. They looked hijacked, stolen from their vanquished source, each on a broken oracle of a disappeared world. (Places 208)

For Santos, these books are not only out of place, but out of time, for even though they were designed to preserve memories, they better belong to the time they remember than the dusty shelves of Oxford’s research library. There, they were living
testimonies to the rich practices of the Mixteca; here, they are lifeless drawings and words with rough approximations that only highlight how untranslatable they are. In essence, the books are homeless, never to fulfill their purpose, doomed to always exist out of place and out of time. Like Santos himself, the books are in exile.

Santos understands this keenly not only because of his own condition, but because he visits the books the same day he learns of the death of his Uncle Frank. Being a time of familial mourning makes being in England even more difficult, so Santos willingly and easily immerses himself in this history of Mexico both intellectually and emotionally. Wanting to be back in Texas himself, he projects his desire upon the books, idly crafting a plan to return them to their place of origin: “I thought I might just be able to quietly fold and carry out at least two of the books, the Seldon and the Codex Bodley. . . The ancient books could be repatriated in Coahuila, in the frontera of Mexico” (208). By musing about returning them to Mexico, Santos imagines that he could allow them to once again fulfill their original purpose. In the land where they were born, they could find someone who could appreciate them for their true value, who could place them among their counterparts and imbue them with new meaning.

However, “a small, simple painting of the Voladores, in the midst of their ritual” (209) that he spots in the corner of the manuscript distracts him from his plan, and in that moment, everything comes together. “The four dancers” he sees on the page were “perched on top of their decorated pole, preparing for the spiraling descent to the earth. Standing on the pinnacle, the caporal was speaking, telltale curls
streaming from his mouth, chanting out loud the old count of the days, praying that the world would be saved from destruction again” (209). Suddenly, Santos is transported back to the times he has seen the Danza de los Voladores in San Antonio and Mexico – indeed, the reader, too, can imagine the repetitive circularity of their motions as the dancers spiral downwards around the pole – and how mesmerized he was by their ritual. “While it may seem peculiar to speak of the pleasures of exile,” Said writes, because “exiles are aware of at least two [cultures and homes], this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions” (Reflections 186). Being in self-imposed exile has sharpened Santos’s vision, and he simultaneously sees the Voladores on the page in the library, in the rituals that he has personally witnessed, in all the performances they have enacted in the past, and in their place in Mexican culture, all the way back to the time that the ritual was first crafted, and, in that moment, he understands that the book needs to stay exactly where it is. Though arguably, Santos never seriously considered stealing the book, there is a part of him that believed that it would be better understood back in Mexico. Remembering the circularity of the Voladores ritual, however, impresses upon him the natural circularity of time, and he sees “things not just as they [were], but how they came to that way” (Said“Intellectual” 378). It may not have been the intent of the original authors for the Mixteca manuscripts to end up halfway around the world, but such is the nature of the setting out process. It is not just the universe that expands by spiraling outwards; each object, each person is a microcosm of that movement, and so cannot tarry too long in one place lest he halt its natural continuation. Eventually, “for the Santos [family]”
that meant that “there were no more places or origin, just the setting out, just the going forth into new territory, new time” (Santos, Places 210); similarly, for the books, for the Mixteca, for ancient Mexican culture, there is no other objective to achieve but exile. The books feel out of place in England not because they belong in Mexico, but because they do not belong anywhere. They have no final destination. They have no home. They just have their constant movement, that perfect connection between the past and the future that can only be achieved by letting go of the present. That is the lesson that Santos learns as he gazes at the drawing of the Voladores: that exile can be a self-imposed condition, but it is also a natural one, for within the circular motion of generations, ‘home’ becomes movement rather than geography.

For Anzaldúa, the cultural and personal exile from which she writes is deeply linked to the condition of internal colonialism because, having lived on both sides of the border, she poignantly feels the difference between the two. In her first chapter of Borderlands, she includes a poem from Chilean songwriter Violeta Parra, entitled “El destierro,” which Anzaldúa calls “The Lost Land.” “no sabe el indio que hacer / le van a quitar si tierra,” it reads. “el indio se cae muerto / y el afuerino de pie” (Anzaldúa, Borderlands 28). “The indian doesn’t know what to do/They are going to take his land away. . . the indian falls down dead/and the outsider stands.” Though the poem is written about Chileans, this “lost land” is also the borderlands that Anzaldúa lives in from the age of ten, the parts of Mexico that were taken by the United States, and more broadly, the Chicano/a homeland of Aztlán. This land is ‘lost’ not because they do not live on it but because they are divided from it culturally. Collective
ownership has been stolen away and replaced with a singular mindset to which all others must conform. Though Anzaldúa lives in a migratory, largely Mexican-American community, she poignantly feels the larger cultural ideals of the United States devaluing the indigenous aspects of her person, dividing her within herself. For her, this is a primary aspect of “Internal colonialism. Being rendered marginal – split estranged from our own beings parts of us rendered alien – the part of us that is not ‘normal’ i.e. white” (“Internal Exile” 3). Feeling cut off from oneself is a condition that follows a person everywhere, affecting a person in every aspect of his or her life and severely stifling one’s growth. Anzaldúa, for instance, manifests the effects of this struggle from a young age through intense feelings of shame toward the parts of herself that are devalued: “I have split from and disowned those parts of myself that others rejected. . . As a person, I, as a people, we, Chicanos, blame ourselves, hate ourselves, terrorize ourselves. Most of this goes on unconsciously; we only know that we are hurting, we suspect that there is something ‘wrong’ with us” (Anzaldúa, Borderlands 67). Here, the ‘internal’ part of ‘internal colonialism’ holds far deeper implications than simply cutting her off from the land in which she lives; in essence, it cuts her off from herself.

Anzaldúa experiences this condition most significantly in her educational experiences, for a large “[p]art of internal colonialism is to keep Mexicans relatively uneducated” (Falcón 119). “Academy,” Anzaldúa writes, “controls, disciplines, constructs. . . For mestiza, everyday [sic] brings an attempted re-conquest. In colleges and universities, theory is used as an ideological weapon” (“Internal Exile” 11,14). In
Anzaldúa feels is taken, devalued through her education in favor of logic and rationality. For a period, the more energy she invested into education, the more she suppresses those parts of herself as well, buying into the ideology that is imposed upon her. Slowly and eventually, though, Anzaldúa then begins to subvert and resist the teachings that cause this effect, instead learning to “change the system that subjugates us; against the imperialism that attempts to take over the cultural territories of ethnic others” (11). In doing so, she simultaneously rejects the covert exile that is imposed upon her by academia, while also opening herself to a more overt exile that comes as an effect of resisting mainstream teachings, fully embracing her status as a so-called outsider to Anglicized ideology. Indeed, her background and inclination gives her little other choice, for, as Said explains, “Even intellectuals who are lifelong members of a society can, in a matter of speaking, be divided into insiders and outsiders: those . . . who flourish in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance. . . [and] the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned” (“Intellectual” 373). Anzaldúa rejects the realms of power and privilege that conventional academia offers her, for she understands that, split between herself as she is, such honors would only celebrate half of herself; ultimately, the net effect of embracing them would be zero, for they would suppress the Mexicana/Chicana half of herself in equal measure that they would bring out her Spanish/Anglicized aspects.
As Anzaldúa begins to resist mainstream teachings, however, she sees more clearly how many others bend under their pressure, that the lack of self-ownership is not merely a condition imposed by the Anglo onto the Chicano/a and the indigino, but frequently a complicit, two-way transfer. This idea is reflected in Parra’s poem: “ya no son los españoles / los que le hacen llorar / hoy son los propios chilenos / los que le quitan su pan” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 28). Just as Parra expresses, “Now it is not the Spanish / who make him weep. / Today it is the Chileans themselves / who take away his bread,” Anzaldúa sees this pattern manifested in Chicano/as, in those who accept their colonialism by placidly assimilating, a decision that she views as only deepening Chicano/as’ exile. Significantly, besides Anzaldúa’s translation of “the lost land,” “el destierro” can also be translated as “a place of exile.” Because of the impositions of internal colonialism that split her within herself, for Anzaldúa, exile is not a distant, abstract concept, but her everyday reality: she immigrated to the former land of her people, certainly, but she also immigrated into exile. Indeed, this condition is made all the more painful by the lack of complete separation – there are constant reminders of one’s former homeland, and so the land feels relatively close by (Said, “Intellectual” 370). The attempted compromise and the all-too-frequent assimilation that Anzaldúa sees around her are indicative of the situation of the land in which she lives: simultaneously a home and a place of expulsion. She knows that no matter how she tries to avoid this, literally or metaphorically, by going or staying, by assimilating or resisting, there will be a part of her that does not fit with the rest, that is always devalued for the benefit of the others. A part of her will always be in exile.
Instead of trying to avoid the inevitability of exile, then, she embraces it. Manifested literally, this choice leads to Anzaldúa’s decision to get away from the borderlands for a period by temporarily teaching in Vermont. Significantly, it is while she is there that she begins to write *Borderlands*. As she explains, “You are closest to home when you’re farthest away. As a writer I can write about places after I’ve left them, rather than when I’m there. . . These feelings of being an outsider, an alien generated in me the impetus to explain things to myself and others” (“On the Process” 1). Anzaldúa’s desire to understand her past and herself inherently derives from her need to live in a place free from the specific cultural restraints in which she has been immersed in her entire life. Gaining greater insight into herself allows her to capture it in such a way in her writing that she can continue to carry it with her into the future, albeit in a new form.

This move leads her to more fully understand not only her personal life but also many of the broader aspects of historical Chicano/a experience, so that when she writes *Borderlands*, she begins with the line, “The Aztecas del norte. . . compose the largest single tribe or nation of Anishinabeg (Indians) found in the United States today. . . Some call themselves Chicanos and see themselves as people whose true homeland is Aztlán [the U.S. Southwest]” (23). Significantly, these words, coming at the very beginning of the work, set up the entire book as one of exile. The Chicano/as are by nature a displaced people. However, establishing an exilic framework is not an admittance that she and all other Chicano/as are doomed to wander in exile, but rather, a tool of empowerment. By creating a lens of double displacement, she exerts a
control over it that she did not previously possess. Herein lies the initially paradoxical relationship that Anzaldúa establishes from the first line of the book and spends much of the rest of it explaining and elaborating upon: *that embracing exile allows one to claim power over space, the very thing that exile takes away.* “Moving,” she explains, “is our defense. Analyze, strategize, actualize plans to coordinate action of various organizations. Creating space to do this” (“Internal Exile” 9). This space is both literal and metaphorical. Post-1848, the borderlands emphasized how little power Chicano/as possessed, for not only was their land taken from them in one sweeping move on the national level, but the little personal space that they retained was only half theirs. Concurrently, the idea of “borderlands” itself opened up a new space for Chicano/as to take advantage of and claim as their own. Oftentimes, these claims are not as concrete as simply living on a piece of land or owning it in deed but must be more abstractly approached by “evading, resisting, subverting, challenging the dominant ideology” (11).

This is the careful line that Anzaldúa walks by writing *Borderlands* in Vermont. On a literal level, the land is less hers than ever, for she is far away from the borderlands, farther away from Mexico, and does not own but merely rents her property. However, by using this location to create, her writing “acts as a safety valve” as well as “a political act that springs from the impulse to subvert, resist, educate, and make changes” (“On the Process” 1). Anzaldúa builds a border of understanding around her past, protecting it from harmful ideology and pushes out everything that does not derive from herself. This effectively creates a space that could not possibly
exist had she attempted to build it in the borderlands, but which thrives from a distance.

Perhaps Anzaldúa would not have been as committed to follow her own path if she had found a viable community of scholars with other women or Chicanos (i.e. males), but, exacerbating her estrangement, her writings “had been repeatedly rejected by the Chicano malestream” (3). As she found no kindred souls in either feminism or Chicanoism, the combination of these factors compelled her to reject both an Anglicized academic path and a standard Chicano approach to scholarship. Because there was no obvious literary niche for the work she wanted to write, Anzaldúa created her own. Just as she did by her literal move, in her independent exploration of metaphorical space, she cemented her condition of intellectual exile but also gave herself a greater freedom of movement than she had experienced within the confines of her previous environment. As she was aware that her blood contained “both the voice of the dominator and the voice of the resister” (“Internal Exile” 2), it appears as though, by resisting, she must deny part of herself that came from the dominator. However, Anzaldúa refuses to accept this give-and-take dichotomy at face value, so rather than embracing the resister over the dominator, she chooses the path that allows for greater overall freedom, the choice that she hopes will lead to being able to embrace both halves of herself. In doing so, Anzaldúa reflected Said’s idea “that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons” (Said, Reflections 185). Like the Mexicans of 1848 who had to choose between giving
up their land or giving up their people, for Anzaldúa, every choice is a choice of exile: one confines her in well-known spaces, granting familiarity but defining the limits of her life; the other allows her to move forward and create her own freedom of space, but cuts her off from her past life, denying her the liberty of returning to it. Accepting these conditions, though, grants her the freedom to live outside of them.

She explores one part of her journey and ability to create this space through the poem “I Had to Go Down” in the section “Cihuatlyotl, Woman Alone.” In it, she places herself into a house and gradually moves from the top floor to her ultimate destination of the basement. This situation metaphorically parallels what happens when she embraces her actual decision to move from the borderlands to Vermont as well as her decision to reject traditional forms of scholarship in favor of her own unique approach. Significantly, by the end of the poem, her depiction not only reflects both these literal and metaphorical journeys of her own life, but also takes on a larger historical and cultural context, symbolizing that rather than just moving farther away from her homeland, she is also returning to it in the form of the legendary land of Aztlán.

Initially noteworthy is the first stanza of the poem, for while the rest of the piece is left-justified, the opening lines are erratically spaced with indentations and extra spaces between words:

I hardly ever set foot on the floors below.
    Creaking wood expanding contracting,
    erratic ticking of the furnace
    wild animal kicking at its iron cage
    frighten me. (Anzaldúa, Borderlands 189)
Only after the last line in the stanza, “frighten me” (189) does the format become aligned. Her syntax and spacing add to the irregular construction: the subject of the second sentence, for instance, stretches out over three lines, making the reader subconsciously anxious before arriving at the long-awaited verb. Placing such a compounded noun in conjunction with a one word verb and object also makes the sentence strangely weighted, throwing the poem off-balance from the start. Omitting the articles that would normally accompany “wood,” “ticking,” and “animal,” also expands the reach of the imagery, for because the concepts are not specified as being those unique to her basement, they exist outside of the house as well, surrounding her in unknown territory. Finally, the extra spaces between “expanding” and “contracting” as well as “frighten” and “me” invite the reader to pause longer than usual, further throwing off the flow of these first lines. Essentially, Anzaldúa uses both the content and the form of this stanza to clearly communicate that she is afraid of going downstairs. Simultaneously, however, the act of admitting this seems to calm her, allowing her to tell her story straightforwardly, for directly after, the poem becomes left-justified and her sentences more balanced and grammatically sound. Much of the content remains anxious, but the prose and the form at least communicate control.

The first two lines of the second stanza continue to invoke minor trepidation: “I don’t know what impelled me to go down. / I should have waited till morning” (189). Here, Anzaldúa invokes her desire to make this transition to her basement in a more convenient time – in this case, in daylight, where the journey into the dark would perhaps be less daunting. However, she knows inherently that she cannot afford to
wait for convenience, that the move must be made when her internal rather than external conditions are correctly aligned. Indeed, the state of her present conditions is hardly more pleasant than those which await her. “Shivering in the cold” of the second floor by the “curtains thickened by time,” she “scraped the caked tears from the windows, / stripped the bed of its stiff sheets” (189). Clearly, although Anzaldúa lives in the upper floors of the house, it remains a hostile and largely neglected environment. Her surroundings grow old despite her presence, and she is not truly at home within them. The decision to clean the windows and the bed, then, is her first rejection of mere co-existence and the beginnings of her resolve to move down.

Within this transition, one image in the poem stands out in particular: “I stood,” Anzaldúa writes, “among the winter trees / grey and leafless in the sunken yard / the sky vast and eternal. / I gathered the rotting wood” (189). These trees are like the upper stories of the house: old, decrepit, belonging to the landscape that surrounds them but not to the larger world and certainly not to Anzaldúa. Instead, she burns them, signifying her acceptance of their out-lived usefulness. In doing so, she also finalizes her cleaning process by burning out the dust of her past that is still left within herself. Once the fire dies, she is finally prepared to go down. In the basement, she finds broken bricks, old clothing, forgotten furniture – but also a young tree, newly sprouted, “nourished by a nightsun” (191). It is living there against the odds, for a root found its way into the house by chance, and despite the dark, despite the dust and the loneliness, it managed to grow. This tree acts as an obvious symbol for the growth Anzaldúa is engaging in herself but also stands in clear contrast to the old, broken
trees that lay outside the house. Under “the sky vast and eternal,” the outside trees die despite the air and the space; however, the space in the basement is different. It is not natural, but deliberately shaped; it is not filled with moonlight, but the light of the “nightsun.” These conditions allow the tree, as Anzaldúa, to thrive.

Indeed, it is only after Anzaldúa sees the tree that she recognizes what she has implicitly known all along: that the “scuffing sounds” she has been hearing are made by her own feet. Initially, she “heard footsteps in the basement, / an intruder breaking in” but then decides that “it was only a flurry of rain drops / hitting the windowpane / or the wind knocking the candle out of my hand” (189). From above, she does not even recognize the sound of her own footsteps; in fact, she construes it as being the sound of objects that are not even distantly related. Not until she goes down, not until she sees the trees growing does she realize that “It had been my footsteps I’d heard” (191). Just as the borderlands are, the upstairs floors are hostile to her. By cleaning them, shaping them to her own desires, she signifies her rejection of tradition and mainstream teachings. In attempting to create a new space apart from her past suppression, she stumbles onto a room where she has been living all along – clearly, this is a place where she belongs.

Indeed, this journey to the basement is not made on a whim, nor is it forced; instead, every single event of her life has been leading her to this moment of going down, for part of her has been here all along, living and walking around quietly. It is with this realization that the poem completes its presentation of circularity to which it alludes the entire time: from a long-ago time when she regularly visited the basement,
Anzaldúa previously moved solely to the upstairs; now, she returns. This cycle largely parallels the long-ago movement of the Aztecs from whom Anzaldúa is descended. As previously noted, the Aztecs left their homeland of Aztlán at the counsel of their god Huitzilopochtli, migrating south and eventually settling in the Valley of Mexico, and although the original location of Aztlán has been lost to memory, speculation places it somewhere in the southwestern United States. Anzaldúa’s literal move takes her away from her own homeland but brings her closer to the homeland of her people; similarly, going down into the basement of her poem brings her full circle to a place where she has previously resided, albeit in a different form. Present and past collide in this moment of recognition, and she engages in a simultaneous reclamation of her history and a creation of her future.

Although this space Anzaldúa creates for herself is largely represented in the metaphorical within the poems, it does have quite viable implications. She realizes, in essence, that by cleansing herself of her past by leaving Anglicized academic theory and Chicano (male) rejection behind, she is accepting an exilic condition. Leaving behind a familiar – if oppressive – space for the unknown, knowing that she cannot return as the same person, can be construed as little else. However, Anzaldúa knows she has no other option, not only the sake of herself, but for anyone, Chicano/a or otherwise, who wishes to escape the same oppressive bonds as she in a space solely of their creation. Her goal, she writes, is to achieve “Solidarity, not unity. Consciousness of our solidarity” (“Internal Exile” 1) and that the most tangible way to achieve this is to “enlarge the space (borderlands) of the disempowered” (11).
Especially important is this second point: that she enlarges the space of the
disempowered by enlarging the borderlands. Much of her literal journey to understand
herself and her past, to write about her home, takes her away from the borderlands.

When Anzaldúa expands that understanding to others, though, it happens in the very
space that she left behind, which empowers not the space she is creating anew, but
also the original borderlands. She gives them new meaning, new purpose, new life in
a new context. In her space, no longer are they the instrument of the oppressor,
stifling voices and limiting growth, but a tool of connection. To welcome others into
this space, Anzaldúa explains that she deliberately leaves gaps in her books, places
where readers who would not usually be drawn into her ideas can enter. “The gaps are
really tiny borders within the text – places where our idea or storyline ends and
another begins only there is a faultline separating the two like gaps between floor-
boards that a reader must navigate,” (“On the Process” 5) and that tiny space that she
leaves open allows people to enter into the larger space of her ever-expanding rhetoric.

The primary example of one such gap lies in Anzaldúa’s discussion of the
“coatlicue state,” which represents “duality in life, a synthesis of duality, and a third
perspective – something more than mere duality or a synthesis of duality”
(Borderlands 68). Literally, Coatlicue is the Aztec goddess who gave birth to the
heavens and Huitzilopochtli (the god of war who advised the Aztecs to leave Aztlán
for the south); metaphorically, she is the internal state of agitation, a name for the
constant and simultaneous combination and separation of various aspects of a person.
Her image is represented by a headless and handleless statue: in place of the former are
twin streams of blood that end in the heads of two rattlesnakes; instead of the latter, her arms end in claws (69). Additionally, “Hanging from her neck is a necklace of open hands alternating with human hearts. The hands symbolize the act of giving life; the hearts, the pain of Mother Earth giving birth to all her children” (69). Coatlicue holds these two contrasting ideas within her image, giving life while also taking it away, causing pain while assuaging it. Similarly, the coatlicue state is joy is coupled with pain; life, with death. This is what Anzaldúa feels inside herself, what she knows others feel and invites them to embrace, and what she prepares in the space of her creation. It is duality, but in its combination, it is also the absence of duality. This is the state that she holds onto, the feelings that allow her to create her exilic space apart from exile, that allow her to subvert the effects of internal colonialism, and the space into which she invites others. People stand with her in these gaps, these borders, these borderlands, not in unity, but in solidarity, creating a community that could not exist in any other space but her own. In doing so, she transcends the exile that she creates for herself, for instead of rejecting her past, rejecting her previous loyalties, assumptions, ideas, and connections, she is embracing new ones. Indeed, “All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement” (Said, Reflections 176), and in her own estrangement, Anzaldúa creates this space of connection between her past and her future, between her struggles and her triumphs, and between all other people who choose to enter.

Both Santos and Anzaldúa, then, rework the space and condition of exile, so often viewed as one of loss and disconnection, to become one of discovery,
understanding, and continuity. Santos restructures the movement that exile necessitates to anchor himself to the movements of his ancestors, and, in doing so, reminds himself that no matter how far away he goes, when he returns, or in what condition he returns, his story is a natural continuation of those in his family that have become before him. Conversely and complimentarily, Anzaldúa prefers to focus on how exilic movement creates new spaces that can be used to foster the deliberate movement of future generations, generations that are connected to the past, yes, but that have a brighter vision of what is to come than what they are leaving behind. In essence, both authors “lend dignity to a condition legislated to deny dignity – to deny an identity to people” (175). Within that dignity comes a sense of renewed identity as well, so even those who must live in exile at least are able to strike a balance between their condition and a sense of connection. In the words of Benjamin Saénz, “There’s that sense of belonging and also that sense of exile. I think that all of us live between belonging and exile” (56). In the space between those two elements is created a new sense of being, a fresh way of interacting with the world that neither entails that people embrace complete loss, nor complete gain. On the surface, this may appear to simply be a restructuring of exile itself, for the condition does naturally include both a loss of the past and a gain of a new perspective and understanding. In one sense, that is exactly what it is: exile, but embraced instead of rejected; in another, the restricting of exile creates an element that exists entirely outside of it, a personal autonomy that cannot be understood in terms of either loss or gain, but only through the lens of a newly created self.
Conclusion

Gloria Anzaldúa and John Phillip Santos both effectively challenge traditional notions of internal colonialism, reframing it from being a tool of oppression to possessing the potential of being a medium for resistance. Largely, this resistance takes the form of connecting the current Chicano/a condition across time: from the past, both authors argue that memories must be reclaimed and preserved to keep a collective historical identity strong; in the present, the multiplicity within Chicano/a communities can be embraced and connected by, for instance, engaging in linguistic and cultural code-switching; finally, a new space can be created in the future by embracing instead of resisting the de facto condition of exile created by the movement of the U.S./Mexico border. If the present-day is viewed in too narrow a context, these inherent connections will be overlooked, and with them, an opportunity for Chicano/as to move into the future with as much strength as possible. While Anzaldúa is more overtly political in her content and Santos initially seems solely focused on individual and family connections, taken together, their reflections on the temporality of internal colonialism are complementary. As Lee Maracle explains, “We are not assigned place, position, or borders, we assume them... no one but ourselves can define place, position, or power” (212). Indeed, if the messages of Anzaldúa and Santos are listened to, understood, and carried into the future, and if borders and the positions of power around them continue to be challenged and refined, the effects of internal colonialism will soon be only a memory.
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