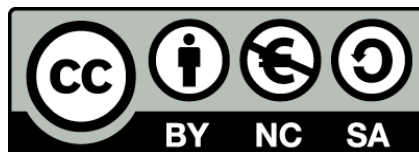




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Representations of Identity in Chicax Children's Literature through Word and Image: Maya Gonzalez's Picturebooks

Marina Bernardo Flórez



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**Representations of Identity in Chicanx Children's Literature through
Word and Image: Maya Gonzalez's Picturebooks.**

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For Celia, the great meiga in my tale,
for granting me my three wishes:
love, knowledge, and freedom.

Para Celia, a gran meiga deste conto,
grazas por concederme os tres desexos:
amor, sabiduria e liberdade.

Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.

—Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

SUMMARY

Chicano children's literature was born in the wake of the so-called *El Movimiento*, the Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and especially the 1970s. In the 1990s, as a part of the rising trend of Multiculturalism and as a cultural product and a reflection of power relations, Chicano children's literature strove to provide an authentic and accurate representation of Chicano identity. The representation of Mexican-Americans in children's literature until then had been based on cultural homogeneity, historical distortion, and stereotypes, the distinctive elements which are at the core of the construction of the 'Other' and that serve to create and maintain structures of power grounded in fixed identities, opposed binaries and inequalities.

In *Borderlands / La Frontera. The New Mestiza*, Chicana author, Gloria Anzaldúa, rethinks the term 'identity', or rather 'consciousness', from an inclusive, queer perspective which is not based on opposed dualities. The ideas the author develops in her work on the *Mestiza* identity echo in her books for children *Friends from the Other Side / Amigos del Otro Lado* and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y La Llorona*. Prietita, "little dark one", is Anzaldúa's alter ego in her children's books, her little child-self, "tender, open and vulnerable" (Anzaldúa 2000: 63), who signals her mestizo identity: Mexican American and Indian. Anzaldúa's second bilingual picturebook, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*, is illustrated by Maya Gonzalez, who portrays Prietita as a young girl of distinctively Mexican features (dark skin and long black hair).

As author and illustrator of her bilingual picture books, contemporary Chicana author Maya Gonzalez gives voice and celebrates the self through what she calls 'the power of reflection', moving beyond 'authentic' or 'accurate' representations of Chicano identity. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyse Gonzalez's picturebooks, starting by focusing on the *Nature Trilogy*, in which the author highlights our connection to nature (*My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo*, *I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama*, and *Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol*), to later explore her most recent projects published by her own independent press, among them *The Gender Wheel*, "a nature-based, inclusive, body positive story of gender". I also pay attention to the visual

poetry she has created together with Chicano poet Francisco X. Alarcón in a series of picturebooks published between 1997 and 2017.

The research questions I address in my study are the following:

1. How has the representation of Chicana identity in children's literature reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history?
2. What elements does Maya Gonzalez make use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and gender?
3. How is contemporary Chicana children's literature being received within the United States context?
4. How are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so?
5. How are Maya Gonzalez's presentations at seminars and workshops helping bring about social change in Chicana and non-Chicana children's identities?

In order to analyse the way(s) in which words and images interact, my focus will be on the dual code, visual and verbal, which is characteristic of picturebooks. I examine the elements Gonzalez makes use of, both as an illustrator and as a writer, to give voice and to represent identity, and how her projects create spaces of inclusiveness and agency, celebrate diversity, and become a source of reflection for all children, Chicana and non-Chicana. I frame my study within a critical multicultural approach in order to explore the subversion of power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and gender when representing identities in picturebooks for young readers. A critical multicultural analysis of children's literature (Botelho and Kabakow 2009) allows me to focus on the ideology and power relations at work in children's literature, so as to bear a critical perspective on Multiculturalism. Although it is not the main purpose of this work, I include two fieldwork studies on the reception of contemporary picturebooks authored by Chicana authors in order to explore the reception of these works in the US context, both in the publishing industry, and in the educational field, as well as in order to complement the analysis of the representations of Chicana identity through word and image.

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PART 1

- 1. Introduction: Borders, Bridges, Identity and Children's Literature**
- 2. Theoretical Framework**
- 3. State of the Art**

1. Introduction: Borders, Bridges, Identity and Children's Literature

There are so many borders
that divide people,
but for every border
there is also a bridge.
—Gina Valdés, *Puentes y Fronteras*

In his book *Community* (2001), sociologist Zygmund Bauman revisits one of the central concepts of our societies, 'community', as the provider of security and freedom in a globalised world. Bauman agrees with Jonathan Friedman, who "warns us – in our fast globalising world 'one thing that is not happening is that boundaries are disappearing. Rather, they seem to be erected on every new street corner of every declining neighbourhood of our world'" (16), an idea which has gained all the relevance today. As both Bauman and Friedman point out, boundaries are not disappearing, on the contrary, at the beginning of the 21st century some of the borders which the world inherited from Colonialism have become today real fortresses and walls designed to prevent the movement of people and to ensure Western security. Among them is the Mexican-United States border, which stretches over 3,245 kilometres from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean.

In his introduction to *Identity* (2004), Benedetto Vecchi presents Bauman's idea of identity, closely linked to that of 'community', in the context of a restricted world which creates boundaries and barriers: "The politics of identity therefore speaks the language of those who have been marginalized by globalization" (7). And it is precisely the inhabitants of the borders, and in this case of the Mexican-United States border, that have been marginalized. Mexican-American or Chicana¹ identity has long been closely related to the borderlands, which, according to one of the most influential Chicana author, Gloria Anzaldúa, should ideally be places of contact. Instead, oftentimes the border has unfortunately become "not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape" (*Borderlands* 12). Throughout the 20th Century, especially since *El Movimiento* (the Chicano

¹ According to anthropologist-historian James Diego Vigil in his introduction to *From Indians to Chicanos. The Dynamics of Mexican-American Culture* (2012), the label 'Mexican-American' is used by those people who take pride in being American, whereas the recent trend favours the use of 'Chicano' because it emphasizes its Mexican background, more appropriate when tracing "the historical development of a contemporary people" (Vigil 10). In this dissertation the term 'Chicana' will be preferred over 'Mexican-American', the final -x indicating gender inclusiveness.

Movement), which took place within the broader Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Chicana artists and authors have represented their own identity in their works of art. Chicana children's literature was born with the idea of providing representations of Chicana identity to future generations. The importance of children's literature in shaping identities is stated in Kimberley Reynolds's introduction to *Children's Literature Studies. A Research Handbook* (2011):

... children's literature is one of the earliest ways in which we encounter stories, it plays a powerful role in shaping how we think about and understand the world. Stories are key sources of the images, vocabularies, attitudes, structures and explanations we need to contemplate experience; because they are often bound up with education of one kind or another they can be important carriers of information about changes in culture, present and past. (1)

And those visual and verbal carriers of the information we learn in childhood affect the way we understand the world:

Just as the children we once were continue to exist inside and to affect us, so writing produced for children continues to resonate over time and to be implicated in the way we conceive, organise and manage societies. (1-2)

In this research I will analyse how Chicana identity has been constructed and represented in children's literature, and how specially in the 1990s, as a part of the trend of Multiculturalism, Chicana children's literature, as a cultural product and as evidence of power relations, strove to represent an "authentic" and "accurate" Chicana identity. Conversely, we will see how the contemporary Chicana author Maya Gonzalez represents and celebrates identities in her picturebooks, moving beyond "authentic" or "accurate" representations of Chicana identity, and I will explore how her work is helping make social change through her representations of identities in Chicana children's literature by means of word and image.

Through the analysis of Chicana children's books and Gonzalez's work, as well as the fieldwork included in this study, I will try to answer the following questions:

1. How has the representation of Chicana identity in children's literature reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history?
2. What elements does Maya Gonzalez make use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and gender?

3. How is contemporary Chicana children's literature being received within the United States context?
4. How are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so?
5. How are Maya Gonzalez's presentations at seminars and workshops helping bring about social change in Chicana and non-Chicana children's identities?

In the theoretical framework of this first part of the dissertation I develop the main concepts to be applied in the analysis of how identity has been and is constructed and represented through Chicana children's literature will be founded on the notion of identity as being "multiply constructed" within discourse (Hall 4). Edward Said's *Orientalism* will help me analyse the systematic construction of the Other by the West. Homi Bhabha's 'Third Space' and 'Hybrid Identities' and Gloria Anzaldúa's concepts of the 'borderlands' and 'the new *mestiza*' will provide me with an insight as to how to approach hybrid cultures and the representation of Chicana culture and identity with a decolonizing agenda.

Perry Nodelman's study on *Orientalism and the Other in Children's Literature* and Maria Nikolajeva's work on power, normativity, and subversion, together with John Stephens' *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (1992) will provide the theoretical concepts to frame my analysis on the subversion of power relations in Chicana children's literature. A critical multicultural analysis of children's literature (Botelho and Kabakow 2009) will allow me to focus on the ideology and power relations at work in children's literature, so as to bear a critical perspective on Multiculturalism, and will also provide me with some of the main elements to be employed in the analysis of Maya Gonzalez's picturebooks. Despite the fact that this research does not have as its main focus how children readers respond to Chicana children's literature, the second part of the analysis section does pay attention to the importance of its reception in the US publishing industry and in the US education programs, mainly throughout the end of the twentieth century until the present day. This is why I consider it necessary to refer to Reception Studies and Reader Response Theory (Iser 1978, Fish 1980), as well as to the concept of visual literacy in order to frame the two fieldwork studies on the reception of bilingual Chicana children's picturebooks in the US education system.

In the State of the Art section of this introduction, I will provide an overview of children's literature as a field of study, as well as the representation of other ethnic groups in US

children's literature. I will also comment on the recent studies on Chicana children's literature and identity, and on Chicana studies in the US, Spain and Catalonia.

Although Maya Gonzalez's bilingual English/Spanish picturebooks, published between the years 2007 and 2018, will be the main focus of analysis, prior analyses have been carried out of other bilingual English/Spanish picturebooks written by other Chicana authors between the years 1990 and 2014 in order to help answer the research questions regarding identity and Chicana children's literature under the trend of Multiculturalism. Part II of this research deals with the analysis of picturebooks which centres both on the verbal and on the visual, with special attention paid to how the two codes complement one another in Gonzalez's picturebooks, as the Chicana artist is both illustrator and writer of most of them. The tools to analyse how the verbal and visual codes work together in picturebooks will draw upon Maria Nikolajeva and Carol Scott's study *How Picturebooks Work* (2001), David Lewis's *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks* (2001), and Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles's *Children's Picturebooks. The art of Visual Storytelling* (2012), as I explain in the methodology section of the analysis, where I also describe and account for the instruments designed and employed to carry out the two fieldwork studies on the reception of children's picturebooks authored by Chicana writers and illustrators in the US context.

In part III of this dissertation, I present the results of the analysis, along with the conclusions and possible further research on Chicana children's books, specially on the reception of these books by children readers, and/or on the representation of other hybrid identities in contemporary children's literature.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section I develop the ideas I draw upon for my analysis of the construction and representation of identity in discourse, as well as of how ideology is conveyed and how power relations can be subverted in children's literature. I close this theoretical framework with notions on the interaction between the reader and the verbal-visual text, and on the °concept of visual literacy.

2.1. The Representation of Identity in Discourse: from the Other to the New

Mestiza

The other is not simply on the far side of the border, itself violently imposed and maintained, and there is no separating wall that can nullify the ethical demand for responsiveness to the suffering of the other. How are we to think such a responsibility across a border that is meant to differentiate populations, to prevent their inmixing (intermixing?) and to render faceless an entire population?

–Judith Butler, *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*

In order to analyse how Chicanx identity has been constructed and represented in children's literature, identity here understood as a process which is never complete, I refer to Stuart Hall when he argues that "Identities are ... constituted within, not outside representation" (4), that is, there is no 'essential self' which is then represented or expressed, but rather subjectivity and identity are constructed within discourse. Thus, identity is an active process of representation or discursive construction; it is always unstable and fragmented, not singular but multiple, since it is constructed through language and culture.

The definition of *identity* has evolved and changed over the last 50 years, and both *identity* and *difference* have been the focus of numerous debates in fields such as Feminism, Ethnicity, and Postcolonial Studies, among others. Since the 1960s a paradigm shift has taken place in literary studies: the literary object is no longer regarded as exclusively "artistic", that is, a set of linguistic signs which creates an aesthetic effect. The introduction of ideology as a key element in our relationship to the literary object brought about a change in the classical paradigm and allowed for the development of ideological readings arising from various approaches to the literary object: Psychoanalysis, Marxism, Feminism, Deconstruction, Postcolonial Studies and Queer Theory. These ideological readings focus on the fact that literary texts construct models of worlds. Literature not only represents identities, it also produces them.

A view of the subject as an unstable entity that is always in construction implies that the subject's identity is flexible and is created through language and discourse, and that as such it is always in a state of flux. From the point of view of Postcolonial Studies, which focus on the power relationships occurring within the colonial system and examine the basis upon which this system is built, the colonial subject is a *mestizo*, a hybrid, the result of the clash of cultures, a fragmented, heterogeneous subject. And it was during

Colonialism that a systematic construction of the Other took place as a tool to perpetuate a colonial system based on fixed identities and inequalities.

2.1.1. The Systematic Construction and Representation of the Other: Edward Said's *Orientalism*

One of the most remarkable and influential texts on how identity can be constructed and represented as a coherent discourse over a period of centuries is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). In his work Said explains how the West has created and developed a system of ideas from different fields and areas of knowledge, with the support of institutions and structures of power, to create and represent the Orient and "Orientals". Beyond this, because Orientalism as a discourse is founded upon binary oppositions, it has also allowed the West to create its own identity and to represent itself: the West is rational, developed, human, and superior; the East is irrational, underdeveloped, and inferior. For his analysis Said takes as a starting point two fundamental notions: the first is Giambattista Vico's idea that history is made by men and women, and thus it can be unmade and rewritten with omissions, impositions and distortions. The second is Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, thanks to which Orientalism can be regarded as a "systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (3). Throughout the centuries, these opposed binary identities have been interpreted and reinterpreted according to socio-historical contexts and have responded to political interests in the West. From a humanist perspective, Said analyses Orientalism as a dynamic exchange between individuals and the political concerns of three empires: British, French and the North-American (the USA), in whose intellectual and creative territories the works he analyses were produced.

As for Orientalism as a system that constructs and represents identities, Said establishes four axioms to define it:

1. It is based on the difference between the superior West and the inferior East.
2. It prefers abstractions of the Orient, in detriment of direct evidence from modern Oriental realities.
3. The Orient is eternal, uniform and unable to define itself.
4. The Orient is something we must fear and, thus, it needs to be controlled.

According to Said, in order to understand Orientalism as a discourse that both constructs and represents identities, it is necessary to understand the underlying notion of identity as something that is neither natural nor stable, but, rather, constructed. We must question whether there can be a true representation of something, or whether any and all representations, being representations, are embedded first in language and then in the culture, the institutions, and the political atmosphere in which the individual making the representation is embedded.

As a result of the four axioms of Orientalism, the knowledge of the Other is distorted due to the representations based on generalization, reductive images, and stereotypes introduced by Western culture/power structures.

One of the common objections raised to Said's *Orientalism* is the fact that it does not offer an alternative to the discourse of Orientalism it critiques, but Said is also critical of possible alternative discourses. In fact, his aim in *Orientalism* is not to offer an alternative discourse, but rather to challenge the idea that what is different is hostile and dangerous. He advocates for the need to rethink historical experiences, the understanding of which was once based on geographical separations of peoples and cultures, separations and conflicts which have helped justify war and imperial control. Not only that, Said hopes his work helps us "go beyond coercive limitations on thought" (337) and cross barriers so that we can move towards a kind of learning which is not dominative or essentialist. According to Said (348), one of the major advances of modern cultural theory is the idea that cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous, that civilizations are interrelated and interdependent, and that identities in Western nations today are mixed identities, the result of the mingling of peoples and cultures, something which is especially true of the United States. Those that have long been regarded as "Others", including the "inferior races of the colonies," are now an integral part of ourselves. They are not only our neighbours, but their ideas and lifestyles are now fundamental in shaping us and our society.

2.1.2. Homi Bhabha's Borders as Third Spaces and Cultural Hybridities as Initiators of Cultural Change

It is precisely these cultural hybridities the ones that emerge in moments of historical transformation, according to Homi Bhabha. In his introduction to *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha locates culture in the late twentieth century, a moment of transition,

‘beyond’, both in time and space. In this ‘beyond’, which is spatial distance and future progress, we are moving away from the categories which have organised subjects, such as ‘class’ or ‘gender’ and which have created fixed identities, leaving liminal spaces or ‘interstitial passages’ between them. It is these interstitial passages which make it possible for cultural hybridities to be born without imposed hierarchies (4-5). As for limits and boundaries in the context of postcolonialism and postmodernism, the author argues:

The wider significance of the postmodern condition lies in the awareness that the epistemological ‘limits’ of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices – women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities. For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees. It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing* in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out: ‘Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks.... The bridge *gathers* as a passage that crosses.’ (7)

Those dissonant and dissident voices which have been silenced by a system of fixed categories of class, race, and gender, now turn the boundaries into a bridge that allows them to create a hybrid cultural space. This is the Third Space, where cultural symbols have no fixed nature and in which signs can be translated and read with new meanings. Referencing the Martinican psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon’s idea that “the liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of hybrid identity”, Bhabha explains that hybrid identities can produce the necessary instability to make cultural change possible (55).

2.1.3. Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands and the New *Mestiza*: Overcoming Dualistic Thinking

It is no coincidence that the titles of Gloria Anzaldúa’s main theoretical works, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981) and *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), include the words *bridge* and *borderlands*. Her central concepts not only revolve around the idea of borders as places of contact, not

separation, but her new *mestiza*, the bearer of a hybrid identity in Fanon's words, symbolises a bridge between cultures.

Anzaldúa deals with issues related to the actual physical Texas-US Southwest/Mexican border (where she was born and lived a great part of her life) to build the foundations of what being a *mestiza* means. However, the idea of borderland that Anzaldúa develops in her work allows us to establish connections not only with other physical borders around the globe, but also with psychological, sexual and spiritual borderlands that divide people.

I am a border woman. I grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory). I have been straddling that *tejas*-Mexican border, and others, all my life. It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape. (21)

In *Borderlands*, form and content support each other, since the form of the text, a hybrid or mestizo text (English text interspersed with Spanish, Nahuatl and Tex-Mex words and expressions), can be clearly identified with the definition of female Chicana identity which the author conveys through the concepts of *mestiza* and *la frontera*.

Borderlands begins with Anzaldúa's own account of the history of the US Southwest, of "The Homeland, Aztlán / El otro México", which is also her own family's history. It is the narrative of movements of people, of a third country which is the result of the merging of two worlds, of borderlands as undetermined places. Borders are unnatural, they are artificial lines which separate and divide, created to define what is safe and what is unsafe, to separate us and them. In the first part of the book, the author reflects on the suffering that results from that movement of peoples, the suffering of the thousands of Mexicans who cross the border illegally, and who feel "faceless, nameless, invisible, taunted with 'Hey cucaracho' (cockroach)" (33), the wetbacks or "*mojados*", who need to get across *el río Grande* "without benefit of bridges" (33).

It is in the chapter entitled "*La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness*", where Anzaldúa presents us with 'a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*', a hybrid mutable species which results from a 'crossing over' and which is based on an inclusive (not exclusive) theory, that of the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos, who envisaged a cosmic race: in opposition to the theory of the pure Aryan, *la raza cósmica* is the fifth race, which embraces the four major races of the world, a coloured *mestizo* race, which is mutable and more malleable. Not only does Anzaldúa use the term

‘inclusion’ when referring to this ‘new consciousness’, but she also makes it clear that this new consciousness, living between different cultures, is the recipient of opposing messages, she is engaged in an inner war, in a state of mental restlessness, in constant transition. By means of dual oppositions, Anzaldúa explains how this new consciousness must transcend duality; it cannot be the sum of two cultures which contradict or oppose each other, but must be something else, something new. A subjectivity with no country, but who belongs to all countries. A cultureless subject who is the creation of another culture.

It is by means of dual oppositions that Anzaldúa explains how a new female subjectivity from the borderlands must transcend duality, must become something new:

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (102)

We are presented with a consciousness which is not unique or stable, but which must go beyond challenging authority, which must act and not only react.

Because I, *a mestiza*,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultáneamente. (99)

In a constant state of mental Nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning ‘torn between ways’ the *mestiza* is the product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Anzaldúa’s new subjectivity allows us to understand identity (not only female identity) as a process, a construction which is in constant movement (‘in transition’), and which results in inclusive, flexible, plural and unstable identities. It is this notion of an ‘unstable identity’ which has been developed by postfeminist thinkers such as Judith Butler, when they see the need for a new concept of woman, the subject of feminism.

Butler stands for a new kind of feminist politics which take new notions of gender and identity as a starting point. As Judith Butler states in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990), "... there is the political problem that feminism encounters in the assumption that the term *women* denotes a common identity. ..." (4), 'a common identity' that non-white feminist writers questioned at the end of the 1970s, among them, Anzaldúa. Her new *mestiza* is a plural personality, which is based on tolerance (for contradictions), ambiguity and flexibility and which has to go through a process of self-discovery to be visible, to create new symbols in order to break with oppressive traditions and to celebrate vulnerability, which is at the core of Butler's idea of 'precariousness', what all individuals have in common, what makes us all the same.

In an interview with María Henríquez Betancor in 1995, Anzaldúa considers identity as "an arrangement or series of clusters", formed by layers which represent the different communities that the individual inhabits (*Interviews* 238). Since it is a relational process, our identity is constantly being reconfigured as our interpretation of ourselves changes. The Chicana writer parallels this reconfiguring one's identity with writing and creating art: writing is not a search *for* identity, but rather a way to arrange all the different facets of one's identity. When she gave this interview, she was writing an essay on nepantla in which she explained the different stages of acquiring an identity and the process of how one composes one's identity, as well as the different stages of the creative process, how one composes a work of art: "There are analogies between how one compiles, arranges, formulates, and configures one's identity and how one solves problems and how one creates a work." (*Interviews* 241). This is why, as she states in the chapter "*Tlili, Tlapalli/The Path of the Red and Black Ink*" (painted in ancient Aztec codices, the colours symbolizing *escritura y sabiduría*), writing for her produces anxiety, and it is in fact the state of psychic unrest caused by the Borderland which "makes poets write and artists create" (*Borderlands* 94). In order to create and reconfigure her identity, or rather, her new *mestiza* consciousness, Anzaldúa writes in "el lenguaje de la frontera" in Chicano Spanish, a natural and living language, "*un lenguaje que corresponde a un modo de vivir*" (*Borderlands* 77), and code-switching, her use of both languages, allows her not only to resist, but also to break the tradition of silence.

If her border language allows Anzaldúa to give voice to her consciousness, rethinking the female Mexican myths enables her to construct her subjectivity in connection to her Indian ancestry. One of the myths the Chicana writer revisits is *la Llorona*, the mother who seeks her lost children. The ghost woman is present in different projects: in her

children's bilingual stories in the *Prietita* series; in *La Prieta*, a novella/cuentos collection in which a lot of the stories use *la Llorona*; and third, in *Lloronas, mujeres que lean y escriben*, the theoretical book which Anzaldúa was composing in the 1990s, and which was meant to be the sequel to *Borderlands*. In the interview she gave to Chicana/o Studies Professor Debbie Blake and mexicana Chicana poet Carmen Abrego in 1994, the author explains: "Llorona was the first cultural figure I was introduced to at the age of two or three. ... To me she was the central figure in Mexican mythology which empowered me to yell out, to scream out, to speak out, to break out of silence. To me she's very important". (*Interviews* 229). Whereas *la Llorona* is central to Anzaldúa's work in the twentieth century, according to AnaLouise Keating, editor of *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo oscuro—Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (2015), in the twenty-first century versions of Anzaldúa's dissertation/book project there is a shift from *la Llorona* to Coyolxauhqui, the Aztec moon goddess (xxi). The Aztec mythic story tells that when Coyolxauhqui tried to kill her mother, her brother Huitzilopochtli decapitated her and threw her body down the sacred mountain, where it broke into a thousand pieces. This myth serves Anzaldúa not only to represent through Coyolxauhqui's dismembered body the disintegration which our identities undergo, but also the reconstruction of the who-we-are by putting the pieces back together in a new order (*Interviews* 280). As she explains in chapter three of *Light in the Dark*, "Border Arte. Nepantla, el lugar de la frontera", "Coyolxauhqui represents the psychic and creative process of tearing apart and pulling together (deconstructing/constructing). She represents fragmentation, imperfection, incompleteness, and unfulfilled promises as well as integration, completeness, and wholeness" (*Light* 50), and it is what she calls 'the Coyolxauhqui imperative' the impulse which leads her to create herself, to communicate in order to make meaning.

Thus, writing and creating, language resistance, and rethinking the myths are the foundations on which Anzaldúa builds her new *mestiza*, who is conceived of as a mediator, a bridge which connects people of different colours, classes, races, time periods, who teaches the 'recent arrivals', the future generations, so that her inner changes become changes in society. This is why Anzaldúa's body of work, and more specifically her book *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, remain so relevant and still have an impact today, almost 35 years after the text was first published. The author's notion of borderlands as a third space between cultures, where antithetical elements mix, is relevant in a globalised world where migratory processes, as well as other political, socio-

economic and even religious conflicts, are resulting in the building of physical walls or fences, real barriers to mutual understanding, physical separations, which are consequences of the fear of the Other. These barriers include sexual and gender dislocations which are also the result of binary thinking imposed by colonisation: “As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me: but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races” (*Borderlands* 102-103). Anzaldúa’s new *mestiza* serves her to decolonise identities which have been fixed by binary thinking and silenced by colonialism.

As Norma Cantú and Aída Hurtado state in their introduction to the fourth edition of *Borderlands*, “Borderlands Theory allows for the articulation of multiple oppressions and forms of resistance to these oppressions, it has produced rich and unique analyses in various academic fields as well as among independent artists, community organisers, and professionals such as counsellors, social workers, and public health workers” (7), and, as we will see, also among Chicana authors of children’s books.

2.2. Ideology, Power, and Subversion in Children’s Literature

In this section of my theoretical framework I refer to the work of international children’s literature scholars who focus on the power relations at work in books for young readers, and on how ideology is embedded in the discourses of books for children. A critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature, defined by authors Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman as a mirror of power relations, calls attention to the construction of identities and society through language and discourse, and has as its central point the historical underrepresentation of groups within a network of power relations and ideology in discourse. Thus, this critical multicultural analysis will provide me with the theoretical basis to consider the indicators for my analysis of the construction and representation of identities in contemporary Chicana picturebooks.

2.2.1. Perry Nodelman’s Orientalism and the Other in Children’s Literature

In his thought-provoking article “The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children’s Literature” (1992) Perry Nodelman explores the parallels between Said’s axioms in *Orientalism* and the representations of childhood in both child psychology and children’s

literature. Nodelman's article follows Jacqueline Rose's influential discussion of "the impossibility of children's fiction", which works from the premise that children's literature is a form of colonisation, since it is an effort by the adult to persuade children of adult versions of childhood:

Children's literature is impossible not in the sense that it cannot be written (that would be nonsense), but that it hangs on an impossibility of which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child. (Rose 1)

According to Nodelman, this impossible relation is obvious in the representation of childhood if we substitute the words 'West' and 'East' by 'the adult' and 'the child' correspondingly in Said's four axioms of *Orientalism*:

1. It is based on the difference between the superior adult and the inferior child.
2. It prefers abstractions of the child, in detriment of direct evidence from modern child realities.
3. The child is eternal, uniform and unable to define themselves.
4. The child is something we must fear and, thus, they need to be controlled.

The 'inherent inferiority' of the Other stated in the first axiom in *Orientalism*, claims that the opposite (the child/the Other) to the person doing the talking or thinking or studying (the adult) is unable to study itself, to see or speak for itself. When speaking and representing the Other, the representer (the adult) provides the Other with a voice, thus silencing them (for instance: "we produce a children's literature that is almost totally silent on the subject of sexuality, presumably for us to believe that children are truly as innocent as we claim" (30), and by silencing the Other, the representer makes the Other incomprehensible to the representer. Following Nodelman's argument, adults believe that children are incapable of speaking for themselves, unable to define themselves (third axiom), since children are not the ones who write either the texts we identify as children's literature or the criticism of those texts. Thus, we reach the "uncomfortable conclusion" (29) that children are inferior to ourselves. This implies that adults have power over children even just by existing, and as a consequence, the representations of children in children's psychology and literature are imperialist in essence: children are represented as intuitive rather than rational, creative rather than practical. This leads us to a main purpose of the discourse of the Other, which is the representer's self-definition: the representer characterizes the Other as Other in order

to define themselves, and in order to achieve that, the Other is represented, in binary terms, as the opposite: adults need children to be childlike, so that adults can understand what maturity is —the opposite of being childlike (32).

Not only that, following the second axiom, there is an ‘inherent distortion’ in the representation of childhood. When Said asks whether there can be a true representation of anything, Nodelman reminds us that we must accept the fact that a representation is embedded in the language and the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer (30). In other words, no representation can be truly objective, and thus, our supposedly objective descriptions of childhood are anything but objective, since adults’ interpretations of children’s behaviour are “contaminated” by the adult’s assumptions about childhood, which have been developed to support the programs of different philosophical and political systems. What the adult calls “childhood” is always an imaginative construct of the adult mind.

If we take the fourth axiom, “the child is something we must fear and, thus, they need to be controlled”, it leads to what Nodelman considers a representation which is ‘inherently adult-centered’ (30). As Rose suggests, when writing books for children, adults seek to provide them with values and with images of themselves which adults approve of or feel comfortable with. Adults encourage in children those values and behaviours to make them easier for us to control (30). According to Jaqueline Rose, in children’s fiction we (adults) show children what we “know” about childhood hoping that they will become like the fictional children we have invented, and being, therefore, less threatening to us. We provide children with stories which ask them to “identify with” the child characters, and thus accept the moral conclusions reached by those characters. We provide children with stories, characters, and events which look at the world in *our* way (32). We adults use our knowledge of “childhood” to dominate children, and knowledge is power.

Nodelman emphasizes two aspects in the representation of the Other which are inherent to children’s literature. One of them is ‘circularity’, that is, children, who are oppressed by adult versions of childhood, turn into the adults who oppress other children. This is what distinguishes our thinking about childhood from other discourses about Otherness: “All those who survive childhood become adults, adults who tend to think of children as their Other” (33). Regarding this inherent ‘circularity’ to children’s literature, Nodelman claims that

(t)hose members of oppressed minorities who are most adamant about their own need for freedom from oppression are often among those who are most vociferous about controlling the image of the world presented in children's literature, trying to ensure that children adopt their own correct attitudes. (33)

This means that adults, when thinking and writing about children, are colonising and oppressing themselves.

The second aspect which Nodelman considers the most characteristic generic marker of children's literature in terms of a discourse of the Other is the contradiction which arises if we regard children's literature as an attempt to keep children as opposed to ourselves, but at the same time, paradoxically it is deemed as an attempt to make children more like us.

After persuading himself and hopefully the reader, too, to a greater or lesser extent, that child psychology and children's literature are imperialist activities, an idea that, as Nodelman assumes, we dislike, he asks himself, what can/should we do about it? (33): a possible answer is to attempt Peter Hunt's "childist" criticism, that is, to think about children and read children's literature from a child's point of view, but we as adults would still be seeing and speaking for them. Nodelman concludes that the first thing we should do is to acknowledge the fact that the adult's discourse about childhood, like any other form of human speech, is imperialist, and then ask ourselves how we can avoid the oppressiveness which is inherent to the use of certain concepts regarding childhood. He underlines that the job of the critic of children's literature is to take into account a series of questions to avoid forgetting or ignoring this oppressiveness inherent in children's literature, and to explore how imperialism as a human discourse is conveyed:

What claims do specific texts make on the children who read them? How do they represent childhood for children, and *why* might they be representing it in that way? What interest of adults might the representation be serving? Perhaps above all, *how* does it work? How does children's literature make its claims on child readers? What are the strategies by which texts encourage children to accept adult interpretations of their behaviour? And can we devise ways of helping children to be more aware of those strategies themselves, to protect themselves from the oppressions of the other? (34)

And Nodelman adds one more question: "Can we remember always to ask all these questions about our *own* writing about childhood and children's literature?" (34).

2.2.2. Maria Nikolajeva's Aetonormativity, Power, and Subversion in Children's and Young Adults' Literature

Nodelman's approach to the representation of childhood in children's literature in his article "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature" (1992) is based on how power relations operate in children's literature as a discourse of the Other, in which the adult is the norm, and the child is the Other. In the introduction to her work *Power, voice and subjectivity in literature for young readers* (2010), Maria Nikolajeva proposes the term *aetonormativity* (from Latin *aeto-*, pertaining to age) to refer to this child/adult power hierarchy when arguing that if all literature reflects power structures, power is in some way or other present in all children's literature. The particular characteristic of children's literature is its focus on child/adult power hierarchy, just as the specifics of feminist literature is the gender-related power structures, and the specifics of postcolonial literature is the ethnic-related power structures (7). However, the author points at two particularities of children's literature within a discourse of the Other which make it a unique form of art and communication: one is the fact that, as an instrument to educate, socialize and oppress a particular social group —children—, "nowhere else are power structures as visible as in children's literature" (8). The other particularity is what Nodelman refers to as 'circularity': Nikolajeva coincides with Nodelman when she emphasizes that, unlike other kinds of literature, children's literature is characterized by "a constant change of power positions: yesterday's children grow up and become oppressors themselves" (9).

The author frames her argument within the 'discourse of the Other' or *heterology* in order to explore how the imbalance, inequality or asymmetry between children and adults is presented and assessed in children's books. Following Queer Theory, which interrogates one single condition as a norm, in this case, *aetonormativity* referring to the assumption that adults and adult experience are normative, while children and childish experiences are deviant or other, the purpose of Nikolajeva's study is to test "how we can exchange an established pattern, in our case, adult normativity, for another one, and examine what happens if we instead depart from child in power as norm and powerless child as deviation" (8). What happens if literary texts substitute child normativity for adult normativity? Nevertheless, the author reminds us that Queer Theory does not attempt to replace one norm by another, but asserts that all conditions are equally normal.

In order to refer to the exchange of established patterns or the subversion of power positions, Nikolajeva refers to Bakhtin's application of carnival theory to literature. Carnavalesque features, such as hyperbole, distortion, upside-down world, the grotesque, and the circus, to name a few, create a temporary reversal of the established order when power structures are exchanged (10). According to the author, in children's literature, the fictional child is empowered only "*on certain conditions and for a limited time*" (10) by a series of elements such as physical dislocation, the removal of parental protection, extraordinary situations, far-away settings, and temporary isolation, among others, to produce a subversive effect. Thus, Nikolajeva claims that, although adults have unlimited power in our society as compared to children (who lack economic resources as well as a political and social voice, and who are subject to a large number of rules which the adults expect them to obey without interrogation), and this is regarded as norm in real life as well as in literature, children's literature can, however, subvert its own oppressive function.

Since alterity is by definition inevitable in writing for children, different strategies may enhance or diminish the effect of power imbalance and the subversion of power relations. One of the main elements which reveals the degree of alterity of the literary work is the way in which the adult narrator narrates the child, specially when the author takes the child's side and lends them their voice, which emphasizes the author's unique position in children's literature. The analysis of voice and focalization, among other narrative devices, will help me enquire if power structures are confirmed or interrogated at three different levels in the picturebooks I analyse in this study, and which place powerless societal groups —children, Chicana children, and non-binary gender children, at the centre:

1. In terms of heteronormativity: adult (the norm)/child (the Other)
2. In terms of ethnicity and class: white Anglo-Saxon (the norm)/Mexican-American or Chicana (the Other)
3. In terms of gender: heteronormativity, cisgenderism, and binaries (the norm)/non-binary (the Other)

Voice and focalization along with discursive elements, that is, how the message is encoded in a complex process, will allow me to explore the ideology embedded in the discourse following John Stephens' work *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (1992), as I explain below.

2.2.3. John Stephens' Discourse, Language, and Ideology in Children's Literature

As he explains in the introduction to his book, Stephens' work is an attempt to examine fiction written for children by bringing together into one methodology the elements of narrative theory, critical linguistics, and a concern with ideology and subjectivity (5). Based on the premise that ideology is never separable from discourse, discourse as a system of signification, and following Barthes (1972), Larrain (1979), and Fairclough (1989) on the notion of discourse as being "endemically and pervasively imbued with ideology" (1), the author considers that writing for children usually has a purpose, an intention to encourage in the young reader a positive understanding of some socio-cultural values shared by the author and the audience. Thus, as with discourse in general, the discourses of children's fiction are imbued with ideological assumptions, which are conveyed sometimes overtly, and sometimes implicitly. If language does not simply reflect the world, but is crucial to the very constitution of the world, "it is through language that the subject and the world are represented in literature, and through language that literature seeks to define the relationships between child and culture" (5). Considered the crucial formative period in the life of a person, it is during childhood that the world becomes intelligible through the mastering of the different signifying codes used by society, the main one being language. One particular use of language to exemplify and instil current values is the imagining of stories. The values transmitted to children through children's books, according to Stephens, are related to contemporary morality and ethics, as well as to a sense of what is valuable in the culture's past, and the objectives about the present and future. If a culture's future is, "to put it crudely, invested in its children" (3), the task of children's writers is often to shape audience attitudes in order to perpetuate certain values, or to resist dominant values in the case of writers which oppose those values. In the latter case, ideological positions are often overtly conveyed, and such authors seek to change social practices as expressed in agreement with significant groups within society —government, boards of education, ecology-orientated organizations, women's groups, and so on (3). However, Stephens emphasizes the idea that every book has an implicit ideology, and that makes them powerful vehicles precisely because that ideology is implicit, and therefore, invisible.

Stephens refers to Hollindale (1988) in his classification of how ideology is conveyed in children's literature:

1. Ideology as an overt explicit element in the text, which can be problematic because it may provoke reader resistance to the message.
2. Ideology as passive ideology, in which the writer's assumptions are implicitly present on the text. This is probably more powerful and effective, since the values conveyed by the text are taken for granted in society, including children.
3. Ideology inherent within language, defined as 'the words, the rule-systems, the codes which constitute the text' (*qtd. in* Stephens 10).

In his study, Stephens makes a distinction between the three main elements which form the narrative: the story, i.e. what is represented, what certain characters do in a certain place at a certain time; the significance, that is, the process of representing which is constructed by the readers through reading processes and deduced from a text (theme, moral); and, finally, the discourse, following Cook's definition (*qtd. in* Stephens 156), the complex process of encoding the story through stretches of language (choices of vocabulary and syntax), and through other elements such as order of presentation and unity of the text, as well as narrating voice and point of view, and intertextuality.

Another important distinction to bear in mind in the study of ideology in children's literature is the difference between what Stephens considers the author and the reader (actual world), and the implied author and the implied reader as the figures who have an ideological function in the reading process. The narrator (who speaks) and the narratee (who sees) carry out the executive function in the reading process. This distinction is especially important in the case of passive ideology, since, as Stephens explains, in this mode, the figure of the implied reader, that is, the hypothetical reader derived from a text's own structures, is the one who can make complete meaning by having an active role and filling the gaps in the narrative. This construction of the active role of the reader is referred to as 'subject position', and it is a crucial part of the reading process (10), as we will see in the part of this framework devoted to Reception Studies and Reader Response Theory (section 2.3.1). This distinction is also key in picturebooks due to their special dual nature, since there is an evident separation between the narratee and the reader: in the reading process the child/narratee sees the story by looking at the pictures, but is not necessarily the reader of the verbal code. Pictures and text in tandem create significance and point of view: the reader is offered a number of possible subject positions from which to view characters and events, and the narrator-narratee relationship constructs at least a double role for the reader (26). Also, in texts with little narrative function, as is the case of a number of picturebooks which are the focus of my analysis,

the implied author and the implied reader are important elements as bearers of implicit social practices and ideological positions.

My main focus when following Stephens' attempt to examine fiction written for children with a concern on ideology and subjectivity is to make use of the elements he explores in his study as indicators for my analysis of picturebooks:

- narrative structure and closure, which are linked to the intentionality of a text, whether the narrative discourse has constructed the elements of the story to produce a particular end which resumes the whole structure, or which reaffirms what society regards as important issues and preferred outcomes;
- significance, taking into account the didactic purpose of much children's literature, it refers to achieving a satisfying ending and a more general sense of a final order and coherence. It is linked to the idea that young children require certainties about life rather than uncertainties and unfixed boundaries;
- focalization and point of view (who sees the objects, the events, people). The concept of focalization is crucial to the analysis of subjectivity and ideology in narrative fictions. The most important ideas in terms of subject position and focalization in children's literature for this theoretical framework and its subsequent analysis are the following: the relationship between subject as reader and the work of fiction replicates other forms of subject/sociality interactions, taking into account the fact that the relationship between the reader and the text is dialectical (something I will refer to later in this framework under Reception Studies and Reader Response Theory). It is particularly interesting what Stephens comments on subjectivity in children's literature in English-speaking countries (Britain, the US, and Australia) during the trend of Multiculturalism, when children's books sought to represent a more open society. Representing the experience of minority groups by situating books entirely within their culture and representing their experience of the world and their own perception of that experience, that is, their own subjectivity, allows for reader subject positions which focalize the text from within the group's assumptions. Thus, the construction of a variety of subject positions for readers contributes towards a positive self-concept for children from minority groups (51), as well as towards the social and personal development of all children by eliminating notions of racial, class or gender superiority. Stephens emphasizes how in the case of picturebooks, erasing social differences can be carried out "unobtrusively" (53)

through the exploitation of the dual verbal-visual mode by representing cultural variety in the illustrations without addressing it in the text. In the case of dual language books, although their publication still remains rare, they offer young readers an empowering kind of textual subjectivity, since cultural assumptions are inseparable not only from the discourse in which they are expressed, but also from the language itself (51).

- intertextuality is the term which Stephens uses to refer to the production of meaning from the interrelationships between audience, text, other texts, and the socio-cultural determinations of significance: “(N)o text exists in isolation from other texts, and from their conventions and genres” (84). Although there may be several kinds of relationship between a focused text and other texts, the intertextual function is not restricted to the relationships between *texts* defined in a narrow sense, but it also operates in the large sense of a cultural discourse, especially with reference to the relationships between language, signs and culture (116).

In the case of ideology and picturebooks, Stephens considers different key aspects, given the fact that in picturebooks there is a duple discourse, in which pictures involve both represented objects and a mode or style of representation, and so, when discussing the visual code, as with verbal texts, we need to pay attention to the “nature of their discourse and its production of story and significance” (198). Thus, the audience has to learn to read pictures just as much as verbal texts, an aspect I will address in the section below on Visual Literacy (section 2.3.2). Another key aspect when dealing with ideology and picturebooks is focalization and the construction of subject positions, since the interaction of the two discourses tends to distance the audience from the ‘story’. Nevertheless, there are strategies to establish various subject positions depending on the didactic function of the text, from introjection or identification with a character (which encourages internalization of the book’s ideology) to detached observation, which may have a strong didactic function (199). Images and verbal text do not necessarily need to construct one single subject position, but can complement or even contradict each other.

An analysis of children’s books from a critical multicultural approach which focuses on underrepresented groups from a power relations perspective takes into consideration the notions discussed above as we will see in the next section.

2.2.4. Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman's Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature

In their work *Critical Muticultural Analysis of Children's Literature. Mirrors, Windows and Doors* (2009), Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman, argue that children's literature mirrors power relations and, at the same time, provides a window on society:

Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature acknowledges that all literature is a historical and cultural product and reveals how the power relations of class, race, and gender work together in text and image, and by extension, in society. (1)

They agree with poststructuralists and cultural studies theorists such as Foucault and Hall that meaning and identity are processes, constructed through discourses within a web of power relations. Botelho and Kabakow's analysis follows Foucault's ideas on how power relationships construct reality and on how language and power position people, as well as Bakhtin's notion of appropriated language as a tool for language users to exercise agency and thus actively construct their identity. According to Botelho and Kabakow, "Critical multicultural analysis calls attention to how identities are constructed, how society is constructed, and how language/discourse creates us as much as we create it" (3). What is more, it places the historical underrepresentation of groups at the centre, and it is based on the complexity of power relations and diversity beyond affirmation and difference (89). Thus, a critical analysis of Multiculturalism in Chicana children's literature within the context of the US allows for a deconstruction of "dominant ideologies of U.S. society which privilege those whose interests, values, and beliefs are represented by these prevailing worldviews" (102). Their approach disrupts binary thinking, the discourse of 'otherness' and 'self-esteem', which imply that identity is fixed, as well as other discursive threads, such as 'invisibility', considered by the authors "a quiescent prejudice" in children's literature (106), and 'silences', because, following Derrida, "the unsaid and the unwritten can be just as important as what is said and written" (107).

Critical Multicultural Analysis exposes dominant ideologies and highlights processes of domination, collusion, resistance and agency, thus making the reader aware of the dominant discourses and ideology that are encoded in choices of vocabulary, syntax, order of presentation and narrative voice. It emphasizes the idea that in literature, meaning

is constructed and reconstructed through the interplay of texts, readers and contexts, that is, through what Stephens calls intertextuality.

Botelho and Kabakow's analysis also allows the reader to be aware of how subjectivity is constructed by means of visual and textual features, as well as by narrative structure and closure (112). The exercise of power is analysed through the four positions mentioned above, 'agency', 'domination', 'collusion' and 'resistance'. Critical Multicultural Analysis is guided not only by these subject positions, but also by point of view or focalisation (following Stephens), social function, and class/race/gender ideology, thus placing children's literature in the discursive field.

2.3. The Interaction Between the Reader and the Verbal-Visual Text

In this last section of my theoretical framework I will address issues related to Reception Studies and Reader Response Theory, as well as to visual literacy. I have already mentioned the fact that this research does not have as its object of study how children receive the picturebooks analysed or how these have an influence on their identity and self-perception, since that should be examined in a complete separate study. Nevertheless, in order to connect theory and praxis, the last part of the analysis is devoted to the reception of contemporary Chicana children's picturebooks in the US context, both in the publishing industry and in the education system. This is the reason why I find it necessary to address, even though briefly, issues related to Reception Studies and visual literacy. Moreover, it seems inevitable to refer to these areas of literary study, not only because of the (un)questionable didactic function of children's literature, but also because of the concept of 'interpretive communities' in the case of Chicana literature, as I will explain below. It is also important to note that throughout the theoretical concepts dealt with above, authors such as Stephens refer to the dialectical relationship between the reader and the text, a key point in Reader Response Theory, as well as to the hypothetical reader derived from a text's own structures, that is, the implied reader, as having an active role to complete the meaning in the narrative, a crucial figure in the reading process, which is also referred to as 'subject position' (Stephens 10).

2.3.1. The Reader, the Text, and Interpretive Communities

The dialectical relationship between the text and the reader which Stephens refers to is the focus of study of Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* first published in 1976. For Iser the literary work is a piece of communication, a set of instructions that the reader needs to carry out during the reading process in order to assemble the meaning (ix). Thus, meaning is created in the process of reading when the text provides the reader with what Iser calls 'repertoire', that is "certain norms, values, and knowledge" that the text shares with the reader (xix). That means that the transfer between text and reader is successful depending on the extent to which the text can activate the individual reader's faculties of perceiving and processing (107). It can be said, then, that the activity of reading is guided by the text, and that "communication in literature is a process prompted and regulated not by a given code but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment" (169). This is why we describe the reading process as a dynamic *interaction* between text and reader.

Aesthetic response is thus analysed in terms of a dialectic relationship between text, reader, and their interaction. It is aesthetic because it is brought about by the text, but it brings into play both the imaginative and the perceptive faculties of the reader.

For other authors within the same school of criticism such as Stanley Fish, there is a total independence on the reader's part, and the role of the text is limited to guiding the reading process. Following Jon Harned's article "Stanley Fish's Theory of the Interpretive Community: A Rhetoric for Our Time?" (1985), if according to Fish's reader-response school of criticism, meaning is not static and spatial, but dynamic and temporal, then in the reading process, there are as many interpretations and texts as readers (10). Nevertheless, in order to avoid the possible implication of this interpretive theory—that there is no single "correct" reading of a text, and "no one superior to the other" (10), Fish refers to 'interpretive communities', taking as a starting point the fact that reading is seen as a function of neither the text nor the reader, but of the reader's 'interpretive strategies', that is the reader's particular assumptions about the text and the world, which are always *prior* to the act of reading. The most significant aspect of Fish's theory for this research is that these 'interpretive strategies' on the reader's part serve social and institutional interests, and thus, are created by interpretive communities, that is, groups of people who share purposes and goals. This concept, according to Manuel Martín-Rodríguez (*With a*

Book in Their Hands. Chicano/a Readers and Readerships across the Centuries, 2014), is key to the study of Chicana literature from the point of view of its Chicana readership, who share cultural and linguistic competences, an idea I will return to in the section devoted to the reception of contemporary Chicana literature in the analysis (section 6.1.1).

In the case of picturebooks with their dual code, the question is: how does the interaction between the verbal text, the visual text, and the reader work? Are there also interpretive strategies to read pictures which the audience, especially young readers, have to learn just as much as with verbal texts? In the following section I will address these issues related to the notion of visual literacy.

2.3.2. Reading Images: Visual Literacy and the Critical Viewer

For thousands of years, images have been central to our lives, and they have been created by humans to convey meaning and knowledge and to tell stories. Nevertheless, it is now in the 21st century that the so-called ‘pictorial turn’ has taken place when new communications technologies have made images central to communication and to making meaning (Oblinger 2005). First coined by writer John Debes in the 1960s, and although regarded as a contentious term “as there are so many different ways of conceptualizing what it means to read image” (Salisbury, Styles 77), visual literacy is defined as the ability to understand, produce, and use culturally significant images, objects, and visible actions (Felten 2008), in other words, it is the ability to construct meaning from visual images. In order to be more inclusive of the various modalities which the emergence of new technologies have led to blend, the concept of literacy itself has been rethought in the past century to encompass not only images and written and spoken texts, but also gestures, symbols, and sound. Notwithstanding the fact that in their daily lives children are surrounded by visual images which they need to use and interpret, this does not mean that they naturally have visual literacy skills, specially if we consider that in terms of visual cognition and perception, seeing is not a simple process of passive reception, but it also involves active construction of meaning. As Peter Felten states in his article “Visual Literacy” (2008), “If the *physical* act of seeing involves active construction, then the *intellectual* act of interpreting what is seen must require a critical viewer” (61). Thus, children must learn to analyse and think critically about the significance of what they are seeing, including images in picturebooks. If writing is essential to reach textual literacy,

then, in terms of visual design, the capacity to manipulate and make meaning with images is a central component of visual literacy (61). As in textual literacy, learning the skills in order to become visually literate requires training and practice, and mastering the syntax and semantics of visual language to recognize and even to produce and employ those two is a lifetime process. However, traditionally schools have considered textual literacy as the source of knowledge, and academic training is still very much focused on verbal texts. It is therefore of utmost importance that readers from a very young age should also learn the key elements of visual art, the so-called visual grammar, that is, a set of techniques with which they can recognize atmospheres and emotions. Among the elements employed by artists/illustrators to create effects are the use of colour, line, shape, size, style, that is, the way in which the artist combines the previous elements in order to express feelings or describe qualities, and composition, the placement of characters and other elements within a picture to establish their relationship (O’Neil 220). In picturebooks meaning is the result of the interplay of word and image, neither of which would make sense when experienced independently of the other (Salisbury and Styles 9). This dual property of the picturebook challenges the boundaries between word and image, since, according to Nodelman (*Words about Pictures* 1988), the relationship between the two codes changes the meaning of both, and meaning is more than the mere sum of the parts. This complex literary genre offers mentor texts which give children a unique opportunity, specially for emergent and novice readers, to develop visual literacy, not only because drawing is an essential part of the writing process, but also because young readers can go back to the illustrations in picturebooks “to explore, reflect, and critique those images” (Galda 506). This synergy of the two media conveys a complex and meaningful story to young readers, whose ability to read pictures as well as text allows them to comprehend picturebooks fully. Illustrations enable readers to understand, interpret, and respond to the story, since they play a critical role in developing literary elements such as setting, plot, and character through the use of the following elements:

- line: to suggest direction, show movement, or establish mood.
- colour: to convey not only emotions and feelings, but also time period, story content or tone.
- perspective (focalization or point of view): to share a view with the reader in order to influence their attitude toward the character(s), or enhance their personal response to the story.

- composition and design: the combination of visual elements and text to create an overall and balanced unity and to convey a sense of rhythm.
- peritexts: these are the front and back covers, the front and back endpapers, the title page, the dedication page, and notes, which often serve to provide the reader information to expand the meaning of the story, and which make the picturebook different from other formats.

In the case of character, as the driving force of the story, and thus, especially critical in making literary meaning, illustrations in picturebooks convey not only external features such as appearance, gender, and age, but also internal facets as poses, gestures, and facial expressions which reveal emotions and attitudes (Nikolajeva and Scott 82).

Visual literacy allows young readers to recognize, understand, and critically interpret the aforementioned elements to gain full comprehension of the picturebook story. Not only that, it also enhances the reader's aesthetic pleasure, since the combination of an engaging story and well-crafted and creatively conceived illustrations stimulates aesthetic thinking to create meaning in the transaction with the reader (Giorgis et al 146).

Felten's definition of visual literacy as the ability to understand, produce, and use culturally significant images, objects, and visible actions is especially relevant since he refers to the cultural aspect of the illustrations, thus connecting with the idea of 'interpretive communities'. If pictorial language stems from the culture in which the artist lives and works, it is used to convey meaning to members of that culture who form a visual interpretive community, and who can understand the deeper and subtler connotations portrayed in the illustrations through choice of colour, tone, media, or style (O'Neil 215). This is why according to researcher and translator of children's picturebooks Riitta Oittinen,

Translators need both verbal and visual literacy: they need to know how to read illustrations and their interaction with the verbal text: the meanings of colours, patterns and the empty or "silent" spaces in between....They need to know the grammar of the visual, too, such as the symbology or hidden meanings of typography, page margin sizes and all the different ways of combining words and pictures. (González-Davies and Oittinen xiii)

Not only that, according to Oittinen, the visual appearance of a picturebook is not limited to the illustrations, but it encompasses "the actual print, the shape and style of letters and headings, composition, and picture sequence. Even the elements of the layout and typography can be strictly culture-bound" (10). Cultural knowledge, thus, can help

readers understand the visual code used by illustrators in order to achieve better comprehension of the thoughts, feelings, and actions communicated by artists through the images they create. Hence, the importance of visual literacy in the development of children's identity and self-perception. It is relevant especially for those children whose identity has been silenced or misrepresented so that they can see themselves in the books they encounter.

3. State of the Art

In order to situate this study, there are certain aspects of children's literature as a field of study, as well as about the context of the US publishing industry and the representation of non-white ethnic groups that I would like to take into consideration before the analysis section. In the last part of this State of the Art, I will refer to studies on the representation of Chicana identity in children's literature in the US and in Spain.

3.1. Critical Theory and Children's Literature Studies

It was not until the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of critical theory that children's literature began to be considered a field of serious academic study. The term 'theory' was broadened and started to encompass research and writing carried out within different disciplines, such as Structuralism, Feminism, Marxism, Deconstructionism and Postmodernism. The canon was expanded thanks to the challenge posed to prior assumptions as to what the object of study was, and as a result, areas like postcolonial writing, women's studies and children's literature came to be viewed as serious fields of academic study.

In spite of these advances, the very nature of children's literature is still controversial because, according to Botelho and Kabakow,

The development of children's literature parallels the development of the concept of childhood as a social construction. In examining both the history of childhood and children's literature, we link the literature aimed at children with the social, political, and economic ideologies of the time. Definitions of childhood vary throughout history, from culture to culture, and across socioeconomic class. (18)

Understanding what children's literature is and is not depends, then, on our understanding of what childhood is, and on how definitions of childhood respond to factors such as class,

ethnicity and gender. Researchers on children's literature have traditionally come from backgrounds related to education, library science, and child development, so the focus has commonly been on its pedagogic and developmental functions. Furthermore, we can not forget the significant work of authors who have approached children's books from the field of translation studies. Nevertheless, as a field of literary study, children's literature can also be approached from many academic disciplines defined by periods and movements, place, genre, and author, among others.

In terms of theory and children's literature, in the introduction to *Power, voice and subjectivity in literature for young readers* (2010) the author, Maria Nikolajeva, discusses the need and the different approaches to theory and children's literature that have been developed by different authors in the late twentieth century. By comparison with other "marginalized literatures" such as feminist and postcolonial literatures, children's literature has not elaborated a theory of its own, precisely because of the lack of agreement on what children's literature is and what it does, following Nikolajeva's argument (1). Regarding the very nature of children's literature, Peter Hunt coined the term 'childist criticism' (2006) to refer to the study of literature written by children: it is them who should write their own literature because only children can create true children's literature. Thus, the object of study should be literature written by children, not for children, drawing to the extreme what Queer and Postcolonial theories maintain about their respective marginalized groups. However, for Nikolajeva, the distinction between literature by/for children blurs even more the object of study of children's literature.

Regarding the study of children's literature at present, and in particular for this research, there are two important aspects related to theory which Nikolajeva points out. The first one has to do with the "literary didactic split" (6), that is, the recurrent question about children's literature as a field of enquiry belonging to either education or art (6). Is children's literature a reflection of adult authors' nostalgic visions of childhood rather than a faithful depiction of it? Do children's authors tell their readers what their childhood should be like, rather than what it is? Nikolajeva agrees with David Rudd (2006) that children's literature is a hybrid in which the pedagogical intention is more explicit than in other literatures, since all literature is both an art form and a didactic, or rather ideological vehicle. The second aspect to bear in mind is the fact that the recent critical studies of children's literature are based on the power dynamics and the examination of power positions present in this kind of literature, making it similar to other literatures

which deal with powerless societal groups such as women's literature, indigenous literature, or gay literature (Nikolajeva 7).

Nikolajeva's reflections on theory throughout her introduction may seem obvious, but have a special relevance in the field of children's literature:

- theory is necessary to approach a literary work adopting a certain position toward it,
- theory must produce efficient working tools,
- theory must be a set of crucial questions we pose about what we are doing and why we are doing it.

My approach, as I have explained in the theoretical framework above (section 2), analyses the elements which constitute the discourse of the representation of Chicana identities from a critical multicultural perspective, that is, focusing on an examination of power relations, as they affect what gets written, illustrated and published (Botelho and Kabakow 101).

As for the literary didactic split Nikolajeva and other authors refer to, although the present study centres on children's literature as art/literature, I agree with Nikolajeva on the idea that the object of study is a hybrid charged with pedagogical intention, or rather used as an ideological vehicle. Thus, this is the reason why I decided on the pertinence of including in the second part of the analysis section fieldwork on the reception of Chicana children's picturebooks in the US context, particularly in school programs.

With regard to the object of my analysis, the picturebook, it can also be defined as a hybrid medium. This complex literary object provides a double source of information, the visual (illustrations) and the verbal (text). These visual and verbal codes can complement or support each other, or they sometimes can even contradict each other, depending on the desired effect on the reader. A number of researchers have investigated the counterpoint of the verbal and visual texts, a relevant issue in contemporary picturebooks. However, a number of authors consider that there is still a lack of a system of categories to describe the variety of interactions between word and image, as well as of an adequate terminology to describe these interactions (Nikolajeva and Scott 6). These are issues which I will address in detail in the Methodology section of my analysis (section 4).

3.2. Publishing Trends in US Children's Literature and the Representation of Non-white Ethnic Groups

In the United States publishing industry, Chicana children's literature has traditionally been, and still is, considered part of a greater body of Latinx children's literature, which in turn is regarded as belonging to the category of multicultural children's literature, defined as literature by and about people of colour:

Multicultural children's literature as a literary category emerged in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement and the growing attention to multicultural education and teaching. During the late 1960s and the early 1970s activists in ethnic studies, multi-ethnic movements, and the African-American community, frustrated with the slow pace of desegregation, demanded more community control over their schools with a goal of infusion of Black history into the curriculum (Banks 1995). As schools responded to these demands, other groups such as Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, who also experienced institutional racism and classism, put pressure on schools for representation in the curriculum and school life as well. (Botelho and Kabakow 75)

It was in the 1960s and 1970s that different organisations were founded, such as the 'Council on Interracial Books for Children' (1965), and awards were created to promote children's literature that reflected underrepresented cultural groups.

In her article "The All-White World of Children's Books" (1965), educator and founder of the International Reading Association, Nancy Larrick, centres on "... one of the most critical issues of American education today: the almost complete omission of Negroes from books for children. Integration may be the law of the land, but most of the books children see are white" (63). Although Larrick's analysis focuses on the representation of Afro-Americans in children's books in the mid-1960s, the picture would certainly have looked very much the same when analysing the depiction of Chicana or Mexican-Americans (or Latinxs in general) in US children's literature publications. In the few cases in which Chicana identity was portrayed, it was depicted in terms of stereotypes of the Other.

Multicultural children's literature is linked to multicultural education and tied to trends in publishing. These trends and the situation of the United States publishing industry have changed in the last 25 years, especially with the creation of small, independent publishers which publish books that feature underrepresented groups and languages, provide

multiple perspectives, and place characters of colour at the centre of the story. Both Children's Book Press and Lee & Low are committed to representing multiculturalism, the first one is specialised in bilingual children's picturebooks and the roles of culture and history, whereas the second one focuses on realistic children's stories which explore multicultural contexts, especially African, Asian, Latinx, Middle Eastern, and Native American cultures. Barefoot Books specialises in picturebooks from traditional cultures all over the world to introduce cultures to children through language, art, music, and dance by means of books and multimedia materials. There are a number of culturally specialised independent presses which work collaboratively in order to have their cultural communities represented in the publishing of children's books and school curricula (Botelho and Kabakow 303). In the case of the African-American community, presses such as Africa World Press & The Red Sea Press, New Day Press, and Third World Press work in the publication and distribution of books about and by the African-American community, the African diaspora, and Black History. The following independent presses publish and distribute selected Asian and Asian-American print materials: Asia for Kids (books in English and Asian languages with an emphasis on language learning), Asian American Curriculum Project or AACP (print and audio materials which represent the diversity of the Asian-American community), China Books (the oldest distributor of books on Chinese language and culture), Many Cultures Publishing (bilingual publications from Asian cultures such as India, Cambodia, and the Philippines), Barnaby Books (children's books based in Honolulu, Hawaii). Independent presses which publish books portraying Native American cultures and histories are Daybreak Star (with a focus on the lives of contemporary Native American children), Oyate (publishes books and materials with an emphasis on work by Native writers and artists), and Theytus Books (promotes reading materials and information by Native authors, illustrators, and artists of all nations). Despite the fact that these small presses work collaboratively to give voice to non-white communities in the US, large publishing houses which work by conglomerate still influence the children's book publishing industry considerably. The Diversity Statistics published by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC)² show that in 2019 out of 3,717 children's books they received from US publishers, 224 were

² The CCBC, a centre specialised in the field of children's and young adults' literature, has been publishing Diversity Statistics by and about Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) since 1994. In 2018 it started documenting diversity including disability, LGBTQ+, and religion (<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/ccbc-diversity-statistics/>).

by Black/African, and 451 about Black/African. In the case of books by Asian authors (including Pacific Islanders since 2018) the number was 381, and 328 books were about this group. Only 29 books were created by Indigenous authors, and 43 were about this cultural group. In the case of the Latinx community, 228 books were created by Latinx authors, whereas 235 were about Latinx (Data on books by and about Black, Indigenous and People of Color published for children and teens compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/ccbc-diversity-statistics/books-by-and-or-about-poc-2018/>).

As I mentioned before, another important factor in the promotion of children's literature which focuses on underrepresented cultural groups is the creation of culturally specific children's book awards, some of which I describe here (Botelho and Kabakow include a list of these US awards in their work *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature*, in Appendix A). Created in 1970, the *Coretta Scott King Award* recognizes the work of African-American authors and illustrators who promote understanding of the African-American experience and the realization of the American Dream, as defined by Martin Luther King Jr. The selection criteria are accurate information, suitability for the intended young readers, clear plot, and well-developed characters. On its part, the *American Indian Youth Services Literature Award*, created in 2006 by the American Indian Library Association, honours the work of American Indian writers and illustrators who portray Native American cultures during different periods of time accurately and realistically.

It is evident that despite the growing number of authors of colour who are acknowledged and honoured for their work today, if we look at the data published by the CCBC for 2019, less than 25 percent of new children's book titles published annually in the US are authored by people of colour.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, Chicanx children's literature is considered part of a greater body of Latinx children's literature, which in turn is regarded as belonging to the category of multicultural children's literature. I think it is necessary to refer to the terms 'Latino' and 'Hispanic', as Jamie Campbell Naidoo, editor of *Celebrating Cuentos. Promoting Latino Children's Literature and Literacy in Classrooms and Libraries* (2011), does in his introduction to the book. It is important to note that although the labels 'Latino' and 'Hispanic' are "often used interchangeably in US society to refer to the same population of people who live in Mexico, Central and

South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Caribbean” (xix), the two terms are loaded with social and political implications, specially in their use as derogatory labels by White Americans. Despite those social and political implications, according to the US Census Bureau (2020)

The category “Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin” includes all individuals who identify with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America, and other Spanish cultures. Examples of these groups include, but are not limited to, Mexican or Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, and Colombian. “Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin” also includes groups such as Guatemalan, Honduran, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Venezuelan, etc. (US Census Bureau)

According to the US Census Bureau (2010) Latinos represent not only the largest, but also the fastest-growing group in the United States. The statistics on books about or by Latinos from 1994 to 2007 published by the CCBC point to an increase in the number of books written by Latino/a authors thanks to publishing trends and to small, independent presses (Botelho and Kabakow 147), as well as awards which have brought increased recognition to their work.

Although I will refer to them in detail in section 6.2. The US Publishing Industry. Chicana Children’s Literature and Independent Presses, in PHASE II of the analysis chapter, the most important small presses which publish children’s books on Latinx groups are Lee & Low, Children’s Book Press, Piñata Books/Arte Público Press, and Bilingual Press. As for the awards for Latinx children’s literature I will refer to the *Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award*, the *Pura Belpré Award*, and the *Américas Book Award for Children’s and Young Adult Literature*, the three of them created in the early 1990s.

According to Jamie Campbell Naidoo, a study carried out by Barrera, Quiroa and West-Williams in 1999 pointed out that

... the relative number of books about Mexican Americans does not parallel the growing US population, and the authors note that future researchers should “conduct comparative analyses, quantitative as well as qualitative, of the different ethnic literatures under the Latino umbrella, and ... establish a longitudinal, critical focus on a particular strand” of culture of the Latino population in the United States (p. 327). (67)

In his introduction Naidoo underlines the importance of incorporating Latino children’s literature into libraries and school programs and presents us with some examples of

activities and workshops held at schools and libraries, where authors of Latino children's literature address issues related to language and cultural identity through children's responses to their books. Among them is Chicana writer Pat Mora, one of the most prolific writers of Chicana children's books and the force behind the creation of "El día de los niños, El día de los libros" / Children's Day, Book Day (<http://www.patmora.com/whats-dia/>), a celebration of children and books, founded in 1996 and marked every April 30th throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. The celebration's main goal is to link "children from all cultures and languages to books, celebrating bilingual and multilingual literacy, fostering global understanding through reading, involving parents as partners in literacy education and emphasizing library collections that reflect a culturally pluralistic society" (201).

Groups of children and teachers use Latino children's literature to establish cultural connections at the Charlotte Huck Children's Literature Festival (<http://inspire.redlands.edu/huck/>) held every year at the University of Redlands, California, as well as at the National Latino Children's Literature Conference in Alabama, the latter being a forum for presenting current research and practice, addressing cultural, educational and informational needs of Latino children and their families (www.latinochildlitconf.org).

In *Celebrating Cuentos*, Naidoo provides the reader with professional resources for evaluating and selecting Latino children's materials and for including them in classrooms and childcare centres, as well as resources for library programs and services for Latino children and their families. The book edited by Naidoo also includes a chart with programs and materials for Latino children and a detailed evaluation sheet for the assessment of Latino children's books in terms of their characteristics (genre, format, Latino or non-Latino author, illustrator, language, awards won), characterisation in narrative and illustration, the books' setting and plot, and their cultural authenticity.

3.3. Studies on the Representation of Chicanxs in (Children's) Literature in the US and Spain

The first ever comprehensive study of the representation of Mexican-Americans in children's literature was carried out in 1975 by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (founded in 1965), with the aim of analysing books to identify racist and sexist content, as well as to promote the publication of non-white authors. Since then, a number

of studies on Chicana children's literature have been published in attempts to examine issues related to language, recurring themes, and the representation of cultural identity. After the shift which took place in the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s with the publication of Chicana children's literature written by a small number of Chicana/o writers such as Gary Soto, Rudolfo Anaya, Pat Mora and Gloria Anzaldúa, a series of studies on the representation of Chicanos in children's books were published. The research carried out by the Latino children's literature scholars Rosalinda Barrera and Oralia Garza de Cortes (Garza de Cortes 1992; Barrera 1997; Barrera and Garza de Cortes 1997; Barrera, Quiroa and West-Williams 1999) emphasizes the complexity of the representation of Mexican-Americans, although some "chronic" stereotypes persist (Botelho and Kabakow 145).

In the field of Reception Studies and Reader-Response Theory, Manuel Martín Rodríguez's works *Life in Search of Readers* (2003) and *With a Book in Their Hands* (2014), as well as his article "Chicana/a Children's Literature: a *Transatlantic* Reader's History" (2006) are very significant to the field of Chicana literature in terms of the historical re-construction of what it has meant to be a Chicano/a, as well as Chicanos' relationship with reading and literature.

In recent years there has been an increase both in the quantity and the quality of articles and publications on Chicana children's literature, specially in the field of education, such as the work of Rosemary Gonzalez and Theresa Montaña "Critical Analysis of Chicana/o Children's Literature: Moving from cultural differences to socio-political realities" (2008), in which they propose a series of questions to help preservice teachers assess children's literature in terms of stereotypes of Chicano/a children in order to create a culturally responsive curriculum. In *Voices of Resistance. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Chicana@ Children's Literature* (2018), editors Laura Alamillo, Larissa M. Mercado-López, and Cristina Herrera collect a series of essays on Chicana children's literature and examine various significant issues such as cultural identity, gender and sexuality, and translanguaging through the analysis of different books for children and young adults authored by Chicana authors. In the section "Implications for the Classroom" in the introduction to the book, the editors underline the fact that one of the main concerns of the volume is "the education of Chicana@ children and how the use of Chicana@ children's literature transforms classroom pedagogy" (xiv), and some of the articles offer classroom applications and activity proposals for the approaches and concepts they develop in their studies.

I would also like to include in this section two recent studies on Chicana children's literature, one from either side of the Atlantic. The first one is Sonia Alejandra Rodríguez's doctoral thesis (University of California, Riverside, 2015) *Conocimiento Narratives: Challenging Oppressive Epistemologies Through Healing in Latina/o Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Rodríguez's work introduces Anzaldúa's concept of "conocimiento narratives" as a process in which healing is reached through knowledge. This study includes an analysis of a number of works by Chicana authors such as Juan Felipe Herrera, and Rigoberto González. The second study I would like to refer to was carried out in 2004-2005 by Emilie Durandelle (University of Angers, France) and is entitled *La literatura chicana infantil: cultura e identidad*. This work points out the main issues dealt with in Chicana children's literature, such as the expression of Chicana culture and identity through nature and cultural heritage, and also analyses the educational role of this literature for children as a tool from which both Chicana and non-Chicana students significantly benefit.

As for the study of Chicana children's literature in Spain and Catalonia, it has been thanks to the work of Chicana authors such as Sandra Cisneros and Gloria Anzaldúa that Chicana books like *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1984) have become the object of scholarly inquiry. This coming-of-age story of twelve-year-old Esperanza, narrated through vignettes, tells us of her search for self-definition and self-empowerment. The creative act of writing allows Cisneros to examine issues of Chicana identity in defiance of the hostile paradigms established by the white and male-dominated hegemony (Sendin 2002: "2"). And it is on Chicana identity that scholar Pilar Godayol has focused her work *Veus xicanes. Contes* (2001), in which the author translates short stories written by Sandra Cisneros, Pat Mora, and Ana Castillo among others, to reflect on the representation of Chicana identity. In her foreword to *Veus Xicanes. Contes*, Godayol explains how some of these stories are narrated through the lens of Chicana children, since childhood is a recurrent topic in Chicana literature. In *Espais de frontera. Gènere i traducció* (2000), Godayol analyses the translation into Catalan of Cisneros's short story "Mericans" to illustrate how translation and gender are closely related to borders as spaces and hybrid identities. Taking as a starting point both Said and Anzaldúa's ideas on borders as spaces where the best cultural exchanges can take place, Godayol states:

... tota experiència fronterera, tingui o no l'origen en actituds violentes, condueix a la interacció entre cultures. És des d'aquest espai que celebra la multiplicitat

d'identitats, l'obertura de lectures i la fluïdesa circulatòria dels processos textuais que es pot entendre la necessitat de tot subjecte d'aprendre a ser mòbil i resistent, si no vol perpetuar els llenguatges repressius que han desenvolupat les formacions hegemòniques al llarg de la història. (14) ³

From the field of translation studies and hybrid cultures, other works on Chicana literature have recently been carried out in Spain, such as María López Ponz's *Traducción y literatura chicana: nuevas perspectivas desde la hibridación* (2009), which includes a study of Spanish translations of some works of Chicana literature, such as Cisneros's *Women Hollering Creek* and *The House on Mango Street*.

From combined textual and cultural approaches to Chicano/a literatures, M^a Antònia Oliver-Rotger's *Battlegrounds and Crossroads. Social and Imaginary Space in Writings by Chicanas* (2003) discusses the writings of contemporary Chicana literature which illustrate power relations in terms of gender, race, class, nation, and sexuality which shape the social and intimate spaces they inhabit. The spaces present in Chicana writings are understood as borderlands or *nepantla*, that is, as "dynamic and subject to change" (17). The selected writings analysed in Oliver-Rotger's study include literary works by Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, Pat Mora, Cherríe Moraga, and Helena Viramontes.

In 2018 the 'XI International Conference on Chicano Literature and Latino Studies' was held at the University of Salamanca. This biannual event organised by Instituto Franklin-Universidad de Alcalá de Henares brings together scholars and authors from both sides of the Atlantic to present and discuss Chicana culture and literature. The papers presented at this Conference are collected in publications such as *Towards New Interpretations of Latinidad in the 21st Century*. The next edition of this conference is expected to take place in Barcelona in June 2021, and it will feature keynote lectures by renowned Chicana authors such as Norma Cantú and Juan Felipe Herrera, the first Chicana US Poet Laureate in 2015, as plenary speakers, together with Amaia Ibarraran-Bigalondo, researcher on the study of Chicana Literature and Culture, and author of *Mexican American Women, Dress, and Gender: Pachucas, Chicanas, Cholas* (2019), among other publications.

Other authors who have taken part in previous editions of the conference are Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Helena Viramontes, Ito Romo, Gary Keller, and Alejandro Morales, and

³ [...] every border experience, whether it originates or not in violent attitudes, leads to the interaction between cultures. It is from this space where the multiplicity of identities, the overture of readings, and the circulatory flow of textual processes are celebrated, that we understand the need of every subjectivity to learn to move and to resist in order to avoid perpetuating repressive languages which have been developed by hegemonic forms throughout history. (Translation provided by the author).

also scholars such as Francisco Lomelí, María Herrera-Sobek, Manuel Martín-Rodríguez, and M^a Antònia Oliver-Rotger.

Although the presence of Chicana children's literature is still scarce in the Spanish and Catalan panorama of Chicana studies, with just a few publications on books by well-known authors in the Chicana literary field, ongoing work such as Carmen González Ramos's studies of picturebooks by Yuyi Morales and Pat Mora, among other children's books authors, open a window on the representation of Chicana identity through the visual and verbal codes of bilingual picturebooks. Some of her publications on Chicana picturebooks are "Bilingual Picture Books and Code-Switching in Chicana Children's Literature" (2019), and "Recipes for a Latina Identity: feminist food politics in children's literature" (2018).

These are a few examples to illustrate the good health of Chicana studies on this side of the Atlantic. Nevertheless, it is relevant to point out that the presence of Chicana children's literature is still scarce in the aforementioned fora, and in fact the study of children's literature in academic programs is still very limited.

In this first part of my dissertation I have provided the theoretical framework for my analysis referring to the study of children's literature with an emphasis on ideology, power-relations, and subversion in the construction and representation of identities in discourse. I have also referred to my approach on the interaction between the reader and the visual-verbal text, which I will address to a further extent in the Methodology section of the next part of this study, which corresponds to the analysis of contemporary Chicana children's picturebooks, in particular to the work of Maya Gonzalez, and their reception in the US context.

PART 2

- 4. Methodology**
- 5. Analysis PHASE I: Chicax Identity in Picturebooks**
- 6. Analysis PHASE II: Reception of Contemporary Chicax Children's Literature in the US Context**

4. Methodology

4.1. Exploring Power Relations in Children's Literature

In chapter two of his comprehensive book about social applied research, Colin Robson describes the social constructionist approach, on which the qualitative paradigm is based, as open and non-prescriptive in terms of applying any specific method to collect data. Researchers with this theoretical orientation, Robson remarks, consider that “the task of the researcher is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge”, thus “(T)he central aim or purpose of research is understanding.” (24). The central aim of my research is to understand the construction and representation of identity in Chicana children's literature, more specifically in the picturebooks and projects of Chicana author Maya Gonzalez, following Botelho and Kabakow's critical multicultural analysis of power relations, which invites us to think about the interaction of race, class, and gender in children's books. Botelho and Kabakow's approach to children's literature is based on Foucault's ideas on how power relations construct reality and on how language and power position people. As I mentioned in the theoretical framework (section 2.2.4), the authors take Bakhtin's notion of appropriated language as a tool for language users to exercise agency and thus actively construct their identity. The exercise of power is analysed through four positions, ‘agency’, ‘domination’, ‘collusion’ and ‘resistance’, reinforced by point of view or focalisation, social function, and class/race/gender ideology, thus placing children's literature in the discursive field.

Also in my theoretical framework (section 2.2.1), I referred to Nodelman's thought-provoking article “The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature”, in which he reminds us that we should not obviate the fact that children's literature is “as inherently imperialist as all human discourse tends to be” (34). Nodelman argues that in child psychology and children's literature it is the adult, the superior force in power, the one who systematically constructs and represents the identity of the child, ‘the inferior other’, in as much the same way as the West has created and developed a system of ideas with the support of structures of power to create and represent the Orient and Orientals, according to Said's *Orientalism*. It is in this line of thought that Nikolajeva proposes the concept ‘Aetonnormativity’ in children's literature to refer to the assumption that adults and adult experiences are normative, while children and childish experiences are consequently deviant or other (section 2.2.2 of my theoretical framework). From this

standpoint and drawing from the essence of Queer Theory, which tries to demonstrate that norms are arbitrary, Nikolajeva contends that children's and young adults' literature has the potential to interrogate power structures and to question the adult as a norm through the use of a variety of strategies for subversion on the part of the author such as specific use of genres (fantasy, adventure, dystopia), settings (Robinsonnade, Orientalism) and characters (superheroes, anti-heroes, gender transgressing characters, animals, monsters), as well as narrative devices such as voice, focalization and subjectivity. For the critic, the degree of alterity in terms of aetnonormativity depends on how the adult narrator narrates the child when lending them their voice. However, she points out, all these strategies employed by children's writers can likewise enhance alterity (Nikolajeva, *Power*).

Taking into consideration that children's literature has the potential for interrogating power structures and for subverting aetnonormativity through the use of a series of strategies, I explore how Chicano children's literature, and more specifically, the work of Gonzalez, subverts power at three different levels:

1. In terms of aetnonormativity: adult (the norm)/child (the Other)
2. In terms of ethnicity and class: white Anglo-Saxon (the norm)/Mexican-American or Chicano (the Other)
3. In terms of gender: heteronormativity, cisgenderism, and binaries (the norm)/non-binary (the Other)

In order to explore how these power relations are addressed by Chicano authors of children's literature, first I need to refer to the picturebook and its dual code of representation, word and image, as the suitable means which will allow me to reflect on those power relations.

4.2. Analysing Picturebooks: Hybridity and Word-Image Interaction

For the purpose of having an insight into the picturebook and the different modes to approach word-image relation, I will refer to three main bibliographical sources: David Lewis's *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks. Picturing Text* (2001), Maria Nikolajeva and Carol Scott's *How Picturebooks Work* (2001), and Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles's *Children's Picturebooks. The art of Visual Storytelling* (2012).

In the introduction to his work, Lewis signals how despite the fact of appearing at the end of the nineteenth century, and becoming fully developed and seriously considered as an

object of academic study during the second half of the twentieth century, there is still considerable disagreement as to how to understand the picturebook. If there seems to be consensus on the fact that it is a hybrid of two modes of representation, it is the word-image duality which leads to confusion when trying to understand how the two modes interact. Following Lewis, this indecisiveness has also had an influence on the metalanguage and the word itself to designate this visual-verbal hybrid: Nodelman uses the two separate words, 'picture book', in his book *Words About Pictures* (1988), a reference book on the subject. In another landmark volume on children's literature, *Children's Literature: an Illustrated History* (1995), edited by Peter Hunt, the hyphenated form 'picture-book' is preferred, whereas Victor Watson favours the compound 'picturebook' in his *Cambridge Guide to Children's Literature*. Lewis opts for this last term, the compound word, 'picturebook', since, according to his viewpoint, it better represents "the artifact itself" (xiv) and allows for a better perception of the picturebook as a whole, instead of the sum of its two modes of representation. For my research, I have adopted Lewis's term on account of my analysis of the dual code in Gonzalez's picturebooks, as well as his conventions on terminology to refer to the text (here both words and images), the words in the picturebook ('written text', 'printed text', or simply 'the words'), to the pictures ('images', 'visual images', 'illustrations'), to the writer ('author'), to the illustrator ('artist'), or both writer and illustrator when they are the same person ('picturebook maker'). When I use other specific terminology of the picturebook which might lead to confusion, I offer an explanation in the same text.

One of my main concerns when researching on how the two codes interact in picturebooks was the thought of being able to read and interpret the images in order to relate them to the words. Salisbury and Styles's *Children's Picturebooks. The Art of Visual Storytelling* refer to British illustrator Edward Bawden's remark when he says that "(D)rawing is another way of thinking" (53). In fact, our society is increasingly visual and image-based. However, as Nodelman explains, "trying to understand the situation a picture depicts is always an act of imposing language upon it" (*qtd. in Lewis* 45), since we interpret visual information in verbal terms, given the dominance of the verbal even in visual culture in societies in which education systems are still very much rooted in the study of words and numbers. Parents, teachers, and reviewers of children's literature are educated primarily in verbal rather than visual literature. Thus, as a consequence of this prevalence of the verbal when we read and understand pictures, we use the terms 'visual literacy', or the 'grammar of pictures', as well as 'reading pictures' (*qtd. in Lewis* 211).

It was precisely the emergence of the picturebook that began to elevate the role of the image in the narrative as a hybrid art form defined by its use of sequential imagery in collaboration with a small number of words to convey meaning. If in illustrated books images are used to decorate or enhance the meaning of words, in picturebooks the meaning is the result of the interplay of word and image, neither of which would make sense when experienced independently of the other (*qtd. in* Salisbury and Styles 9). This dual property of the picturebook challenges the boundaries between word and image, since, according to Nodelman, the relationship between the two codes changes the meaning of both, and meaning is more than the mere sum of the parts (*qtd. in* Salisbury and Styles 90). This is why picturebook scholars make use of different metaphors such as interweaving, interanimation, and interaction, to describe the relationship between words and pictures. In *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks. Picturing Text*, Lewis devotes chapter two, “The interaction of word and image in picturebooks”, to reflect on this notion of the picturebook as a composite, which we, experienced readers of verbal texts, are still learning to understand. Displayed in close proximity, when we read picturebooks, we look at the pictures and we read the words, our eyes going back and forth between the two in the process of decoding the meaning of the text (words and images). In the same way, Lewis explains how children reading picturebooks also find routes to connect words and images (32). In this process of decoding meaning as a result of the interaction of the visual and the verbal, according to Nodelman, the relationship is not completely symmetrical in the way the two codes act on each other, since “what the words do to the pictures is not the same as what the pictures do to the words” (35). Following Nodelman’s idea, Lewis explains, “the words in a picturebook tend to draw attention to the parts of the pictures that we should attend to, whereas the pictures provide the words with a specificity – color, shape and form – that they would otherwise lack” (35). Notwithstanding the extent to which the relationship between the visual and the verbal is symmetrical, the picturebook creates a synergy between pictures and words which requires the reader to take both media together.

In order to try to explain and analyse this synergy, picturebook scholars have attempted to classify word-image interaction, as is the case of Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott in their work *How Picturebooks Work* (2001), who establish four main categories which range from symmetry (equivalence of word and image), enhancement (pictures expand upon the words or viceversa, from significant enhancement to complementarity), counterpoint (images and words offer the reader ‘alternative information’ so that an effort

must be made to forge a connection) and contradiction (maximal dissonance). The problem with this classification is that in the case of symmetry, when words and pictures express the same, there is no interaction to examine. As Lewis proposes, it would be more useful to analyse how the effect of symmetry is achieved, which is what I explore in Gonzalez's picturebooks through a series of elements and indicators drawn from Nikolajeva and Scott's analysis, which allow me to examine the way in which the types of interaction of words and pictures intersect with narrative features such as characterisation, setting and point of view, as well as discursive threads. Since discourse is imbued with ideology, I pay attention to choices of vocabulary, syntax, order of presentation and of the narrative voice directed at the implied audience. I consider how the pair formed by the implied author/implied reader is constructed in texts which have little narrative function, such as Gonzalez's picturebooks, but which mainly convey social practices and ideological positions (Stephens 21).

For the purpose of reading pictures, I take into account the key features provided by Lewis in chapter seven, "A word about pictures" in *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks. Picturing Text*, taking colour and line as the basic elements which result in more complex features, such as action and movement, size and location, and symbolism. I also pay attention to how images are framed, to the predominance of certain shapes, and to facial expression and gesture employed for visual characterisation. Another element to take into account in order to read pictures is the structural organization of a picture, that is, the way the structure of an image contributes to what the image says to us (119), for example, how the participants are organized on the page and how they relate to one another helps us construct meaning. As scholars Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen remind us in their work *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design* (1996), visual language, like verbal language, is a form of social semiotics, thus, intelligible because makers and users share common understanding about how the world can be represented (*qtd. in* Lewis 120). If we consider genre as a material representation of ideology (Botelho and Kabakow 121), the picturebook as a complex multiple genre will be analysed in order to identify what subject positions the genre offers and how it organises the reader's perceptions by managing ideology. I focus on the way of coordinating pictures —iconic signs to describe or represent—, and text —words as conventional signs primarily to narrate— (Nikolajeva and Scott), and the interaction between them.

In order to answer my research questions, I have drawn results from the elements described above with the aim of producing a series of indicators which I have included in

my research instruments, described in the next section, 4.3. Some of those elements are the ones which have helped me read pictures, such as the basic colour and line, action and movement, size and location, and symbolism. The indicators are the result of the types of interaction of words and pictures when they intersect with narrative features such as characterisation, setting and point of view, as well as discursive threads.

My analysis of Gonzalez's picturebooks takes into consideration how the picturebook author creates a new discourse by means of language (bilingual English/Spanish texts), by making use of features of verbal discourse analysis, such as choices of vocabulary, syntax, order of presentation and of the narrative voice, which together with the elements listed above will help me determine the cultural statement to which the author and illustrator is responding when representing Chicanx identities in her picturebooks.

4.3. A Multi-Strategy Design to Explore Maya Gonzalez's Picturebooks and Their Reception

Considering that the purpose of my research is mainly to explore, as well as to describe and to explain how identity has been represented in Chicano children's literature and how picturebooks by Chicano authors are being received in the US context, the research questions I need to answer are open-ended, qualitative, 'what' and 'how' questions. 'What' questions require a descriptive answer, whereas 'how' questions indicate a concern for change and are mainly employed to explore, describe and explain (Robson 62).

4.3.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Thus, my research questions are the following:

1. How has the representation of Chicanx identity in children's literature reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history?
2. What elements does Maya Gonzalez make use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and gender?
3. How is contemporary Chicanx children's literature being received within the United States context?

4. How are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so?
5. How are Maya Gonzalez's presentations at seminars and workshops helping bring about social change in Chicana and non-Chicana children's identities?

The first and main purpose of this section/dissertation is to analyse the selected picturebooks using a literary criticism approach and the tools of image studies, which is to say, making use of ways of examining the representation of self-image in children's literature in a given language, in this case in both English and Spanish, since the majority of the picturebooks I explore are bilingual. The focus will thus be on content, form and context, since literary criticism is concerned with meaning as well as method and with investigating text, here words and images, and context to deepen our understanding of it (Grenby and Reynolds 13). This is what I intend to do in the first part of the Analysis, in section 5 (Analysis PHASE I: Chicana Identity in Picturebooks), whereas section 6 (Analysis PHASE II: Reception of Contemporary Chicana Children's Literature in the US Context), in which I describe and explain the findings of my two fieldwork studies, centres on the second purpose of my research, the reception of contemporary Chicana children's literature in the US context, both in the publishing industry and, specially, in educational programs, paying special attention to the pedagogic function of children's literature, used as a tool to develop not only children's literacy, but also critical thinking. Keeping these two objectives in mind, I have designed what Robson calls a "multi-strategy design" (165), with two differentiated phases of the analysis, both of them responding to the qualitative aspect of this research. After each phase, I include the findings, first of the analysis of the picturebooks (section 5.11), and second, of the fieldwork on the reception of Chicana children's literature (section 6.5), which are both later integrated in the Conclusions chapter of my work (Part III, section 7.1).

4.3.2. PHASE I: Analysing Picturebooks. Instruments [RQ1, RQ2]

The analysis of picturebooks is aimed at answering research questions one and two. Thus, my analysis begins with an introduction to the history of the Mexican-American population in the US up until the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, *El Movimiento*, which took place in the 1960s and the 1970s. As a means to answer my first research question, how the representation of Chicana identity in children's literature has reflected ethnic and

class power relations throughout Mexican-American history, I refer to the findings resulting from projects and research carried out by Arte Público Press and the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC). Then, I focus on how in the 1990s, under the trend of Multiculturalism, Chicano children's literature, as a product of culture and as evidence of power relations, strove to provide an authentic and accurate representation of Chicano identity. I consider why some scholars use the terms 'authentic' and 'accurate' when referring to representations of Chicano identity by examining a sample of bilingual picturebooks created by Chicana authors in the 1990s until 2014. This sampling of bilingual English/Spanish picturebooks helps me answer this first question, since they serve as illustrations of the conceptual perspectives and cultural themes used to construct Chicana identity in children's literature and address issues of authenticity and accuracy in the representation of Chicano identity in children's books. Most of them are non-fiction, narrative and autobiographical in origin. All the picturebooks used for the purposes of this paper are targeted at children ages 5-10, except the last two picturebooks in my analysis authored by Maya Gonzalez, *They She He Me: Free To Be!* (2017), and *they, she, he easy as ABC* (2017), which are targeted at younger children, age 3+, and the young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona*.

As I already mentioned, a critical multicultural analysis of children's literature provides me with the main tools to analyse Chicana children's literature in order to answer research questions one and two on how identity has been constructed and represented in Chicana children's literature before and after *El Movimiento*, as well as under Multiculturalism. The discussion of the context of Chicana children's literature after the Chicano Movement and within Multiculturalism in the United States publishing industry will help me in my consideration of issues related to the role of insider/outsider authors in the construction and representation of identity, that is, the importance of the cultural membership of the author in a given group, as well as the authenticity and accuracy of the representation of Chicana identity in picturebooks written by Chicana authors. I will take into consideration the elements that make (or do not make) Chicana children's literature culturally conscious: where are Chicana characters placed? What is the driving force behind the story/book?

The main focus of analysis in order to answer question two, what elements Maya Gonzalez makes use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and gender, are Maya Gonzalez's picturebooks, most of them English/Spanish bilingual editions, published between the years 2007 and

2017. However, the first picturebook I analyse is Gloria Anzaldúa's *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona* (1995) in section 5.4. I am beginning my analysis with this work for several reasons: apart from it being the first picturebook illustrated by Gonzalez, it allows me to further develop the concepts related to the border and the new *mestiza* presented in the theoretical framework (section 2.1.3), as well as to provide an example of the main concerns of Chicana authors when representing Chicana identity in books for children. After interviewing Maya Gonzalez in February 2019, I set the criteria to select the picturebooks to analyse, and I expanded the range of books, including Maya Gonzalez's recent work published by her own independent press, Reflection Press, *The Gender Wheel*, as well as the six picturebooks in which the Chicana artist collaborated with Chicano poet Francisco X. Alarcón. My intention was to analyse the three picturebooks by Amada Irma Pérez which Gonzalez has illustrated, all of them published by Children's Book Press, as well as the picturebook by Ernesto Javier Martínez, *When we Love Someone, We Sing to Them / Cuando Amamos, Cantamos* (2018), published by Reflection Press. However, for reasons related to the length of my dissertation, I am going to allude to Pérez's and Martínez's picturebooks, but concentrate on the first picturebook illustrated by Gonzalez and written by Anzaldúa, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*, and the poetry books by Alarcón, since for Gonzalez the two authors, Anzaldúa and Alarcón, play a key role in her work as she considers them part of her artistic lineage (interview, min 45:00).

The order in which Gonzalez's picturebooks are presented in the Analysis section is not strictly chronological, but rather responds to my view on the visual and verbal progression of the author's work. After analysing Anzaldúa's picturebook illustrated by Gonzalez, in section 5.5 my focus is on the first three picturebooks illustrated and written by the picturebook maker, which form the 'Nature Trilogy': *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo* (2007) *I know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama* (2009), and *Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol* (2014), the latter considered in this study a turning point in the work of Gonzalez in terms of diversity and gender inclusiveness.

Then, in section 5.6, I turn to analyse the six picturebooks written by Chicano poet Francisco X. Alarcón and illustrated by Gonzalez: the series of four picturebooks devoted to the seasons, *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems / Jitomates Risueños y otros poemas de primavera* (1997), *From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems / Del Ombligo de la Luna y otros poemas de verano* (1998), *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems / Los Ángeles Andan en Bicicleta y otros poemas de otoño* (1999),

Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems / Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno (2001), and *Animal Poems of the Iguazú / Animalario del Iguazú* (2008) which includes poems written after the poet's trip to the Iguazú waterfalls, and *Family Poems for Every Day of the Week / Poemas familiares para cada día de la semana* (2015-17) (all of them ages 7-10), published after the passing away of Alarcón in 2016.

The last part of the picturebooks analysis centres on the picturebooks published by Gonzalez's independent press, Reflection Press: *i see peace* (section 5.7); *When a Bully is President. Truth and Creativity for Oppressive Times* (section 5.8), and *The Gender Wheel Project. A story about bodies and gender for everybody* (section 5.10), the three of them published in 2017 and aimed at ages 7-10. In *The Gender Wheel Project* I include the two picturebooks which complement *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, *They She He Me: Free To Be!* (2017), and *they, she, he easy as ABC* (2017), which, as I mentioned before, are targeted at younger children, age3+.

Before moving to *The Gender Wheel Project* picturebooks, in section 5.9 I include the analysis of Gonzalez's young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona* (2017), a significant work by the Chicana author for several reasons that I explain in the analysis and which are related to visual design, but mainly to the influence of Gloria Anzaldúa's work and activism in contemporary Chicana children's and young adults' literature. This structure allows me to close the circle of this part of the research, which started with Anzaldúa's *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*.

The very last part of this first phase of the analysis is devoted to the picturebooks which are part of *The Gender Wheel Project*. This part of the analysis fully relates to the second fieldwork study of phase two in this part (section 6.4), the observation and participation in one of Gonzalez's workshops for child care professionals precisely on *The Gender Wheel Project* in November 2019 in Oakland, California.

Having explained the selection criteria and order of Gonzalez's picturebooks and young adults' novella in this section of my study, I would like to address a number of aspects connected to the analysis of picturebooks. The first point is related to the fact that I have preferred to centre my attention, not on each and every page of a reduced number of picturebooks, but only on those pages whose elements relate to the indicators of my study in several picturebooks, and which at the same time follow the thread of thought along the analysis. I take into consideration Lewis's idea on the flexibility of picturebooks, which considers that the dynamics of word-image relationship does not remain the same from page to page, as well as the fact that the "(A)nalysis of the pictures in picturebooks

need to be fed into an understanding of the book as a whole” (123). This flexibility of the picturebook makes it extraordinarily diverse and difficult to categorize as an individual entity. However, Lewis remarks, both flexibility and complexity, as a result of the interrelation of word and image give picturebooks an internal ecology (48). It is this internal ecology that I try to explore in my analysis. In order to do that, I include the illustrations which I describe, considering that in a study like this, it is necessary to actually see what is being described. As for the use of description in my study of the visual and the verbal, I agree with Lewis that despite the fact that description is considered to be a lower kind of approach than argument or analysis, in describing something, we favour certain choices of vocabulary depending on the particular perspective from which we look at the object being described, on how we see the images we describe, and, ultimately, on how we understand that image (2).

Instrument for Phase I: Analysis Grid. Word-Image Interaction in Picturebooks

In order to analyse how text and images interact in Gonzalez’s picturebooks to explore how identities are constructed and represented, I will examine the following indicators elicited from the elements that I drew from the bibliographical sources, mainly from Nikolajeva’s studies and Lewis’s work on picturebooks, and especially from Botelho and Kabakow’s critical multicultural analysis when they refer to Stephens’s recommendations (1992) in order to analyse meaning systems within children’s books such as the visual and textual features” (Botelho and Kabakow 112). These indicators are particularly relevant to my approach on how identities are constructed and represented in picturebooks, since they allow me to take into consideration discourse and ideology, subjectivity and how power is exercised:

1. point of view or focalisation (who speaks? who sees? who is being seen?) and characterisation (verbal and visual; physical and psychological; gender construction)
2. setting (place and time; affective climate; framing)
3. unity of the text (discursive threads and sense of closure) and intertextuality (verbal and visual information in paratexts: titles, covers, endpapers)
4. position of text and images (“intraiconic text” - words appearing inside pictures)

With these indicators in mind, I have designed an analysis grid in order to first extract the visual and verbal elements, and second, to interpret the way they interact in the picturebooks according to my indicators. (Annex 2)

One of the key instruments used not only to develop the other instruments which helped me analyse Chicana children's picturebooks, but also to gather information on the reception of these books in the US context, is the interview that I carried out with Gonzalez.

Interview with Maya Gonzalez

The interview with Maya Gonzalez that I carried out in February 2019 in San Francisco has been an essential tool for my analysis and one of the main sources from which I have created the instruments to analyse qualitatively the elements which Gonzalez resorts to in order to represent identities in her picturebooks and projects. Bearing in mind that I had already started my research on the author's work, I considered different aspects of the analysis beforehand with the idea of carrying out a semi-structured interview following an interview guide that served as a checklist of topics to be covered and a standard wording and order for the questions. When I prepared my interview guide in advance, I took into consideration that both the wording and the order of the questions could be substantially modified depending on the flow of the interview, and I also thought of additional questions which I could ask to follow-up on what the author said (Robson, 285). Thus, I prepared a set of items often with alternative subsequent items depending on the responses obtained and bearing in mind that the proposed sequence for questions may be subject to change during the course of the interview. The majority of the questions I prepared were open questions, since they are less restricted on the content and manner of the reply, and they are more flexible in the sense that the interviewer can go into more depth as well as encourage participation on the side of the interviewee. Not only social science scholars consider the interview as an essential instrument to do research. In the literary context the importance of interviewing authors is paramount, since some authors consider interviews another dimension of writing, as Ana Louise Keating explains in *Interviews / Entrevistas* (2000).

For Anzaldúa interviews are another dimension of writing – oral writing, as it were. But because interviews occur within a specific time frame and consist almost, if not entirely, of dialogue and conversation, they have an immediacy rarely found in written work and a potential openness and self-exposure that perhaps even exceeds the openness Anzaldúa strives for in her publications. ...

This spontaneity gives readers unique insights into Gloria's published words and an intimate picture of the ways her mind works. (4)

In his introduction to *Spilling the Beans in Chicanolandia. Conversations with writers and artists* (2006), Frederick Luis Aldama notes that "(T)he interview then becomes an improvised conversation between the interviewer and the author. ... This process allows one to probe deeply into the author's work, learn of his or her points of view about it, and learn the circumstances in which he or she has written and produced it" (11-12). Not only that, in the case of visual-verbal artists Aldama underlines that "(T)he face-to-face interview usually reveals much more about visual/verbal artists than the words they speak; it gives the interviewer a sense of the artist's world view and experiences of life, ... gestures, ... body markings (tattoos and scars), and poise." (12-13). Thus, the interview unveiled relevant information on the Chicana picturebook maker's personality, on visual cues and contextual information, such as the place chosen by the artist to carry out the interview, in this case, a café near Misión Dolores in the Mission District in San Francisco, a significant place, not only because it is one of the historical landmarks in the city, but also because it is the place where the second part of Gonzalez's young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona*, is set. Nearby one can contemplate the murals of the Women's Building, which Gonzalez mentions in the interview.

The previous work done before the meeting with the author does not only include preparing the interview guide, but also taking into account how to contact and to arrange place and time, as well as trying to anticipate the amount of time and attention I could give to different topics.

Below I include the interview guide which I prepared beforehand, and I provide a transcription of the interview and a summary of the main ideas I extracted from the author's responses to the questions which have helped me in my exploration, both in phases I and II of the analysis section, in order to answer my research questions (Annex 1).

I divided my interview guide into two blocks, the first one on Maya Gonzalez's Children's and Young Adults' Books and the second one on Children's books and Chicana identity, the first one aimed at prompting ideas related to Gonzalez's work as an author of picturebooks and her young adults' novella. I also took the advantage to ask specific questions on her picturebooks. With the second block I intended to obtain knowledge of Gonzalez's views on children's literature in terms of power relations and

the representation of Chicana identity in contemporary children's literature. As follow-up questions I included my research questions three, four and five on the reception of contemporary Chicana children's books in the US publishing industry and in educational programs.

Interview Guide

Maya Gonzalez's Children's and Young Adults' Books

The visual and the verbal:

- Your creative process: interaction between image and word
- Illustrations: your art, circles (symbols → rabbit in the moon, river, the eye seeing), colours and materials
- Identity: The Power of Reflection

Picturebooks: specific questions

- *The Gender Wheel* → Why a school edition? Society not prepared for certain taboos?
Not bilingual → gender in translation (Judith Butler), difficult to translate gender?
- *When a Bully is President* (bilingual English-Spanish) → Spanish translation?
- *They, She, He, Me* → Amazon edition includes two other picturebooks written by other authors, why?

Gloria Anzaldúa:

- *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. Anzaldúa's young self, *mestiza*, and *Borderlands*
- Young Adults' novella *Ma Llorona* and Gloria Anzaldúa's *La Llorona* (Coxolxauhqui) in *Light in the Dark*.

Children's books and Chicana identity

Children's and YA literature and theory: alterity in children's lit → Nodelman, Orientalism, heteronormativity (adult-author's power) in child's lit?

Plagiarism of *The Gender Project* and “Who is entitled to speak?” (post in MG’s blog: <http://www.mayagonzalez.com/blog/>)

Only Chicana authors can write about Chicana reality?

Follow-up questions: my research questions (on reception):

- How is contemporary Chicana children’s literature being received within the United States context?
- How are educational programs in the U. S. context integrating these books, if they are doing so?

I quote extracts from the interview throughout the analysis and conclusions sections when I consider them relevant to the development of my study.

4.3.3. PHASE II: Fieldwork Studies 1 and 2. Instruments [RQ3, RQ4, RQ5]

For the purpose of answering research questions three, four and five I have carried out fieldwork to research the reception of contemporary Chicana children’s literature in the US publishing industry (research question three), as well as in the US educational context, specially in those areas with an important presence of Chicana population (research question four). My last research question is intended to explore how Maya Gonzalez’s picturebooks and projects are being received in the US context, and how her representation of identities in terms of ethnicity and gender is contributing to make social change.

In order to situate my fieldwork in the context of Reception Studies and Reader Response Theory, I have done research on the reception of Chicana children’s literature through the following bibliographical sources: *Life in Search of Readers* (2003, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque), and *With a Book in Their Hands* (2014, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque), both by Manuel Martín-Rodríguez, who specialises in Chicana Literature from the point of view of Reception Studies. Martín-Rodríguez’s article “Chicano/a Children’s Literature: a *Transatlantic* Reader’s History” (2006) has allowed me to have a deeper insight into the historical re-construction of what it has meant to be a Chicano/a and a child, and their relationship with reading and literature, as well as into the representation of Chicana identity not only since the 1960s, when *El*

Movimiento was born, but in previous historical times, depending on the political and cultural relations of Mexican-Americans with other communities, mainly the US-Anglo, Spain and Latin America. Other works, some of which have been cited in the introduction to this dissertation, and which include chapters on Latinx and/or Chicanx children's literature and education, as well as on the US publishing industry, have been key resources to provide essential data on the reception and the situation of Chicanx children's books in the US context: Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman's *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature* (2009), Christine Leland, Mitzi Lewison, and Jerome Harste's *Teaching Children's Literature. It's Critical!* (2013), and Jamie Campbell Naidoo's *Celebrating Cuentos. Promoting Latino Children's Literature and Literacy in Classrooms and Libraries* (2011).

Fieldwork 1: This first fieldwork focuses on research question four, how are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so? I had planned to attend one of Gonzalez's workshops for children at schools, in order to explore how these schools were integrating Gonzalez's and other Chicanx authors' picturebooks in their educational programs. However, the Chicana artist is only carrying out these workshops for educators, and not necessarily at schools. Nevertheless, I contacted members of the school community in the Santa Barbara area to carry out research on whether picturebooks written by Chicanx authors, and by Gonzalez in particular, are being received and integrated in their bilingual educational programs.

My contact person was Dr. Carlos Pagán, Director of Literacy and Language Support Curriculum & Instruction at the Santa Barbara County Education Office. I requested an interview with Dr. Pagán to have an insight into the Dual Language Programs in the Santa Barbara County in order to establish a focus group and design a questionnaire for teachers in these programs on the use of picturebooks authored by Chicanx writers and artists. Before the interview, I researched on the dual language programs in public schools in California and thought of items which Dr. Pagán could elaborate on, so that I would obtain as much information as possible during the interview in order to have a sound framework for this first fieldwork and to help me design the questionnaire for teachers in these dual language programs⁴.

⁴ I carried out my fieldwork study 1 in the Santa Barbara, CA area since I was doing my international research stay at the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California in Santa

Thus, my instruments for this fieldwork were:

- Semi-structured interview with Dr. Carlos Pagán Director of Literacy and Language Support Curriculum & Instruction at the Santa Barbara County Education Office (RQ3, RQ4)
- Questionnaire for Teachers in Dual Language Programs (RQ3, RQ4)

Instruments for Fieldwork 1: Semi-structured interview with Dr. Carlos Pagán and Questionnaire for Teachers in Dual Language Programs

- **Semi-structured interview with Dr. Carlos Pagán, Director of Literacy and Language Support Curriculum & Instruction at the Santa Barbara County Education Office**

Before interviewing Dr. Pagán, we exchanged a series of e-mails where he provided me with basic information and resources to help me find the necessary data on dual language programs in California. After consulting some of these resources, specially the ‘Teach Bilingual California’ website, <https://www.teachbilingualca.org>, I designed a guideline with a series of items with notes to comment during the semi-structured interview (Annex 3). I grouped the items into three main blocks:

1. Dual Language Programs
2. Dual Language Programs in Santa Barbara County
3. Teachers’ Questionnaire

Previous to the interview, I sent Dr. Pagán a first draft of the questionnaire for teachers which I had designed in order to help me answer research question four.

- **Questionnaire for Teachers in Dual Language Programs**

The first draft of the questionnaire included five questions on the bilingual materials used in dual language programs authored by Chicana writers and artists, as well as by Maya Gonzalez. However, after interviewing Dr. Pagán and consulting the website of the California Department of Education (<https://www.cde.ca.gov>), I realised that most of the answers to those questions did not depend on teachers in Dual Language Programs or that they should be adapted to the characteristics of the programs in terms of standards and materials. The fact that this first fieldwork could not be carried out in situ and teachers would have to respond online meant that the questionnaire should be more user-friendly and introduced by a brief presentation of myself, my project, as well as about the use and

Barbara. Due to the travelling restrictions during the pandemic, I could not travel to develop this fieldwork in situ, so I carried it out online.

treatment of the information I was collecting in the questionnaires in order to grant the participants' anonymity. I kept the number of questions, five, including two yes/no questions followed by a 'comments' section in case that participants wanted to expand on their answers, one open-ended question, and two questions where respondents could tick a checklist with the possibility again of adding comments. As in the attendees' questionnaire of fieldwork 2, I tried to keep the wording simple and the questions short, avoiding questions in the negative, so as to make it as accessible as possible to the respondents, but at the same time keeping the questions faithful to the research task (Annex 4). In section 6.3 of this analysis, I explain the setting (context and participants), and I focus on the analysis of the instruments, as well as the results of this fieldwork study.

Fieldwork 2: With the aim of answering research questions three, four and five, I attended Maya Gonzalez's workshop for child-care providers, 'Teaching for Gender Inclusivity: a Nature-based, Holistic Perspective for Children', which is based on *The Gender Wheel Project* (<http://www.genderwheel.com/trainings/>). The workshop took place at <https://bananasbunch.org>, a center for parents and child care professionals in Oakland, California on November 5, 2019, during my international research stay at the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, at the University of California in Santa Barbara. After my request, I was invited by the author to attend the workshop not only as an observer, but also as a participant once the activity started. Before attending the workshop, I designed the instruments to help me take notes during my observation in order to answer my research questions. Taking as a starting point the design of instruments in the EPILA project⁵ in which I participated, the instruments I designed are:

- an observation grid
- an attendees' questionnaire

Instruments for Fieldwork 2: Observation Grid and Attendees Questionnaire

- Observation Grid

⁵ Estudio exploratorio del impacto del Enfoque Plurilingüe Integrador (EPI) en centros educativos como modelo orientativo para el profesorado en el aprendizaje de lenguas adicionales". I+d+i. Programa Estatal de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación Orientada a los Retos de la Sociedad. REF.: FFI2015-6374R. IP: Dra. Maria González-Davies.

My main aim when observing Gonzalez and the participants in her workshop was to first describe the dynamics and interaction during the activities with the objective of analysing and interpreting the data I collected in terms of the reception of the author's work among children educators and care givers. My first intention was to act as a pure observer in order to take notes on the observation grid I had prepared previously including those items I could then analyse and interpret to help me answer my research questions. I designed the observation grid including items which allowed for a flexible observation depending on the progress of the workshop. The grid is divided into two broad sections to focus on the author on the one hand, and the participants on the other. The items I included ranged from 'what they do and how' to 'materials used' both visually and verbally. I also took notes on the development and progress of the workshop, including the order of presentation and content of activities. In Robson's terms, I intended to carry out an unobtrusive, non-participatory observation (315), so that my observation did not affect the situation observed and the participants' attitude during the workshop. According to Robson, this type of less structured observation allows the observer considerable freedom in what information is gathered. However, [this kind of observation, which is](#) relatively unstructured and complex, requires on the part of the observer to perform difficult tasks of synthesis, abstraction and organization of the data (318).

The fact that during the workshop I was invited by the author to participate in the activities as a member of one of the groups, turned my role as a pure observer into a participant observer, the basic difference being that "the pure observer typically uses an observation instrument of some kind (the observation grid), whereas the participant observer is the instrument" and becomes a part of the group and of whatever is being studied, and hence analysis takes place in the middle of data collection and is used to help shape its development (Robson 319). I include the observation grid in section 6.4.1.2 of this analysis.

- **Attendees' Questionnaire**

With the aim of collecting data on the participants' response to Gonzalez's workshop to complete my answer to research question five, and also to questions three and four, I administered a questionnaire at the end of the session⁶. In order to make it a useful tool for my exploratory study, I asked one yes/no question followed by an open-ended

⁶ Before requesting the attendees to fill in the questionnaires, I informed them verbally about the research I was carrying out, as well as about the use and treatment of the information I was collecting in the questionnaires in order to grant the participants' anonymity.

question depending on the previous answer, and three open-ended questions so as to analyse the reception of Gonzalez's picturebooks and projects among the participants. The advantage of open-ended, self-completion questions is that respondents are free to answer as they wish, and the fact that the researcher was there made it easy to clarify questions and encourage participation and involvement (Robson 241). When designing the questionnaire, I tried to keep the wording simple and the questions short, avoiding questions in the negative, so as to make it as accessible as possible to the respondents, but at the same time keeping the questions faithful to the research task and bearing in mind the concepts in my theoretical framework (Robson 253). (Annex 5)

In section 6.4 of this analysis, I explain the setting (context and participants), and I focus on the analysis of the instruments, as well as the results of this second fieldwork study.

5. Analysis PHASE I: Chicanx Identity in Picturebooks

In this section of the analysis I start by outlining the socio-historical conditions which have shaped the Chicanx experience in the US in order to answer research question one. I pay special attention to the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, *el Movimiento*, due to its significance in shaping the construction and representation of Chicanx identity in Chicanx literature. Before exploring Maya Gonzalez's picturebooks so as to analyse the visual and verbal elements she makes use of in her work for children (research question two), I centre on the effects of Multiculturalism in Chicano children's literature and the rise of concepts of *authenticity* and *accuracy* when authoring books for young audiences. After examining the picturebooks both illustrated and written by Gonzalez, as well as those written by Gloria Anzaldúa and Francisco X. Alarcón illustrated by the Chicana artist, I focus on the reception of contemporary Chicano children's literature in the US context. The bibliographical sources consulted and the fieldwork carried out in the US educational context provide me with the necessary elements to answer research questions three, four, and five.

5.1. El Movimiento and Chicanx Experience: Forging the Chicano Identity [RQ1]

Throughout the centuries, migratory movements and diasporic experiences, as well as the moving and changing of frontiers, have left liminal spaces, places Homi Bhabha calls

‘interstitial passages’, and Gloria Anzaldúa calls ‘a nepantla’, “(...) a Nahuatl term meaning ‘el lugar entre medio,’ el lugar entre medio de todos los lugares, the space in-between.” (Anzaldúa, *Entrevistas* 238). These ‘spaces in-between’ or ‘Third Spaces’ have resulted in the creation of cultural hybridities, one of them being the Chicana identity.

Despite the fact that Chicanos or Mexican-Americans, are popularly thought to be Mexican migrants (and their offspring born in the United States) whose presence in the US is a result of their crossing the Mexico-US border in search of a better future, Mexican-Americans have in fact populated for centuries the region that is now the Southwest of the United States. In fact, one of the myths recovered by Chicana activists in order to pay tribute to their indigenous origins is that of Aztlan, the place of origin of the Mexica or Aztec peoples, which might have been located in the US Southwest. Although it is presumably a mythical place, there are ethno-historical sources as far back as the colonial period which mention Aztlan as the place from which various tribal groups, among them the Mexicas, migrated to central Mexico, where they founded Tenochtitlan (currently, Mexico City). In his book *The Book of the Sun Tonatiuh* (1979) Cecilio Orozco provides an interpretation of the Aztec Calendar, claiming that the monolith, which measures twelve feet in diameter and weighs twenty-four tons, is not a calendar strictly speaking, but the book of Tonatiuh, the Sun, which “tells the history of the migrations of the ancient Native Americans from the icelands of the North, the ‘Happy Hunting Grounds,’ south to TENOCHTITLAN. This Stone is the American Discovery of the 20th Century! Its new interpretations shed light on our American ancestry” (2). Orozco traces the journey of the ancient Native Americans analysing the elements which appear in the four squares in the inner circle of the calendar or book of the Sun. According to this interpretation, the first migration (1386 BC) took place in order to look for warmer lands, and took the group from the icelands of the north (‘Ocelotl Tonatiuh’ or ‘sun of predators’ according to the symbols carved on the Stone) to the Nahui-atl, “the land of the four waters”, what is now the American Southwest (circa 502 BC), but after Ome-Tonatiuh, the second sun, sent a drought, the migration continued south to the lands on the south Pacific coast of present Mexico (308-1116 ad). After a series of inundations, the last stage of this migration (1321 ad) took these people, the Nahuatl, to ‘the place near the cactus’, where they founded Tenochtitlan (present day Mexico City), centre of the Aztec or Mexica Empire (Annex 8).

What we are certain of is that the US Southwest was explored and settled by indigenous tribes, by the Spanish, and by the *mestizos* following Hernán Cortés’s invasion of what is

today Mexico. These were the lands of Northern Mexico (California, Nevada, Utah, much of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas), inhabited by Mexicans, which were sold to the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War (1846-48). Thus, Aztlán became a symbol for *mestizo* activists, the people whose identity was culturally and politically a border identity, and who believed that they had an original right to the land where their indigenous predecessors had settled centuries before.

In the foreword to James Diego Vigil's *From Indians to Chicanos. The Dynamics of Mexican-American Culture* (2012), Carey McWilliams states, "To understand the history of the Chicanos is to understand the Chicano movement" (xiii). It was in the 1960s, within the framework of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, that a series of movements arose to counter the mechanisms which had served to erase ethnicity, class, and gender issues. The Chicano movement brought together diverse groups and organisations, such as the farmworkers' organisation led by activist César Chávez, which advocated for Mexican(-American) farmers' rights; the Crusade for Justice led by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, seeking mainly economic and political advances; and the Brown Berets, formed by young students who worked for an initiative sponsored by the government to solve urban problems, among others. Another of these groups formed by students was the Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán (*Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán*, MEChA), which used the ancient Aztec name for the Southwest to symbolize the Chicano destiny. After meeting in Denver in 1969, the student groups arrived at a historically-based nationalist programme in 1970, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. Corky Gonzales, one of the spokesmen for the plan, wrote the epic poem which became the symbol of the Chicano trajectory, "I am Joaquín" (1967), in which, through the struggles of the Chicano people portrayed by Joaquín's voice, the narrator explains what it means to be a Chicano.

This is the context in which the Chicano Movement originated and worked to address issues related to migration conditions, community involvement, and social justice. Some scholars argue that in fact modern Chicano resistance to economic, social and political inequalities is rooted in the legacy of Colonialism and the enslavement of the Indian population in the *ranchero*-based system (Botelho and Kabakow 137). This pre-capitalist labor system had its continuity in the class division that was established after the invasion and annexation of Mexican territory by the US army in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The power relations between the dominant Anglo-Americans and the oppressed Mexican-Americans bound together these heterogeneous, underrepresented

Southwestern groups. According to McWilliams, the Chicano experience is significantly different to that of other ethnic minority groups due to the different influences which have affected its geographical and socioeconomic context, creating “a rapidly developing region of different interests and economies” (Vigil xiii). The Chicano experience has been a source of identity problems, since it involves ethnic, class, cultural, and national conflicts in the Southwest. It has been marginal and exceptional and has been given a variety of interpretations and definitions. More importantly, “The movement seems to be guided less by ideologies and theories than by the Chicanos’ determination to forge their own identity and to reject outside influences and imported schemes and ideas” (xiii-xiv).

5.2. The Chicano as the Other in US Children’s Literature before *El Movimiento* [RQ1]

The historical events of 1848 mark a sociopolitical identity shift because of the power relations they generated between the dominant Anglo-Americans and the oppressed and underrepresented Mexican-American⁷ population. According to Botelho and Kabakow, “This history informs the rendering and interpretation of the Mexican American experience in children’s literature” (137). This is the reason why we might be inclined to consider that Mexican-American children’s literature needs to be interpreted against the historical background starting in 1848, marked as the beginning of Mexican-American identity. However, literature existed before that moment and, of course, it continued afterwards. Scholar and literary critic Luis Leal signals five periods in Chicano literary history (Martín-Rodríguez *Hands* xiii). The first one, the Hispanic period, starts with the Spanish colonization of the US Southwest and their settling in this area as its northernmost colony in the Americas, and finishes in 1821, when Mexico reaches its independence from Spain. Published in 1610, Gaspar de Villagrà’s poem *Historia de la nuevo Mexico* is the earliest published literary text of the US Southwest/Mexican-American literary history. After the independence of Mexico and until 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the brief Mexican period is signaled mainly by the arrival of the printing press to New Mexico. But it is in the Transition period (1848-1910) when it is considered that Mexican-American literature began with the publication of works by authors such as María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, who denounces the injustices that the

⁷ Botelho and Kabakow use the term ‘Mexican American’ instead of ‘Chicano’.

native Californios suffer in her novel *The Squatter and the Don* (1885). The Interaction period starts in 1910, year of the Mexican Revolution, when thousands of Mexicans crossed the border to establish themselves in the US. New periodicals were founded which published works on the Mexican-American way of life. It is in this period when Daniel Venegas's novel, *Las aventuras de Don Chipote, o cuando los pericos mamen*, was published (1928), considered "one of the earliest examples of Chicano/a proletarian literature" (Martín-Rodríguez *Hands* xv). For Leal the Chicano period did not start in the 1960s, but earlier, in 1942, when *Arizona Quarterly*, written by Mario Suárez, was published. It is regarded as an example of social realism before *el Movimiento*, which portrays Mexican-American life. However, for many the text that means the beginning of contemporary Chicano literature due to its focus on different issues such as identity, migration, and changes in gender roles is Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho* (1959). It was not after 1970 that professors and scholars recovered this text whose aesthetic level is not very sophisticated and which did not have a good reception when first published, at a time when publishing a Chicano novel was unprecedented, but which is still today an essential text to discuss Chicano literature, since it deals with most of the issues which are present in Chicano literature produced fifty years later (Lomelí 323). During the Chicano Civil Rights Movement an important number of presses, journals, and authors appeared, and together with movements such as El Teatro Campesino (linked to the United Farm Workers and led by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta) boosted the publication of Chicano literary texts. The poem "I Am Joaquín" (1967) by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, the manifesto adopted by the First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in 1969 can be considered as the flagship texts of *el Movimiento*. If Gonzales's poem provides Chicanos with an affirmation of identity, the Chicano manifesto "reclaims the land once deemed to belong to the Chicano people" and "... delineates a separate Chicano culture and nation and as such marks an important turning point in refining a collective idea of Chicano identity" (Jacobs 21).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Quinto Sol Press, aiming to publish quality literary and academic Chicano texts, awarded its Quinto Sol Prize to works of literature which form the canon of Chicano literature to the present. Renowned texts such as Tomás Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971), Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), and Rolando Hinojosa's *Estampas del Valle y otras obras* (1973) are among these literary works.

In the 1970s Chicana writers started to publish their work with strong feminist content, providing new images of women in contrast to the representation of women in literary works written by male Chicano authors. Their focus was on gender and sexuality, and the revisiting of mythical female figures such as Malinche or Malintzin Tenepal, Hernán Cortés's indigenous interpreter, la Llorona, and la Virgen de Guadalupe, as well as the goddesses of Aztec mythology, Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui.

In the early 1980s an important number of small presses were established, such as Bilingual Review Press and Arte Público Press, the latter undertaking a program, the Recovery Project, to reconstitute the literary history of Latinos/as in the United States from colonial times to 1960 (Botelho and Kabakow 141). One of the most remarkable literary works of this decade is with no doubt, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) due to its breaking conceptualization of what it means to live in the borderlands, literally and figuratively, and what it means to be a *mestiza* not only in terms of race and class, but also with regard to gender. Anzaldúa's work is present throughout this research not only as one of the main sources I draw upon in my theoretical framework, but also in the following sections of this analysis, since I explore the impact of her concepts both in her own books for children and young adults, and in contemporary Chicana children's literature written by other authors, specially in Maya Gonzalez's picturebooks and young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona*.

Although it is believed that no Mexican-American children's books were published before 1940, folk tales published as picturebooks reveal the presence of an oral literary tradition. In his article "Chicano/a Children's Literature: A *Transatlantic* Reader's History" (2006) Martín-Rodríguez provides the different aspects of Chicano children's literature "from a reception-informed perspective" (15), based on a transnational perspective both in time and space, that is, taking into account the interaction of the Chicano community with other communities from the nineteenth century to the present time. When he coins the term 'Transatlantic', Martín-Rodríguez reflects the relationship of Mexican-Americans with the culture from the other side of the Atlantic which most influenced Chicano children's literature during the nineteenth century, the Spanish culture, as well as Latin America. Including the term 'Aztlán' directly reminds us of the indigenous past reclaimed by the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. In this first stage it is the publication of José Martí's magazine *La Edad de Oro* (New York, 1889) that had the most influence on the writing for Spanish-speaking children. It published works of poetry, narrative, and graphic art, and included a selection of the best international children's

literature, based on a new understanding of what children's literature was considered at the time. Spanish and Mexican writers also had an important role to play in literature for children at that time, but we must not forget, as Martín-Rodríguez points out, the importance of folklore and the oral tradition in Spanish, Mexican, and native compositions in the culture of Mexican-American children.

For Martín-Rodríguez it was at the beginning of the twentieth century, after the Spanish-American War of 1898, when Mexican-Americans redefined their relationship with Spain and Latin America, as well as with the US. The migration of Mexican refugees escaping Porfirio Díaz's regime and the posterior Mexican Revolution (1910) increased the number of Mexican nationals at the north of the border. Being culturally part of Latin America, Mexican-Americans were politically tied to the United States due to the US interventionist policy. It is at this time when Anglo-American authors create discourses about these other Americans, in which Anglo-Americans are mainly represented as the embodiment of agency and empowerment, whereas Mexicans are portrayed as "primitive others" (Martín-Rodríguez *Transatlantic* 23), lacking agency and power, relying on their "white saviours" to come to their rescue. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century the representation of Mexican-Americans in US children's literature was based on cultural homogeneity, historical distortion, and stereotypes, the distinctive elements which are at the core of the construction of the Other and that serve to create and maintain structures of power grounded in fixed identities, opposed binaries and inequalities. Thus, the four axioms that define Said's Orientalism as a system that constructs and represents identities are present in the representation of the Mexican-American 'Other'. According to a comprehensive study carried out in 1975 by the CIBC (Council on Interracial Books for Children) on the representation of Mexican-Americans in children's literature, the cultural misrepresentation and stereotypical depiction on which Anglo authors based their cultural themes stem from the following assumptions: "(1) the assumption of Mexican and Chicano quaintness, ignorance and inferiority; and (2) the assumption of Anglo benevolence and the unquestioned superiority of the Anglo American way of life" (Botelho and Kabakow 142). Said's first axiom on the superior West and the inferior East can be translated here into the superior Anglo-American and the inferior Mexican-American. The poor, ignorant Mexican-Americans can either be saved by the benevolent Anglo-Americans or by learning English, in a process of acculturation to become "American" and leave their Spanish language behind. Taking the Latino population as an homogeneous group regardless of the historical and cultural differences existing between

the various Latin American realities reveals the remaining axioms of Orientalism: it prefers abstractions of the eternal and uniform Orient, which is unable to define itself. In the chapter “A Brief Historical Overview of Latino Children’s Literature in the United States” in *Celebrating Cuentos*, Naidoo states that in the 1970s and early 1980s, children’s books about Latinos “were still loaded with stereotypes in both the narrative and the illustrations” (52). In the majority of the books, Latinos were depicted as poor and dirty, relying on Anglo-Americans for help with their problems. However, during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s Chicano authors started constructing the identity of Chicana children, specially through the reconstruction of the relationship between the Chicana community and the acts of reading and writing: “In that sense, Chicano/a Movement children’s literature was a major effort to reeducate Chicanos/as and children through the discursive and visual construction of a tradition of which to be proud” (Martín-Rodríguez *Transatlantic* 24). Parents, educators and other intellectuals made an effort to devise school curricula laying emphasis on Chicana history and culture, and to do so they benefited from the work of authors such as Ernesto Galarza, specially from his collection ‘Mini-Libros’, both in Spanish and English to promote bilingualism. The Mini-Libro *Todo mundo lee*, sought to debunk the myth that Chicanos were illiterate people and it conveyed a message of empowering to Chicano children, and other authors such as poet Alurista passed on the pride of being Chicano through the indigenous past in *La Calavera* (1973). This latter publication with illustrations characteristic of the indigenist trend of Chicano art, which will have an influence on the art of Chicana children’s picturebooks, was linked to the CANBBE project (Curriculum Adaptation Network for Bilingual Bicultural Education) focused on promoting Chicano-produced materials. As a result of all these publications and projects, the Chicano Movement was undoubtedly a key stage in the development of literature for children, since it did not only have as its focal point what meant to be a Chicano child, but also because it gave way to anthologies written BY children, thus establishing a bond between children and literature beyond the act of reading.

It was in the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s when Multiculturalism became the trend in the US children’s publishing industry, and renowned Chicana writers such as Rudolfo Anaya, Juan Felipe Herrera, Sandra Cisneros and Pat Mora, among others, started imagining the Self in their literary works, including their books for children. The appearance of small presses specialising in children’s books about Latinxs, and the creation of the three major awards for US Latinx children’s literature in the early to mid-

1990s contributed to an increase not only in quality, but also in quantity of the number of books published about and by Latinxs.

5.3. Multiculturalism: An Authentic and Accurate Representation of Chicano Identity in Children's Literature? [RQ1]

When first starting to write children's books to provide children with representations of their culture, many Chicano authors considered it important to write bilingual books so that bilingual and migrant children could see their identity reflected in books which they could read both in the language they were taught at school, that is, English, and in the language some of them spoke at home, Spanish.

The study conducted by the CIBC in 1975 on children's books published from 1940 to 1970 on works with Chicano themes written by Anglo writers pointed to the careless use of the Spanish language in these books, with "translation mistakes and the stereotypical portrayal of the English speech of people whose first language is Spanish" (Botelho and Kabakow 142). The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who stressed the social nature of language learning, long ago emphasized the importance of language and culture in a child's construction of meaning. Thus, if language is intimately involved in creating the reality it articulates, an accurate and careful use of the Spanish and the English languages is essential to the transmission of positive images of Chicano culture, helping make children's literature better able to serve as a mirror reflecting children's own lives and culture.

Analysing a sample of bilingual picturebooks published between 1990 and 2014, all of them written by Chicano authors and mostly illustrated by Chicano artists as well, it is manifest that both the Spanish and the English texts were published with an eye to linguistic accuracy. According to a study conducted by Barrera and Garza de Cortés in 1997 on the Mexican-Americans in children's literature from 1992 to mid-1995, there is an increase in the use of Spanish in the texts and a significant number of bilingual editions with English and Spanish texts alongside each other. Chicano poet Francisco X. Alarcón stresses the importance of accurately reflecting the children's Chicano community through language:

I also write children's books as a way to reflect on and share my experiences as a Chicano growing up bi-culturally in California. I was struck by the odd Spanish that was used in the bilingual children's books published by Children's Book Press

of San Francisco. I found out that the translator for some of these books was from Spain. I said to myself, “Wow, that’s kind of disservice to the community”. . . . I wanted to change this, so I began working as an editor and consultant for Children’s Book Press. I then got all my writer friends in the Bay Area involved - Juan Felipe Herrera, Lucha Corpi, and Jorge Argueta- to begin writing for the press, which would reflect more accurately our Chicano/Latino community. (Aldama 44)

In multicultural children’s literature, ‘authenticity’ and the author’s identity are central concerns, since insider authors, that is, authors who have similar experiences to those of the books’ characters, are thought to be more capable of writing about their cultural experience. However, this implied ‘authenticity’ is intertwined with the discourse of *otherness* based on binary oppositions and bound up with the notion of the text corresponding to a stable cultural reality (Botelho and Kabakow 104).

Contemporary Chicana picturebooks show how different authors connect identity to different aspects of their culture, depending on their own experiences. Some authors go back to a mythical indigenous past and rewrite symbols and characters of the Mexican imagery (Anzaldúa’s *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*, 1995); others describe their traditions in terms of religious festivities, food and celebrations (Lomas Garza’s *In my Family / En mi familia*, 1996), or celebrate diversity within the family and the community (Cisneros’s *Hairs / Pelitos*, 1994), whereas other authors establish an unbreakable bond between the landscape and their identity (Mora’s *The Desert is my Mother / El desierto es mi madre*, 1994). Some Chicana authors show the lives of migrant farmworkers (Herrera’s *Calling the Doves / El canto de las palomas*, 1995), and some present us with the experience of immigration and crossing the Mexican-US border (Anzaldúa’s *Friends from the Other Side / Amigos del otro lado*, 1997, and Pérez’s *My Diary from Here to There / Mi diario de aquí hasta allá*, 2002). Yuyi Morales’s *Niño wrestles the world* (2013) and Cynthia Leonor Garza’s *Lucía the Luchadora* (2017) make use of the iconic status of Mexican/Chicano tradition of *lucha libre* to present us with “children who use their masked performance as wrestlers to express their struggle for a positive ethnic identity and to empower themselves” (González Ramos 2019). Although not bilingual, in Morales’s and Garza’s texts the Spanish expressions and words abound, specially those related to *lucha libre*. Despite the variety which characterizes these picturebooks and the different forms through which they portray Chicana identities both verbally and visually, when asked why they write books for children, Chicana authors

express a common goal: to provide Chicana children with positive representations of their culture and identity, rather than limiting themselves to strict categories of accuracy and authenticity. For one of the most prolific writers of children's books in Chicana literature, Pat Mora, writing children's literature is her way of investing in the future, and storytelling is the way to preserve community (Aldama 154). Alarcón's ambition from an early age was to become a master storyteller because it provided him with a sense of empowerment and connection to his ancestral Mesoamerican spirit. Having had a very happy childhood, with his poetry he wants to encourage "all sorts of children to touch, smell, taste, and imagine Chicano culture and experience it as it is shaped through Spanish/English word-images" (Aldama 45). With her children's books, Anzaldúa wanted Chicano children to get to know their culture and their roots in order to give them the possibility of choosing what they wanted to be (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 273). As insider authors, they have more access to culturally specific discourses and histories. According to Barrera and Garza de Cortés's study, insider authors provide a more complex rendering of the Mexican-American identity. Their children's books are culturally conscious because they place Chicano characters at the centre of the story and represent some aspect of the Chicano experience verbally and visually.

Grounded in power relations, critical multicultural analysis reminds us that by understanding how language is used and how power is exercised within and outside the culture, we must acknowledge that no person can speak for or represent an entire group. Cultural groups are not immune to intragroup power dynamics, and we are all outsiders to a degree, even when we specifically depict ourselves, because our portrayal is a representation of our lived experience (Botelho and Kabakow 104). In *Teaching Children's Literature: It's Critical* (2013), authors Leland, Lewison and Harste point out that, if we consider cultures as dynamic and changing, "examining cultural accuracy is tricky" (63), and they refer to Short and Fox to state that "there can never be a simplistic scale for evaluating authenticity" (*qtd. in* Leland et al. 63), since there is always variance. In his introduction to *With a Book in Their Hands* (2014), Martín-Rodríguez states that Chicano children's literature in the 1990s played an important and increasing role not only due to market reasons (according to the 2011 census, 35.1% of Latinos are under the age of 18, most of them Chicanos), but also because of the authors' concerns to provide "quality materials that portray Latinos/as and their cultures in an engaging, stereotype-free manner" (xviii). Instead of 'authentic' representations of Chicano identity, we should rather refer to Chicana picturebooks as a multiplicity of texts and meanings which seek

to avoid previous misrepresentations and to provide Chicana children with a reflection of themselves in the literature they encounter.

5.4. Imagining the Self in Chicana Children's Literature by Turning the Border into a Space of Empathy: Gloria Anzaldúa's *Prietita* [RQ2]

In the chapter devoted to Latino children and US public education in Naidoo's *Celebrating Cuentos*, Ream and Vazquez reflect on the notion of "critical witnessing" and on literature as a means "(1) to stimulate resistance among Hispanic youth to the strains of trauma that perpetuate their sense of 'otherness', and (2) to translate the offenses of the past into present possibilities" (13). How can literature stimulate resistance among Latina youth and translate past offenses into present possibilities? By creating narrative spaces "driven by empathy and understanding, rather than presumptions born from stereotypes, fear, or ignorance" (14). This is what Anzaldúa does in order to provide Chicana children with a representation of their culture and identity in her two books for children. In the 1960s, working as an elementary school teacher, the Chicana author realized that bilingual and migrant children needed to see their culture in the books they read. As I explored in the theoretical framework of this study (section 2.1.3), in *Borderlands / La Frontera. The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa rethinks the term 'identity' from an inclusive perspective which is not based on opposed dualities. For the Chicana author, the new *mestiza* consciousness must transcend the mixture of races (*raza*) in order to become a 'crossroads'. In the same way, *la frontera* is not only the Mexico-US border, but rather an indeterminate, metaphorical border, here understood as a 'Third Space', a place of contact, of merging, a bridge which connects differences and brings them into contact. The new *mestiza* is seen to serve as a mediator, a bridge which unites people of different colours, classes, races, and time periods, one who teaches the 'recent arrivals', the future generations, so that her inner changes become changes in society. The ideas the author develops in *Borderlands / La Frontera* echo in her books for children *Friends from the Other Side / Amigos del Otro Lado* (1993)⁸ and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona* (1995). After years of suffering the effects of colonization

⁸ *Friends from the Other Side / Amigos del otro lado* (Children's Book Press, 1993) was illustrated by Venezuelan painter and graphic artist Consuelo Méndez.

in their own country, for Anzaldúa it is essential to represent Chicana identity in a positive way in order to transform the world constructed by colonialism:

All of a sudden we Mexicans became Mexican Americans, became foreigners in our own country. What and who we were was not valued, was treated as inferior. From kindergarten through college we were bludgeoned with these views. Reading and writing books that show Chicanos in a positive way becomes part of decolonizing, disindoctrinating ourselves from the oppressive messages we have been given. (*qtd. in* Rebolledo 283)

Prietita, “little dark one”, is Anzaldúa’s alter ego in her children’s books, her little child-self, “tender, open and vulnerable” (*qtd. in* Rebolledo 280), who signals her mestizo identity: Mexican-American and Indian.

In *Friends from the Other Side / Amigos del otro lado* (1993) (ages 8-11), Prietita sees the humanity of Joaquín, an immigrant child from Mexico (from the other side of the border) who finds it hard to fit into his new American community. Prietita sees that he is hurt both physically and morally after having crossed the border, and she tries to defend him and protect him not only from the Border patrol, but also from those who deride him by calling him “wetback”. Prietita feels empathy towards Joaquín, and her perspective as the leading character in the story makes the reader feel the same towards the immigrant child, whose name is full of significance in Chicana experience thanks to the epic poem ‘I am Joaquin’, by Corky Gonzales.

In *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*, published in 1995 (ages 8-11), Anzaldúa’s second bilingual picturebook, illustrated by Maya Gonzalez, the third person narrator tells us that Prietita, portrayed by Gonzalez as a young girl of distinctively Mexican features (dark skin and long black hair), must find a plant in a dangerous territory to cure her ill mother. The story develops as follows: when Prietita is working in the garden at the house of *la curandera*, Doña Lola, her little sister Miranda tells her that their mother is ill again. Prietita asks *la curandera* for herbs to cure her mother. Doña Lola has all the ingredients except for one, ruda-rue (associated to pity, sorrow), so she sketches the rue and tells Prietita it is only to be found in the King Ranch, but it is dangerous to go there because they shoot trespassers (a clear reference to the border). However, the heroine decides that she must go and find the plant. Prietita reaches the fence of barbed wire and decides to cross it to go deep into the woods. When she is near a lagoon, she asks a deer to help her find some rue. The deer tells Prietita to follow her, but

after a while, she loses sight of the deer and asks a salamander to help her, then a dove, and after that a jaguarundi.

When it is getting late and she feels hungry and tired, she suddenly sees flashlights (shots?) and she hears a crying sound near the lagoon, the moon reflected on it. It is a woman crying, and the dark woman dressed in white emerges from the trees and floats above the water. The ghost woman (“*Señora Llorona*”) helps her find the rue and guides Prietita in a flight through the woods. When she sees the fence and wants to say goodbye, nobody is there, the ghost woman is gone. When she approaches her village, she sees her family and Doña Lola, who are looking for her. When she tells them about the ghost woman, her cousin Teté says that when *la Llorona* takes children away, she does not bring them back, and Doña Lola responds: “Perhaps she is not what others think she is” [28] and she tells Prietita at the end of the story: “I am very proud of you. You have grown up this night” [29]. She has grown up with the help of *la Llorona* and *la curandera*, both her mentors.

In terms of form, it is important to notice how, as in other pieces of Anzaldúa’s writing, here the English text is intentionally sprinkled with Mexican Spanish words (*remedio*, *mijita*) which refer not only to natural elements, such as plants and animals: *ruda*, *venadita* (little deer), *huisache* (species of acacia), *salamandra* (salamander), *cucurrucucú*, *palomita blanca*, but also to the symbolic characters, such as *la curandera* and *la Llorona*. In fact, in an interview with María Henríquez Betancor (1995), when asked about the intended readers of her children’s books, Anzaldúa notes: “When I submitted *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona* [...] the publishers wanted to make it comfortable for the white reader. It’s in both languages, but I wanted to put ‘la curandera’ in the English side as well because it doesn’t translate and at first they objected but later accepted” (*Interviews* 245).

In this first picturebook which Gonzalez illustrated for Children’s Book Press, the Chicana artist’s illustrations cooperate with the text to amplify the main characters in the narrative (fig. 1):

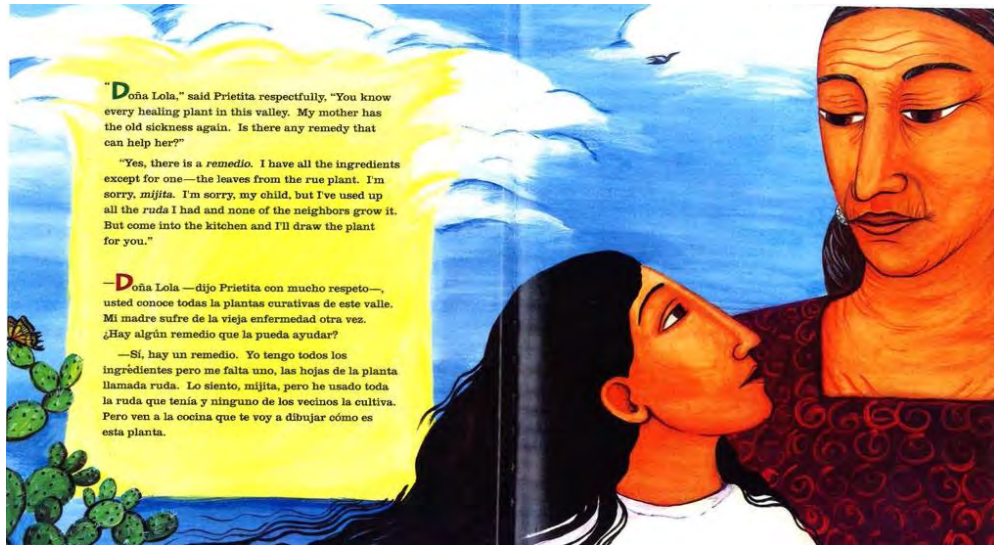


Fig. 1. *Prietita* [3-4]

Prietita as the heroine appears on each and every page of the picturebook, her centrality underlined by her position on the page and a close-up image when *la Llorona* is about to appear in the story. Prietita is placed at the edges of the page when the animal-advisers are present in the story (fig. 2): as the heroine goes into the woods, the deer, the salamander, the dove, and the jaguarundi (the latter a symbol of ancient Mexico and las Americas as we will see in Alarcón's *Animal Poems of the Iguazú*, in section 5.6 of this analysis) act as magical helpers, their traditional folktale roles, and they encourage her to continue in her quest.

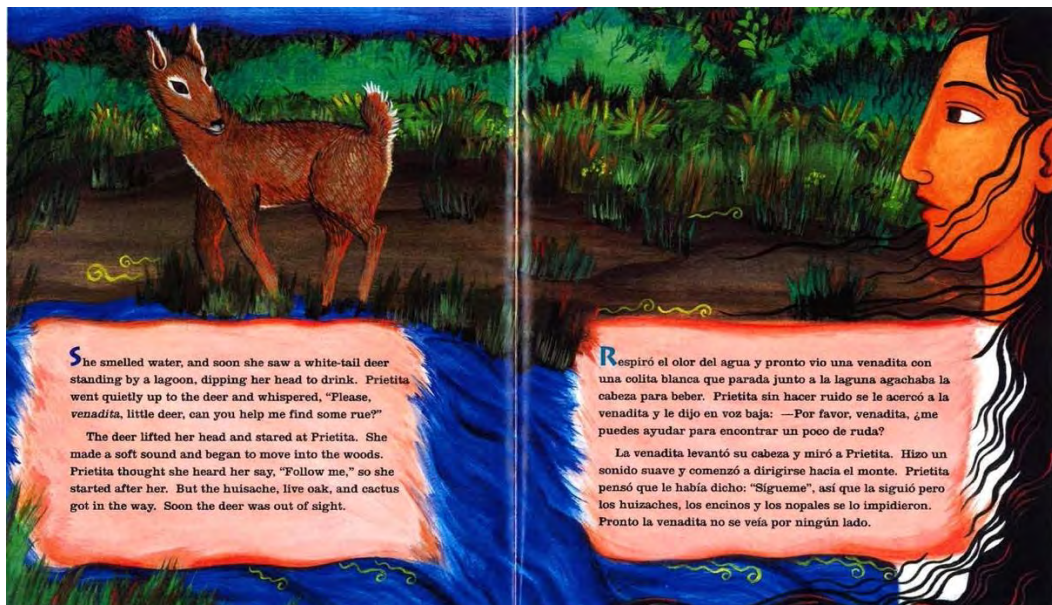


Fig. 2. *Prietita* [11-12]

It is *la Llorona*, as well as *la curandera*, also central to the story as Prietita's guides, who are centrally placed by Gonzalez's visual text: *la Llorona*, dressed in white, surrounded

by a yellow light and with a gentle facial expression, accompanies Prietita along the river (a meaningful symbol in Gonzalez's illustrations, as we will see) and across the fence (fig. 3). Both the river and the fence of barbwire inevitably make the young Chicana reader think of the Mexican-American physical border, the Río Grande or Río Bravo, which serves as part of the natural border between the US and Mexico, and the fence being the representation of the harsh physical wall which separates the two countries. The river is also a symbol usually associated to *la Llorona*, who dressing in white appears at night around water, wailing for her lost children. *La curandera*, a gentle old woman, is shown in close-up views at the beginning and on the last page of the story. Characters represented visually following the indigenist trend that characterised the visual arts during *el Movimiento* convey their feelings through their facial expressions, especially by the look in their eyes.

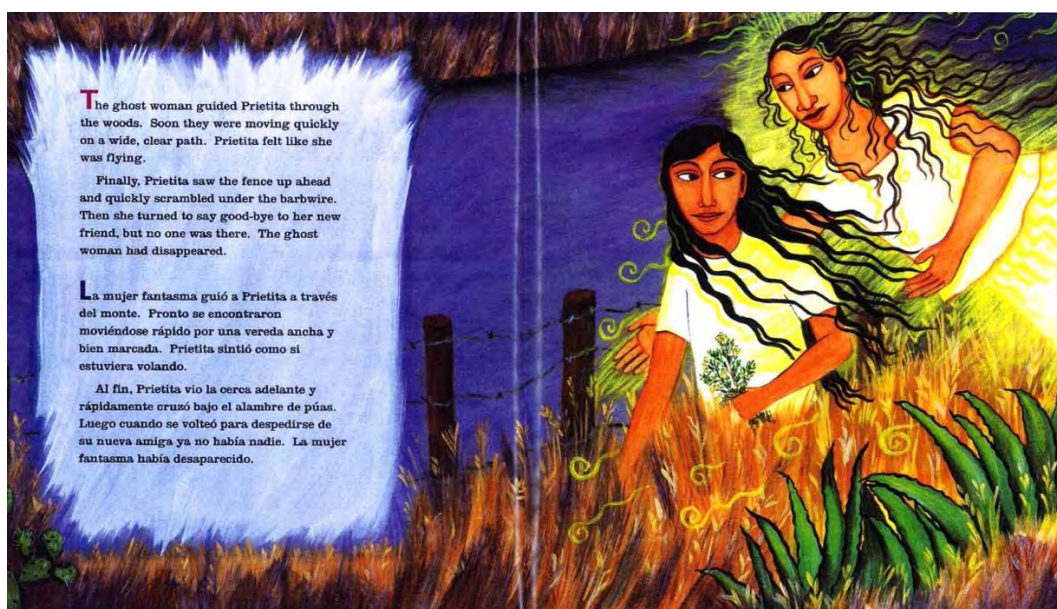


Fig. 3. *Prietita* [25-26]

The setting of the story is clearly rural, with the characteristic constructions (*la curandera's* house) and landscapes (the woods) of the Mexico-US border. The spatial transition from *la curandera's* house into the woods is paralleled by a temporal transition, from daytime to night. The English and Spanish texts are framed inside the illustrations by dimmed margins on a background which goes from yellow to pink, from blue to purple. Both texts are placed on the recto or on the verso of the double page spread, or at the bottom of the illustration, the English text on the verso and the Spanish text on the recto. As most often happens in the picturebooks illustrated by Gonzalez, the illustrations are borderless or bleed to the edges, that is, they extend to the edge of the page without

frames or borders, thus enhancing identification with character and, according to Nikolajeva and Scott's analysis, conveying a sense of a hidden viewer whose perspective is very close to the image (Nikolajeva and Scott 95).

Although the tale has the traditional structure of Western fairy tales with a clear sense of closure, in which the hero or heroine must go through a series of tests in order to reach adulthood, Anzaldúa and Gonzalez make use of the Mexican-Chicano verbal and visual imagery and characterisation, and they turn its elements into positive symbols. As in *Borderlands / La Frontera*, where Anzaldúa transforms *la Llorona* into a complex figure, here she turns her into the ghost woman who helps Prietita overcome difficulties so that she can succeed in her quest.

The ghost woman ("Señora Llorona") helps her find the rue and guides Prietita as she flies through the woods. *La Llorona* is one of the myths Anzaldúa rethinks when constructing and representing the new *mestiza* consciousness. The weeping woman is, according to Mexican and Chicano imagery, the woman who drowned her children and is condemned to cry and to search for them. This is why she takes children away, and the figure is used by adults to scare children out of going to dangerous places.

On the back endpapers, when the story finishes, the author herself tells us about the importance of *la Llorona* in her childhood:

When I was a little girl growing up in South Texas near the King Ranch, my *mamagrande*, my grandmother used to tell me scary stories about *la Llorona*, the ghost woman. These stories were well known throughout the Southwest and in Mexico. All the children were afraid of *la Llorona*—I was afraid too, but even at that age I wondered if there was another side to her. As I grew older and studied the roots of my Chicana/Mexicana culture, I discovered that there really was another side to *la Llorona*— a powerful, positive side, a side that represents the Indian part and the female part of us. I discovered, like Prietita, that things are not always what they seem to be. In this story I want to convey my respect for *las curanderas*, the traditional healers of my people. They know many things about healing that Western doctors are just beginning to learn. And I want to encourage children to look beneath the surface of what things seem to be in order to discover the truths that may be hidden. (back endpapers)

By creating narrative spaces of empathy, Anzaldúa's aim is not only for Chicanx children to see themselves in the books which they read both in English and Spanish, but also for them to discover their roots and their identity by learning to "look beneath the surface". Anzaldúa turns the border into a place of contact and merging, where her new *mestiza*, Prietita, helps others. Anzaldúa and Gonzalez make use of the Mexican-Chicano imagery

and turn its elements (*la Llorona*, the border and its landscape, the river, the animal-advisers) into positive symbols in order to resist negative representations of their culture. As we will see towards the end of this analysis (section 5.9), in Gonzalez's young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona*, the myth of the "Weeping Woman" is revisited, emphasizing the Indian and female sides of the ghost woman, turning the myth into a way of resistance against colonisation and silence.

5.5. Celebrating the Self through the Power of Reflection: Maya Gonzalez's *Nature Trilogy* [RQ2]

In her work, both as an illustrator and as an author, we can see that some of the main elements Gonzalez uses as an illustrator in picturebooks written by other authors are also present in her own first three bilingual English/Spanish picturebooks which make up her *Nature Trilogy* (ages 5-10): *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo* (2007), *I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama* (2009), and *Call Me Tree / Lláname árbol* (2014).

Scholars who have analysed the interaction of pictures and words in picturebooks consider that illustrations must collaborate with the text by including all the details the writer regards as important, such as the setting and the appearance of characters. Thus, when the same person serves as both author and illustrator this collaboration becomes highly coherent because the modes of expression do not overlap but rather work in harmony to strengthen the ultimate effect (Nikolajeva and Scott 16).

Gonzalez was inspired to illustrate after meeting Harriet Rohmer, the founder of Children's Book Press, at her first art show in San Francisco. That encounter made Gonzalez realize that she could have a voice through illustrating children's books. The Chicana artist has illustrated over twenty books, and has written **nine** of her own so far. Gonzalez considers it very important for children to see themselves depicted in books, and this is what she has done in her first three picturebooks: she has created her own reflection, thanks to which she exists. Gonzalez explains:

I grew up Chicana and biracial in what seemed like a white, white world. I would not have had those words then. All I knew was that I could never find books at the library that felt like me and I often found myself drawing my image onto the blank

pages in the backs of books, seemingly because I needed some place to draw. Now, of course, I imagine I wanted to see myself there: my round, Chicana, girl face inside the covers of a book: hard cover, library shelf, label on the spine. It's as if I knew my image belonged there reflected in the "real world". (Naidoo 319)

What mechanisms have allowed her to create her own reflection in her picturebooks, both verbally and visually? How does intertextuality between the two codes reinforce this idea?

It is in her first picturebook, *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo* (2007), that we first see that "round, Chicana, girl face" which Gonzalez as a child looked for in the children's books she borrowed from the library. The title page of the book is a circle, the "Eye Seeing" illustration (fig. 4) with a close-up of child Maya's face, one eye closed, the other one wide open and surrounded by Maya's hands, as if she wanted to magnify what she is looking at.

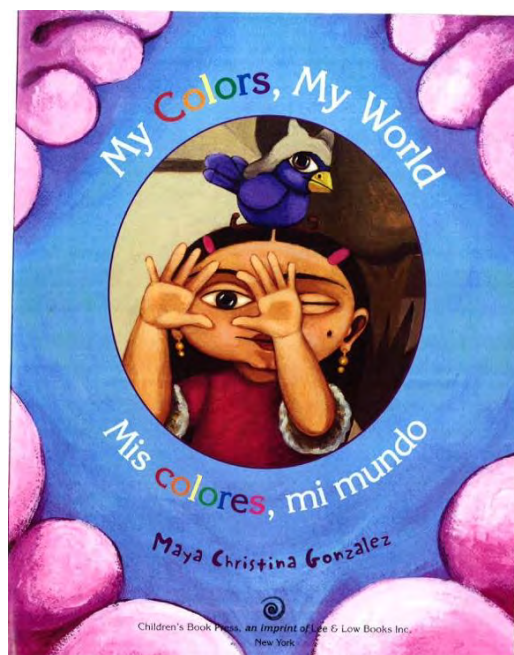


Fig. 4. *Colors* title page

In fact, she is looking at us, the readers, and she begins her story by telling us that she lives in the desert where everything is one colour, the colour of sand, beige-grey: "Desert sand covers everything. Everything the same color..." (fig. 5).

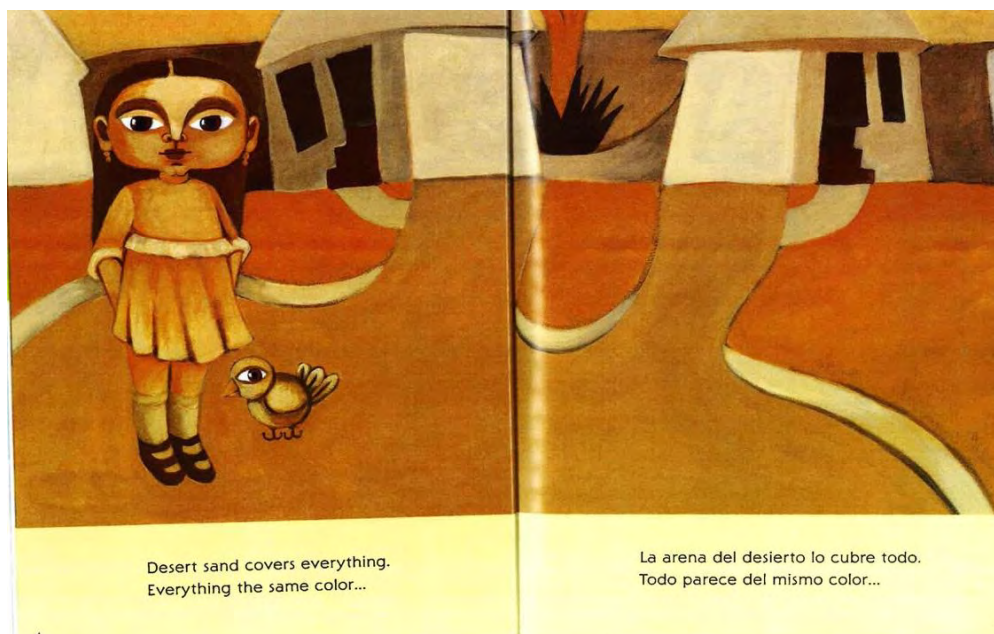


Fig. 5. *Colors* 4-5

But the child's agency ("I open my eyes extra-wide to find the colors in my world") allows her to discover the colours which the environment has created for her: the desert sunset is pink, which is also the colour the girl wears at all times of day; mud is brown and marigold flowers are orange, irises are purple, pollen is yellow, cactus is green, the swing in the backyard is red, and her dad's hair is black. On the first pages, beige predominates in the illustrations, making the pink of Maya's dress and the purple of the bird that accompanies her all through the illustrations (Maya's *alter ego*, her guardian in the spirit world (Bundy 142), always represented next to her, paralleling her emotions) stand out from the background. And it is shades of purple and mauve that later predominate in this picturebook: at dusk the sun and clouds take on a mauve colour, which also predominates on the cover and back cover of the book. The use of bright, expressive colour language by Gonzalez not only in this picturebook, as we will see further in this analysis, is a way of connecting Chicana art tradition to Latin American art. It is "a form of affirmation and of resistance that color [sic] a new vision of storytelling in literature that is uniquely Chicana" (Avilés 133).

The colourful images in Gonzalez's first picturebook are frameless, drawing the reader into the picture (Nikolajeva and Scott 105), a way to let the reader share the first person narrator's point of view. The visual fills the entire double page spread, and both the English and the Spanish texts are placed at the bottom of the page, separated from the illustrations by a line framing the text over a coloured background. The English text appears on the verso and the Spanish one on the recto page. It is important to note that

the verso side of most picturebook spreads deals with the known (here the English words), whereas the recto favours new information (here the Spanish written text), encouraging the reader to turn the page. The words referring to colours in the text appear in the colour they describe, so that text and image are connected by the colours that the girl discovers around her. On the back endpapers the author includes “A bilingual color glossary / Un glosario bilingüe de colores” (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Colors back endpapers

The layout of image and text allows Gonzalez to make the visual and the verbal collaborate, and at the same time to raise awareness of the importance of conveying the same message in both languages.

In terms of narrative perspective, Gonzalez’s three picturebooks are told by the child who the reader sees in the images. *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo* is the child Maya’s story of self-discovery, so she speaks and is observed, and the reader observes her and listens to her. Visually, the girl’s central position on the last page emphasizes her central role in the story. When she is not placed in the centre of the page, her image is presented by close-up views, emphasizing her presence in the narrative. Child Maya exercises her power not only by opening her eyes and discovering her colours, but also by telling her story, by speaking and not being silenced. This agency is exercised from the very beginning, when the Chicana author includes the first person singular in the titles of her picturebooks: **My** (Colors), **I** (know the River Loves) **Me**, (Call) **Me** (Tree) we are

aware of the fact that she has appropriated her own story. In *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo*, child Maya acts (opens her eyes wide), resists and challenges domination (the dominant beige/white versus her colourful/Chicanx world).

Maya is visually characterized with an emphasis placed on her Chicanx features, especially her eyes, since they allow her to take in the world around her, her colours. Characters, in this case the girl and her parents, are portrayed with a gentle smile, looking peaceful and happy. It is the visual expression in the girl's eyes that tells us the most about her emotions, mainly discovery, gentleness, peace and freedom. Illustrations show the girl not only looking, but also moving with the wind, dancing, making mud pies, reading, feeding domestic animals and picking fruit from trees, all these images reinforcing the idea of child Maya's agency.

The end of the book offers the reader a sense of closure or completeness, when the girl Maya says that she loves all the colours in her world, her parents waving at her from their house below (fig. 7) in the illustration where she seems to be flying free between the pink-mauve sun and a grey-purple moon with a rabbit inside, a symbol in Aztec legends, as Rachel Alexander explains in *Myths, Symbols and Legends of Solar System Bodies*:

In Aztec mythology, the Moon shone as brightly as the Sun until one of their deities flung a rabbit at the face of the Moon, where it remains. In Mexico, there is a story that is very similar to one in both Chinese and Indian mythology. Their god, Quetzalcoatl, started off as a mere man. He traveled for a long period of time and eventually became ravenously hungry. He encountered a rabbit at this point who, most generously, offered to allow Quetzalcoatl to eat him. For the Aztecs, it was therefore Quetzalcoatl who caused the rabbit to rise up into the Moon, giving the creature immortality. (90)

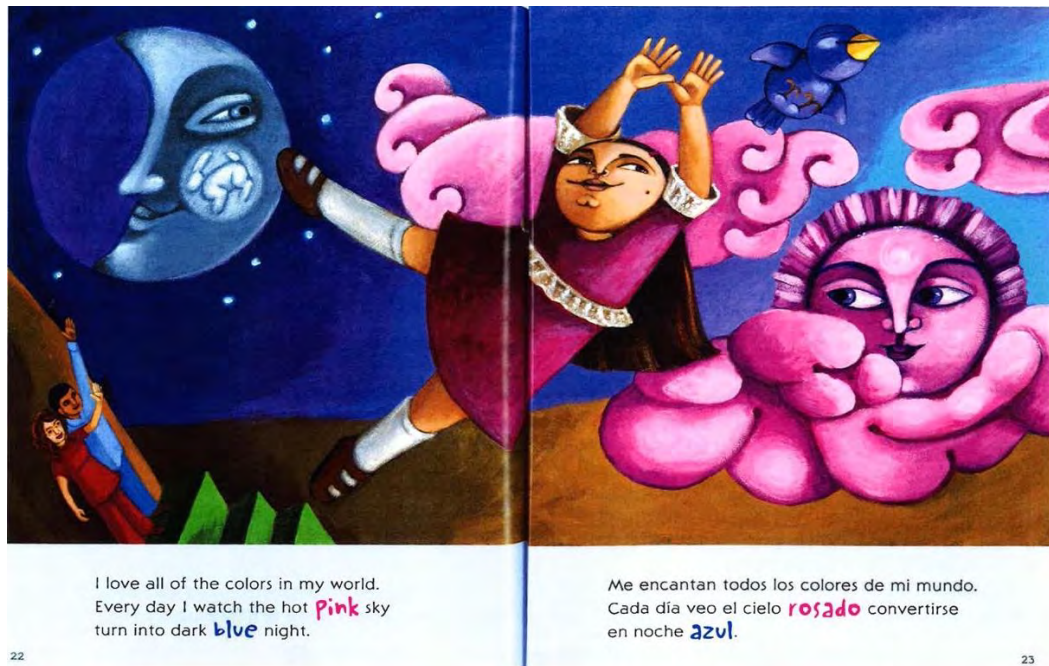


Fig. 7. *Colors* 22-23

Gonzalez takes up two of the most important themes used by Chicana writers of children's books to represent their identities and a harmonious relationship with it: nature and family. Although the girl does not mention her mother in the story, she is presented visually, but always at a distance on the left side of the page, on the house threshold. However, the narrator's father is a more prominent figure in the story, both verbally, "I sway on my swing. I helped my Papi build it and paint it the perfect shade of red" (18), "When my Papi comes home from work, I see his shiny black hair" (20), and visually, in a close-up view where the girl is embracing him (fig. 8). The fact that Gonzalez uses the Spanish *Papi* in the English text and that the character has more weight visually and verbally in the story than the girl's mother may be related to the Mexican origin of the author's father, who grew up as a fluent Spanish speaker and suffered social and racial discrimination at school, whereas Gonzalez's mother comes from a German background, and "her assimilationist perspectives added to the sense of internalized colonialism the Chicana felt throughout her childhood" (Avilés 126).

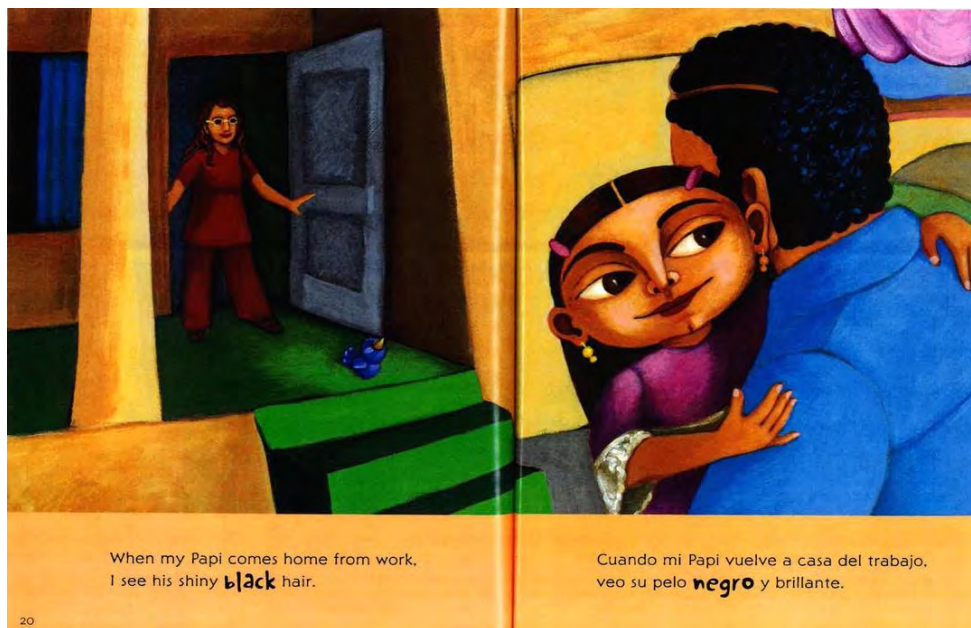


Fig. 8. *Colors* 20-21

On the back endpapers the author claims: “The little girl in this book is me. ... I faced a number of challenges as a very young person. I turned to my environment to search out my reflection and a sense of belonging” (back endpapers). Thus, being an outsider in terms of class, ethnicity, and gender, the environment is what helps Maya’s counterpart in the book to find her identity in the midst of a beige-grey landscape, here a metaphor for the predominantly white US society. As Naidoo suggests in the pages devoted to Maya Gonzalez in *Celebrating Cuentos*, “Maya’s likeness is the flowing lifeline of the entire book” (29), not only in her first picturebook, but also in *I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama*, (2009) her second picturebook. Here, the girl tells us about one of her best friends, the river (2).

In terms of narrative perspective, as in *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo*, it is the girl who speaks and is observed, as the reader observes her and listens to her. Visually, the girl’s position emphasizes her central role in the story, here shared with the river as the other protagonist. On the first page we see her silhouette at a distance in the left hand upper corner of the double page spread, the river, the mountains, and the trees filling most of the double page spread. On the following pages her image is presented either on the verso or the recto page in close-up views, emphasizing her presence in the narrative. Child Maya exercises her power by responding to the river’s call; she goes to visit her, the river here referred to as “she” in English, something which is important to take into account in a Spanish/English bilingual edition, since in Spanish the word ‘río’

is grammatically a masculine noun, and as such it appears in the Spanish text. The river loves her and calls her. They play together, jump and sing, they change together and take care of each other: “When I jump on her back she holds me up. When I leap into her arms she takes me in” (12). But more importantly, the river offers the girl her own reflection: “I know the river loves me because when I look into her face, she’s happy to see me” (fig. 9).

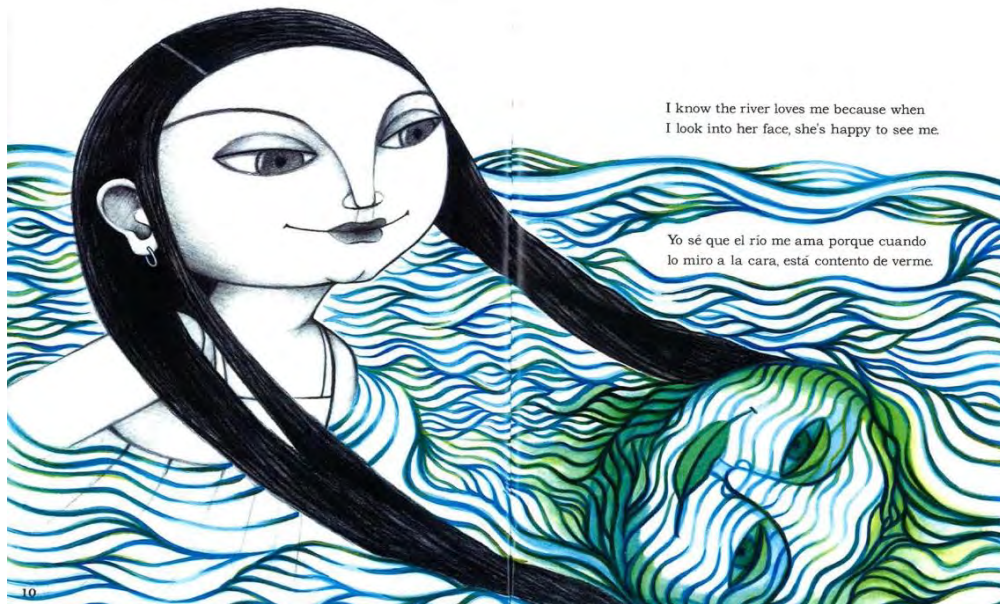


Fig. 9. *River* 10-11

Visually, this is the most relevant page in the picturebook: nature, here the river, is the means by which the Chicana author allows her little self to see her own face, her own reflection, the river being not only a friend, but also a mirror, a powerful metaphor in children’s literature to convey affirmation of identity and/or self-contemplation (Botelho and Kabakow xiii). Gonzalez illustrates this transformational moment in the picturebook by showing the girl’s face in a close-up image on the upper part of the verso page, reflected as in a mirror in the river on the lower part of the recto page.

It is remarkable how from the colourful picturebook *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo*, the Chicana author moves to the white page as the background in order to shift the focus to the only colours of the blue of the river, the brown of trees and birds, the green of mountains, fish and frogs, the pink of flowers, and the purple of butterflies. The girl is outlined in black pencil, thus allowing the river to stand out in the white background throughout the book. She is characterized by the clothes and backpack she wears at the

beginning of the book, when she goes to visit the river. Her hair is in an updo until she gets into the river, where it flows freely with the water.

Another difference between Gonzalez's first and second picturebooks is the use of intraiconic texts, that is, text appearing inside borderless illustrations. At times both the English and Spanish texts are placed one after the other within the pictures (the English text on top). In one case, the English and Spanish texts are placed on the verso and recto, respectively. In most cases the short texts are contained within the illustrations, either following the movement of the river, or surrounding the girl's outline, the use of intraiconic texts conveying an uncertain division between text and image (Nikolajeva and Scott 73). In the last pages, Gonzalez shows little Maya's respect for the river, sending the reader a message of environmental responsibility and respect for nature: "The river takes care of me and I take care of the river. I only leave behind what already belongs to her" (fig. 10).

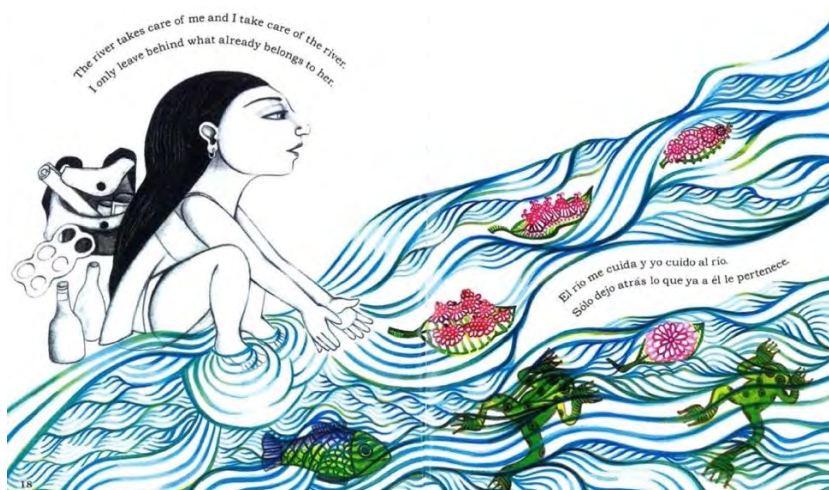


Fig. 10. *River* 18-19

The sense of closure is once more stressed by the visual, covering the complete double page spread (fig. 11). The text "I know the river loves me, and I love the river" is embedded between the branches of the trees next to the river, the girl standing on a bridge looking down at the water which flows from and to her, her blue dress becoming one and the same with the river.



Fig. 11. *River* 22-23

As she does in her previous picturebook, Gonzalez makes use of the back endpapers to tell us about her special relation to rivers, especially to the Yuba River in California:

I tell my daughter we are “river people”, here to learn how to flow with all of life, and to let life flow through us. I have gone to the Yuba for many years now. She is a part of me. She’s family. Everyone can visit her at the South Yuba Independence Trail, the country’s first wheelchair accessible trail. [24]

Where other Chicana writers, such as Anzaldúa and Juan Felipe Herrera have turned border areas from places of separation into spaces of contact and empathy, Gonzalez turns the river into an ally that helps us find our own reflection. In Mexican-American culture, the river is full of meaning and associated with the ‘wetbacks’ (*los mojados*), Mexican immigrants trying to get into the United States “without benefit of bridges”, as Gloria Anzaldúa put it, as the Rio Grande forms a natural border between Mexico and the US. It is nature and inclusiveness that make up the thematic milieu in which the Chicana picturebook maker sets her third picturebook, *Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol* (2014). Here, Gonzalez describes what it means to be like a tree, how children, all different and all the same, are born and grow like trees, creating an ode to our connection to nature, the capacity for agency, freedom, and inclusiveness.

If the focalisation is the same as in her two previous picturebooks, also taking the form of a first person narrator who speaks to us and whom we can see in the illustrations, this

time it is not Maya's likeness who is talking to the reader, but a child not marked in terms of gender.

The opening sentence of the book, "I begin Within the deep dark earth" (fig. 12) is embedded within the earth in the illustration which bleeds to the four edges of the page with no framing, as will be the case throughout the picturebook.

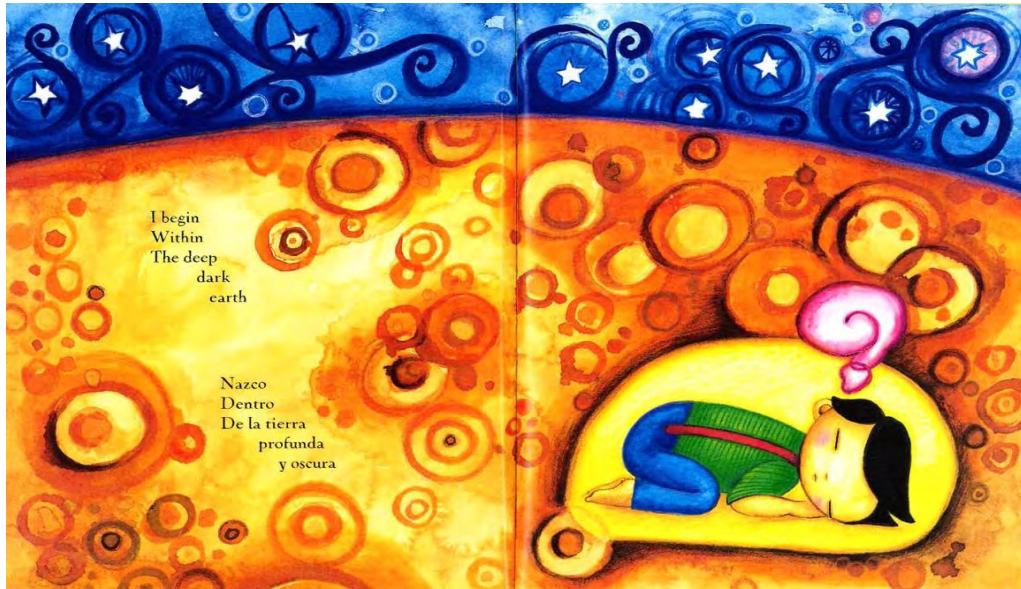


Fig. 12. *Tree* [1-2]

The child's growth is paralleled verbally and visually with the growth of a tree: the written text "A seed. A tree. Free to be free" [4] is inserted in the illustration showing a tree with an arm reaching out from inside it. When the child stands in front of a grown tree, the text reads, "I reach and I rise" [9-10]. The central pages are the turning point in the picturebook (fig. 13), when the child, after reaching and rising, looks around to see more trees/children. The illustration taking up the whole double page spread in landscape format is a close-up view of the child's face, surrounded by the leaves of trees and pink clouds.



Fig. 13. *Tree* [11-12]

As the child grows, (s)he discovers that (s)he is surrounded by other trees, which are different, “some trees reach, some trees teach, some trees stand still” [18] and all the same, because “all trees have roots, all trees belong” (fig. 14). To celebrate this diversity, in her illustrations Gonzalez depicts children (paralleled by various kinds of trees) from different ethnic groups, each of them in different positions, one of them in the yoga tree pose, who are performing the actions described verbally: singing, playing, moving. Like the trees, they are rooted to the earth, the roots connecting them at the same time one with the other.

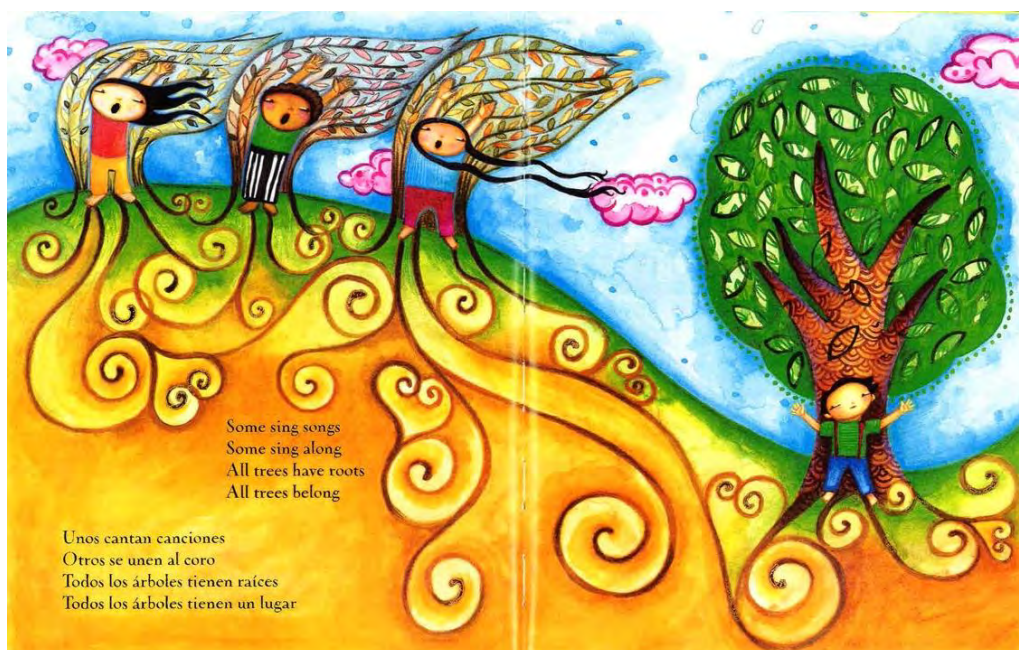


Fig. 14. *Tree* [19-20]

To provide the reader with a sense of closure, the last page of the book has a portrait format, that is, it has to be turned in order to see the child standing in front of the tree, reaching up with her/his arms stretched. The written text says: “Call me tree because I am tall, I am strong, and like a tree I am free” (fig. 15).

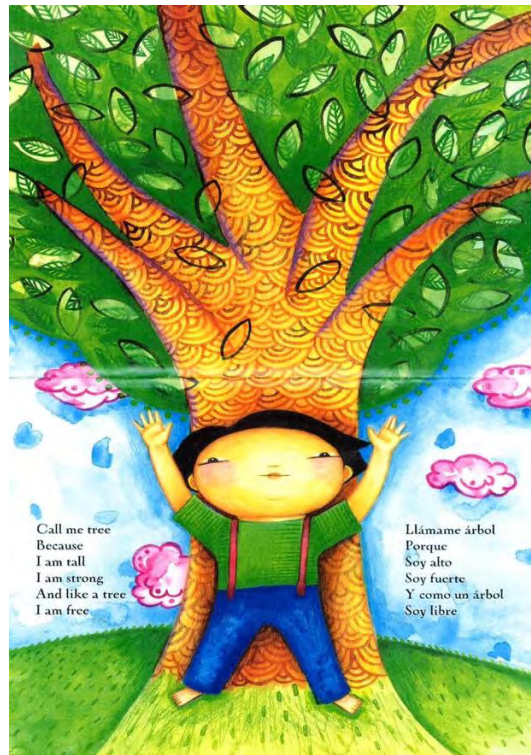


Fig. 15. *Tree* [21-22]

Call me Tree / Lláname árbol celebrates diversity, freedom, and strength related not only to ethnicity and class, but also to gender: as Gonzalez herself explains, the little child-narrator is deliberately not marked in terms of gender (Gonzalez “A note to my readers” 2014). Some scholars of children’s literature agree that the protagonist’s gender is in many cases not essential, arguing that picturebooks address the reader at an age when gender identity is not yet relevant. However, the child-narrator’s lack of gender in Gonzalez’s *Call Me Tree / Lláname árbol* is deliberate: if her art has focused on children of colour as a way of reflecting her own biracial heritage, she also seeks to provide transgender children with their reflections, since they are severely underrepresented, as she explains in the worksheet with resources and a note to her readers (Annex 10). With this picturebook, the author lets children know that they all belong, and that “*Tree*’s reminding us there are lots of different ways to be!” And it is precisely ‘tree’ one of the inclusive pronouns she uses in her picturebook *They, She, He, Me. Free to Be!* to which

I will refer in the part of the analysis devoted to *The Gender Wheel Project* (Section 5.10). It is in the trees of *Call Me Tree / Lláname árbol* that the roots of Gonzalez's radical and revolutionary message in her picturebooks is located: she breaks from binary modes of thinking in order to emphasize, both visually and verbally, the importance of freedom and inclusiveness.

On the back endpapers of this third picturebook, the author and the publisher provide relevant information on the author's work and the book. As in her previous books, here Gonzalez tells us about her relationship to trees and why they are important to her:

My family moved to the Oregon woods when I was thirteen. After living in the desert, the trees amazed me. I lived in the deep woods again as a young adult. Surrounded by deep majestic trees, I got to know their unique characteristics and how they changed throughout the year. Each had a presence and a spirit. I considered the trees friends and parts of my world. And at times I thought of myself as a tree! I still do. ... In the illustrations, I included some kids in the yoga tree pose. I loved doing the tree pose when I was young: balancing, being strong and stable. I'll call you tree if you call me tree! (back endpapers)

As in *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo* and *I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama*, the visual seems to prevail over the verbal, since the author employs very short texts to convey her message. Nevertheless, the choices of vocabulary (words full of content and meaning) and syntax (short, direct sentences) both in English and Spanish, especially in *Call Me Tree / Lláname árbol*, allow for a very synthetic text to convey a complete, closed meaning. On the first pages, the words seem to convey that the protagonist who speaks to the reader is a tree, but at the same time the images show us the child paralleled with the tree, either within it or in front of it, so that the interplay of word and image make it clear that both the child and the tree are one and the same. The visual and the verbal codes interact to complement and support each other, with text and picture taking on equal importance. The way the text is displayed together with or within the illustrations (intraiconic texts) allows Gonzalez to make an impact on the reader, emphasizing the text's message.

I have already mentioned the intertextuality of Gonzalez's picturebooks in terms of their titles (containing the first person pronouns My, I, Me), which constitute a considerable percentage of the books' verbal messages. Intertextuality is also present in the narrative perspective chosen by the author, with a child narrator who holds agency, who is at the centre of the picturebook both verbally and visually, and who tells her/his story which, at the same time, is seen by the reader.

As an artist, Gonzalez in her illustrations represents the connection of the individual to the environment: the river becomes one with the child (*River* 22-23), and characters are literally rooted to the earth in illustrations which visually represent our origins (*Tree* 19-20).

In the interview with the author which I carried out in February 2019⁹, Gonzalez explains how as an outsider in terms of ethnicity and gender, her perception of nature has helped her heal herself: “Nature had always been the place where I felt safe, where I felt like I could be myself. And it was always like that resource when I didn’t have anything else.” (interview, min 34:02). And it is in nature that Gonzalez finds her reflection and the power to heal herself from trauma and to claim “I exist!” (interview, min 33:35).

5.6. Blurring Borders and Margins through Visual Poetry: Francisco X. Alarcón and Maya Gonzalez’s Picturebooks [RQ2]

Before authoring her own picturebooks, Gonzalez collaborated with other authors as an illustrator of bilingual children’s books published by Children’s Book Press. With Amada Irma Pérez, bilingual educator who promotes literacy and multicultural programmes, Gonzalez worked to illustrate Pérez’s three picturebooks, *My Very Own Room / Mi propio cuartito* (2000), *My Diary From Here to There / Mi diario de aquí hasta allá* (2002), and *Nana’s Big Surprise / Nana, ¡qué sorpresa!* (2007)¹⁰ (age 8), in which the educator speaks through her first person narrator, the author’s child self, about her life as an immigrant, the importance of family and traditions, as well as the role of writing about one’s own experiences to convey a positive, powerful message.

With her own independent press, Reflection Press, Gonzalez has also illustrated Ernesto J. Martínez’s *Cuando Amamos Cantamos / When We Love Someone We sing to Them* (2018) (ages 7-10). An academic and artist, Martínez focuses on how racially and sexually marginalized communities subjected to different forms of violence express their knowledge through the use of art, literature, and music. In this his first picturebook, the Chicano author makes use of the first person narrator, the boy-protagonist (the author’s child self) to tell us the story of a boy who asks his father to help him write his “butterfly

⁹ See full transcription in Annex 1

¹⁰ *My Very Own Room / Mi propio cuartito* won numerous awards, such as the Tomas Rivera Children’s Book Award. *My Diary From Here to There / Mi diario de aquí hasta allá* was awarded the Pura Belpré Honor Book Award.

song”, his serenade for a boy who loves a boy. The text, which could be defined as prose-poetry or poetic prose, recovers the Mexican tradition of singing to family and loved ones to include everyone. And it is books of poetry for children that Gonzalez has illustrated in what can be regarded as her closest collaboration with another children’s books author, Chicano poet, Francisco X. Alarcón.

In the interview with Maya Gonzalez in February 2019, she explained that it was Alarcón who translated Anzaldúa’s *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona* into “real” Spanish:

Gloria wanted real Spanish in the book instead of academic Spanish, because Children’s Book Press had been struggling with more academic Spanish prior to this. And literally, Gloria and Francisco came in and said “No. You need to speak like this. Let’s be real here, right? If you’re doing this work, this must be the language”. And so, Francisco, and I didn’t know it actually, I think maybe until much later, even within the last ten years I think I found out that Francisco translated that book because of Gloria. Because of that, and because of Gloria, then Francisco and I did six books together. So, Francisco, prior to his passing, I interviewed him for my website. He spoke of his mentor in Mexico City, who was the first Mexican person, gay person, they had ever seen read gay poetry in public, and it changed them in their heart. That person was best friends with Frida Kahlo. So, I was just like “Wow!”. (interview, min 43:20)

Both Anzaldúa and Alarcón are considered by Gonzalez part of her artistic ancestry, together with Frida Kahlo, to whom she has been compared not only artistically, but also because of their common Mexican-German background. Despite the fact that Gonzalez has always resisted this connection with the Mexican artist to avoid being “pigeonholed”, we will see in some illustrations that there are certain symbols and aesthetic elements which seem to resonate with Kahlo’s works of art.

According to Chicano scholar Frederick Luis Aldama, Francisco X. Alarcón is among the authors who make up a second wave of Chicano artists. For Aldama, this group of Chicano authors focus not only on what Chicano identity is, but also on the aesthetics of its representation. Alarcón, who was interviewed in Aldama’s book *Spilling the Beans in Chicanolandia. Conversations with writers and artists* (2006), is the author of several books for children. If genre shapes the reader’s expectations of the text (Botelho and Kabakow 191), the poet, in his children’s books, wants to move away from a traditional narrative: “I wanted to write short poems that would be like open doors inviting children inside to play” (Aldama 44). In his Spanish/English bilingual poems, which translate

almost literally keeping the same number of verses and stanzas in both languages, Alarcón not only conveys his experiences, feelings and thoughts as a child moving between the US and Mexico, but also represents Chicana identity by celebrating family, traditions, nature, hybridity, and the feeling of (non)belonging. If“(P)oetry and picturebooks are the least restrictive genres in terms of content, and the most structured in terms of format” (Botelho and Kabakow 194), in Alarcón’s picturebooks illustrated by Maya Gonzalez, the verbal, in this case in the form of poems, and the visual support each other, and poems and elements of the illustrations intertwine with one another. Only one of Alarcón’s picturebook of poems for children, *Poems to Dream Together / Poemas para soñar juntos*, published by Lee & Low Books in 2005, is not illustrated by Gonzalez, but by Ecuadorian artist Paula Barragán (Children’s Books Press became an imprint of Lee & Low Books in 2012).

Alarcon and Gonzalez published together a series of four picturebooks devoted to the seasons, *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems / Jitomates Risueños y otros poemas de primavera* (1997), *From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems / Del Ombligo de la Luna y otros poemas de verano* (1998), *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems / Los Ángeles Andan en Bicicleta y otros poemas de otoño* (1999), *Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems / Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno* (2001), as well as *Animal Poems of the Iguazú / Animalario del Iguazú* (2008) which includes poems written after the poet’s trip to the Iguazú waterfalls. Alarcón and Gonzalez’s last collaboration was the picturebook *Family Poems for Every Day of the Week / Poemas familiares para cada día de la semana* (2015-17), which was published after the passing away of Alarcón in 2016. All these picturebooks are for ages 7-10.

The first book of the series devoted to the seasons, *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems / Jitomates Risueños y otros poemas de primavera* (1997) is a celebration of nature and how it nourishes us, providing us with vegetables and fruit, with the traditional ingredients at the base of Mexican food, tomatoes, corn, tortilla and chile, but also with the sun and the rain, words and dreams, Alarcón’s grandma’s songs. The poems also celebrate *Cinco de Mayo*, one of the most important holidays in Chicana culture to commemorate the victory of Mexicans over an invading French army in Puebla, Mexico. Another poem is devoted to César Chávez, the Mexican-American leader, who founded the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA). The very first page of the book, the front endpapers immediately after the front cover of the book, shows the reader a framed image of a girl and a boy, the girl apparently turned upside down, holding a strawberry as if

were her heart, and on the boy's head there are two tomato slices. The kids are looking at each other from the corner of their eyes, a black cat leaning out from behind the boy. Parallel to the frame, a two-lined bilingual poem reads: "A Poem makes us see everything for the first time / Un poema nos hace ver todo por primera vez" anticipating that in the picturebook the reader is not only going to read the poems, but actually is going to see them in the images, words and pictures forming a pictorial text (fig. 16).



Fig. 16. *Tomatoes* front endpapers

The first two short poems which open the book "Dew" / "El rocío" and "Roots" / "Raíces" (fig. 17) appear in the left and right upper corners of the double page spread covered by the borderless illustration, which shows a young girl sleeping on a beige bed in the green fields surrounded by dogs and cats, the yellow sun rising behind them. The young girl's fingers become roots, and from those same roots bushes and plants spring from the ground.



Fig. 17. *Tomatoes* 4-5

The poem “Roots” / “Raíces” is evocative of the life of farmworkers and their families constantly moving to work the fields depending on the seasons’ harvests, thus “carrying their roots” with them, surrounded by the colours of nature, which prevail throughout the picturebook. In the case of the poem “Other Voices” / “Otras voces” (fig. 18) Gonzalez illustrates it portraying the grandmother’s words with blue strings (rivers) coming out of her mouth and into a boy’s ear, whose river of words at the same time travels into another child’s ears. The grandmother bears the most visual weight on account of her size and position on the page, her yellow apron taking up most of the page-opening, as well as her big hands and her chest, emblazoned with a big red heart with roots coming out of it. She represents Alarcón’s grandmother, who is present in most of the illustrations in the book, and who is the storyteller whose stories in Nahuatl captivated Alarcón as a child. Those other voices between the lines which the poem refers to can be read as the voices of the indigenous peoples who have been silenced for so long. The young girl’s finger-roots in figure 17, as well as the rooted grandmother’s heart and the blue strings which connect her to the children in figure 18 are recurrent symbols in Frida Kahlo’s work. In her paintings, in particular in her self-portraits (see Annex 8, *Las dos Fridas* and *Raíces*), the Mexican artist makes use of roots, veins, and hearts as elements which symbolize feeding ducts and channels which transmit pain, the focus of her art, where she reflected (on) her reality.



Fig. 18. *Tomatoes* 28-29

As Alarcón states in the afterword to *Laughing Tomatoes*, "poems are really incomplete until someone reads them" (31). The short poem allows the poet to attract the young reader, so that it is only when the poem is read that it is complete. Thus, as Martín-Rodríguez points out in his article "Children's Literature Sin Fronteras: *Mesticismo* and Eco-poetics in Francisco X. Alarcón's Animal Poems of the Iguazú" (2017), "... the reader for him —Alarcón— must be an active participant in the construction of meaning through the completion of textual blanks and the fleshing out of sparse details" (79). As Alarcón himself argued, the active participation on the part of the young reader makes the poem more powerful (Martín-Rodríguez *Mesticismo* 78). In the case of the picturebook, with its characteristic interanimation of the visual and the verbal, the words come fully to life and gain their complete meaning when read alongside the accompanying picture (Lewis 36).

Alarcón and Gonzalez's second picturebook in this series is *From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems / Del Ombligo de la Luna y otros poemas de verano* (1998), a collection of poems written after Alarcón travelled with his family to Mexico ('Bellybutton of the Moon' being the Aztec name for Mexico City, as the poet explains in a brief bilingual note on the front endpapers at the beginning of the book). The poems in this picturebook are devoted to the elements of nature: "Blue" / "Azul" to the sky, "Green Grass" / "Hierba verde", "Mountain Mist" / "Niebla del monte", "Sunflower" / "Girasol", "Summer Sun" / "Sol de verano", "Rainbow" / "Arco iris", "Daily Shower" /

“Ducha diaria” to the rain, “Sea” / “Mar”, “Wind” / “Viento”, “We Are Trees” / “Somos árboles”, and the pictorial imagery is characterised by the use of bright colours, and the composition of most double spreads is teeming with movement and life. In the two poems “Air Wheel” / “Rueda aire” and “Water Wheel” / “Rueda agua” (fig. 19) the short text is placed within the illustration which forms green wheels of air and blue spirals of water, the central part of the double page spread filled by a tree on which two smiling Chicana children with their eyes closed seem to be in perfect harmony with nature. Whereas in “Water Wheel” / “Rueda agua” the written text is made up of the elements of nature which represent the cycle of water (rivers, sea, water, sun, mist, clouds, rain, snow, mountains, lakes), in “Air Wheel” / “Rueda aire” the written text is a sentence which describes the air cycle in nature, and which has no punctuation or capital letters, so that the sentence represents the natural cycle which repeats itself: “the fresh air we breathe is transformed by trees back into (the fresh air we...)”. The presence of concentric circles and wheels to embody nature and movement will be more and more present in Gonzalez’s illustrations and conceptual framework in her future work, specially in *The Gender Wheel Project*, as I will point to later in this analysis (section 5.10).



Fig. 19. *Bellybutton* 18-19

The two central poems in the book, entitled “From the Bellybutton of the Moon” / “Del ombligo de la luna” parts 1 and 2, are an ode to the poet’s trip South, to his family (part 1), to the origins which, as his grandma tells him in the poem, he must not forget (part 2). The illustration which covers the recto of the double spread (the bilingual poem covers

the verso side) underlines the salience of the boy and his grandmother by their size and position on the page. It shows Alarcón's grandmother embracing the kid, touching his bellybutton, both of them surrounded by gardenias in which small images depict different aspects of the lives of the Aztecs on a blue background representing the water of Lake Texcoco, where the city was built by the Aztecs. (fig. 20)



Fig. 20. *Bellybutton* 10-11

The people represented in this picturebook, Alarcón as a kid, his grandmother, uncles and aunts who tell the kids about the “Ancient Wisdom” / “Antigua sabiduría” of working in the farms, Grandpa Pancho giving the kids the “Keys to the Universe” / “Las llaves del universe” when he teaches them their first letters in Spanish, all of them are portrayed emphasizing their Mexican-indigenous pronounced features, as is the case in the previous picturebook of the series, and much like the characters in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* / *Prietita y la Llorona*.

Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems / *Los Ángeles Andan en Bicicleta y otros poemas de otoño* (1999) is a celebration of Alarcón's family who lives in Los Angeles. The poems in this picturebook are devoted to the different members of his family, as well as to his house, his city, and different festivities, such as the Mexican Day of the Dead and the American tradition of Thanksgiving (fig. 21). In “Thanksgiving” / “Acción de gracias” the written poem on the recto side reads “for the ancient ones / the first ones in this land / every day was for giving thanks”, and the illustration shows part of Francisco's family sitting at the table ready to start their meal. The yellow background shows images which

remind us of Aztec representations of indigenous people and of ears of corn. On the verso side the poem “Family Recipe” / “Receta familiar” describes how to cook “mole” an ancient Mexican dish typically made for festivities. In this double spread, the text, both words and images, show the mixture of cultures and traditions which lie at the heart of the Mexican-American experience. Alarcón’s relatives and young Francisco himself are portrayed by Gonzalez with quite realistic features, emphasizing their distinctive Mexican facial characteristics and with a relaxed, happy countenance, conveying a positive attitude. She has been one of the first illustrators to portray an overweight boy (Alarcón himself as a child) in a picturebook, thus positioning herself for inclusiveness in children’s picturebooks. Once more, Alarcón’s grandmother is present in most of the illustrations in the picturebook, specially in those poems which reflect on the special moments in the development of the boy’s personality. Francisco squeezes his grandma’s hand, but has to let her go when he has to start school and he does not understand the teacher because she speaks English (“Primer día de clases” / “First Day of School” 12). Grandma comes and visits him on the Day of the Dead when he places a photo of her on the family’s altar (“El Día de los muertos” / “Day of the Dead” 18). And she is an angel in the poem Alarcón dedicates to her, to the person he learned Spanish from, the person who took care of him when his parents left to work. She wore “Mexico’s mountains / deserts / ocean / in her eyes / her braids / her voice” (10).

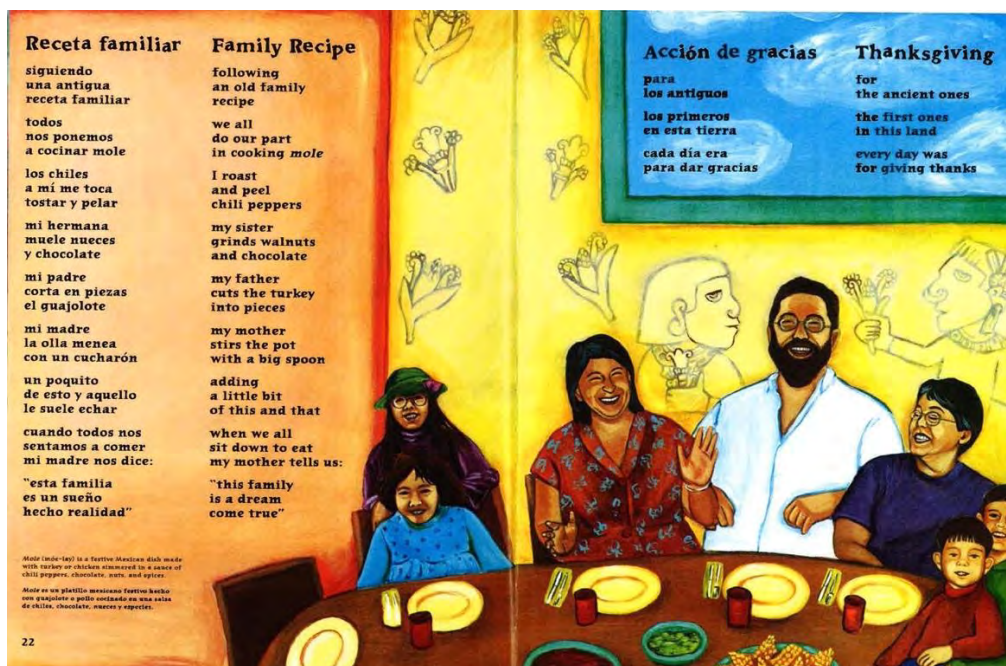


Fig. 21. *Angels* 22-23

As I have mentioned, the poem “Primer día de clases” / “First Day of School” tells us about the problems Francisco encountered as a boy on his first day of school in the US because he was not able to understand English (fig. 22), a situation immigrant children must face when they start school. In “Guardian Angel” / “Ángel de la Guarda” one of the angels that fill the picturebook, in this case, a girl in the class, depicted with the wings of an angel, offers him her help and recomforts the kid saying “don’t worry / you’re not alone” (13). The composition of the image shows very clearly the way the characters interact and relate to one another: young Francisco is placed almost at the centre of the page-opening looking sad and confused, the teacher looking at him from the kid’s back, whereas we can only see the grandmother’s hand letting Francisco go on the verso, and on the recto side the girl who becomes Francisco’s guardian angel, inviting him with her hand to sit on a chair near her.



Fig. 22. *Angels* 12-13

Although there is no narrative structure per se because the written texts in these picturebooks are short poems with diverse metric and rhyme, there is actually a sense of closure or completeness. *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems / Los Ángeles Andan en Bicicleta y otros poemas de otoño* opens with two short poems about Los Angeles, “Our City” / “Nuestra ciudad” and “Los Angeles” / “Los Ángeles”, which reads “here people / come from all / over the world / to make / their dreams / come true” (2-3), the images that fill the double page spread representing the different means of transport by which people arrive in the city during the day and night, and the picturebook closes with

the poem “Promised Land” / “Tierra Prometida”, the land where Francisco’s brothers and sisters, and himself have had the opportunity “to follow / our own call / this is our / Promised Land / after all” (30). On the recto side of this last page-opening Alarcón explains what the city of Los Angeles means to his family, the place where they have had an education in order to become professionals, “Since our parents saw education as the main route to a better life” (31). Francisco and his brothers and sisters are portrayed here in adulthood, and the afterword finishes with a message of hope for children-readers:

These poems celebrate Los Angeles as a Promised Land where people from all over the world can make their dreams come true. I want to share this vision with the youngest among us: the kids in my family and children everywhere. This is the beauty and magic of poetry – it communicates across generations! (31)

And it is in his afterword to the fourth picturebook devoted to the seasons, *Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems / Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno* (2001), that Alarcón tells us that “these poems celebrate Northern California, where I have lived for more than two decades” [32]. To write these poems, the Chicano author took inspiration from the children and teachers he had come to know through the community programmes of Children’s Book Press. With her illustrations, Gonzalez portrays some of the most emblematic places in San Francisco and the Bay Area described in Alarcón’s poems, such as in “Ciudad de puentes” / “City of Bridges”, the poem in Spanish and English celebrating the city in which “people / become / bridges / to each / other” (fig. 23) which appears on the recto of the double page spread, and this idea is expanded upon by the illustration showing adults and children of different ethnic groups shaking hands and playing, the San Francisco Bay and its two main bridges in the background. Despite the fact that the text is devoted to the city and the bridges which it is famous for, the illustration is composed to draw the eye to the people interacting with one another, since they are the real “bridges”. This is one of the images where the influence of the murals is manifest in Gonzalez’s art, as she herself confirms when she says:

What’s interesting when I first moved to San Francisco I was deeply impacted by the murals, ... specifically the Women’s Building¹¹ ... and is literally one of the most beautiful ones in the city, and there are many. ... I had been so impacted, actually mostly by Diego (Rivera), there are some by Frida as well. ... I like seeing buildings just with art all over them, it’s just so nice, and they have stories, they have meaning, behind the imagery you’re faced with every day. (interview, min 14:04)

¹¹ The Women’s Building murals: <https://womensbuilding.org>

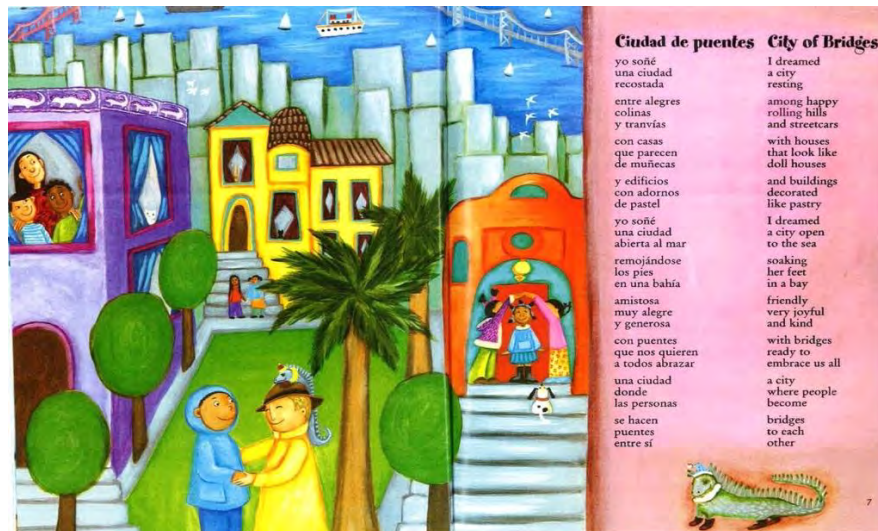


Fig. 23. *Iguanas* 6-7

Another interesting feature of the pictorial text in this picturebook is the embedding of pieces of different materials in the illustrations, a technique the Chicana artist would later make use of in Amada Irma Pérez's picturebook *Nana's Big Surprise / Nana, ¡Qué sorpresa!* (2007). In *Iguanas in the Snow* and "To Write Poetry" / "Para escribir poesía" (fig. 24) we can see that the clouds, the sky, and even a girl's T-shirt contain pieces of the map of California. This poem expresses the way Alarcón conceives poetry, specially poetry for children: "To Write Poetry / we must / first touch / smell and taste / every word" (19). The short poem is visually embedded in one of the kids' mouth, composing a metaphorical imagery in which the words are actually tasted by the kid. If in the previous picturebooks of this series the main feature of the characterisation of both children and adults was the distinctive Mexican-indigenous facial features, in the winter poems those features are softer and rounder, despite the fact that most characters are dark-haired and brown-skinned.



Fig. 24. *Iguanas* 18-19

The images in the last pages of the picturebook devoted to winter and snow show a predominance of white, sprinkled by the colourful clothes of the children moving and playing, most of them dressed in Green, one of the colours of iguanas. In the last poem of this book, “Futuros ancestros” / “Ancestors of Tomorrow”, Alarcón celebrates children as the future. (fig. 25)



Fig. 25. *Iguanas* 30-31

The picture which illustrates this poem shows four children from different ethnic groups happily smiling and standing together in the snow in front of the branches of trees. The two written poems appear each on the two bottom corners of the page-opening, and there are two children on each side of the double spread, the composition conveying balance and harmony.

In the examples described above, we can observe that Gonzalez’s illustrations in this series of four books are not mere graphic decoration, but rather interpretive illustration: they expand the written text and add a new richness of meaning, intertwining the visual and the verbal as they envelop the text, thus creating a form of visual poetry (Reisberg and Han 14). As David Lewis points to in his analysis on the interaction of word and image, the flexibility and the complexity of picturebooks make it difficult to classify them in terms of that same relationship, because the visual and verbal may interact in very different ways in the same picturebook. However, the four picturebooks made by Alarcón and Gonzalez which are devoted to the seasons have a series of common elements, the

first one being certainly the presence of nature, as well as the celebration of family and Mexican-American traditions. The space setting varies from picturebook to picturebook, since Alarcón takes us to San Francisco in the winter poems, to Los Angeles in the fall poems, and to Mexico in the summer poems, these spaces experienced and transmitted through the ‘I’ speaking to us in the poems, Alarcón as a kid, who is represented in the illustrations as an active observer who the reader observes at the same time. There are very few examples in which focalisation changes, as in “Ancestors of Tomorrow” / “Future Ancestors”, the last poem of the series, in which we can hear the poet’s voice as an adult. The intertextuality and the unity of the text is manifest in the four picturebooks, in the titles as well as in the presence of an afterword in each picturebook, and the sense of closure is remarkable not only in each book, but also in the four books as a whole: the poem which opens the spring poems is “Roots” / “Raíces”, and the last poem of the Winter poems is “Ancestors of Tomorrow” / “Futuros ancestros” which expresses the hope in our children as the future, at the same time paying tribute to the past, to our ancestors and our roots. In the examples in which I have analysed the interaction of the verbal and the visual in these four picturebooks, the words in the short poems frame the image for the reader by directing attention and offering interpretation. The synergy between words and pictures is accomplished in the way Gonzalez translates into images Alarcón’s powerful metaphors, such as in the poems “Roots” / “Raíces”, “Other Voices” / “Otras voces”, and in “Laughing Tomatoes” / “Jitomates risueños” (fig. 26), in which the children’s and the dogs’ smiles are slices of red tomatoes, “the happiest of all vegetables” (12).



Fig. 26. *Tomatoes* 12-13

In his article “Children’s Literature Sin Fronteras: *Mesticismo* and Eco-poetics in Francisco X. Alarcón’s *Animal Poems of the Iguazú*” (2017) scholar Manuel Martín-Rodríguez considers *Animal Poems of the Iguazú / Animalario del Iguazú* (2008), a milestone in Alarcón’s career, since it “brings together stylistic choices and philosophical concepts that he had developed in earlier works” (76). The poet’s stylistic choices that Martín-Rodríguez refers to are the short-line poems and the metaphors which characterise not only his poetry for children (as we have seen in the picturebooks analysed above), but also Alarcón’s poems for adults. It is worth noticing that in *Animal Poems of the Iguazú / Animalario del Iguazú* all the poems are composed of three-line stanzas or tercets, following the form of the traditional Japanese poems, *Haikus*, which are typically devoted to nature. Although Alarcón’s poems do not have the number and distribution of syllables which characterise *Haikus* (seventeen syllables distributed in five – seven – five), the influence of the traditional Japanese poems is evident in Alarcón’s book of poetry for adults *Borderless Butterflies: Earth Haikus and Other Poems*. As for the philosophical concepts developed in earlier works and present in *Animal Poems of the Iguazú / Animalario del Iguazú*, Martín-Rodríguez alludes to the coined term *Eco-poetics*, which as Alarcón understands it in his article “Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America”, “calls for a new global awareness of the oneness of all living creatures and of nature as a whole” (Alarcón 241). As in Maya Gonzalez’s Nature Trilogy, specially in *I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama*, here the stress is in the connection of the (poetic) self with nature, which was already present in the seasons series, and the sense of oneness with the ecosystem.

In the introduction to the picturebook, the poet explains how during his visit to the Iguazú Waterfalls he wrote “in a small green notebook” (3) the bilingual poems in the book which celebrate the Iguazú Waterfalls and connects them to their people, the Guaraní. He explains how the Iguazú Natural Park, established in 1934, protects the rainforest which is home to “thousands of species of trees, plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects” (3). Many of these species and the rainforest itself are in danger, and environmental organizations are working to preserve *Ybirá Retá*, ‘Land of the Trees’ in the Guaraní language. As he explains, the aim of these poems is to motivate us to protect the Iguazú area and the entire world.

In order to do that, in Alarcón’s poems the different animals of the area introduce and describe themselves to the reader in the first person singular (fig. 27) that is, in terms of

focalisation they are the ones who speak, and in some poems, as we will see, they are the ones who observe the people and their environment.



Fig. 27. Iguazú 8-9

The change of focalisation turns humans into “objects of contemplation” by decentering them (Martín-Rodríguez *Mesticismo* 80) as we can clearly see verbally and visually in the poems “What a Pest!” / “¡Qué plaga!”, in which helicopters are “these big mosquitos / with noisy motors” which annoy the nesting birds, and which carry humans “who can’t fly / by themselves!” (20), and in “Giant Ants” / “Hormigas gigantes”, in which ants see “many people / walking in file / like giant ants ... holding digital cameras / taking lots of photos / of each other / ignoring the great / and tiny wonders / all around them” (21) (fig. 28).



Fig. 28. Iguazú 20-21

Through the use of powerful metaphors characteristic of Alarcón’s poetry, these two poems clearly condemn the (over)use of technology by humans, which prevents them from admiring nature and its wonders. Visually, Gonzalez translates Alarcón’s words into image by placing the ants at the front of the illustration and the humans at the back, so that the insects, painted in more detail, appear to be bigger than people, who in the illustration are just sketched without specific features. This will be the case in all the illustrations where humans are represented and are being observed by the animals: in “Observant Monkey” / “Mono observador” the animal observes people going down the river on rafts and thinks “how weird are / these monkeys / that all dress up / and ride past / on top of / rubber boats” (24-25), (fig. 29). The borderless illustrations taking up the whole page-openings enhance identification with the characters, in this case the animals, as well as the viewer’s closer perspective of the image.



Fig. 29. *Iguazú* 24-25

In the case of the poem “Butterflies” / “Mariposas” two humans (an adult and a child) are represented on the lower corner of the verso page at the front of the image, the child trying to reach for the butterflies, “the multicolored / flowers of the air” (16), the two humans’ features traced more precisely in this image (fig. 30). However, the salience of the animals is present throughout the picturebook both verbally and visually, words and pictures enhancing each other.



Fig. 30. Iguazú 16-17

In a note about the artwork on the back endpapers, Maya Gonzalez explains how she has painted the animals in a very detailed way to draw special attention to them and to nature. She tells us that she has used cut paper to illustrate the people, the rainforest background, and the water, but she has painted the people in one spread to emphasize that humans are animals, too, because “we are all made up of the same materials...” (32). The spread is the one which corresponds to the poems “Better Fun” / “Mejor diversion” and “Iguazú Blessing” / “Bendición del Iguazú”, the two poems in the picturebook where humans are given voice to express how fun it is “bumping our way / to the base of / the thundering falls” (22), and to receive the Iguazú blessing “go in peace / the whole world / awaits you” (23). The people are depicted in the middle of the double spread on a raft at the front of the illustration, having fun, surrounded by the water of the falls in full movement (fig. 31).



Fig. 31. *Iguazú* 22-23

Visually, green and blue prevail all through the picturebook to represent nature and the Iguazú environment, combining with the red of the earth (“Red Earth” / “Tierra colorada”), the brown of the trees, the yellows and oranges of the sun, and all the colours of the animals, thus creating a unique sense of place. The use of the Guaraní language and beliefs in poems such as “Iguazú Waterfalls” / “Cataratas del Iguazú”, “Jaguetaré” (Jaguar), or “Same Green Fate” / “Mismo destino verde” responds to the will to develop and convey to children positive images of cultural diversity in America as one continent without borders, as Alarcón states in the poem “Sin fronteras” / “Without Borders”. This borderless continent links to the previous philosophical concept which Martín-Rodríguez develops in his article, and which Alarcón himself explains in “Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America”, the neologism *mesticismo*, which results from *misticismo* and *mestizaje*:

This awareness of our Mesoamerican past should be projected into our present and our future in radically new ways. Not in the nostalgic or romantic modes à la Jean-Jacques Rousseau (“the noble savage”), but as the liberating praxis of a new Mestizo/a (“mixed-blood”) consciousness. I have called this praxis *mesticismo*, which purposefully combines Mestizo and *misticismo* (“mysticism”), in order to differentiate it from *mestizaje*. *Mesticismo* comes out of the experiences that the dominant cultures have confined to the realm of the “other” and the “marginal,” those people and cultures condemned to live dangerously in psychological and cultural borderlands. El *mesticismo le da vuelta a la tortilla* (*Mesticismo* turns things around) and sets out a fluid way of thinking about relations in which any notion of “self” must include the “others”, equally trespassing neat demarcations like subject/object, human/nature, us/them, and other similar dichotomies

common in Western thought and mythologies. (36-37)

Terms such as “psychological borderlands”, “the other”, “the marginal”, “a fluid way of thinking about relations”, trespassing binaries (“dichotomies”) which are common in the West, specially the us/them dichotomy, leads us to think that Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* and the new *mestiza* clearly resonate in Alarcón’s *mesticismo* when she rethinks the term ‘identity’ from an inclusive perspective, not based on opposed dualities. In the same way, *la frontera*, a metaphorical border, becomes a bridge which connects differences and the new *mestiza* serves as a mediator who unites people of different colours, classes, races, and time periods, teaching the future generations, so that her inner changes become changes in society. If for Anzaldúa the borderlands are that liminal space which makes contact possible, for Alarcón Mesoamerica is not something from the past, but a place alive, well, and all around us in contemporary native and mestizo peoples (35), where cultural hybridities are born without imposed hierarchies, following Homi Bhabha’s line of thinking. In order to convey this message of respect to the Mesoamerican biodiversity and to set out a fluid way of thinking about relations in which the notion of “self” includes the “others”, the authors of *Animal Poems of the Iguazú / Animalario del Iguazú* make use of the elements I analyse in terms of word-picture interaction. Focalisation changes the point of view from humans to animals, affecting the readers’ attitudes and their understanding of the text they read and the images they look at. Characterisation of animals and humans, a clear sense of place created in a unique pictorial setting, and the endpapers, both the introduction and the note about the artwork at the end, are aimed at raising the readers’ awareness to preserve the environment of this borderless continent. The unity of the text also plays an important part to convey the authors’ message: the book opens with the poem “Iguazú Waterfalls” / “Cataratas del Iguazú”, (fig. 32) which in Guaraní means “big waters” (5) and is an ode to Mother Earth, to the waterfalls and to all the colors of the rainbow shown in the illustration, in which readers visually identify themselves with the figure in the bottom right corner who is observing the waterfalls, with their back to us seeing what the reader sees.



Fig. 32. *Iguazú* 4-5

The sense of closure in the picturebook is given by the conservationist message in the last poem, “Same Green Fate” / “Mismo destino verde” (fig. 33), in which the illustration shows a colourful image of the animals, which are placed at the centre and at the front of the double spread, looking at the waterfalls surrounded by the green of the rainforest which prevails on the page. The text invites the reader to listen to the rainforest voice, to learn the language of the animals, and to be part of nature (“*you all belong / to us as we all / belong to you*”), by protecting it to make it “a true *Ybirá Retá*”, a Land of the Trees in Guaraní.



Fig. 33. *Iguazú* 30-31

The celebration of the Iguazú Waterfalls, its animals and its environment, as well as the

Guaraní language and culture can be a powerful tool to empower children readers, Chicax and non-Chicax, since it transports them to “scenarios that go beyond their own immediate social contexts” (Martín-Rodríguez *Mesticismo* 86) in which they see nature through the animals’ eyes in this unique pictorial world created by the visual poetry of Alarcón and Gonzalez.

The last picturebook in which Maya Gonzalez and Francisco Alarcón collaborated is *Family Poems for Every Day of the Week / Poemas familiares para cada día de la semana* (2017). Although the poems were written by the Chicano author in 2015, the book was published in 2017, one year after the poet’s passing. Going over the seven days of the week, in the poems we hear the child poet’s voice, who tells us about family, community and childhood, as well as the traditions and routines related to each day of the week. All the poems are formed by tercets, varying in length (the shortest one formed by only one tercet, the longest one by eight tercets), and like in the previous picturebooks of poetry analysed here, Alarcón does not begin the poem with a capital letter or does end it with a full stop.

One of the differences we find with the previous books in which the poet and Gonzalez have collaborated is a much more fixed structure in terms of the written text: on the verso of the double page spread for each day there is one short poem (two tercets) entitled with each day of the week, all of them containing the words “this day” / “este día”, except the one dedicated to Sunday “the first day” / “el primer día”: “the first day / of the week is / dedicated to the Sun— / with family around / it’s always sunny / on Sunday” [6-7] (fig. 34). In this first double page spread of the book we observe the colour and the shapes that will prevail in the illustrations throughout the picturebook: yellow, the colour of the Sun, and circles, already represented in previous picturebooks, and which in this specific case remind us of the ancient calendars of the Aztecs and the Mayas, which represented time making use of concentric circles with symbols which moved to give as a result a combination which indicated a specific day (see Annex 8). As we noted previously in section 5.1 of this analysis, one of the interpretations of the Aztec calendar in connection with the myth of Aztlan is that the calendar represented the journey of the Mexicas from the US Southwest (where Aztlan supposedly was) towards the South, to Tenochtitlan, present Mexico City. The Aztec calendar has in its central circle the face of Tonatiuh, the God Sun, and is surrounded by other circles with symbols of other gods and nature elements, whereas the Maya calendar is formed by three different circles, the biggest one

external and the two smaller ones one inside the other with gear teeth that allow them to move and give as a result the combination which represents a specific day. In the illustration we see a combination of both calendars represented by Gonzalez with three yellow concentric circles which occupy most of the page-opening. The most external circle is formed by stripes in different hues of yellow. At the centre we see the face of the Sun smiling with its eyes closed, and in one of its cheeks a smaller circle in which a family is portrayed: grandparents and children are depicted in yellow, whereas the figure who represents the mother is in full colour. We can observe that one of the kid's hair forms the shape of a spiral, another recurring shape in this picturebook and in *The Gender Wheel* picturebook as we will see later in this analysis. In the bottom right corner of the page-opening the illustration shows a black dog sleeping and a ball with a pattern of stars, which Gonzalez represents together with spirals and circles in different sizes and colours throughout the book. The poems are intraiconic since they are placed within the borderless illustrations, the direction of the written text following the rounded shapes in the images.



Fig. 34. *Family* [6-7]

These short poems always include the origin name of the planet or the god, and they always refer to a feeling (it is family which makes a Sunday sunny in the first poem) or to a habit in people's daily life, as in the poem "Wednesday" / "Miércoles", which says "this day celebrates Mercury / the fastest planet in the sky / and Roman god of trade— / maybe that's why / market day takes place / on Wednesday" [18]. When the origin of the name does not coincide in English and Spanish, both are included in the two poems, as

in *Thursday / Jueves*: “this day is for Jupiter / the largest planet of all / and god of thunder Thor— / like Jupiter and Thor / I feel big and mighty / on Thursday” [22].

On the recto of the same double spread for each day another poem tells us of an event related to that day of the week. For instance, on the recto side of the page-opening of the poem “Saturday” / “Sábado”, in the short poem “Children’s Day” / “Día de los niños” Alarcón wishes “how the world / would change if / people would celebrate / every Saturday as an / official Children’s Day / everywhere” [31]. Following the fixed structure in terms of written text, on the page that follows, one longer poem or two short poems tell us something more, usually feelings, related to that day of the week. In the case of Monday, the poem “On Monday I Feel like a Dragon” / “El lunes me siento como un dragon” the poet conveys how “bad” we feel on a Monday morning by the use of similes and metaphors: “early on Monday / my hair stands out / **like a sea urchin** / I can barely open / **the shut oysters / of my sleepy eyes** / Monday afternoon / **I’m a wild porcupine** / in real bad humour / this trail of smoke / you see following me / **is the dragon in me/...**”¹² [13]. As we can see in all these examples, the Spanish version of the poem always appears on the left side (or above the English version), leaving the recto page for the English version.

In terms of focalisation, it is the child-poet speaking to the readers about his feelings, but specially about his family and family life, very often through the use of the senses, as in “Listen” / “Escucha”, the poem in which his grandmother reminds him that we are never alone, “the wind / the stars / the sea / never stop / speaking to / each of us” [16].

In his introduction to the picturebook, Alarcón refers to these bilingual poems as a reflection of the multicultural life experiences of many Latino children in the United States. However, diversity is present again in the imagery created for these poems: we see the presence of other US communities, such as African-Americans (in the poem “Somewhere Else” / “En otro lugar”) and Chinese-Americans (in the poem “Best Dinner” / “La mejor cena”). Inclusiveness is also present in the picturebook in the illustration of the poem “Time is Very Tricky” / “El tiempo es vacilón”): in the poem Alarcón makes use of the similes of a tortoise and a hare to express how slowly and how fast time can pass for children when they are at school or when they play respectively. Again, Gonzalez powerfully translates the poet’s metaphor into the visual by painting a blue and white hare in movement and a green tortoise moving slowly and whose shell pattern is formed

¹² My emphasis

by children sitting at desks in class. Inside the hare, the decoration includes flowers, plants, and children moving and running, one of them on a wheelchair (fig. 35).



Fig. 35. *Family* [20-21]

Characterisation is once more based on the indigenist trend of the artistic Chicano movement, emphasizing people’s indigenous features with thick strokes and giving them almost a geometrical shape, not only in the case of Mexican-American characters, but also when portraying other communities. Visually I have already mentioned the predominance of yellow, which is usually associated to happiness and is used to lift the mood (Salisbury and Styles 124). Nevertheless, Gonzalez applies other bright colours, and even black in the case of the page-opening devoted to Saturday to represent Saturn and its ring by means of concentric circles. The poems “Thursday” / “Jueves” and “Instead of Thanksgiving Day” / “En vez del Día de Acción de Gracias” celebrate Thanksgiving as the Indigenous People’s Sunrise Gathering (fig. 36), and as such, the imagery here depicts Thor, the god of thunder, in bright green colour at the top centre sending his lightning bolts to the people congregated on Alcatraz Island to celebrate this sunrise gathering. The colours of the sunrise which fill the page-opening are hues of mauve and purple, with some blue and green for the water and the vegetation, and the orange, yellow and pink of the crown which appears at the bottom centre around which the people are gathering.



Fig. 36. *Family* 22-23

The last poem of the picturebook conveys the sense of closure present in all the picturebooks analysed so far. In “One Big Family” / “Una gran familia” people from all communities are represented in the illustration, moving and holding hands, wearing bright colours and embedded imagery that repeats throughout the picturebook (the Sun, stars, spirals, clouds, and a crowned heart) on a yellow-ochre background (fig. 37).



Fig. 37. *Family* [34-35]

On the endpapers on the first pages of the book, in the “Illustrator’s Note” Gonzalez states: “My art always tells the story inside the story”, something that we can definitely

see in the artwork in this picturebook, which is characterised by the use of concentric circles and spirals to convey precisely a sense of timelessness, and in which we can read the visual in the verbal, and see the verbal in the visual, since the margins between the two modes of communication have been erased. She explains how she has created these “circle upon circle” imagery inspired by Mexico’s indigenous crafts to represent “Francisco’s beautifully crafted words” [2], thus composing an interplay of the visual and the verbal which results in visual poetry which blurs the limits between word and image. With these poems Alarcón celebrates the seven days of the week, which is common heritage shared by most regions of the world. In his introduction to the picturebook he explains about the origins of the days of the week, going back to Mesopotamia. By informing the reader on the common origins of the names in Spanish and in English through different languages (Latin and Germanic languages), the poet is placing emphasis on the bilingualism underlying his community, reflecting on the differences and similarities between the two languages. With their visual poetry, poet and artist erase the margins between communities, crafting picturebooks from the community to the universal.

5.7. Art and Creativity as a Means of Empowerment and Belonging [RQ2]

If the first three picturebooks written and illustrated by Gonzalez resort to nature to reflect and create her own identity, and the visual poetry created together with Alarcón provides Chicana children with a sense of belonging through the celebration of family, traditions and also nature, the picturebook *i see peace* published by her independent press, Reflection Press in 2017, seeks to empower the reader by guiding them through the process which leads to the discovery of inner peace. The idea started in 2011 with the publication of the paperback book/journal and later in 2013 the e-book. Gonzalez herself explains how the idea of this picturebook came to be:

While *i see peace* hibernated, many things happened: the revolution in the Arab world, the Occupy movement in the US, the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan and more. I could feel the world changing and needing to change. I wanted to support my world in the big and the small ways because I could feel the connection between all of us. I could feel my desire for peace for each individual on the planet experiencing all the things they were experiencing. Was that kind of peace possible? And was there anything I could do about it? (Reflection Press *peace*: <https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/see-peace-picture-book/>)

So far the picturebooks I have analysed are English/Spanish bilingual picturebooks, and that is in fact one of my criteria when I selected Gonzalez's works as the focus of my analysis. However, in this particular work by Maya Gonzalez the written text is monolingual English, despite the fact that there is a later monolingual version in Spanish, *yo veo la paz*, published in 2013 also by Reflection Press. Nevertheless, I decided to include this picturebook in my analysis because, as I try to explain in the following paragraphs, I consider *i see peace* a turning point in Gonzalez's creativity process for several reasons. To begin with, it is the first of the picturebooks published by Reflection Press in which Gonzalez is both illustrator and writer, and thus, the first work in which the author has complete creative freedom and control over the making process. Second, in the picturebook maker's words, it is the work in which "writing and drawing became the same" (interview, min 15:40), an idea that is at the core of this dissertation, since the interaction between word and image is the main focus of analysis of the picturebook as a complex multiple genre. Third, the simple style that Gonzalez displays and the empowering message conveyed in this picturebook will have a significant influence on her following work, *When a Bully is President. Truth and Creativity for Oppressive Times* and *The Gender Wheel Project. A story about bodies and gender for everybody* (both published in 2017), as Gonzalez herself explains:

And then, what's interesting is the style I'm working on in the most now, it is so simple, right? With the *Bully* book and the *i see peace*, and the *Gender* books and follow this style. It took me a really long time to develop, but that's hilarious, it took me years to simplify myself into what felt almost like writing and drawing became the same, which is what I believe wanted. (interview, min 15:40)

This style is characterised by the white page and the black ink drawing, which is mirrored in the written text by the use of simple words and short sentences, giving as a result a delicate simplicity to guide the reader, "you", through the pages of the book and the process of understanding and finding inner peace. This quest begins with a question: "what is peace?" (fig. 38)

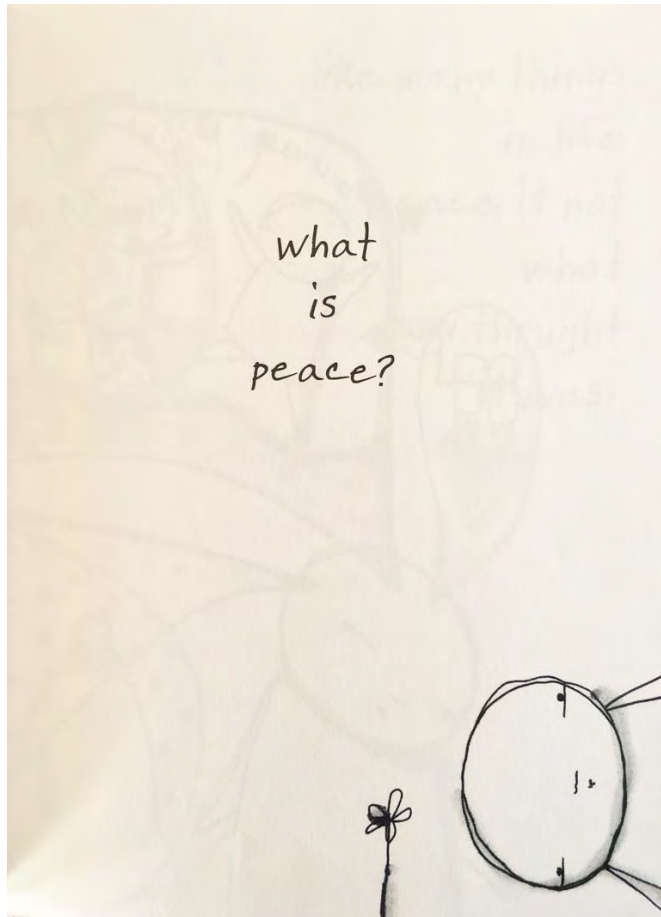


Fig. 38. *peace* [5]

In this first page-opening we notice that the written words which form the question are placed each on different lines and the character who asks the question and who is going to be our guide throughout the book leans out from the right bottom side of the recto page, a flower, a symbol of peace as the author explains in ‘the story of flowers’, the endpaper at the back of the book, appearing at the bottom of the same page. The written text has no capital letters, not even the first person singular pronoun “I” employed by the guide-narrator, as we see in the title on the front cover and the front endpapers of the book. Like the simple visual representation of the character, the first person narrator who guides the reader into the quest for peace could be everyone and anyone, a difference from the *Nature Trilogy* picturebooks, in which the child narrator is clearly represented visually and verbally as Gonzalez’s little self. Nonetheless, the narrative structure of *i see peace* follows the same pattern as in the three picturebooks of the trilogy. As mentioned above, the book opens with the question *what is peace?* and continues to say that it is not what the narrator thought, a concept that is “hard to put into words” [12], but which surprises you when you first feel it, something that affects everything, that is infinite. The part of

the book which would correspond to the development is the process in which the guide and reader explore what peace is and how it can be attained: it is personal but it belongs to everyone, it begins within “when i listen to myself” [20], when we get rid of our own judgment, when we are together and even when we do not want to be together, it can be inside or outside (fig. 39).

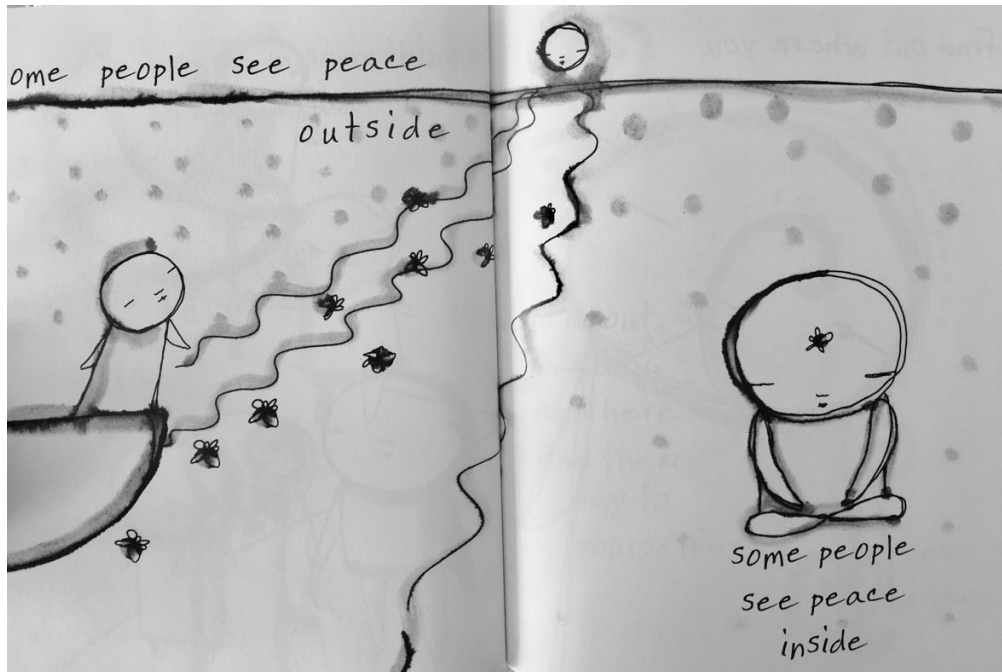


Fig. 39. *peace* [48-49]

The sense of closure is achieved when the character-guide visually vanishes from the last page-opening in which we read “just say the words” at the top of the verso side and on the recto side the written text reads “i see peace” almost in the centre of the page, below the horizontal line drawn along the whole double spread, and the words “and see.” on the right bottom corner (fig. 40).

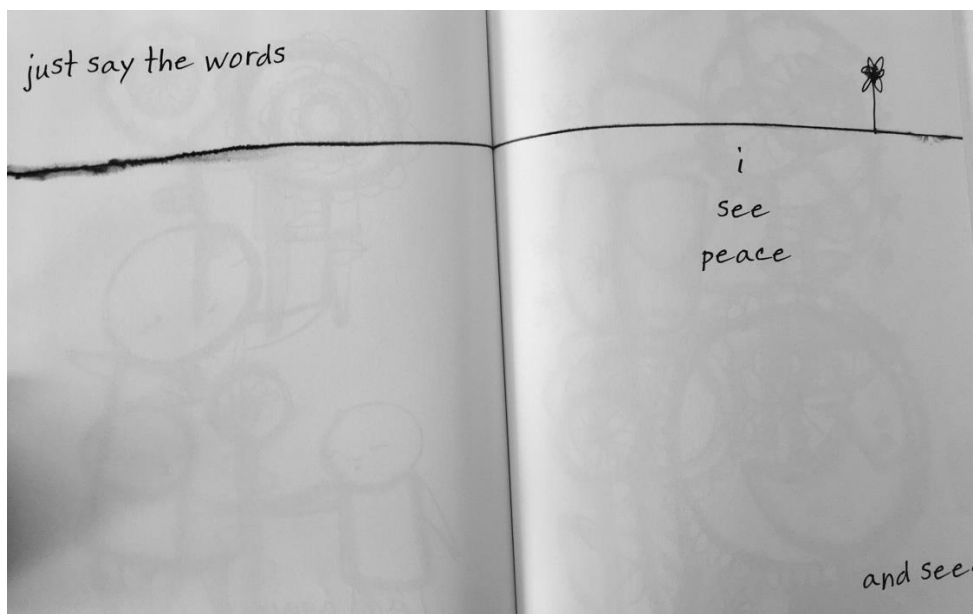


Fig. 40. *peace* [60-61]

As we have seen previously in this analysis, the repetition of the title as part of the written text which closes the picturebook is one of the discursive threads the author uses in the *Nature Trilogy* series to convey the sense of closure and to give unity to the text, visually paralleled by making use of different resources in the image. Here, the narrator is visually absent, leaving the reader on their own to see and find their own peace. In *Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol* the last page of the picturebook is the only one which is depicted in portrait format (rectangular with the longer edges running vertically), unlike the rest of the picturebook which is landscape format (rectangular with the longer edges running horizontally). The last page of *I know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama* visually represents the connection between the child-Maya and the river as the river flows from her blue dress, and in *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo* the child-narrator seems to fly away from her parents when she has found the colours of her world. In the three cases the words of the title of the picturebooks are repeated in the written text of the last page-openings.

As for the position of text and images, there is no separation of word and illustration, the written text is displayed in different layouts, the letters of some words forming vertical lines, and the words of the short sentences appearing on different lines inserted in the image, thus creating a visual communication in which, again, printed text and pictures interanimate and influence one another.

The shapes that predominate are rounded figures, circles and swirls, which form flowers, as well as the visual characterisation of the character-guide, which is based on simple

features, almost sketched, with the black ink lines shaded to blur the margins. The simplicity and depth of the black ink on the white background results in a delicate, fragile linework, which, in interaction with the concise, sparse text gives each image a powerful presence which conveys complex emotions. The character appears on the pages alone, on close-up images in a few cases (fig. 41), or accompanied by other characters with exactly the same features to convey the idea of equality and diversity (fig. 42).



Fig. 41. *peace* [54-55]

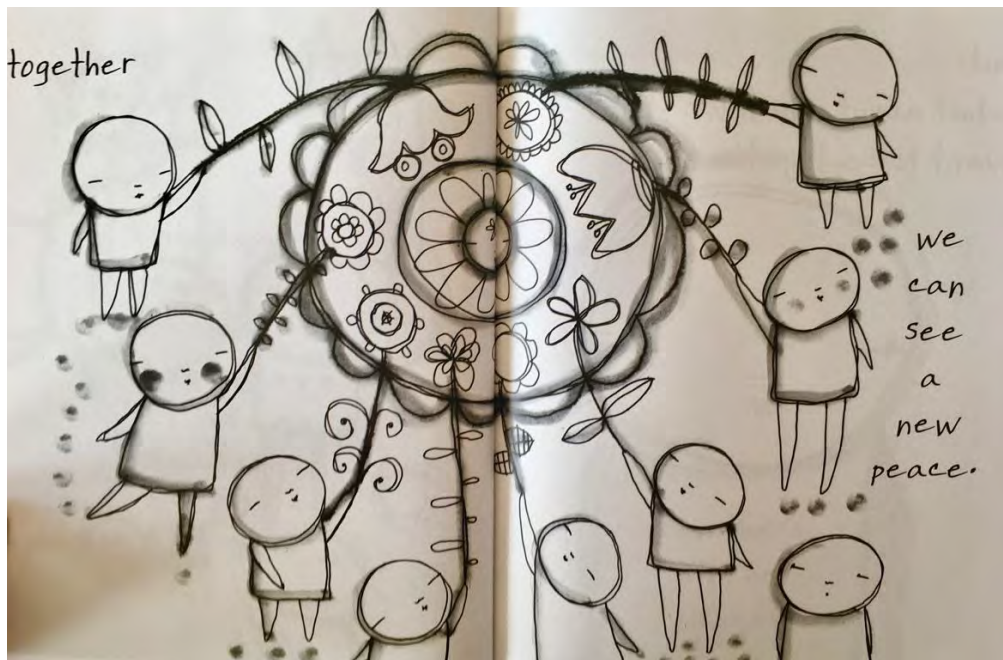


Fig. 42. *peace* [30-31]

In *i see peace* the consistent structure of the book and the unity of the text are the result of the synergy between the visual and the verbal which form an integral whole. This is a very good example of how “the image can only live and have meaning *as part of the picturebook* when informed by the words” (Lewis 36). The fact that the visual world represented in this picturebook is timeless and does not take place in a specific setting reinforces the idea of the universality of the message of reassurance and empowerment conveyed by Gonzalez through the first narrator-guide in the book, who can represent anybody and everybody. The style that the author creates for this picturebook has a clear purpose:

I wanted a style that embedded that spiritual sense, that felt universal, that anyone could project upon, like it wasn't just me saying, this is, you know, what, that people could actually see themselves in it because it was so simplistic, and that a kid could be “I could do that.” (interview, min 16:36)

On the endpapers at the end of the book, Gonzalez explains the story of flower power which started in Berkeley, California as a symbol of peace in the movement of the 1960s and 1970s in response to the Vietnam War, when Allen Ginsberg encouraged protestors to hand flowers out to maintain peace during the demonstration.

On the very last endpapers, in a short text entitled “About Maya” the Chicana author introduces herself as “an artist, author, educator, co-founder of Reflection Press and peacemaker!” and elaborates on what her personal peace means and has meant to her in order to deliver a message to the reader to attain peace and empower themselves through finding peace: “I see peace in you”.

For the Chicana artist this is a very special book:

I have made a lot of books. It's my job. But never one like this.

.....I combined my love of simple storytelling,

...playful ink drawing

..... and peace

..... to share a very personal journey.

(Reflection Press *peace*: <https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/see-peace-picture-book/>)

In the words of Portuguese illustrator, Madalena Moniz, “To illustrate something that can't be seen, such as feelings, requires creativity” (*qtd. in* Salisbury and Styles 63). With *i see peace*, Gonzalez puts her creativity at the service of the readers to empower them through the universal feeling of peace.

5.8. Resisting Colonisation and Silence I: Community and Inclusiveness [RQ2]

In the website of Reflection Press the picturebook *i see peace* is defined by the author as “a tool for self-care” and as a great companion to *When a Bully is President. Truth and Creativity for Oppressive Times*. Published also by Reflection Press in 2017, *Bully* was a direct reaction to the US Presidential Elections of November 9, 2016. Defined in the Reflection Press website as “not your usual kid’s book” (Reflection Press *Bully*: <https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/when-a-bully-is-president/>), as the author explains on the endpapers which open the picturebook in the section entitled “Voice is a Revolution”, “How this Book came to be...”, it took her indie press less than four months to “write, illustrate, translate, design and publish” this book, to respond to the political situation and to help their community to keep strong and to show respect through art and creativity in children’s books. Unlike *i see peace* and *The Gender Wheel Project*, as we will see in the next section of this analysis, *When a Bully is President / Cuando el presidente es un Bulí* is an English/Spanish edition, the one I am actually using for my analysis. However, the Spanish translation was not accurate enough, and Reflection Press included the following note on the Spanish translation in their website:

**Note about the 1st Edition and the Spanish: It came to our attention that the original Spanish translation from our translator was too literal and needed more work. We are grateful that we were able to get that 1st edition out so quickly to support our kids during this time and at least have a working start on the Spanish. We also feel good that we got Spanish text in front of kids (and grown-ups) who may not have otherwise purchased or viewed a bilingual book. Bilingual books remain very important to us. However, since the translation was not ideal and we are a super small press with limited resources, we decided to reformat the 2nd edition with just the English for now until we could have a smoother Spanish translation. (Reflection Press *Bully*: <https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/when-a-bully-is-president/>)

Having said this, in this specific picturebook I am working with the English version of the written text when analysing the interaction of word and image.

The book has three differentiated parts, introduced by the first two page-openings, the first one sending a message in which the words ‘community’ and ‘strength’ are associated with ‘creativity’ and ‘truth’. On the verso side of this double page spread the English written text is illustrated showing a group of people from different ages, genders, ethnic

groups, who represent a diverse and inclusive community. On some of the people's shirts we can read powerful messages such as "Standing with Standing Rock", "Las Vidas Negras Importan", and "family equality" (4) (fig. 43).



Fig. 43. *Bully 4*

The second double page spread opens with the definition of what a bully is:

A bully is someone who uses their strength or control to frighten someone, especially to force a person to act the way the bully wants. This can range from spoken word to physical action to silence. The purpose of bullying is to hurt the heart and spirit even if the body is not hurt. (7)

The first part, "Bully History and Behaviours" tells us about the US history "rooted in a strong form of bullying called colonization" (9) from the European colonisation of America, which destroyed the way of life of Native Americans, followed by slavery, and the loss of equal rights for Mexican-Americans, who became second class citizens after the Southwest states became part of the United States. On the last page-opening of this first part illustrated with the "Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin Bus Line", which "is heading home", the author reminds us that bullying still exists today in the US against

other communities as well, such as Muslim and Sikh Americans, Asian Americans, the LGBTQ community, disabled Americans, and “Americans who identify as women or girls” (14), all of them visually represented on the bus (fig. 44).

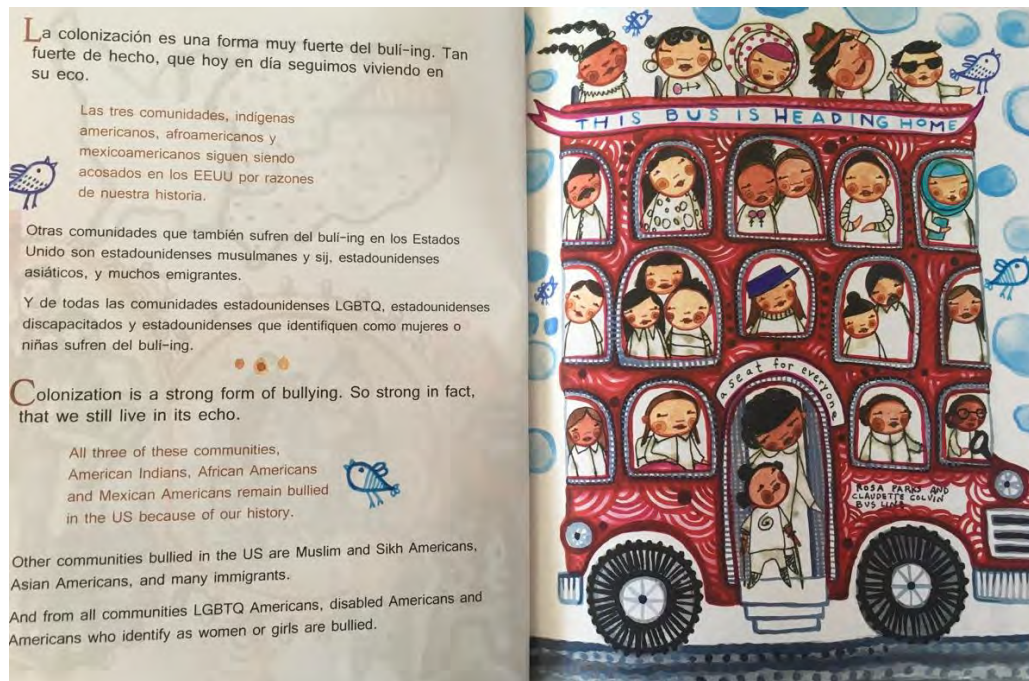


Fig. 44. *Bully* 14-15

The second part begins with the question “Why does seeing bullying keep us strong?” (17) and explains and gives a series of guidelines of what to do to take care of yourself and the community when witnessing or suffering from bullying, such as “Knowing that you are truth keeps you strong” (17), “Doing keeps us strong” (19), “Being keeps us strong.” (21), “Knowing the way things work keeps you strong too” (22). It also mentions the ancestors, people like Pat Mora, one of the most important Chicana writers of children’s books, together with the names of Cesar Chávez and Dolores Huerta, leaders of the Chicano Farm Workers Movement, and Gloria Anzaldúa (whose portrait stands out on the verso side of the page-opening), all of whom have made a difference with their work and art to defend these communities’ rights, and emphasizes one of Anzaldúa’s most influential remarks both in the printed text and the image: “When we change ourselves, we change the world” (29) (fig. 45).

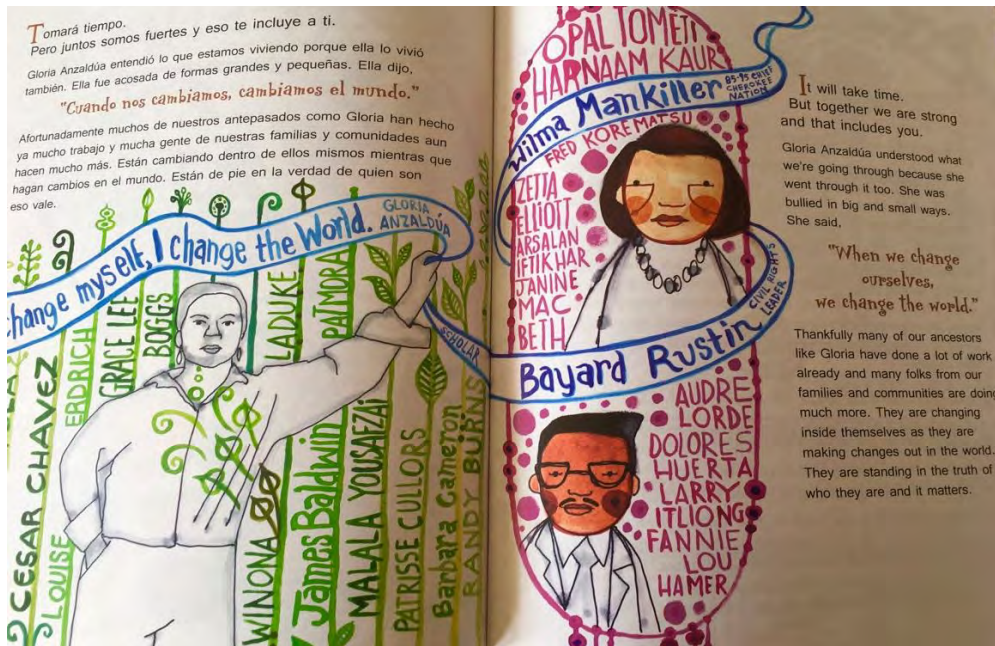


Fig. 45. *Bully* 28-29

The last section describes practical ways in which children (and also adults) can use their creativity to draw their self-portraiture, that is, to craft their own reflection as a means of showing self-respect and respect for each other. Gonzalez also provides the reader with four statements which they can use to write their feelings and actions after reacting to bully behaviour: “This is what I heard”, “This is what I know”, “This is what I did”, “Because this is who I am” (37).

The picturebook closes with the printed text which reads “Together we are strong” on a double page spread which visually portrays people’s faces to represent again individuals from different ages, genders and ethnic groups which form the community, the “we” the author uses as a voice to speak to the reader in this picturebook (fig. 46).



Fig. 46. *Bully* 42-43

The sense of closure is conveyed when the last words of the picturebook are a repetition of the ones which open the book “We are stronger together” / “Together we are strong” (42).

The unity of the text is present not only due to the sense of closure, but also thanks to the narrative structure with three distinguishable parts, and in terms of form with important questions and powerful messages highlighted in bold, bigger size and coloured font, which are outlined against the white background. Meaningful concepts (truth, creativity, love, feeling, colonization, homophobia, racism...), powerful slogans and messages (la raza, Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock, economic justice, environmental protection...), as well as the names of authors, activists and artists (Gloria Anzaldúa, César Chávez, James Baldwin, Wilma Mankiller, Audre Lorde...) are important parts of the visual imagery of the picturebook, since they are not only inserted in the objects represented in the images (kites, T-shirts), but they also shape the colourful illustrations. Thus, Gonzalez achieves to turn the crucial distinction “pictures show and words tell” exploited by picturebook makers (Lewis 60) into “pictures tell and words show”.

The hues that prevail throughout the pictorial text against the white background are the basic colours which represent nature (green, brown, blue, yellow, pink, red, orange) and the different shades of brown to portray different skin colours. As Gonzalez explains on the endpapers at the beginning of the picturebook, “How this Book came to be...”, the people depicted in the imagery representing the community are drawn making use of “the easiest, most accesible art materials and style posible” and by means of a template the artist designed for their *Make Books Now Indie Publisher Training* program (<http://www.schoolofthefreemind.com/course-samples/>), where, apart from handouts, worksheets and templates, she includes videos and other materials to create children’s books, specially to support the making of children’s books that reflect the lives of people of colour and queer communities. This template is the base from which the *i see peace* character is crafted, and from which any character can be represented by adding primary features such as skin colour, hairstyle and clothing, as Gonzalez shows in the third section of the book, in which she guides the reader to create their own reflection using their own creativity (fig. 47). These simple features allow for a visual representation which is distinctively diverse and inclusive.

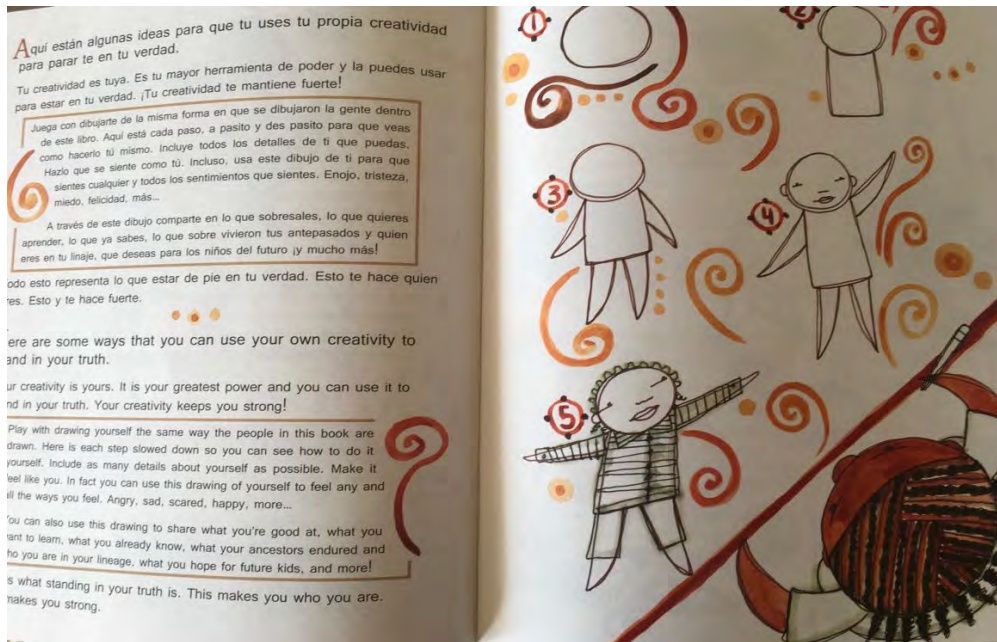


Fig. 47. *Bully* 32-33

In the illustrations which tell about the bullying in US history, in order to represent Native-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and African-Americans, the Chicana artist makes use of images depicting portraits in black and white or sepia colour, as in a photograph, with more accurate features than those of the people representing the members of the community throughout the book (fig. 48).



Fig. 48. *Bully* 12-13

As we can observe in these illustrations, the position of text and image varies from double spread to double spread, the longer texts occupying one side, either the recto or the verso, the shorter texts placed on top of one of the page-opening sides, the Spanish printed text always before the English version, on the verso side or above the English written text.

The back endpapers of the book include resources with lists of words which have been visually emphasized in the illustrations associated with bullying behaviour (People of Color or POC, LGBTQI2S, Oppression, Equity) under the heading “know your words”, followed by a list of links to websites related to social rights movements, in “know your movements”, as well as a list of “ancestors and community activists and artists”, and another list of links to know the basics of the history and children’s literature of American Indians, as well as links with information related to slavery. The very last endpapers, “A note to the reader” calls attention to the importance of understanding our own history and experience and of using art, both drawing and writing, to reclaim who we are. With *When a Bully is President*, the picturebook author makes use of her activism (Avilés 126) to resist the different forms of colonialism and silence, encouraging children (and adults) to tell their own stories visually and verbally: “... You are the storyteller. You are the artist. Join the revolution now!” (2). Sharing her art activism, Gonzalez aspires to give voice to all those stories which have been silenced by colonialism:

I hear so often from people “I don’t have a story”, and you hang with me long enough, “Oh, child! The stories you have, that you don’t value”. This silence that lays on your tongue. And once it gets lifted off, you can’t stop telling stories. (interview, min 46:41)

And giving voice to stories which have been undervalued and silenced is what lies at the core of her young adults’ novella, *Ma Llorona. A ghost story. A love story*, as I analyse in the next section.

5.9. Resisting Colonisation and Silence II: Rethinking the Myths [RQ2]

Dressed all in white, La Llorona (La Yo-ró-na) wails in the night, often lurking around water, because her children have drowned. A dangerous woman, in some stories she kills her own offspring or brings misfortune to hapless men. Apparently a relatively new figure, she possibly hides pre-Conquest roots within her mythology, although these roots now lie very deeply buried. Like Malinche, with whom she sometimes fuses, La Llorona expresses more contemporary than ancient images of women; unlike those of Malinche, who remains largely Mexican, La Llorona’s tales are spun throughout Latin America.

Gonzalez's first young adults' novella was also published in 2017 by Reflection Press, and despite the fact that it is not a picturebook, and it is written in monolingual English, I consider that it is a significant work to include in this analysis for a number of reasons. To begin with, even though the written text is the code which carries the weight of communication, visually, the embedded imagery, the visual design and the visual shape give as a result a strong visual identity to convey a compelling message to the reader. I also regard this work significant to determine the influence of Gloria Anzaldúa's work and activism on contemporary Chicana children's and young adults' literature. In fact, I contend that, with her novella, Gonzalez picks up Anzaldúa's baton to negotiate ancestral trauma and current political times by rethinking the myths. The myth of La Llorona is not only central in Anzaldúa's children's and young adults' books (Anzaldúa planned to write a young adult's book, *Prietita and the grave robber*, a middle-grade school book for kids (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 283). In her introduction to *Light in the Dark*, editor Ana Louise Keating, tells us that La Llorona played a significant role in Anzaldúa's new project in the 1990's: "Anzaldúa explored diverse interpretations of Llorona's historical, mythic, and rhetorical manifestations. She aspired to include and go beyond the existing stories and analyses to offer both an archaeology and a phenomenology of this multifaceted figure" (Anzaldúa *Light* xv).

As we saw in the section devoted to the analysis of Anzaldúa's picturebook *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*, the first picturebook illustrated by Gonzalez, La Llorona is one of the myths Gloria Anzaldúa rethinks when constructing and representing the new *mestiza* consciousness, and her ideas in *Borderlands / La Frontera* echo in her books for children. As Isabel Millán remarks in her article "Contested Children's Literature: Que(e)ries into Chicana and Central American Autofantasías," Anzaldúa's children's books "... dealt with many of the themes in her published works for adults, including identities, illness, spirituality, poverty, and immigration" (205). For the Chicana author, after years of suffering the effects of colonisation, it was essential to rethink the myth of la Llorona in a positive way, providing Chicano children with another side to la Llorona. In chapter 3 of *Borderlands*, "Entering Into the Serpent", Anzaldúa uncovers this "another side to La Llorona" digging up for the pre-Conquest roots of this "relatively new figure", revisiting the myth by connecting it to Mesoamerican mythology: the ancient Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl or Serpent Woman is for Anzaldúa the antecedent

of la Llorona. Cihuacoatl is the goddess of the earth, of war and birth, as well as the patron of midwives. She is described wearing “a white dress with a decoration half red and half black. ... Like la Llorona, Cihuacoatl howls and weeps in the night, screams as if demented. She brings mental depression and sorrow. Long before it takes place, she is the first to predict something is to happen” (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 57-58). This last feature is considered one of the pre-Conquest characteristics of la Llorona, since, according to Mesoamerican mythology, before the Conquest Cihuacoatl delivered a warning to the Mexica twice saying that she would abandon them.

Other Chicano authors, like Rudolfo Anaya, have revisited the myth of la Llorona in their children’s books (*La Llorona. The Crying Woman*, 2011, English / Spanish picturebook) and in their works of fiction (*The Legend of la Llorona: A Short Novel*, 1984), as well as Chicana writers, such as Sandra Cisneros in her short story “Woman Hollering Creek” (1991), and Helena Maria Viramontes in her short story “The Cariboo Café” (1995). Gonzalez’s first young adults’ novella, is one of the most recent works where the myth has been retold and revisited. Reclaiming the classic Mexican ghost story, she turns it into a supernatural queer love tale that spans from 1500 Mesoamerica to present day San Francisco. And it might not be a coincidence that the first children’s book Maya Gonzalez illustrated was precisely Anzaldúa’s *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*. The novella is divided into two parts. Set right before the arrival of the “pale ones” (conquistadores), part one tells us the story of Texocamiltic (dark blue) and Cualtzin (beautiful), two young women “who walk both sides of the river” (3), who meet and fall in love in the community of women on Ixchel’s island (Ixchel is the rainbow lady, midwifery goddess venerated on the island of Cozumel). They leave the island to travel inland together, and when they reach their destination, an encampment near a river, they plan to settle down and to establish a community birthing place, “in the center of the wards’ rounds from Tenochtitlan to the coast” (8). There Cualtzin serves as a messenger for the higher lords, and she leaves on a service right after the arrival of the “pale ones”. Texocamiltic is at that moment in the river and, feeling drawn by a beautiful horse, approaches the animal and rests her forehead on its nose, when one of the pale ones takes her and rapes her by the river. When the conquistador releases her, “She was a different woman” (16), “She was not dead. She was not alive” (17), and her name changes at that moment from Texocamiltic to Chocatiuh, which means “She Goes Weeping”. At this moment in the story, the river turns aggressive. It rages while Chocatiuh watches it, “her belly now full of heartbeats and limbs” (19). She goes every day to the river to weep,

holding the carved stone Cualtzin gave her until she throws it into the river. Chocatiuh comes into the river with two pale babies and the river feels her face reflected on its own. Then it “takes” the babies and Chocatiuh, who drowns in the river. Cualtzin returns, but when she finds no sign of Texocamiltic, she leaves only to return when she is an old woman ready to face the raging river. Then a small speck of blue light turns into the blue light woman, becoming a ghost screaming and raging, this transformational moment represented visually in the text aligning the letters which represent the ghost’s scream shaping an inverted pyramid (fig. 49).

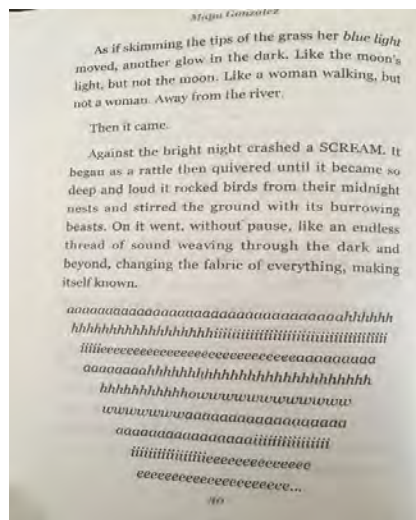


Fig. 49. *Ma Llorona* 30

The river tries to reach her, but her wails get greater and louder and reach the encampment. Scaring the people, who take their children indoors, the blue light woman floats and walks at night, but she doesn’t feel free until she finds a child with brown skin and brown hair. She and the child wail together, and a woman hiding in the bushes (the baby’s mother) joins in the wailing. The child dies, thus being beyond reach of the pale ones. Every night she finds children in that area until it becomes the children’s field. After a long time, she sees Cualtzin as an old woman near the river, and blue light woman accepts her name when the old woman Cualtzin pulls the small carved stone out of her pocket and then she sees her, la Llorona. Finally, la Llorona speaks and everyone can feel the force of her love. La Llorona and Cualtzin walk along the river’s edge and conjure a plan. Cualtzin calls herself la Llorona and tells the children tales about her, she becomes a storyteller and encourages la Llorona to move farther.

At the end of this first part of the novella la Llorona meets Cualtzin in the river again and becomes body. Cualtzin dies and la Llorona remains tied to the river and stays away.

While she follows and flows with the rivers of the Americas, her legend growing in America's indigenous languages, but always telling the same story, the pale ones continue to pretend to take over the world, disguising their fear as power and control, "the pale 'truth'" (74). La Llorona lays down along a beautiful river, where the Chutchui lived (one of the villages where the Yelamu lived, a tribelet of the Ohlone people from the San Francisco Bay Area), and she falls into a restful state. Then the pale ones settle on the banks.

Part two begins with la Llorona feeling grief, after centuries of howling heal her and those who hear her. She awakes in a powerful place in the river, now called 18th Street, which is now covered up, near a hill that now overlooks a city on a bay, San Francisco, in the area of Mission Dolores and Park Dolores, where there is a school called Mission High, in an area marked by rainbows, Castro District. She feels at home with that group of people, maybe because there were many who "walked both sides of the river" (88). She walks the Mission High School and the students can sense her, especially Xóchitl, a teenager just starting high school, who keeps her head down, who doesn't talk, who wants to disappear, walking invisible, like a ghost, since her mother was deported back to Mexico, and she is only surrounded by people when she attends marches, when the tragedy in Orlando, Florida brought people into the streets of Castro. La Llorona goes to the school regularly and grows stronger and stronger until she becomes body: a small beaded woman with grey braids, tattoos on her face, hands and arms, her nose pierced, seeming old and young at the same time (fig. 50). It is worth noticing that the illustration of the book cover depicts the lower part of a woman's face, which coincides with this description. Interestingly, in the photograph which accompanies Maya Gonzalez's blog entry on her first novella, the author's appearance looks exactly as the image on the book cover (<http://www.mayagonzalez.com/blog/2017/07/the-ghosts-and-the-writing/>).

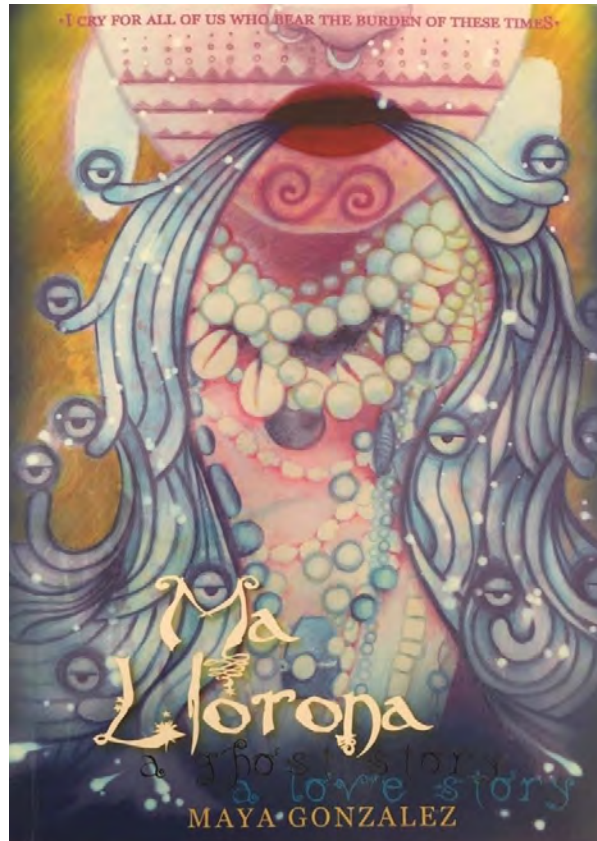


Fig. 50. *Ma Llorona* book cover

During the class, the teacher (Cualtzin) introduces her as a local author, and asks the students in class about la Llorona. When they tell stories about the myth, Xóchitl feels the speaker is looking directly at her and vanishes from the classroom to enter the brilliant blue light. She feels her mother in the blue light and sees her at the detention center together with other women who are telling their stories. Xóchitl comes back into being and la Llorona tells her “you’re *La Llorona* now.” La Llorona leaves, “no longer woman, no longer ghost” (135), and Xóchitl feels stronger than she ever has when she remembers everything that has happened. She says out loud “I am *La Llorona*” (137). When Xóchitl tells her story the next day in class, she is not silenced anymore, she is not invisible. However, she holds one story back and does not tell that la Llorona was the speaker. Then the rest of students are encouraged to share their stories about relative immigrants, making them visible by giving them a voice.

Gonzalez’s first young adults’ novella is a story of transformation: the world where Cualtzin and Texocamiltic live is transformed by the arrival of the colonizers. Texocamiltic becomes Chocatiuh, who later turns into the blue light woman, the ghost, la Llorona, to finally transform into the author who, in part two, triggers Xóchitl’s

transformation into somebody visible with a voice of her own. This particular transformation occurs in the dream state which, according to scholar Katherine E. Bundy, is particularly featured “in Chicana@ juvenile literature”, in which “dreams can provide a space for expressing desires for the future, listening to the advice of ancestors that have passed on, and/or rehearsals of activism in a nonmaterial state of consciousness that can help resolve problems in the child’s waking life” (138). La Llorona’s howling also transforms the lives of the indigenous people, who by sharing and joining her in her howling, are not afraid and silenced anymore by colonialism, it is their way of resistance. Children tell tales about the ghost woman and speak of la Llorona as if she was family. They begin to elaborate the stories about her, as young and courageous, as a grieving mother, as the protector of children, as the one who steals them away. Her howling serves the people, not as a kind of revenge, but to remember the pain of the victims.

Transformation is also tangible in the river, which is another character in the story as la Llorona’s ally. The fact that la Llorona follows and flows with the rivers of the Americas and her story is told in the different indigenous languages reminds us of Alarcón’s defense of America as a borderless continent with a common past. The rivers flow along the continent blurring borders as the legend of la Llorona is told in the different indigenous languages, thus shaping a common cultural past which is projected into the present by *mesticismo* in order to overcome the restrictions of Western binary thinking.

In the novella the river is the protagonist in parts of transition and has an essential role in la Llorona’s transformation from Texocamiltic to Chocatiuh, to the blue light woman, to a ghost, to body. It even merges with Chocatiuh, when her face is reflected on its own, “As if they were one” (21). In the analysis of Gonzalez’s second picturebook *I know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama* (2009), we have seen how the river is the protagonist together with the child, who sees her own reflection on the river in the most relevant page in the picturebook: the river mirrors her own reflection to convey affirmation of identity. In *Ma Llorona* the salience of the river is conveyed visually in the imagery embedded between sections of the story and on the endpapers at the beginning and the end of the book (fig. 51-52).



Fig. 51. *Ma Llorona* 78-79

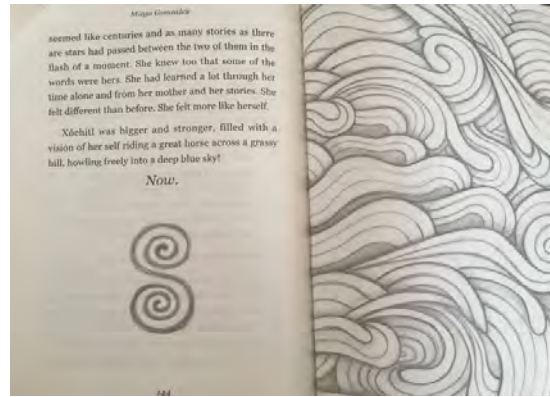


Fig. 52. *Ma Llorona* 144-145

In *Ma Llorona* the river remains silent when it tries to forget the tragedy of colonialism. But as Gonzalez reminds us in the story:

The river tried to turn away again, but hiding is like forgetting. Temporary.
 Its only purpose is to survive the moment,
 Until you can move on to the next.
 And the next moment was there
 Rolling around in the dark. (27)

The river witnesses and remembers how la Llorona was the first of many women to take their children into the river, and remembers the pale ones, colonialism and slavery, terror and fear, power and domination. It gets very old, knows that everything changes, and prepares for the big shift which will take place in part two, remaining strong and powerful despite having been covered up, silenced and forgotten.

By remembering and telling her story, la Llorona helps the people to stop being silenced and invisible, and in fact, Cualtzin calls herself la Llorona and tells the children tales about her, thus becoming a storyteller herself because “in times like these... you use the voice that is yours and no one else’s... you speak for the ghosts” (53). When Xóchitl tells what has happened to her to the other students in class, she is not silenced anymore, she is not invisible, and becomes la Llorona when she encourages her classmates to tell stories about relative immigrants. La Llorona/Xóchitl makes them visible and serves not only as a bridge between worlds, but she also helps transformation take place in the story thanks to “... an activation of *mestiza consciousness* that occurs within the dream state of the Chicano child regardless of gender or age” (Bundy 145). Surrounded by her lovers and friends who were artists and activists, curanderas and dancers, Xóchitl’s mother told her stories of Ixchel and Coyolxauhqui “goddesses of the people” (95). Xóchitl has been trained by her mother to be silent, to keep her mind aware, despite living in a sanctuary

city. Even though her mother became silent, Xóchitl's mother does not want to pass on the legacy of silence because she does not want her daughter to become one of the women who turn into ghosts with no tale, their stories lost because they were never told. She explained Xóchitl how when the stone of Coyolxauhqui was discovered in Mexico City, the Mexica goddess rose from the rubble and created a bridge between worlds (97) when a group of women performed a ritual for feminine power: they prayed for safety, for the healing of women and for the feminine power to wake up and walk the land.

In the last section of the book, "From the author", Gonzalez tells us how voice is a powerful tool to heal yourself when you have been silenced and erased. But at the same time, she has learned to understand and appreciate her silence because it can hide shame but at the same time, it can provide safety, it helped her heal the shame and keep her safe (160). This is why the river in the story stays silent, to survive the moment until it is time to move again, and this is why Cualtzin and Xóchitl keep one story for themselves, to protect themselves with their silence. It is through the transformation of la Llorona that in her first young adults' novella Gonzalez manages to connect the physical and the symbolic, to express resistance towards colonisation, and to heal others by giving them the powerful tool of voice.

In "Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa" by Karin Ikas, published in the fourth edition of *Borderlands / La Frontera*, Anzaldúa emphasizes the need for Chicano children to hear stories about la Llorona and about the border as early as possible. She says: "That is why I started writing children's books. So far I have had two bilingual books published, and I am writing the third one at the moment. This is going to be more for juvenile readers, little boys and girls who are like ages eleven to twelve. Next I want to write a book for young adults who are about fifteen to sixteen years old as well" (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 273). In fact, she was planning to write a young adult's book, *Prietita and the grave robber*, a middle-grade school book for kids, Prietita serving as a "bridge" to transform the world (Rebolledo 282).

The myth of la Llorona is not only central in Anzaldúa's children's and young adults' books. In her introduction to *Light in the Dark*, Keating tells us that Anzaldúa considered various titles for her new project: *Lloronas—Women Who Wail: (Self)Representation and the Production of Writing, Knowledge and Identity*; *Lloronas, mujeres que leen y escriben: Producing Writing, Knowledge, Cultures, and Identities*; and *Lloronas – Writing, Reading, Speaking, Dreaming* (xiv- xv). The centrality of the complexity of the myth for shaping identity is manifest also in the chapter draft titled "Llorona, the Woman

Who Wails: Chicana/Mestiza Transgressive Identities”, which was part of her projected dissertation”. In it, Anzaldúa writes:

As myth, the nocturnal site of [Llorona’s] ghostly “body” is the place, el lugar, where myth, fantasy, utterance, and reality converge. It is the site of intersection, connection, and cultural transgression. Her “body” is comprised of all four bodies: the physical, psychic (which I explore in the chapter “Las Pasiones de la Llorona”), mythic/symbolic, and ghostly. La Llorona, the ghostly body, carries the nagual possessing la facultad, the capacity for shape-changing and shape-shifting of identity. (xv)

These “four bodies” and the “shape-shifting of identity” of la Llorona clearly resonate in *Ma Llorona*, since these are represented in the character’s transformation to decolonize identities in the story: the transformation from Texocamiltic to Chocatiuh, then to the blue light woman, to a ghost, to eventually body again. According to Keating, Anzaldúa meant to build on previous theoretical concepts she had developed in Chapter Six of *Borderlands / La Frontera* and “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers” (xiv) in a dissertation/book project which she viewed as both her doctoral dissertation (Anzaldúa enrolled in the doctoral programme in literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1988), and a publishable book. In her dissertation, Anzaldúa moves from twentieth Century la Llorona as the central myth to twenty-first Century Coyolxauhqui, the Mexica lunar goddess and Coatlicue’s eldest daughter, who according to the Aztec mythology was killed, decapitated and dismembered by her brother Huitzilopochtli. In her article “Prieta y el Otro Lado: Gloria Anzaldúa's Literature for Children” Tey D. Rebolledo emphasizes the importance of the Mexica goddess in Anzaldúa’s sense of identity: “She felt so different as a child that she imagined she had a fragmented self, just as did the Aztec goddess Coyolxauhqui, who was cut into pieces by her brother, Huitzilopochtli, the sun god. By cutting her into pieces, he disempowered her. For Anzaldúa, the challenge was to put the pieces together again, rewriting the stories” (280). This is why Coyolxauhqui serves as Anzaldúa’s “light in the dark”, representing a complex holism —both the acknowledgement of painful fragmentation and the promise of transformative healing (*Light* xxi). The parallelism is clear: both la Llorona and Coyolxauhqui serve Gonzalez in her young adults’ novella to decolonize reality. In part one la Llorona is the symbol of transformation and resistance towards colonisation and being silent, whereas in the second part it is Coyolxauhqui who is re-visioned and helps Xóchitl’s mother and the group of women to create a new reality and

a dream to reclaim the feminine. Anzaldúa identifies creativity and storytelling with healing when she says “My job as an artist is to bear witness to what haunts us, ... I believe in the transformative power and medicine of art” (*Light* xxxii). For her part, in “From the Author” Gonzalez emphasizes how as an outsider she healed when her voice rose, so that she could grow more and more into her full self (160). The Chicana artist explains how through art she found her voice:

It seemed a way to be really free and that I could express something that was very much pushing on me and I don't think I understood as a child what that meant yet, that it was a lack of visibility or reflection in the world that I had a sense of self but in no place did I ever see it or touch it out the world around me. And even in my own family because I'm biracial with a white side and a Mexican side that there was this real disconnect about who I was, that I was nothing, right? And so, art was the way to affirm my very existence as a small person, and I negotiated that through a number of different things. (interview, min 01:50)

If for Anzaldúa, writing books for children was “an important step of activism because children would effect necessary cultural and social transformations” (Rebolledo 279), Gonzalez takes the baton from Anzaldúa, encouraging her young readers to tell their suppressed stories and to empower them through art, as she previously does in *When a Bully is President*: “know your ghosts, know your SELF!”, “YOU HAVE A STORY!”, “YOU WILL TELL IT”. “VOICE IS A REVOLUTION and our time has come” (161). In Anzaldúa's words: “Nuestra tarea is to envision Coyolxauhqui, not dead and decapitated, but with eyes wide open. Our task is to light up the darkness” (*Light* 8). Thus, in her first young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona* (2017), Gonzalez revisits the myth of la Llorona turning it into a story of transformation which allows the Chicana artist to connect the physical and the symbolic, to express resistance towards colonization by decolonizing identities, and to heal others by giving them the powerful tool of voice.

5.10. Bringing About Social Radical Change: *The Gender Wheel Project* (2017) [RQ2, RQ5]

In order to finish my analysis of Gonzalez's picturebooks, I will focus on *The Gender Wheel* series, the project in which the Chicana artist and her partner Matthew Smith-Gonzalez have been working most recently and which in this part of my research will lead to the fieldwork studies on the reception of Chicanx Children's Literature (sections 6.3 and 6.4), in particular the response to Gonzalez's picturebooks by educators in the US

school system. *The Gender Wheel* Project has its own website, <http://www.genderwheel.com>, and is made up of diverse elements, such as a curriculum designed to guide educators and parents through the Project, as well as diverse educational tools, among them the picturebooks *The Gender Wheel – a story about bodies and gender for every body* (2017); *They, She, He, Me. Free to Be!* (2017); and *they, she, he easy as ABC* (2019), the three of them published by their independent press, Reflection Press. It also includes the *Playing with Pronouns* card deck, and the Gender Wheel game, a wooden board representing the Gender Wheel. Defined as “A Holistic & Nature-Based Approach to Gender”, the Project includes trainings and other resources such as tips, an online course, videos, and downloadable worksheets. Nevertheless, for the purpose of my analysis I will focus on the three picturebooks which are part of the Project to continue with my exploration of the interaction between the visual and the verbal. And both visually and verbally, *The Gender Wheel* picturebook undoubtedly draws from the Gonzalez’s previous work. In *Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol* the Chicana artist deliberately chose a child-narrator not marked in terms of gender in order to provide non-binary children with their reflections, since they are severely underrepresented. Also in her note to *Family Poems*, Gonzalez explains how the creation of the entire book was a reflection on all the work Alarcón and herself had done together through the years, and how they were working on a future project for an LGBTQ children’s book. We will see how *The Gender Wheel* picturebook is an extension and a fulfillment of her previous work in terms of composition, that is visual design and communication, as well as in terms of subject matter, in the use of nature as a source of truth, difference, diversity and inclusiveness. The intended readership is for ages 7-10, and the book genre is defined as “a nature-based, inclusive, body positive story of gender. Inviting every body back to the circle” (<https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/the-gender-wheel/>). Right from the very beginning on the book cover we see that the visual design is practically identical to that of *Bully*: the picturebook title is shown at the centre of the cover, in this case in the middle of a white circle outlined in purple colour, and surrounded by multiple faces which show the diversity and inclusiveness which will be present throughout the picturebook. Visually, characterisation and style is one and the same as in *Bully*, but in *The Gender Wheel*, purple and green are the predominant colours against the white background, representing nature (green) and gender (purple, which blurs the lines between the traditional blue —masculine— and pink—feminine). In terms of voice and focalisation, here again the narrator’s voice speaks to the reader and to the community in which they

both belong: “This is our world” (5). “We”, “every body”, “our community” remind us that we both see and are seen, we both speak and are spoken to. “Our world”, which “(L)ike many things in nature (it)’s round and holds every body at the same time” (5) is represented in the centre of the first page-opening by concentric circles outlined with the basic colours of nature: brown, blue, green and purple, the latter outlining the most external circle (fig. 53).



Fig. 53. *Wheel 4-5*

Wheels, circles and swirls fill the pages of *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, which tells us the “story about bodies and gender” in three different parts. The first part is an introduction to our round world and nature, and to the round Gender Wheel which “holds every body at the same time too” (7). Nature is defined by movement, it exists because it is in constant change, and change brings about difference (10-11). As we previously saw in this analysis, one of the interpretations of the Aztec Calendar with its concentric circles is that it represents the movement of the indigenous people from the lands in North America towards the South to Tenochtitlan where the Mexica finally settled down. Movement, thus, is identified with round shapes, circles, curves and cycles, it has no corners, but infinite points. Difference in nature mirrors itself in human diversity, and the Gender Wheel mirrors itself in Nature. If in *Bully* the author explained both visually and verbally how colonisation was rooted in bully behaviour and systemic racism, here colonisation is as well the origin of binary thinking, which reflects on its limited conception of gender: it said how the world should be, linear and rigid, against nature, it

boxed people and told them what to be and how to feel according to the ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ labels, what they had to look like, how they had to feel, how they were supposed to act, labeling those people who did not fit in those boxes as wrong and bad. What the author is doing in this first part is explaining the construction of gender by colonialism and the patriarchal system both with words and images: on the double page spread on pages 14 and 15 (fig. 54) two sketched silhouettes appear inside two boxes, a light blue one with the word ‘boy’ inside, and a light pink one with the word ‘girl’ inside. Even though the printed text explains that people were classified according to the ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ labels depending on “how their body looked on the outside” (14), the blue box is clearly labeled as ‘PENIS-MALE’, and the pink one as ‘VULVA-FEMALE’, so that the image amplifies what the printed text says through the use of straightforward language to refer to sexual organs. The blue and pink sketched silhouettes contrast with the diversity of the people portrayed on the page dressed in different hues of purple who represent those who “struggled against these beliefs” (15).

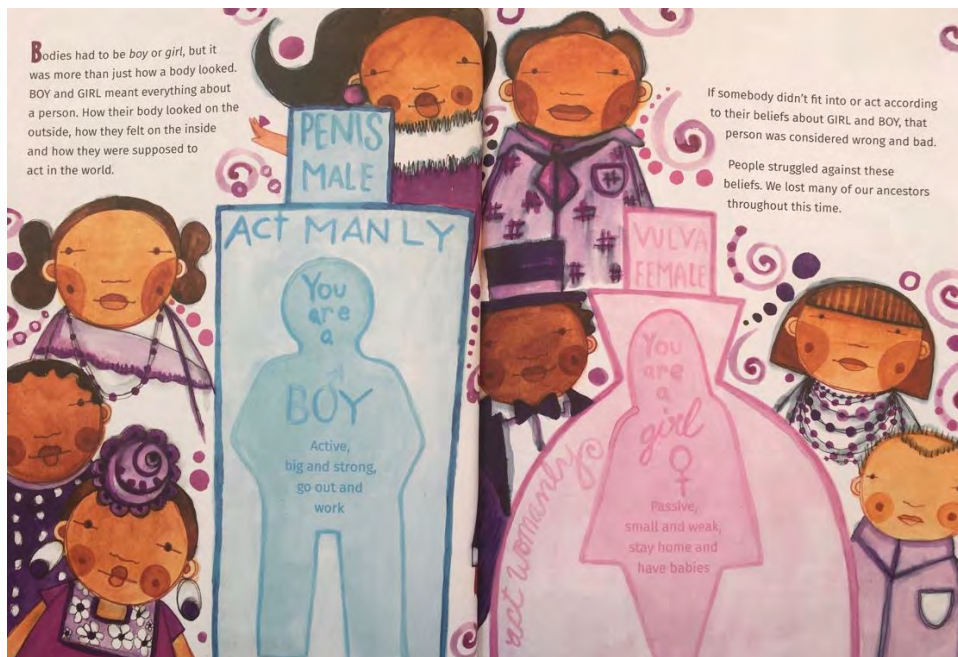


Fig. 54. *Wheel* 12-13

Although this binary conception of gender is still present today, Gonzalez tells the reader, the truth of nature is that “all bodies belong” (17), since we are all connected to nature. Then, the author explains how important it is to understand that binary gender has created “false boxes” in order to help us see the truth of nature, which respects diversity and inclusiveness. The second part explains the Gender Wheel: on the basis of nature, where every body is connected and “fulfilling an important part of the whole” (18), it is formed

by three concentric circles: the most external one is the body circle, which includes the prefixes ‘trans’, ‘inter’ and ‘cis’ (here Gonzalez explains the meaning of ‘intersex’), the next one is the inside circle with the different ways people may identify according to how they feel inside, “no matter how our bodies may look on the outside” (24). This is visually represented depicting different children with a green circle in the centre of their chests which shows how they feel inside (23). By means of the body and the inside circles, the Chicana artist explains the prefixes ‘trans’ and ‘cis’ and the meaning of ‘transgender’ and ‘cisgender’ portraying different children who represent some of the options the Wheel provides us with. The circle at the very centre which completes the Gender Wheel is the pronoun circle, which apart from including the familiar/traditional pronouns ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘they’, also offers “pronouns that expand” (32), such as ‘ze’ and ‘they’, as well as ‘tree’, which directly relates to Gonzalez’s picturebook *Call Me Tree*. As in nature, movement defines how the Gender Wheel functions: all the circles turn to show the different possibilities, giving as a result an expansive and inclusive world which holds every body (fig. 55).



Fig. 55. *Wheel* 34-35

In the last part Gonzalez makes the reader reflect on how they feel inside and how they act: “Consider how you think, how you speak, what stories you pass on, what books and movies you look at, even how you learn about nature, or history or cultures” (35). Rooted in nature, movement, and change, the Gender Wheel is not finished or closed, since more circles can be created showing “more connections, new ideas” (37).

The invitation to come into the circle and dance conveys the sense of closure at the end of the picturebook, which portrays different children represented with a small purple Gender Wheel at the centre of their chests replacing the small green circle which was placed in the children’s chests on the previous pages: “This is our world. This is our Gender Wheel. Come into the circle where you belong!” (39) (fig. 56).



Fig. 56. *Wheel* 38-39

In the second and third parts of the picturebook, on the pages which explain the Gender Wheel we can observe that the images show children with no clothes, a point to which Reflection Press alludes to when presenting the picturebook on their website:

NOTE TO PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND ADULT ALLIES: The “ORIGINAL” version is a body-positive picture book showing bodies in their natural state (i.e. with no clothes on, albeit in a stylized way) and is specifically created for a supportive adult to explore alongside a child. If you prefer a clothed version more conducive to school environments, choose the “School Edition.” They also offer a nice complement to each other, one as a home version and one to provide to your child’s school. (Reflection Press *Wheel*: <https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/the-gender-wheel/>)

In the picturebook Gonzalez’s approach to gender is rooted in our connection to nature, so that “our body holds our heart and mind and spirit” (22). In terms of the interaction of word and image, representing children with no clothes in the illustrations creates a synergy in which words and images influence one another so that the meaning of the words is understood in the light of what the pictures show, and vice versa (Lewis 35).

The Chicana artist explains the reason for a “School Edition”, emphasizing the importance of being able to bring their books into the US school system:

If we wanted to get into the schools, they had to topless that. So that’s why we called it the school edition. We still make it way more than anything else, but it’s good to know that people can get it into the classroom. So, that’s our only reason, because it’s way too tight here, and when I talk about sort of the foundation of the materials, what I hope in time to bring out more and more is specifically that controlled bodies and sexuality are the foundation of patriarchal domination. And so, it’s no surprise that that’s still so fixated on here...

(interview, min 24:00)

The suitability of portraying physical love or naked people in children’s picturebooks is an issue susceptible to discussion for picturebook scholars, since there are a number of elements which may have an influence on the children’s reactions to those images, one of the most important ones is the approach of the adults who help young readers explore the picturebook, as Gonzalez’s press points to on their website when referring to the “original” (no clothes) *The Gender Wheel* picturebook: “(is) specifically created for a supportive adult to explore alongside a child” (<https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/the-gender-wheel/>).

Although in both the *Bully* and *The Gender Wheel* the written text is longer and more explanatory than in the *Nature Trilogy* picturebooks, mainly due to the different age target readers (7-10), the choice of vocabulary here is clear and direct, but it is also distinguished by the gentleness it conveys to the young reader: nature and the circle hold us, we are invited to dance in the Gender Wheel. In fact, for Gonzalez language is paramount when explaining and expanding our understanding of gender, and it is also the reason why this picturebook (and the picturebooks which complement it in *The Gender Wheel Project* as we will see) is not English/Spanish bilingual:

... this haunts me. I am basically always in the look out for people and I lean to Spanish that is more Mexican-oriented because that’s the dominant frame here, but obviously the more international in word world domination through a lot of children’s books. We need to expand into larger frameworks around that, but because we have such a high population here is, finding somebody who can translate it in a way that’s contemporary, and because I know that queers are using language, we always mess with language, because the language wasn’t built for us, right? So, we’re always messing with it. (interview, min 19:47)

Like Anzaldúa and Alarcón, the Chicana author strives to provide the community with language which is ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ to Mexican-Americans, but at the same time,

Gonzalez is aware of the complexity of expressing her expansive and inclusive approach to gender in a language, both English and Spanish, which has restrictions for the queer community.

In my analysis of the young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona*, I contend that it is the rethinking of the myths the means by which Gonzalez, following Anzaldúa's conception of the new *mestiza*, decolonizes identities which have been fixed by binary thinking and silenced by colonialism. In *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, like in the *Nature Trilogy*, the author resorts to nature as the powerful source of truth in which diversity and inclusiveness are rooted, making use of concentric circles that expand in order to dismantle binary thinking and to recover the stories which have been suppressed by colonialism:

... this is why I go back to the Gender Wheel, which is never out of context in my imagination, is that the Gender Wheel ideology is nested always in circles that expand out. Whoever is in that place will go back to, who are the indigenous people from this place? What history has been suppressed here? And it's not only indigenous, but then the survival of queer, trans, intersex people through the colonized times, because obviously you're so deeply colonized. How do we get that and how to read that in a place where basically the colonization was home and crafted before it was transferred into here. So, this is deep unravelling, but that's what I actually believe in, is that we're going through a deep unravelling. And ironically, focusing on gender and this idea of how do we translate this, how do we create these conversations that actually hold that space, the indigenous from that area in these more holistic frameworks. I guess that's literally the role domination I'm talking about through love, and children's books is this way to unravel something that has been silenced and placed in tiny. (interview, min 21:21)

On the endpapers at the end of the picturebook, in "A note to the reader", Gonzalez explains that it is the shapes found in nature which have inspired her to create the Gender Wheel concentric circles and spirals: the Fibonacci Sequence, the Golden Spiral and fractals in nature are some of them. The Ancient calendar wheels have also had an influence on the visual imagery not only of this picturebook, but also of her previous work, as we have seen throughout this analysis. It is here where she defines herself as a Mexican-American to explain how by using these Aztec and Maya symbols, she brings her ancestors into the present moment (41). Intertextuality, that is, the verbal and visual information in titles, covers, and endpapers is, once more, of major significance to comprehend the story behind the story in the Chicana artist's picturebooks. In the case of *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, she accounts for the different elements which she has

brought together to tell the Gender Wheel story, such as biodiversity and learning everything about nature; infinity, her holistic approach, and the big picture which allows her to “hold a large enough perspective”; knowing our “suppressed history” to help us understand the present; her “real life”, that is, her family and the LGBTQI community which they are part of; the fourth circle on the Gender Wheel, and the importance of playing with words to include everybody because language is alive. And playing with words is what the young reader is invited to do in *They She He Me: Free To Be!* (2017), the pronoun book, which they define as the “prequel” to *The Gender Wheel*, and the picturebook she has created with her partner Matthew Smith-Gonzalez, printed by Reflection Press. Described as “a powerful companion” to *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, the pronoun book is aimed at younger children, ages 3+, and as we will also see in the case of a third picturebook in the Gender Wheel Project, *they, she, he easy as ABC*, an ABC book aimed at ages 3+ as well, the books communicate at a different level due to the different sense of composition, keeping, though, the same pictorial imagery distinctive of the picturebooks published by Reflection Press. Whereas in *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, as in Gonzalez’s previous work, the printed text is integrated in the borderless illustrations which extend over the double page spread without any kind of margin or frame, in the *Pronoun* book there is a fixed structure: six kids are represented on each double spread (three on the verso and three on the recto), all of them dressed in white and different green hues, the colour associated to nature in *The Gender Wheel* picturebook. The same pronoun appears on the printed text under each kid at the bottom of the page, in a green strip whose hue varies according to the pronoun on the page (fig. 57).



Fig. 57. *Free to Be!* 14-15

The first pronoun is ‘me’ on the first two double spreads, the next one is ‘he’, followed by ‘she’, ‘they’, and the pronouns alternating on the last two double spreads are the inclusive pronouns ‘ze’ and ‘tree’, the latter takes us back to *Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol*, where we are reminded that there are lots of different ways to be in order to call attention to the importance of diversity. On the last page-opening, before the endpapers, the illustration shows the faces of some of the kids portrayed on the previous pages and the pronoun ‘we’ written several times in the printed text on the double spread to reinforce the sense of community and belonging in a non-binary world (fig. 58).



Fig. 58. *Free to Be!* 24-25

Despite the fact that there is almost no text, only the different pronouns at the bottom of the pages which go with the representation of diverse people, this picturebook, as well as the *ABC*, communicates visually in a powerful way: it shows representations of gender diversity which do not necessarily match the traditional ‘she’ or ‘he’, as we can see in figures 57-58, and it presents the young reader with the inclusive pronouns ‘they’, ‘tree’, and ‘ze’ to break down binary assumptions. It is once more the endpapers which reinforce the powerful message conveyed by the interaction of word and image. Here the authors address the young readers first, explaining how pronouns are assigned to us when we are born according only to how we look outside, without taking into account how we feel on the inside: “Who you are is not always something you can put into words or explain. You just know who you are because you are” (27). In this “Pronouns” section, the young reader is guided to freely use and play with pronouns, even to create them in order to claim their pronoun(s) according to how they feel right inside, in line with *The Gender Wheel* approach. In “About M+M” Gonzalez and her partner explain their personal pronoun story, and how as parents they talk about their experience, which they want to share through their picturebooks. Visually, their kids and they themselves are represented following the style and characterisation of the rest of the kids represented in the book. The last two endpapers are addressed to the grown-ups: in “for the Grown-Ups” the authors invite us to honestly reflect on our own assumptions and stereotypes regarding gender, and how they affect our language in relation to gender, which might make us feel uncomfortable and challenged at times. However, it will also empower us and help us be “comfortable with the unknown and ambiguity” (36), as well as make us aware of the importance of our nonverbal behaviour, which is more powerful than what we communicate verbally. The authors provide the adult reader with ideas to expand our conception of gender and the way we use pronouns, such as reading a book or watching a movie with a character on them to whom we relate and using an inclusive pronoun, ‘they’ or ‘ze’, to refer to that character. There is a note at the end of this section on the use of the singular ‘they’ as grammatically correct with a link to the Merriam Webster dictionary online, www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/singular-nonbinary-they. According to this dictionary entry the use of the singular ‘they’ dates back to the 1300s: “the traditional singular *they*, which is used to refer to a person whose gender isn’t known or isn’t important in the context”. However, it also explains the new non-binary use of

the singular ‘they’ for someone who has a non-binary gender or does not identify with ‘she’ or ‘he’.

On the last endpapers of this picturebook, the Chicana artist and the picturebook co-author, Matthew Smith-Gonzalez, include a list of other books for children authored by Gonzalez and books by other authors related to gender.

As I mentioned before, the third picturebook which forms *The Gender Wheel Project* is *they, she, he easy as ABC*, also published by Reflection Press in 2017, and also authored “by maya & matthew” as it reads on the book cover. Also aimed at ages 3+, it follows the consistent structure of the classic alphabet books, which are designed for very young readers, and where the letter refers to a word which is represented visually on the same page-opening. In the case of Gonzalez and her partner’s ABC picturebook, there are two letters on each double spread (one on the verso, the other one on the recto side), the letter accompanied by the representation of a kid in movement whose name begins with the alphabet letter (fig. 59)



Fig. 59. *ABC* [7-8]

At the bottom of the page, below each kid there are two short simple sentences with the same structure: the first sentence starts with the kid’s name, whose first letter is highlighted in purple, the colour which prevails throughout all the picturebook against the white background. The word which begins the second sentence corresponds to either the pronoun to refer to the kid represented on the image, or to the kid’s name, also printed in purple. In some cases, some of the final words of the four sentences on the page-opening rhyme, as is the case of the last words of the second sentences on the verso and

the recto in figure 59, “bounds” and “sounds”. The verbal code characterised by a choice of gentle and kind language in a printed text which is sparse, concise and poetic, interweaves with the visual, which represents the idea of the dance floor with kids depicted and conveying movement and dance. Diversity is once more key in the representation of the kids in this picturebook, which from the start invites the young reader and everyone to dance and play emphasizing the inclusiveness expressed by the pronoun ‘they’: “They is a way to let everyone be. No one left out and everyone free” [3-4]. The sense of closure reinforces the idea of inclusiveness with the representation on the double spread of each and every kid who has appeared on the pages before and two short sentences in the printed text on each side, inviting everyone to dance, and highlighting the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘you’ in purple colour (fig. 60).



Fig. 60. *ABC* [32-33]

The back endpapers include a double spread with the portraits of each kid and their names in alphabetical order, including the portrayals of Gonzalez and her partner at the end, at the bottom of the recto side with their names and a short written text in which she explains how they work together making books for “the kids they used to be. And for their own two kids so all kids can grow free!” [34]. The last page-opening of the back endpapers explains and gives ideas on how to use the singular ‘they’ as an inclusive pronoun, “(W)e are leaving room for them to be themself” [35], as well as ‘ze’, which has been used by people since the 1970s together with other non-binary pronouns, and ‘tree’, “a playful pronoun to show our connection to nature” [35]. On the recto side of this last double spread in the credits information, Reflection Press is described as

a POC queer and trans owned independent publisher of radical and revolutionary children's books and works that expand cultural and spiritual awareness. Rooted in holistic, nature-based and anti-oppression frameworks, our materials support a strong sense of individuality along with a community model of real inclusion. [36]

For Gonzalez, creating children's books where she can represent inclusive spaces through the interaction of the visual and the verbal is a way to continue her artistic and cultural lineage, which goes back to Alzandúa, Alarcón and Kahlo, inviting children to be part of that lineage by playing with language and art in order to reflect on their identities and to feel part of their community:

And I was “Oh, this is my ancestry, this is my lineage”. And so, if you pass that out to other queer, trans Chicax kids, to be like, you have a lineage, be mine, you can be part of my lineage. This is how we go back to Frida. We are Frida. And I had always used her art as this one practice that I did with kids that was that ‘I am Frida exercise’, where I would make them do art on Frida as themselves, and it would blow their minds and they would come up with this amazing things. And adults, it would blow adults’ minds that they would come up with these amazing things. And I was like “Oh, Ok. I accept that I’m in lineage with Frida in this way”. And then, in a sense, I’m doing probably what she would be doing, the most radical thing you can do to create social change. And at this time, this is one of the ways. (interview, min 45:00)

Creating books for children and making them participate in the reflection of their own identities through art is the means by which Gonzalez is helping bring about social radical change. Providing them with a more inclusive and diverse world rooted in our connection to nature as a way to resist impositions inherited from colonialism and still persistent today, the Chicana artist seeks to empower children and young adults by giving them a sense of belonging.

5.11 Results of Picturebooks Analysis: Questioning Power Relations in Chicax Children's Literature

As I mentioned in the Methodology section (4.1. Exploring Power Relations and Subversion in Children's Literature), the central aim of my research is to understand the construction and representation of identities in Chicax children's literature, in particular in the picturebooks of Chicana author, Maya Gonzalez, and in her projects and workshops, following Botelho and Kabakow's critical multicultural analysis of power

relations, based on the interaction of race, class, and gender in children's books. In the Theoretical Framework (section 2.2.2) I referred to the concept of 'Aetonormativity' in children's literature to make reference to the assumption that adult experiences are normative, while children and childish experiences are deviant or Other. From this standpoint, scholars such as Maria Nikolajeva consider different strategies which subvert those power relations in literature for children and young adults.

Bearing that in mind, in order to answer research question one, how the representation of Chicax identity in children's literature has reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history, and research question two, what elements Maya Gonzalez makes use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of aetonormativity, ethnicity and gender, I have explored how Chicax children's literature, and more specifically, the work of Gonzalez, subverts power at three different levels:

1. In terms of aetonormativity: adult (the norm)/child (the Other)
2. In terms of ethnicity and class: white Anglo-Saxon (the norm)/Mexican-American or Chicano (the Other)
3. In terms of gender: heteronormativity and binaries (the norm)/non-binary (the Other)

I have chosen the picturebook as a complex multiple genre with its dual code of representation, word and image, as the suitable means which allows me to reflect on those power relations, and which, at the same time, challenges us, experienced readers of verbal texts, to "read illustrations" and to blur the margins between the visual and the verbal.

Centring my analysis on the following indicators, below I elaborate my results on the analysis of the visual and the verbal in Gonzalez's picturebooks, to move on to comment on the outcomes of the construction of Chicax identities in children's literature, and finish this section with the results of the examination of power relations from a critical multicultural analysis of picturebooks:

- point of view or focalisation (Who speaks? Who sees? Who is being seen?) and characterisation (verbal and visual; physical and psychological; gender construction)
- setting (place and time; affective climate; framing)
- unity of the text (discursive threads and sense of closure) and intertextuality (verbal and visual information in paratexts: titles, covers, endpapers)
- position of text and images ("intraiconic text" - words appearing inside pictures)

5.11.1. Subverting Power Relations in Maya Gonzalez's Picturebooks

The elements that Maya Gonzalez makes use of visually and verbally to subvert power relations in terms of aetnormativity, ethnicity and gender in her picturebooks (research question two) result from the interplay of the indicators I used for my analysis of word and image. Here I concentrate on how these elements function in the different picturebooks:

- 1. FOCALISATION AND CHARACTERISATION:** In point five of the analysis, *Celebrating the Self through the Power of Reflection: Maya Gonzalez's Nature Trilogy*, after examining the elements which allow Gonzalez to represent Chicano identity in her *Nature Trilogy* picturebooks, her first books for children both as illustrator and author, I contend that focalisation and characterisation shape how power is represented and exercised by the narrator-protagonist. At a visual level, identification is enhanced by the frameless illustrations which occupy the double spread and which bleed to the edges. Child Maya in her first two picturebooks and the child-narrator in *Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol* exercise power and agency by doing, by opening their eyes to see what surrounds them, by finding their own reflections, by resisting, by reaching out and looking around and, finally, by celebrating who they are. By talking to the reader through their little selves, identification with the main character is greater for the younger reader, and both Gonzalez and Alarcón blur the degree of alterity adult-child if, by definition, alterity is inevitable in writing for children. It is in the picturebook of Alarcón's *Animal Poems of the Iguazú* where there is an important shift in focalisation in order to enhance identification with the characters who speak to the reader, in this case, the animals, which gain visual prominence, since they are the ones who observe the people and their environment. Identification with the first person narrator who guides the reader in the quest for peace in *i see peace* is also heightened since, both visually and verbally, the narrator could be anyone and everyone in order to convey the universality of the message of reassurance and empowerment of the book. The simple features which characterise the narrator in *i see peace* are the basis on which Gonzalez creates the people in *Bully* and *The Gender Wheel* picturebooks to represent different ages, genders and ethnic groups which form the diverse community, that is, the 'we' which the author uses as the

voice who speaks to the reader in the picturebooks. Diversity and inclusiveness are present again in the imagery created for Alarcón's poems: we see the presence of other US communities, such as African-Americans and Chinese-Americans, which are portrayed emphasizing their features, (in the case of Chicanos, emphasizing their Mexican-indigenous pronounced features) as well as children on wheelchairs or using crutches in order to empower each and every reader by seeing themselves represented in their books. Thus, when Gonzalez provides a visual representation of children, she tries to include individuals who are not often seen in books, such as brown children, or overweight characters, like Francisco Alarcón himself as a child portrayed in *Angels Ride Bikes / Los Angeles Andan en Bicicleta* (1999). All these strategies used for focalisation and characterisation make for ideologically powerful components. Through her illustrations and art, Gonzalez employs her creativity to convey messages of empathy, belonging and inclusiveness.

2. **SETTING:** Special comment deserves the presence of nature in Gonzalez's picturebooks, not only as 'the place' where her picturebooks are set, but also as the refuge where she had always felt safe, where she felt like she could be herself (interview, min 34:00). In fact, nature plays a key role in Gonzalez's picturebooks: it provides her with the colours of her world, with the strength and diversity of trees, and specially with the river, where she can see her own reflection in the picturebook *I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama*. In Gonzalez and Anzaldúa's picturebook, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*, the river turns from a traditional element of separation as a natural border and a symbol traditionally associated to *la Llorona* into a place of contact which helps transformation and healing. In Gonzalez's young adults' novella, *Ma Llorona*, it is one of the main characters in the story, its salience conveyed visually and verbally throughout the book. The river accompanies Chocatiuh in her transformation into *la Llorona*, who follows and flows with the rivers of the Americas, Alarcón's borderless continent with a common past. Although nature is present in the poem picturebooks devoted to the seasons, it is in *Animal Poems of the Iguazú* where its significance is central, since the poems stress the connection of the poetic self with nature and the sense of oneness with the ecosystem. Nature is ultimately the driving force behind *The Gender Wheel Project*, "A Holistic & Nature-Based Approach to Gender", as a source of truth,

movement, difference, diversity and inclusiveness. Other settings, such as Alarcón's cities in the seasons picturebooks (San Francisco, Los Angeles, Mexico City) are spaces experienced and transmitted through the 'I' speaking to us in the poems, the focus being on the relationship of the child protagonist and the reader with the setting. In the case of *i see peace*, as I explained in my analysis, the fact that the visual world represented in this picturebook is timeless and does not take place in a specific setting reinforces the idea of the universality of the message of reassurance and empowerment

- 3. UNITY OF THE TEXT AND INTERTEXTUALITY:** During my analysis I have also pointed to the importance of the unity of the text and the sense of closure, since, as picturebook scholar Daniel Lewis, states: "Analyses of the pictures in picturebooks need to be fed into an understanding of the book as a whole" (123). The fact that Gonzalez's picturebooks provide the reader with a unity of the text and a sense of closure, both in form and content, by repeating powerful visual and verbal messages, makes Gonzalez's cultural and identity statement more compelling. The Chicana picturebook maker creates a strong visual identity for each picturebook which interacts with discursive threads such as choices of vocabulary and syntax, as well as narrative structure, creating a particular synergy for each picturebook. In the visual poetry which she creates together with Alarcón, it is the short poems and the use of metaphor that allows the poet to attract the young reader. As I underlined in my analysis, the way in which Gonzalez translates Alarcón's powerful metaphors into images creates an interaction between words and pictures which provides the picturebooks of poems with a sound unity of the text.

The unity of the text is also conveyed through the repetition of certain elements and symbols. In my analysis I have underlined the importance of the round shapes, spirals and concentric circles that Gonzalez makes use of in order to represent nature and movement, as well as a sense of timelessness, as she remarks in her "Illustrator's Note" in *Family Poems for Every Day of the Week*. The use of concentric circles, as she explains in *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, is based on the shapes of nature, but it also draws from the Maya and Aztec calendars, the latter interpreted by some scholars as the representation of the movement of indigenous people from Aztlán to Tenochtitlan (Mexico City today), so that it

connects with the myth of Aztlan used by the Chicano Movement to represent their indigenous roots.

The analysis of intertextuality has also allowed me to point to the importance of paratexts, such as titles and endpapers, as significant parts of the narrative: the titles of Gonzalez's picturebooks contain the books' verbal messages. In the *Nature Trilogy* the use of the first person pronouns (My/I/Me) conveys the agency of the main characters and how they exercise power. On the endpapers to her first three picturebooks, the Chicana author relates what she is telling us in the book to her own personal story, thus contributing to the understanding and identification with the narrator on the part of the young reader. As we have seen in the analysis section, in the picturebooks where Gonzalez collaborates with Alarcón, on the endpapers she includes an "Illustrator's Note" in order to explain about her artwork, as noted above, whereas the poet explains his motivation and his personal experiences related to the poems in the picturebook. In the picturebooks published by her own independent press the back endpapers gain more prominence, both visually and verbally, as they include resources with lists of words and links which provide information on topics related to the picturebook subject. In *Bully*, the back endpapers turn the picturebook into a tool which empowers the community and encourages to resist all sorts of colonisation. In *The Gender Wheel* picturebook words and images on the back endpapers are of major significance to comprehend the story behind the story, since Gonzalez accounts for the different elements which she has brought together to tell the Gender Wheel story. In the same line, in *They, She, He, Me* the authors, Gonzalez and her partner, address the young readers first on the endpapers at the back, to explain how pronouns are assigned to us when we are born, whereas on the last two endpapers they address the grown-ups to invite us to make an honest reflection on our own assumptions on gender. The back endpapers in *ABC* include the portraits of Gonzalez and her partner at the end, and they explain how they work together making books for "the kids they used to be. And for their own two kids so all kids can grow free!". The last page-opening explains and gives ideas on how to use the singular 'they' as an inclusive pronoun.

4. **POSITION OF TEXT AND IMAGE:** In my analysis I have explored how words and pictures interact in picturebooks, a complex multiple genre in which text and image take equal importance. In the case of bilingual written texts, I have

brought into focus how texts and image are placed on the page: in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona* both the English and Spanish short texts are framed inside the illustrations by dimmed margins, at times placed one after the other within the pictures (the English text on top), or the English and Spanish texts are placed on the verso and recto, respectively, the verso side of most picturebook spreads dealing with the known, whereas the recto favours new information, encouraging the reader to turn the page. I also pointed to the importance of the fact that in most of the picturebooks illustrated by Gonzalez, the illustrations are borderless or bleed to the edges, enhancing identification with character, thus, blurring the boundaries between the adult narrator and the child reader. I also emphasized the fact that Gonzalez's illustrations in the picturebooks of poems written by Alarcón are not mere graphic decoration, but rather interpretive illustration: they expand the written text, resulting in a form of visual poetry. In Gonzalez's English monolingual picturebook *i see peace*, there is no separation of word and illustration, the written text displayed in different layouts, thus creating a visual communication in which, again, printed text and pictures interanimate and influence one another in order to convey complex emotions. The ultimate form of interaction of words and pictures is the use of intraiconic texts and the fact that words become pictorial elements, as I pointed to with some examples from *I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama*, Alarcón's poems, and *Bully*. Intraiconic texts make the margins between words and image blur, conferring conceptual consistency and a strong visual identity to Gonzalez's works for children.

5.11.2. The Power of Reflection

As a Chicana artist and writer of children's books, Gonzalez believes in the power of reflection, both visually and verbally. In fact, it is the power of reflection that underlies all her work and projects:

I like the word reflection because of its double meaning. *Reflection is an image, representation, counterpart. But also, reflection is a fixing of the thoughts on something, careful consideration, a thought (or an image) occurring in consideration or mediation.* My personal work has led me to link the two meanings. I create reflections of myself so that I can reflect upon them. (Naidoo 323)

By reflecting (on) her own experiences as an outsider in terms of ethnicity and gender, in her picturebooks she not only provides children with a sense of identity, but also celebrates identities. Creativity is for Gonzalez the means to provide agency and empowerment and to celebrate each and every identity, and to overcome fixed structures based on binaries which exclude identities which do not fit those binaries. This is why Anzaldúa's concept of the new *mestiza* echoes in Gonzalez's work. When Gonzalez represents her younger self with a Chicana face, especially in her first two picturebooks, she is giving Chicana children a reflection of themselves. In order to allow each and every child to create their own reflection, the Chicana artist provides them with a visual characterisation, so that they can represent themselves in a simple way. At the same time, the experiences that she is recounting, turning to nature and finding our own reflection, are relevant to other children, Chicana or non-Chicana. Her picturebooks embody Gonzalez's cultural statement when representing Chicana identity: through her art activism she creates spaces of empathy by transcending identities based on dualities and by teaching 'recent arrivals'/children to find their own reflection through creativity. Gonzalez aspires to give voice to all those stories which have been silenced by binary thinking.

Thus, creativity is for Gonzalez the means to take on social constructs and to root our sense of self within ourselves, at a stage in our lives when our sense of identity is constantly challenged.

5.11.3. Turning the Mexican-American Other into the Chicana Self: Chicana Children's Literature

In the work of Maya Gonzalez, both as an illustrator and as an author, we can see how contemporary Chicana picturebooks create visual and verbal narrative spaces which represent and celebrate the self, and which become spaces of empathy within and towards the community, making the Chicana experience universal. For the Chicana artist "Chicana literature is a synthesis of unity, of being like 'I am both, I am everything...'" (interview, min 06:00).

In order to answer research question one, on how the representation of Chicana identity in children's literature has reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history, I elaborated on the development of the concept of Chicana identity in

children's picturebooks authored by Chicano/a writers throughout *el Movimiento* and Multiculturalism. *El Movimiento* emphasized the idea of moving away from discourses which identified Mexican-Americans as 'the Other', in order to provide Chicano children with a representation of the Chicano 'self'. I also pointed out the fact that contemporary Chicana authors are moving away from the labels of 'authentic' and 'accurate' identity created by Multiculturalism. The fact that their books for children are published as bilingual editions (both languages used accurately and respecting their nuances and nature) makes them more inclusive and aimed at all Chicana children, and at non-Chicana readerships in the United States. However, it is important that the Spanish in these bilingual children's books is real Chicana Spanish as a way to show resistance against colonialism. In Anzaldúa's words:

There's pressure on Chicanas and Chicanos from both sides: there's pressure from the Spanish-speaking community, especially the academic community to speak "correct" Castilian standard Spanish and not to assimilate. Then there's pressure from the Anglo society to do away with Spanish and just speak English because English is the law of the land. My use of both languages, my code-switching, is my way to resist being made into something else. I'm resisting both the Spanish-speaking people and the English-speaking white people because I want Chicanos to speak Chicano Spanish, not Castilian Spanish. We have our own language, it's evolving and it's healthy. A lot of the stories I'm writing use Spanglish, also known as Tex-Mex or caló, a pachuco dialect. This resistance is part of the anticolonial struggle against both the Spanish colonizers and the white colonizers. (Anzaldúa, *Interviews* 245-246)

Not only that, it also responds to the need of a language activism which has been present in the community as a way of resistance to policies such as 'English for the Children' (California Proposition 227, 1998¹³; Arizona Proposition 203, 2000¹⁴), which had the effect of eliminating bilingual classes in most cases.

As we have seen in the analysis of Anzaldúa and Gonzalez's picturebook *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*, by rethinking the myths and turning the border into a place of contact, exposure and empathy, Anzaldúa's aim is not only for Chicano children to see themselves in bilingual books, but also for them to discover their roots and to resist negative representations of their culture.

¹³ https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/1998/227_06_1998.htm

¹⁴ <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=58d003651130c012d8e906e5>

Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and the New *Mestiza* clearly resonate in Alarcón's *mesticismo*, as "a fluid way of thinking about relations in which any notion of 'self' must include the 'others'" (Alarcón, "Reclaiming Ourselves" 240-241), and which must overcome the subject/object, human/nature, us/them Western binaries. Anzaldúa's work on the rethinking of the myth of la Llorona has had an influence on Gonzalez's work, as we saw in the analysis, specially in her young adults' novella *Ma Llorona*, in which the transformation of the myth results in resistance towards colonisation and the use of the powerful tool of voice to heal. By rethinking the myth of la Llorona and the Aztec goddess Coyolxauhqui, who serves Anzaldúa to represent the acknowledgement of painful fragmentation and the promise of transformative healing (Anzaldúa *Light* xxi), Gonzalez takes the baton from the Chicana author, encouraging her young readers to tell their suppressed stories and to empower them through art.

For Gonzalez, creating children's books where she can create inclusive spaces through the interaction of the visual and the verbal is a way to continue her artistic and cultural lineage, which goes back to Anzaldúa, Alarcón and Kahlo, inviting children to be part of that lineage by playing with language and art in order to reflect on their identities and to feel part of their community they are engaged with.

According to Manuel Martín-Rodríguez, Chicana children's literature in the twenty-first century "is undergoing one of the richest and most creative periods in its history" (Martín-Rodríguez *Transatlantic* 31). It offers a diverse picture of what it means to be a Chicana child through a variety of cultural themes they present, such as family, identity, education, language, immigration and a sense of place from a particular historical and socio-political context (Botelho and Kabakow 156). Through their body of work, Chicana authors show that the Chicana experience is dynamic, diverse and complex, some of them displaying this complexity by means of genre, like Alarcón in his picturebooks of poems, poetry being "the most unlikely of genres to make political statements to children" (Botelho and Kabakow 193). In the interview with Frederick L. Aldama, Alarcón explained his reasons for authoring books for children, including a sense of giving back to the community, countering prevailing ethnocentric messages, celebrating and promoting bilingualism, and providing Latina/o children with opportunities to see themselves in literature (44). What all Chicana authors of children's literature have in common is the will to turn their borderlands into places of contact and spaces of empathy, in order to make their reality visible. If, according to James Diego Vigil, the driving force behind *el Movimiento* was the "determination to forge their (Chicano) own identity and to reject outside influences

and imported schemes and ideas” (xiii-xiv), Chicano authors started constructing the identity of Chicano children to convey what meant to be a Chicano child, specially through the reconstruction of the relationship between the Chicano community and the acts of reading and writing (Martín-Rodríguez, *Transatlantic* 15). Thus, *El Movimiento* allowed them to represent themselves, moving away from stereotypes and generalisations based on dual oppositions on which their representation as the Other had been grounded until that moment. Findings of the analysis of Chicano picturebooks point to how Chicano children’s literature in the 1990s, under the trend of Multiculturalism and as a product of culture and evidence of power relations, strove to provide with an authentic and accurate representation of Chicano identity. This will to render ‘authentic’ and ‘accurate’ images of their culture was a response to the under- and misrepresentation of their experience in the US publishing industry until that moment. Nowadays contemporary Chicana authors like Maya Gonzalez create spaces for children, both Chicana and non-Chicana, to see themselves and celebrate their identities, to imagine other ways of existing and to encourage understanding through representations of Chicana identity and creativity.

5.11.4. Blurring Boundaries to Subvert Power Relations: the Dual Code of Picturebooks

In the introduction to this dissertation I noted the importance of children’s literature in shaping identities, as it is one of the earliest ways in which we encounter stories, thus playing a powerful role in shaping how we think about and understand the world (Grenby and Reynolds 1). As a tool for creating historical and socio-political imagination in young readers, it can also help teachers and other adults to serve as important role models of resistant reading. In spite of the fact that some scholars, such as Nodelman, consider children’s literature as just another realm of colonisation, where adults colonise children and childhood by using literature to exert cultural power over children (Grenby and Reynolds 32), reading children’s literature with a critical multicultural lens allows us to construct history and society, and what is more to “actively construct who we are” by continually asking questions (Botelho and Kabakow 33).

In terms of the subversion of the implied heteronormativity in children’s literature, as I mentioned at the beginning of this results section, the fact that Gonzalez and Alarcón make use of their little selves to talk to the young reader from their picturebooks, blurs the degree of alterity adult-child, subverting heteronormativity in their picturebooks. In her article “Contested Children’s Literature: Que(e)ries into Chicana and Central American

Autofantasías”, scholar Isabel Millán coins the term *autofantasia* to refer to this literary technique, by which, in her own words, “authors deliberately insert themselves within a text in order to fantasize solutions or responses to hegemonic structures” (202). Thus, the hegemonic adult, having themselves been marginalized as children, create a fiction (*fantasia*) from memories of their childhood (*auto*), and by telling stories which young readers identify with their own experiences, they blur the adult author’s hegemony. Taking as a premise the consideration that children’s literature is a political site where power relations are established following the hierarchical dichotomy adult/child, with *autofantasia*, Millán relates to Anzaldúa’s *autohistorias*. For the Chicana author, the term refers to the way in which Chicanas and women of color “write not only about abstract ideas but also bring in their personal history as well as the history of their community.” It does not only refer to history, it also relates to fiction, fiction as a story you make up, because for Anzaldúa, “History is fiction because it’s made up, usually made up by the people who rule” (Anzaldúa, *Interviews* 242). And it was precisely to move away from stereotypes and generalisations based on dual oppositions on which their representation as the Other had been grounded until that moment, that Chicana authors of children’s literature started representing in their books what it meant to be a Chicana child after *el Movimiento*. As Alarcón explains:

In most picture books in the U.S., you would never see the kinds of faces and bodies portrayed like those in my books, that reflect our *mestizo* heritage. It’s important for children to see themselves and their families reflected in books. This, to me, is very political. After all, in California one out of three kids is Latino, and the majority of children in L. A. right now are Latinos. Yet, when children go to libraries and open their first books, they don’t see themselves. We need to include ourselves in books, so children know that it’s okay to be dark-skinned, or to have a nose that is not narrow and turned up like the Anglo noses you see in most children’s books. (Aldama 44)

In order to resist and to subvert the power relation white Anglo-Saxon as the norm and Mexican-American or Chicana as the other, authors of Chicana children’s books provide Chicana children with those visual and verbal reflections of themselves, so that they can relate to “the experiences shaped by Spanish/English word-images” (Aldama 45).

The third power relation I explore in my study of Gonzalez’s picturebooks is the one which assumes heteronormativity or cisgenderism, and binaries as the norm and a non-binary approach of gender as the Other. In her young adults’ novella, *Ma Llorona*, by turning the classic ghost story into a queer love tale, Gonzalez takes the baton from

Gloria Anzaldúa to give voice to those who have been voiceless by colonialism. But is in *Call Me Tree / Lláname árbol* where Gonzalez's radical and revolutionary message in terms of gender is rooted in her picturebooks: she breaks from binary modes of thinking in order to emphasize, both visually and verbally, the importance of freedom and inclusiveness. In *The Gender Wheel* picturebooks, preceded by *Call Me Tree / Lláname árbol*, the Chicana author makes use of all the resources she has previously presented in her work in order to present the young reader with a message of resistance to the gender binary approach imposed by Western-patriarchal colonialism: a reflection of each and every one of the young readers rendered by nature to empower them and to provide with a feeling of belonging to the community, which is a place of diversity and inclusiveness. Within children's literature, it is the picturebook with its two voices, the verbal and the pictorial, which can most empower young readers by blurring and redrawing boundaries and by creating a sense of interactivity with the different ways of coordinating pictures and text. Readers are required to bring their own answers and their own resolutions and interpretations to the works (Nikolajeva, *Picturebooks* 259), thus engendering a special collaborative relationship between children and adults, the visual allowing for a more balanced power dynamic between less experienced child readers and adults. This notion relates to Lewis's idea of the ecology of the reading event. In the Methodology section (4.2) I pointed to Lewis's concept of the internal ecology of picturebooks due to their flexibility and complexity which results from the interrelation of word and image, and it is this internal ecology that I explore in my analysis section. In the scholar's words, "one of the greatest advantages of looking at the word-picture relation in picturebooks in ecological terms is that it points towards the role of the reader in the interanimation of word and image" (Lewis 54). The role of the reader as an active partner in the creation of meaning is fundamental in the case of picturebooks: "(T)he words are brought to life by the pictures and the pictures by the words, but this is only possible in the experience of reading" (Lewis 55), especially in the experience of reading on the part of children. In a world where the visual predominates and in which competence with images is a prerequisite, the way children read picturebooks varies from the way adults approach the picturebook reading event. As Alarcón states when reflecting on his short poems for children, "... poems are more like an open-ended question. I really believe in the power of poetry" (Aldama 48), so that their meaning is only complete with the active participation of the young reader.

Picturebook scholars agree on the fact that the picturebook, both as art and literature — visual literature—, deserves greater recognition, and highlight its role in introducing children to language, as well as to visual arts. Picturebooks do not only tell a story, the illustrations perform a crucial role, as Singaporean illustrator Kow Fong Lee notes, “they enhance one’s aesthetical awareness” (*qtd. in* Salisbury and Styles 133). As for the status of picturebooks in the twenty-first century, even though the picturebook market is becoming increasingly global as can be expected in an increasingly global society, the picturebook as a cultural reflection of its place of origin and as a tool to preserve languages and traditions is enduring in smaller countries and communities thanks to subsidies to artists and small publishers. In the next section of this analysis (section 6), I include a study of the situation of Chicano children’s literature within the US publishing industry, as well as some considerations on the picturebook created by Chicano authors as text-as-read, and their reception and integration in the US bilingual educational programs.

6. Analysis PHASE II: Reception of Contemporary Chicanx Children’s Literature in the US Context

In this section of my analysis I intend to explore answers to research questions three, four and five:

- RQ3. How is contemporary Chicanx children’s literature being received within the United States context?

This is what I explore in the sections 6.1. Chicanox Children’s Literature and Reception Studies and 6.2. The US Publishing Industry. Children’s Literature and Independent Presses, where I also refer to children’s books awards and their relevance in the promotion of Chicanx and Latinx children’s literature.

- RQ4. How are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so?

In order to answer research question four, I deal with issues related to bilingual contemporary picturebooks authored by Chicanx authors and their integration in dual language programs in section 6.3. Chicanx Children’s Literature and the US Education System, as well as in section 6.4. Maya Gonzalez’s Workshops for Educators: Towards Making Social Change, in the first fieldwork study of this analysis.

- RQ5. How are Maya Gonzalez's workshops and presentations helping bring about social change in Chicax and non-Chicax children's identity?

In section 6.4 devoted to the second fieldwork study I explore how Gonzalez's projects are intended to help make social change in terms of diversity and inclusiveness.

Therefore, in the paragraphs that follow I will briefly refer to the situation of books for children written by Chicax authors in the US context. I will start by referring to the essential and relevant ideas on Reception Studies within Reader Response Theory and the act of reading picturebooks, as well as visual literacy, which I developed in my theoretical framework of this study (section 2.3), in order to situate the reception of bilingual Chicax children's books in this part of the analysis. I will then go on to consider the status of bilingual Chicax children's books in the US publishing industry and their inclusion in the US public education system for the purpose of situating the two fieldwork studies.

6.1. Chicano Children's Literature and Reception and Reader Response Studies [RQ3]

In order to answer research question three, how contemporary Chicax children's literature is being received within the United States context, I need to refer first to some main ideas in the field of Reader Response Theory and Reception Studies, and second, to those studies in which Chicax (Children's) Literature has been considered from the point of view of its readers.

6.1.1. Chicano Children's Literature and Reception and Reader Response Studies

As I mentioned in the Methodology section (4.3.2) of this analysis, the main bibliographical sources which I have based upon the reception of Chicax Children's Literature are mainly Manuel Martín-Rodríguez's *Life in Search of Readers* (2003, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque), *With a Book in Their Hands* (2014, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque), and his article "Chicana/a Children's Literature: a *Transatlantic* Reader's History" (2006), this last one has been instrumental in order to analyse what it has meant to be a Chicano/a and a child, and their relationship with reading and literature as I pointed out in the picturebooks analysis section. However, it is in Martín-Rodríguez's latest work, *With a Book in Their Hands. Chicano/a Readers*

and Readerships Across the Centuries, where he emphasizes the fact that “critics have not paid attention to Chicano/a readers and audiences until recently” (xix) notwithstanding the advances to (re)construct and (re)interpret the history of Chicano/a literature, and despite the fact that Reception and Reading theories became popular in the US in the 1970s. In his introduction to the book, before explaining how his own interest in Chicano/a readers and audiences began, Martín-Rodríguez contextualizes his work by briefly pointing to some of the main works of Reader-response criticism. One of them is Wolfgang Iser’s *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978) which, as I referred to in the Theoretical Framework section of this study (2.3.1), focuses on the reader’s experience of the literary work and on how meaning is created in the process of reading, examining the type of communication established between the text and the reader. The basis to construct meaning is provided to the reader by the text “sharing certain norms, values, and knowledge with the reader” (xix), what Iser calls “repertoire”. Literary communication thus succeeds thanks to the balance between this shared repertoire and satisfactory textual strategies. For other authors within the same school of criticism such as Stanley Fish, there is a total independence on the reader’s part, and the role of the text is limited to guiding the reading process. However, as Martín-Rodríguez remarks, the most useful idea for the study of Chicano/a literature from the point of view of its readers, who share a similar cultural background, is what Fish calls “interpretive communities”, that is, groups of readers who share cultural and linguistic competences. In his introduction to *Celebrating Cuentos*, entitled “Latino Children’s Literature in Today’s Classrooms and Libraries”, editor Jamie Campbell Naidoo explains how at an event in California third grade students, predominantly Latino, presented Chicana author Pat Mora with creative responses to her poetry and picture books. These responses, which took the form of drawings, masks related to Mora’s stories, dramatic performances, and poems recitations, are, according to Naidoo, a way of honoring the Chicana author for providing these children with “reflections of themselves—their languages and cultures” (xiv).

In relation to these responses, the editor of *Celebrating Cuentos* refers to Louise Rosenblatt’s concept of “aesthetic response”, which she develops in her article “The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response” (1993) within Reader Response Theory: “Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (268). In this transaction, the child draws on their personal, sensuous, and kinesthetic experience during the process of aesthetic reading, that

is, attention is turned to the “lived-through in transaction with the text” in contrast with the “efferent reading” of the text, in which the child focuses on the public meaning of the text, thus paying attention to the abstract concepts and the verbal symbols in order to organize the information. Rosenblatt points out the fact that, although both efferent and aesthetic readings should be taught, it is the efferent reading which predominates in the educational process. For the author, when teaching literature, teachers should encourage the aesthetic stance in the child reader and Rosenblatt emphasizes the idea Naidoo put forward when describing the responses of Mora’s children readers: “Transactions with texts that offer some linkage with the child’s own experiences and concerns can give rise aesthetically to new experiences” (Rosenblatt 275).

6.1.2. The role of the picturebook reader, visual literacy, and children’s self-perception

In the conclusions of Maya Gonzalez’s picturebooks analysis (section 5.11.4), I referred to David Lewis’s idea on how the role of the reader as an active partner to create meaning is fundamental in the case of picturebooks, specially on the part of children (Lewis 55). I also pointed out Lewis’s idea of how the way children read picturebooks varies from the way adults approach the picturebook reading event in a world where the visual predominates and in which competence with images is a prerequisite. The fact that the picturebook, due to its composite nature, exploits images to create meaning makes visual literacy to have an impact in this kind of text, which occupies a unique position as a popular text for young children within the early years of childhood (Lewis 64). In the theoretical framework (section 2.3.2), following Felten’s article “Visual Literacy” (2008), I referred to visual literacy as the ability to construct meaning from visual images, that is, the ability to understand, produce, and use culturally significant images, objects, and visible actions. A number of articles and publications on the subject of visual literacy (Giorgis et al 1999, O’Neil 2011) also considered that this ability does not only allow young readers to understand, recognize, and critically interpret the elements such as colour, line, shape, size, and style to fully comprehend the picturebook story, but it also enhances the reader’s aesthetic pleasure, so that the combination of an engaging story and well-crafted and creative pictures stimulates aesthetic thinking to create meaning in the transaction with the reader (Giorgis 1999). Hence the importance of visual literacy in the development of children’s identity and self-perception, specially if illustrations reflect the culture in which the artist lives and works, and thus, convey deeper and subtler

connotations to members of that culture, a ‘visual interpretive community’, through choice of the elements mentioned before (O’Neil 2011). Images, then, seen as language which can be read, acquire a given meaning depending on the individual reader’s personal, social and cultural background, especially in the case of young readers who can see themselves in the books when their identities have been silenced or misrepresented. In his Foreword to one of the few books devoted to contemporary Chicana Children’s Literature, *Voices of Resistance. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Chicana@ Children’s Literature* (2018), US Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera, himself author of bilingual picturebooks, considers that through the “recent rise of books written for Chicana@ youth” we find a new way of seeing, and asks himself:

How do we see and read ourselves in this radically new room of conversations and stories? How do we write ourselves into the key centers of society, into the schools, libraries, classrooms, and little houses like mine many years ago? How does the text, the actual words, the images blurring into phrase, and the gestures of the major characters inhabiting the books – how do they say things, mean things in and of themselves, and how are they (in some odd way) loosely threaded to all of us, pulling in, for, out, and against the larger grid of power? And – how do we speak of the writing about ourselves? (viii)

The answer rendered by the Chicano poet in the form of a metaphor is that in the last half century Chicano artists have “*nurtured the tree of knowledge*”, have sown the seeds so that contemporary literary critics, writers, speakers, and artists have the opportunity to see, write, and read themselves, creating “this radically new room of conversations and stories” which enter schools, libraries, classrooms, and houses. So, how do these conversations and stories reach schools, libraries, classrooms and houses so that Chicana and non-Chicana children have access to them?

According to Martín-Rodríguez, following his study on the experiences of Chicano/a readers in his work *With a Book in Their Hands* (2014), among the several recurring themes mentioned by the interviewees, we find not only literacy and the rich cultural context that surrounds it, and reading as a door to learning Spanish, but also the difficulties to access books “in great part due to adverse socioeconomic conditions in which many Chicanos/as grew up, and still encounter today” (xxv). In his own words, Martín-Rodríguez’s work was designed “to play an empowering role in public libraries, community centers, discussion groups and other collective and public venues, as well as for individual readers” (xxv). In order to see how contemporary Chicana readers access Chicana children’s literature, it is necessary to make reference to the situation of books

written by Chicana authors in the US publishing industry, as well as to the role of both children's books awards and public libraries in order to facilitate access to this kind of literature.

6.2. The US Publishing Industry. Chicana Children's Literature and Independent Presses [RQ3]

As I mentioned in sections 5.2 and 5.3 of the picturebooks analysis, in the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s Multiculturalism as the main trend in the US children's publishing industry resulted in the appearance of small presses specialising in children's books about Latinos. There was a commitment by renowned Latino and Chicana writers to provide quality materials which portrayed Latinos and their cultures free of stereotypes (Martín-Rodríguez, *Hands* xviii). Some of these small presses lead still today the publication of children's and young adults' books by Latinx, Chicana, and authors from other communities in the US. In chapter seven of their book *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature* (2009) authors Botelho and Kabakow analyse the social construction of class in children's books about Mexican-American migrant farmworkers, which were published between 1992 and 2005 by small independently owned publishers such as Lee & Low, Children's Book Press, Piñata Books/Arte Público Press, Bilingual Press, and University of New Mexico Press, as well as by Houghton Mifflin, member of The Blackstone Group, which takes the leadership in publishing about Mexican-American migrant farmworkers (155).

6.2.1. Small Independent Presses

On its website, Lee & Low Books, founded in 1991, defines itself as the largest multicultural children's book publisher in the United States, "We are your diversity source" (<https://www.leeandlow.com/about-us/the-diversity-baseline-survey>). Its catalogue includes dual-language levelled collections, a Latin American Spanish/Bilingual collection, a Native American English collection, and an LGBTQ+ Collection, among others. In fact, its commitment to diversity led this publishing house to release the first Diversity Baseline Survey in 2015 in order not only to provide specific statistics about diversity in the publishing workforce, but also to see if "the publishing

industry is moving in the right direction and becoming more inclusive” (<https://www.leeandlow.com/about-us/the-diversity-baseline-survey>).

Most of the picturebooks included in my analysis were published by Children’s Book Press, which in 1975, when founded by Harriet Rohmer, was the first independent press in the United States to publish children’s literature by and about people of colour. An imprint of Lee & Low Books since 2012, it continues to publish picturebooks from diverse cultures, and specially bilingual English/Spanish titles as a way to support the acquisition of literacy in any language and validate children’s home languages, cultures, and identities (<https://www.leeandlow.com/imprints/children-s-book-press>).

Piñata Books, an imprint of Arte Público Press, was founded in 1994 and specialises in children’s and Young adults’ books which focus on US Hispanic culture with an aim to accurately reflect themes, characters and customs unique to US Hispanic culture (<https://artepublicopress.com/pinata-books/>). Arte Público Press (University of Houston) is in charge of the “Recovery” project, that is, recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage, an international program to locate, preserve and disseminate written documents produced by Latinos since colonial times until 1960. This is the most important centre for research on Hispanic documentary history in the United States (<https://artepublicopress.com/recovery-program/>).

Founded in 1973, Bilingual Press (Arizona State University), publishes literary works in English, Spanish, and bilingual format by or about US Hispanics. Through the Press’s Clásicos Chicanos/Chicano Classics imprint, classics of Chicanx literature are available. In their appendix of children’s book publishers, in the Latino section, Botelho and Kabakow include BOPO (Books Offering Profound Opportunities) Bilingual Books, an independent publisher which specialises in family-oriented children’s picture books with a focus on English/Spanish bilingual books mainly for kids (Botelho and Kabakow 306), but also for adults, as well as in other languages. They also include the Latin American Literary Review Press, founded in 1980 and affiliated to the Department of Comparative Literary in Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. It publishes books dealing with the cultural heritages of Latin America and Spain, with an emphasis on translations of creative writing and literary criticism (Botelho and Kabakow 306).

Despite the fact that these publishers account for a growing interest in bilingual children’s books written by and about Latinxs and Chicanxs since *el Movimiento* and Multiculturalism, in comparison with other children’s books being published, Latinx children’s books are at a disadvantage. It is also important to observe that teachers and

librarians must be selective when choosing books, since some books reinforce stereotypes through cultural inaccuracies and contain Spanish that is grammatically incorrect (Naidoo xvi), a point I already analysed in section 5.3 when dealing with the terms *accuracy* and *authenticity* in Chicana children's literature, specially in the context of Multiculturalism. Being aware of the disadvantage of diverse children's books in the US publishing market not only by and about Chicanas and Latinxs, but also by and about the LGBTQ+ community, Chicana authors of children's books, Maya Gonzalez among them, have founded their own independent presses. Gonzalez and her partner Matthew Smith-Gonzalez founded Reflection Press in 2009 (www.reflectionpress.com). Apart from *The Gender Wheel* and the *i see peace* series of picturebooks and resource books, they have also published the Young adults' novella *Ma Llorona*, and *The Heart of It Collection* anthologies, three picturebooks which feature the work of a number of new and emerging diverse children's book Artists/Authors from around the world. These artists and authors joined one of the courses offered by Gonzalez and Smith-Gonzalez through their School of the Free Mind (<http://www.schoolofthefreemind.com>), *Creating Children's Books that Matter*, defined by the publishers as "a practical and personally empowering course based on a holistic approach to creating children's books" (Gonzalez, *By the Light of the Rabbit Moon* front endpapers). Reflection Press has also published Spanish/English bilingual picturebooks by other Latinx authors such as Ernesto Javier Martínez's *When We Love Someone We Sing to Them* (2018), and Juan Luís Ríos Vega's *Carlos, the Fairy Boy* (2020). In the front endpapers of their picturebooks, Gonzalez and Smith-Gonzalez describe Reflection Press as "an independent publisher of radical and revolutionary children's books and works that expand cultural and spiritual awareness" (Gonzalez and Smith-Gonzalez *Free to Be!*). Supporting emergent writers and illustrators of diverse children's books and providing resources through their training and program 'Make Books Now!' (<https://reflectionpress.com/free-stuff/we-the-people-self-publishing-resources/>) is primordial in Gonzalez's work, and a way to counteract the numbers regarding diversity in children's books in the US publishing industry. As she pointed out during our interview when asked about the reception of contemporary Chicana children's books in the US publishing industry and in educational programs, there has been some progress in the number and the diversity of children's books published by Latinxs and indigenous people. However, the US publishing industry is still very European White American and conservative, specially during the previous administration, which "demonized" the Latinx community:

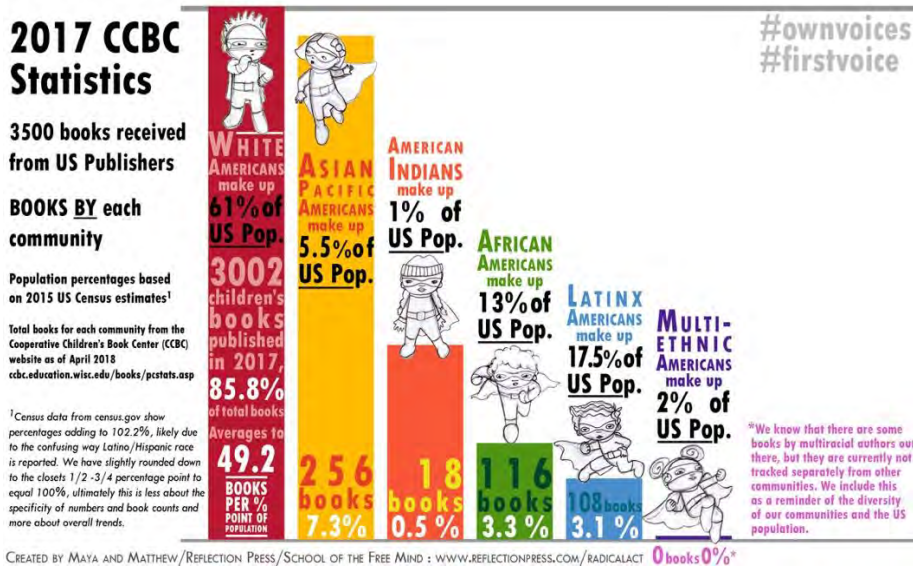
So, this is interesting. I'm a nerd, obviously, and I do a lot of research in a lot of ways and then I like to format it to be understood, and one of the things we do are the statistics where we look at the CCBC's children's books' statistics and look at what kind of books are actually being created and supported, and as we find, to stand in equity with, if we look at my framework is, if European white Americans are certainly the most free to express, and that system supports that, and if we stood in equity with them, what would we need? And with the Latinx community it's staggering, in fact, it's the worst. I don't have my numbers with me, but it's often in like 700 more books per year within that framework. It's just like, wow! We're still completely invisible in an equitable framework. And we're demonized so much right now by the administration. There's this interesting thing going on where bullying is on the rise and that invisibility piece is in flux, well because of this fight for a justice framework finally getting a little bit more pulled here within the industry, which is very conservative generally, it's starting to get a little bit better, but it's really still kind of ridiculous and it becomes very obvious that the system wasn't built for us, and with that said, within communities where there is a high Latinx population, books like mine and many more now, of course there's many more. Back in the day when I started, there was just like a handful of us practically. Now there's many, many more, which is fantastic, more diverse, more interesting, many more cultures represented, because of course Latinx experience is extremely diverse across the Americas, and indigenous communities, I think it's fantastic, but still, still we're really tiny. (interview, min 09:25)

The invisibility of non-white communities in the industry, and above all the scarce representation of the Latinx community, is reflected in the numbers and statistics which Gonzalez researches and formats, as she says, in the infographics published in the Reflection Press website (<https://reflectionpress.com/childrens-books-radicalact/>). The graphs within the 'ownvoices', 'firstvoices' framework show numbers of 2017 taken from the CCBC, the Cooperative Children's Books Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In these colourful illustrated infographs it is clearly seen how the representation of the Latinx community in the children's books published in the US is limited to 3.1%, when the Latinxs make up 17.5% of the US population, in comparison with the 85.8% of books where White Americans are represented, when they make up 61% of the US population. It is interesting to look at the infographic where the Chicax author shows 'Where we should be if POC and Indigenous authors were telling our own stories': 1,421 more books per year should be published in the US in order to be on the same level of children's books by White Americans.

Gonzalez also provides numbers and statistics on the state of LGBTQ+ children and teen books: out of 3,700 books received by the CCBC from US and non-US publishers in

2017, only 134 had significant LGBTQ+ content, and only 13 of those were picturebooks, as we can see in the infographs below. As the Chicana picturebook maker said in the interview, there is still a long way to go to make the representation of these identities visible in the US publishing industry.

Where we stand as of 2017 in U.S. Children’s Book Industry:



Statistics from the [Cooperative Children’s Book Center \(CCBC\)](http://www.cooperativechildrensbookcenter.org/)

Fig. 61. Reflection Press (<https://reflectionpress.com/childrens-books-radicalact/>)

Where we should be if POC&Indigenous authors were telling our own stories:

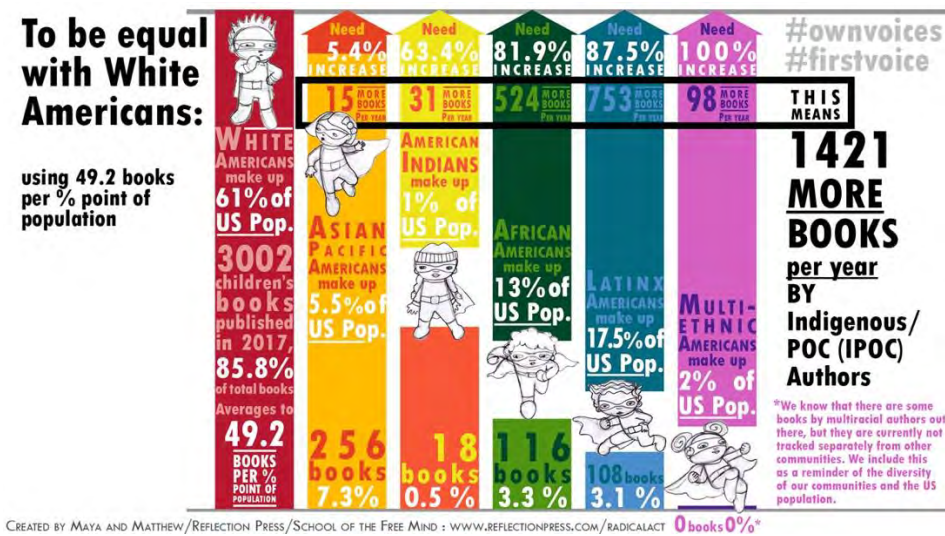


Fig. 62. Reflection Press (<https://reflectionpress.com/childrens-books-radicalact/>)

6.2.2. Latinx Children’s Book Awards

In the section devoted to Multiculturalism in the analysis of picturebooks (5.3) I mentioned the three major awards for US Latinx children's literature which were created in the early to mid-1990s. Before paying attention to how these awards have had an influence in Latinx children's literature, I would like first to give a brief description of those three major awards. The *Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award* is an annual award established in 1995 by Texas State University College of Education, which honors its distinguished alumnus, Dr. Tomás Rivera, one of the first authors who represents the Mexican-American migrant farmworker experience in literature. It selects literary fiction or non-fiction works created for children and young adults (from birth to age 16) by exceptional authors and illustrators of Mexican-American literature. The selection criteria are "accurate depictions of Mexican American experience, exemption from stereotypes, and rich characterization" (Botelho and Kabakow 301). The *Pura Belpré Award* was created in 1996 in honor of Pura Belpré, an author, storyteller and the first Latina librarian of the New York Public Library. It acknowledges Latino writers and illustrators with two medals, one to a Latino author and one to a Latino illustrator for representing the Latino cultural experience in literature for children and young adults. The general criteria for selection are the following: children's books of all genres, fiction and non-fiction, published in Spanish, English, or bilingual formats, created by citizens or residents of the US or Puerto Rico, and which must be published in the US or Puerto Rico. These literary works must be original work that portrays, affirms and celebrates the Latino cultural experience (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal/criteria-submissions-com-info#Terms%20and%20Criteria>). The two medals were awarded biennially, annually since 2009, and the award is sponsored by two of the American Library Association (ALA) affiliates: the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. The *Américas Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature*, initiated in 1993, recognizes US published children's and young adults' books in English or Spanish, which "authentically and engagingly portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinos in the United States" (<https://uwm.edu/clacs/public-engagement/teaching-resources/americas-award-for-childrens-and-young-adult-literature/>). Sponsored by the national Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP), the award recognizes works of fiction, poetry, folklore, or selected non-fiction. Among the selection criteria we find: distinctive literary quality; cultural

contextualization, exceptional integration of text, illustration and design, and potential for classroom use. With this award CLASP seeks not only to commend and encourage authors, illustrators and publishers of quality Latinx children's and Young adult books, but also to provide teachers with recommendations for classroom use (<http://claspprograms.org/pages/detail/65/About-the-Award>).

These awards are considered to have contributed to an increase not only in quality, but also in quantity of the number of books published about and by Latinxs. In their article "Critical analysis of Chicana/o children's literature: Moving from cultural differences to sociopolitical realities", professors Rosemary Gonzalez and Theresa Montaña (2008) consider that the diversification of children's literature has led to the emergence of literary awards such as the *Pura Belpré Award*, the *National Association of Multicultural Education's Book Award*, and the *Coretta Scott King Award* (76), the last one given annually to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults. So, one may wonder what has led to what: have book awards led to an increase in quality and quantity of Latinx children's books or, rather, has the diversification of children's literature resulted in the creation of literary awards? Be it as it may, the influence of the awards on US Latinx children's books is undeniable, specially if we pay attention to the studies carried out by scholars on these book award winners and on positive representations of Latinxs in US children's literature. A study carried out in 2002 by Medina and Enciso on the *Américas Award* winners and other children's books written and illustrated by Latinxs concluded that many of the books "express pride and engagement in Latino/a customs and family relations" (*qtd. in* Naidoo 64). Medina and Enciso come to the conclusion that the books "embrace the breadth and complexities of shaping a Latino/a identity in a society that highly values assimilation to European, English, middle class, and masculinist [sic] norms" (*qtd. in* Naidoo 64). Another study from 2000 by Eliza T. Dresang on selected *Américas Award* winners published between 1993-1997 and *Pura Belpré Award* winners published between 1990 and 1997 highlights the following elements as allowing for positive representations of general Latino culture: characters portrayed in new, complex ways; the use of magical realism, "a literary/life concept familiar to Latino and Latina children" (*qtd. in* Naidoo 64-65); new types of communities, and "unresolved endings leaving interactive readers making more decisions for themselves". Other elements which the study identifies in these books and which contribute to these positive representations of Latinx identities are changes in formats, increased synergy between words and pictures, and non-linear text with multiple layers

of meaning. These awards are useful resources when choosing children's books which do not perpetuate racial and gender stereotypes (Leland et al 170). This is the reason why I consider it relevant to include here a list of the picturebooks authored and/or illustrated by Maya Gonzalez which have been recognised with these and/or other literary awards in the US:

My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo (author and illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2007)

- Pura Belpré Illustrator Award Honor
- Américas Book Award, Commended Title
- Texas 2x2 Reading List, Texas Library Association

I Know the River Loves Me / Yo sé que el río me ama (author and illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2009)

- Américas Book Award, Honorable Mention
- International Latino Book Awards, Best Children's Bilingual Picture Book, second place

Call Me Tree / Llámame árbol (author and illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2014)

- Tejas Star Reading List (Texas Library Association – TLA)
- Choices (Cooperative Children's Book Center – CCBC)

Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona (author: Gloria Anzaldúa, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 1995)

- Commended Lists – Américas Book Award

Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems / Jitomates Risueños y otros poemas de primavera (author: Francisco Alarcón, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 1997)

- Pura Belpré Author Award Winner
- Best Books of the Year Selection (Library of Congress)
- Gold Medal Award (National Parenting Publications)

From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems / Del Ombligo de la Luna y otros poemas de verano (author: Francisco Alarcón, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 1998)

- Pura Belpré Author Award Honor
- Commended Lists – Américas Book Award

Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems / Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno (author: Francisco Alarcón, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2001)

- Pura Belpré Author Award Honor
- Commended Lists – Américas Book Award
- Notable Children’s Book (American Library Association – ALA)

Family Poems for Every Day of the Week / Poemas familiares para cada día de la semana (author: Francisco Alarcón, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2017)

- 101 Great Books for Kids (Evanston Public Library)
- Starred Review (Publishers Weekly)
- Junior Library Guild Selection

My Diary from Here to There / Mi diario de aquí hasta allá (author: Amada Irma Pérez, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2002)

- Pura Belpré Author Award Honor

My Very Own Room / Mi propio cuartito (author: Amada Irma Pérez, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2002)

- Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award
- Outstanding Achievement in Books (Parent’s Guide to Children’s Media)

Nana’s Big Surprise / Nana, ¡Qué sorpresa! (author: Amada Irma Pérez, illustrator: Maya Gonzalez, 2007)

- Tejas Star Reading List (Texas Library Association – TLA)
- Commended Lists – Américas Book Award

As I mentioned in the Methodology to this analysis chapter (4.3.3), for the purpose of completing the answers to research questions three, and specially four and five I designed two fieldwork studies to research the reception of contemporary Chicana children’s literature in the US educational context, specially in those areas with an important presence of Chicano population, in this case in Southern California (research question

four). My last research question is intended to explore how Maya Gonzalez's picturebooks and projects are being received in the US context, and how her representation of identities in terms of ethnicity and gender is contributing to make social change. I would like now to focus on these two fieldwork studies explaining their settings, the elements analysed through the instruments used in each of them, and finally commenting on the results and findings.

6.3. Chicax Children's Literature and the U. S. Education System [RQ4]

In this section I intend to answer research question four, that is, how are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so? Before focusing on the two fieldwork studies, I would like first to address issues related to language and bilingualism, critical literacy, as well as identity in US public education.

In my interview with Maya Gonzalez, when I asked her about the reception of Chicax contemporary children's literature in school programs, she emphasized the fact that, as in the publishing industry, there is still a long way to go for Latinx not to be in "unfavorable perspectives" (interview, min 11:23) and for them to have agency and voice within the community. The "unfavorable perspectives" Gonzalez refers to are the result of a series of propositions and acts which have made "the history of Latinos in US public education (is) fraught with contradictions: schooling serves both as the pathway to the proverbial American Dream and as the threshing floor on which Hispanic students' cultural and linguistic knowledge is so often separated and then swept aside", according to Roberto K. Ream and Lilia Vazquez in their "Overview of Latino Children and US Public Education" in *Celebrating Cuentos* (qtd. in Naidoo 3).

Although studies which are based on data from the US Census Bureau show important improvements in Hispanic educational attainment during the twentieth century, historical factors such as poverty and nativist hostility have had an impact on dropout rates among Hispanic students (three times those of non-Hispanic whites at the beginning of this century, according to the National Center for Education Statistics). According to Ream and Vazquez, studies also show that not only socioeconomic progress for many US Hispanics has been slow, but also that the US continuing history of racialized inequality, as measured by educational inputs and outcomes (Gibson, Gándara, and Koyama 2004; Ream 2005; Valenzuela, 1999), has accumulated what some researchers call an

“educational debt” that the United States owes to minority and poor students who have been inadequately served by the education system (*qtd. in* Naidoo 4).

Following Ream and Vazquez, one of the elements which has contributed to inequality in the US education system is what Angela Valenzuela calls *subtractive schooling* (1999), which emerged from her three-year ethnographic study in which she analyzed the influence of generational status on academic attainment for Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American students. *Subtracting schooling* refers to the practice of many US schools of dispossessing the children of immigrants of the cultures and languages they bring to school from home, and thus on a basic level of the formative experiences, imaginative resources, and rudimentary identity derived through family life and tradition (Moll 2001; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Subtracting schooling prevents these children from taking advantage of their *virtual school bag*, that is the things they have learned at home, their language/s, abilities, and past experiences. The concept, developed by Pat Thomson (The School of Education, University of Nottingham, 2002), draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of *cultural capital*, which in a school setting is the knowledge, resources, and ways of thinking that are valued in classrooms and can be used to accomplish school tasks (Leland et al 73). According to Leland, Lewison, and Harste, authors of *Teaching children’s literature: It’s Critical*, one of the resources which can expand the *cultural capital* of second language learners is dual language books, specially in the case of Spanish, since in their own words “there is an abundance of these resources” (Leland et al 73). For the authors, having students in their classes who are not fluent in English should not be problematic, on the contrary, it is an advantage for all students to bring different experiential, cultural, and linguistic resources to the classroom when working with linguistically and culturally diverse students, and their job as teachers is to use those resources in their classrooms on a regular and meaningful basis.

In the conclusions to my analysis of picturebooks (section 5.11.3), I noted how for Chicana authors the fact of publishing bilingual children’s books was a response to the need of language activism in the community to resist policies such as ‘English for the Children’ (California Proposition 227, 1998¹⁵; Arizona Proposition 203, 2000¹⁶), which had the effect of eliminating bilingual classes in most cases. For poet Francisco X. Alarcón, writing a creative book for children was “a personal response to the passing of

¹⁵ https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/1998/227_06_1998.htm

¹⁶ <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=58d003651130c012d8e906e5>

Proposition 227, that made bilingual education almost a crime” (Aldama 45). The fact that a significant number of Chicana authors of children’s books have also been educators (Gloria Anzaldúa, Francisco Alarcón, Amada Irma Pérez, among others), makes them aware of the centrality of language and identity within the school context. These writers and other Chicana authors went through a process of deculturalization as children, language being the place where Mexican Americans, like other linguistically diverse groups, resist deculturalization policies and practices (Botelho and Kabakow 156). Different experiences such as using Latino children’s literature to make cultural connections, or a group of Latino and non-Latino children and their families interacting with Latino Children’s Book artists in *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* (children’s Day/Book Day) show the importance of using bilingual Latinx children’s books in class, not only for Latinx students, who have the opportunity to see reflections of their culture, but also for non-Latinx children who have the opportunity to celebrate the culture of their peers. Thus, both groups share the cultural and linguistic experiences they bring in their *virtual school bags*, as well as develop critical literacy skills. From the point of view of the authors of *Teaching Children’s Literature. It’s critical!*, critical literacy is strongly connected to the books they choose to read, since children as growing literate beings who are competent readers and writers develop the ability to think critically and to commit to making the world an equitable place for all. Reading books about social issues, multicultural experiences, and international stories in which characters are portrayed in realistic, dynamic, non-stereotypical, and multi-dimensional ways has the potential to open up new spaces that break down boundaries between ourselves and Edward Said’s “the other” (*qtd. in* Leland et al 60). This is why it is essential that when choosing books to raise awareness and to develop critical literacy, teachers critically analyze children’s literature and the criteria they use when adopting literary materials for the classrooms in order to avoid multicultural literature that can be counter-productive, that is, stories which affirm “other” ethnic groups underlining differences, oversimplifications and cultural stereotypes. Critical literacy is the conceptual framework in which teacher educators Rosemary Gonzalez and Theresa Montaña set their study “Critical Analysis of Chicana/o Children’s Literature: Moving from Cultural Differences to Sociopolitical Realities” (2007), which focuses on Chicana/o children’s literature, defined as “pre-K through adult literature written in English or in Spanish by US based authors raised within local and immigrant Chicano/Latino cultures” (77). On the basis that children’s literature can be used to analyze past and present sociopolitical realities, the authors consider that many

teachers should be trained to identify stereotypes and misconceptions of Chicana/os and Latina/os in the US, to choose texts which portray the complexity and diversity of the Latina/o-Chicana/o experience, as well as to design a critical literacy lesson with images and questions to empower Chicano/Latino children, to reinforce academic goals by deepening students' understanding of inequality, oppression, and social action (78). Chicana/o children's literature can engage teachers and students in personal reflection, raise student consciousness, and facilitate discourse about the systematic inequality inherent in our schools that impedes education success (87).

RQ4-FIELDWORK 1: Bilingual Chicana Picturebooks in Dual Language Programs (Santa Barbara County, California)

The aim of this first fieldwork is to complete the answer to research question four, how are educational programs in the United States integrating bilingual Chicana picturebooks, and particularly Maya Gonzalez's books, if they are doing so. As I explained in the Methodology section (4.3.3), I had planned to attend one of Gonzalez's workshops for children at schools, in order to explore how these schools were integrating Gonzalez's and other Chicana authors' picturebooks in their educational programs. However, the Chicana artist is only carrying out these workshops for educators, such as the presentation I attended and which is the focus of fieldwork 2, and not necessarily at schools. This is why I contacted members of the school community in the Santa Barbara area for my research on whether bilingual picturebooks written by contemporary Chicana authors, and by Gonzalez in particular, are being received and integrated in their bilingual educational programs.

6.3.1. Setting of FIELDWORK 1: Context and Participants

Before explaining the specifics of the setting of this first fieldwork, I would like to contextualize Dual Language Programs (DLP) within the framework of Proposition 58¹⁷, which was approved in 2016 in California in order to implement the Multilingual Education Act of 2016 by which California public schools had more control over dual language acquisition programs, repealing the English-only requirement of Proposition 227 (1998), thus allowing students to learn English through multiple programs outside of

¹⁷ <https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/2016/Prop58-110816.pdf>

English immersion classes (<https://edsources.org/2017/a-new-era-for-bilingual-education-explaining-californias-proposition-58/574852>). According to a Governance Brief published by the California School Boards Association (CSBA) in March 2017,

How California schools can and should educate English learners has been a political football for many years. One result of this was the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998, which limited district options for the instruction of English learners. The passage of Proposition 58 on Nov. 8, 2016 by an overwhelming 73.5 percent of California voters, overturns Proposition 227 restrictions and places the decision of how to educate English learners back in the hands of county offices of education, school districts, schools, and communities. CSBA (California School Boards Association)¹⁸

In this context, carrying out this fieldwork on the use of bilingual Chicana picturebooks in DLP through a county office of education was considered the most appropriate option. So, as I mentioned in the Methodology section, my contact person was Dr. Carlos Pagán, Director of Literacy and Language Support Curriculum & Instruction at the Santa Barbara County Education Office. I chose to carry out this first fieldwork in the Santa Barbara, (California) area since there is an important presence of the Chicana and Latina communities, and also because the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California in Santa Barbara, where I carried out my international research stay, is considered one of the leading centres in Chicana studies with national and international recognition. However, due to the travelling restrictions during the pandemic in 2020, I could not travel to develop this fieldwork in situ, so I carried it out online. During our interview in October 30, 2020 I got an insight into the Dual Language Programs in the Santa Barbara County, so that I could later establish a focus group, and design the questionnaire for teachers in these programs on the use of picturebooks authored by Chicana writers and artists.

Dual Language Programs have as their goal full bilingualism and biliteracy in English and a partner language. Students study language, arts and other academic content (math, science, social studies, arts) in both languages over the course of the program, where the partner language is used for at least 50% of instruction at all grades. The program lasts at

¹⁸https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/StudentAchievement/~media/CSBA/Files/GovernanceResources/GovernanceBriefs/201703GBEnglishLearnersInFocusIssue4_Prop58.ashx

least five years (preferably K-12). The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and other institutions use this term as an umbrella term that includes two-way immersion, foreign language immersion, heritage language immersion, and developmental bilingual programs. Throughout the US it is frequently used synonymously with two-way immersion (TWI).

There are approximately 360 dual language programs in California, out of which about 300 have Spanish as a partner language. Other languages taught in these bilingual programs in California are Armenian, Cantonese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. In the case of the Santa Barbara County, there are 7 schools with Spanish/English Dual Language Immersion Programs, and they are 90/10, that is 90% in Spanish, and 10% in English to begin in the first years of Elementary School.

Thus, the focus group was formed by teachers in Dual Language Programs in schools in the Santa Barbara County. Once I had the final version of the questionnaire, I sent it to Dr. Pagán, who distributed it to the DLP teachers. The answers were sent directly to me through the Google docs application. Seven teachers from the different schools in the program sent their answers to the questionnaire on the use of bilingual picturebooks authored by Chicana authors, and particularly by Maya Gonzalez.

6.3.2. Analysis of FIELDWORK 1: Instruments

1. Semi-structured Interviewed with Dr. Carlos Pagán

Before meeting Dr. Pagán, and after consulting some of the resources on DLP in California, specially in the county of Santa Barbara, I designed a guideline with a series of items and notes which helped me focus on the most important issues related to my research to comment during the meeting. The first block of information dealt with the characteristics of DLP in California, specially in terms of standards and materials. In the California public education system, it is the California State Board of Education which establishes the content standards, the teachers' credentials, and the instructional materials for all K-12 subjects. In the case of DLP the standards and instructional materials are set in the subject 'English Language Arts' (ELA). Public schools are required to use the materials in the program in order to meet the content standards. Teachers can make use of other materials during leisure time, but specially in the first years of instruction they are discouraged to use other materials due to the requirements of the subject programs.

The second block dealt with the context of DLP in schools in the Santa Barbara County, and provided me with a basis on which to develop this fieldwork study, which I explain in section 6.3.1. Settings of FIELDWORK 1: Context and Participants, regarding not only the number of schools in the Santa Barbara County which are in DLP, but also issues on teachers' meeting the necessary requirements to be able to work in the programs, as well as the process schools must follow in order to request the DLP.

The last block of this guideline (which I insert below) allowed me to work on the draft questionnaire for teachers of DLP which I had prepared previously. For the final version of the questionnaire (Annex 4) I adapted the terminology and changed the content and format of the questions in the draft questionnaire to elicit meaningful information for my research.

2. DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

The second instrument to analyse the integration of bilingual Chicana picturebooks in DLP for this fieldwork is the DLP Teachers' Questionnaire. As I mentioned in the Methodology section, the questionnaire consists of the following five items:

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picturebooks authored by Chicana writers and artists?
2. Could you name some authors (Chicana or non-Chicana) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picturebooks that you are familiar with?
3. Do you know the picturebooks authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez? If yes,
 - I have heard of them
 - I have read one / some of them
 - I have used one / some of them for my classes
4. How often do you use bilingual picturebooks as extra reading material in your classes? If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picturebooks.
5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picturebooks?

The items include two yes/no questions (items one and three), followed by a 'comments' section, so that participants could expand on their answers. Item two is an open-ended question, and in items four and five respondents had to tick one or more options in a checklist with the possibility again of adding comments in item five, and the possibility to expand on the reasons of their answer in item four. As in the attendees' questionnaire

of fieldwork 2, I tried to make it as accessible as possible to the respondents, but at the same time keeping the questions faithful to the research task.

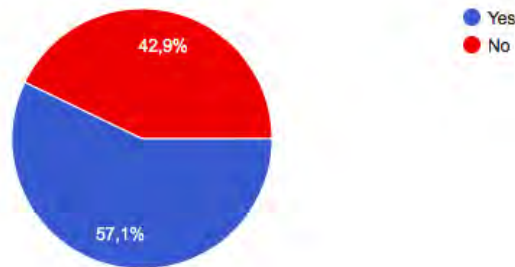
Here are the items of the questionnaire and the respondents' answers, which I comment on the results section of this fieldwork study below:

ITEM 1

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicax writers and artists?



7 responses



Comments

3 responses

I have a degree in Chicano Studies.

I've read books written by Chicano Authors but not CHICANX

This isn't first year teaching a 50/50 bilingual program and I have limited resources.

ITEM 2

2. Could you name some authors (Chicax or non-Chicax) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

5 responses

Alma and how she got her name, Martina the beautiful cockroach, (we used to do a musical play based on the tale), books by alma flor ada, cuentos que contaban nuestras abuelas, quizás algo hermoso

Alma Flor Ada, Julia Alvarez.

Many of the books we have are translated from english. We lack Chicano authors in our library.

Patty Rodriguez

Dr Francisco Jimenez (book series). Bless me última is a must read,

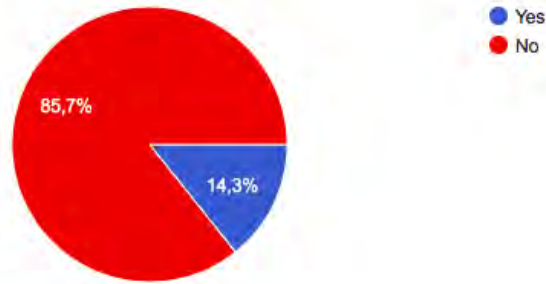
This is an area I want to know more but it is never discussed at my site. Distance learning has not helped the situation.

ITEM 3

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?



7 respuestas



If yes

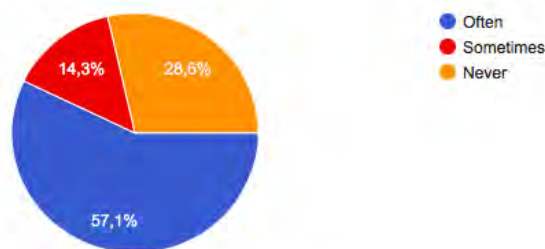
1 respuesta



ITEM 4

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

7 respuestas



If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

4 respuestas

With first grade DLI 80% needs to be in Spanish not bilingual.

I would love to! Students are in a DLI program and would feel proud to read bilingual books.

(1) During distance learning, it is easier for us to use curriculum books

(2) Also, in our program we prefer using books that are just in Spanish or just in English.

That being said, bilingual books are still great resources because they cover many different topics that relate to both Spanish and English speakers.

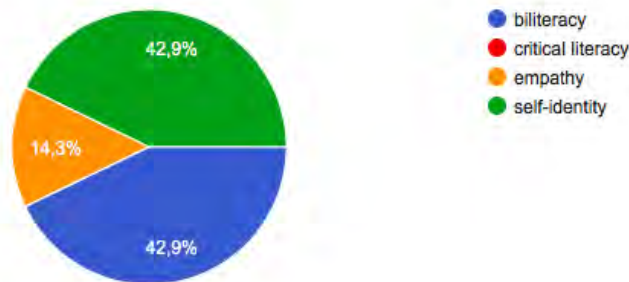
I would like to use them to support vocabulary.

ITEM 5

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?



7 responses



Others

4 responses

Self identity for some and empathy for others

Thank you for reminding me how important it is to have bilingual books in my classroom! We are working with our librarian to improve our Spanish book section. I will search for some Chicano/a authors.

Bilingual books are beneficial, especially for students who are familiar with one of the languages and are motivated to learn the other. Students often look for words they know and want to learn what the word translates to in the other language.

In addition to developing biliteracy, students can develop all areas: empathy, self-identity, self-expression, family values, and cultural importance.

6.3.3. Results of FIELDWORK 1

In order to complete the answer to my research question four —how are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so? — the responses received are a useful sample of the various perceptions and elements regarding the use of Latinx and Chicanx bilingual picturebooks by teachers in Spanish-English DLP. Although some of the picturebooks which teachers use as extra material in the classroom are not bilingual editions (some have separate editions in English and in

Spanish), the respondents were familiar with picturebooks by Latinx authors (Alma Flor Ada and the author of *Martina the beautiful Cockroach*, Carmen Agra Deedy, have a Cuban background, and Juana Martinez-Neal, author of *Alma and how she got her name* was born in Perú) who publish in Spanish and English. It is interesting how in their comment, one of the respondents shows interest in knowing more about this area and in discussing it in their school: “(T)his is an area I want to know more but it is never discussed at my site. Distance learning has not helped the situation”. It must also be noted how the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, distance learning, is having an impact in the use of resources and adapting materials to digital formats by teachers (“(1) During distance learning, it is easier for us to use curriculum books”). The fact that respondents resort, or would like to resort to this kind of books by Chicanx and Latinx authors as extra material, is meaningful and positive for this study. When asked about the areas and skills which students could develop by reading these bilingual picturebooks (here I included skills and areas which I have underlined previously in this chapter as key elements in the use of bilingual Latinx and Chicanx picturebooks in the classroom: biliteracy, critical literacy, empathy, and self-identity), it must be noted that the reasons they gave in favour of making use of these bilingual picturebooks, not only to support language learning but also to make DLI students feel proud to be able to read in both languages, as well as the fact that both Spanish and English learners can relate to the different topics covered by bilingual picturebooks support the idea of the importance of using bilingual Latinx children’s books in class, not only for Latinx students, who have the opportunity to see reflections of their culture, but also for non-Latinx children who have the opportunity to acknowledge the culture of their Latinx peers. The respondents’ comments in item five on the importance of developing self-identity, empathy, as well as “self expression, family values, and cultural importance” relate to the importance of linking education, language, and identity, an idea which is at the core of this study, and which is sustained by authors and educators who consider that ‘subtracting schooling’ prevents these children from taking advantage of their *virtual school bag*, that is, the things they have learned at home, among them their language/s, skills, and past experiences specially when language is the place where Mexican-Americans, like other linguistically diverse groups, resist deculturalization policies and practices (Leland et al 156). The fact that five respondents often or sometimes use bilingual picturebooks as extra material is also significant and expected, due to the fact that the use of instructional materials is restricted by DLP standards, as can be seen in some of the teachers’ comments

“(T)his isn’t first year teaching a 50/50 bilingual program and I have limited resources”, (2) Also, in our program we prefer using books that are just in Spanish or just in English. That being said, bilingual books are still great resources because they cover many different topics that relate to both Spanish and English speakers”). The need to use books only in Spanish or only in English in DLP can be seen in another respondent’s answer: “(W)ith first grade DLI 80% needs to be in Spanish not bilingual”. Teachers and scholars have pointed to the lack of flexibility or time in the day for using quality children’s literature (Leland et al 71). Not only that, some studies also emphasize the fact that strict linguistic separation and teaching languages by keeping them separate throughout the day in DLP, privileges one language, English, over the partner language, Spanish, thus stigmatizing the use of Spanish in US society and shaping how bilingualism is viewed (Flores and Rosa, 2015) (*qtd. in* Alamillo et al 154).

As for the use of bilingual picturebooks authored by Gonzalez and other Chicana writers and artists, the answers show different degrees of familiarity with Chicana literature, ranging from the classics *Bless Me Ultima* (1972), Rudolfo Anaya’s coming-of-age novel, and works by Francisco Jiménez, such as the series *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (1997), or *The Christmas Gift* (2000), a bilingual picturebook illustrated by Claire B. Cotts. It is also interesting to note how one of the teachers associated her knowledge of Chicana bilingual picturebooks to her degree in Chicano Studies (“I have a degree in Chicano Studies”), as well as the fact that the only respondent who was familiar with Gonzalez’s work also was the one who provided a number of examples of bilingual picturebooks by other Chicana and Latinx authors.

To conclude this results section, the fact that two comments showed the respondents’ motivation to make use of and discuss about the advantages of this kind of materials in their schools is considered very relevant and positive to this research.

6.4. Maya Gonzalez’s Workshops for Educators: Towards Making Social Change [RQ5]

As an educator and author of children’s books, Maya Gonzalez believes that “(O)ur school systems are in need of change. It doesn’t have to be something dramatic or external. It can be something simple and slow from within” (*qtd. in* Naidoo 326).

Both creativity and reflection form the very basis of Gonzalez’s projects in order to achieve social change, such as *Claiming Face, An Educator’s Guide to Building the*

Powerful Link Between Creativity and a Sense of Self, which consists of projects to be carried out at schools, in which children work on their self-empowerment through self-portraiture. The activity book *Gender Now*, with its school edition, has been designed to help schools become more gender-inclusive and accepting. In fact, one of her main aims is to reach those kids who are most at risk of being discriminated in terms of ethnicity, class, and/or gender, and the reason why she collaborates with educators through workshops and talks, as she explains:

And I think that my trick has been how do I synthesize that into the most simplistic terms to get into the classroom, because my goal has always been in indie teaching in children's books is how do I access our most-at-risk kids through those who find themselves in these positions to teach. Teachers are amazing and it's a beautiful job, and it's just terrible that this should stop. So, the kids, the teachers, right? (interview, min 08:22)

Recently, the Chicana artist has been most actively engaged in *The Gender Wheel Project*, whose picturebooks I analysed in the previous section (5.10), where I noted that Gonzalez created a "School Edition" of the picturebook *The Gender Wheel*, due to the importance of being able to bring her books into the US school system. It was precisely one of Gonzalez's workshop on *The Gender Wheel Project* that gave me the opportunity to carry out the second study of the fieldwork included in the following section.

RQ5- FIELDWORK 2: Maya Gonzalez's Workshops for Educators

The aim of this second fieldwork was to complete the answers to research question three, how is contemporary Chicanx children's literature being received within the United States context, in this case by child care providers and educators, and research question five, how are Maya Gonzalez's workshops and presentations helping make social change in Chicanx and non-Chicanx children's identities?

Nevertheless, as I explain in the section devoted to the results of this fieldwork, the data which I gathered through the instruments which I analyse below also provided me with essential ideas to answer research questions two, what elements does Maya Gonzalez make use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of aetnormativity, ethnicity and gender, and four, how are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so.

6.4.1. Setting of FIELDWORK 2: Context and Participants

During the first part of my international research stay at the University of California, in Santa Barbara at the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, I carried out the first part of my fieldwork. I had met the author in February 2019 in San Francisco where we held our interview. After asking Gonzalez about the possibility of observing one of her workshops to complete my research on Chicanx children's picturebooks, and particularly her work, on November 5, 2019 I attended Gonzalez's workshop for child-care providers, 'Teaching for Gender Inclusivity: a Nature-based, Holistic Perspective for Children', which is based on *The Gender Wheel Project*. This was the second two-hour workshop which was part of a two-session training. The first workshop had taken place the previous week and focused on the concepts Gonzalez relates to when working on gender inclusivity and which are at the basis of *The Gender Wheel Project*. This second workshop of the series was a 'hands-on practice' session in which Gonzalez used her *Gender Wheel* materials, as well as other authors' picturebooks to see how to implement the concepts dealt with in the previous session. I can not specify whether the eight participants who attended this second session had attended the previous one, or whether some of the participants in the first session did not attend this second part of the workshop. The workshop took place at Bananas (<https://bananasbunch.org>), a centre for parents and child care professionals in Oakland, California. The same centre offers child care resources to families with young children and care professionals in the Northern Alameda County cities of Oakland, Berkeley, Albany, Piedmont, Emeryville, and Alameda. They also invite families and child-care providers to attend their workshops, parent education classes, professional development trainings, and playgrounds.

The place where the session took place was a spacious, multipurpose room where the author and her two assistants laid out tables and chairs in a semicircle, so that all the attendants were able to easily see the screen. Maya was assisted by two persons, as well as by her partner and cofounder of Reflection Press, Matthew Smith-Gonzalez. She put the materials she was going to use on a table at the front, and on one side of the room, near the entrance, Gonzalez and her partner put some of their books as well as other materials for the attendants to consult. The eight participants sat around the table in a semicircle.

As an observer I initially took a place at the back of the room to take notes in my observation grid since, as I noted in the methodology section, I intended to carry out an unobtrusive, non-participatory observation (Robson 315), so that my observation did not affect the situation observed and the participants' attitude during the workshop.

Nevertheless, once Gonzalez invited me to join in the activities I sat at the table as one more participant and took part in the group activities with two other participants.

6.4.2. Analysis of FIELDWORK 2: Instruments

1. **Observation Grid**

The notes I took in the observation grid allowed me to describe the dynamics and interaction between the author, here also educator, and the attendees in order to see how Gonzalez's work was received during the workshop, and ultimately to respond to research question five, that is, how the author's workshops and presentations are helping make social change in Chicana and non-Chicana children's identities.

As I mentioned in the Methodology section (4.3.3), the grid is divided into two broad sections to focus on the author on the one hand, and the participants on the other. The items I included ranged from 'what they do and how' to 'materials used' both visually and verbally. In the case of the author/educator, in the indicators included in the 'what she does and how' column, my intention was to describe the way Gonzalez got her ideas across by focusing on how she presented topics, whether she asked questions in order to interact with the attendees, and what she commented on certain key concepts to her approach to diversity in terms of gender, such as movement, circles, and inclusive language. The author/educator related these key concepts to the more practical side of the workshop, that is, the activities and games in which the attendees took part.

In the observation grid, which I include below filled in with my notes, in the first section, 'what she does and how', I noted how Gonzalez started by asking everybody in the session to relax, and by relating this hands-on session, which was meant to explore and play, to the first part of the workshop which was carried out some days before, and which focused on concepts and ideas at the core of *The Gender Wheel* project. I emphasize the fact that her movements and gestures, her tone of voice, and the way she interacted with the attendees and related to them by talking about her work and about herself created a relaxing atmosphere, so that everybody felt comfortable to discuss about removing assumptions imposed by the binary gender system. To relate this session to the first and more theoretical one, she distributed a pronoun card to each participant to explain the 'pronoun protocol' for creating gender inclusive spaces for kids and public settings, which is based on "12 agreements with the intention of creating a way of speaking that fundamentally includes everybody all the time and interrupts the cycle of gender

stereotypes and assumptions” (The Gender Wheel Curriculum, Pronoun Protocol card). The first agreement suggests that as a foundation, gender inclusive words such as ‘people’, ‘person’, ‘kid’, ‘relative’, ‘sibling’, ‘parent’, etc, are to be used. Thus, in order to remove assumptions, a new way of speaking is necessary, we need to change the language. One of the main ideas, as she explained, is how circles are dynamic and open up possibilities to go beyond binary thinking, they connect everybody since potentially they have infinite points. Gonzalez presented the *Gender Wheel* game as an educational tool, as well as the picturebook, and she explained the different activities that can be carried out with the game board, the book, and the downloadable materials from the Reflection Press website with the goal of moving away from assumptions within the holistic, nature-based framework of *The Gender Wheel* project. She drew special attention to the school edition of *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, emphasizing the fact that children’s books can be radical tools to start disseminating information. Gonzalez made it clear that as childcare providers, one of the initial steps to remove assumptions and bring about social change is to modify our language in order to make it more inclusive. She commented on the idea of taking the binary system as a starting point, since we are familiar with it, to make our language more inclusive, an idea she put into practice in the ‘inclusive reading’ activity. This activity consists of reading a picturebook with the traditional binary gender framework changing not only the language (mainly personal pronouns and words such as ‘mum’ and ‘dad’), but also the characters in the story, in order to include other people who have been traditionally erased in children’s books. In the ‘Materials she uses’ column I include the title of the two picturebooks she used as an example for this ‘inclusive reading’ activity, in ‘Materials by other authors’, such as the picturebook *The terrible underpants* by Kaz Cooke (2001) and *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L’Engle (1962). In this section of the grid, I noted that she mainly made use of her own materials, and particularly, *The Gender Wheel Project* picturebooks, cards and games, but also her picturebook *Call Me Tree*, which as I mentioned in the analysis of picturebooks, is the book in which Gonzalez’s radical and revolutionary message in her picturebooks is located: she breaks from binary modes of thinking in order to emphasize, both visually and verbally, the importance of nature, freedom, and inclusiveness. After the ‘inclusive reading’ activity, the author and educator asked the attendees to form groups of three people to participate in three activities using the different didactic materials of *The Gender Wheel Project*:

- Activity 1 → participants had to find a kid on the board wheel game which is represented in *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, and then, they had to turn the circles which correspond to the outer body, the inside circle, and the pronoun circle. This allowed participants to begin to open up new ways of thinking or understanding beyond the binary.
- Activity 2 → consisted of an inclusive reading exercise.
- Activity 3 → consisted of two games. In the first game, participants had to play with the pronouns card deck, which consists of round cards with the illustrations of the kids who appear in the picturebooks *They, she, he, me. Free to be!* and *They She He. Easy as ABC*, on one side, and a pronoun, including inclusive pronouns ‘ze’, ‘tree’, on the other side. Players had to choose 2 or 3 cards which reminded them of themselves, and then they had to turn over the cards to check the pronouns assigned to the kid. In the second game, players used the 15 purple sorting cards that include both pictures and words and are grouped into broader “Hair” “Clothes” and “Accessories” categories. The game consisted in choosing three purple cards, sort kids, and then turn over the cards to check the pronouns. According to Gonzalez this is a way of paying attention to our gender assumptions and stereotypes, and to realise how most of our thinking about gender is unconscious.

The author wrapped up the activities by reminding the attendees that the main idea when using these materials and games was to allow kids to create their own images and to create a whole vision, by breaking down the system that controls human consciousness in our communities, and by translating these concepts into reality. She then asked the participants to reflect on how they could apply in their own contexts what they had learned in the workshop.

In the section devoted to the observation of the attendees, my main purpose was to focus on their reactions to the contents of the workshop, and the way they interacted with Gonzalez, as well as with their fellow participants. The items in this section focus on whether they asked questions, gave opinions, participated carrying out the activities, and whether they suggested their own activities, ideas, or practices. When working in groups I noted that they were willing to participate and carry out the activities proposed by Gonzalez. They asked when having doubts on the instructions and objectives of the tasks, and specially towards the end of the workshop, one of the participants expressed their doubts on the difficulty of seeing “the big picture” of Gonzalez’s gender framework.

The last section of the grid is formed by indicators drawn from Gonzalez’s comments and responses during the interview we carried out some months before this workshop, and which I considered key elements of her framework both as an author and as an educator. During the session she referred to concentric circles and movement, as well as to nature as the resource to her healing framework, and she emphasized the need for social change, which in her own words is “the most radical thing you can do” (interview, min 45:26). At the end of the grid, which is inserted below, I include the notes which I took on the development and progress of the workshop, the order of presentation and content of activities.

Observation grid: Maya Gonzalez Presentation. The Gender Wheel Curriculum. Hands-Off Practice (session 2)

Early childhood educators and caregivers. 8 attendees

Date: Tuesday Nov 5, 2019

Place: Bananas (A Place for Parents and Child Care Professionals), Oakland, CA

Maya Gonzalez			
What she does and how	verbally	visually	Comments
- Presents topic	Relates to session 1	Ppt The Gender Wheel Curriculum	Session2: hands-on practice
- Asks questions			
- Interacts with the attendees	Yes		Tables layout: rectangle
- Activities she proposes	Explore and play (lg: not 'This is...')		To start opening our minds
- Movement	Body Language	Moves around all the time	Spirit and body changes
- Circles	Open up possibilities, not binaries	Everybody is connected	But binary as a familiar starting point. CIRCLES: potentially

			infinite points, dynamic
- inclusive language	Changing our lg. Explicit 'penis', 'vulva'	Explains clearly	Explicit, changing our lg
- Others: empathy, inclusiveness, diversity	Relates to the attendees, comments about her work, about herself		Beginning presentation: relax, gravity, holding
Materials she uses	verbally	visually	comments
- Her own (Gender Wheel)	Yes	Yes	Picturebook, ABC, Pronouns, game, cards, teacher downloadable, website, video from website
- Her own (other than Gender Wheel)	Yes	Yes	Call Me Tree
- Materials by other authors	Yes	Yes	-The terrible underpants -A wrinkle in time To practice inclusive reading
- Materials by educators and caregivers			
- Materials by attendees			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A table at the front with materials she uses. On a side, table with materials to sell (picturebooks, card game, T-shirts) 			
Attendees (8 people)			
What they do and how			Comments

- Ask questions	Yes		About instructions, objectives
- Give opinions	Yes		Difficult to see the big Picture
- Participate	Yes		Activities in threes. Individual comments
- Carry out activities	Yes		In threes
- Suggest their own activities, experiences	Yes		
INDICATORS FROM MG INTERVIEW			
- Concentric circles and movement	Yes		
- Nature: resource for healing framework	Yes		
- Healing: decolonize yourself through art and creativity	Yes		
- Everybody has a story: don't be silenced			
- Develop critical thinking			
- Children's books: simplistic terms to get into the classrooms			
- Create social change (the most radical thing you can do)	Yes		

NOTES:

- 2 assistants, Matthew, Sky (their kid)

ORDER OF ACTIVITIES

1. **RELAX:** feel our gravity, holding us

2. **LANGUAGE** is one of the most important places you can create change now

3. **PRONOUN CARD** to each participant. Pronoun protocol → removing assumptions // a new way of speaking → systemic change of the system instead of accommodation. Changing Language. Gender as a form of oppression

4. **GENDER WHEEL GAME** → educational tool

5. **USING THE BOOK:** experiment with the wheel and the book → feedback, post-activity discussion. Moving away from assumptions. Holistic, nature-based framework
6. **TEACHER'S TOOLS** downloadable from their website
7. **GENDER WHEEL BOOK** → school Edition
8. **CHILDREN'S BOOKS** → radical tools to start disseminating info. Practice
GENDER INCLUSIVE READING → change pronouns and words (mum, dad → parent), changes in the story to include other people who have been erased.
9. **PLAYING WITH PRONOUNS:** educational cards (round shape!!). They can be used with other media or by themselves.
- ACTIVITY 1:** find a kid on the wheel. Turn the circles: the outer body, the inside circle, the pronoun. Do the same reflecting your position. Being curious and playful, you begin to open up new ways of thinking or understanding beyond the binary.
- ACTIVITY 2:** reading practice
- ACTIVITY 3: GAME 1** - playing with pronouns card deck. Choose 2 -3 cards that remind you of yourself. Turn over the cards to check pronouns
- GAME 2** - place the sorting 3 purple cards (pants, dresses and skirts, shorts), sort kids, and turn over the cards to check pronouns. Paying attention to our gender assumptions and stereotypes and playing to become more inclusive. Most of our thinking about gender is unconscious.
- Shows **CALL ME TREE** → nature as a pronoun. Tree=pronoun. We=trees, are strong.
 Teaching frameworks in a gentle way.
10. **WRAP UP ACTIVITIES** → Language, downloadable materials → kids create their own images. Creating a whole vision. Human consciousness, breaking down the system that controls it. Humanizing, community, Peace (change consciousness).
 Translate concept into reality. Participants reflect on how they can apply what they have learned in the workshop in their own contexts.

2. Attendees Questionnaire: Respondents' Answers

At the end of the session, after requesting permission from the author and from the representatives of BananasBunch who had organized the training session, I introduced myself and my research in order to ask the attendees to answer a short questionnaire on Gonzalez's work and on the workshop. This questionnaire, which consists of four main items, is the second instrument for this fieldwork. It was designed in order to complete mainly the answers to research questions three and five, but since the attendees were educators, it also provided me with important information on how educational programs in the US context are integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so, that is, research question four.

Before the four questions which the participants were asked to answer, at the beginning of the questionnaire, the respondents were requested to specify their post (educator, caregiver), if they worked in early education or primary, and whether the Chicana community was present in their schools. Five out of the eight respondents answered

specifying the percentage of the Chicana community in their schools: “about half the school”, “10%”, “about 5%”, “less than 5%”, and one respondent said they were not in a school. Regarding the presence of other communities in the school, one participant wrote the following: “Many children of mixed races (about 1/3), then about 1/3 white”. This information might be particularly relevant in the case of the reception of Gonzalez’s work in schools or centres given that, the interest on diversity on the part of the participants could be not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of ethnicity.

As for the questions, questions one, three and four were open-ended questions, and question two was a yes/no question followed by an open-ended question depending on the previous answer.

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

2. Are Maya Gonzalez’s books present in your school?

If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

Items one and two focused on the reception of contemporary Chicana children’s literature and Gonzalez’s picturebooks in the US context (research questions three and four), whereas items three and four focused on the reception of Gonzalez’s workshops and trainings in terms of educators’ motivations and possibilities to create social change (research question five) (see Annexes 5 and 6).

In their answers to item one, one respondent did not know about the author previously, two respondents knew about the author/educator through the Bananas Bunch center, another one through trainings and books, one heard about the author, specially about *The Gender Wheel Project*, through a co-worker, one through the workshop, and one respondent answered: “I had found some of her work on the internet when I was personally researching for storybooks to read of language to use at my school”. One of the participants did not answer.

As for the presence of Gonzalez’s books in the schools where they work (item two), although the eight respondents answered “no”, one of them said “(M)y own library yes”, another respondent said “(N)ot that I know of, though we have a large collection”. Two participants answered “(N)ot yet”, and of these two one said: “(N)ot yet.

Working on it as we speak”.

Answers to item three on the motivation for attending Gonzalez's presentation ranged from the more concise "(T)itle was inviting" and "(T)o learn more about the topic" to the more explanatory "I was interested in gender inclusivity and since it was offered as professional development I decided to find out more" and "(T)o gain more knowledge and tools for gender inclusivity". Three respondents expressed their motivation, both professional and personal, in more detail: "(T)o learn how to be a better human. To reclaim to years (and many years) of non gender freedom", "(I)nterest in gender and inclusive language. Advocacy for children with gender expression outside the binary", and "I am feeling a great sense of urgency around this topic – a combination of politics and personal makes me feel this is a key moment in time to be using inclusive books, language, etc. with very young children". One respondent clearly stated their support for Maya's work as their main motivation: "(T)o gain knowledge and support Maya. I brought her here".

Answers to item 4 on how the author's presentation could help the participants' work with children varied from being "aware of the language to use", to helping those children that "may need representation that don't have it", and in another respondent's words: "(T)o think of gender not as a binary or spectrum, but a circle of gender". One respondent's answer was related to their personal beliefs/values, "(E)ven expansive of tools to implement my personal beliefs/values", whereas another participant related the issues dealt with in the workshop with their communication with coworkers, "(C)ommunicate with my staff tools and communication techniques to provide more inclusivity". Two of the responses were very precise in terms of the workshop helping the educators make social change: "(T)his work is already helping think about the way I see children and how they want to be seen matters", and "(I) cannot wait to begin reading existing books with inclusive language, and to be carefully exploring our existing materials to see what I can modify, change, or eliminate! with this new lense". One participant did not respond.

6.4.3. Results of FIELDWORK 2

From the items and the notes taken with the observation grid on Gonzalez's workshop based on *The Gender Wheel Project*, it can be concluded that, as an educator, the Chicana author conveys the key elements of her gender framework by first creating an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable to discuss and approach gender and remove binary

assumptions, taking the binary system as a starting point to introduce inclusive language, thus emphasizing the significant connection between language and identity. Her interaction with the participants when relating certain key concepts to her approach to diversity in terms of gender such as nature, movement, circles, and inclusive language to the practical side of the workshop, the activities and games, made the attendees feel involved not only by reflecting on the goals of the activities and their role as participants during the session, but also by expressing their doubts and seeing the difficulties when trying to apply some of the concepts in their work as educators.

As expected, the attendees' responses to the questionnaire clearly show that those participants who had not only a professional motivation (taking a training course offered by the organization), but who were also driven by a personal and even political commitment, responded to the activities with a higher involvement. The fact that some of the answers in the questionnaires, specially to item four (how the presentation could help them when working with children in their own contexts) already reflected an immediate application of the activities ('inclusive reading') and thinking of gender as a circle beyond binaries on the part of the participants, show that Gonzalez conveyed her message, and that participants, at least the most receptive ones, were willing to take part in the social change which is necessary for Gonzalez.

As I mentioned in the analysis of picturebooks, the Chicana author makes use of nature, movement, and constant change reflected in the interaction of the visual and the verbal in her picturebooks in order to subvert power relations in terms of gender. Some of the answers to item four in the questionnaire show that participants are making use of Gonzalez's materials (picturebooks, but also, card games, and activities) to subvert power relations also in terms of heteronormativity: "(T)his work is already helping think about the way I see children and how they want to be seen matters", that is, although the adult, here "I", plays an active role ("I see children"), and the children, here "they", are passive subjects ("how they want to be seen"), it is the way they want to be seen that matters here, thus subverting heteronormativity which regards the adult as the norm.

The fact that for the most part of the practical session my role was that of a participant as well as an observer made me synthesize and prevented me from being able to observe the other participants' reactions and comments about the activities in more detail. Nevertheless, participating in the activities and interacting with the attendees to the workshop allowed me to relate in a more practical way to the author's framework and concepts and to reflect on them in a more personal and affective manner.

Therefore, the main conclusions which allow me to answer research question five —how are Maya Gonzalez’s workshops and presentations helping make social change in Chicax and non-Chicax children’s identities? — are the following: *The Gender Wheel Project* with its materials and educational tools forms a solid framework, based on language and identity, as well as nature as a source of diversity. Although it can be regarded as challenging to apply in certain contexts, the different activities and games proposed by Gonzalez may be used by educators as agents of change to reflect on gender and identity beyond binary thinking.

6.5. Results of the Analysis of Chicax Bilingual Picturebooks in the US

Context: Still a Long Way to go...

In the picturebooks analysis (section 5), the main aim was to answer research question one, how the representation of Chicax identity in children’s literature has reflected ethnicity and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history, and research question two, what elements Maya Gonzalez makes use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of aetnormativity, ethnicity and gender.

The aim of this section of the analysis was to analyse the situation of books for children written by Chicax authors in the US context, that is, to answer research questions three, four, and five.

In the case of research question three —how is contemporary Chicax children’s literature being received within the United States context? — in the sections devoted to Chicax Children’s Literature and Reception and Studies (6.1), and to The US Publishing Industry. Children’s Literature and Independent Presses (6.2) I have referred to main concepts of the fields of Reception Studies within Reader Response Theory and the act of reading picturebooks to see how these new perspectives have started to have an impact in the study of Chicax literature from the perspective of readers’, and specially considering notions such as Stanley Fish’s “interpretive communities” in order to (re)construct and (re)interpret its history. I related the concept of ‘interpretive communities’ to the notion of visual literacy, another key concept in this research, since pictorial language stems from the culture in which the artist lives and works and is used to convey meaning to members of that culture. Hence its relevance in the development of children’s identity and self-perception when reading picturebooks, mainly if we take into consideration David Lewis’s idea on how the role of the reader as an active partner to

create meaning is fundamental in the case of picturebooks, specially on the part of children, since the picturebook, due to its composite nature, exploits images to create meaning, thus making visual literacy have an impact in this kind of text.

Through their bilingual children's books, Chicana authors show their language activism, as well as the Chicana experience as being dynamic, diverse and complex, and among their reasons for authoring books for children, they include a sense of giving back to the community. Thus, what follows is: how do contemporary Chicana readers have access to Chicana children's literature? As we saw, the appearance of independent publishers specialized in multicultural children's literature, particularly in Latina and Chicana bilingual picturebooks, as well as the Latina children's book awards contributed to an increase not only in quantity of the number of books published about and by Latina and Chicana authors, but also allowed for representations of general Latina and Chicana cultures to be positive in the new and complex ways in which characters were portrayed. Nevertheless, one of the main conclusions of this part of the research is that, despite the positive advances in terms of picturebooks portraying diversity not only by and about Chicanas and Latinas, but also by and about the LGBTQ+ community, there is still a long way to go in order to achieve equality in the US publishing industry, an idea stated by Gonzalez during our interview and supported by the infographics she has published in her Reflection Press website.

The same could be said as to the inclusion of bilingual picturebooks in the US education system, which corresponds to research question four: despite the recent advances in the US educational system, the conclusions lead to the idea pointed out by teachers and scholars that minority and poor students in the US educational system have suffered the consequences of the "educational debt", that is, the inadequacy of the programs to address issues of language, bilingualism, and identity, and to what is referred to as *Subtracting schooling*, which means dispossessing the children of immigrants of the cultures and languages they bring to school from home. Various studies support the idea that when both groups, Latina/Chicana and non-Latina/non-Chicana, share the cultural and linguistic experiences they bring in their *virtual school bags*, this helps them develop critical literacy skills and emphasizes the centrality of language and identity within the school context. All these factors translate in the need to include this kind of bilingual children's books in the school system. However, my observations resulting from the first fieldwork study and the responses to the questionnaire by DLP teachers seem to indicate that, despite the teachers' interest in increasing the use of Chicana (and Latina) bilingual

picturebooks in the classroom, the restricted standards established by the program did not always allow for it. A meaningful result of this fieldwork was the fact that making use of this kind of materials was regarded not only as a tool for language learning, but also as a way to help students feel proud of being able to read in both languages, as well as a way to help both Spanish and English learners to develop empathy and self-identity.

The interest expressed in some of the teachers' comments showed their motivation to make use of and to start a conversation about the advantages of this kind of materials in their schools, an idea which is considered not only very relevant to this research, but also a good start in order to improve the status of Chicana bilingual picturebooks in the US education and cultural context.

Regarding the impact of Maya Gonzalez's publications and specially her workshops for educators (research question five), according to the results of the second fieldwork study, in the workshop on *The Gender Wheel Project* addressed to educators, the Chicana author conveys the key elements of her gender framework by creating an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable to discuss and approach gender. As an educator herself, in her workshops and presentations previously for children and nowadays for teachers, she makes use of the interaction of the visual and the verbal, as well as of theory and practice, in order to subvert power relations in terms of gender and ethnicity. The attendees' responses to the questionnaire showed that those participants who responded to the activities with a higher involvement did not only have a professional motivation, but were also driven by a personal and even political commitment, thus willing to take part in the social change which is necessary for Gonzalez.

In the next section of this study, Part III, which is devoted to the final conclusions, my intention is to integrate these results and the results of the picturebooks analysis within the theoretical framework which I provided in the introduction (Part I, section 2), as well as to consider possible future research areas deriving from the present study.

PART 3

7. Final Conclusions: Building Bridges by Blurring Boundaries

7.1 Research Questions: Final Results

7.2 Future Research

7.3 Final Reflections

7. Final Conclusions: Building Bridges by Blurring Boundaries

In a time when far too many think we should be erecting bigger and bigger walls to close our borders, it is literature that inspires us to build broader bridges instead—ones that open our eyes, our minds, our hearts.

—Viola Canales, “Belpré Author Award Acceptance Speech: The Beauty of Us All, Together”

As I stated in the introduction to this research, the purpose of this study has been to analyse how Chicana identity has been constructed and represented in children’s literature, specially since the 1990s, when the trend of Multiculturalism prevailed which in its turn allowed Chicana children’s literature as a cultural product to evidence power relations in its attempt to represent an ‘authentic’ and ‘accurate’ Chicana identity. Throughout the analysis of contemporary Chicana author Maya Gonzalez’s picturebooks, I have explored how contemporary Chicana authors of literary works for young readers move beyond this ‘authenticity’ or ‘accuracy’ when representing Chicana identity, to provide diverse and inclusive representations of identities which help bring about social change in their communities.

7.1. Research Questions: Final Results

I have addressed the following questions through the analysis of Chicana children’s books in general and of Gonzalez’s work in particular, as well as through the fieldwork studies on the reception of bilingual picturebooks authored by Chicana writers and artists in the US publishing industry and educational programs included in this research:

1. How has the representation of Chicana identity in children’s literature reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history?
2. What elements does Maya Gonzalez make use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and gender?
3. How is contemporary Chicana children’s literature being received within the United States context?
4. How are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so?

How are Maya Gonzalez's presentations at seminars and workshops helping bring about social change in Chicax and non-Chicax children's identities?

In this last chapter of my dissertation I provide my final conclusions first by summarising the answers to my five research questions, and second by focusing on the detected subversion of power relations in contemporary Chicax literature for young readers through the picturebook genre, referring to the main concepts of the theoretical framework. I would also be addressing further questions that have surfaced as I was carrying out my research on issues such as authors and communities related to the Own Voices Movement, as well as on the broader issue of the study and research of children's literature. I will also be suggesting possible future lines of research related to this dissertation. Finally, I will devote the last section of this chapter to my final reflections on my research in order to "close the circles" opened at the beginning of this study.

The Chicax Experience in Chicax Literature for Young Readers

RQ1: How has the representation of Chicax identity in children's literature reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history?

The answer to the first research question is sustained by the three following main premises on the construction and representation of identities of my theoretical framework developed in the introductory chapter:

1. Literary texts construct models of worlds, and identities are constructed and represented through language and discourse.
2. The active process of representation or discursive construction is never complete, since identities are unstable, fragmented, and multiple, and they are constructed through language.
3. Colonialism was founded on the systematic construction of the Other based on fixed identities, inequalities, and a binary system. The border and the mestizo — a hybrid, heterogeneous subject— are crucial ideas to Postcolonial studies.

As I pointed out in the results section of the picturebooks analysis (5.11), children's literature has reflected power relations at play in the different stages of Mexican-American history. The Chicano Civil Rights Movement, *el Movimiento*, boosted the creation of literary works written by Chicano authors in which they provided models of the Chicano world and the Chicano identity. In order to move away from the binary system which identified Mexican-Americans as the Other based on stereotypes and

generalisations grounded on dual oppositions, authors and artists sought to provide an authentic and accurate identity of the Chicano subject in the context of Multiculturalism, which tried to respond to the under- and misrepresentation of the Chicano experience in the US publishing industry until that moment. However, contemporary Chicana authors of books for young readers have departed from the notions of *authenticity* and *accuracy* when representing the multiple and diverse identities which shape the Chicana community.

Not only that, as hybrid and *mestizo* subjects themselves, they are inclusive of other communities and groups creating spaces for children, both Chicana and non-Chicana, to see themselves, to encourage understanding, and to imagine other ways of existing. As some of these authors have explained, poet Francisco Alarcón among them, writing children's books is their way to give back to the community: by providing Chicana children with the opportunity to see themselves in literature turning their borderlands into places of contact and spaces of empathy, they make their reality visible, and counter prevailing ethnocentric messages. As Martín-Rodríguez pointed out, Chicana authors of books for young readers focused on what it meant to be a Chicano child, specially through the reconstruction of the relationship between the Chicano community and the acts of reading and writing.

One of the elements which these authors consider paramount to represent Chicana identities through children's books is language: as *mestizo* subjects they have insisted on publishing their work in bilingual editions which include real Chicano Spanish, their *mestizo* language, as a way to resist colonial discourses and as a form of language activism to counteract a series of policies which tried to eliminate bilingual classes in the education system.

Another means which has enabled contemporary Chicana authors of children's books to represent identities since *el Movimiento* is the rethinking of the indigenous myths, so that they can resist previous negative representations of their culture by discovering their roots. One of the authors who rethinks the myths, specially the indigenous female myths, is Gloria Anzaldúa. In the picturebook *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona*, Anzaldúa and Gonzalez turn *la Llorona* into the guiding spirit who helps *Prietita*, the embodiment of Anzaldúa's new *mestiza*, to find her way back home. In the picturebooks analysis section I also referred to how Anzaldúa's work on the rethinking of the myth of *la Llorona* has had an influence in Gonzalez's work: in the latter's young adults' novella *Ma Llorona*, the transformation of the myth results in an act of resistance

towards colonisation, both in terms of ethnicity and gender, in the use of the powerful tool of one's own healing voice. On its part, the myth of the Aztec goddess Coyolxauhqui, who was cut into pieces by her brother Huitzilopochtli to disempower her, serves Anzaldúa to represent the painful fragmentation which characterises the creative process as transformative healing (Anzaldúa, *Light* xxi), and allows Gonzalez to create a new reality as well as a dream to reclaim the feminine, and to encourage her young readers to tell their suppressed stories and to empower those young readers through art.

Throughout this research I have called attention to the significance of Anzaldúa's work in contemporary representations of Chicana identities in children's literature: her ideas on the border as a place of contact, exposure and empathy, and the New *Mestiza* as a hybrid subjectivity in constant transition, echo in Alarcón's term *mesticismo* as a mode of thinking about relations, in which the notion of 'self' includes the 'others' in order to overcome binary thinking (Alarcón, *Reclaiming Ourselves* 240-241). Not only that, many Chicana authors situate their work for young readers in a borderland. This is the case of *Super Cilantro Girl / La niña del supercilantro* (2004), by Juan Felipe Herrera, the first Chicano US Poet Laureate (2015-2017), and Honorio Robleda Tapia, a picturebook which tells the story of Esmeralda Sinfronteras, a girl whose mother has been stopped at the border in Tijuana because authorities say that she needs a green card to enter the United States. After making a wish holding green cilantro, Esmeralda becomes the superheroine Super Cilantro Girl, and rescues her mother from the detention centre at the border. This is just one example of how these authors reflect on their experiences across borders in the "borderlands" of language, ethnicity, and gender, as several studies on contemporary Chicana children's literature demonstrate, such as Laura Alamillo's "Translanguaging *con mi abuela*: Chicana@ Children's Literature as a Means to Elevate Language Practices in Our Homes" (Alamillo 155), in which Alamillo refers to Anzaldúa's New Consciousness as the framework to her analysis of Amada Irma Pérez's picturebook *Nana's Big Surprise*, illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. Another example is Juan Felipe Herrera's *Grandma and Me at the Flea / Los meros, meros remateros*, illustrated by Anita De Lucio-Brock. In both cases translanguaging serves "to challenge students to think beyond the separation of languages" (Alamillo 160) by validating the way Chicana children communicate in their own lives. These are just a few examples of how Anzaldúa's work resonates through the children's books created by Chicana authors. Anzaldúa herself expressed her awareness of her work's potential when she was asked about the critical reception of *Borderlands* in an interview with Andrea Lunsford (1996),

“Toward a Mestiza Rhetoric”: “My whole struggle is to change the disciplines, to change the genres, to change how people look at a poem, at theory or at children’s books.” (Anzaldúa, *Interviews* 272). The fact that her ideas resonate in the work of contemporary authors of books for young readers has helped Chicana children’s literature to offer diverse representations of identities as well as to create inclusive spaces in which children can reflect on their identities.

Maya Gonzalez’s Picturebooks: Subverting Power Relations by Blurring Boundaries

RQ2: What elements does Maya Gonzalez make use of visually and verbally for her projects to subvert power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and gender?

It is the critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature as developed by Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman (section 2.2.4) that has provided me with the central indicators to approach the subversion of power relations in Maya Gonzalez’s picturebooks. Let us not forget that Botelho and Kabakow’s framework is based on the idea that children’s literature mirrors power relations, and so their framework calls attention to the construction of identities and society through language and discourse, but most importantly it places the historical underrepresentation of groups at the centre, in the case of my study, the Chicana community. Perry Nodelman’s notion of children’s literature as a discourse of the Other (2.2.1), and especially Maria Nikolajeva’s approach to the study of children’s literature taking as a basis heterology studies and adult normativity in children’s and young adults’ books (2.2.2), has framed my analysis of power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity, and heteronormativity in Maya Gonzalez’s picturebooks. John Stephens’s work on how ideology is conveyed in the discourses of children’s fiction has allowed me to consider a series of indicators in order to analyse the elements which Gonzalez makes use of to subvert power positions in her picturebooks through the double visual and verbal codes. As the analysis of the different indicators show, it is precisely this double code of word and image which defines picturebooks that has enabled Gonzalez to blur boundaries at various levels to overcome binary thinking and eventually to subvert power relations in terms of heteronormativity, ethnicity and class, and gender:

1. In terms of heteronormativity: adult (the norm)/child (the Other).

In “The Adult’s Self-Denial”, Nikolajeva’s conclusion to her work *Power, voice and subjectivity in literature for young readers* (2010), she concludes:

As adults–writers as well as promoters of children’s literature—we cannot unconditionally abolish adult normativity, since we would then be subverting our own existence. Yet we can, through the carnival of children’s literature, make young readers aware of the fact that adult norms and rules are not absolute.” (Nikolajeva *Power* 204)

However, as Gonzalez does in her picturebooks, this inevitable adult-child alterity can be blurred by giving power and agency to the child-narrator-protagonist. As I referred to when analysing the elements of focalisation and characterisation in Gonzalez’s picturebooks, the boundary which separates the adult narrator and the child reader is blurred by enhancing identification with character at a visual level through the use of frameless illustrations, and/or by talking to the younger reader through the author’s little self, and in doing so, the author lends their voice to the silenced child. Authors of children’s books who have been marginalized as children, such as Gonzalez, can even insert themselves through the use of the literary technique defined by Isabel Millán as *autofantasia* (from Anzaldúa’s notion of *autohistorias*, which refer to the way in which Chicanas and women of colour write about their history and the history of their communities), that is, by creating fiction from memories of their childhood.

2. In terms of ethnicity and class: white Anglo-Saxon (the norm)/Mexican-American or Chicano (the Other)

As I pointed out in the previous section on research question one, Chicano authors of children’s literature started representing in their books what it meant to be a Chicano child after *el Movimiento*. I mentioned the importance these authors gave to the fact of having their books for young readers published in bilingual editions with actual Chicano Spanish in order to emphasize the *mestizo* component of their identities, and presenting the Chicano-Spanish text (font, position on the page) as equal in status as the English text to resist and to subvert the power relation white Anglo-Saxon as the norm and Mexican-American or Chicana as the Other. Thus, authors of Chicana children’s books aimed at providing Chicana children with visual and verbal reflections of themselves. This is what Gonzalez does in her first series of picturebooks, the *Nature Trilogy*, when she visually presents her Chicana face, verbally the ‘I’/her little self who speaks to the reader, since she could never see herself in the books she read as a child. In her following picturebooks, especially in *Bully* and in the series *Gender Wheel*, Gonzalez represents people of different ages, genders and ethnic groups which form the diverse community, that is, the ‘we’ which she uses to speak to the reader. Representing diversity in the community blurs

the boundaries not only of ethnicity and class when Gonzalez represents other US communities, such as African-Americans and Chinese-Americans, but it also reinforces her message of inclusiveness when she includes the representation of children on wheelchairs or using crutches, thus including individuals who are not often depicted in books.

3. In terms of gender: heteronormativity, cisgenderism, and binaries (the norm)/non-binary (the Other)

It is in the third book of the *Nature Trilogy*, *Call Me Tree / Lláname árbol* where Gonzalez starts subverting the third power relation I explore in my study, the one which assumes heteronormativity or cisgenderism and binaries as the norm, and adopts a non-binary approach of gender as the Other. She breaks from binary modes of thinking in order to emphasize, both visually and verbally, the importance of freedom and inclusiveness. Instead of classifying gender by means of boxes and fixed structures, it is the concentric circles we find in nature and in the art and the symbology of the Indian ancestors, the Aztecs and the Mayans, which, according to Gonzalez, can hold everybody. In *The Gender Wheel* picturebooks, the author makes use of all the resources she has previously presented in her work in order to blur the limits imposed by Western-patriarchal colonialism. Her work offers resistance against colonialism and binaries, empowerment and a sense of belonging, as well as the power of both visual and verbal reflection.

The artist makes use of her personal draughtsmanship and the conceptual consistency of her work to counter the misrepresentation of powerless societal groups, creating a new discourse with results of the interaction of the visual and the verbal codes, blurring boundaries in order to subvert power relations based on binary thinking.

The reception of Chicax Children's Literature in the US Publishing Industry and Education: Advances and Obstacles

RQ3: How is contemporary Chicax children's literature being received within the United States context?

In the case of the status of Chicax children's literature in the US cultural context, we saw how the advances in the fields of Reception Studies within Reader Response Theory, and especially Stanley Fish's notion of "interpretive communities", have started to have an impact on the study of Chicax literature from the perspective of readers' in order to (re)construct and (re)interpret the history of Chicax literature. However, how do the

books authored by Chicana authors who present readers with dynamic, diverse and complex Chicana experiences reach contemporary Chicana and non-Chicana readers? As I explored in the part devoted to the publishing trends in US children's literature in the State of the Art section (3.2), how Chicana children's literature has traditionally been considered to belong within the broader group of Latinx children's literature, which in turn belongs to the category of multicultural literature. It was within the Multiculturalism trend in the 1990s, linked in turn to multicultural education, that small and independent publishers were created. They specialized in multicultural children's literature, particularly in Latinx and Chicana bilingual picturebooks, and together with the Latinx children's book awards, not only contributed to an increase in the number of books published about and by Latinx and Chicana authors, but it also allowed for positive and complex representations of these communities. I also pointed out the impact of initiatives such as "El día de los niños, El día de los libros" / Children's Day, Book Day" created by Chicana writer Pat Mora, (<http://www.patmora.com/whats-dia/>), and which has brought together children from all cultures and languages, as well as parents as partners in literacy education and books, since 1996, in order to celebrate bilingual and multilingual literacy and to promote global understanding through reading. As I pointed out in the results of the analysis section of PHASE II (6.5), despite the positive advances brought about by these factors and initiatives, there is still much work to be done in order to achieve equality in terms of ethnic and gender diversity in the US publishing industry. One of the yet unachieved goals is the integration of bilingual children's books authored by Chicana authors in the US educational programs.

RQ4: How are educational programs in the US context integrating these picturebooks, if they are doing so?

Although my approach to the study of children's literature in this research has been based on the analysis of textual elements —*textual* here meaning both verbal and visual—and their interaction, as I referred to in the State of the Art section (3.1), the study of children's literature has been traditionally approached from backgrounds related to education, library science, and child development, thus focusing on its pedagogic and developmental functions. This dissertation considers that, in order to complement the purely textual study, it is crucial to determine whether the materials analysed in terms of the representation of identities and power relations are being integrated in the US educational system is considered meaningful to complement the textual study.

The results of the fieldwork study carried out in order to consider the extent to which bilingual picturebooks created by Chicana writers and artists are being integrated in the US educational programs show that, despite the good will and intentions of teachers to include these materials in the programs, in the case of Dual Language Programs, the use of instructional materials are restricted by DLP standards (section 6.3.3). Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that these programs were approved only recently—in 2016—in California, in order to implement the Multilingual Education Act of 2016, which bestowed California public schools more control over dual language acquisition programs. DLP programs and the Multilingual Education Act seek to overturn the English-only requirement of Proposition 227 (1998), in order to allow students to learn English through programs other than English immersion classes. The fact that it is now county offices of education, school districts, schools, and communities the ones that decide how to educate English learners is a significant step ahead, since they can better respond to the needs of students in their communities.

As can be seen in the results, the most meaningful results of the fieldwork study for this research are, first, the fact that the teachers-respondents to the questionnaire expressed their will to start a conversation at their educational sites on the use of these bilingual materials in the DLP; and second, the fact that for them these bilingual picturebooks do not only support language learning, but they also help students develop empathy, and make them feel proud of their identities.

As I explained during the analysis (section 6.3), the fact that a significant number of Chicana authors of children's books have also been involved in education (Gloria Anzaldúa, Francisco Alarcón, Amada Irma Pérez, among others), makes them aware of the centrality of language and identity within the school context. This dovetails with the study of heritage languages and literacy carried out extensively by Jim Cummins and Ofelia García, among others, which underscores the efforts that are going on in Education in order to promote the “Plurilingual and Intercultural Turn” (Stephen May, 2014) in schools worldwide.

Since one of the respondents associated their knowledge of Chicana bilingual picturebooks to their university degree in Chicano Studies, a case in point is the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California in Santa Barbara, which is one of the most influential in the US, and the Colección Tloque Nahuatl is the most important collection specialised in Chicano Studies in the US. The Davidson library in campus has a section with Curriculum Resources which includes an

important number of bilingual picturebooks written by Chicax authors, as well as by writers with a Latinx background.

RQ5: How are Maya Gonzalez's presentations at seminars and workshops helping bring about social change in Chicax and non-Chicax children's identities?

As is the case of an important number of Chicax authors of children's books who are related to education and who share their work in workshops or at readings of their books in libraries, apart from being an artist and a writer, Maya Gonzalez is also an educator who has carried out workshops and seminars at schools, both with children and with educators. As an educator herself she believes in the need of changing the school systems in a simple and slow way, and most importantly, she claims that this change must come from within the system (Naidoo 326). This is her main aim in her workshops and presentations with educators: within the framework in which she has developed her work, Gonzalez invites the participants to her seminars to approach identities and diversity reflecting on their own assumptions and beliefs. She considers educators as agents of change, so she listens to their doubts regarding the application of some of the activities and ideas in their work and context, and emphasizes how questioning the binary system, as a starting point to introduce inclusive language, is one of the main steps in order to remove their own assumptions.

Her work as author of picturebooks which promote diversity and inclusiveness, and her work as an educator whose aim is to help bring about social change complement each other and form the solid framework of her project.

7.2. Further Questions: Representing Identities and Children’s Literature

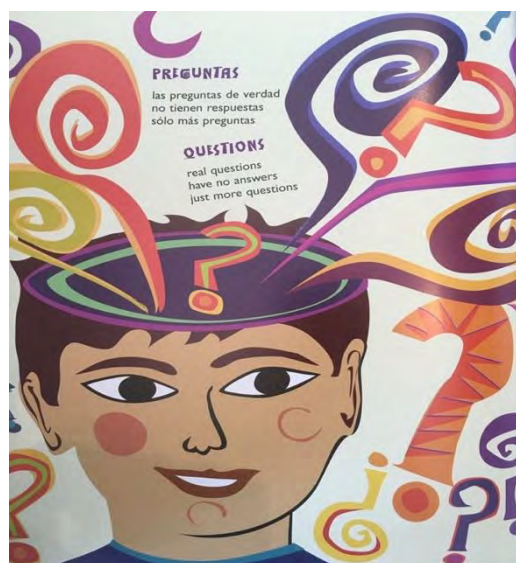


Fig. 63. *Poems to Dream Together* [7]

“real questions / have no answers / just more questions” says Francisco Alarcón in one of his poems in the bilingual picturebook *Poems to Dream Together / Poemas para soñar juntos* (Lee & Low Books, 2005), illustrated by Paula Barragán (fig. 63). The image which interplays with the written text of this poem shows a child’s head open as if it were a container with colourful question marks coming out of their head and filling the page on a white background. This poem is an excellent example of what a research study means: throughout this dissertation I have tried to answer the research questions on the representation of identities in children’s picturebooks authored by Chicanx authors, but at the same time, as my study has been making progress, further questions have arisen regarding different aspects of the representation of identities and children’s literature, which I would like to address in this section.

7.2.1. Further Questions 1: Authors and Community. Own Voices Movement

In the results to research question one (RQ1) (section 7.1) on how the representation of Chicanx identity in children’s literature has reflected ethnic and class power relations throughout Mexican-American history I commented on how the will to provide an authentic and accurate identity of the Chicano subject on the part of Chicanx authors in

the context of Multiculturalism was a response to the under- and misrepresentation of the Chicano experience in the US publishing industry until then.

I have also addressed issues related to the role of insider authors in the construction and representation of identity, that is, the importance of the cultural membership of the author in a given group. I have taken into consideration the elements that make (or do not make) Chicana children's literature culturally conscious, such as the bilingual editions of picturebooks with real Chicano-Spanish, as well as the characterisation both verbal and visual of Chicana characters, as well as the driving force behind the story/book. This is related to the fact that authors of books for children and young adults have addressed the issue of 'own voices' in children's and young adults' literature, meaning that books which feature diverse characters and perspectives must be written and/or illustrated by an author/artist who shares those identities. Maya Gonzalez is among the authors who consider it essential to support the 'own voices movement', while valuing the representation of diverse groups in literature for children and trying to review books for children with a critical eye. In a note to the infographics which she provides in the Reflection Press website, she explains:

****Additionally** it is important to note that current statistics count a book as "BY" a particular community if either the author or illustrator is IPOC or LGBTQ. While it is of course valuable to have visual representation, we have seen a trend of white and/or straight authors writing stories that are illustrated by IPOC and/or queer illustrators. These books would still be included in the "BY" category for IPOC and/or queer communities even though a white/straight author wrote them. So, we ask the question... *whose voice is still prioritized in these situations?*

While we value any and all work done to change the tide of representation in children's books (particularly in relation to first-voice/own-voice books), because of our history, it is always good to keep a critical eye when reviewing children's books. Especially those books written outside the community they are representing. **For help in reviewing LGBTQ+ children's books, [check out this handout.](https://reflectionpress.com/childrens-books-radicalact/)** (<https://reflectionpress.com/childrens-books-radicalact/>)

In the case of Gonzalez this concern about who writes and illustrates children's books about IPOC or LGBTQ communities is also related to the fact that her work on *The Gender Wheel* was plagiarised in two books, and especially to the fact that one of them gave what Gonzalez considers "to be one of the most damaging messages" to children in terms of gender identity (<http://www.mayagonzalez.com/blog/2019/05/what-are-we-really-saying-to-our-children-language-acquisition-gender-part-3/>). As she explained during our interview, it is important to call attention to how power relations are also at

play here when Gonzalez puts the stress on the fact that authors who belong to communities which lack societal power are likely to be plagiarised:

It's interesting as I move forward with the plagiarism, what I've heard sadly is that IPOC people in the US are frequently plagiarized because they lack societal power. And so, what's happened is this frame opened up this other aspect of reality, where everyone is continuously clobbered here, which is really mind-boggling in multiple ways. And our society here in the US is extremely cis-sexist, so often I think because I'm stepping forward more with my gender work. And the fact that I'm queer as well and partnered with a trans person, my voice has, I think, been harder for people to support, honestly. (interview, min 27:02)

Nevertheless, going back to the 'own voices' movement in children's literature which I just mentioned above, the question which follows consequently is: who is entitled to write/illustrate books for children or young adults which represent multiple and diverse identities? And returning to the debate brought up in the theoretical framework of this study regarding the adult-child power relation at play within the realm of children's literature, should children's literature then be ultimately and exclusively regarded as literature written by children for children?

7.2.2. Further Questions 2: The Definition and Study of Children's Literature

In the introduction to this dissertation I noted the importance of children's literature in shaping identities, as it is one of the earliest ways in which we encounter stories, thus playing a powerful role in shaping how we think about and understand the world (Grenby and Reynolds 1). Despite the ongoing debate on the definition of children's literature, books for children are regarded as a tool for creating historical and socio-political imagination in young readers, and they can also help teachers and other adults to serve as important role models of resistant reading.

In the theoretical framework (section 2.2.1) I also pointed out how scholars such as Perry Nodelman consider children's literature as just another realm of colonisation from the lense of heterology and the discourse of the Other, since adults colonise children and childhood by using literature to exert cultural power over them (*qtd. in* Grenby and Reynolds 32). Maria Nikolajeva also approaches the study of children's literature taking as a basis heterology studies with her concept of aetonnormativity and the idea that adult normativity in children's and young adults' books can not be avoided, but at least, it can be subverted through different elements, as we saw in the section of the analysis of

picturebooks. The attempt to apply Peter Hunt's "childist" criticism, that is, to think about children and read children's literature from a child's point of view, would still be fruitless, since we as adults would still be speaking for them, the children.

Thus, what we can do is, as Gonzalez suggests above, to keep a critical eye when reviewing and studying books for young readers by taking into account a set of questions to explore how texts represent childhood for children, and *why* they represent it in that way, as well as what interest of adults might the representation be serving and how it works. In fact, these are questions that I have kept in mind throughout this research in the particular case of Chicana children's books, and more specifically when analysing the work of Maya Gonzalez. The even further questions here would be: how do Chicana (and non-Chicana children) receive these picturebooks in terms of their own identity? What impact do these books have in the children's everyday school and community lives? Do the target readers identify with the verbal and visual messages conveyed by these bilingual picturebooks? And if so, how? These are questions that would need an entire following study in order to be answered.

7.3. Future Research

Let me now address possible lines of future research resulting from this study and the further questions I pointed out above on the study and research of the construction and representation of identities in children's literature.

7.3.1. Reader Response, Educational Programs, and the Representation of Other Hybrid Identities in Children's Literature

For the purposes of this dissertation, that is, identifying the elements used by Chicana authors to represent their cultural identities in picturebooks, the primary intention of the analysis of picturebooks has been to study children's literature as literature, that is, focusing the analysis on the interaction of the written Spanish/English texts with the illustrations. The research on the reception of children's books authored by Chicana writers in the US publishing industry from Multiculturalism in the decade of the 1990s until nowadays in section 6.2 has provided me with a first snapshot of how the situation of Chicana children's literature has changed in the last thirty years. The two fieldwork studies included in sections 6.3 and 6.4 of this dissertation are a first approach to the

reception of these materials in the US educational system with the focus on educational programs and educators. What naturally follows this research is the study of the reception of Chicana children's picturebooks with its focus on children. An interesting line of postdoctoral research, taking Reception Studies and Reader-Response Theory as the main framework, would be to design a number of fieldwork studies to work with children through the community and the schools in order to assess how Chicana (and non-Chicana) children respond to these picturebooks in terms of their own identity, whether they identify with the verbal and visual messages conveyed by these bilingual picturebooks, as well as what impact these materials have in their everyday school and community lives.

Another significant line of study related to this research might be how other hybrid identities are being portrayed in children's picturebooks, not only in the United States context, but also in other 'Third Spaces' or borderlands where the building of cultural walls and lack of understanding make it necessary to build bridges through art and literature, children's literature being a tool to promote intercultural and plurilingual competences in increasingly plural societies (Sugrañes and González-Davies 47). Furthermore, bearing in mind that children's literature may be used as a tool to promote plurilingualism, it would be relevant to explore the status of bilingual editions of children's books in the various contexts where languages are in contact such as in Spain, where the existence of four official languages would deem it pertinent to provide children with books where they can actually see those languages represented on the same page in order to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Moreover, it would also be relevant to assess whether the new heritage languages of migrant children are being integrated in educational programs, and also in books for children not only in this researcher's context and Spain, but in other European territories.

7.3.2. Integrating Literature Written by Children in Plurilingual and Pluricultural Projects

Another line of research which dovetails with the issues I have referred to in the 'Further Questions' sections above regarding authorship and the adult-child power relation in children's literature, consists in the exploration of those children's books which have been written by children themselves. In his article "Chicano/a Children's Literature: A *Transatlantic* Reader's History", Manuel Martín-Rodríguez points out the fact that an

important number of anthologies of works written by children were published during the period of *el Movimiento*, since that intellectual framework took into consideration “what it meant to be a (Chicano/a) child” (26), and Chicano/a children were not only seen as students and readers, but also as potential writers. Exploring those anthologies and ascertaining whether they have had some kind of continuity up to the present would be a significant way to complement this study, as well as a relevant topic which deserves its own research to approach the construction and representation of Chicanx children’s identities through their own pieces of work.

In her doctoral dissertation, *A Plurilingual Approach to Language Teaching and Learning in Catalonia: Using Heritage Languages in the Additional Language Classroom* (Universitat Ramon Llull), Caterina Sugrañes presents The Story Book Project carried out by fifth grade students in a school in Barcelona, in which participants in groups create story books in English and translate them into the different languages spoken by the students in the class to encourage their plurilingual identities. Half of the participants in the project were not born in Catalonia and their families immigrated to Barcelona at different stages of their lives (6). According to Sugrañes, this project confirms recent research in that using pupils’ languages in the additional language classroom, here English, is relevant to pupils’ identities. This is a significant example of how the interaction of identities and languages at school and in the community can be explored through the lens of children’s picturebooks created by children.

7.4. Final Reflections

In this final section of my dissertation I will attempt to close the concentric circles which this study has been revolving around, or rather, to open the “universal spiral” of Francisco Alarcón’s poem illustrated by Maya Gonzalez in the picturebook *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates Risueños*, “there are / no endings / just new / beginnings” (32) (fig. 64):



Fig. 64. *Tomatoes 32*

As noted in the analysis of Gonzalez’s picturebooks, one of the Chicana artist’s strongest beliefs underlying all her work and projects, both visually and verbally, is ‘the Power of Reflection’ (section 5.11.2). Its double meaning, reflection as an image and visual representation, as well as reflection as a thought, a careful consideration, has allowed Gonzalez to link both meanings in her work as an artist and as a writer: “I create reflections of myself so that I can reflect upon them” (*qtd. in* Naidoo 323).

Drawing from Gonzalez’s power of reflection, in these last pages I would like to reflect briefly on my own research as to what it has meant to me both academically and personally.

7.4.1. From Concentric Circles to Spirals

As a language teacher and as an interpreter, I am used to organising ideas on lists and charts, and representing time as a horizontal line when trying to explain the difference between verbal tenses, especially in English and Spanish language teaching. This research has opened new ways in which I can organise now my thoughts and ideas, and even the way in which I understand time. In the last chapter of his work *The Poetics of Space* (1958), Gaston Bachelard’s discusses ‘The Phenomenology of Roundness’ through a series of concepts found in the work of psychiatrist and German philosopher Karl Jaspers (“Every being seems in itself round”, *Von der Wahrheit*, 1947), Van Gogh (“Life is

probably *round*”), and French poet Joë Bousquet (“He had been told that life was beautiful. No! Life is round.”). According to Bachelard the sphere includes the values of perfection and unity, because when a thing becomes isolated, it becomes around as it is “concentrated upon itself” (254). This is probably why the Aztecs and the Mayans used concentric circles to represent time in their calendars, although my brief study of the Aztec calendar suggests that a possible interpretation of the symbols contained in those circles is a representation of the movement of indigenous peoples from Aztlan to Tenochtitlan. There seems to be an irremediable relation between circles, time, and movement. In any case, as I was moving on in my research, I became aware that the organization of this dissertation in three main parts could be represented by three concentric circles which feed back one another: part one (theoretical framework) – part two (analysis of picturebooks and fieldwork studies) – part three (conclusions). Similarly, the three power relations on which I focus my analysis of picturebooks—heteronormativity, ethnicity and class, and gender— can also be represented by three concentric circles, each of them in constant relation to the other two. Interestingly enough, Botelho and Kabakow represent the essential elements of their critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature with the image of concentric circles, or rather a spiral in Janet Tonell’s illustration in Appendix D of their book (327) (fig. 65).

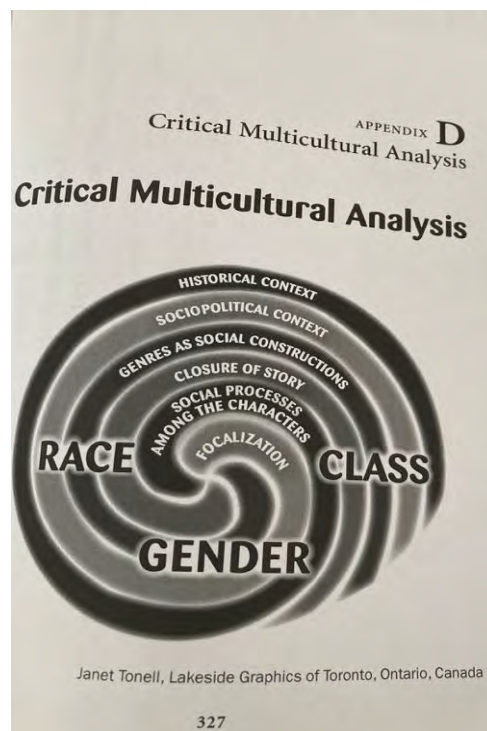


Fig. 65. Botelho and Kabakow 327

As Gonzalez notes in the back endpapers of *The Gender Wheel* picturebook, circles and spirals are found in nature and infinite points can be represented along the circumference of circles.

7.4.2. Hybrids: Building Bridges by Blurring Boundaries

One of the concepts which this dissertation has revolved around is the notion of ‘hybridity’ which I developed in the theoretical framework drawing from Homi Bhabha’s work in *The Location of Culture* (section 2.1.2). As noted, according to Bhabha, hybridities originate in the liminal spaces or ‘interstitial passages’ left by fixed categories. Cultural hybridities are those that can produce instability in order to make social change possible since they are born without imposed categories (Bhabha 55). In Anzaldúa’s words, it is the new *mestiza* consciousness which originates in the liminal space of *frontera*, the bearer of a hybrid identity who can transcend duality and act as a bridge between cultures. Gonzalez herself, in our interview, referred to Chicanx identity as “a synthesis of unity”, expressed in her phrase “I am both, I am everything” (interview, min 06:00).

It is in terms of ‘hybridity’ that I understand this research: as a *hybrid* work which studies *hybrid* identities by analysing a *hybrid* piece of work. But let me briefly refer to all those *hybrids* of my previous sentence. The hybrid piece of work is the picturebook with its two codes which blurs the boundaries of the concept of what literature is. Not only that, reading and analysing a picturebook as an adult experienced reader of verbal texts has made me be aware of my own limitations not only when reading the visual text, but also when describing the images.

This study can be considered as a hybrid research because of the focus, on the one hand, on the textual elements (*textual* meaning both verbal and visual) analysed in picturebooks, and, on the other hand, the focus on the various conditions explored in the two fieldwork studies on the reception of these picturebooks.

Despite being an academic work with academic purposes, one would like to think that this research could serve as a tool to blur boundaries and build bridges, in Anzaldúa’s terms. Since Anzaldúa’s work has acted as a bridge in this research to connect theory, analysis, and conclusions, let me resort to her words again to reflect on this research and my own identity: “Identity is like a work of art: you take from all the influences and worlds you’re inhabiting and... los compones, haces una composición with different

stages. Your dissertation is going to be your fruit.” (Anzaldúa, *Interviews* 241). This dissertation, ‘my fruit’, has helped me reflect on my own identity as an adult with a responsibility, or rather, being aware of the importance to provide children with what and how to read, both verbally and visually, in order to allow them to reflect on the patterns they find in children’s literature.

As a hybrid myself both culturally, due to my Mexican childhood and my adulthood in Spain, and professionally (I am a language teacher and a translator and interpreter), my research is inevitably imbued by that hybridity and by the need of building bridges by trying to blur boundaries, an idea which is expressed by poet Gina Valdés’s epigraph which opened this dissertation:

There are so many borders
that divide people,
but for every border
there is also a bridge.

Gina Valdés, *Puentes y Fronteras*. 1996

Walls and borders are also referred to in Judith Butler’s reflection on our responsiveness to the suffering of the Other, which I included to open the theoretical framework section on the other:

The other is not simply on the far side of the border, itself violently imposed and maintained, and there is no separating wall that can nullify the ethical demand for responsiveness to the suffering of the other. How are we to think such a responsibility across a border that is meant to differentiate populations, to prevent their inmixing (intermixing?) and to render faceless an entire population?

Judith Butler, *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. 2012

And to open this conclusions section I have included Chicana writer of children’s and young adults’ books, Viola Canales’ significant words on walls, bridges, and literature from her “Belpré Author Award Acceptance Speech: The Beauty of Us All, Together”:

In a time when far too many think we should be erecting bigger and bigger walls to close our borders, it is literature that inspires us to build broader bridges instead—ones that open our eyes, our minds, our hearts. (*qtd. in* Naidoo xvi)

Let me close these reflections with the words of Chicana author Norma E. Cantú in her introduction to “30 años de Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza de Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa” (2018):

I conclude with a plea and a challenge for those of you who read these essays: carry the torch forward and “do work that matters” out in your own communities, I challenge you to work to dismantle borders and to bridge them wherever they

exist. The work of decolonization is never ending. Whether in radical readings of texts and films, or in the classroom inserting disruptive voices into the cacophony of diverse voices, Anzaldúa impels us to act and to do so with conciencia. She whose life's work was about coalition and building bridges reminds us that we do not need more walls in this global community, we need more bridges. So let's get to work, "do work that matters. Vale la pena, it is worth the pain" (Anzaldúa 2005: 102). (*qtd. in Camino Real*, 2018 22)

My intention with this research is to emphasize the importance of studying the literary representation for children and young adults from the university context, given the fact that this representation is significantly important in the construction of the self, not only from the educational standpoint, but also from the artistic and aesthetic point of view. In addition, I consider that it is also worth studying, from Europe, the intellectual production of the Chicax community, since it questions and helps us reconsider our understanding of our own diverse communities.

Vale la pena, indeed...

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9. Appendices

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9. Appendices

Annex 1: Maya Gonzalez interview I: transcription

SF 08/02/19)

Marina Bernardo - Thank you for accepting to give me this interview, Maya. Thank you so much.

Maya Gonzalez - My pleasure.

MB - I wanted to ask you different questions. I have set two different blocks of questions. The first one, the first block is on your work as an author of picturebooks and young adults' books. And the second part is rather on children's literature in general and Chicana identity. So, first, regarding your work, your picturebooks and your young adults' books, probably picturebooks better, about the visual and the verbal. What is your creative process like? And the interaction between image and Word. Do you think first on the words, do you work first on the image?

MG - Well, so... this is a great question because this basically I think circles in on the larger spirit of my work **[min 01:00]** in a sense is that this is a healing frame very much rooted in my own experience. So I basically believe in my body and where I have been .blessed and/or cursed to learn through it. And I began ironically as a young child wanting to be an artist, right? It seemed a way to be really free and that I could express something that was very much pushing on me and I don't think I understood as a child what that meant yet, that it was a lack of visibility or reflection in the world that I had a sense of self but in no place did I ever see it or touch it out the world around me. And even in my own family because I'm biracial with a white side and a Mexican side that there was this real disconnect about who I was, that I was nothing, right? And so, art was the way to affirm my very existence as a small person, and I negotiated that through a number of different things. When I was thirteen, for some reason Emily Dickinson, **[min 02:00]** and I've just actually read about this, her words were like paintings to me, like they took me to this place that I was trying to touch, and so I stopped painting, I'm like, no, no! I will not be an artist now! I will first do writing, and writing became a place where I just could put forward everything, and it was a place where I could play with art I could fuse these different experiences on my own, so that the idea of spirit, having a very, very active spiritual life mixed with a creative life and this very deep internal life, very embedded in the experience of nature, these were the things that kept me alive, kept me strong, and then fused with the creative force and all these expressions. So, my writing had all of it, it was like this place, it was just so great. Because I was used to being such an outsider, I couldn't quite enter those forms that were kind of being presented to me. I was always breaking forms and not understanding them because they didn't work for me. So my writing was a place for a lot of experimentation. And when I got, I didn't even think that I was going to go to university, it was not on the table, or it was just like I was going to

be a writer, but then it was just when things penny shifted and I had that opportunity, my writing was that place where I immediately got like spring into this position. So, I think even if pointed out how much those forms didn't fit for me. And then at a very young age, putting to like graduate creative writing programs where it was all white, straight, males and their fixation on that kind of material. And first I was just like UAAAA! and then it mixed with being disowned by my family when I came out and all this stuff, and silence just like poured over me, thank god! and I write about this a lot, I could paint. And so, I went back to the non-verbal, and that's where I, that shift where I could access a non-verbal richness and still be able to express, to be perfectly honest I think saved me in many ways, to continue negotiating that pressure that builds up when you're extremely creative and you are negotiating a lot of things in life. So, and I stayed a painter for a very long time. I put all writing aside, in fact when I would write, I would write like in secret, and then I would hide it in my books. I still have all that writing embedded in all of my books and one day I will gather it all together. But the non-verbal was so important to me and I could embed my stories in it. I very consciously embedded a lot of symbolism and stories and spirit in that process. It was a ritual. And I think going into the non-verbal, after thinking I was going to be a writer, actually cleared me out and healed my mind and my spirit, and I think I developed in that place a great deal. And I realize what kept me strong and I basically, in a sense if, I can say this as much as possible, I decolonized myself [min 05:00]. A step outside of the framework is that where meant to dictate my behavior on every level and developed actually through study and a very strong spiritual practice this whole other world view based on queer, trans scholarship and this reclamation of what had been colonized. And it's not about going back to the past by any means, but allowing that to come forward again, be healed through these last many hundreds of years, going all the way back through the initial formation of patriarchal, Western culture to be honest and how we are tied to Europe and all of the countries there and what got negotiated there and how that got transferred to our indigenous communities here in the Americas. And I think that Chicax literature really is, in my imagination, one of those healing veins, [min 06:00] a synthesis of unity, of being like "I am both, I am everything and how do I in this moment hold on to my ancestry in a way that's legitimately not denying with the 'fuck up' it.

MB - Reconciling more and more...

MG - Yeahh. So, it's weird. I think that had to be non-verbal for a long time and so, it's interesting getting involved in children's books and Gloria Anzaldúa's being the first book that I illustrated it was like I am, like I was put on a path that I wasn't conscious of at the time, but doesn't surprise me. I have always asked to be guided and so, it makes sense that when I went back to my book, then I was guided to do this and then that guided me to do this, and there's a clarity to it. So that, when I stand here sometimes I'm like ZEEEEE!, I couldn't have planned this better. Had I not surrendered to this larger spirit, this larger nature, this more integrated whole non-Western, like full self. So, that's the encapsulation of everything. I would use now anything and everything that will take us to that place and so, my toolbox now is this verbal/non-verbal [min 08:00]. And even

with this “ABC book” that’s on my plate right now, it always goes back and forth now for me where first I do the drawings, then I do the writing, then I do the drawings, then I do the writing, and then the writing is talking to the drawings, and the drawings are talking to the writing, and that’s the conjuring of it, that’s the magic, the witchcraft in a sense of allowing the creation to become itself and then to surrender to witnessing it, how we become conduits in a sense. So that these are my stories in one sense and yet they’re everyone’s stories and I can access that through graphic into this more ritual, non-verbal spaces, so that it becomes a song that I’m singing out. I listen to the kids, and because I’m focused on gender as part of my frame, and specifically indigenous and POC children that are queer, trans and intersex, that I’m really calling through from this very deep spiritual place, and trying to, I think, in a sense, extend the rituals that we have in our ancestry into this moment through children’s books. That’s my fine-art way that I talk about it. And I think my trick has been how do I synthesize that into the most simplistic terms to get into the classroom, because my goal has always been in indie teaching in children’s books is how do I access our most-at-risk kids through those who find themselves in these positions to teach. Teachers are amazing and it’s a beautiful job, and it’s just terrible that this should stop. So, the kids, the teachers, right?

MB - Yeah, in fact that was one of the questions that I had for the second block.

MG - See, I don’t give small answers.

MB - No, that’s perfect, no, no, no. It’s much better like that. How do you think is contemporary Chicana children’s literature being received within the United States context? Are schools accepting it or just in certain areas of the States, like California, where there’s a higher population of Chicanas or are your books being used by educational programs?

MG - So, this is interesting. I’m a nerd, obviously, and I do a lot of research in a lot of ways and then I like to format it to be understood, and one of the things we do are the statistics where we look at the CCBC’s children’s books’ statistics and look at what kind of books are actually being created and supported, and as we find, to stand in equity with, if we look at my framework is, if European white Americans are certainly the most free to express, and that system supports that, and if we stood in equity with them, what would we need? And with the Latinx community it’s staggering, in fact, it’s the worst **[min 10:00]**. I don’t have my numbers with me, but it’s often in like 700 more books per year within that framework. It’s just like, wow! We’re still completely invisible in an equitable framework. And we’re demonized so much right now by the administration. There’s this interesting thing going on where bullying is on the rise and that invisibility piece is in flux, well because of this fight for a justice framework finally getting a little bit more pulled here within the industry, which is very conservative generally, it’s starting to get a little bit better, but it’s really still kind of ridiculous and it becomes very obvious that the system wasn’t built for us, and with that said, within communities where there is a high Latinx population, books like mine and many more now, of course there’s many

more. Back in the day when I started, there was just like a handful of us practically. Now there's many, many more, which is fantastic, more diverse, more interesting, many more cultures represented, because of course Latinx experience is extremely diverse across the Americas, and indigenous communities, I think it's fantastic, but still, still we're really tiny. And I think that a lot of times what is frustrating is that because they end up being the only thing within that system, within a classroom where Latinx people are put in unfavorable perspectives, I feel like, it's not a losing battle, by any means, I don't want to frame it in that battle sort of idea, but it's a long dance, that's what I say. I think there is some movement, and I think that within more progressive environments it takes hold, but I think it's still absolutely stunning what I see out in the world to be perfectly honest. So, I want to think that this is great and I'm so excited that there is movement, and we have so much further to go. And when it comes to first voice, much as people writing about Latinx people, but actually Latinx people having agency and voice within this community, within this country, and we have very far to go. And I think that having this political framework is pushing that, which is great, there are people like "Oh no, we do need to step forward", and I like that, I love that. **[min 12:00]**

MB - So, I'll go back to your children's books, picturebooks. So, the illustrations, the art. Where does your art draw from? Cos I have read a thesis, it was a small book, a Master's thesis about your art and Frida Kahlo...

MG - Oh! Interesting!

MB - Together with other...

MG - Oh, Frida! I get partnered with Frida so often. We're both Mexican and German, which is interesting, so there is that...

MB - So, let me see, it's here, it's a Master's thesis written by someone from the University of Iowa, Lauren Marie Freese. Well it's "Frida Kahlo and Chicana Self-Portraiture: Maya Gonzalez, Yreina D. Cervantes, and Cecilia Alvarez"

MG - Oh, my goodness! That's great! The things I find out about myself...

MB - And she describes a little bit your fine art, specially 'The Love that Stains', and well, she compares it with Frida's 'Las dos Fridas', right? And the title of the chapter of this thesis is "Breaking Traditional Dichotomies", which I think makes a lot of sense, and the author says that your art draws from Aztec art, Aztec symbols, but also from Buddhism and...

MG - They've done their research! What's interesting when I first moved to San Francisco I was deeply impacted by the murals, and I don't know if while you're here you have time, specifically, the Women's Building is staggering, it's the whole building, and my studio actually is across the street from one of the side streets, it's on... Oh! My

brain is completely forgetting what they..., but it's one of the side streets, and so I look out and I see, there's Rigoberta Menchú, it's just stunning. And all of these great muralistas from the area gathered and painted the Women's Building, and it's literally, one of the most beautiful ones in the city, and there are many. And so when I first moved here, I think I was very struck because I had been so impacted, actually mostly by Diego, there are some by Frida as well. The murals just like...ah! It was so... I want to say refreshing. I love seeing buildings with just art all over them [min 15:00], it's just so nice, and they have stories, they have meaning, behind the imagery you're faced with every day, was part of changing me. And so the murals here just deeply impacted me. And then, what's interesting is that the style I'm working on in the most now, it is so simple, right? With the *Bully* book and the *i see peace*, and the *Gender* books, they follow this style. It took me a really long time to develop, but that's hilarious, it took me years to simplify myself into what felt almost like writing and drawing became the same, which is what I believe wanted. And I wanted something that kids, I always, whenever I make art for children's books, I was always pushing myself to experiment as much as possible, so that I can actually show a child in the classroom or an educator think "Oh, look, Maya says this is how they did this, and you can see how they did this in the book. So, trying to expose them to lots of different ways to look at art, how to look at craft, and for that shift so often the materials we think are supposed to be this, but really if we open up to this, then it just like flows through us. So, how to get kids to see into the materials as well. So, this actually, the style on these books, my current one (*They, He, She...*), I've studied jigsaws(?) in Japan. Is it China or Japan? I did it so long ago, that now I can't remember. And I wanted a style that embedded that spiritual sense, that felt universal, that anyone could project upon, like it wasn't just me saying, this is what, that people could actually see themselves in it because it was so simplistic, and that a kid could be "I could do that". A kid would automatically say "I could do that" and that they would. And they would be like 'oh', and like in *Bully* I actually draw it out and be like "Hey, this is how you do it, you're stressed out, let's do a drawing of yourself, let's do a drawing of the person who was harmed, so you can send them love through this act of creativity". So, I say I make children's books, but it's really about conjuring, and about spirit, and about speaking to that place where Western culture cannot touch us. They have tried to pretend that this doesn't exist and it focused here in the most superficial based place, and so, from here, specially with children, specially using creativity spirit, heart and healing, we can actually enlighten this connection that we all have. So, I don't get to talk to a lot in books, about that aspect of what I'm actually doing, but that's the truth. And when I focus on the fine art, it's interesting, it's almost like I'm allowed to talk about that more. So, when I was framed as a fine artist for many years, ah! I've got to talk about all kinds of stuff. Now that I'm focusing on children's books, I'm trying to translate that into this moment, and yet sometimes I get tired of being so simplistic, and want to talk about that, simply this is about consciousness [min 18:00], and that's how we're feeling at this time, and children's books again go back to that, this is literally where we plant the initial seeds, what are we planting?

I'm glad I chose such a noisy place!

MB - It's ok, no problem. I hope I don't miss something...

MG - I'm trying to be loud...

MB - Yeah! Since we have the actual books here, *the Gender Wheel* is not a bilingual edition...

MG - I know... Which it saddens me at the moment. It saddens me all the time, actually...

MB - And my question is... Well, I attended a seminar with Judith Butler in Barcelona. I don't know if you are familiar with her? She's the author of the book "Gender Trouble". She's an academic working on identity and specially "Gender Trouble" is about what is gender? Gender is something that is constructed by society. And in this seminar she talked about the difficulty of translating gender into different languages. It was so interesting. Gender not only as a word, which of course, is difficult to translate into certain languages, like Spanish, we have different words: 'género'... but, it's difficult, the pronouns for instance, in Spanish also. And she talked about this difficulty of translating not only the language, but also the concept. And I was wondering if that's why you didn't do this a bilingual edition, if it was for that reason or...

MG - That's... you know... and this haunts me. I am basically always in the look out for people and I lean to Spanish that is more Mexican-oriented because that's the dominant frame here, but obviously the more international in word world domination through a lot of children's books [min 20:00]. We need to expand it into larger frameworks around that, but because we have such a high population here is, finding somebody who can translate it in a way that's contemporary. And because I know that queers are using language, we always mess with language, because the language wasn't built for us, right? So, we're always messing with it. We're like "Oh, yeah, ta, ta, ta, ta, ta. You think I'm a 'she', but I'm actually a 'he'". So, I'm always on the look out for folks who are going to be good translators in that way, and I haven't lined up with anybody yet, because it's a huge amount of work, and at the moment it's literally me and my partner. So, I'm always looking for new ways to create translating cooperatives, or maybe a share, and a list of things. It's in the dream stage still. So, I'm always looking for translators. But that's interesting, that's great, actually, because I think what's going to happen is we're going to hit critical mass at some point and we're going to need this now, let's get this out. And so, it will be interesting then to be able to walk through how to communicate. What I'm hoping, and this is why I go back to the Gender Wheel, which is never out of context in my imagination, is that the Gender Wheel ideology is nested always in circles that expand out. Whoever is in that place will go back to, who are the indigenous people from this place? What history has been suppressed here? And it's not only indigenous, but then the survival of queer, trans, intersex people through the colonized times, because obviously you're so deeply colonized. How do we get that and how to read that in a place where basically the colonization was home and crafted before it was transferred into here [min 22:00]. So, this is deep unravelling, but that's what I actually believe in, is that we're

going through a deep unravelling. And ironically, focusing on gender and this idea of how do we translate this, how do we create these conversations that actually hold that space, the indigenous from that area in these more holistic frameworks. I guess that's literally the role domination I'm talking about through love, and children's books is this way to unravel something that has been silenced and placed in tiny. I imagine in my heart of hearts that words will start coming out of people's hearts and minds and spirits and be like "Ooohhh, this is how you say that. This is what I remember. This is what has always existed through the land here that I can hear again". Because that land spirit healing is ultimately the point and how it moves through our bodies. And I say this when I lecture about gender. I'm talking about a very big thing. I'm not talking in any way about small things. And yet, it's the small things. You have to start somewhere. And once you get in the small things, well... So, isn't interesting to create that narrative in there?

MB - I've seen that you've created a school edition of the Gender Wheel. Why a school edition where the kids are wearing clothes?

MG - If it's a school edition, it means clothes. We always start naked. I wish we had tones of naked books for kids, but we don't.

MB - I showed this book to my kid, and I said have a look, and he said "Oh, mum! They're naked!" and I said "Yeah!" because he's not used to seeing naked kids in books. And then I saw that you had created this school edition with the children wearing clothes, and I thought: is it because society in fact is not ready for this kind of... well, of course not...

[min 24:00]

MG - Well, this is what's interesting. If we wanted to get into the schools, they had to topless that. So that's why we called it the school edition. We still make it way more than anything else, but it's good to know that people can get it into the classroom. So, that's our only reason, because it's way too tight here, and when I talk about sort of the foundation of the materials, what I hope in time to bring out more and more is specifically that controlled bodies and sexuality are the foundation of patriarchal domination. And so, it's no surprise that that's still so fixated on here.

MB - I've got the *They, She, He, Me*, and I got it through Amazon, because that was the only way I can get your books in Spain... but it's ok. But then, I was surprised to see that, when I ordered the book, then suddenly I see that here inside there are other two picturebooks by other authors. I don't know if you knew about this.

MG - Oh, my God!

MB - And then, at the very end, here, you've got the actual book. And I was like, "I don't know if Maya knows about this."

MG - Ok, oh, no! Can I have this for a sec? Wow, that's amazing! So, you know, that's

why we have this (and where is it? There's somewhere). Oh there it is! "If you receive defective or misprinted books, please contact us", but this is really insane, and...

MB - I thought I had to tell you.

MG - Is it all right if I take a picture of this? This that got printed in there? **[min 26:00]**

MB - You can keep it if you want.

MG - Keep it? Keep the book?

MB - It's got my ex-libris here, but it's ok.

MG - Oh, I should have brought you a new book?

MB - It's ok.

MG - I didn't bring you any books. I didn't even think of it.

MB - Because I also saw that plagiarism and how your work on the *Gender Wheel* was—I know this is not nice, but— how it was columbused, and what you said, and everything you wrote about it.

MG - So, it's interesting. I just posted something on Facebook, and it's the only place I've come out publicly about it, that I was, I might have been public. Did you see that? The plagiarism is, you know, it's been mind-boggling here, and we're still dealing with it in multiple ways. Sexism and that something would be attached to the *Gender Wheel*, that is so offensive to me. Well, I've held back a while to push the plagiarism piece. It's interesting as I move forward with the plagiarism, what I've heard sadly is that IPOC people in the US are frequently plagiarized because they lack societal power. And so, what's happened is this frame opened up this other aspect of reality, where everyone is continuously columbused here, which is really mind-boggling in multiple ways. And our society here in the US is extremely cis-sexist, so often I think because I'm stepping forward more with my gender work. And the fact that I'm queer as well and partnered with a trans person, my voice has, I think, been harder for people to support, honestly. And then I'm also still speaking very gladly to race and ethnicity. So, I'm less popular. More popular than all the cool kids, right? But, less popular I feel like in the dominate conversation and how to hold space for that. And so, now that we're coming out with more of the *Gender* books **[min 28:00]**, I literally could not hold that in any more. It really is very, very bothersome to me. So, I'm hoping that we're starting to be ready for that piece of the conversation, because when I look at children's books, the cis-sexism screams at me. And I'm, so everyone's straight, first I was all ok, everyone's white, everyone's like this very hetero, normative American way. Now, all I can see, and I had this before, but I was, it was too much to load on. Now, everyone is straight, everyone is

cis-gender, everyone is performing gender in the prescribed ways. And I literally cannot have my child... I literally can't, I mean, it erases my entire community. And so, we're always starving for books, and I change all of the words in all of the books, you know. And what is the little mermaid is all about drag queens, I don't know if you know that, Sky knows that, "oh, that is a drag queen", and I say "That's right, child". So, we're constantly reframing everything all the time, because the message is so dominant, if we reframe everything in our lives, it still permeates Sky's reality. It's just like that. So, I'm hoping the cis-sexism piece can come forward more in relation to children's books that were literally brainwashing children from a young age, how to behave, who to bully, and who is going to be bullied.

MB - It's all about bullying.

MG - Well, that's how you talk to kids about it. I want to say all of the other stuff, and I will, as basically Sky gets older, everything is rooted in the fact that I've got to get materials in hand for my own child. So, as they age, the materials will continue to age as well. We're going as fast as we can. **[min 30:00]**

MB - In terms of identity, I read what you said about the Power of Reflection, and that very nice concept of reflection with the double meaning in English of reflecting on something mentally, and the reflection of something or somebody, your identity. And I think that's very well-portrayed in *I know the River Loves Me*, when you see the girl and the river as a mirror where she sees herself. I think that's the most powerful image I've ever seen. And in fact it's in my master's dissertation.

MG - I saw that!

MB - I thought it was fantastic. This Power of Reflection is what you said before. How everything inside you is reflected in the visual and the verbal, but in the visual more than anything.

MG - Yeah! What's interesting in terms of the verbal is, I think, my experience has been that Latinx, indigenous, POC, queer, trans, intersex folks, we actually have a different way of seeing the world, and telling stories, and even perceiving nature. And, so I think you can hear that in the voice, and that's why then the reflection in the voice, having that same source and that same thing. I torture everyone to write stories and to make art themselves, and to include themselves in the art. And so much in my work initially, when I started working with kids, was about actually making art on their own faces, so that they started understanding how awesome they were, but also that they had the creative power to express themselves, and it was sort of that back door way of saying your body, your self is your work of art. This is your power, who you are. Literally your reflection is your power. And I think that's always at the heart of everything I do. That's the core piece. And because my work was mostly focused on, I had a whole life to heal of my own. So, all my books that I've done with traditional presses until *Call Me Tree* **[min 32:00]** have

all been very honestly about me processing myself, my family, my experiences, and everything, just everything. And then, as I started writing my own, when it became much more personal because then I could have all of it. I could be the queen of everything! Hey, I will write about this! Which I never, ever thought I would do. This was not intentional. Again it was this accidental sort of thing. So, all of these intensely intimate stories were me literally healing myself, and I think that the final one with the river, then I could build up and say, “Ok, I can do another child that is not me now with *Call Me Tree*”, who’s then...

MB - Not marked in terms of gender...

MG - Right, right. So, it’s interesting how all that fits into each other.

MB - And also nature, the presence of nature in those three books.

MG - Did you notice that?

MB - Well, then I read ‘the trilogy of nature’ or ‘the nature trilogy’, and I thought about that, but I wasn’t so sure about *My Colors*, *River*, and *Call Me Tree*.

MG - Yeah, it’s very interesting. In *My Colors*, *My World*, I don’t know if you’ve seen this, it was actually part of the somatic healing that I did in relation to a lot of my own trauma was. I used to have panic attacks, going to really dissociative state. I had a lot of trauma back ever from childhood. And then with adult trauma, it all got steamed up for a long time. And children’s books were a place where I could take that apart non-verbally, and it was fabulous! It was like “I exist, oh! No one knows I’m freaking out back here praying and healing all the stuff through my art”. All that way you feel like kids feel it. And when I started moving away, I got all sidetracked again.

MB - Yeah, but nature again...

MG - That must be the thing. Oh, that’s the healing framework. I’m always talking about the same thing ultimately. So, the healing frame is about how to become more present **[min 34:00]**. Nature had always been the place where I felt safe, where I felt like I could be myself. And it was always like that resource when I didn’t have anything else. And part of my healing practice was, when I would get very like checked out, which kids, you see traumatized kids really checked me just to leave. “Oh, I know that”. That’s why I like those kids, because I know. “Oh, I know you’re checking out. I understand that”. My books actually always have this somatic piece and always have this thing that calls us in and uses nature as that resource, because I know on some level we’re all traumatized. I tend to be drawn to the most traumatized because that’s where I relate, what I want to attend first, which ironically are the queer, trans, intersex, IPOC kids, just like me, often biracial or embedded in cultures that are deep inside this culture, so their invisibility is just intact. So, how to create those conversations, even those non-verbal conversations

with that piece to again, it might end in that somatic response. And even with the *ABC* book everything is always very intentional. I always have like an evil plan underneath of healing. So, it's all about dancing, and it's about not only learning the *ABCs* and learning the piece of pronouns, but about being in your body, about having your imagination move through your body in a way that keeps you strong, because that is actually what I've got to teach. The *ABCs* are a cheap excuse.

MB - And the next question is connected to this. I lost it! Well, I had a couple of questions on Gloria Anzaldúa, which I think is related to this anyway, Ah, no, no, no... Since we were talking about colonizing and the patriarchal system and so on, there, now I'm reading theory on children's literature and most of them are Anglo-Saxon writers who are looking at children's literature as a colonized place [min 36:00]. And the idea is that the adult who writes, reads, and chooses the books for children, is colonizing the child in a sense, in a certain way. We are deciding what they read, we are deciding how they should be educated, we are deciding everything, so it's this power relation: the adult having power over the child. I was reading that and I was freaking out. Oh, my goodness! What am I doing to my kid? I'm colonizing him. I can't believe it! From their point of view, the postcolonial studies and power relations, it makes sense in a way. And they talk about this childIST literature, literature written by children, for children. What do you think about that?

MG - I love that I'm never alone. That's what I love. So, that's interesting. There's a couple of pieces to that. So, there's this first piece around being a parent and being a parent of a very young vulnerable child. So, as we're dealing with gender, it's very interesting. Our child, we've raised as gender neutral, if such a thing can exist as possible, which means bringing a lot of awareness to the cultural framework as well. And in as many ways as possible, keeping her separate from those. And you say 'her', Sky has no idea what 'her' even means in some ways. It's a pronoun, whatever that may be. She's literally, she's been called every single pronoun out of the world. And we always bring her back to that. So, what we've noticed in relation to gender as we're taking it out is, we are participating in a home and schooling practice with our child, and so we have a very child-focused learning. She is to initiate what she wants to learn in her way. It's a way of learning all these foundations around her, and she's already learning how to read. It's all moving. Because I trust that she already knows how to learn, it's that whole framework. But, within that frame [min 38:00], in our imagination, my partner and I, is because this is so dominantly, patriarchal, westernized, colonized, bla, bla, bla, and our perspectives are not included, what we can do within this framework basically to keep Sky free, like our hoping is: how do you raise a free child in an unfree world? How do we ourselves stay free within an unfree world? Is we develop critical thinking, and that ability to see through what's happening. So, that we don't take anything to a circus level and to always think of those concentric circles. That's what I always try to think of, to think in patterns that are concentric. So, we are very intense in how we curate what Sky comes into contact with, including also exposure to the dominant culture, be like "Yeah! This is an opportunity for us to talk about why all the brown people are working in the kitchen, were

all those brown people probably Mexican, right? Let's talk about it". So, that there's this constant way of bringing presence and awareness, it's just normal. It's just, I'm not going to freak out and make a great deal out of this. We're just going to talk about it, because this is what we see every day. And that's how we approach children's books. "Oh, look! This book has all white people in it. What the heck is going on with that? Is this like people who sit in the front at the restaurant? Interesting". We're just noticing this. So, bringing that constant awareness into it, so that I basically am aware and being honest with the fact I believe this, and this is why we read books like this, Sky. It's just like I will not participate in the girl-boy life. That is a bully behavior. So, we're constantly empowering them, and then, as they age, they will then be drawn to know whatever they need, what books they have, and then support whatever they want to curate, basically their library, in a sense. But they'll have that critical awareness to be like: "Well, look at this ABC book. All the kids in this one are brown and dancing. This feels good to me. This feels like something we would have made at home". OK, let's do, let's get this one. It's interesting then to see how that literally plays out on the playground. Who is Sky drawn to? Who does Sky reach out to? **[min 40:00]** Who does Sky always include? How do they talk about kids? How do they negotiate and how like mediate different things on the playground between people? They need to see all of that there, and then we make into a children's book. So, it's a holistic, it's a family-based frame that is invested in being a parent committed to freeness and awareness. It's a bitch in one way, and yet it's enlivening in another. Like I said, I love my child and being a parent has just made it all meaningful. So, as I see it myself. I co-parented another child for eleven years, now I have this child, whom I'm co-parenting, but they're in my home all the time. Again, things get put in my path, that are exactly not what I expected, not what I intended to do. I wasn't going to be a freaky artist. But well, this is even better.

MB - Yes, sometimes that's how things work. The more you plan, the worse.

MG - Just don't do that.

MB - Somebody has planned everything for you...
So, is it ok can we move on?

MG - Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I said to my partner before coming here, "Well, if it's a good interview, I'm going to have a really good time. So, if not, it will be like, you know, short". So, thank you very much!

MB - Thank you! One of the theorists that I'm following in my line of thought for my dissertation is Gloria Anzaldúa. I think that's where it all started, when I looked at her children's books, and then I saw *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. And I saw that you had illustrated the book, and then I researched a little bit...

MG - Oh, fabulous!

MB - And then I saw that you were writing your own picturebooks and everything. So, it's like the connection, I think for what I was planning to do, again [min 42:00], and your picturebooks. I wanted to ask you, what was it like to work with Gloria? Did you work together with her?

MG - I love people always ask me that, and I'm so sad that at the time she was really nearby, too. We had some correspondence and very little else, sadly. And this is one of those interesting things where... I actually just picked it up, I pulled it out. I had a manuscript I wrote in the middle of somewhere in the last two years, that is actually my story, but it's me connected to Francisco Alarcón, and connected to Gloria Anzaldúa, and connected to —and I'm forgetting now their name— but it's one of these famous poets in Mexico, and then to Frida. And I have always resisted my connection to Frida because everyone says “Oh, you're just like Frida”, and “Look, maybe... I don't know... completely”. In some ways. And I think it was more that thing where you have to individualize, and I was just “Don't pigeonhole me”. But the truth of the matter is there's this huge connection. Gloria wanted real Spanish in the book instead of academic Spanish, because Children's Book Press had been struggling with more academic Spanish prior to this. And literally, Gloria and Francisco came in and said “No. You need to speak like this. Let's be real here, right? If you're doing this work, this must be the language”. And so, Francisco, and I didn't know it actually, I think maybe until much later, even within the last ten years I think I found out that Francisco translated that book because of Gloria. Because of that, and because of Gloria, then Francisco and I did six books together. So, Francisco, prior to his passing, I interviewed him for my website. He spoke of his mentor in Mexico City, who was the first Mexican person, gay person, they had ever seen read gay poetry in public, and it changed them in their heart. That person was best friends with Frida Kahlo. So, I was just like “Wow!”. And what happened for me was I was never alone. All of those times when I felt like I was alone, I was never alone, literally, like Frida. Somebody came up to me when I was in school and said “Oh, you're my near Frida”, and then that helped me. And then, when I came to San Francisco, I had Gloria Anzaldúa and all these queer Chicax people around me, tracing back to Frida. And I was “Oh, this is my ancestry, this is my lineage”. And so, if you pass that out to other queer, trans Chicax kids, to be like, you have a lineage, be mine, you can be part of my lineage. This is how we go back to Frida. We are Frida [min 45:00]. And I had always used her art as this one practice that I did with kids that was that ‘I am Frida exercise’, where I would make them do art on Frida as themselves, and it would blow their minds and they would come up with this amazing things. And adults, it would blow adults' minds that they would come up with these amazing things. And I was like “Oh, Ok. I accept that I'm in lineage with Frida in this way”. And then, in a sense, I'm doing probably what she would be doing, the most radical thing you can do to create social change. And at this time, this is one of the ways. So, it's interesting. Actually my partner at the time had given me a book, *La Frontera*

MB – *Boderlands and the New Mestiza*

MG - Right. A signed copy that they got in Oregon, I lived in Oregon. They gave it to me in Oregon and it was one of the few books, along with my books of Frida, that I carried to San Francisco. And then I walked in to doing a book with Gloria. I mean, it's so weird sometimes the magic of life. And then Gloria remained elusive and passed so early. And then Francisco got so closed, and then passed so early. And I'm still here.

MB - About *Ma Llorona*, and I connected it in a presentation last year in Salamanca...

MG - Thank you! My first foray, if I got the hell out of it now! Again, I did it because I wanted that roundness. I wanted it to be like, you know what? We can do whatever the hell we want, we can tell our stories and trying to get back into that voice where people don't feel, Chicanx in particular, I hear so often from people "I don't have a story", and you hang with me long enough, "Oh, child! The stories you have, that you don't value". This silence that lays on your tongue. And once it gets lifted off, you can't stop telling stories. So, I wanted *Ma Llorona* to stay very raw in a sense, and be "Hey, we can get anything out". **[min 47:00]**

MB - I connected that to Gloria Anzaldúa's latest work, because she was working on, I read in an interview that she was working on a young adults' book, and she always worked around *La Llorona* and the symbolism, and then, *Coyolxauhqui*, because she represents her creative process in *Light in the Dark*, —I don't know if you're familiar with it, it's a book published by AnaLouise Keaton, she's an expert on Gloria Anzaldúa's work, and she compiled all her writing and all her last work.

MG - Gloria lives on and on.

MB - And it's funny that she explains how her creative process is like *Coyolxauhqui*: it's all these different pieces all scattered, and then she puts them back together again. In this presentation I talked about how with *Ma Llorona* what you do is you take the baton, you continue Gloria Anzaldúa's work in a way.

MG - Oh, wow! See, and again

MB - That was my theory. I don't know if you agree...

MG - This is that thing where I feel my little self cannot make this kind of plans, but my big self is all on it, and that's where I have to surrender to repeatedly in relation to my work, is that there's something larger than me, within through me and I feel very fortunate to have figured out how to shut the hell out when things wave through me sometimes, and to not... to be embodied. But it's so interesting, I want to say to not take full credit, to allow my small self in a sense to stand in the presence of my larger self that is by still being in conversation with Gloria very actively. That's literally where I feel that Gloria, Francisco, Frida. That there was this intention of permeating the physical with spirit **[min 49:00]**. And I feel that is the lineage that I'm literally a part of. So, in a sense I'm like

“Wow, that’s amazing to learn! Oh, and I’m not surprised”. That’s hilarious. So, in that sense, I’m not surprised. I surrender to the path. Because *Ma Llorona* was like push through the green forest. I have Gonzalez, all of these stories and story-tellers inside me that are literally pushing to get out, but because I have a five-year-old, the gender is really taking forefront at the moment. So, there’s much to come.

MB - Then, I’ll have a lot to work on.

MG — Just when you think you have me, figure it out.

MB - So, I think that’s it more or less.

MG - Thank you.

MB - Thank you so much!

Annex 1: Maya Gonzalez interview II: results

1. CONCENTRIC CIRCLES→
 - verbal-visual-verbal-visual...
 - Movement
 - Gender Wheel Ideology

*Thesis structure, Gender Wheel
 2. NATURE→
 - resource for her HEALING FRAMEWORK
 - Resource for traumatized kids

*Nature Trilogy = healing herself→ I exist!!
 3. ANCESTRY-LINEAGE→
 - G Anzaldúa, Fco Alarcón, Frida Kahlo= community (never alone). Alarcón's mentor (a Mexican gay poet) was Frida's best friend.

*Analysis
 4. HEALING→
 - through art /creativity, children's books
 - ART: now more simple so that kids can make art, to empower them
 - SOMATIC RESPONSE: 'Permeating the physical with the spiritual
 - Develop CRITICAL THINKING

*Bully
 5. HAVE A STORY→ NOT SILENCED (Colonization)
 - Language (local Mexican Spanish, lg for queer, trans, intersex) to reflect the different way of seeing the world, tell stories, perceive NATURE
 - Everybody has a story

*Bully (translation, colonization), Nature Trilogy
 6. PATRIARCHAL DOMINATION (Colonization)
 - Societal power
 - Body control (plagiarism)

*Bully
- Not planned (a little self) // Unexpected things (big self)
'The magic of life', 'There's something larger than me'
 - Create social change = the most radical thing you can do
 - Children's books→ more simple style (Peace, Bully, Gender Wheel). Simplistic terms to get into the classroom and reach most-at-risk kids.
 - CORE PIECE→ 'Your reflection is your power'
 - Everybody has a story: 'My stories are everybody's stories'

- Children's Lit: colonised by adults. Being a parent → awareness ('raise a free child in an unfree world) → develop critical thinking
- ART: influenced by murals (Diego Rivera) because they have stories (the Women's Building in San Francisco).

I See Peace, Bully, The Gender Wheel → simple style, took her years to simplify herself into writing and drawing becoming the same, a style that felt universal, that anyone could project upon...

Annex 2: Analysis Grid (Picturebooks Analysis)

Analysing the representation of identity in maya gonzalez’s picturebooks.

Word and image interaction

		Illustrator and author								Illustrator								
		Nature Trilogy								The Gender Wheel			Gloria Anzaldúa			Francisco X. Alarcón		
INDICATOR S↓	PICTURE BOOKS ⇒	Colors	River	Tree	Peace	Bully	Gender Wheel	Pronouns	ABC	Prietita and the Ghost	Tomatoes	Bellybutton	Bikes	Iguanas	Animals	Family		
		VERBAL																
	Bilingual	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes		
	Genre	Narr			Narr	narr	Narr	Info	info	Narr	Poetry							
Narrative devices	Voice	1sg			1sg	1plu	1plu			3 rd	1sg				1sg*ani	1sg		
	Focalisation	I = child Maya speaks and sees			I everybody	We	We			She	I				I animals	I		
	Narrative structure	Introduction, development, conclusion			Question, answer	3 parts	3 parts	repetition	repetition	Traditional (fairy tales)	—							

	Unity of the text and closure	Discursive threads: narrator, nature, freedom	Closure: repetition	Closure: repetition	Closure: circles, nature, movement	Repetition	repetition	Heroine's rite of passage	Last poem				1 st and last poem	Number of poems, tercets, 1 st and last poem
	Setting (time and place)	Nature, timeless	Timeless, no place	America, colonization/now	Nature, colonization/now	—	—	The Mexico-US border, now	California, Spring/now	Mexico Summer/now	Los Angeles, Autumn/now	Northern California/Winter/now	Iguazu falls, timeless	Community (Northern California), now
	Characterisation (physical, psychological)	-being through nature -active, agency -self-discovery and freedom	Anyone and everyone	-I, you, we=community -physical: simplification to reflect diversity, equality			Prietita: brave, agency, coming of age Llorona: helper, Curandera: mentor	Poet child: importance of family, community, diversity				- Animals: human attitudes - Humans: objects of contemplation		

		Colors	River	Tree	Peace	Bully	Gender wheel	Pronouns	ABC	Prietita	Tomatoes	Bellybutton	Bikes	Iguanas	Animals	Family	
INTERACTION ON VERBAL- VISUAL	Position text-image	Separated, text below	Intraiconic texts (moving with the illustrations)					Pronouns in green stripe at the bottom	Text at the bottom. Second line coloured, capitalized	Text framed recto-verso or bottom	Intraiconic texts (moving with the illustrations)						
	Frames	no				In 3 rd part	No	Bottom stripe	no	Yes	no						
	*Mode	Complementary															
	Size	Double page spread															
VISUAL	Colors	Bright colours: pink, mauve	White background, blue, green, pink	Colourful, nature colours, clouds=pink	White background, black lines	White background, Hues of brown (skin colour)	White background, Hues of brown (skin colour), green	Green	purple	Bright colours, predominance nature				Bright colours, white=snow, winter	Bright colours of nature, specially green	Bright colours, specially yellow	

							n, purpl e						
	Shapes	Predominance of round shapes (circles, swirls)											
	Lines	Predominance of soft, blurred lines											
	Margins	Illustrations bleeding to the page											
	Characteris ation (physical, psychologic al)	Maya's little self: round Chicana face	Not mar ked in term s of gend er, dive rsity	Sim ple featu res, simp lific ation	Simplification to reflect diversity	Distinct ive Mexica n indigen ous feature	More Mexican indigenous, realistic features, including overweight child, inclusiveness	More rounde d simple features	Animal s and plants depicte d in detail, humans sketch ed	Marked facial features to reflect diversit y,			
INTERTEXTUALITY	Endp apers : bilin gual gloss ary	End pape rs: Yuba river	End pape rs: trees in Oregon	End pape rs: the story of flow ers, abou t Maya	End pape rs: reso urces, refer als	Endpapers: resources, note to adults, resources on pronouns and inclusive language	endpap ers	Endpapers: important information from author and illustrator on thematic thread and artwork					

PICTUREBOOKS→Colors 2007 (CBP) 7, River 2009 (CBP) 7, Tree 2014 (CBP) 6, Peace 2017 (RP) 7-11, Bully 2017 (RP) 7-10, Gender Wheel 2017 (RP) 7-10, Pronouns 2017 (RP) 3+, ABC 2019 (RP) 3+, Prietita 1995 (CBP) 8, Tomatoes 1997 (CBP) 8, Bellybutton 1998

(CBP) 8, Bikes 1999 (CBP) 8, Iguanas 2001 (CBP) 8 , Animals 2008 (CBP) 8, Family 2015-17 (CBP) 7, Room 2000 (CBP) 8, Diary 2002 (CBP) 8, Nana 2007 (CBP) 8, Love-Sing 2019 (RP) 7-10

Annex 3: Guideline interview Dr. Carlos Pagán (Fieldwork 1)

MEETING WITH DR. CARLOS PAGÁN
Friday October 30, 2020 (via Zoom)

DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS:

- A response to a language activism to resist policies such as ‘English for the Children’?(California Proposition 227, 1998)→ Prop 58
-
- **Dual language:** A program in which the language goals are full bilingualism and biliteracy in English and a partner language, students study language arts and other academic content (math, science, social studies, arts) in both languages over the course of the program, the partner language is used for at least 50% of instruction at all grades, and the program lasts at least 5 years (preferably K-12). CAL and other institutions use this term as an umbrella term that includes two-way immersion, foreign language immersion, heritage language immersion, and developmental bilingual programs. Throughout the U.S., it is frequently used synonymously with two-way immersion.

- Is it the same as ‘Two-way immersion programs’?

Two-way immersion (TWD): A dual language program in which both native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language are enrolled, with neither group making up more than two-thirds of the student population.

- Other languages? Yes
- California Department of Education: sets content standards, teachers’ credentials, and the instructional materials for all K-12 subjects
- Bilingual books / dual language programs? → set by the standards. Schools are required to use the materials in the program to meet the standards. Teachers → Leisure: teachers can use other materials

DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CA:

Teach Bilingual CA: <https://www.teachbilingualca.org/contact-us/>

7 programs in Santa Barbara but rising in number. All of the Santa Barbara programs are dual language immersion, Spanish/English, and 90/10 (90% in Spanish and 10% in English to begin).

- Is it optional for schools? Schools (parents) request the programs → dept of education + school staff elaborate a plan to meet the standards and select classes

Schools ask for the program? Yes

Do they have to meet any requirements (minimum percentage of Latino students, only public schools)?

All elementary/primary levels? Yes Also secondary/high school?

- Teachers' special preparation? Yes

Do they have to meet any requirements (Bilingual Authorization)? Yes

The Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program (BTPDP) enables teachers to earn a Bilingual Authorization (previously called BCLAD) to help meet the needs of English Learners. This program is tailored to recruit and authorize future bilingual educators

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE

- **comments:** terminology and questions adapted to DLP characteristics and standards. Changes in format: include checklist, short introduction of my research.

PhD_Fieldwork2_Teachers

Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicanx writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in dual language programs to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books.

Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicanx writers and artists?

Yes

No

Comments

Tu respuesta

2. Could you name some authors (Chicanx or non-chicanx) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?



Tu respuesta

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

Yes

No

If yes

I have heard of them

I have read one / some of them

I have used one / some of them for my classes

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

Often

Sometimes

Never

If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

Tu respuesta

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?

- biliteracy
- critical literacy
- empathy
- self-identity

Others

Tu respuesta

Enviar

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① DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicax writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in a dual language program to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicax writers and artists?

Yes

No

Comments

2. Could you name some authors (Chicax or non-Chicax) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

Alma and how she got her name, Martina the beautiful cockroach, (we used to do a musical play based on the tale), books by alma flor ada, cuentos que contaban nuestras abuelas, quizás algo hermoso

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

Yes

No

If yes

I have heard of them

I have read one / some of them

I have used one / some of them for my classes

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

Often

Sometimes

Never

If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

With first grade DLI 80% needs to be in Spanish not bilingual.

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?

- biliteracy
- critical literacy
- empathy
- self-identity

Others

Self identity for some and empathy for others

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② DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in a dual language program to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers and artists?

Yes

No

Comments

I have a degree in Chicano Studies.

2. Could you name some authors (Chicana or non-Chicana) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

Alma Flor Ada, Julia Alvarez.

Many of the books we have are translated from English. We lack Chicano authors in our library.

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

Yes

No

If yes

I have heard of them

I have read one / some of them

I have used one / some of them for my classes

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

Often

Sometimes

Never

If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

I would love to! Students are in a DLI program and would feel proud to read bilingual books.

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?

- biliteracy
- critical literacy
- empathy
- self-identity

Others

Thank you for reminding me how important it is to have bilingual books in my classroom! We are working with our librarian to improve our Spanish book section. I will search for some Chicano/a authors.

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3 DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicax writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in a dual language program to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicax writers and artists?

Yes

No

Comments

2. Could you name some authors (Chicax or non-Chicax) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

Yes

No

If yes

- I have heard of them
- I have read one / some of them
- I have used one / some of them for my classes

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?

- biliteracy
- critical literacy
- empathy
- self-identity

Others

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4 DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicanx writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in a dual language program to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicanx writers and artists?

- Yes
- No

Comments

2. Could you name some authors (Chicanx or non-Chicanx) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

Patty Rodriguez

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

- Yes
- No

If yes

- I have heard of them
- I have read one / some of them
- I have used one / some of them for my classes

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?

- biliteracy
- critical literacy
- empathy
- self-identity

Others

Google no ha creat ni aprovat aquest contingut.

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⑤ DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in a dual language program to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers and artists?

Yes

No

Comments

2. Could you name some authors (Chicana or non-Chicana) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

Yes

No

⑥ DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in a dual language program to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers and artists?

Yes

No

Comments

I've read books written by Chicano Authors but not CHICANA

2. Could you name some authors (Chicana or non-Chicana) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

Dr Francisco Jimenez (book series). Bless me ultima is a must read,

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

Yes

No

If yes

- I have heard of them
- I have read one / some of them
- I have used one / some of them for my classes

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?

- biliteracy
- critical literacy
- empathy
- self-identity

Others

in addition to developing biliteracy, students can develop all areas empathy, self identity, self expresion, family values and cultural importance.

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DLP Teachers' Questionnaire

My name is Marina Bernardo Flórez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona (Spain). For my research on the representation of identity in English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers, I would kindly request you as a teacher in a dual language program to complete this short questionnaire on the use of bilingual picture books. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Are you familiar with English/Spanish bilingual picture books authored by Chicana writers and artists?

Yes

No

Comments

This isn't first year teaching a 50/50 bilingual program and I have limited resources.

2. Could you name some authors (Chicana or non-Chicana) and/or titles of English/Spanish bilingual picture books that you are familiar with?

This is an area I want to know more but it is never discussed at my site. Distance learning has not helped the situation.

3. Do you know the picture books authored by Chicana artist Maya Gonzalez?

Yes

No

If yes

I have heard of them

I have read one / some of them

I have used one / some of them for my classes

4. How often do you use bilingual picture books as extra reading material in your classes?

Often

Sometimes

Never

If never, would you like to? Please, give a couple of reasons for or against using bilingual picture books.

I would like to use them to support vocabulary.

5. In your opinion, what areas and skills do/could students develop by reading these bilingual picture books?

- biliteracy
- critical literacy
- empathy
- self-identity

Others

Google no ha creat ni aprovat aquest contingut.

Google Formularis

Short and Fox 2004: 378

Short and Fox

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

Attendee ①

Attendees questionnaire

Post educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: _____

Others: _____

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

I heard about Maya from a coworker
and her work around gender wheel

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

Not yet.

If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

Working on it as we speak

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

To learn how to be a better human: to reclaim
10 years (and many years) of ~~open~~ non gender
freedom.

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

This work is already helping think about ~~they~~
The way I see children and how they
want to be seen matters.

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

attendee (2)

Attendees questionnaire

Post: educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: About 5%

Others: _____

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

BANANAS website

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

No
If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

To gain more knowledge and tools for gender inclusivity

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

Communicate w/ my staff tools and communication techniques to provide more inclusivity

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

Attendees questionnaire

Post: educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: less than 5%

Others: _____

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

Bananas resource + referral agency

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

not yet
If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

interest in gender + inclusive language,
advocacy for children with gender expression
outside the binary.

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

to think of gender not as a binary or spectrum,
but a circle of gender.

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

Attendees questionnaire

Post: educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: Absent half of school
Others: _____

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

No Did not know about her

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

NO

If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

I was interested in gender inclusivity & since it was offered as professional development I decided to find out more.

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

Help those children that may need representation, that don't have it.

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

Attendee (5)

Attendees questionnaire

Post: educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: _____

Others: _____

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

no

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

Title was inviting

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

Attendees questionnaire

Post: educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: I am not in a school

Others: _____

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

trainings, books,

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

my own library at S

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

To gain knowledge & support Maya
I brought her here

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

even expensive &
tools to implement my
personal beliefs
vlog
babys/mas

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

Attendee (7)

Attendees questionnaire

Post: educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: _____

Others: _____

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

through this workshop

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

no

If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

to ~~be~~ learn more about the topic

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

to be more aware of

the language to use

Maya Gonzalez's presentation: The Gender Wheel

Attendees questionnaire

Post: educator, caregiver

Early Childhood, Primary

Presence of Chicanx community in your school: 5 out of 50

Others: About 50 children total - many children of mixed races (about 1/3), then about 1/3 white,

1. How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?

I had found some of her work on the internet when I was personally researching for storybooks to read & language to use at my school.

2. Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school?

Not that I know of, though we have a large collection.
If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)

3. Why are you attending this presentation?

I am feeling a great sense of urgency around this topic - a combination of politics and personal makes me feel this is a key moment in time to be using inclusive books, language, etc. with very young children.

4. How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?

I cannot wait to begin reading existing books with inclusive language, & to be carefully exploring our existing materials to see what I can modify, change, or eliminate! with this new lens.

Thank you!
Best wishes on your research!
294 ;

Annex 6: Questionnaire Results Chart (Feldwork 2)

Maya Gonzalez’s presentation Nov 5, 2019

Bananas Bunch, Oakland, CA

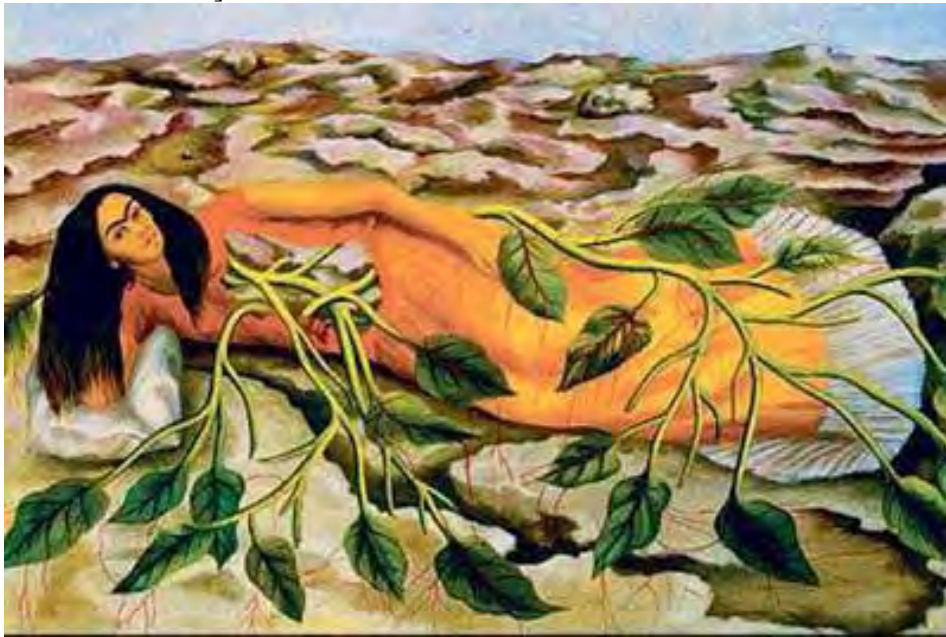
Attendees	1 educator	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 early childhood educator
Questions								
Presence of Chicane community in your school	Blank	About 5%	Less than 5%	About half of school	Blank	I am not in a school	Blank	5 out of 50
Others	Blank	Blank	Blank	Blank	Blank	Blank	Blank	About 50 children total. Many children of mixed races (about 1/3), then about 1/3 white
1.How did you know about Maya Gonzalez as an author/educator?	I heard about Maya from a co-worker and her work around	Bananas Website	Bananas resource and referral agency	Did not know about her	Blank	Trainings, books	Through this workshop	I had found some of her work on the internet when I was personally researching for storybooks to

	Gender Wheel							read of language to use at my school
2.Are Maya Gonzalez's books present in your school? If yes, how and where? (library, class, your own)	Not yet. Working on it as we speak.	No	Not yet	No	No	My own library yes	No	Not that I know of, though we have a large collection
3.Why are you attending this presentation?	To learn how to be a better human. To reclaim to years (and many years) of non gender freedom.	To gain more knowledge and tools for gender inclusivity.	Interest in gender and inclusive language. Advocacy for children with gender expression outside the binary.	I was interested in gender inclusivity and since it was offered us professional development I decided to find out more.	Title was inviting	To gain knowledge and support Maya. I brought her here	To learn more about the topic	I am feeling a great sense of urgency around this topic – a combination of politics and personal makes me feel this is a key moment in time to be using inclusiv

								e books, language, etc. with very young children
4.How do you think this presentation can help your work with children?	This work is already helping think about the way I see children and how they want to be seen matters.	- Communicate with my staff tools and communication techniques to provide more inclusivity.	-To think of gender not as a binary or spectrum, but a circle of gender.	-Help those children that may need representation that don't have it.	Blank	-Even expansive of tools to implement my personal beliefs/values	-To be more aware of the language to use	I cannot wait to begin reading existing books with inclusive language, and to be carefully exploring our existing materials to see what I can modify, change, or eliminate! with this new lense

Annex 7: Frida Kahlo's Raíces and Las dos Fridas.

Raíces. Frida Kahlo, 1943. [<http://gavieros.blogspot.com/2007/03/races-un-autoretrato-de-frida-kahlo.html>]

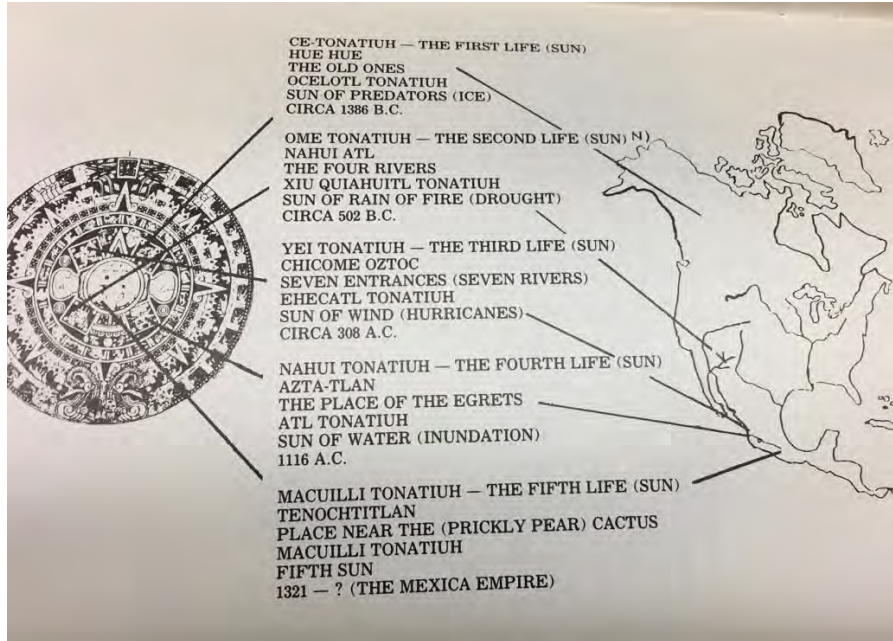


Las dos Fridas. Frida Kahlo, 1939. [<https://www.galeriavalmar.com/obra-las-dos-fridas-analisis/>]



Annex 8: The Book of the Sun Tonatiuh, Aztec and Maya Calendars

The Book of the Sun Tonatiuh by Cecilio Orozco, California State University, Fresno; 2nd Edition (1992)



Aztec Calendar [<https://www.pinterest.es/pin/31595634865194264/>]

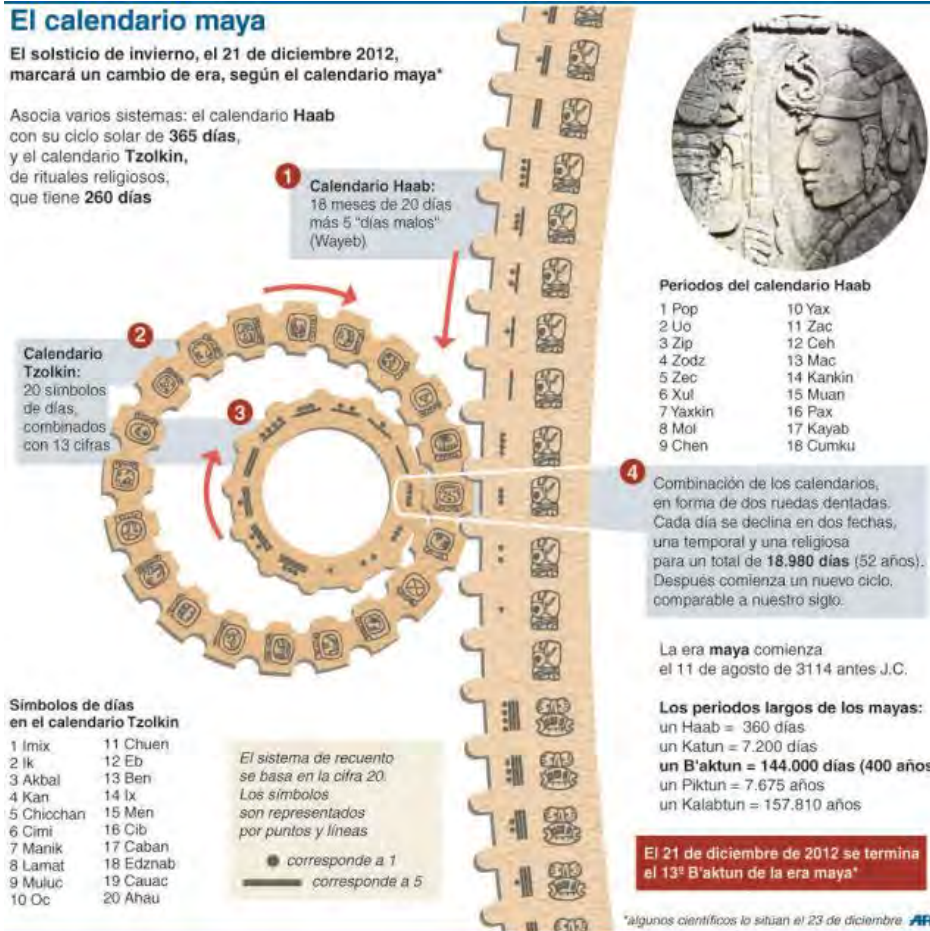


Maya Calendar [http://www.lasnibat.com/2012/12/que-ocurrira-el-proximo-21122012.html]

El calendario maya

El solsticio de invierno, el 21 de diciembre 2012, marcará un cambio de era, según el calendario maya*

Asocia varios sistemas: el calendario Haab con su ciclo solar de 365 días, y el calendario Tzolkin, de rituales religiosos, que tiene 260 días



#ownvoices
#firstvoice

2017 CCBC Statistics

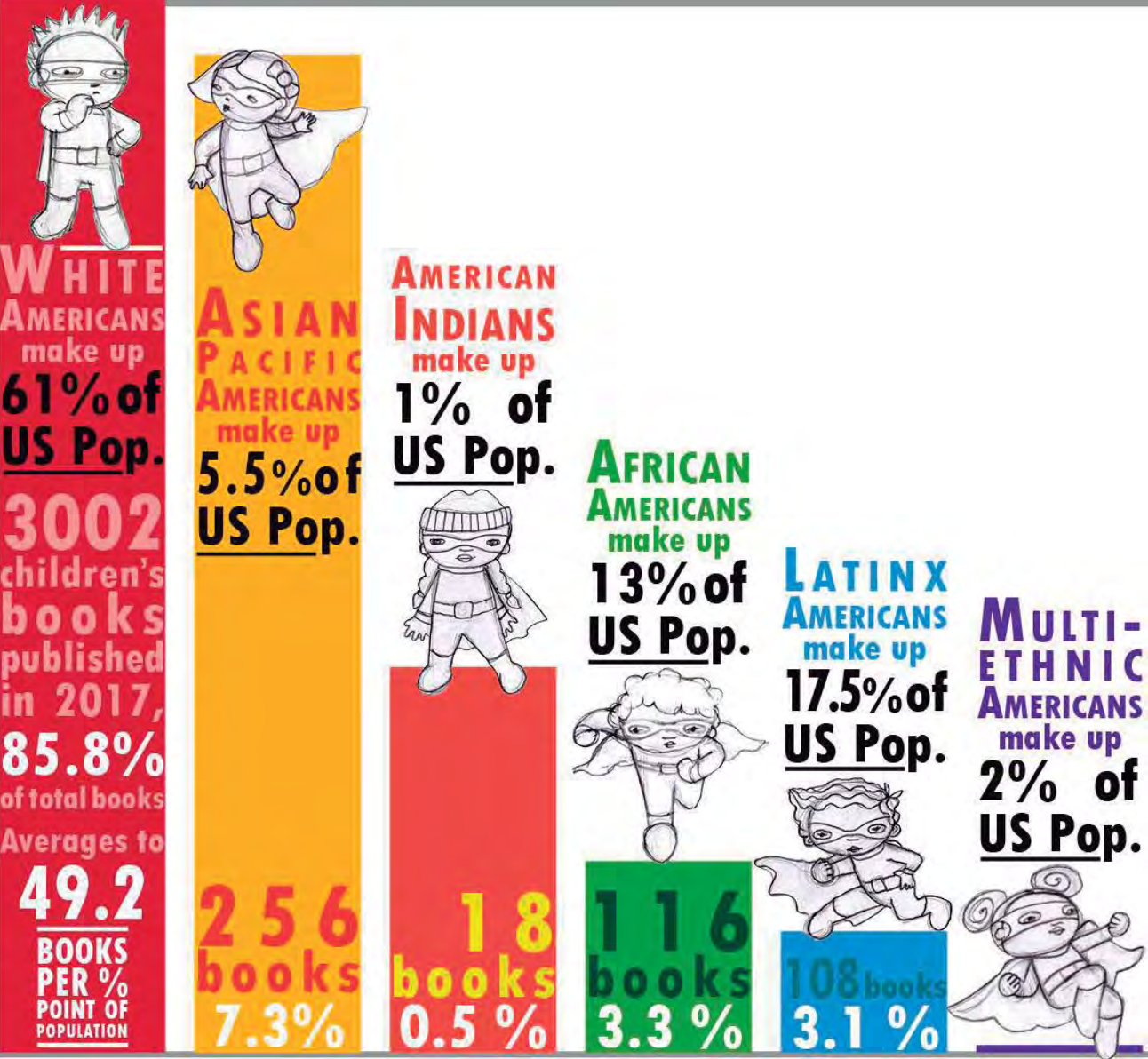
3500 books received from US Publishers

BOOKS BY each community

Population percentages based on 2015 US Census estimates¹

Total books for each community from the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) website as of April 2018
ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp

¹Census data from census.gov show percentages adding to 102.2%, likely due to the confusing way Latino/Hispanic race is reported. We have slightly rounded down to the closets 1/2 -3/4 percentage point to equal 100%, ultimately this is less about the specificity of numbers and book counts and more about overall trends.

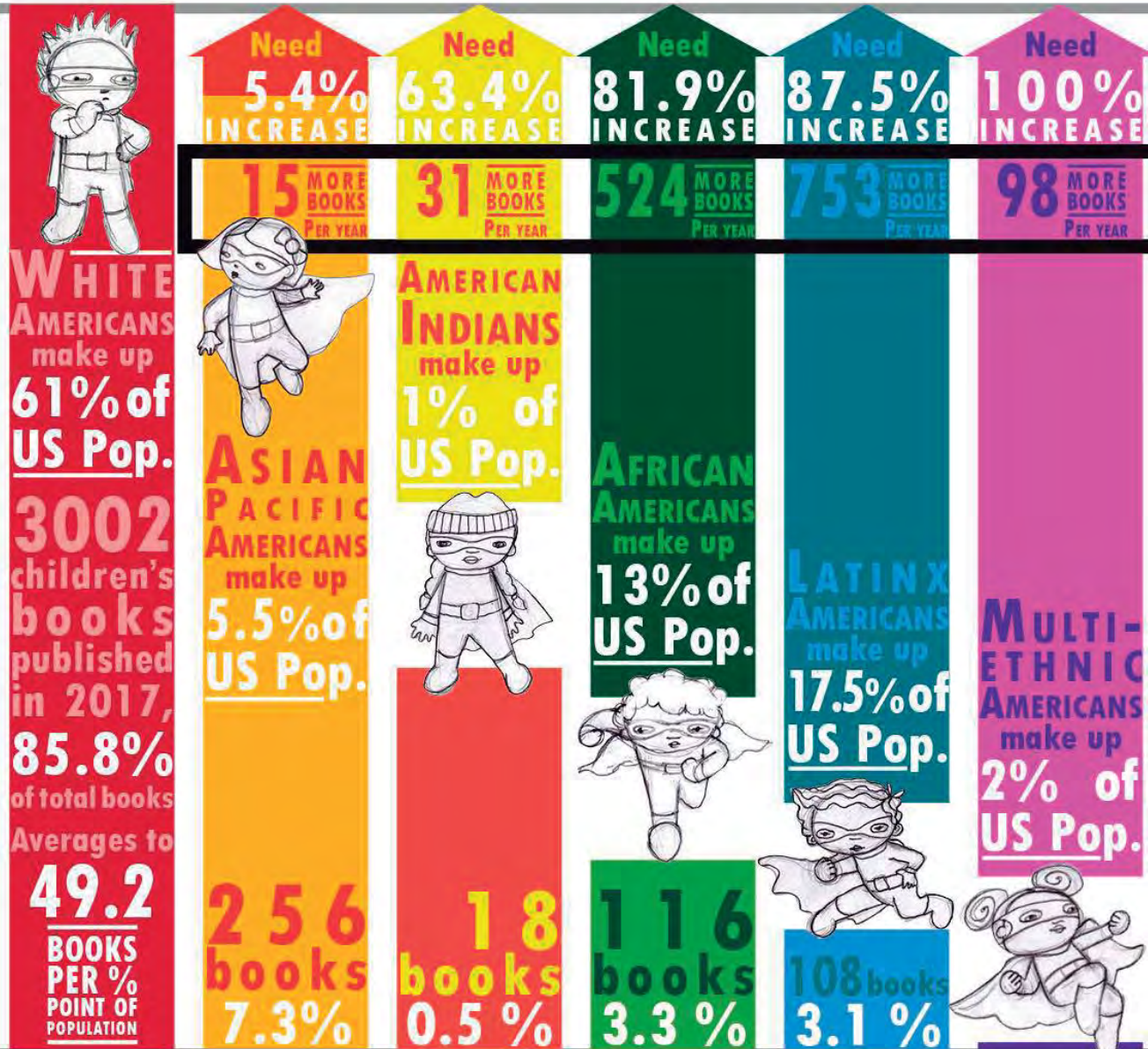


*We know that there are some books by multiracial authors out there, but they are currently not tracked separately from other communities. We include this as a reminder of the diversity of our communities and the US population.

CREATED BY MAYA AND MATTHEW / REFLECTION PRESS / SCHOOL OF THE FREE MIND : WWW.REFLECTIONPRESS.COM / RADICALACT 0 books 0%*

To be equal with White Americans:

using 49.2 books per % point of population



#ownvoices
#firstvoice

THIS MEANS

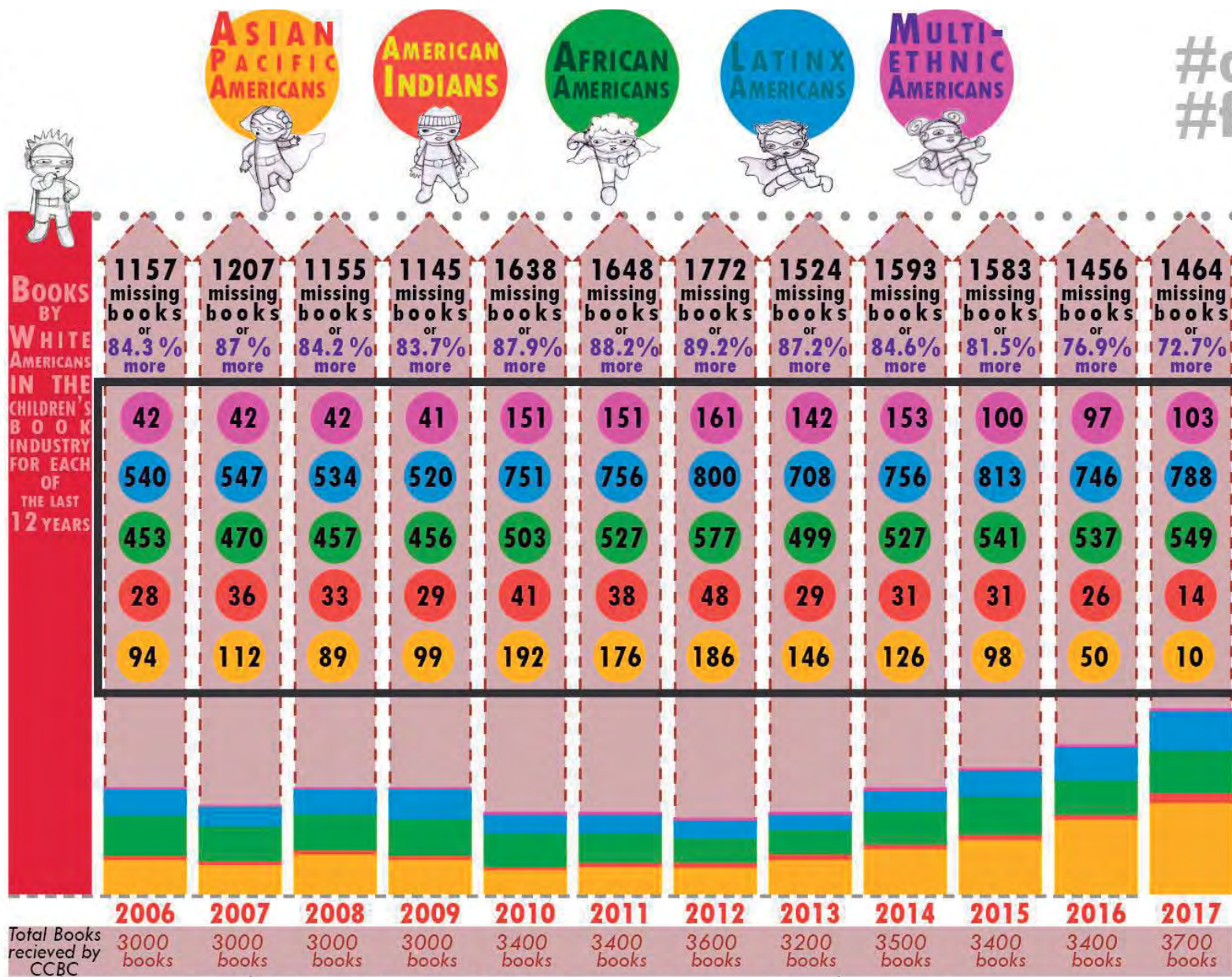
1421 MORE BOOKS
per year
BY
Indigenous/POC (IPOC) Authors

*We know that there are some books by multiracial authors out there, but they are currently not tracked separately from other communities. We include this as a reminder of the diversity of our communities and the US population.

a look at the last 12 years

books received from US & non-US Publishers

*separate statistics for US & Non-US publishers only started in 2015



#ownvoices
#firstvoice

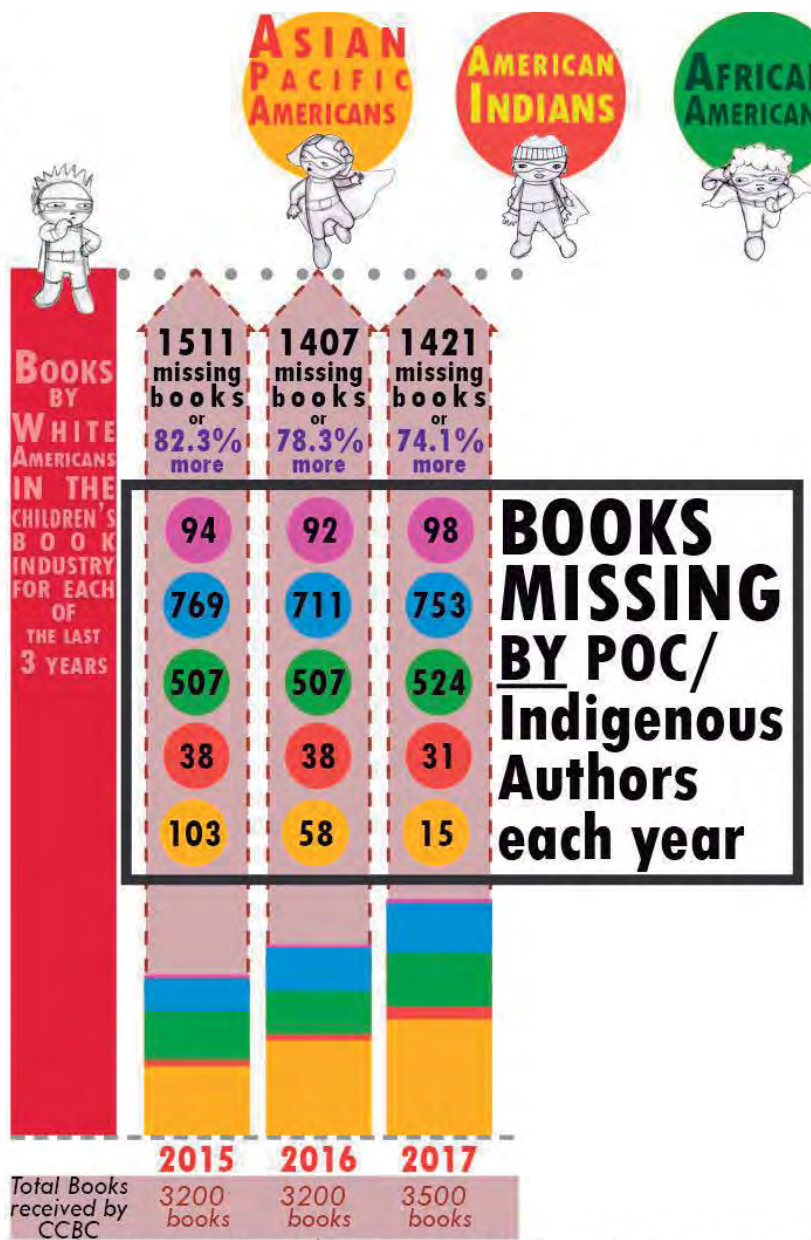
BOOKS MISSING BY POC/Indigenous Authors each year

a look at the last 3 years

books received from **ONLY US Publishers**

*separate statistics for US & Non-US publishers only started in 2015

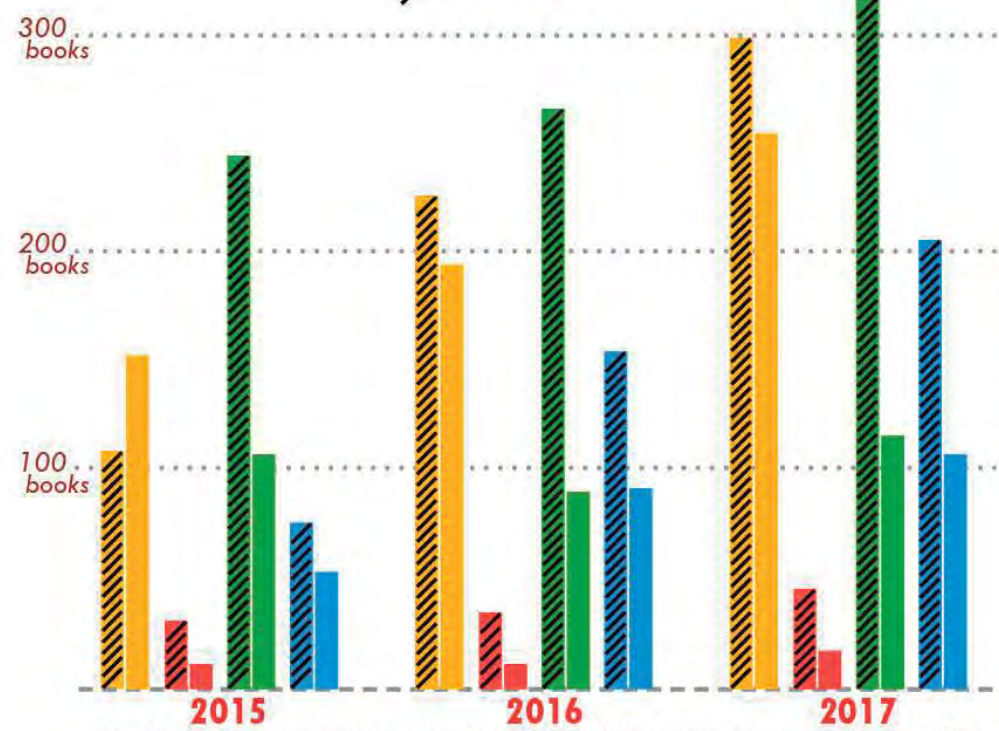
+ NOTE: see BY AND ABOUT graph on the "#ownvoices the last 3 years" infographic for greater detail around the BY numbers



#ownvoices
#firstvoice

Books ABOUT vs. BY

≡ = books ABOUT



Over the last 3 years, we've seen **larger increases in books 'ABOUT' than books 'BY.'** So who is telling our stories?+

the state of LGBTQ+ Children & Teen Books

3700 books received by CCBC from US & Non-US Publishers in 2017

134 had significant LGBTQ+ content* **only 21** were written **BY** LGBTQ+ person



* **IMPORTANT NOTE:** of the 134 only 13 were picture books

- 4.3% of adults self-identify as LGBTQ (millennials more likely than older generations at 7.3%)
- estimated that 1.7% of population are Intersex
- estimated that LGBTQ youth make up 7% of the youth population
- estimated 3-5% of children under 18 are being raised by LGBTQ parent(s)

This works out to at least 7.7% of the US population identifying as LGBTQI and/or being raised by LGBTQ parents. Given the still hostile climate for LGBTQI people and families it is likely that some may be reluctant to fill out census data for safety reasons so percentages are likely higher than what is reported. Also LGBTQ children are likely unable to self-identify themselves on surveys for numerous reasons but we know they exist.

Statistics:

- ccblogc.blogspot.com/2018/04/ccbc-2017-statistics-on-lgbtq.html
- news.gallup.com/poll/201731/lgbt-identification-rises.aspx
- time.com/lgbt-stats/
- www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2017-11/LGBTQ-families-factsheet.pdf



at least **7.7% of US Pop. LGBTQI and/or being raised by LGBTQ parents**

400 books

300 books

200 books

100 books

113 ABOUT (NOT VOICED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY)

21 BY & ABOUT

16% OwnVoice FirstVoice

2017

359 missing books

380 minimum*

#ownvoices #firstvoice

We would need at least 359 MORE BOOKS written BY LGBTQI authors for #ownvoice/#firstvoice reflection also taking into account the lack of POC/Indigenous diversity in the industry

*380 came from adding together the total US books received (3500) and the missing books for IPOC authors (1421 US) and taking 7.7% to get a general minimum estimate reflective of the US population, ultimately this is less about the specificity of numbers and book counts and more about overall trends.

#ownvoices #firstvoice the last 3 years

books received
from US & non-US
Publishers

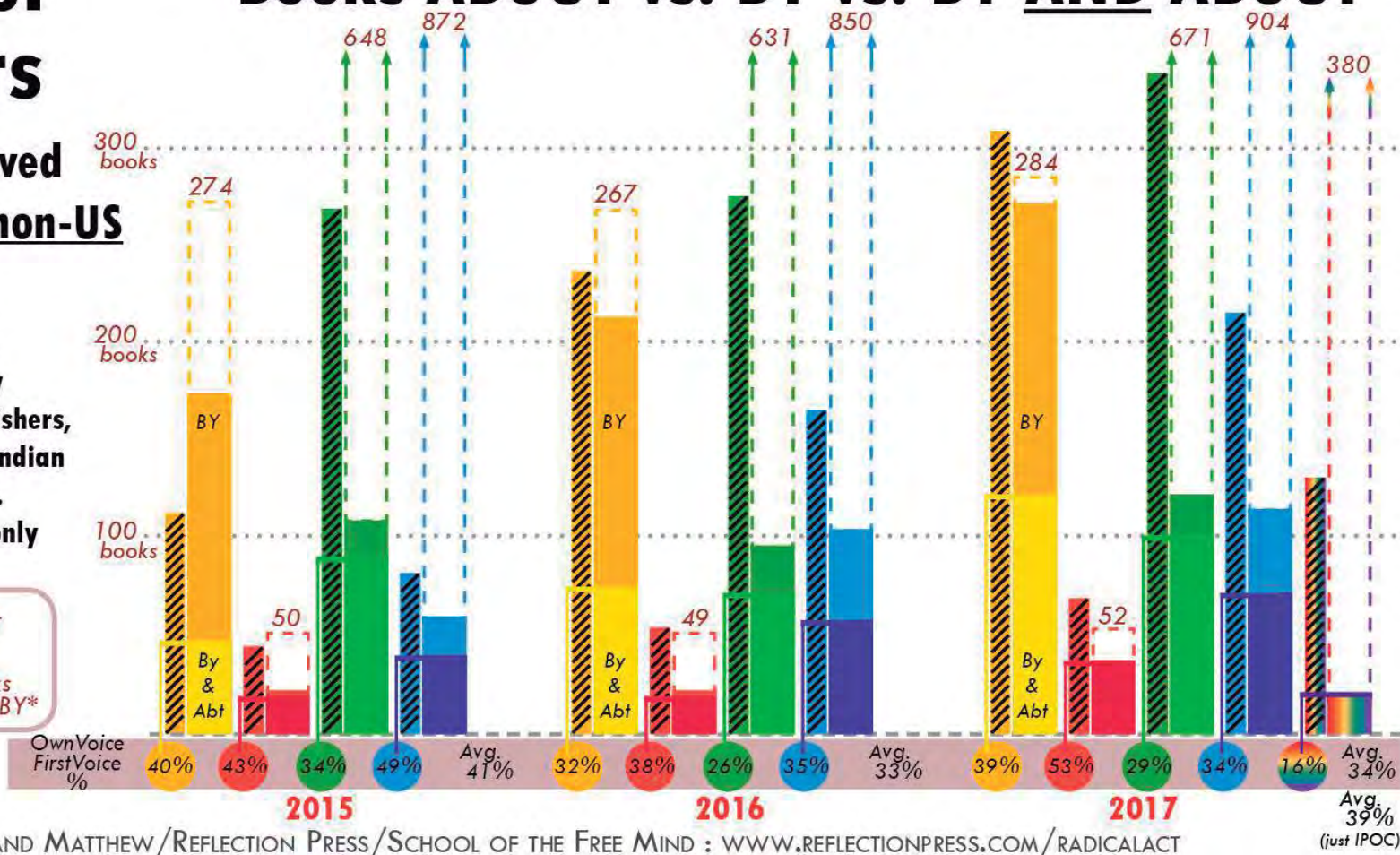
*BY & ABOUT not
tracked separately
from non-US Publishers,
affects American Indian
numbers the most.
*LGBTQ numbers only
started in 2017

▨ = books ABOUT
[] = minimum books
SHOULD be BY*



#ownvoices
#firstvoice

Books ABOUT vs. BY vs. BY AND ABOUT



While there have been increases in books ABOUT and, to a lesser extent books BY, for most communities #ownvoice/#firstvoice % (books BY AND ABOUT) has not shown the same increases.

2017 saw the largest # of books received in the last 15 years at 3700, over 700 books ABOUT IPOC/LGBTQI were written from outside those communities. For comparison, there were only 550 books BY IPOC authors in 2017.

Who controls the narrative?

*min. books SHOULD be BY is based on being equal with white Americans in books per % point of population for US & non-US publishers



Call Me Tree Gender Free

a note to my readers...

You may or may not notice something different about my new book, *Call Me Tree*. Nowhere in the story are boy/girl pronouns used. No 'he' or 'she' anywhere! I found it easy to write this way because that's how I think of kids, as kids, not boy kids or girl kids.

I even requested that no 'he' or 'she' be used anywhere else in the book, like on the end pages or the back cover when talking about the story. I also asked the publisher to only refer to the main character as a child or kid when they talked about my book out in the world. Because I wanted *Call Me Tree* to be gender free!

Why? I'm glad you asked

Two reasons come to the top of my mind.

First, I know a lot of people. Some don't feel that they fit into the boy or the girl box and of course, some do! By not using 'he' or 'she,' I could include everyone! This is very important to me. **I want everyone to know that we all belong!**

And second, I thought it would be a great opportunity to talk about the main character in *Call Me Tree*. Let's call them 'Tree.' *Tree* is like a lot of people I know, including my own kids! Strong, curious, free! Now, if you were going to guess if *Tree* is a 'he' or a 'she,' which do you think?

I'm going to guess you'd say 'he' first, maybe because *Tree's* already been called 'he' by folks who have given *Call Me Tree* some really awesome reviews. *Tree* could be he, but maybe not! A lot of times we make guesses based on what we think is true, but sometimes that can leave people out. ***Tree's* reminding us there are lots of different ways to be!**

I just remembered another top reason.

People who don't fit into the boy or the girl box get teased more than anybody. This is extra not cool to me. I happen to know all kids rock, so I want to make sure the ones that get picked on the most know they rock! Right?!

So *Call Me Tree* is gender free! Because all trees belong!

Try it on for a day. Play with not being called 'he' or 'she,' but only *Tree*, tall and strong! Just for one day, or even one afternoon. Would anything feel different? Would you be different?

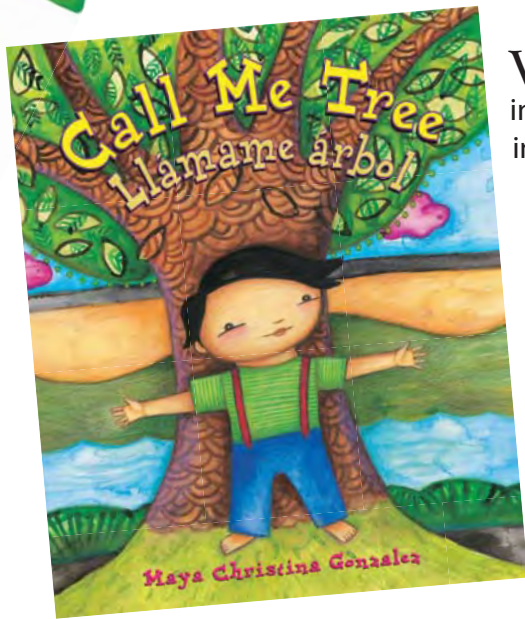
Let's call it Tree Day.

Let's all be free. Let's all be trees!
Whatdya think?

Call me Tree!

Love, *mayatree*





When sharing this book, you may want to include that it's gender free as part of the conversation in your classroom, library or home if

- you have a child, family or community member who does not fit into the boy or girl box they were assigned at birth
- you want to expand the boxes to include more ways of being a girl or a boy
- you want to be inclusive of everyone regardless of boxes because everyone belongs

For more resources:

www.reflectionpress.com/our-books/gender-now-activity-books-school-edition

www.welcomingschools.org/pages/resources-on-gender-identity-and-children

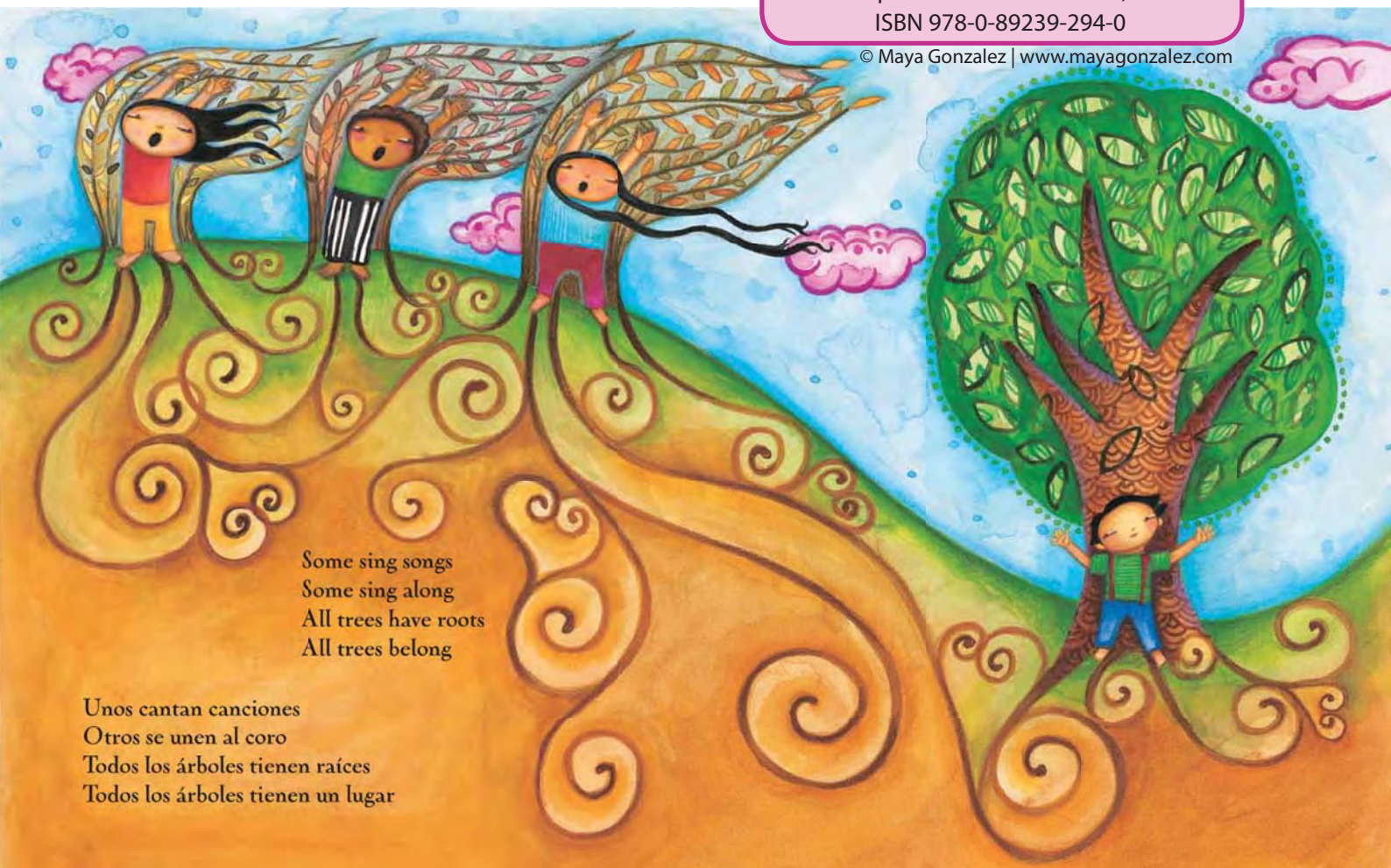
www.tolerance.org/gender-spectrum

www.genderspectrum.org

www.outproudfamilies.com

Call Me Tree
 written and illustrated by Maya Gonzalez
 published by Children's Book Press
 an imprint of Lee&Low Books, 2014
 ISBN 978-0-89239-294-0

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Some sing songs
 Some sing along
 All trees have roots
 All trees belong

Unos cantan canciones
 Otros se unen al coro
 Todos los árboles tienen raíces
 Todos los árboles tienen un lugar

Vetting LGBTQI Children's Books with Love

by Maya Gonzalez

I estimate that to stand in equitable reflection in the children's book industry, LGBTQI authors and artists need to produce approximately 380 books every year. In 2017 the CCBC began tracking the number of LGBTQ children's books, the numbers are sobering. Of the 136 books produced with LGBTQ content only 56 were written BY someone in the LGBTQ community. And with so few books that reflect us as well as even fewer written BY us, it can be challenging to be critical of the few that are produced. However, due to the nature of the industry and the sociocultural climate of the US it is vital that we educate ourselves to help bring authentic and appropriate LGBTQI children's books into our homes, libraries and classrooms.

This supports our families and especially our kids, and gloriously it supports LGBTQI children in public settings who may or may not have supportive families. The books you vet and share support not just our community, but are a way to extend our love and experience OUT to the children that we once were and support their families into greater LGBTQI love and awareness.

These are a series of guidelines for assessing LGBTQI children's books through a social justice/ LGBTQI lens rooted in love and respect for our community. The basic frame and a series of questions are meant to help bring conscious and critical awareness to the books that feature LGBTQI characters and stories.

Basic Frame:

- » Visual/Nonverbal Story
- » Cultural Awareness: LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Queer, Intersex), IPOC (Indigenous, People of Color), Disability communities
- » Suppressed History/Context
- » Lived experience, 'first voice' or 'own voice' contrasted with non-LGBTQI parent or professional voice (teacher, therapist, counselor)
- » Subtext and/or unconscious material/implicit bias

Intent:

- » Less about ratings and judgment and more about care and awareness
 - *even though a book may not hit all the marks, being able to acknowledge that with kids can be a powerful tool to help develop their own critical awareness and open up conversations*

Review Questions: (akin to researching 'fake news')

The questions (pgs. 3-4) are meant to draw our awareness and engage our thinking. They are not a checklist of rights and wrongs. They can support us in choosing books that resonate with us and our community, help guide our conversations with our kids, provide the chance to talk about how few books we have available and how and why some of them are limited in their perspectives.

I encourage parents to take the time to do a little research, critically look at the books our kids come into contact with and have the conversations... and when you find good books that lead to bigger conversations, get them into the classrooms and libraries and share your experience. Do not rely on blog and review recommendations. Many well intentioned bloggers/reviewers are also limited. We are at a time when we must develop our own awareness and be proactive in looking at what LGBTQI children's books are being created and what they're communicating to our kids, especially around gender and race. This is a time of waking up and taking action. Reflection is a powerful message of belonging that empowers our kids to find their way in the world.

Resources:

- » Statistics about how many more books each community needs to create each year to stand in equity:
 - <http://www.reflectionpress.com/childrens-books-radicalact/>
- » Interview about Maya's 3 traditional picture books within a personal queer frame:
 - https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/04/call-me-tree_n_6994138.html#
 - *Call Me Tree, I Know the River Loves Me, My Colors, My World* written and illustrated by Maya
- » School of the Free Mind Children's Book Course:
 - <http://www.schoolofthefreemind.com/courses/the-heart-of-it/>
- » Examples and support for bringing critical awareness to children's books:
 - <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>
 - <http://readingwhilewhite.blogspot.com/>

Books referenced in presentation (& some others):

- » Recommend for reflection:
 - Vivek Shraya, Rajni Perera: *The Boy in the Bindi*
 - Syrus Marcus Ware: *Love is in the Hair*
 - Beth Reichmuth, Nomy Lamm: *I'm Jay, Let's Play*
 - Catherine Hernandez, Marisa Firebaugh: *M is for Mustache*
 - S. Bear Bergman, Rachel Dougherty: *Is That for a Boy or a Girl?*
 - Gayle Pitman, Kristyna Litten: *This Day in June*
- » Recommend for parent perspective:
 - Laurin Mayeno, Robert Liu-Trujillo: *One of a Kind Like Me*
- » Recommend for Sex Ed:
 - Cory Silverberg, Fiona Smyth: *What Makes a Baby* and *Sex is a Funny Word*
- » Recommend for conversation and reflection:
 - Marcus Ewert, Rex Ray: *10,000 Dresses*
- » Do NOT recommend because of implicit bias and plagiarism:
 - Brook Pessin-Whedbee, Naomi Bardoff: *Who Are You? The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity*
 - Kelly Storck: *The Gender Identity Workbook for Kids*
- » **Maya's books through Reflection Press:**
 - *Gender Now Coloring Book*
 - *They, She, He, Me: Free to Be!*
 - *The Gender Wheel*
 - *When a Bully is President: Truth and Creativity for Oppressive Times*

Review Questions

Author

- » **Is this author/artist from the LGBTQI community?**
- » Are they Indigenous or a Person of Color?
- » What is their profession? Is it related to their authorship?
- » Are they a parent? educator? therapist or counselor? **What is their relationship to kids?**
- » Are they telling their story? If not where is this story coming from?
- » Are they claiming to be an expert? (especially relevant to LGBTQI nonfiction)

Art

- » The majority of what we teach is nonverbal
- » Do LGBTQI characters feel recognizable to you? How so?
- » Do you see yourself or folks you know reflected? Who is not reflected?
- » Are there different kinds of LGBTQI people shown or mostly similar kinds of people?
- » Are IPOC and disabled people shown? Different body sizes? Notice skin tones.
- » Who are what is shown the most? The least?
- » Do you like the art? What does it remind you of? Does it feel thoughtful and creative? What don't you like about the art? Does anything feel missing?

Gender

- » Are words like 'boy' or 'girl' used and how?
- » Are more than 2 genders shown?
- » How are different genders portrayed?
- » Note basic stereotypical representations: (just a quick few to get started)
 - *Girls: small, long hair, thin, 'pretty', decorated*
 - *Boys: larger, short hair, thin, 'cute' or 'handsome', plain*
- » What pronouns are used?
- » Are you reflected? People you know? Who is not reflected?
- » If you are someone not reflected, how does this sit with you? Can you imagine how you would feel if you were reflected? What if you were the main character?
- » What does this communicate to a child about the world around them?
 - *NOTE: To remedy the binary we must expand and play with pronouns constantly using any and all media available to us whether LGBTQI focused or not. Expanding the binary supports our community and helps dismantle layered systems that oppress us specifically.*

Storyline/Text

- » Feelings
 - *What is the overall emotional tone of the story?*
 - *Who has the most feelings? And what are they?*
 - *Who doesn't have a lot of feelings?*
- » Common Narratives to be Aware of
 - *Incessant inclusion of bullying-what does this communicate? Notice how many books are published and how many include bullying? With so few books published this becomes a dominant narrative: You will be bullied.*
 - *LGBTQI characters must be exceptional in some way to be valued. This includes but is not limited to the savior or hero position.*

- *LGBTQI characters must be convinced they're 'special' in order to cope and/or be seen as valuable by others, instead of being seen as normal and the reality that others are limited in their perspectives of inclusion. This is a form of othering.*
- *Boy wearing a dress is a dominant narrative for awhile. What does this communicate? What LGBTQI characters are absent? How does this reflect or not reflect the dominant culture and the fact that it is a patriarchy?*

» Text

- *The basics:*
 - What is the story about?
 - Are the characters fully realized and believable or stereotypical, one dimensional, predictable?
 - Did you learn anything?
 - Did you feel anything?
 - Were you entertained?
 - Was the author speaking to you as a part of our community? Or were they explaining our community to non-LGBTQI people?
 - What catches your attention? Both good and not so good.
 - What feels like it's missing?
- *Nonfiction:*
 - What do they define, share, tell?
 - What do they not define, share, tell?
 - Do they cite their resources or are their resources other resources?
 - Are they speaking from lived experience?
 - What is their position in the LGBTQI community?
 - Is their work plagiarized from LGBTQI authors? This is sadly so prevalent that we need to purposefully ask this question and be aware that many of the same resources are available in our own community. Support LGBTQI authors!

Overall message

- » What is the most basic message/s of the book? This is usually the intended message of the author.

Subtle message

- » What is the underlying or subtle message(s) of the book including both explicit and implicit content? Note what implicit bias may come from the author's position in our culture/society. (Rejoice and share if they deal with it in their text and/or imagery!)
 - *Explicit: story or text, art, stated intent*
 - *Implicit/subtle/sometimes unconscious: everything you've reviewed above taken into account within the context of our current culture/society, implicit or unconscious bias*
 - For example, prioritizing young, white males, even gay ones is more important than supporting other children in our current culture, especially when they're potentially socially at risk for not performing their appropriate gender assignment.
 - Other children matter less or do not matter.

Race/ethnicity, disability, LGBTQI—the whole picture

- » Are there multiple race and ethnic reflections in characters, communities and environments? How diverse? How recognizable from your own community and family?
- » Are disabled people reflected? If so, how?
- » Are multiple reflections of LGBTQI people present? Latinx Butch dykes? Professional African American Gays? Multiracial Trans Therapists? Masculine White Gay athletes?
- » Two Spirit- this is a specific identity tied to indigenous cultures of the US