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GRADUATE COLLEGE

LITERARY TRANSCULTURATION IN LATINO U.S.A.:

AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE IN THE WORKS OF

TATO LAVIERA AND ROBERTO G. FERNÁNDEZ

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Norman, Oklahoma

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AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE IN THE WORKS OF  
TATO LAVIERA AND ROBERTO G. FERNÁNDEZ

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES, LITERATURES,  
AND LINGUISTICS

BY

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Abstract

LITERARY TRANSCULTURATION IN LATINO U.S.A.:

AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE IN THE WORKS OF

TATO LAVIERA AND ROBERTO G. FERNÁNDEZ

Stephanie M. Alvarez

Director: Dr. Grady C. Wray

This dissertation studies the theory of transculturation and its application to the study of U.S. Latino literature. Specifically, I analyze Spanglish as a form of linguistic transculturation in the poetry of Tato Laviera and Roberto G. Fernández' novel Raining Backwards.

In the first chapter, I provide the definition of transculturation as offered by Fernando Ortiz as well as a review of other formulations of transculturation and subsequent critiques of the theory. Furthermore, I provide an appraisal of other frameworks that theorize cultural contact in the Americas—such as mestizaje, heterogeneidad, hybridity, awqa, the melting pot, and multiculturalism—in order to demonstrate why transculturation is particularly applicable to the study of U.S. Latino literature.

In the second chapter, I analyze the poetry of Tato Laviera from la carreta made a u-turn, ENCLAVE, AmeRican,

and Mainstream ethics / ética corriente in light of transculturation. The analysis reveals how Laviera successfully presents a unique linguistic and cultural worldview through Spanglish. Laviera's Spanglish poetry demonstrates a cosmology that emphasizes how past and present transculturations are a means of both survival and creativity in the Latino community.

In chapter three, I use transculturation in order to analyze the language used by Roberto G. Fernández in his novel Raining Backwards. I find that Fernández employs a unique type of Spanglish through the Hispanization of English rather than the more traditional anglization of Spanish. Through the use of calques, Hispanisms, and intertextuality I reveal that Fernández is able to subvert the language of authority and preserve a particularly Latino cosmology through transculturation.

## Introduction

"Even our own people,  
other Spanish speakers  
*nos quieren poner candados*  
*en la boca.* They would  
hold us back with their bag  
of *reglas de academia.*"

"When I saw poetry written  
in Tex-Mex for the first time,  
a feeling of pure joy flashed  
through me. I felt like we  
really existed as a people."

-Gloria Anzaldúa<sup>1</sup>

Despite the long historical presence of Latinos in the United States, they and their literature continue to experience discrimination. In large part, this prejudice is directly tied to their language, which many believe reflects a linguistic and cultural incompetence in both languages, Spanish and English, and both cultures, Latin- and Anglo-American. Notions of linguistic ineptitude that exist throughout society have prompted scholarship that examines Spanglish in order to test its legitimacy and worthiness, and in this dissertation, I evaluate such research and find that claims of Spanglish literature's inferiority should be disregarded. It is my hope that my research ultimately promotes more incorporation of the study of Latino culture at all academic levels and leads

to a domino effect in which the legitimization of the language and literature of Latinos further validates them as citizens actively engaged in the formation of culture and knowledge of the United States. Therefore, I employ the theory of transculturation to examine the language of two authors of contemporary U.S. Latino literature: Tato Laviera and Roberto G. Fernández. My analysis continues the necessary validation process that provides the tools to dissect and better evaluate this frequently disregarded literature.

Transculturation affords Laviera and Fernández, as well as other U.S. Latino authors, a way to resist the assimilating forces of U.S. society in order to document a third culture and language through their writing. This culture is neither Latin-American nor Anglo-American but at the same time and in varying degrees, both—that is to say a new third culture: Latino culture. This language is neither Spanish nor English but a new third language: Spanglish. These authors demonstrate that Latinos in the U.S.—the native, uprooted, or transplanted—experience the process of transculturation in which the original Latin-American culture, itself a product of transculturation, endures some deculturation—loss of its original culture—

and acculturation—acquisition of Anglo-American culture. The result, then, is neoculturation—the creation of a new culture: U.S. Latino culture.<sup>2</sup> These authors reveal that a new language also accompanies this new culture: Spanglish.

A careful analysis will demonstrate that the very language Laviera and Fernández employ in their works reflects transculturation. Laviera and Fernández provide excellent texts on which to test the transcultural theory. Laviera's various collections show how transculturation functions with poetry while Roberto G. Fernández' Raining Backwards gives a transcultural theorist ample prose to elaborate on the resistance he creates to hegemonic "English Only" dictates. My analysis of their literature using a Latin-American theoretical approach that has a long and tested history proves that literature written in Spanglish is in fact one that does not reflect an inadequate attempt to express oneself but rather demonstrates both great creativity and resistance. In fact, a study of Laviera and Fernández reveals that, in large part, the driving force behind the creation of their work stems from the repeated attacks on their communities' language. A transcultural analysis of their

texts exposes their intent to document and preserve Latino culture, which in turn fosters the creation of a greater sense of pride, belonging, and history in the community directly related to Spanglish.

Fundamental to this study is the acceptance of Frantz Fanon's remarks that "to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (17-18). Therefore, specifically, I have chosen the language used by Laviera and Fernández to demonstrate how the use of Spanglish constitutes an act of transculturation in which Latinos do not passively allow English to infiltrate Spanish, but rather how they actively transform both Spanish and English to create a new third language, Spanglish,<sup>3</sup> that reflects the culture of Latinos in the U.S. In the most innovative of cases, some writers move beyond the Spanish/English dichotomy and interject Indigenous and African linguistic components onto both English and Spanish in order to emphasize the plethora of past transculturations evident in the languages.



Guillermo Gómez-Peña in an open letter to the National Arts Community writes: "In order to articulate our present crisis as crosscultural artists, we need to invent and reinvent languages constantly. These languages have to be as syncretic, diverse, and complex as the fractual realities we are trying to define" ("The Multicultural" 49). Gloria Anzaldúa further elaborates upon this emphasis for a new language, which is neither Spanish nor English:

For a people who live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of 2 languages . . . We needed a language with

which we could communicate with ourselves, a secret language. For some of us, language is a homeland closer than [our own]. (77)

Both Laviera and Fernandez successfully capture the tenacious relationships of the languages in the borderlands and demonstrate how the transculturation of the two can help to define the community's realities.

Ilan Stavans in 2003 released Spanglish. The Making of a New American Language in which he defines Spanglish as "The verbal encounter between Anglo & Hispano civilizations" (5). While some believe that Latino culture and Spanglish spontaneously appeared in the 1980s,<sup>4</sup> it is important to note that the use of Spanglish, as defined by Stavans, in literature appears as early as 1864. Luis Torres identifies a poem titled "El Cura aprendiendo inglés, or the Yankee Dul" by El Cura de Tamajara published in the San Francisco newspaper El nuevo mundo of the same year (247). Torres also catalogues some 540 bilingual poems written between 1848 and 1906 and observes that "one of the major considerations determining the poets' use of bilingualism in these poems was to serve as a warning against increasing loss of the Chicano culture" (248). In fact,

my analysis of the use of Spanglish by both Laviera and Fernández reveals the same intent: to resist complete acculturation.

An analysis of the language used by Laviera and Fernández is important, and my analysis addresses this vital need. My research goes further, however, and shows how Latino literature is not simply rebellious but ready to be judged by world literary standards. Typically, Latino literature is relegated to a minor position because it is written in Spanglish. Latin-American literary critic Roberto González-Echevarría decries that "la literatura en spanglish sólo puede aspirar a una suerte de ingenio basado en un gesto rebelde, que se agota rápidamente. Los que la practican están condenados a escribir no una literatura de minorías sino una literatura menor" ("Hablar" 3). Attitudes such as González-Echevarría's demonstrate the need for more scholarship in the field of bilingual literature, which currently falls in the blindspots of scholars of English and Spanish.

The failure of scholars of Spanish to examine this literature occurs mainly because, for quite some time, Spanglish has been viewed as nothing more than the

language of the poor and the uneducated, whose speakers simply "incorporate English words and constructions into their daily speech because they lack the vocabulary and education in Spanish to adapt to the changing culture around them" (González-Echevarría, "Spanglish" 1). With regard to literature, some have even proclaimed that Spanglish "se difunde como nuevo evangelio lingüístico con alto potencial destructivo para el español. El ámbito del idioma hablado invade la esfera del idioma escrito y anuncia el principio del fin" (Molinero 2). Hana Valíková also claims that Spanglish "representa un grave peligro para la cultura hispánica" (55). Ironically, as Torres noted in his study of bilingual poetry of the nineteenth century, many who produce literature in Spanglish do so in an attempt to document and preserve Latino culture, quite the opposite from the concerns of these scholars. Ana Zentella who studies Puerto-Rican Bilingual Children in New York "refute[s] the charges of linguistic incompetence" among Spanglish-speakers and affirms: "What looked so effortless actually required the complex coordination of social and linguistic rules" (Growing Up 115). Yet, "sadly, [the children's] bilingual skills were disparaged within and

beyond their community and their 'Spanglish' often became a source of embarrassment instead of pride" (136). When Latino authors employ Spanglish in their texts, they combat the same notions of linguistic and cultural incompetence that lead to shame in communities. By representing the language of their community, they instill a sense of being and belonging, or, as Anzaldúa noted, actual existence. An analysis of Laviera's and Fernández' work demonstrates clearly that their intent to preserve Latino culture and thereby instill pride, a sense of belonging, and history in the community is directly tied to their use of Spanglish.

A close analysis of their sophisticated use of Spanglish and the tension between English and Spanish dismantles the idea that Spanglish is merely the embodiment of English's invasion of Spanish. Their Spanglish demonstrates that Latinos do not simply and passively allow English to infiltrate their Spanish, but that it also actively transforms English as well. Nuyorican poet Miguel Algarín articulates this tension as he reflects: "Languages are struggling to possess us; English wants to own us completely; Spanish wants to own us completely" ("Nuyorican" 162). Spanglish, then,

proves to be the tool that best combats such tension between the languages, and further study of Spanglish in literature will begin to disprove those who believe that it "indicates marginalization, not liberation" (González-Echevarría, "Hablar" 2). In Anzaldúa's own attempt to liberate herself from such linguistic strife and prejudice, she reacts to such marginalization in a chapter titled "Linguistic Terrorism" from her book Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. She describes Latinas as:

Deslenguadas. Somos los del español  
deficiente. We are your linguistic nightmare,  
your linguistic aberration, your linguistic  
mestizaje, the subject of your burla . . .  
Racially, culturally, and linguistically somos  
huérfanos—we speak an orphan tongue.

In the country with the fifth largest Spanish-speaking population in the world, how does this happen? In part, it is due to the lack of interest shown on the part of language departments in the U.S. to preserve the Spanish spoken in the U.S.

The 2000 Census statistics reveal that some 35 million Latinos live in the U.S., comprising 12.5% of the

population.<sup>5</sup> More recent estimates reveal that this number has grown to comprise 18% of the population making Latinos the largest minority in the U.S. Despite these numbers, universities continue largely to ignore the needs of Latino students as demonstrated by the fact that 50% attend Latino-serving institutions.<sup>6</sup> It is also reflected in graduation statistics where only 6.9% of Associate's degrees are awarded to Latinos and 5% of Bachelor's degrees, 3.6% of Master's degrees, and 2.2% of doctorates.<sup>7</sup>

Numbers such as these are what have caused some academics to question their role within their departments and universities. In a recent letter published in World Literature Today, Peruvian literary scholar Ismael P. Márquez writes:

. . . I wonder nevertheless about the pertinence of some of our academic concerns. We are zealous in defending gender differences in language, and dismayed when we are invited to chatear on line by a colorful 'haga click aquí.' Are we as disturbed by the fact that the dropout rate for Latinas aged 16-24 is reported by the U.S. Census Bureau to be 30%,

compared with 12.9% for Blacks and 8.2% for whites? . . . that Hispanic girls are least likely to earn a college degree.

I find that not only are universities ignoring the needs of Latino students but that Spanish departments are doing the same. While recent studies show that a large percentage of Spanish students are heritage learners, the curriculum does not reflect this fact. In large part, this is due to the fact that many academics, as seen earlier, view Spanglish as a barbaric language and, therefore, a sub-standard form of literary expression. However, by ignoring the linguistic and cultural needs of Latino students, Spanish departments could ironically be contributing to the disappearance of Spanish among second generation Spanish-speakers in the United States. In addition, by ignoring the culture of Latinos in the U.S., Spanish students will continue to view Spanish and Latino culture as foreign. In a time when Latinos are viewed more and more as foreigners and criminals, Spanish departments must re-evaluate their curriculum.

I propose, then, that Spanish departments must recognize the needs of Latinos and provide them with the language skills they want and the literary and cultural



history needed to validate their sense of self-worth. Changing the curriculum to reflect the needs of Latinos can, perhaps, not only increase the number of Latinos who graduate from the university but provide graduates with the Spanish language skills that most Latinos who leave the university lack and, thereby, assist in the preservation of Spanish in the U.S. Afterall, as Max Castro observes a "key factor in Spanish's long-term future here [in the U.S.] is the availability of programs to teach Spanish to native speakers" ("The Future").

Ironically, many of our literary and cultural studies courses focus on the works of authors such as Pablo Neruda, José Martí, Gabriel García Márquez, and countless others who denounce the U.S. presence in Latin America, courses that emphasize the colonial and post-colonial status of the area. Are not Latino students in the classroom because of those circumstances described in Latin-American literature? Why then do many Spanish departments abandon them, their culture, and literature once they are in the United States? The literature and language of the Latin-American diaspora is as important as that of Latin America. Equally important is the preservation of Spanish in the U.S..<sup>8</sup> As Steve Schaufele

of Urbana, Illinois writes: "As a general rule, a language will survive if the community that uses it cares enough to invest the effort to maintain it" (qtd. in Castro, M. "The Future"). Spanish departments must recognize the needs of Latinos and provide them with the language skills they seek and the literary and cultural history needed to validate their self-worth. The changing of the curriculum to reflect the needs of Latinos can, perhaps, not only increase the number of Latinos who graduate from the university, but provide graduates with the Spanish language skills that most Latinos who leave the university lack, thereby preserving Spanish language in the U.S.

My analysis, therefore, is necessary because it shows that the Latin-American theoretical approach of transculturation can aid in better understanding U.S. Latino literature, and it advances the validity of Spanglish as a literary language. Without more scholarship that provides valid literary approaches to U.S. Latino/Spanglish literature, Spanglish and its literature will remain a minor, demeaned category, as will those who practice it. I use transculturation in the analysis of Spanglish texts because by using this

theoretical approach, I am able to demonstrate that Spanglish texts should not be viewed as separate from Latin-American literature, that they need to be studied more in Spanish departments, that they are part of and not separate from Latin-American literary history. They cannot be fully understood outside of the Latin-American context. Afterall, a number of canonical Latin-American literary works such as those authored by Cristóbal Colón, Guaman Poma de Ayala, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Nicolás Guillén, José María Arguedas, and others share an essential characteristic with many U.S. Latino authors: contact between different languages and cultures.

In chapter one, I closely trace the history of transculturation as a literary theory, beginning with Fernando Ortiz' introduction and definition of transculturation as an anthropological theory. In addition, I provide an overview of the various interpretations of transculturation that have appeared over the years and why I believe that Ortiz' theory is particularly applicable to the study of U.S. Latino literature. However, because a number of Latin-American literary scholars have come to question transculturation, I reexamine the critique as well as provide a review of

other theoretical paradigms of the Americas regarding identity and culture, such as mestizaje, heterogeneidad, cultural reconversion/hybridity, awqa, the melting pot, and multiculturalism. Such a reexamination and review provides a solid argument as to why transculturation is an appropriate theoretical framework with which to analyze U.S. Latino literature. My analysis provides an updating of the theory in order to make it viable for the purposes of studying U.S. Latino literature. While some studies of Latino literature use the term transculturation loosely, few, if any, have provided an in-depth transcultural analysis of U.S. Latino literature. Therefore, the analysis of transculturation as a theory provided in this chapter validates transculturation as a viable analytical tool for the study of Latino literature.

In chapter two, I put the transculturation theory to practice as I examine the poetry of Tato Laviera. I begin with a brief synopsis of Laviera's poetry collections followed by a detailed analysis of selected poems from all four collections in order to demonstrate how Laviera displays a unique transcultural cosmology through language. Then, I discuss poems that deal with

the relationships between languages and how they affect one's identity. Next, I explore Laviera's emphasis on the non-European roots in the transcultural process and how this emphasis reveals transculturation as a resistance strategy. Similarly, I provide an analysis of Laviera's stress on popular culture, orality, and music that further emphasizes Laviera's transcultural philosophy as a means of survival and creativity. Lastly, I describe Laviera's homage to certain poets and declamadores, as well as his insistence upon the Nuyorican's contribution to the formation of Puerto Rican culture. Together, these various points demonstrate how, through transculturation, Latinos transform their language to reflect their biculturalism and create an entirely new code.

In chapter three, I shift the focus from poetry to prose and show how Roberto G. Fernández creates a unique Spanglish text through the Hispanization of English. After a brief explanation of his novel Raining Backwards, I discuss the history of the "English Only" movement in Miami-Dade County. I explore how Fernández uses the "English Only" pretext of that movement to subvert the language of authority. Additionally, I demonstrate the

feasibility of categorizing the author's particular use of English as Spanglish and reveal the Spanish subtext of Fernández' English through a detailed study of the author's use of calques, Hispanisms, and intertextuality. While various scholars have previously commented on aspects of these techniques, I attempt to document most instances in which Fernández employs them. Lastly, I reveal that with these techniques Fernández creates a truly Spanglish text through the subordination of English to Spanish.

My analysis with transculturation as a lens to better view these texts not only illuminates both the poetry of Laviera and the prose of Fernández and its value as U.S. Latino literature, but it also offers a revitalized theory that can now be used to interpret and foster other works by U.S. Latino authors. My intent is to provide a an approach that grants intricately crafted and problematic texts the recognition they deserve. At the same time, I hope to persuade those who view Spanglish and its literature as barbaric that it is in fact another important literature of the Americas that represents its complicated, five hundred-plus year history of linguistic and cultural contacts.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> From Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999. 76, 82.

<sup>2</sup> Transculturation is defined and discussed further in Chapter I, "Transculturation: A Latin-American Theoretical Approach to U.S. Latino Literature."

<sup>3</sup> Other terms used instead of Spanglish are espanglés, cubonics, casteyanqui, caló, inglañol, argot-sajón, español bastardo, papiamento gringo.

<sup>4</sup> Gómez-Peña marks the year of 1987 as pivotal in the "discovery" of U.S. Latino Culture. He remarks: "In 1987, just like in 1492, we were 'discovered' (re-discovered to be precise). We have been here for over 2,000 years; yet, according to Time magazine and many other publications, we 'just broke out of the barrio'" ("The Multicultural" 50).

<sup>5</sup> [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=01000US&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U DP1ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U). 21 February 2006.

<sup>6</sup> A Latino serving institution, better known as Hispanic Serving Institutions or HSIs. The Hispanic

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Association of Colleges and Universities defines HSIs as colleges or universities where the Latino enrollment must constitute a minimum of 25% of the total enrollment at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Currently there are 193 HSIs in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. [http://www.chci.org/chciyouth/resources/hispanicserving .htm](http://www.chci.org/chciyouth/resources/hispanicserving.htm). 17 March 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Also reported by the 2000 U.S. Census.

<sup>8</sup> "The case for the fading of Spanish is bolstered by data such as that from a recent study in Miami-Dade County, Florida. In that traditional stronghold of Spanish, the study found that only 2% of public high school students graduate as full-fledged bilinguals" (Castro, "The Future").



## Chapter I

### Transculturation: A Latin-American Theoretical Approach to U.S. Latino Literature

"The Third World  
does the practice  
and produces the  
text, and the First  
World delivers the  
theory and thinks  
about it"

-Fredric Jameson<sup>1</sup>

"It appalls us that the West  
can desire, extract and claim  
ownership of our ways of  
knowing, our imagery, the  
things we create and produce,  
and then simultaneously reject  
the people who created and  
developed those ideas and  
seek to deny them further  
opportunities to be creators  
of their own culture and own  
nations."

-Linda Tuhiwai Smith<sup>2</sup>

The neologism transculturación first appears in 1940  
when the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz proposes its  
use instead of the widely-used term acculturation in  
describing Cuban culture. In his book Contrapunteo  
cubano del tabaco y el azúcar,<sup>3</sup> Ortiz finds the  
designation acculturation insufficient because it refers

only to "el proceso de tránsito de una cultura a otra" (93). For Ortiz, acculturation is an Anglo-American word, interchangeable with assimilation, a process that is not representative of the historical circumstances of Latin America, Cuba in particular.<sup>4</sup> Ortiz explains that the term acculturation is inadequate because:

en Cuba han sido tantas y tan diversas en  
posiciones de espacio y categorías  
estructurales las culturas que han influido en  
la formación de su pueblo, que ese inmenso  
amestizamiento de razas y culturas sobrepaja en  
trascendencia a todo otro fenómeno histórico.  
(93)

It is precisely the "inmenso amestizamiento" that disconnects the historical reality of Latin America from that of Anglo America, where such extensive mestizaje never took place. Therefore, for Ortiz, the term transculturation better expresses the different phases of the transitive process from one culture to the next because it does not emphasize just the acquisition of a different culture, or acculturation. The process of transculturation takes on three phases, as Ortiz defines it; acculturation—the acquisition of another culture,

deculturation—the loss or displacement of a previous culture, and neoculturation—the creation of new cultural phenomena (Contrapunteo 96). Therefore, in the process of transculturation, some, but not all, elements of a culture are lost and new elements are acquired creating a new culture: a culture that is neither one nor the other, but a fusion of both. A fusion so unique that while aspects of both cultures exist the end result is a new, third culture. Cuban poet Nancy Morejón describes this third culture as “nuevo e independiente, aunque sus bases, sus raíces descansan sobre los elementos precedentes” (23).

In this chapter I provide an overview of the various interpretations of transculturation that have appeared over the years and why I believe that Ortiz’ theory is particularly applicable to the study of U.S. Latino literature. However, because many in the scholarly community have come to question transculturation I will reexamine the critique as well as provide a review of other theoretical paradigms of the Americas regarding identity and culture, such as mestizaje, heterogeneidad, cultural reconversion/hybridity, awqa, the melting pot, and multiculturalism. Such a reexamination and review

will provide a solid argument as to why transculturation is an appropriate theoretical framework from which to analyze U.S. Latino literature.

One should note that enthusiastic acceptance of Ortiz' neologism occurs immediately and, in the introduction of Ortiz' book, fellow anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski praises the Cuban anthropologist for the new term. However, more recently many have come to criticize the theory. Celina Manzoni, for example, concludes that although transculturation may describe the transformations, Ortiz "no cuestiona las transformaciones que el término designa" (171). Nevertheless, Ortiz' work causes many to rethink not only the idea of acculturation, but also its consequences. One such analysis, as Angel Rama notes, appears in 1966 by Vittorio Lanternarie.<sup>5</sup> In his examination of acculturation, Lanternarie offers three potential responses when a culture faces the forces of acculturation:

'La vulnerabilidad' cultural que acepta las proposiciones externas y renuncia casi sin lucha a las propias; 'la rigidez cultural' que se acantona drásticamente en objetos y valores

constitutivos de la cultura propia, rechazando toda aportación nueva; y 'la plasticidad cultural' que diestramente procura incorporar las novedades, no sólo como objetos absorbidos por un complejo cultural, sino sobre todo como fermentos animadores de la tradicional estructura cultural, la que es capaz así de respuestas inventivas, recurriendo a sus componentes propios. (qtd. in Rama 30-31)<sup>6</sup>

Angel Rama interprets this cultural plasticity as key to understanding narrative transculturation in Latin America.

Rama's ideas on transculturation appear first in a 1974 article titled "Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana." However, it is in his landmark study, Transculturación narrativa en América Latina, that Rama specifically refers to and applies Ortiz' theory of transculturation to study the impact of modernization on the Latin-American novel. Rama concludes that the writers who best resist the acculturating force of modernization are those whose response to modernization is transculturation. These transculturators, as Rama designates them, include José

María Arguedas, Gabriel García Márquez, Augusto Roa Bastos, Juan Rulfo, and João Guimarães Rosa. When applying Ortiz' description of transculturation to literature, Rama determines necessary some corrections. Rama states that Ortiz' model, which describes the three previously mentioned stages that comprise transculturation—deculturation, acculturation, and neoculturation—, omits two important components: selectivity and invention. In every case of cultural plasticity, selectivity and invention must be postulated given that cultural plasticity certifies the energy and creativity of a cultural community (38).

Logically Rama would include the components of selectivity and invention in his analysis, but not Ortiz, as he concerns himself with the production of literature, which implies a conscious act of selecting specific material to create a cultural product. Therefore, one can say with reasonable assurance that the transcultural writer shifts through available cultural elements in order to choose those that need to be preserved, as well as those elements of the "other's" culture that are beneficial in order to achieve their goal of preservation and thereby ensure the survival of their culture. This

does not necessarily imply that the cultural material being preserved is always visible, it, in actuality, will become a hybrid, something new and unique, perhaps even unrecognizable, through its syncretism with the other culture. In fact, a transculturator may even recuperate and revitalize real cultural components that, although belonging to the cultural tradition, previously were not seen or even used in a systematic form but whose expressive possibilities come to light when seen in the modernizing perspective (Rama 31). However, as Rama observes, the transculturators do not limit themselves to a mere syncretic composition of aspects of one culture and another. The transculturator, knowing that each culture is an autonomous structure, understands that the incorporation of external elements should lead to a global rearticulation of the cultural structure that appeals to new focalizations within it (Rama 31). Transculturation, therefore, becomes an artistic solution in the face of possible cultural annihilation.

José María Arguedas, in Rama's opinion, best exemplifies the transculturators. Arguedas himself describes the survival of the Peruvian Andean culture in terms of plasticity:

Ocurrió lo que suele suceder cuando un pueblo de cultura de alto nivel es dominado por otra; tiene la flexibilidad y poder suficiente como para poder defender su integridad y aún desarrollarla, mediante la toma de elementos libremente elegidos o impuestos. (qtd. in Pacheco 115)

Arguedas implies here that flexibility remains a strength of the dominated culture over the dominant culture and that in this flexibility lies the key to survival. As Diana Taylor asserts, this differentiates Arguedas' and Rama's transculturation from Ortiz'. Arguedas and Rama "map out the progressive or expanding nature of transculturation over time and space; both consider transculturation a shifting process, not a static deterministic state" (Taylor 92). Taylor observes that Rama and Arguedas add to Ortiz' theory the "ever shifting patterns—historical, geographical, economic, and linguistic—of cultural transformations" (93). Therefore, as Sylvia Spitta observes in her 1995 analysis of transculturation in the Latin-American narrative, cultures are always in flux, a culture that becomes static is destined to disappear while those that are



flexible are most likely to survive (Between 8).

However, while they may survive, they will exist in a new form—neoculturation—a form that may not even resemble the original culture.

In Arguedas' works, he precisely wishes to accomplish the survival of his culture. Arguedas recognizes that if he simply retires into the indigenous community and rejects western culture that the indigenous community is doomed. Therefore, Arguedas appropriates a western tool, the novel, and western language, Spanish, and transculturates it by appropriating Quechua syntax to the Spanish in order to portray Quechua folklore, music, and orality. As Taylor observes "he stressed the survival of an indigenous culture 'differentiated from Western culture' not in that it was unadulterated or unaffected by its contact with the West, but rather in that it was precisely a product of that contact" (92). Arguedas in his acceptance speech for the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega award in October of 1968 makes this clear:

Intenté convertir en lenguaje escrito lo que era como individuo: un vínculo vivo, fuerte, capaz de universalizarse, de la gran nación cercada y la parte generosa, humana, de los

opresores. . . . El cerco podía y debía ser destruido; el caudal de las dos naciones se podía y debía unir. Y el camino no tenía por qué ser, ni era posible que fuera únicamente el que se exigía con imperio de vencedores expoliadores, o sea: que la nación vencida renuncie a su alma, aunque no sea sino la apariencia, formalmente, y tome la de los vencedores, es decir que se aculture. Yo no soy un aculturado; yo soy peruano que orgullosamente, como un demonio feliz habla en cristiano y en indio, en español y en quechua. Deseaba convertir esa realidad en lenguaje artístico. (297)

Therefore, as Spitta remarks, "transculturation can thus be understood as the complex processes of adjustment and re-creation . . . that allow for new, vital, and viable configurations to arise out of the clash of cultures and the violence of colonial and neocolonial appropriations" (Between 2). Transculturation, then, may take place in those areas where there is a division between two or more cultures. In her 1992 study of travel writing and transculturation, Mary Louise Pratt expands upon this

notion and designates these areas as "contact zones."<sup>7</sup>

These contact zones:

refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.

(6)

Within this contact zone, Arguedas presents the binary problem and conflicts of two cultures and proposes a possible transculturating synthesis as the only possible solution to the conflict (Pacheco 111).

Can, then, one view transculturation as a resistance theory? Frank McQuade rejects it as a resistance theory and instead describes it as "a theory of processes, emphasizing the vitality of minority structures in the face of assumptions of colonial subordination or cultural indebtedness" (797). If one considers only Ortiz' theory then McQuade's statement appears accurate. However, in reviewing Arguedas' creative purpose and Rama's theory of narrative transculturation, it seems that one could view the theory as one of resistance. After all, the author

undergoes a conscious revision of the culture to select those aspects of the culture that will best facilitate survival of the culture as it faces possible destruction by another dominant culture. In an analysis of bilingual children's literature, Taran Johnston argues that transculturation is, in fact, used as a resistance strategy. Johnston states that narrative transculturation, as Rama describes it, meets the criteria set forth by Barbara Harlow in defining resistance literature (46). Johnston elaborates and states that the transcultural narrative like resistance literature:

tends to be part of a larger resistance strategy, which may also include political struggle and armed rebellion (Harlow 10, 11) . . . [a] tendency to resist pressures toward universalization (Harlow 16, 17) . . . its insistence on historical specificity (Harlow 16, 17, 78, 80) . . . [and] the 'expropriation' of the oppressing voices' texts in order to subvert or disdain them (Harlow 24, 25). (Johnston 45)

Taylor confirms Johnston's argument when she observes that:

the theory of transculturation is a political one in that it suggests the consciousness of a society's own historically specific cultural manifestation. . . . It is also one of political positioning and selection: which forms, symbols or aspects of cultural identity become highlighted or confrontational, when and why. (91)

Key to the argument of narrative transculturation as a resistance strategy, then, lies the process of selection. Rama asserts that this selective capacity "es una búsqueda de valores resistentes, capaces de enfrentar los deterioros de transculturación, por lo cual se puede ver también como una tarea inventiva, como una parte de la *neoculturación*" (39). Therefore, the mere fact that an author takes on the task of transculturation in their work becomes an act to resist the forces of acculturation. In fact, Spitta stresses ". . . la postura del transculturador, [es una] postura que rompe con una larga tradición de desmemoria . . . el transcultador, es el que trata de independizar el imaginario

latinoamericano de la desmemoria colonial" ("Traición" 174-75).

Literary transculturation, when seen as a form of resistance, may be viewed as a liberating act, what Rama refers to as "un esfuerzo de descolonización espiritual" (20). Taylor emphasizes that:

the importance of stressing the liberating potential of the theory of transculturation is that it is one of the few theories that allows an opening to the impasse usually set up in relation to minority theories . . . it does not lock cultures into binaries, it eschews simple oppositions. (101)

Therefore, transculturation lends itself to the study of Latino literature because Latino authors tend to resist the assimilating forces of U.S. society to document a third culture through their writing, a culture that is neither Latin-American nor Anglo-American, but at the same time, both—that is to say, Latino.

Despite the enthusiastic acceptance of Ortiz' term and Rama's study, in the 1990's many literary critics began to rethink Rama's own transcultural theory. For many scholars transculturation "belongs to the modern

totalitizing paradigm . . . a will to cultural or racial synthesis all too willing to erase difference" (Campa 65). The main point of contention with Rama's study points transculturation as just another term to mask the previously popular proposal of mestizaje. Maribel Ortiz-Márquez objects to Rama's Transculturación narrativa, because his proposal of national integration in the 1980 study "establece una relación estrecha con los numerosos proyectos modernos decimonónicos, dificultando la construcción de un espacio alternativo donde se puede elaborar una teoría sobre la cultura latinoamericana que no responde a un proyecto sintetizado de las diferencias" (341). This erasure of difference becomes problematic for Peruvian literary critic Antonio Cornejo Polar as well. Cornejo Polar, who earlier in his career applauded transculturation, later states that the theory of transculturation:

se ha convertido cada vez más en la cobertura más sofisticada de la categoría de mestizaje. Después de todo el símbolo del 'ajiaco' de Fernando Ortiz que resume Rama bien puede ser el emblema mayor de la falaz armonía en la que

habría concluido un proceso múltiple de  
mituración. ("Mestizaje" 341)

Nevertheless, while it is true that Ortiz' metaphor of the ajiaco to represent Cuban culture attempts to facilitate nation building, it is important to remember that for Ortiz the ajiaco is "un conglomerado heterogéneo . . . un incesable borbor de heterogéneas sustancias" ("La cubanidad" 6). Therefore, the heterogeneous nature of Cuban culture is not compromised by an attempt at homogeneity. In fact, the heterogeneous nature of the culture and the fact that it is always in process of change makes it unique. As Ortiz sustains, "la cubanidad tenga sabor y consistencia distintos según sea catada en la panza de la olla o en su boca donde las viandas aún están crudas y burbujea el caldo claro" ("La cubanidad" 6). Despite Ortiz' own emphasis on heterogeneity, many accuse Rama of only focusing on binaries. Abril Trigo observes:

la plasticidad cultural [de Rama], demasiado próxima al sincretismo y al mestizaje, no previene la resolución esencialista de la espiral desatada por los binarismos en juego. Rama, asomado al abismo, sólo atina a resolver



la aporía modernizante entre transculturación  
urbana o cosmopolita y transculturación  
regionalista o transculturada de Darcy Ribeiro  
entre culturas auténticas y espurias. . . .  
Rama persista en mantenerla amarrada a lo  
literario, en notable reducción de la fórmula  
ortiziana, capaz de condensar en un haz  
metafórico historia y geopolítica, cultura y  
economía, biología y hábitos populares  
cotidianos. (original emphasis) (149)

Trigo's observations prove important because she refers  
back to the original source of transculturation: Ortiz,  
who most definitely does not place cultures into mere  
binary positions.

While the greatest criticism of transculturation  
lies in the belief that it masks the promotion of  
mestizaje instead of difference, other criticisms exist  
as well. Juan de Castro reveals that a number of critics  
believe that Rama's transculturation is:

indebted to the theory of dependence popular in  
Latin America from the late 1960s to the early  
1980s. Rama's vision of the relationship  
between international and national cultures

reproduces the division between center and periphery characteristic of dependency theory.

(6)<sup>8</sup>

However, these critics of Rama, and others, fail to observe Rama's:

emphasis on the agency of the traditional or regional cultures—and therefore the agency of their populations—contradict[ing] the dependency theory assertion of the determining role of the center. (Castro, J. 6)

Consequently, Rama's transculturation:

implies a sophisticated vision of political reality in which resistance to international and globalizing capitalism is not limited, as it is in the dependency theory, to the utopian possibility of revolution, but rather can be found in the everyday actions of individuals and social groups. (Castro, J. 7)

Mabel Moraña observes another objection to Rama's transculturation in that once again the intellectual is the translator and interpreter of the popular which of course is found in the interior of the nation ("Ideología" 142). Moraña remarks:

el esquema es parcial (urbanista, letrado, nacionalista, dicotómico) y que el anastre liberal de la propuesta de alguna manera falla por su base, en la identidad de lo popular con lo rural como reducto idealizado y permanente, que existe 'en estado de naturaleza' en la periferia de los proyectos y de los centros modernizadores. ("Ideología" 143)

In a similar vein, Catherine Davies asserts that Ortiz himself "could never quite shake off the ideological premises of his Eurocentric formation" (179).<sup>9</sup> Such re-evaluations have left Alberto Moreiras to declare the end of transculturation to coincide with the suicide of José María Arguedas and the publication of his novel El zorro de abajo y el zorro de arriba in which occurs "la dramática escenificación de la destrucción del sentido de la transculturación" (217).<sup>10</sup> Afterall, if Arguedas found it impossible to reconcile his own biculturalism, Moreiras contends, then, that all must be left with the impossibility of a harmonious reconciliation as well. Moreiras asserts that in "nuestro tiempo histórico, diferente del de Rama, ya no nos aconseja o permite ser tan arriesgadamente entusiastas en la evaluación del

poder cultural de la semiperiférica del planeta" (216).

After all, "qué pasaría si ese espacio indeterminado o entrelugar probara ser, no el proveedor de una nueva coherencia histórica, como Rama quiso, sino más bien un espacio mestizo de incoherencia" (Moreiras 216)?

Moreiras concludes that Arguedas' suicide should be understood ". . . como el momento más intenso de la transculturación literaria latinoamericana. Porque lleva la transculturación a su consumación última, rompe la transculturación, y la aboca a su final narrativo" (227).

While Moreiras acknowledges the Ortizian roots of transculturation in his essay, what he fails to realize is that Ortiz' theory of transculturation implies that the transcultural process is always evolving and changing in unpredictable ways. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, Ortiz' theory never leads one to believe that the process is easy or that the outcome is harmonious. In fact, the Cuban anthropologist is careful to explain that the transcultural process is, in effect, very painful. With all of these objections to transculturation in mind, John Beverly, calls not for the death of transculturation but rather the exploration of transculturation from a different perspective; what he

calls "transculturación al revés" or transculturation from below. Beverley believes that for Rama:

transculturación es algo que ocurre *entre* la cultura hegemónica y las culturas indígenas o subalternas, no algo inherente a estas últimas . . . La novela se privilegia por sobre las formas narrativas indígenas; el español sobre los idiomas indígenas. . . . Rama rara vez piensa en la posibilidad de una transculturación inversa. (269)

However, it is important to note that Ortiz always envisions transculturation as coming from below and even affirms that "la cubanía fue brotada desde abajo y no llovido desde arriba" ("La cubanidad" 14). Beverley observes that for Rama, as well as for Ortiz, transculturation functions as "una teleología . . . necesaria en última instancia para la formación de una cultura 'nacional' o latinoamericana. Las alternativas son la renuncia o el genocidio cultural" (269-70). Beverley continues to observe that Rama, facing modernization, does not allow himself to anticipate or valorize . . . the emergence of movements of the indigenous and women in Latin America during the 1980s

and 1990s, movements that are not only based ideologically on a narrative of transculturation, but also at times a resistance to or inversion of that same "narrative" (270). Beverley objects to Rama's focus on transculturation from above and asks that transculturation be looked at from below.

Transculturation "fundada no en la manera en que 'la ciudad letrada' criolla se hace más y más capaz de representar lo indígena, sino como un contra-proyecto de hegemonía indígena que apropia elementos de esa formación cultural para servir a sus propios intereses" (271).

I propose that through language some U.S. Latino writers are indeed taking on such a project of transculturation from below. Nevertheless, it does not mean that transculturation from above does not occur or does not appear in their works. Whether it is transculturation from above or below does not negate the fact that it is a form of resistance on the part of the subaltern to resist total acculturation into the dominant culture. Even so, there is little room for doubt that the true innovators are those authors who instead of transculturating in order to fit into a Eurocentric hegemonic mestizaje, or multiculturalism in the case of

the U.S., transculturate in order to achieve their own subaltern hegemony.<sup>11</sup>

A review of other theoretical paradigms of identity and culture will facilitate a better understanding of transculturation and why it is appropriate for the analysis of U.S. Latino literature. These theories include; mestizaje, heterogeneidad, cultural reconversion/hybridity, *awqa*, the melting pot, and multiculturalism. As discussed previously mestizaje<sup>12</sup> for many years was the theoretical framework for the analysis of various elements of Latin-American society, identity, and culture. Cornejo Polar goes as far as to observe that, "podría decirse que la categoría mestizaje es el más poderoso y extendido recurso conceptual con que América Latina se interpreta a sí misma" ("Mestizaje" 368). The mestizaje paradigm, in fact, arose in the early nineteenth century as a "necessity for the newly independent Latin-American nations to differentiate themselves with respect to the former colonizer, as well as . . . with respect to the newly emerging neocolonial power to the north" (Chanady 170). In addition, Amaryll Chanady observes that:

Spanish valorization of limpieza de sangre . .  
. and the marginalization and exploitation of  
specific racial groups . . . became a target of  
criticism for several thinkers who attempted to  
create a national (or continental)  
consciousness by underlining the specificity of  
Latin America. (170-71)

Therefore, it is important to remember that at one point  
the mestizaje paradigm most definitely served as a  
resistance theory. In fact, Cornejo Polar notes that  
"tal vez hoy su capacidad de ofrecer imágenes  
autoidentificadorias sea menos inclusiva que hace unas  
décadas y aunque—de otro lado—no pueda olvidarse que a lo  
largo de nuestra historia no dejó de suscitar  
cuestionamientos distintos pero casi siempre radicales y  
hasta apocalípticos ("Mestizaje" 368). Indeed, mestizaje  
is the "symbolical construction of a cultural identity  
opposed to that of the metropolis" (Chanady 171).  
Nevertheless, the criollo elites claimed mestizaje to  
show a direct lineage to the Indigenous and their  
rehabilitation not only to justify their independence  
from Spain but, at the same time, to claim an Indigenous



ancestor yet separate themselves from the contemporary Indian (Saldaña-Portillo 405).

While mestizaje emerged in the early nineteenth century, it is not until after the Mexican Revolution of 1910 that mestizaje changes its ideological framework and becomes widely propagated by many Latin-American intellectuals. In the 1920s, several important and influential works on Latin-American politics, identity, and culture base their ideology in large part on mestizaje. These works include; José Vasconcelos' La raza cósmica (1925), Raúl Haya de la Torre's Por la emancipación de América Latina (1926), and José Carlos Mariátegui's Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana (1928). In fact, Silvia Spitta observes that until 1920 "el mestizaje había sido degenerativo y el factor que había contribuido más que cualquier otro al atraso de Latinoamérica" ("Traición" 188). Until this point Europeans primarily used mestizaje as it related to biology and race, in which the inferior qualities of miscegenated peoples were underscored. However, in the 1920s the term changed drastically as Latin Americans reclaimed it and no longer saw themselves as inferior conjoined elements of each race but rather the superior

elements. Nevertheless, several problems arise with this approach. Primarily, Vasconcelos, propagates the most vicious of stereotypes for each individual race. In addition, all intellectual capacities are superior in the European race only. In all three of these works, the hegemonic aspect and capacity of mestizaje as an ideology is most stressed (Castro, J. 133).

The mestizaje paradigm promotes an entirely too harmonious process when in reality it is a difficult and painful one. The emphasis on creating a homogeneous culture in order to establish a hegemonic nation-state erases all but the physical signs of the subaltern who remains in the past while the mestizo is the present, and even future, or as Saldaña-Portillo concludes "mestizaje fetishizes a residual Indian identity to the detriment of contemporary Indians" (402). Lastly, mestizaje most always only refers to the European and Indian and ignores the African and Asian.

Chicanos, at various times, have relied on the mestizaje paradigm itself, most notably in the 1970s when Chicano activists appropriated its discourse in order to claim Aztlán. Unfortunately, Chicanos resorted to images of an indigenous past at the detriment of an indigenous

present as well. Nevertheless, mestizaje served as the catalyst for radical change among Chicanos as it had in Latin America. The most recent reappropriation of mestizaje in the U.S. has come from Gloria Anzaldúa as expounded in Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987). Although Anzaldúa has undergone some scholars' criticism for resorting to the typical mestizaje pitfalls, most see her work as a radical reworking of mestizaje.<sup>13</sup> In fact, Anzaldúa, instead of using mestizaje as a term to describe her new theoretical framework, always refers to it as a new mestiza consciousness. Juan E. De Castro astutely summarizes the differences between traditional mestizaje and Anzaldúa's in the following manner:

Anzaldúa sees the future as characterized by the proliferation of bicultural and multicultural identities. While she mentions mestizaje, the emphasis is not on the creation of a new race or culture but, rather, on the development of a new heterogeneous consciousness. The new mestiza is, therefore, not necessarily a multiracial or postracial individual; she is just one able and willing to

live in more than one culture at one time. . .  
. In Anzaldúa's analysis, hybridization breeds  
even more heterogeneity. (116)

Anzaldúa, then, does not fall into the harmonious  
homogeneous mestizaje trope that traditionally marks the  
mestizaje paradigm.

Another recent and popular theoretical approach in  
Latin-American cultural studies appears in Nestor García  
Canclini's Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y  
salir de la modernidad. J. Castro describes García  
Canclini's scholarship as follows:

emphasis is on the breakdown of the distinction  
between high and popular culture. . . . modern  
and traditional culture, and national (or  
regional) cultures and international cultures .  
. . . García Canclini's emphasis is on the  
polysemous riches of hybrid cultures. (7)

In essence, García Canclini concludes that "la modernidad  
disminuye el papel del culto y lo popular tradicionales  
en el conjunto del mercado simbólico pero no la cultura  
industrializada, bajo condiciones relativamente  
semejantes. El trabajo del artista y el artesano se  
aproximan . . ." (18). The result is cultural

reconversion that relates in great part to "una actualización del mercado" (334). García Canclini divides cultural reconversion into two groups: hegemonic reconversion, and popular reconversion. Román de la Campa finds one of the fundamental flaws of the cultural reconversion theory and asks, "Does it respond to any principle other than the constant movement between market, cultural producers, and modernizations" (73)?

Elizabeth Monasterois also comments that "the fact that it works within the logic of capitalism and economic globalization makes it incompatible with cultural productions formulated from different economic and cultural logistics" (108). Others, however, celebrate hybridity because it emphasizes "respect for Otherness and valorize(s) diversity" as opposed to the hegemonic and homogenous conceptions of mestizaje (Chanady 177). Nevertheless, as Cornejo Polar notes, while García Canclini's tone is celebratory these reconversions do not always comply with the needs, interests, or liberties of those who realize them ("Mestizaje" 342). The celebratory tone also causes concern because García Canclini does not emphasize loss as much as gain. In fact, his theory seems to promote a postmodern version of

Angel Rama's version of transculturation with one exception. According to Campa, Rama "is concerned as much with loss as change . . . with the possible negative impact resulting from continuous exposure to modernizing markets. Rama [may] not lament these losses, but he [does] highlight the value of resistance" (32).

Interestingly, despite the obvious similarities between Rama and García Canclini, nowhere in his study does he mention transculturation, Ortiz, or Rama. This is particularly curious given the fact that Ortiz, like García Canclini, focuses his theory around both the cultural and the economic. Further opposition to García Canclini's theory lies in the designation of the term hybridity or hybrid because "these words originate in the discourse of scientific racialism" (Castro 130).

Antonio Cornejo Polar, who previously embraced transculturation, has revised his own theoretical approach not only to reject the notion of mestizaje, transculturation, and hybridity, but also to suggest a new theoretical framework—heterogeneidad. Cornejo Polar's proposal of heterogeneity stems from his desire to:

formular otro dispositivo teórico que pudiera dar razón de situaciones socio-culturales y de discursos en los que las dinámicas de los encruzamientos múltiples no operan en función sincrética sino, al revés, enfatizan conflictos y alteridades. ("Mestizaje" 369)<sup>14</sup>

For Cornejo Polar, heterogeneity explains the discourse of pluricultural areas in which the cultures do not operate in a dialectical manner where the different cultures do not attempt nor achieve synthesis in a space of harmonious resolution—what Cornejo Polar terms a contradictory totality.<sup>15</sup> Trigo summarizes Cornejo Polar's proposal as "un concepto que en lugar de representar una totalización hegemónica, expresa una pluralidad antagónica, la tensa coexistencia segmentada en disímiles sistemas de producción" (154). Many theorists find Cornejo Polar's heterogeneity far superior to the theories of transculturation and mestizaje, in part because it allows for the existence of various literary systems within each country (Sobrevilla 24). Cornejo Polar himself admits that in hypothesizing over heterogeneity and a contradictory totality that he is

unsure of how such a category would function. However, his intention:

consiste en producir aparatos teórico-  
metodológicos suficientemente finos y firmes  
para comprender mejor una literatura (o más  
ampliamente una vasta gama de discursos) cuya  
evidente multiplicidad genera una copiosa,  
profunda y turbadora conflictividad.

("Mestizaje" 370-71)

Nevertheless, I am in agreement with Raúl Bueno, David Sobrevilla, Silvia Spitta, and others who claim that Cornejo Polar's heterogeneity and Ortiz' transculturation actually complement one another.<sup>16</sup> As Sobrevilla notes in the case of Rama, the result of cultures in the contact zone is always a synthesis of some sort while for Cornejo Polar the result in many, if not all, cases is a conflictive totality. However, in reality not just one response exists but rather both as well as the option of acculturation (29).

Elizabeth Monasterois offers one of the most recent reevaluations of Latin-American cultural theory based on cultural contacts. Like Cornejo Polar, the scholar searches for alternatives to the mestizaje,



transculturation, and hybridity paradigms. Monasterois rejects transculturation on the basis that "Rama's analysis does not consider . . . that even if these cultural agents may be active at the moment of intercourse, they are certainly not active in an equal manner nor do they hold similar positions of power" (106). However, her criticism of Rama is not entirely true. Rama bases his entire argument for artists to transculturate on the fact that they come face to face with the overwhelming position of power that modernization and the metropolis hold over the regional cultures. In addition, one only needs to look back at the original theorizer of transculturation, Ortiz, to see that the anthropologist has no disillusion regarding power and equality. Additionally, Monasterois rejects Cornejo Polar's revision of these cultural theories and believes conflictive heterogeneity to be insufficient because "it does not provide occasions to theorize Andean concepts" (108). For Monasterois the answer to theorizing Andean cultural conflictivity lies in the application of Andean categories of analysis—in her conclusion, Awqa.<sup>17</sup> Awqa depends on the tension created between opposites. Monasterois explains:

This concept is Awqa, and to grasp its meaning we need to understand that from an Andean perspective the cultural world is not conceived as an undifferentiated totality but as a composition, as an encounter of elements equalized and/or opposed among themselves. This conception of the universe . . . allows them to understand human permanence in the cultural world in three different ways: as an encounter of elements equalized between them (TAYPI, union of opposites), as an encounter of opposite elements (PURUMA, separation of opposites) or as an encounter of irreconcilable elements (AWQA, where things cannot be together). (103-04)

While Latin America has been theorizing its pluricultural society for well over a hundred years, the U.S. has yet to offer any viable theories to explain its own pluricultural society. As Gómez Peña alerts even today "the U.S. still doesn't have a critical discourse to understand and explain its own mestizaje" ("Binational" 19). This is due in large part to the very subject that leads Ortiz to formulate his own theory, the

Anglo insistence on acculturation as a paradigm for dealing with its own pluri-cultural society.

Acculturation, best known as the melting pot theory or assimilation, continues to be the driving force in the U.S. as a means of negotiating with the many cultures that exist. However, the idea is very similar to that of mestizaje in that all the cultures will "melt" into one homogeneous one. In the case of the U.S., this homogenous culture is, of course, Anglo-European in which there is room for only one language, English. In an attempt to change the concept of the melting pot, in the late 1980s the paradigm of multiculturalism emerged. In many ways this "radical re-thinking" of the U.S., pluri-cultural society differs very little from its predecessor. Gómez-Peña remarks that "the word multiculturalism hasn't even ever been defined" ("The Multicultural" 57). The effects of multiculturalism have mostly led to more political correctness, and an acknowledgement that different cultures and races actually do exist in the U.S. but always as the other. However, all of these "different" cultures are all obliged to leave behind their "old-world" ways and adopt the predominant and preferred Anglo-European, English-

speaking culture in order to achieve success in the U.S. In a letter to the National Arts Community, performance artist Gómez-Peña expresses his frustration over the multicultural label and states:

Blockbuster exhibits present multiculturalism art as 'cutting edge': yet with few exceptions, there is no mention of the historical crimes and social inequities that lie beneath the neocolonial relationship between Anglo-European culture and its surrounding others. Like the United Colors of Benetton ads, a utopian discourse of sameness helps to erase all unpleasant stories. The message becomes a refried colonial idea: if we merely hold hands and dance the mambo together, we can effectively abolish ideology, sexual and cultural politics, and class differences. (57)

Multiculturalism, then, does not address the fact that while the U.S. is a multi-cultural society it most certainly is not a multi-participatory society, and it certainly makes no room for a bi/tri/multi-cultural identity, as cultures remain distinctly separate and unique.

The lack of a bi/tri/multi-cultural heterogeneous paradigm leaves many examining border cultures in the U.S. without any theoretical discourse of their own to turn to. The search for decolonizing methodologies in order to shed the ethnocentric and inadequate language of cultural studies discourse is essential to describing the experience of Latinos in the U.S. As Gómez-Peña asserts, "we need to find a new terminology, a new iconography, and a new set of cartography and definitions. We need to re-baptize the world in our own terms" ("The border" 46). He also warns: "In the absence of a more enlightened terminology, we have no choice but to utilize [currently available terminologies] with extreme care" ("The border" 46).

In an attempt to reclaim Latin America's own methodologies and theoretical paradigms for Latino literature in the U.S., I have chosen to look not towards the West, nor the East, but the South—South of the Río Bravo. I believe that transculturation provides a good, or, at the very least, a better, while not perfect, theoretical framework from which to analyze the cultures and literatures of Latinos in the U.S. Like many Latinos, in an attempt to recover the history, language,

culture, memory, and other identifying markers stripped away through Anglo-American assimilationist tactics of white-wash, I look back to the origin of U.S. Latino culture: Latin America. As seen in the previous discussion of various Latin-American cultural theories, Latin-American critical discourse offers a greater depth of analysis regarding culture in the contact zones than cultural theories in the United States. In countering the commonly held belief that people of the Third World are producers of culture but not knowledge,<sup>18</sup> I agree with Catherine Davies that Fernando Ortiz "ranks among the most important theorists of the postcolonial condition . . . enabl[ing] us to refine the terms commonly employed in Anglo- and Franco-centric discourses (141).<sup>19</sup>

For various reasons Ortiz' transculturation is quite applicable to the study of U.S. Latino cultures and in this case U.S. Latino literature. First, Ortiz develops his theory from the perspective of countering both colonial and imperialist discourse. As discussed earlier Ortiz finds the Western theorization regarding culture in the contact zone, acculturation, inapplicable to the Cuban and Latin-American cultural reality. This does not simply emerge from his own observations and research of

Cuban culture, but also out of a desire to combat what he calls imperialistic ideology.

Ortiz' formation is critical in this light as he, while born in Cuba, was raised in Menorca until 14 years of age. Therefore, while Ortiz is from a criollo family, his experience in Menorca is as an outsider. Furthermore, the time of his return to Cuba is crucial as it occurs precisely during the Wars of Independence (1895-98). In 1898, he leaves for Spain again, this time to Madrid, to continue his studies for the title of doctorate, only to return to the newly independent Cuba in 1902, the same year that the U.S. withdraws from Cuba and the first Cuban constitution is drafted, which includes the Platt amendment.<sup>20</sup> There are several significant factors regarding the years 1898-1902 of Ortiz' formation. One, while in Madrid viewing "the ñaño exhibit . . . looking from the centre to the periphery, he adopted the colonial gaze" (Davies 145). This exhibit has a profound impact on Ortiz. He realizes that "what differentiated Cuba from Spain was the presence of a vibrant, undocumented black culture, and that what differentiated Cuba from the USA was its large mulatto population" (Davies 145). Upon his return from

Spain, he takes on the task of recovering AfroCuban culture. Many have criticized Ortiz' earlier works on AfroCuban culture as Eurocentric. However, it is apparent that over the years Ortiz' work takes on a decidedly different direction once he becomes aware of Cuba's Hispanization and what he calls "racismo panhispanista." Davies points out that in two letters to Miguel de Unamuno, published in 1929, Ortiz laments: "es que en Cuba, en no pocos aspectos, es más española que España" (155).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Ortiz' experience in Spain is not unlike that of many Latinos in the U.S. Ortiz and his family leave Cuba to the metropolis in search of better opportunities. While living as a minority, in his case a criollo, in the metropolis he is unaware of the non-Western influence upon his culture of origin. For Ortiz, it is after viewing the Nãñigo exhibit that he begins to understand the effects colonialism has had upon not just his own identity, but that of his nation of origin as well. This pattern is very much the same for the Latino raised in the U.S. who is indoctrinated in the Western tradition. Many Latinos raised in the U.S., while knowing they are not Anglo, do not understand, develop awareness, or come to terms with their non-



Western origins and the effects of neocolonialism until a moment of awakening where an educator, artist, exhibition, book, or other phenomenon sparks that realization.

After his experience in Spain, Ortiz returns to a Cuba under the protectorate of the U.S. Therefore, Ortiz not only undertakes the task of recovering AfroCuban culture from an overwhelming Hispanic ideology that has dominated Cuban anthropological studies, but also "struggle[s] to gain control of the means of cultural production in an effort to resist the hegemony of the U.S." (Davies 142).<sup>22</sup> As Diana Iznaga points out, in a 1934 essay "De la música afrocubana. Un estímulo para su estudio" Ortiz remarks:

Si no tan grave como el imperialismo económico, que succiona la sangre del pueblo cubano, es también el imperialismo ideológico que le sigue. Aquél rompe su independencia económica; éste le destroza su vida moral. El uno quita el sostén; el otro el alma. Tratemos, pues, de conocernos a nosotros mismos y de alquitarar nuestras esencias, para mantener puras las de valor sustantivo y perene y apartar aquéllos

que nuestras o extrañas, sea ya de pútrida  
ranciedad o traigan a nuestra vida una letal;  
ponzoña. (qtd in Iznaga 26)<sup>23</sup>

Given Ortiz' experiences and ideologies, it appears that the occasion of his neologism in 1940 is not by chance. Santí reminds us that it is precisely in the midst of the U.S. proclamation of the Good Neighbor policy that the neologism transculturation appears (239).

Thus, the experiences that led Ortiz to the formulation of his theory of transculturation are very similar to those of U.S. Latinos in that both experience not just the Indigenous & African / Spanish dichotomy and all its implications, but they both experience the Latin-American / U.S. dichotomy as well. Transculturation allows for the analysis of these and many other different cultural contacts. What makes transculturation very appealing to Latino studies, then, is its avoidance of the typical binaries in Western thought that cannot help explain the Latin-American and U.S. Latino experiences. Additionally, as Karsten Fitz notes in his own analysis of Native American literature, transculturation is:

an ethnocritically mixed approach . . . It questions ethnocentric positions by analyzing

the differences rather than similarities of cultures and cultural productions.

Transculturation as ethnologically oriented literary criticism considers literary texts as examples for negotiations of differences: how differences are perceived, imagined, and actually dealt with. (13-14)

The focus on difference and negotiation is important for two reasons. Primarily, the Latino's experience is first and foremost one of constant difference from the Anglo. The Latino's identity too often is based upon how they are different from the Anglo, and those paradigms that ignore difference, but rather focus on similarities erase the painful experience that is transculturation.

Anzaldúa, herself, refers to the border experience as an open wound, hemorrhaging where two worlds merge to form a third (25). Afterall, as Spitta notes transculturation "no se trata . . . de asumir ninguna clase de mestizaje o sincretismo fácil y reconciliador. Se trata de *asumir*—no de reprimir—el *desgarramiento* como proyecto intelectual y personal" (original emphasis) ("Traición" 174).

Secondly, the focus is important because it demonstrates the subaltern as an active, rather than passive

participant in creating the new culture. As Nancy

Morejón points out, acculturation:

tiene en primera instancia, una carga  
evidentemente moral . . . es decir, asimilarse  
al otro; de modo que ese uno queda dependiente  
o, lo que es peor, inferiorizado, minimizado .  
. . es fundamentalmente eurocéntrico . . . Es  
la supuesta conversión de un salvaje en hombre  
civilizado. (21-22)

Fundamental to Ortiz' theory, then, is the refusal to  
accept the subaltern's cultural history as one of passive  
victimization, but rather one of active resistance and  
creativity.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> From "Marxism and the Historicity of Theory: An Interview with Fredric Jameson" (380).

<sup>2</sup> From Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples (1).

<sup>3</sup> Ortiz publishes the first edition of the book in 1940. In 1963, he prepared a second expanded edition published by the Dirección de Publicaciones de la Universidad Central de las Villas. Two subsequent editions appear: in 1978, Biblioteca Ayacucho de Caracas, and in 1983, Editorial Ciencias Sociales de la Habana (Manzoni 171).

<sup>4</sup> Angel Rama notes that Redfield, Linton, and Herskovitz in "Memorandum of the Study of Acculturation," in American Anthropologist, XXXVIII, 1936 first discuss the problems with the term acculturation. Melville Herskovitz discusses an amplification of the term, two years later, in Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contacts. New York: J.J. Augustus, 1938 (Rama 32).

<sup>5</sup> Both Mabel Moraña and David Sobrevilla note that an earlier analysis and application of the Ortiz theory of transculturation appears in the 1944 work of Mariano

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Picón Salas De la conquista a la independencia. The fourth chapter of Picón's book is titled "De lo europeo a lo mestizo. Las primeras formas de la transculturación." As Karsten Fitz observes, in U.S. anthropology the term is first applied in 1963 by A. Irving Hollowell in his study of Native American Cultures titled "American Indians, White and Black: The Phenomenon of Transculturation" (12).

<sup>6</sup> All Rama quotes are taken from the 1982 Ayacucho edition.

<sup>7</sup> Pratt "borrow[s] this term 'contact' here from its use in linguistics, where the term contact language refers to improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in the context of trade" (6).

<sup>8</sup> Again, Cornejo Polar proves to be very critical of Rama's use of the dependency theory in his article titled "Para una teoría literaria hispanoamericana: A 20 años de un debate decisivo."

<sup>9</sup> Davies continues that Ortiz' work "corresponds most closely to Frantz Fanon's second or 'remembrance'

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phase in the native intellectual's evolution from colonial complicity to postcolonial opposition produced at the point when the intellectual 'decides to remember what he is'" (143).

<sup>10</sup> Arguedas commits suicide on November 28, 1969 while El zorro de abajo y el zorro de arriba is published in 1971.

<sup>11</sup> Guillermo Gómez Peña observes that one needs to exercise caution when designating what may be transculturation from above or below as well as corporate and grassroots transnationalism as well. Gómez Peña provides the example of a Lacandon Indian in the jungle wearing an Ozzy Osborne t-shirt and observes that this "doesn't mean that he has been colonized. He has, in fact, co-opted it and turned it into a symbol of resistance, in this particular case against the government sponsored folkloric culture that Indians are supposed to wear and represent" (Dangerous 206).

<sup>12</sup> Juan E. De Castro relays that the word mestizaje and mestizo originate from the Spanish word mesto, which derives from the Latin mixtus—an agricultural term to describe hybrid plants (18).

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<sup>13</sup> For a harsh criticism of Anzaldúa's mestizaje review Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's article "Who's the Indian in Aztlán? Re-writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandón."

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that while mestizaje and transculturation are theories that have been adopted from other disciplines in order to analyze literature. Cornejo Polar's theories of heterogeneity were always "pensados desde y para la literatura" (370).

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, while Rama forms much of his transculturation ideology on the works of José María Arguedas, it is Argueda's posthumously published novel, El zorro de abajo y el zorro de arriba that inspires Arguedas to formulate his position of heterogeneity.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed delineation of the opposites between the two concepts see Friedhelm Schmidt's article "¿Literaturas heterogéneas o literatura de transculturación?"

<sup>17</sup> Monasterois derives her theory from a reading of Blanca Wiethüchter's novel El jardín de Nora. La Paz: Ediciones de la Mujercita Sentada, 1998.



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<sup>18</sup> I would refer, at this time, to the opening of the chapter in which I quote Fredric Jameson who states "The Third World does the practice and produces the text, and the First World delivers the theory and thinks about it" (380).

<sup>19</sup> Although there are some critics who claim that Ortiz merely borrows the methods and terminologies from criminology and functionalism I, however, agree with Davies in countering this assumption and "suggest that he developed his own ideas concurrently, ideas which were firmly grounded in a Hispanic tradition" (144). Such attempts to dismiss Ortiz' theory on these bases only further reinforces the ethnocentric idea that people of the developing world are producers of culture, but not knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> All autobiographical information is taken from Catherine Davies' essay "Fernando Ortiz' Transculturation: The Postcolonial Intellectual and the Politics of Cultural Representation."

<sup>21</sup> Ortiz' original letter is printed in the January-February 1929 issue of Revista Bimestre Cubana, under the title "Ni racismos ni xenofobias."

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<sup>22</sup> Davies relies on an essay by Ann Wright titled "Intellectuals of an Unheroic Period in Cuban History, 1913-1923: The Cuba Contemporánea Group" to establish this claim. According to Wright there is a "turning point from acquiescence, and even enthusiastic acceptance, of U.S. hegemony to outright resistance around 1923, following the economic crisis of 1920 and the intervention of General Enoch Crowder" (qtd in Davies 162). Enrico Santí relays that Ortiz refers to the criticism of U.S. politics as "la crítica de la caña" (239).

<sup>23</sup> Ortiz' statement is reminiscent of Martí in Nuestra América. However, Ortiz differs from Martí in that he focuses on picking and choosing, in true transculturating fashion. Gloria Anzaldúa, herself, remarks in an interview:

it is not that I reject everything that has to do with white culture. I like the English language, for example, and there is a lot of Anglo ideology that I like as well. Nevertheless, not all of it fits with our experiences and cultural roots. That is why it

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is dangerous not to know about your own  
cultural heritage at all, because then you do  
not have the chance to choose and select. (234)

## Chapter II

### Tato Laviera's Spanglish Poetics

"la lengua es  
la ametralladora  
de la libertad"

-Tato Laviera<sup>1</sup>

Poetry provides a unique space for writers to display transculturation, and Tato Laviera exemplifies how Spanglish in poetry serves as an integral part of his representation of transculturation. In this chapter, I begin with a brief synopsis of Laviera's four poetry collections, followed by a detailed analysis of selected poems from all four collections in order to demonstrate how Laviera displays a unique transcultural cosmology through language. First, I discuss the poems that deal with the relationships between languages and how those relationships affect one's identity. These linguistic relationships reveal prejudice, confusion, racism, loss, acquisition, and many other difficult and often painful issues. Next, I explore Laviera's emphasis on non-European roots in the transcultural process and how this emphasis reveals transculturation as a resistance strategy. Similarly, an analysis of Laviera's stress on popular culture, orality, and music further emphasizes

Laviera's transcultural philosophy as a means of survival and creativity. Lastly, I describe Laviera's homage to certain poets and declamadores as well as his insistence upon the Nuyorican's contribution to the formation of Puerto Rican culture. Together, these various points demonstrate how transculturation is another Latin-American cultural tradition brought to the United States and how, through this tradition, Latinos transform their language to reflect their biculturalism, and create an entirely new code.

Tato Laviera makes his role as poet clear in the first poem of his first collection of poetry. In "para ti, mundo bravo" of la carreta made a U-turn (1979), he states "I am nothing but a historian / who took your actions / and jotted them on paper" (13). El pueblo y su gente are the subjects of Laviera's poetry and from where the most authentic culture emerges. He feels that it is his duty, as a Nuyorican poet, to document that culture.<sup>2</sup> As is the case for many poets, the word is at the center of his creation, his creativity. However, in the case of Laviera, a Puerto Rican born in Santurce and raised in New York City, language takes on an important and political role. Frances Aparicio has identified four

major poetic moments in the metalinguistic discourse of Latino poetry: "bilingualism as conflict; the dismantling of institutionalized forms of discourse; the redefining of literacy; and Latino language(s) as a source of empowerment" ("Language" 58). What makes Laviera's poetry so unique, powerful, and exceptional is that all four major poetic moments are present.

In an interview, Laviera tells how he became a poet:

So in May of 1960 I was Jesús Laviera Sánchez, and in September, three months afterward, when I started classes here [in New York], I was Abraham Laviera. That affected me a lot. That's when I decided to be a writer, to go back to my name. When I became a writer, I said "I don't want to go back to either Jesús or Abraham"; I used my nickname, Tato.

("Interview" 83)

Laviera's choice not to use either Jesús or Abraham, but Tato, reflects his attitude towards his choice of language. Laviera does not choose between Spanish or English. His personal reality and the reality of his people, the Nuyoricans, is not one of either / or. He opts instead for a mixture of the two, and displays a

vast range of vernaculars in between the two dichotomous languages. Laviera observes:

Bilingualism is not only between English and Spanish; it's a universal situation. It may refer to urban English in Spanish form . . . it's a Spanish with an English tonality, with an English spirituality, it's a Spanish urbanized. . . . It's an accent in English, it's an accent in Spanish, it is Spanish with an English accent and with urban Black tonalities. ("Interview" 81)

In his collections, one can identify at least seven different linguistic registries, which he combines in endless varieties. These include:

1. Puerto Rican Spanish Vernacular
2. Urban / African-American English Vernacular
3. Formal / Standard Spanish
4. Formal / Standard English
5. Afro-Spanish Vocabulary and Grammatical  
Constructions
6. Nuyorican Spanglish
7. Other Latino Spanglish Vernaculars

Just as the choice to use his nickname, instead of Jesús or Abraham, was a conscious act of freeing himself from linguistic constraints, so is his decision to employ all the languages at his disposal and to mix them as he sees fit. In this act, Laviera takes on his self-described role of historian in order to recover the often lost and forgotten voices of his community. His community speaks Spanglish, and he, as a voice of the community, will write in Spanglish. There are no translations, no glossaries at the end of the book, no italics or quotation marks to indicate a foreign word. No words are foreign for Laviera and he makes no apologies for his Spanglish. He acknowledges and overcomes the anguish that Gloria Anzaldúa describes in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza:

Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.

(81)



Laviera's Spanglish constructions legitimize the language, and therefore, the people who use it. For these reasons, Véronique Rauline refers to the poet as "a linguistic activist, [because] Tato Laviera does not only voice the linguistic confrontation, but the power of words as a source of our imprisonment but also of our liberation" (162). Anzaldúa herself reflects on the importance of this act of legitimization and recalls, "when I saw poetry written in Tex-Mex for the first time, a feeling of pure joy flashed through me. I felt like we really existed as a people" (82). This existence is exactly what this poet / historian wishes to capture. As Juan Flores aptly notes:

Laviera is not claiming to have ushered in a 'new language' . . . Rather, his intention is to illustrate and assess the intricate language contact experienced by Puerto Ricans in New York and to combat the kind of facile and defeatist conclusions that stem so often from a static, purist understanding of linguistic change. (Divided 176)

As the Nuyorican poet Miguel Algarín observes, in true transculturating fashion, the Nuyorican poet is "the

philosopher of the sugar cane that grows between the cracks of the concrete sidewalks" ("Introduction" 9).

Spanglish permeates throughout all of Laviera's work, which includes a number of unpublished plays and four collections of poetry, all published by the Latino publishing house Arte Público Press: la carreta made a U-turn (1979),<sup>3</sup> ENCLAVE (1981), AmeRícan (1985), and Mainstream Ethics (ética corriente) (1988). La carreta made a U-turn takes René Marqués' 1953 production of La carreta as its point of departure.<sup>4</sup> La carreta describes the typical displacement of the Puerto Rican jíbaro<sup>5</sup> due to the politics of "Operation Bootstrap."<sup>6</sup> In the play, Doña Gabriela and her family move from the countryside of Puerto Rico to the streets of San Juan and then to the hostile Anglo metropolis, New York City. For Marqués the only possible redemption for Doña Gabriela, and those like her, is a return to Puerto Rico. Flores observes that in Marqués' play:

the 'oxcart,' guiding symbol of the play and an abiding reminiscence of abandoned national roots, must be restored to its natural place in a world uncontaminated by inhuman modernity and incompatible foreign values. (Divided 169)

Laviera's oxcart, however, opts not for Puerto Rico, but instead makes a u-turn and stays in New York, just as many Puerto Ricans did and still do. Laviera refers to this collection as the fourth act of the Marqués play ("Interview" 81). The first section of la carreta made a U-turn, titled "Metropolis Dreams," directly references the last act of Marqués' play, "La metrópoli." Laviera's metropolis, not unlike Marqués', portrays a harsh New York reality, filled with scenes of hunger, cold, poverty, drugs, abandoned buildings, subways, and homelessness. One may read the second section of U-turn, "Loisaida Streets: Latinas Sing," as what became of the displaced Doña Gabrielas in New York.<sup>7</sup> These Latinas portray hope, sadness, love, freedom, rhythm, and, above all, survival. The third and last section of this collection titled "El Arrabal: Nuevo Rumbón" suggests a new path for the Nuyorican that returns to the cultural richness of Puerto Rican popular culture. According to Laviera, this popular culture, the product of transculturation, is African at its root and reflected best in the bomba, plena, and décima. Unlike Marqués, Laviera sees the possibility of such a return to Puerto Rican culture not in the physical return to the island,

but instead the poet calls for a new transculturation between the popular culture of the island and that of New York. Laviera's "nuevo rumbón" / new transculturation allows Nuyoricans to challenge the acculturating forces of Anglo society.

Just as in la carreta made a U-turn, ENCLAVE begins in English and ends in Spanish while filling the pages in between with Spanglish, moving between languages and mixing them with great ease. The very title of this second collection indicates Laviera's linguistic aptitude. A possible reference to the enclave of Puerto Ricans in New York, one can also interpret enclave as enclave, in a code or to the beat of the clave.<sup>8</sup> All of these definitions, however, apply and thereby demonstrate Laviera's capacity to use language in order to portray a unique worldview. Again divided into three sections, "Feelings of One," "Oro in Gold," and "Prendas," Laviera presents "a gallery of cultural heroes whose every essence is adaptation and survival within the enclave that allows for freedom of identity and expression" (Kanellos, "Introduction" 3). Here the transculturation of Puerto Rican culture in New York called for in his

first collection has taken effect and has given the enclave its unique place and flavor in the metropolis.

In his third collection, AmeRícan, Laviera proposes and defines a new, more humane America. Just as Laviera indicates in the two previous collections, the African and Indigenous are the humanizing factors and principal creators of a transcultural Puerto-Rican culture. In AmeRícan, Laviera suggests the need for a new humane America, one in which the "Puerto Rican, Hispanic, ethnic or minority [acts] as the important catalyst in American culture as a whole, the presence that humanizes America, helps her to grow and flourish" (Kanellos, "Introduction" 3). While still presenting and documenting a vast array of cultural values to his fellow Nuyoricans, he hopes to reach "beyond the New York enclave. He seeks to stake a claim for Puerto Rican recognition before the whole U.S. society, especially as Puerto Ricans are by now clustered in many cities other than New York" (Flores, Divided 194). He challenges the United States to integrate these humanizing Puerto-Rican values.

Laviera's last collection, Mainstream Ethics (ética corriente), takes on a similar tone. In this collection, while still faithful to his role as "chronologician," and

"wordsmith" (25), he boldly states that Latinos are the mainstream; migration, bilingualism, Spanish, English, injustice, foreign invasion, religion, freedom, and poverty, among other elements, make Latinos mainstream. As Nicolás Kanellos accurately observes, "it would be futile to search for . . . waspish ideals in this book . . . we all can and do contribute to the common ethic" ("Introduction" 3). Furthermore, "it is not our role to follow the dictates of a shadowy norm, an illusive mainstream, but to remain faithful to our collective and individual personalities. Our ethic is and shall always be current" (4).

In all four collections, however, the very language and linguistic variety of his poems mirror all of Laviera's themes. Moving from English to Spanish, to urban English, to Spanglish, to Puerto-Rican "que corta" vernacular, he creates a linguistic cosmovision that reflects all of his values and hopes for the future. A cosmovision of linguistic transculturation that reflects the cultural transculturation of the people, where languages are not static, but ever evolving, mixing, colliding, and, of course, creating. Laviera's poems demonstrate the "proceso doloroso" of transculturation

that Ortiz describes as deculturation, acculturation, and finally neoculturation. Take for instance Laviera's poem "my graduation speech":

i think in spanish  
i write in english  
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.  
tengo las venas aculturadas  
escribo en spanGLISH  
abraham in español  
abraham in english  
tato in spanish  
"taro" in english  
tonto in both languages  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
ahí supe que estoy jodio  
ahí supe que estamos jodios  
english or spanish  
spanish or english  
spanenglish  
now, dig this:  
hablo lo inglés matao  
hablo lo español matao  
no sé leer ninguno bien

so it is, spanglish to matao

what i digo

¡ay virgen, yo no sé hablar! (la carreta 17)

At first glance, it seems that the poetic voice is caught in a world of confusion, a world in which Spanish and English clash leaving him and the community without any language. The placement of this poem within the collection is important. Located in the first section of la carreta made a U-turn, "Metropolis Dreams," it is preceded and followed by depictions of a cruel New York. A New York of drugs, death, cold, and abandoned buildings—el arrabal. However, this poem apparently points to another brutal reality: loss of language and the failure of the education system. The reference to his name, Abraham, reflects that defining moment in Laviera's life upon his arrival in the United States when a teacher changed his name: The very moment that made Laviera a poet out of his need to reclaim his name. However, just as Laviera comes to realize that neither his Spanish given name—Jesús—nor his adopted English name—Abraham—will suffice, the same is true of his language choice. Neither English nor Spanish will do.



Nevertheless, a solution exists: a new language, the acceptance of Spanglish as his language. The very title, "my graduation speech," is indicative of this. His graduation is the realization and acceptance of Spanglish as his language. "Matao" or not, Spanglish is his language and he will not make any excuses about it. The placement of the poem within the collection points to this conclusion. Not only is it the first statement on language, but while the four previous poems are mostly in English, with the exception of a sprinkling of a few Spanish words, "my graduation speech" is followed by a roller coaster ride of movements without warning between a range of English(es) and Spanish(es), which leads ultimately to the creation of a true Spanglish text. Placed in the center of the first section of his first collection, depictions of a brutal and ugly New York precede and follow the poem. The placement, then, would also seem to reveal the survival skills and creativity of the Nuyoricans who surrounded by such despair and poverty are able to not just survive, but also create, among other things, an entirely new language. That language, Spanglish, the result of the Nuyoricans' resistance to hegemonic acculturating forces, proves that

transculturation can be a resistance strategy. As Aparicio observes "Language for Latinos in the U.S. is not merely a philosophical idea nor an intellectual luxury. It is a matter of survival, of life and death" ("Language" 59).

This bilingual condition leads the poet to comment on the relationships between the languages within the Nuyorican community in all of his collections. The relationships between the languages directly reflect the world of acceptance, negation, loss, uprooting, imposition, and transfer that the community has lived both on the island and in the metropolis. Take for instance Laviera's stance on the Spanish language. Although Laviera enthusiastically embraces Spanglish, the poet in no way abandons Spanish for Spanglish. Quite the opposite, Laviera sees in Spanish the strength to endure, and he is determined to preserve the language. Laviera observes in the poem "spanish":

your language outlives your world power.  
but the english could not force you to change  
the folkloric flavorings of all your former  
colonies  
makes your language a major north and south

american tongue. . . . (AmeRícan 33)

Aparicio notes that in the poem, "Laviera does not personally identify with the historical reality of Spanish as an imposed language" ("La vida" 157). However, there is little doubt that Laviera is not aware of the imposition of Spanish by the first colonizers. What is curious is that he nevertheless does not reject the language. Perhaps, the reason for this may be that he sees in Spanish the same capacity for survival and creativity that Spanglish demonstrates. The key to this strength resides in Spanish's more than one thousand years of transculturation. Thus, for Laviera, the Arab, African, and Indigenous influences make Spanish unique:

the atoms could not eradicate your pride,  
it was not your armada stubbornness  
that ultimately preserved your language  
it was the nativeness of the spanish,  
mixing with the indians and the blacks,  
who joined hands together, to maintain your  
precious  
tongue,  
just like the arabs, who visited you for  
eight hundred years, leaving the black

skin flowers of andalucía,  
the flamenco still making beauty with your  
tongue . . . (AmeRícan 33)

However, Laviera expresses frustration over the fact that Spain does not want to recognize the Spanish of the United States, perhaps because of the further transculturation taking place.<sup>9</sup> He pleads:

. . . it was the stubbornness of the elders,  
refusing the gnp national economic language,  
not learning english at the expense of  
much poverty and suffering, yet we  
maintained  
your presence, without your maternal support

Spain, you must speak on behalf of your  
language,  
we wait your affirmation of what we have fought  
to preserve.

ESPAÑOL, one of my lenguas, part of my tongue,  
I'm gonna fight for you, i love you, spanish  
i'm your humble son. (AmeRícan 33)

Ironically, Laviera chooses to express his ideas on Spanish in English thus further emphasizing the hybridity

of his culture. He does not need to address Spanish in Spanish, the reader knows that Laviera is capable of writing in standard / formal Spanish and in case one did not know, Laviera follows the poem "spanish" with "mundo-world" written in the so-called standard / formal Spanish to make it clear. A second interpretation of the use of English in the poem could lead one to conclude that if Spain does not speak on behalf of their language it could ultimately disappear.

Attacks on the language of Nuyoricans, however, are not limited to Spain. Perhaps the most painful attacks come from Puerto Ricans themselves. Performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña accurately observes:

Bicultural Latinos in the United States  
. . . and monocultural citizens of Latin  
America have a hard time getting along. This  
conflict represents one of the most painful  
border wounds, a wound in the middle of a  
family, a bitter split between lovers from the  
same hometown. (Warrior 47)

Such a conflict is beautifully displayed in "brava" one of Laviera's best expressions of bilingualism and the tension that language(s) can cause. As Rauline notes

"the poem starts with a tight separation between the two codes to illustrate the lack of understanding, or rather the unwillingness to understand" (156).

they kept on telling me  
"tú eres disparatera"  
they kept on telling me  
"no se entiende"  
they kept on telling me  
"habla claro, speak spanish"  
they kept on telling me  
telling me, telling me  
and so, the inevitable  
my spanish arrived  
"tú quieres que yo hable  
en español" y le dije  
all the spanish words  
in the vocabulary, you  
know which ones, las que  
cortan, and then i proceeded  
to bilingualize it, i know  
yo sé that que you know  
tú sabes que yo soy that  
i am puertorriqueña in

english and there's nothing  
you can do but to accept  
it como yo soy sabrosa  
proud ask any streetcorner  
where pride is what you defend  
go ahead, ask me, on any street-  
corner that i am not puertorriqueña,  
come dímelo aquí en mi cara  
offend me, atrévete, a menos  
que tú quieras que yo te meta  
un tremendo bochinche de soplamoco  
pezcozá that's gonna hurt you  
in either language, así que  
no me jodas mucho, y si me jodes  
keep it to yourself, a menos  
que te quieras arriesgar  
y encuentres and you find  
pues, que el cementerio  
está lleno de desgracias  
prematuras, ¿estás claro?  
are you clear? the cemetery  
is full of premature short-  
comings. (AmeRícan 63-4)

Brava reflects the anxiety expressed by what Anzaldúa has termed "linguistic terrorism" or the repeated attacks on one's native tongue (80). Anzaldúa, like Brava, reflects, "if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language" (81). Brava makes the same connection instantly, and one is not sure if she is lashing out because they are attacking her poor Spanish or because they offended her by saying she is not Puerto Rican. Never in the poem is it stated that someone said she was not Puerto Rican, but Brava correlates the attack on her language as an attack on her ethnic identity. Notice that the first few lines only address her language, and she is relatively calm until the tension explodes as she states "tú sabes que yo soy that / i am puertorriqueña in / english and there's nothing / you can do but to accept / it como yo soy sabrosa" (AmeRícan 63). Despite the fact that she proceeds to "bilingualize it" and use very specific Puerto Rican vocabulary<sup>10</sup> to stress not just her ability to speak Spanish, but her puertoricanness, she emphasizes "i am puertorriqueña in / english . . ." (AmeRícan 63). Thus, Laviera here, as in "spanish," reaffirms the hybrid



nature of puertoricanness that lives in either language and in both languages.

In "spanish," Laviera underscores such hybridity on the island by giving emphasis to "the nativeness of the spanish / mixing with the indians and the blacks" (AmeRican 33). For the poet, the non-European roots of the language are key to linguistic transculturation. Just as the Africans and Indigenous made the particular Spanish of the Americas unique, Latinos themselves bring these transculturating traditions with them to the United States. Therefore, they transform both Spanish and English, yet at the same time Laviera is aware that transcultural representations are anything but a harmonious mestizaje. Aparicio observes "la tensión entre el lenguaje popular y las expectativas creadas por la mentalidad europeizada en cuanto al uso 'correcto' del español es una de las problemáticas básicas que preocupa tanto a los escritores hispanos en los Estados Unidos como a sus coetáneos en América Latina" ("Tato Laviera" 8). Laviera reflects on the fact that Latinos also bring with them the same linguistic prejudices as seen in the poem "melao":

melao was nineteen years old

when he arrived from santurce

. . . . .

melaíto his son now answered  
in black american soul english talk  
with native plena sounds  
and primitive urban salsa beats

somehow melao was not concerned  
at the neighborly criticism  
of his son's disparate sounding  
talk

melao remembered he was criticized  
back in puerto rico for speaking  
arrabal black spanish  
in the required english class

melao knew that if anybody  
called his son american  
they would shout puertorro  
in english and spanish

. . . . .

dual mixtures of melao and melaítos

spanglish speaking son

así es la cosa papá (Mainstream Ethics 27)

Here Laviera challenges the idea of the purity of any language, as both languages, English and Spanish, are transformed by the non-European elements. Melao's Santurce Spanish<sup>11</sup> was too black for teachers in Puerto Rico and his exposure to this prejudice does not allow him to feel shameful of his own son's language. However, the description of Melaíto's speech as a "disparate sounding / talk" may cause some confusion as to whether that which draws censure from the barrio is Melaíto's Spanish or his English. Given that the last line of the poem is in Spanish, "así es la cosa papá," most likely it is both. Clearly Melaíto's English has been transformed just as Melao's Spanish was. The standard/formal English is transformed first by "black american soul," but Melaíto adds his own flavor of "native plena sounds / and primitive urban salsa beats" (Mainstream 27). The very language Laviera employs in "melao" demonstrates this as Juan Flores notes:

Though the narrative voice is in English,  
Spanish words, sounds and meanings burst  
through the monolingual seams; every shift in

geographic and biographical reference  
undermines the 'official' status of either  
language standard. Close and repeated reading  
reveals a vernacular Spanish subtext that  
explodes at the end. ("Broken" 347)

Two key words underscore this point: "disparate" and  
"son." Hidden in the seemingly English of the poem these  
words read in Spanish add a new dimension to the poem.  
Is Melaíto's talk disparate as in different or disparate  
as in atrocidad? Is it a different kind of Spanish or a  
different kind of English? Or rather, an atrocious  
Spanish or an atrocious English? Or both? Or all four?  
When Laviera writes "dual mixtures / of melao and  
melaítos / spanglish speaking son," does he refer to  
"son" as in child or son as in music?<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Laviera  
seems to indicate all of the above. The hidden meanings  
reflect the undeniable transculturation that has occurred  
in the language(s): a hispanized English, an anglicized  
Spanish, or rather Spanglish. Underscoring these  
transformations are the very names used in the text,  
which again highlight the non-European roots of such  
cultural renovations. The name Melao, which is the very  
Caribbean pronunciation of melado, or sugar cane syrup,

is a strong reference to the island's history of slavery in connection with sugar production, the very industry that Ortiz uses as a point of departure in his creation of the neologism, transculturación.

This emphasis on non-European roots as the basis for the rejection of linguistic acculturation is further evidenced in the poem "asimilao":

assimilated? qué assimilated,  
brother, yo soy asimilao,  
así mi la o sí es verdad  
tengo un lado asimilao.  
  
. . . . .  
but the sound LAO was too black  
for LATED, LAO could not be  
translated, assimilated,  
no asimilao, melao,  
it became a black  
spanish word but  
  
. . . . .  
how can it be analyzed  
as american? así que se  
chavaron  
trataron

pero no pudieron  
con el AO  
de la palabra  
principal, dénles gracias a los prietos  
que cambiaron asimilado al popular asimilao.

(AmeRícan 54)

Thus the "AO" of asimilao, Melao, and even Melaíto becomes the linguistic symbol for not only resistance to acculturation, but also creative neoculturation. Both of which reside in the African component of Puerto-Rican culture, both on the island and in the metropolis.

Laviera's transculturating philosophy, therefore, is clear and appropriately conveyed by "esquina dude":

. . . nothing is better than nothing, bro  
i integrate what i like, i reject  
what i don't like, bro, nothing of  
the past that is the present is sacred  
everything changes, bro, anything  
that remains the same is doomed to  
die, stubbornness must cover all my  
angles, bro, y te lo digo sincerely . . .

(AmeRícan 58).

The "esquina dude" relays the need for change in the form of transcultural syncretism for survival. Furthermore, by voicing this philosophy through the voice of a street hustler it becomes evident that for the poet transculturation takes place at the level of popular culture, in the barrios, and this culture is first and foremost an oral culture. As Aparicio reflects:

más que una reacción en contra de los criterios europeizados de la literatura occidental, la lengua oral, que deviene en lenguaje poético, representa una aproximación al problema de la identidad personal y cultural del hispano en los Estados Unidos. ("Nombres" 47)

The poem "doña cisa y su anafre" reinforces this clearly. Laviera, in an interview remarks:

The poem "Doña Cisa y su anafre" defines me as a Puerto Rican. That poem and that experience was my transition from the *jíbaro* to New York. . . . It is there I express the combination between the *jíbaro*, the language, and New York. That is the total coloring, the rainbow of my identity. When I realized that, everything

came together and I went on from there.

("Interview" 84)

How does a poem about a woman selling bacalaítos define Laviera as a Puerto Rican? First, it demonstrates the power of orality on the popular level. Ana Celia Zentella who has done extensive studies regarding the language(s) of the New York barrio asserts that for Nuyorican artists:

the pervasive influence in their work is that of the oral tradition, which may have been received by direct means such as the telling of family stories and traditional lore or through the influence of the radio, which many refer to as crucial in their artistic development.

(Growing Up 13)

For this reason, not surprisingly, Laviera elevates a street vendor to the class of poet. In examining the title of the poem, it appears that Laviera does consider the street vendor a poet as seen in the use of the word "anafre." Here, it is possible that Laviera cleverly plays with the words anafe (a portable kitchen) and anáfora (the poetic technique of repetition). Doña Cisa's anáfora is her constant repetition of the word



"bacalaitos" to attract her clientele.<sup>13</sup> The very name of the vendor, Doña Cisa, also appears to be another clever play with words. Doña could be read as another reference to the Doña Gabriela of Marqués' La carreta. This is true especially if one considers that the name Cisa itself may be read as the Spanish prefix "cis-" meaning over here or acá, and therefore Cisa meaning "the lady over here," or in this case the "Doña de acá." Laviera writes of Doña Cisa:

. . . dándole sabor al aire reumático  
creando sin vanidad al nuevo jíbaro  
que ponía firmes pies en el seno de  
américa quemando ritmos africanos y  
mitos indígenas . . . (la carreta 74)

Doña Cisa, then, like Laviera himself, recreates, or transculturates, the jíbaro in New York through her own poetry. She, a street vendor, is elevated to that of poet because she, like Laviera, feeds the hungry barrio culture:

doña cisa no refunfuñaba, no maldecía  
el anafre gritaba de alegría cuando  
el rasca rasca rasca que rasca  
dientes jíbaritos, chupándose las bocas

mordiéndose los dedos del sabor olor  
bacalaítos fritos color oro  
dignidad. (la carreta 75)

Laviera, again, indicates such a transcultural act as  
normal for the Puerto Rican when he emphasizes:

. . . gritaba doña cisa,  
. . . . .  
escogiendo el camino  
ni regular  
ni suave  
ni cósmico  
pero el camino-carrito-cultural  
del pensamiento típico. (la carreta 75)

Here, Laviera's Doña Cisa chooses her path, which, unlike  
Marqués' Doña Gabriela, is to stay in New York. The  
choice to stay, then, is not forced upon her, but rather  
typical. Here, Laviera replaces the jíbaro symbol of the  
carreta, the oxcart, with the carrito, the shopping cart,  
that she pushes up and down the streets of New York  
displaying the "the nuevo rumbón."<sup>14</sup> Again, this new  
path, is the path the Nuyorican creates through  
transculturation and is clearly seen in the juxtaposition  
of the thoroughly Puerto-Rican food bacalaítos with the

U.S. capitalistic symbol of the shopping cart. The new path that shows how Puerto Ricans can and do create their own unique Nuyorican culture through ingenuity and persistence.

The jíbaro, poetry, and music, for Laviera, are inseparable. All three form part of the rich Puerto-Rican oral tradition:

derramando décimas con lágrimas  
.  
el cantor de las montañas sacaba el lo  
.  
que congaba las tetas de cayey salía el le  
.  
de jorge brandon salía el lai  
lo le lo lai lo le lo lai . . .<sup>15</sup>  
(la carreta 73)

While the author explores all three in his poems, and all are interrelated, Afro-Puerto-Rican music forms the base of much of his poetry. The poem "the africa in pedro morejón" reveals Laviera's ideology in his use of Afro-Puerto-Rican rhythm: "and the mambo sounds inside the plena / so close to what i really understand / . . . / musically rooted way way back / before any other

language" (la carreta 57). Therefore, for a poet for whom language and the word are more than mere tools of composition, just as many hip-hop artists would say, the beat determines the rhyme and not the other way around. Given Laviera's emphasis on the African roots of Puerto-Rican culture this should not be surprising. Laviera evidently indicates the importance of music before the word on the basis that Africans who came to the Caribbean were from many different areas of Africa and didn't speak the same language. Therefore, their primary form of communication became music. The emphasis, then, on rhythm and music is not done simply "en un anhelo de descubrir raíces ni de exaltar la tradición," but like José María Arguedas, Laviera does so "sencillamente porque éstas son estructuras expresivas que ha escuchado toda su vida y ha llegado a formar parte de su manera de concebir el mundo y de proyectarse al mundo" (Kanellos, "Canto" 105).

Fundamental to this worldview projected through song is the idea that cultural survival depends upon transculturation. Laviera recognizes that while the culture and its music are fundamentally African, it has been through transculturation that this root has survived

as his poem "the salsa of bethesda fountain"  
demonstrates:

the internal soul of salsa  
is like don quijote de la mancha  
classical because the roots are  
from long ago, the symbol of cer-  
vantes writing in pain of a lost  
right arm and in society today,  
the cha-cha slow dance welfare

the internal soul of salsa  
is an out bembé on sunday afternoons  
while felipe flipped his sides  
of the cuban based salsa  
which is also part of africa  
and a song of the caribbean

the internal dance of salsa  
is of course plena . . . (la carreta 67)

Laviera here details the origin of salsa as the intricate  
transculturation of various musical genres from different  
locations and cultures. However, the coming together of  
these different components in New York produces the new

transcultural phenomenon salsa. First, the displacement of Africans in the Caribbean and their interaction with the Spanish and Indigenous cultures produces son, bomba y plena, and mambo, among other genres. Then, the displacement of Latinos from various countries who bring their transcultural traditions and cosmology to the United States create, or rather neoculturate, salsa. Thus, the worldview displayed by salsa is one of continuous transculturations. Because salsa is a transcultural representation, in the same poem African Americans instantly embrace the musical genre because the African core, while modified, is pure:

. . . la bomba y plena puro són<sup>16</sup>  
de puerto rico que ismael es el  
rey y es el juez  
meaning the same as marvin gaye  
singing spiritual social songs  
to black awareness

a blackness in spanish  
a blackness in english  
mixture met on jam sessions in central park,  
there were no differences in

the sounds emerging from inside  
soul-salsa is universal  
meaning a rhythm of mixtures . . .  
(la carreta 67)

Hence, we see Laviera's idea of music coming before any language. Nobody at Bethesda Fountain needs to know Spanish to understand what is "musically rooted way way back / before any other language," "all these sounds / about words" (la carreta 57, 64). In the poems "the new rumbón" and "tumbao (for eddie conde)" Laviera insinuates that it is through transcultural production that not only do the two groups—Latinos and African Americans—come together, but that through transculturation one can fight and heal from acculturating forces. Laviera in "tumbao" refers to the "conguero despojero . . . artista manipulador" and reflects "give us your tired / your beaten triste soledad" (La carreta 64). The alleviating nature of the conga and the connection with African Americans repeat in "the new rumbón" as Laviera writes "congas the biggest threat to heroin / congas make junkies hands healthier / . . . / y ahí vienen los morenos / a gozar con sus flautas y su soul jazz" (La carreta 53). The new path is clearly that of

transculturation as the poet articulates "the congas burn out / everything not natural to our people." Therefore, salsa and all Afro-Latino music, transcultural manifestations, come to represent resistance to acculturation because its African root along with all its other cultural roots—the European, the American, the Indigenous—are intact, yet different. The result, then, is an entirely new cultural phenomenon.

The strength of transculturation through song is again displayed in "bomba, para siempre." First, Laviera makes the statement: "bomba: puerto rican history for always, national pride" (ENCLAVE 68). Once again, the poet recovers and elevates the voice of the working class, this time to that of national history. Laviera's previous statement along with "la bomba ya está mezclada con las rimas jibareñas" provides more evidence that for Laviera music and poetry are one in the same (ENCLAVE 68). Laviera goes on to demonstrate that national history is one of transculturation "los carimbos en sus fiestas, español era su lengua / le ponían ritmo en bomba, a castañuelas de españa vieja" (ENCLAVE 68). Bomba specifically comes to represent resistance to acculturation. The author asserts "por el frío yo la



canto, por los parques caminando, / siento el calor en mi cuerpo, mis huesos en clave, / me dan aliento" (ENCLAVE 69). The poet continues the poem by challenging the United States' acculturating tendencies and writes, "métele encima el jazz, el rock o fox trot inglesa, / la bomba se va debajo, ay virgen no hay quien la mueva." Laviera, does not worry about acculturating forces because bomba is proof of Puerto-Rican cultural survival and Laviera's switch to Spanish at the end of the poem underscores this point.

and at the end of these songs,<sup>17</sup>  
in praise of many beats,  
my heart can only say:  
se queda allí. (ENCLAVE 69)

Therefore in "bomba, para siempre," as Rosanna Rivero Marín notes, the poet:

both challenges a Puerto Rican society that  
does not fully acknowledge the importance of  
its Black roots, and the United States  
society's impulse to 'acculturate' its citizens  
. . . And he also confronts both by not  
settling for one language or the other  
language. (96)

However, Laviera not only challenges Puerto Rico's failure to fully recognize the importance of its Black roots, but also the island's failure to acknowledge the prominent role that the oral culture has played on the island.

This challenge is evident not only in the poet's insistence on the incorporation of music as a legitimate form of oral culture and even poetry, but also in the poems where he pays his respects to the declamadores Juan Boria and Jorge Brandon. Laviera studied at the age of six under Juan Boria.<sup>18</sup> Boria, well known in Puerto Rico as a declamador of Afro-Caribbean poetry, was particularly skillful at reciting the poetry of Luis Palés Matos, which proved to be a great influence in Laviera's work. In the poem "juan boria" Laviera describes the declamador:

. . .director ejecutivo de la bamba burocracia  
huracán en remolino, un nuevo diccionario  
.  
palesmatear y guilleneear                      juan    juan  
.  
el presidente—comandante—caballero,  
recitando al todo negro

de la cuna con sus versos. (ENCLAVE 65)

The other great influence on the poetry of Laviera is undoubtedly Jorge Brandon,<sup>19</sup> another Puerto Rican declamador who spent most of his life reciting both his own poetry and that of others, particularly Latin-American poetry, on Loisaida streets. Kanellos affirms that for Brandon "la única función del poeta es comunicar directamente con su auditorio. Brandon es uno de los pocos verdaderos declamadores que hayan sobrevivido en tiempos modernos" ("Canto" 103). Laviera's poem "declamación" reflects his feelings towards him: ". . .en to poesía encomiendo mi madre / mis hijos, mi patria, mi abuela . . . / el pan nuestro de cada día dáoslo hoy" (la carreta 86).

The importance of incorporating these two poets in his own work relates to Laviera's transculturation project in two ways. First, by including Boria in his work, Laviera situates himself into Puerto-Rican literary history. Secondly, he brings Boria to the attention of his compatriots in the metropolis and thereby extends another island tradition to the mainland. The same is true for Brandon. Because Brandon is not only a poet but also a declamador, Laviera accomplishes first, to

continue and second, to insert a Latin-American tradition of oral culture in the United States, not just by reciting poetry, but also by inspiring Nuyoricans to continue the tradition of Puerto-Rican letters as well. Laviera himself recalls that for the Nuyorican poets Brandon was "one of our great teachers . . . he was a great historical figure. He's the tie that binds us to Puerto Rico" ("Interview" 80). Brandon, then, represents another great mediator between cultures. Just as Laviera brings Boria to the metropolis, he brings Brandon to the island, thereby inserting Brandon into the literary history of Puerto Rico. The insertion of Brandon into Puerto Rican literary history, also inserts the Nuyorican into that same history. Therefore, when Laviera inserts Brandon's name into the poem of "música jíbara" and partially credits him with the thoroughly Puerto-Rican "lo lei lo lai" he not only further emphasizes the link to Puerto-Rican culture, but also Nuyoricans as legitimate creators of that culture.

Nowhere, however, is the legitimization of Nuyoricans as creators of Puerto-Rican culture more apparent than in Laviera's warning poem to José Luis González, the author of the very important and seminal

work on Puerto Rican culture: El país de cuatro pisos y otros ensayos (1980). The great value of González' work lies in the fact that he, like Laviera, emphasizes the importance of the African component in the making of Puerto-Rican culture—something previously underappreciated and overlooked by most scholars.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, González fails to acknowledge the Nuyorican component of Puerto-Rican culture.<sup>21</sup> Laviera responds to the oversight in his "three-way warning poem (for José Luis González)":

en  
el  
fon  
do  
del  
nu  
yo  
ri  
can  
hay  
un  
pu  
er

to

rri

que

ño. . . (AmeRícan 49).

Thus, Laviera's role as a mediator of cultures should not be seen solely as a mediator between Anglo and Puerto-Rican and/or Nuyorican cultures, but also between Nuyorican and Puerto-Rican cultures.

Nicolás Guillén and Luis Palés Matos, two other great mediators of culture, surface in Laviera's own poetry with his admiration of their ability to capture the transcultural voice of the Afro-Caribbean. His poem "cuban for Nicolás Guillén" demonstrates this clearly:

Base prieta jerigonza

(escondida en lo cristiano)

huracán secreto

. . . . .

yemayado de orishas

sacudiendo caderas de europa

el origen se preserva

al vaivén de ideas claras

al vaivén de ideas claras

ideas claras caribeñas!

. . . . .

salió el sol, sus rayos atravesando  
rayos, largas piernas afriqueñas  
rayos, trompetas charanga europea  
rayos, tambores indígenas se encuentran  
rayos, rompiendo todo esclavo  
rayos, preservando colores de resguardo  
rayos, con los viejos africanos  
libremente exclamando:

¡somos los mismos, los mismos éramos

. . . . .

somos humanos, respaldándonos, somos humanos

. . . . .

yo le canto a la lumbre del glorioso

despertar! (AmeRícan 21-2)

The homage to Guillén reveals Laviera's admiration for the Cuban poet's ability to awaken Cuban consciousness, an awakening that Laviera attributes to Guillén's ability to successfully capture Afro-Cuban language, a "Base prieta jerigonza" which leads to "la lumbre del glorioso / despertar"!

In regards to Palés Matos, Laviera's tribute reflects his admiration for Palés Matos' language alone,

rather than any sort of awakening of consciousness. Many have correctly criticized Palés Matos for a:

form of poetry characterized by African sounding words, rhythms and language, yet, a shallow understanding of black culture . . . [that] is partly responsible for the negative and, at best one dimensional images of blacks. (Jackson 469)

Laviera, nevertheless, defends his verse. As Martín-Rodríguez notes "from Palés Matos, Laviera takes his ability to construct a poetic language inspired in the music, the vocabulary, and the rhythms of African tongues" (265). The scholar continues and accurately points out that "el moreno puertorriqueño (a three-way warning poem)" reflects this inspiration:

. . . ay baramba bamba  
suma acaba  
quimbombo de salsa  
la rumba matamba  
ñam ñam yo no soy  
de la masucamba  
papiri pata pata . . . (la carreta 60)



Laviera views Palés Matos as an important poetic figure because he is the first to interject the language of afro-caribeños into Spanish language literature, and as observed previously, the use of language in literature is very important to the legitimization of a marginalized people. In his poem "homenaje a don luis palés matos" the contribution of Palés Matos to this legitimization becomes even clearer as he declares:

. . . orgullos cadereando acentos al español  
conspiración engrasando ritmos pleneros  
a la lengua española pa ponerle sabor.  
.  
despierta la clave chupando las cañas  
prucutú-piriquín-prucú-tembeando  
el secreto máximo: que luis palés matos  
también era grifo africano guillao de  
castellano. (ENCLAVE 66)<sup>22</sup>

Palés Matos' work proves extremely important for Laviera given not just his own intent to reclaim and legitimize the voice of the Afro Puerto Rican, but also his own attempts to insert the Spanglish voice of the Nuyorican into the Puerto Rican literary canon. Laviera's task to recover the Nuyorican voice is not

unlike Guillén's and Palés Matos' recovery of the Afro-Caribbean voice. Therefore, Laviera's representation of both Guillén and Palés Matos proves also to be an attempt to insert himself and the Nuyorican voice into the Latin-American phenomenon of transculturation, represented by a tradition of both orality and bilingualism. Laviera essentially determines Guillén and Palés Matos as great poets because they capture the voice of the transculturated subject, the authentic voice of the Americas.

In conclusion, a thorough analysis of Laviera's four poetry collections reveals the often difficult and even combative relationships between the languages and how they affect the Nuyorican's and Latino's identity. However tenuous the relationships may be, Laviera finds that through a transculturation of the languages a resistance strategy can combat the devastating effects such linguistic tension may have on one's identity. As demonstrated, an emphasis on the non-European roots in this transcultural process is key to this resistance strategy. Laviera's homage to various transcultural innovators and the importance he places on popular culture, orality, and music further reveals Laviera's

transcultural philosophy as a means of survival and creativity. His poems reveal that transculturation is a part of Latin America's cultural heritage that manifested itself with the arrival of the first Spaniards and Africans to the New World. Latin Americans as a transculturated people continue this tradition in the United States, and, therefore, instead of acculturating and abandoning their culture, they transculturate. They transform their language to reflect their hybridity, and, by doing so, they have created and continue to create an entirely new language. Yet another authentic language of the Americas, "so it is, Spanglish to matao."

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> "conciencia" from the collection Mainstream Ethics (ética corriente) (51).

<sup>2</sup> Nuyorican poets Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero, in their anthology of Nuyorican poetry published in 1975, state that a Nuyorican is a Puerto Rican who has been born, raised or spent a considerable part of their life in New York. Puerto Ricans all over the United States adapt the term, replacing "Nuyo" with their own place of residence. For example: ChicagoRican, OrlandoRican, CaliRican, etc . . .

<sup>3</sup> la carreta made a U-turn is now in its seventh edition and has sold more than 60,000 copies (Hernández 74).

<sup>4</sup> Juan Flores remarks:

Marqués' death in 1979—the same year that Laviera's book was published signaled the close of an era in Puerto Rican letters. . . . La Carreta that became widely familiar to Puerto Rican and international audiences came to be extolled for over a generation as the classic

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literary rendition of recent Puerto Rican  
History. (Divided 169)

René Marqués is also the author of the both popular and  
controversial El puertorriqueño dócil.

<sup>5</sup> Jíbaro is a term used by Puerto Ricans to describe  
someone from the countryside. Sometimes used  
pejoratively to describe someone who is backwards in his  
or her ways, the jíbaro is also upheld as the symbol of  
national culture. Cubans use the term guajiro similarly.

<sup>6</sup> "Operation Bootstrap," referred to in Spanish as  
"Operación manos a la obra," was the policy of the  
industrialization of the island undertaken by governor  
Luis Muñoz Marín in the 1940s and 1950s which displaced  
millions of Puerto Ricans first from the countryside to  
San Juan, and then to New York due to the lack of  
employment in San Juan.

<sup>7</sup> Loisaida is a term used by Nuyorican Poets to  
refer to the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

<sup>8</sup> The clave is the instrument, two sticks tapped  
together, that keeps the 2/3 or 3/2 beat of salsa. The  
clave is considered by many to be the most important  
instrument in salsa.

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Fernando Ortiz himself observes the same linguistic snobbery from Spain regarding the vocabulary of Latin America, and specifically Cuba. In his own cataloging of cubanisms, he discusses the origin of the word guayabo and expresses his dismay over the fact that the Spanish Academy attributes its origin as French. Ortiz refers to the academy's analysis as an "inexplicable etimología gabacha," and replies "¡Que no nos venga la Academia con *guayabas!*" (Nuevo Catauro 280).

<sup>10</sup> For example: "bochinche de soplamoco / pezcóz."

<sup>11</sup> Laviera reveals in an interview:

Santurce was settled mostly by free slaves, run away from non-Hispanic islands of the Caribbean who found their freedom in Puerto Rico, and by poor people. It later became the prosperous, 'new' part of San Juan and is now in decay. ("Interview" 217)

<sup>12</sup> Son is a type of African folk music that originated in Cuba.

<sup>13</sup> Laviera's choice of bacalaitos, which are cod fish fritters, is interesting if one takes into consideration the previous discussion on the use of the suffix -ao

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instead of -ado. Laviera could perhaps be making the connection between the Puerto-Rican culture of orality and it's non-European roots.

<sup>14</sup> Dominique repeats this idea in the photo on the front cover of la carreta made a U-turn. The photo reflects a shopping cart filled with a conga, guitar, machete and a typical jíbaro straw hat, standing in the snow in front of a detour sign.

<sup>15</sup> "Lo lei lo lai" is a common refrain particular to Puerto Rico repeated in many songs, both old and new. It is said that this refrain originated in the music of the Puerto-Rican jíbaro. The refrain is often repeated in songs as a way of identifying it or the artist as Puerto Rican.

<sup>16</sup>By articulating these transcultural manifestations as pure, Laviera challenges the traditional U.S. view of any cultural hybridity as bad, and even degenerate. The importance of articulating such mixing as pure has proven to be fundamental in many emancipatory Latino projects. One of the most glaring examples would be Corky Gonzales' "I am Joaquin" in which he declares his mestizo blood as pure (20).

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<sup>17</sup>Here the author refers to his poems as songs.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Boria (1905 - 1995):

fue intérprete de los versos de Fortunato Vizcarrondo y Luis Palés Matos. Declamaba en actividades y en la radio. . . . Dentro de sus más notables interpretaciones se pueden mencionar "Tangalatin" (de F. Vizcarrondo), "Majestad negra" (de L. Palés), "Enamorao" (de M. Jiménez) y "Para dormir un negrito" (de E. Ballaga). Recibió varias distinciones y un doctorado Honoris Causa que le otorgó la Universidad de Sagrado Corazón. ("Juan Boria")

<sup>19</sup> Jorge Brandon (1902-1995) is known as the "coco que habla" because he recited poems through a microphone attached to a speaker inside a painted coconut. While his fame is as a Nuyorican, Brandon actually began reciting poetry in Puerto Rico in the 1930s and 1940s. Brandon memorized and recited hundreds of poems and would record his own original poems in a secret code for fear that someone from a publishing house would steal them (Kanellos, "Canto" 103).



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<sup>20</sup> One study is particularly important in this regard, Antonio S. Pedreira's Insularismo (1930) which contributed greatly to create the myth that Puerto-Rican culture was largely Hispanic and white. González' book, El país de cuatro pisos (1980), started to destroy this myth as González demonstrated the importance of African culture in the formation of Puerto-Rican identity. However, González often receives criticism for overlooking the Indigenous component of Puerto-Rican culture and, more recently, for overlooking the Nuyorican component as well.

<sup>21</sup> Arcadio Díaz-Quinonez in his analysis of contemporary Puerto-Rican culture, La memoria rota (1993) "identifies the most glaring lapses in Puerto Rican historical memory" (Flores, "Broken" 338). One of the most important lapses commented on by Díaz-Quinonez is the failure to acknowledge the contributions of the emigrant Puerto-Rican community in the formation of Puerto-Rican culture.

<sup>22</sup> Much of the criticism against Palés Matos is based on the fact that he was not Black. However, with this line Laviera seems to challenge this critique. In the

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same poem he also writes, "qué de blanco: / . . . un  
negrindio sureño, rascacielo de mulato / patología  
criolla, ogoun-ochoun de barrio" (ENCLAVE 66). This  
challenge is perhaps better understood when one takes  
into consideration Laviera's poem "the africa in pedro  
morejón" where he exclaims "two whites can never make a  
black. . . . / but two blacks, give them / time . . . can  
make mulatto . . . / can make brown . . . can make  
blends. . . / and ultimately . . . can make white" (la  
carreta 58).

### Chapter III

#### Subversive English in Raining Backwards:

##### A Different Kind of Spanglish

"el inglés  
se deforma  
con el  
calor de tu cultura"  
-Tato Laviera<sup>1</sup>

As in the works of Tato Laviera, language itself is the central figure of Roberto G. Fernández' literature. Born in Havana, Cuba in 1951, Fernández was raised in Sagua la Grande until 1961 when he fled with his family to the United States. While his literature revolves around Cuban Miami, Fernández spent his adolescence in Belle Glade, Florida, some one hundred miles north of Miami, a distance that the author says allowed him to view Miami more objectively. Fernández first published two short story collections: Cuentos sin rumbo (1975) and El jardín de la luna (1976). Two novels, La vida es un special (1981) and La montaña rusa (1985), followed and perhaps function as precursors to Fernández' first English novel Raining Backwards (1988). While all three are autonomous texts, they tackle the same themes, have similar structures, and some of the same characters appear in each of the three novels. Most importantly,

however, in all three novels language takes on the role of protagonist. Fernández' academic scholarship also reflects his interest in language.<sup>2</sup> He has written articles concerning Cuban language both on and off the island.<sup>3</sup> His first two articles, written in 1979 and 1983, focus on the lexical and syntactical impact English has had on the Spanish of Cubans in South Florida.<sup>4</sup> A third article studies the changes in the vocabulary of Cubans in Cuba since the Revolution.<sup>5</sup> His latest two works of fiction include Holy Radishes! (1995) and En la ocho y la doce (2001). Of all his works, Raining Backwards stands out as his greatest success, both critically and popularly.

In this chapter, I utilize Raining Backwards as the base text for my analysis that examines how Fernández creates a unique Spanglish text through the Hispanization of English. After a brief explanation of the novel, I discuss the basic history of the "English Only" movement in Miami-Dade County. I explore how Fernández uses the "English Only" pretext to subvert the language of authority. Additionally, I demonstrate the feasibility of categorizing the author's particular use of English as Spanglish and reveal the Spanish subtext of Fernández'

English through a detailed study of the author's use of calques, Hispanisms, and intertextuality. While various scholars have previously commented on aspects of these techniques I attempt to document most instances in which Fernández employs them. Lastly, I reveal that with these techniques Fernández creates a truly Spanglish text through the subordination of English to Spanish.

Raining Backwards is a fragmented tale composed of letters, telephone conversations, poems, advertisements, recipes, newspaper columns, television news briefs, monologues, dialogs, first and third person narratives, and even a beauty contest application. Such fragmentation successfully portrays the often-chaotic reality of Cuban-Americans. The novel tells the stories of three extended families, who are all related to each other, and their neighbors.

While the many linked plots and characters suggest many protagonists, in reality language itself takes on the role of protagonist. The prohibition of Spanish in Dade county<sup>6</sup> and the persecution of those who do speak Spanish by the Tongue Brigade, a local group of concerned citizens formed to enforce the law unites all of the protagonists. The civic group wears a bracelet depicting

a tongue inside a circle with a line crossing it out (Fernández "La subversión" 27).<sup>7</sup> Fernández writes Raining Backwards in the midst of "English Only" debates, making the premise not so fictitious. In the year before its publication, 37 states considered constitutional amendments to declare English the official language (Zentella, "Language" 39).<sup>8</sup> Miami is often seen and portrayed as a very tolerant, cosmopolitan and even bi-cultural community having fully accepted the Cubans. In 1973 the county commission affirmed such ideas when it officially declared the county bilingual and bicultural, where Spanish is considered the second official language (Castro, M. 183). In fact, bilingual education originated in Miami-Dade county in 1960. However, this seemingly progressive county, in regards to bilingualism and biculturalism, also became the leader in the "English Only" movements of the 1980s. Between April and September of 1980 over 100,000 Cubans reached the shores of Miami during the Mariel Boatlift. During this time, a group of already frustrated citizens formed the organization "Citizens of Dade United" to spread an awareness campaign and enact "English Only" laws. In November 1980, the voters of Miami-Dade County passed a

citizen initiative by 59 percent that proved to be "the most restrictive Official English measure ever passed in the United States . . . and terminated a variety of county services in other languages" (Crawford 131).<sup>9</sup>

James Crawford further explains that:

the ordinance prohibited the use of public funds on the use of languages other than English. Fire safety information pamphlets in Spanish are prohibited, Spanish marriage ceremonies are halted, and public transportation signs in Spanish are removed.

(90)

Fernández, himself, reflects that he sees these laws "as a reaction to Cubans making it too fast. That was the only way to slap them back. One thing was to welcome a few refugees; another is when refugees take over" (Binder 7). Thus, in the novel not only do authorities outlaw Spanish, and those found to speak Spanish persecuted by the Tongue Brigade, but they also classify Spanish-speakers as handicapped. Over halfway through the novel, the reader learns that the United States Supreme Court, in a narrow decision of 5 to 4, declares the prohibition of the use of languages in the United States equivalent

to violating the civil rights of the handicapped and diseased. The disease, speaking in Spanish, is termed disglossia, "a degenerative disease of speech centered in the brain . . . [for which] the federal government [will] set up treatment centers . . . to curb the spread of the disease" (Fernández Raining 142).<sup>10</sup>

This premise allows Fernández to take on the task of creating an English text to express a Cuban experience in Miami where language itself becomes the main protagonist. Fernández' task is not unlike that of José María Arguedas in Los Ríos Profundos, and other Arguedas texts, in that in order to express a reality that is foreign to the language of authority, he must creatively manipulate that language of authority. If Arguedas indigenizes Spanish and thereby undermines its presumed superiority over Quechua, as Silvia Spitta asserts, then Fernández hispanizes English to accomplish the same goal (Between 167). Spitta states, regarding Arguedas, that an apparent task of translation, now transforms itself into transculturation in which each language is changed by the other. For if English, in the case of Fernández, and Spanish, in the case of Arguedas, seem to have stepped into Spanish and Quechua respectively, so too has Spanish



infiltrated English and Quechua infiltrated Spanish (Between 167). As Spitta observes in regards to the work of Arguedas, the same is true for Raining Backwards because "through the seemingly artificiality of the language that they now manipulate, the narrators constantly remind the new reader that [English] is an imposed foreign language" (Between 167). By creating a new type of English, an English written to the rhythm of Spanish, an English that reflects Spanish syntax, grammar, and ideology, Fernández, then, subverts the language of authority so that its true meaning becomes lost to the monolingual reader. Therefore, only the bilingual reader, and to some extent only the Cuban bilingual, can truly understand the entire meaning of the novel. Thus, though the text exists in English, the monolingual reader becomes the outsider or the foreigner in their own language and consequently, feels like the minority. The bilingual becomes the insider and the authority of language is subverted and no longer in the hands of the monolingual but rather in those of the bilingual. As Rivero Marín astutely observes:

The narration describes a developing relationship between English and Spanish, where

English is supposed to conquer and reign  
supreme . . . However, Spanish is the  
conquering hero in this novel's formulation . .  
. where English tries to take over Spanish but  
in fact it is Spanish who remains in a  
commanding position over English in the novel.  
(48)

Fernández at first chooses to write in English  
through the urging of his editor at Arte Público Press  
who suggests that by writing in English, he will then be  
able to have greater appeal and reach a larger audience  
(Rivero Marín 31). Therefore, he participates in a trend  
beginning in the 1980s in which Latinos choose to write  
in English over Spanish.<sup>11</sup> However, Fernández' "fiction  
is as alien in English as it is in Spanish" (Febles  
"English" 99). His seemingly unusual English has led  
some to categorize his text as "an arbitrary collection  
of borrowed signifiers frequently leading absolutely  
nowhere . . . they die unto themselves leaving only the  
image that everything is ridiculous when taken out of  
context or when placed in a degrading situation"  
(Febles, "English" 101). Perhaps to the monolingual  
English speaker the narration may seem ridiculous, but

for the Spanish/English bilingual it serves another purpose. Fernández observes:

The discourse for the monolingual that reads this book is limited. If a bilingual reads it, he can enjoy it on a different level. The other one might find it exotic or whatever and does not understand it. Maybe the Anglo world imposes the language. What we do with the language is play with it, and so we give him the things in English he cannot understand.

("Interview" 18)

Fernández' technique may seem unusual, but as Guillermo Gómez Peña relays about himself, more and more authors have become "interested in subverting English structures, infecting English with Spanish, and in finding new possibilities of expression within the English language that English-speaking people don't have" (Fusco 156-57). Frances Aparicio in her study of subversive signifiers used by Latino writers in the United States argues:

the reading politics proposed . . . are clear. By metaphorically displacing the ideal monolingual American reader and producing texts whose poetic and cultural signifying solicit

cross-cultural competency and complicity,  
contemporary U.S. Latino/a writers are  
marginalizing and perhaps even excluding the  
predominant ideal monolingual reader. ("On  
Sub-Versive" 206)

These authors prove that English is not, as Fernández  
himself asserts, immune to the influence of other  
languages and that even part of its lexicon can change  
meanings. The very structure of English is subverted and  
therefore, the presumed stability of the language  
questioned ("La subversión" 29). Thus, an entire body of  
literature written in English that at first may seem  
assimilationist, in many cases, is exactly the opposite:

It constitutes . . . a transformation and  
rewriting of Anglo signifiers from the Latino  
cultural vantage point. As such, it becomes a  
textual *diferencia* from the linguistic  
repertoires of Anglo U.S. authors . . . [These  
Latino authors] write in English because that  
has been the language of their education and  
intellectual formation, proof that the cultural  
conquest has had its consequences. Yet, a  
close reading of their lexicon and syntax

reveals the underlying presence of Spanish in most of their works. (Aparicio, "On Subversive" 202)<sup>12</sup>

Can one, then, consider this practice of subversive English as Spanglish? Not according to Rosanna Rivero Marín, who, in her study of Raining Backwards, plainly states that the linguistic technique used by Fernández should "not be confused with Spanglish which is characterized as the fusion of Spanish and English to create a new word . . . it is English-Spanish, or Spanish-English, but not Spanglish, that is something altogether different" (47, 49). Fernández argues that this technique is actually the opposite of Spanglish, "español disfrazado de inglés . . . [es] un proceso a la inversa del vituperado y denigrado *spanglish*. En esta novela es el español que infiltró el inglés y no la inversa" ("La subversión" 29). In one sense, the author is correct. Spanish does infiltrate English. However, the hesitancy to categorize his technique as Spanglish may lie in the author's own observation that Spanglish has been rejected and censured by so many, as seen in chapter one of this study. Further rejection of the use of the term Spanglish is seen in the preference of

Frances Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman who refer to this technique as "tropicalization" of the English language. However, I argue that the use of the term "tropicalizing" is insufficient, especially when the term Spanglish accurately describes this technique (as I will discuss further). While the authors themselves argue that they are reclaiming the tropics for themselves in much the same manner that Said reclaims the Orient, the scholars apply the term to all Latino writers, regardless of their country of heritage. The term "tropicalization," with its emphasis on the tropics excludes a great portion, perhaps the largest portion of Latino writers. "Tropicalization" stresses the tropical areas of Latin America, leaves out all other zones of the region, and thereby insinuates that Latino writers who use this technique are for the most part of Caribbean descent. The fact that the term fails to recognize these other zones perpetuates the stereotype, albeit unintentionally, that many Anglos have of all Latinos being hot-blooded Ricky Ricardos from areas suffocated with heat, beaches, palm trees, and rumba. While in fact these scholars use the term in an attempt to overcome these stereotypes and reclaim the tropics, the

geographical exclusion that the term insinuates does exactly the opposite. Lamentably they chose "tropicalize" over other useful terms such as "Spanglish," "hispanize," "latin americanize," or even "linguistic transculturation" in describing this technique.<sup>13</sup>

A review of the definition of Spanglish given by Ilan Stavans is useful in this discussion. Stavans, as previously mentioned, defines Spanglish as "the verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispanic civilizations" (Spanglish 3). While the definition may appear simplistic, it does apply to the use of subversive English, or as Fernández says, Spanish disguised as English. The problem lies in the fact that too many times Spanglish is only referred to as Spanish being infiltrated by English, as Rivero Marín asserts. Stavans himself admits that Spanglish "is not a symmetrical two-way street. Its speakers tend to adopt English words (mostly verbs and nouns) into the syntactical pattern of Spanish" (Spanglish 58). The author's own registry of Spanglish words proves this. Of the approximately 6,000 terms included only 117 originate from Spanish and are adopted as Anglo voices, and of those 117, all but four

are Spanish loanwords.<sup>14</sup> While for now English seems to have the upper hand in regards to one language infiltrating the other, the infiltration of Spanish into English is no less Spanglish than is the infiltration of English into Spanish. After all, Spanglish is a code used and understood by bilingual Spanish/English speakers, the result of the encounter between Latino and Anglo peoples. Therefore, I would assert that just as English disguised as Spanish, is Spanglish so is Spanish disguised as English. Both are products of linguistic transculturation, and they form part of the long tradition of bilingualism in Hispanic letters, as seen in more contemporary works, such as Arguedas', and such medieval texts as the jarchas. The counterpoint of English and Spanish—just as that of Quechua and Spanish, or Arabic and Spanish—reflects two worldviews that through transculturation come to represent both, neither, and an entirely new worldview through language.

In the novel, Fernández' subversive English unfolds through the use of calques, Hispanisms, and intertextuality.<sup>15</sup> Calques are, by far, the linguistic tool favored by Fernandez in the novel. A calque, or loan translation,<sup>16</sup> is "a word or expression which has



been formed by translation of a corresponding word or expression in another language" (Matthews 45). Moreover, the translation is one in which "the semantic components of a given term are literally translated into their equivalents in the borrowing language" ("Loan"). While Aparicio asserts that calques are usually described as "unconscious linguistic utterances that exemplify the power of one dominant language over another . . . associated with so-called uneducated speakers . . . [and] connote [a] lack of originality," Fernández employs them to create a "very original literary strategy," ("On Subversive" 204). Fernández, himself, reveals that the result of the calques of colloquial Cuban Spanish used in the novel "es una serie de frases sin sentido, las cuales carecen de significado para el lector monolingüe, y consecuentemente corroe la estabilidad de su propio código lingüístico" ("La subversión" 29).

I have categorized the calques employed by Fernández in Raining Backwards into two categories: false cognates and idiomatic expressions. False cognates, as they appear in the novel, are literal translations of words from Spanish to English. The English word chosen reflects a similar syntax to the Spanish word but with a

completely different meaning. One of the most common types of false cognates found in the novel includes terms of endearment. These include: "Manny is that you my little heart?," from mi corazoncito; "my little treasure," from mi tesorito; and "Thanks, little sky," from cielito (18, 25, 37).<sup>17</sup> Fernández makes such common Spanish terms of endearment particularly Cuban in English by adding the diminutive, something particularly common in Cuban speech. Bilingual readers easily identify such terms of endearment and monolingual readers, through context, may also understand them; however, the encoding is lost to them.

A second type of false cognate found in the novel includes the literal translations of proper nouns. Names of protagonists are the most common examples. The most common name changes come from those of the 1.5 and 2 generations.<sup>18</sup> Names that are changed include: Joaquin to Quinn, Jacinto to Keith, Miguel to Michael, Patricia to Patsy, Dra. Elena Reyes to Dr. Helen Kings, and Caridad to Connie. Even, José Martí by the end of the novel becomes Joe Marty to the remaining Cuban Americans, presumably of the 2 generation. 1 generation Cubans in the novel, however, while forced to speak English, do not

submit to having their names changed. In fact, early in the novel we find one character who laments over the fact that her bank misspells her name: "Stop by the bank and tell them that there's a mistake in my checkbook, that my name is Miss Mirta Maria Vergara, not Mrs. Mirtha Verga . . ." (11). The attempt to translate Mirta's name to English, here, by an Anglo from Spanish to English, results not in incomprehension or confusion, as it does when Cubans do it, but rather a vulgarity as Vergara is changed to Verga, the Spanish word for penis. While Mirta complains of her name change, at no time do 1 generation parents directly criticize their children for using American names. There does, however, seem to be some underlying lament on the part of the 1 generation, particularly in regards to Connie. Her father states "Caridad, our only daughter (she calls herself 'Connie'), she lost her virtue . . . she disgraced us" (70). Somehow the father loosely associates the name change with the loss of her virtue. Indeed, Connie's father sees all of Connie's activities as too American, cheerleading in particular—an activity from which he drug her home, shouting that no daughter of his would be a prostitute. It appears that losing the true meaning of

her name, charity, has changed even her personality. Patsy Jimenez, an older woman and TV news reporter who was secretly in love with her informs the officers investigating the murder, "I always called her Caridad because for me she was no Connie" (175). Those who belong to the 1.5 and 2 generations, however, not only change their names, but they change everybody's name. For example, Connie calls Isabelita, Izzy and she is the only one who partakes in this name changing (43). In one of the last chapters, "Boys," where a group of Cuban men of various ages play dominoes, the younger men change all names to their English counterparts while the 1-generationers refer to everyone by their Spanish name. Here Roberto changes to Bob, Frankie to Frank, Miguel to Mike, and Rolando to Roland. Personal names are not the only proper nouns subjected to translation.

Other translated proper nouns include locations in Cuba, artists, and song titles. Interestingly, while names of places in Cuba such as Cienfuegos and Pan de Matanzas translate to One Hundred Fires and the Killing Bread, locations in Miami with Spanish names do not—for instance: la Clinica Biblica, Calle Ocho and the Matanzas Shopping Arcade. Artists and song titles are not as

fortunate. Jesusito, upon arrival to Mima and Jacinto's home to celebrate "The Good Night," or Nochebuena, announces that he has brought some "records: 'The Big Dances of Anthony M. Romeu, Fajardo and his Stars, Congas and Carnival from the Orient . . . The Moor Woman from Syria by Little Barbaro X, and They are from the Hills by the Moorkiller Trio'" (45). These translations, then, "constitute bizarre utterances that evoke immediate laughter due both to the context and to either awareness or unawareness of the referent" (Febles, "English" 104). The monolingual, in particular, lacks the cultural and linguistic referents to understand the particularly Cuban context. "Big Dances" do not translate to danzones, and "Congas from the Orient" becomes Asian Congas, instead of congas from the Cuban province Oriente. In fact, "Little Barbaro X" could convey the image of a Black Muslim militant instead of the famous Barbarito Diez. The literal translation of "They are from the Hills" is rendered unrecognizable as a son, when taken out of its original context, "Son de la loma."<sup>19</sup> Lastly, another false cognate for a location and/or surname renders the "Moorkiller Trio" incomprehensible unless one speaks Spanish and, can connect it to el Trío Matamoros. Febles

concludes that in these examples "through the exploitation of linguistic inflexibility, Fernández succeeds in promoting that carnivalesque laughter which debunks cultural symbols" ("English" 104). This occurs not just with artistic cultural symbols, but culinary ones as well.

Even advertisements are subjugated to Fernández' linguistic games. In the magazine "THE SOUTHERN PEARL: The Voice of the Municipality of One Hundred Fires in Exile" readers are asked to support their "announcers," another false cognate which comes from the Spanish anunciantes or, in English, sponsors (28, 32). Two of these announcers, the bilingual reader knows, cater specifically to the Cuban community, by the very English they use. Pepe's Grocery, for one, offers meat cuts such as "GULLY, SMALL PIGEON, BALL AND SKIRT" (32). If these typical Cuban meat cuts—cañada, palomilla, bola or boliche and falda—are senseless to the English only reader, then no Anglo will surely be eating at the Friends of the Sea Restaurant where the specialties include: "SHRIMP at the little garlic" or "camarones al ajillo" / garilc shrimp, "SAW at the oven" or "serrucho al horno" / baked swordfish, "CHERN at the iron" or

"cherna a la parilla" / grilled grouper, "FLOUR with moorish crabs" or "harina con cangrejos moros," "SEAFOOD sprinkle" or "zarzuela de marisco," and "PULP in its own ink" or "pulpo en su tinta" / octopus in its own ink (32).<sup>20</sup> These false cognates along with the previously mentioned ones require not just a knowledge of Spanish, but to some degree a knowledge of Cuban culture. In other instances where the author uses false cognates, however, knowledge of Spanish is usually sufficient.

While traditional calques would "illustrate the subordination of Spanish to English, perpetuating the stereotype of the Hispanic who is losing his/her tongue," Fernández switches it around to show the subordination of English to Spanish in everyday Cuban Miami speech (Aparicio, "On Sub-Versive" 204). Fernández refers to this same tactic as "la dulce venganza del oprimido" ("El inglés" 29). For example when asked, "Is Quinn still thinking of becoming a Saint?" the monolingual Anglo may perceive Quinn to be a saintly, devout person or perhaps simply confused. However, the bilingual recognizes the underlying Spanish in that "saint" derives itself from santero and therefore, understands that Quinn is not

necessarily saintly, but rather training to be a priest in the Afro-Cuban religion of Santería.

Fernández provides another brilliant example of disguise in "The Southern Pearl" when we learn that Mrs. Hortensia Vergara Perez ". . . will undergo surgery to correct a waterfall in her left eye" (31).<sup>21</sup> Here again, all readers may understand the text as a medical problem. Yet, while the term waterfall may dumbfound the monolingual, the bilingual deciphers the Spanish of catarata, or cataract in English. The use of these false cognate calques is not limited to a few instances meant to cause a little discomfort to the monolingual and a chuckle from the bilingual. Rather, the novel, replete with false cognates, creates an environment in which the law requires the use of English only, but the bilingual is in control and determines which English will be used—Cuban English in this case. From beginning to end, there is no escaping these ingenious false cognate calques.<sup>22</sup>



Table 1

Additional False Cognates as They Appear in Raining Backwards<sup>1</sup>

False Cognates	Spanish Equivalent	English Equivalent
"she said I was <u>going to get dirty</u> if I mixed with trashy people" (1).	ensuciarse	slutty
"ballroom of the Sophia <u>Saloon</u> " (29).	salón	ballroom
"Connie <u>opened</u> the party by dancing the traditional <u>"big dance"</u> with her father" (29).	abrió danzón	began a Cuban dance
"Much happiness to the <u>enamored</u> young couple" (30).	enamorado	in love
"I began to <u>persecute</u> an ant" (24).	perseguir	to follow
"our annual <u>fraternity</u> dinner" (31).	fraternal	fraternal
"symbol of our <u>fatherland</u> " (31, 105, 107,190).	patria	homeland
"I have this thing with men that makes them <u>savage</u> " (35).	salvaje	wild

<sup>1</sup> The emphasis/underline is mine and indicates the calque.

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" <u>The Good Night</u> " (36).	Nochebuena	Christmas Eve
" <u>Vacillation</u> " (49).	vacilón	party like atmosphere
"It gives them <u>material</u> for conversation" (75).	materia	something
" <u>BEING REPRESENTATIVE</u> EXAMPLE" (77).	representativo	prime
"She has her <u>defects</u> , but basically she is a good person" (80).	defectos	faults
"'Thanks!' ' <u>For nothing</u> , Mrs. Olsen'" (86). <sup>23</sup>	por nada	your welcome
"Is Quinn Still thinking of becoming a <u>saint</u> ?" (112, term is repeated many more times in the novel).	santero	a santería priest
"You <u>can form no idea</u> of the perplexity of my situation" (113).	no puedes formar ninguna idea	you don't have any idea
"A duel is rarely fought . . . without at least one of the <u>principals</u> being hurt" (129).	principales	participants
"I met my <u>defunct</u> husband, Jacinto" (130).	difunto	deceased
" <u>the compromise</u> " (130). <sup>24</sup>	compromiso	engagement
"'Take the <u>arms</u> off! Get the <u>arms</u> off the tree first" (134).	brazos	branches
"he had been <u>enamouring</u> <u>her</u> for almost a year" (136).	enamorándose	falling in love

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"I no like <u>ordinary</u> <u>people</u> " (137).	gente ordinaria	common folk
"Who's shuffling the <u>bones</u> ? . . . He'd been known to cheat by getting a few <u>bones</u> up his sleeve" (184).	huesos	dominoes

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Through the technique of abundantly using calques "English becomes opaque, unable to speak for itself, it relies on translation to be understood" (Rivero Marín 34). Moreover, for the monolingual English speaker "the language seems to lack coherence. In this space of lack, Spanish is needed to render these passages meaningful" (Rivero Marín 34). The end result is that "*English Only* queda subvertido al inyectársele una fuerte dosis de significados en español" (Fernández, "La subversión" 29).

However, it is in the calques formed by the literal translations of idiomatic expressions where Fernández interjects a specifically Cuban view of the world. Luis Pérez López, a cataloguer of Cuban sayings observes that "además de su lengua oficial, los pueblos gustan de tener forma propia, descuidada y festiva de transmitir sus ideas. Como si dijéramos 'un idioma dentro de otro idioma'" (3). Interjecting the cosmology of the culture

is important in any transcultural representation, and to be able to do so in the borrowed tongue demonstrates fully the transculturation of the Cuban-American. While most of the time English sayings do indeed exist that would appropriately translate the same saying, for Fernández the "[Cuban] and Anglo mentalities are worlds apart" (Rivero Marín 32). Aparicio informs us that "this strategy attempts to present to an Anglo reader the first generation's linguistic praxis as Spanish speakers" ("On Sub-Versive" 203). However, if idiomatic expressions are, as Pérez López indicates, one language inside of another language, what happens when that language inside of a language is translated into another language? For the monolingual, the text is, at times incomprehensible. For the bilingual, in this case the Cuban bilingual, the text becomes a subversive means of cultural preservation, albeit in an altered form, a transculturated form. Jacinto, who belongs to the 1 generation is particularly fond of using the calque expressions. In fact, of the twenty refrains that I have identified, Jacinto is responsible for seven, all of which are found in the chapter titled "The Chain."<sup>25</sup>

Table 2

Calqued Idiomatic Expressions employed by Jacinto.<sup>2</sup>

Idiomatic Expression as it Appears in the Novel.	Spanish Equivalent	English Equivalent
"I was born to be a tail and no head" (71).	Prefiero ser el rabo de un león que la cabeza de un ratón.	I'd rather be a big fish in a small pond than a small fish in a big pond.
"It smells bad to me" (71).	Me huele mal.	Something's fishy.
"Let me tell you something that is <u>going to make you fall on your back</u> " (73).	-algo que te va a hacer caer para atrás	-fall out of your chair
I threw the house out the window" (74). <sup>26</sup>	Boté la casa por la ventana.	I went all out.
"The tree should never insult the machete" (75).	La mata nunca humilla al machete.	
"He who was born to be a bull gets horns from heaven" (76).	El que nace para toro, del cielo le caen los taros.	-someone who is unfaithful to his wife or women

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the idiomatic expressions have been underlined to more easily identify them to the reader. The emphasis is mine.

"where there is caca there are always flies" (76).	Donde hay mierda comen moscas.	If you hang around with shit, you're going to get a little on you.
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In all, 1 generation protagonists employ all but one of the loan translations of idiomatic expressions. The only exception is Miqui, or Mike. Interestingly enough, Miqui is of the 2 generation and appears to be one of the most culturally alienated characters. In the chapter "Raining Backwards," he sets out to help his grandmother who wishes to return to Cuba before she dies. The grandmother fears that if she stays in Miami she will not be allowed to die in peace but rather will be eternally connected to life support. When the grandmother explains that, because it had been raining backwards, she knew her time to die was coming, Miqui who does not understand her, blames her nonsense on too much coffee. He, nevertheless, helps her construct a canoe that will send her back to Cuba. Further indication of his cultural alienation occurs when he does not understand his grandmother's own use of a calque. She exclaims "Take the arms off! Get the arms off the tree first!" (134). Miqui responds "I didn't quite understand what she meant"

(134). At the end of the story, however, a much older Miqui notices that it is raining backwards and exclaims, "Then I realized that rabbits can't lay eggs and my time was coming" (138).<sup>27</sup> The use of the calqued idiomatic expression—los conejos no ponen huevos—indicates Miqui's own realization of his cultural alienation and his need to connect culturally. It also reveals the younger generation's own cultural alienation as Miqui's own grandson's response to the calque is "Grandpa Mike, you had too much coffee" (138). Mike responds by finding the map that he had used to plan his abuela's voyage home "determined to land where she had" (138). All the same, it is too late. Not only is it too late for him, as he is connected to life support, but for future generations as well.

From this example, we see that for Fernández language is key to the preservation of culture. The author's insistence on including loan translations of idiomatic expressions indicates that he sees in them the means of preserving a particularly Cuban language and culture. López Pérez recalls that in his own catalog of cubanisms "sólo intenta recoger, con ánimo de preservar para las venideras generaciones, un rasgo de la

personalidad del cubano y un trozo de su rico costumbrismo" (4).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, by incorporating cubanisms literally translated into English Fernández attempts to capture the truly unique spirit of the Cuban American. This is seen in the remaining idiomatic expression calques found in the novel.

Table 3

Remaining Calqued Idiomatic Expressions.<sup>3</sup>

Idiomatic Expression as it Appears in the Novel.	Spanish Equivalent	English Equivalent
"She said she wouldn't honor a <u>bad weed</u> " (25).	hierba mala o mala espiga	an evil person
"'Promise me you won't tell anyone.' ' I promise. You know <u>I am like a tomb</u> '" (42).	ser como una tumba	My lips are sealed or I'll take it to my grave.
Her family <u>had lots of hot air, but no cash</u> (43).	-tener mucho aire, pero poca plata	-to blow hot air
	La ignorancia	Ignorance is

<sup>3</sup>Some of the idiomatic expressions have been underlined to more easily identify them to the reader. The emphasis is mine.



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"Ignorance kills people" (59).	mata.	deadly.
"New broom always sweeps well" (80).	Escobita nueva siempre barre bien.	New friends always work well.
"Rabbits can't lay eggs" (138).	Los conejos no ponen huevos.	-something impossible
"The dead to the hole and the living to eat chicken" (151).	El muerto al hoyo y el vivo al pollo.	Life goes on.
"He used <u>to be nail and flesh with Keith</u> " (153).	-ser uña y carne	-to be like bread and butter, peas in a pod
"from being in love to being crazy is very close" (154).	De enamorado a loco no hay más que un paso.	Love is blind.
My husband, God bless his soul, <u>was a piece of bread</u> " (157). <sup>29</sup>	Era un pedazo de pan.	He wouldn't hurt a fly.
"Back then, I used to like <u>to burn oil</u> " (187). <sup>30</sup>	-quemar petróleo	-to have sex with black women
"'One death is nothing compared to the calvary of a whole people'" (188).	Una muerte no compara con el dolor de un pueblo.	
"'Hah. <u>Pure cane straw</u> '" (189).	Puro bagazo de caña.	-wishful thinking

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These literal renditions of Cuban sayings have led many critics to categorize them as fiction meant to cause laughter or dismay the reader; that people do not speak this way. In fact, Ilan Stavans in his seminal work on Spanglish does not include any of these idiomatic expressions. However, many Cuban-American citizens of Miami employ such phrases repeatedly. On any given day, one can hear children on the basketball court refer to someone who makes a lucky shot as "a milker." Milker is derived from the Cuban saying "ser un lechero," a lucky person. Other idiomatic expressions used often, even in professional and government settings, include: "what a cag", "you ate it", or even "I am not painted on the wall." These sayings being derived from "lo cagaste," "you screwed up," or "te la comiste / you did a great job," instead of the traditional English expression that indicates to fall down hard, and "no estoy pintado en la pared / I am not invisible." Interestingly enough, Bill Cruz and Bill Teck in their Official Spanglish Dictionary do include such idiomatic expression calques. However, these authors are also the editors of a Cuban-American magazine Generación ñ. So then, are loan translations of refrains limited to just Cuban-Americans? This is highly

unlikely. More than likely they are common among all Latino groups, but since it is so commonly referred to as the language of the uneducated, nobody has thought to valorize it as Fernández, Cruz, and Teck. In fact, these literal renditions of Cuban sayings, along with most other calques, most often go unnoticed by the very speakers who use them, who, as Pérez López informs us, "hoy algunos de ellos [nuestros hijos] las repiten acaso desconociendo que con ello mantienen viva la llama de su propia herencia cultural" (3). Therefore, these calques and others have become part of everyday English: subversive English.

Fernández employs a second technique to subvert the English language that I refer to as Hispanisms. I have identified two types of Hispanisms in the novel: morphological and lexical. Morphological Hispanisms mark the intersection of Spanish and English grammar, in other words, the Hispanization of English grammar or English infused with Spanish syntax and grammar.<sup>31</sup> Lexical Hispanisms include Spanish loan words that have found a place in English. Both of these types of Hispanisms have proven to be invaluable in previous transcultural projects such as those of Guaman Poma de Ayala and José

María Arguedas. For both of these authors the use of Spanish written to the syntax of Quechua and the incorporation of Quechua into everyday speech resulted in what has been termed the andeanization of Peruvian Spanish. Thus, the result of Fernández' use of Hispanisms can be viewed as the Hispanization of English. Fewer acts could be more subversive in a society that attempts to preserve the English language by forbidding the use of Spanish.

If, as Mary Vásquez asserts, the calques "insist upon incommunication, distance from the majority culture to which considerable deference is made, the greatest example of which is the very use of English which offers the alienating calques," then what can be said of the actual Spanish used in the text ("Parody" 100)? Ironically, the Spanish may result in bringing the cultures closer together. For if Anglos have incorporated Spanish loanwords it would indicate to some degree at the very least some understanding of Latino culture, and to a lesser degree the acceptance of that culture. It undeniably demonstrates that the minority culture has made an impact on the majority culture; it affirms its existence, participation and importance in

the shaping of U.S. culture. One need look no further than the vocabulary of and related to ranchers in the western part of the United States to see evidence of this.

The lexical Hispanisms incorporated in Raining Backwards also reveal such an impact. It should be noted that very few actual Spanish words find their way into the text due to the law prohibiting the use of Spanish. However, when Cubans do speak Spanish in the novel it often appears as only one word or a phrase in a sentence. The same is true of the Spanish voiced by Anglos. For both ethnicities, these words mostly appear in italics. When a word used by a Cuban appears in italics it seems to indicate that no English equivalent will suffice. The words used by Cubans that appear in italics include:

coño, viejo, turron, señorita, mojo, basura, Señor, limpia, culito, cabrones americanos, hijos de puta, cabrones, cabrón, mi amigo, qué pasa, amigo, casa, comida, culo, ¡estoy rica!, picadillo, abuela, gracias, and guayabera.<sup>32</sup> However, on other occasions Spanish words do not appear in italics. These words and phrase include: bolita, boniatillo, boniato, Hasta la vista, mi amigo, cantina, flan, micro, tapas, Papa, siesta, bolero,

and por favor. This switching between italicized and unitalicized words seems to indicate two things. One, the words that do appear in italics are pronounced in Spanish and two, the unitalicized words maintain an English pronunciation. Therefore, if Spanish words spoken by Cubans are not italicized then they are essentially part of English. They have become Hispanisms, Spanish loan words. We also observe evidence of this phenomenon with the Spanish used by Anglos in the novel. When Anglos speak Spanish, it almost always appears italicized, indicating its foreignness. For example, the Tongue Brigade recites the pledge of allegiance as follows: "*Juro fidelidad a la bandera de los EEUU y a la republica que representa una nacion bajo Dios con libertad y justicia para todos*" (93). Other times the foreignness is captured by italics and phonetic representation, "*Eisa cabrouna mi las va a pagar*" (93). However, what does it indicate when members and the leader of the militant Tongue Brigade use Spanish, as in the examples provided? These characters say they need to use Spanish "to confuse" the Cubans. Ironically, however, it demonstrates that the Cubans are gaining their own place in Miami, if not displacing the culture

and language of authority. Is it not a major triumph for the minority when the majority must learn their language? A member of the Tongue Brigade alludes to this again when, in an harassing phone call he reveals, "do you realize my brother lost his job because he doesn't spica the spañol? In our own country and we're fired for not speaking spic" (100). Some of the words the Anglos use that do not appear in italics include: casa, por favor, pronto, ole, bolita, and nombre real, indicating, again, their adoption into the English language of not just Cubans, but Anglos as well.

Perhaps, one of Fernandez' most subversive acts occurs when false cognate calques make their way into the speech of Anglos. One example occurs when Mr. Olsen, the racist neighbor of Barbarita and Manolo, who wants to move to Ocala<sup>33</sup> to escape the foreign invasion, says to his wife "'What's this in the frigidaire, Lois?'" (108). Lois responds "*boniato*" (108). It is ironic that Mr. Olsen admonishes his wife for accepting boniatillo from Barbarita while he himself employs a false cognate calque that apparently has become a hispanism.<sup>34</sup> In this case, the calque is frigidaire. It may seem at first that Mr. Olsen is simply referring to the brand name of the

refrigerator. However, if that were the case, Fernández would have obliged us with the capitalization of frigidaire. The lack of capitalization combined with the fact that Miami Cubans refer to refrigerators not as refrigeradores but as frigidaires, indicates that frigidaire is a calque. Furthermore, when one considers that this calque is unitalicized, it could possibly indicate that the word has become a hispanism, a new English word.<sup>35</sup> Thus, use of lexical Hispanisms by Cubans is one thing, but their incorporation into American speech "causes the reader to question a mythical, standard English that allegedly unifies America . . . ." (Deaver "From Polyglossia" 452).

While Anglos seem to have adopted lexical Hispanisms, the same cannot be said of morphological Hispanisms.<sup>36</sup> Morphological Hispanisms allow the author to communicate an English that has been manipulated in such a way that it absorbs the syntax of Spanish. One of Fernández' preferred uses of morphological syntax includes the use of double negatives. While, grammatically speaking, English does not allow for the construction of double negatives, the Miami Cubans of the novel utilize them often in English, reflecting the



Spanish construction of double negatives. In fact, Cuban American characters of all generations employ them: "I didn't have no sugar," "I swore I wasn't going to be an asshole no more," "It wasn't getting me nowhere," "I didn't have no money to pay for medicines," "I wasn't religious or nothing like that," and "Sir, I don't know much about nothing" (18, 66, 66, 66, 73, 173). In addition to the double negatives, the word order of English also finds itself compromised to that of Spanish. What should read as "I also brought a few records," in the novel appears as "I brought also a few records" (45). The Spanish word order of "traje también" is infused with English vocabulary. Furthermore, English comparatives become hispanized. What should read as stronger and happier are rendered as "more strong" and "more happy" (71, 74). Another example of Fernández' Hispanization of English is through verbiage. For example Jacinto, after warning someone about a chain letter responds, "I don't responsabilize myself with what happens to you" (71). While the statement is still understandable to the monolingual, it seems odd. However, the bilingual may not even find it odd since its Spanish derivation from responsabilizar would be obvious. In fact, such

Hispanization of English is common among Latinos, such as the use of "in" rather than "on." Pepe hispanizes the following sentence, "Say hello to everybody in your block" (55). A particular cubanization of English occurs as well when Barbarita informs us that her husband "likes to play domino" (61). When Barbarita uses the singular form of dominoes, she reflects a sort of cubaness, as Cubans often times omit the final "s."

Table 4

Further examples of morphological Hispanisms.<sup>4</sup>

Morphological Hispanism	Original Spanish Construction
"The grocery" (55).	- "the use of one word from <u>mercado</u> or <u>bodega</u> , instead of grocery store"
"How you say in English" (75).	- "cómo dices en inglés"
"much problems" (76).	- "muchos problemas"
"JESUS WINNING THE LOTTERY <u>BEING REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE</u> " (77).	- "siendo ejemplo representativo, instead of prime example"

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the morphological Hispanisms have been underlined in order to more easily identify them to the reader. The emphasis is mine.

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"You like?" (86).	- "¿te gusta?"
"In that way, when he arrives" (120).	- "de esa manera"
"how many years I have" (132).	- "cuántos años tengo, instead of how old am I"
"there are no houses <u>where</u> to live." (184).	- "donde vivir"
"'You know how much <u>is</u> going to be the price for the smallest unit?'" (187)	- "va a ser"
"I asked her what the reason . . . and <u>she didn't know to explain it to me</u> . . ." (204).	- "no sabía explicármelo"

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Unlike, the idiomatic expressions, which are used almost exclusively by the first generation, the morphological Hispanisms in the novel, are employed by all three generations. This would indicate that Fernández does not simply attempt to capture the grammatically incorrect English typical of 1 generation Cubans, but rather he subverts the English of even those who are educated in the United States. In addition, retaining of such speech patterns but losing key cultural concepts held in idiomatic expressions accurately conveys the position of those of the 2 and even 1.5 generations. The ones who have at the same time been deculturated and

acculturated, while they still transculturate through language.

Fernández uses intertextuality as a third subversive technique. In using this device, he includes and/or alludes to various texts of canonical Spanish language literature and the lyrics of numerous Spanish and English pop songs.<sup>37</sup> Intertextuality, then, functions as an important component of transculturation that allows him to insert a Spanish language literary tradition into English. The subversiveness becomes clearer when one takes into consideration that only once does Fernández reveal the source of such intertextuality. Fernández incorporates intertextuality in three ways: 1) parody—the parodying of the styles of various canonical Spanish language texts; 2) calques—the literal translation of canonical Spanish language texts and; 3) literary allusions. Febles in his in-depth & invaluable analysis of Fernández' intertextuality in Raining Backwards categorizes intertextuality differently. The categories proposed by Febles include: "1) el subtítulo cuya mención opera en contra de cierto tipo literario; 2) la apropiación inconsciente de un pre-texto y su devirtuación en base a la traducción macarrónica; 3) la

anécdota o el detalle anecdótico calcados a fin de que entrañen el doble grotesco de su modelo" ("Sobre" 161). Additionally, all of the examples of intertextuality that follow have already been observed and commented on by several critics.<sup>38</sup> However, through a thorough re-evaluation of Fernández' use of intertextuality, I demonstrate that it is the author's intent to preserve in English a Spanish literary tradition, to reaffirm the Latino core of its English-speaking characters, and to preserve a particularly Latino worldview. Intertextuality, then, becomes a key component of the author's transcultural project.

Intertextuality through parody is one of the ways that the author executes his transcultural philosophy. Chris Baldick defines parody as "a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work or works" (161). In her own study of parody and intertextuality in Raining Backwards, Mary Vásquez relies on Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody to conclude that there are both conservative and subversive forces at play in parody (Vásquez 94). Hutcheon argues:

. . . a central paradox of parody: its transgression is always authorized. In

imitating, even with critical difference,  
parody reinforces . . . Parody is fundamentally  
double and divided; its ambivalence stems from  
the dual drives of conservative and  
revolutionary forces that are inherent in its  
nature as an authorized transgression. (26)

The key for Vásquez lies in that "the conservative force  
of parody, then, respects and preserves imitation, while  
the revolutionary one challenges by subversion ("Parody"  
94). However, Deaver disagrees with Vásquez and prefers  
the term stylization to parody. For Deaver, stylization  
"mimics rather than imitates the discursive tendencies of  
another author . . . [and] differs from parody since it  
has this limitation: it mocks only an author's style.  
Parody is not limited to just mocking style"  
("Stylization" 446). While parody may not be limited to  
just style, I feel that it is indeed a better descriptive  
of Fernández' manipulation of some of the  
intertextualities found in the novel. First of all, the  
author does not only mock another author's style, he also  
parodies the titles of great epic medieval poems.  
Furthermore, Vásquez' signals that parody's inherent  
mixture of affirmation and subversion, of praise and

blame is indeed essential to Fernández transcultural project. Homi Bhabha asserts that "mimicry can be subversive: you use the language of the master in an alloyed form . . . to deflect the dominating ideologies being imposed on you" (82). Thus, Fernández through intertextuality, undeniably, re-affirms certain Latino cultural aspects while at the same time he subverts authority.

Such affirmation and subversion becomes particularly evident when Fernández parodies the texts of Christopher Columbus and Hernán Cortés. Fernández relies on the descriptions of the colonizers to describe the New World, a completely foreign world to the European, to again describe another foreign world: Cuban Miami. As William Deaver points out, the descriptions offered by Columbus of the West Indies do not differ much from those offered by protagonists Mirta and Manolo of Cuba. All three must describe their perceptions in a tongue that is foreign to them, they all exaggerate the magnificence of the islands, and for both Manolo and Colón the land is extremely fertile (Deaver, "Stylization" 446). Mirta exclaims that "Varadero was the most beautiful beach, not in the whole world, but the whole universe!" (9). One

may recall Columbus' narrative, "porqu' es cierto que la fermosura de la tierra d'ests yslas . . . es tal la vista que ninguna otra tierra que sol escaliente puede ser mejor, al paresçer, ni tan hermosa" (Columbus 85). Like Columbus, Mirta even goes on to incorporate non-native attributes to the land, where "there were giant penguins and white seals that roamed the beach" (12). Manolo recalls the fertility of the land and posits that "the eggs over there had a tough shell and bright red yolk . . . and the land, what bountiful land! You planted a seed today and within a week you had the whole tree with leaves and fruits" (189). Similarly Columbus exclaims "Han sembrado mucha hortaliza, la cual es cierto que crece mas en ocho dias que en España veinte" (65). Deaver further observes that Fernández stylizes Columbus' description of the canoes of Jamaica and that of the canoe Nelía constructs. Appropriately again, someone who is detached from the culture offers the description; in this case it is Nelía's grandson, Mike. Columbus depicts the canoes as "todas de un tronco, como dicho es, enteras de un árbol . . . ellos así traen labradas aquellas canoas en proa y popa á laços y pinturas que es maravilla la fermosura de ellas" (125). Mike observes of his



abuela's canoe: "She instructed me to start carving a hole right in the center of the tree . . . [and] covered the exterior with rhinestones and pictures of Julio Iglesias and German Garcia" (134).

In a similar fashion, Deaver recounts the similarities in the descriptions given by Cortés upon arrival in Mexico to the descriptions of WMIA reporter Ernie Rehder of the Cubans residing in Little Havana. For both Cortés and Rehder the inhabitants are of a "smaller stature" / "mediana estatura" and "fond of wearing bright colors" / "traen unas mantas muy pintadas" (Fernández 126-27, Cortés 65). Such differences lead Rehder to declare that "in a restricted sense of the word, they are not really Americans" (127). Further details regarding the Cuban American's foreignness are relayed in Rehder's description of the Calle Ocho market, which parodies Cortés' own description of the Aztec markets.

Inside the *mercado*, pronounced [mair-ka-doe], against the walls, there are stalls and booths for small tradesmen, where cheap jewelry, curios, gentlemen's clothing, ladies' fashions, silks, ribbons, thread, fruits, confectionary,

drugs and drinks of various kinds are sold. As you can see, vegetables of many varieties lie about in heaps and are piled on platforms. There are fish of every variety, fowl, dead and alive, birds of brilliant plumage, carcasses of beef . . . we're hearing the turkeys gobbling, birds whistling and singing, and monkeys chattering. We are told that monkeys are eaten on very special occasions . . . women go about the streets carrying great wicker baskets on their heads . . . The rider perched on that mule is a charcoal vender. Charcoal is the cooking fuel used. (127-28)<sup>39</sup>

In having an Anglo parody Cortés, Fernández accomplishes the task of inserting the Anglo's descriptions into the corpus of colonial literature, thus presenting the Anglo as a colonizer, and therefore, the Miami Cubans as the colonized. Secondly, the Anglo presents himself as absorbing Latino culture by also employing the hyperbolic language of the novel's Cuban protagonists, revealing the process of transculturation taking place on their part.

In this same chapter Mary Vásquez observes that when Ernie interviews Mima she "recites a litany of motherly

vigilance and norms of female conduct which are taken from the medieval code of honor and Fray Luis de León's La perfecta casada" ("The fantastic" 80). Another parody derived from Medieval Spanish texts includes Fernández' use of chapter titles that "parodically echo great European epic poems of Medieval times" ("Parody" 99). These chapter titles, which appear one after the other in the text, include "La Chanson de la Cousine," "El cantar del olvido," and "Keithlied." These chapters relay the arrival of Keith in the United States and the care given to him by his aunt and uncle, the rejection of him by his mother, and finally the events that led him to become a drug dealer and then a revolutionary. Febles observes:

Tantos los títulos como los propios rasgos resumidos agreden también hacia atrás, hacia el propio molde en que se fundan para construir una sucinta parodia de la epopeya al acentuar los matices hiperbólicos, falsos y hasta monstruosos que le son innatos. Cuando lee estos fragmentos del libro, el lector también *relee* al unísono los textos en que se afincan. ("Sobre" 161-2)

It is precisely this re-reading that is fundamental to Fernández' transcultural project. In this case, by incorporating the narrative of a Cuban American into the epopeya in Spanglish, the author preserves a piece of cultural history while he creates a new transcultural one—that of the Cuban American.

Just as the medieval epic poem suitably portrays the formation of a Cuban American in Miami, Mario Vargas Llosa's novel ¿Quién mató a Palomino Molero? fittingly depicts the murder investigation of Quinn and Keith's sister, Connie. In the chapter "Who Killed C.R.?"<sup>40</sup> Jorge Febles provides an extensive account that documents the parodying of the Vargas Llosa text in "El pretexto de la parodia o la parodia del pre-texto: en torno a un capítulo de Raining Backwards." The description of officers arriving on the scene, the depiction of the dead body hanging from the ceiba tree, the interrogation of suspects, and even the seemingly racial motivation of the crime strongly echo Vargas Llosa's text. Febles concludes that "tal metatexto opera como acápite de un cometido paródico global, es decir, se integra en la fábula para intensificar la distorsión del mundo cubanomiamense" (75). However, such a distortion is

necessary to reveal the chaotic nature of Cuban-American life. The parody of such texts is simply a reflection of what Cubans in Miami themselves do, that is, that Cuban Americans themselves parody a past life in Cuba. While it at times seems as ridiculous as a parody of the Vargas Llosa text, or any other text, the parody of Cuba in Miami is nonetheless a reality. In addition, one cannot lose sight of the fact that all of the texts parodied by Fernández are themselves products of bicultural societies. Therefore, when Febles asserts that the parodying of such texts essentially results in the devalorization of them, he loses sight of the fact that Fernández achieves quite the opposite. In fact, the parody leads to cultural affirmation and valorization. Sometimes, as is the case with Cuban Miami, only through parody can one achieve cultural preservation.<sup>41</sup>

A second means of transmitting cultural knowledge through intertextuality occurs when Fernández casually alludes to other canonical Spanish language texts.<sup>42</sup> These texts include El cantar de mío Cid, Cien años de soledad, Los funerales de la mamá grande, and Tres tristes tigres. While some have referred to these allusions as parody, I find that the references to these

texts differ significantly from the previously analyzed parodied texts of Colón, Cortés, and Vargas Llosa. In the case of the parodied text, Fernández imitates the style of an author, whereas, in the case of these texts Fernández very briefly alludes to a scene in one of the aforementioned works. For instance, as Vásquez observes, Mirta in describing her supposed rape by Eloy to Barbarita invokes the scene from El cantar de mio Cid and the rape of El Cid's daughters (97). Mirta recalls: "He left me for dead in the oak forest. . . . It seems that [there are] two other women, one named Elvira and one named Sol, who were abused in a similar fashion" (51).

Fernández alludes to two other authors, Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Gabriel García Márquez. Febles observes that the gnats that are constantly following some of the characters in Raining Backwards may be viewed as an allusion to the yellow butterflies in Cien años de soledad that always accompany Mauricio Babilonia ("A Character's" 31). Deaver observes a parallel between the description offered by García Márquez of those who come to pay their respects to La Mamá Grande and those who pay their respects to Quinn, the santero turned Pope ("Stylization" 448). The description alludes to the long

line of beauty queens who appear before Quinn: The Seafood Queen of Apalachicola, the Conch Queen, the Watermelon Queen, and the Queen of Queens the Queen of Eighth Street greet Quinn (194). In Colombia, their counterparts are the "reinas del mango, de la ahuyama, del guineo, del coco de agua, el frijol, la yuca, y la de huevos de iguana" (García Márquez 145). Lastly, Fernández makes two allusions to a character in Guillermo Cabrera Infante's Tres tristes tigres. On two occasions, Fernández hints at Cabrera Infante's Estrella. In the scene where Nelía sets out to sea in order to return to Cuba and die only to have gone the wrong way and die at sea, Rivero Marín observes an allusion to Estrella, "the soul of Cuban music who dies and her body lost at sea. Both, [Estrella and Nelía], then are lost at sea, forever encircling the globe without ever reaching shore, a wandering corpse, if you will, the ultimate paradox" (55). Both mark the death of Cuban culture, one in Cuba, the other in Miami. A second allusion to Estrella occurs in the tales told of "El Cid of Varadero" by Cuban exiles. Vázquez observes that both large Black women are "mock-heroic, literally larger than life, a suggested proclamation of the Cuban duality: European in social and

cultural institutions, African in the sensuality and exuberance of its spirit" ("Parody" 95). "El Cid of Varadero," then, "evokes the soul of the troubled homeland, the martyred island, yearning for deliverance from her sorrows" ("Parody" 95). Vázquez again accurately conveys the purpose of these intertextualities:

The replication of social and cultural texts outside the novel is self-subverted through irony as replicated texts move ever farther from their original models. There is a simultaneous internal movement within Fernández' text both outward toward the periphery (majority incorporation) and inward toward a central Cuban core in self-repeating, self-replicating concentric circles which move continuously inward and outward, creating a perpetual state of flux, shift, and change.

(81)

Vásquez' astute recognition of the function of Fernández' intertextuality points directly towards transculturation. Indeed, the majority culture absorbs the text while at the same time it self-replicates a



Cuban core. The result, therefore is the transcultural representation found in Raining Backwards. In fact, one finds that in the calqued literary texts Fernández' transcultural project comes together. The authors calqued in the novel include José Martí, Rubén Darío, Garcilaso de la Vega, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, Pablo Neruda, Lola Rodríguez de Tió, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Miguel de Cervantes and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. As Fernández himself asserts, "En boca de los personajes de la novela estos textos adquieren dos funciones, una de enfatizar la esencia hispana del personaje, y la otra de apuntar hacia el proceso de transculturización en los personajes no hispanos" ("La subversión" 29).

By including the calqued verses of canonical Spanish and Latin-American letters the author accomplishes two things. First, by bringing these authors into his work through translation, Fernández places himself in the same Spanish language literary tradition. He essentially asserts that his text, too, is itself a translation—a Cuba that exists through translation in Miami. If a translation itself is never a faithful copy of the original, then an already translated Cuban reality in Miami further translated into English becomes even more

distant from the original. However, by portraying that reality in subversive English, the text ceases to be a translation rather, it becomes a transcultural representation. Thus, Fernández demonstrates the transculturation of Cuban Americans who live in between Spanish and English, who live in Spanglish. A second accomplishment of the use of calqued texts lies in that it extends the tradition of Spanish and Latin-American literature to include the United States. By extending that tradition to the United States, Fernández realizes the possibility of further transculturation in two ways: First, in the preservation and continuance of the Hispanic literary tradition in the United States; and secondly, in the infiltration of Latino culture into mainstream U.S.A. An analysis of which characters repeat the calqued literary texts reveals both of these assertions of further transculturation.

Manolo, the character who most profusely employs calqued refrains, is also one of the protagonists that most conveys the calqued literary texts. During the Christmas Eve party, Manolo interrupts a familial dispute and exclaims, "Youth, divine treasure, you are leaving never to return, when I want to cry I can't and sometimes

I cry without wanting" (45-46).<sup>43</sup> Barbarita, his wife, reacts "My husband is a genius." Manolo, later the same night during a second family argument, interjects:

Unfortunate admiral! Your poor Cuba, your beautiful, hot blooded, virgin love, the pearl of your dreams, is now hysterical, her nerves convulsing and her forehead pale . . . a most disastrous spirit, the red spirit, rules your land where once the people raised their arms together, now there is endless warfare between brothers. (47)<sup>44</sup>

Important in Manolo's adoption of Darío's verses is first that Manolo never reveals the true author of the poems, and he allows everyone to assume he is the author.<sup>45</sup> Secondly, in Manolo's rendition of "Tribute to Colón," he replaces Darío's "pobre América" with "poor Cuba" and adds "red spirit" where none was included (Febles, "Sobre" 163). This demonstrates not only the Miami Cubans' desire to make Cuba everything—Cuba, the center of the universe as Febles notes—but also their obsession with communism. Similarly Pepe, the neighborhood grocery store/bar owner, calques the poem of the Puerto Rican revolutionary Lola Rodríguez de Tió and replaces Puerto

Rico with Florida.<sup>46</sup> Pepe on the wall of the store displays his favorite saying "FLORIDA AND CUBA ARE TWO WINGS OF A / SINGLE BIRD. / THEY RECEIVE LOVE AND BULLETS IN THE / SAME HEART" (161).<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, both of these first generation Cuban Americans choose poems whose authors penned verses that admonish and warn against imperialism and colonialism, and call for the people of Latin America to take action.<sup>48</sup> The importance of the voicing of these calqued poems lies in the cultural material and values that they contain. When Pepe's patrons read the Rodríguez de Tió poem and Manolo's family is subjected to his declamations, they are absorbing, consciously or unconsciously, these cultural signifiers. Therefore, the restaurant patrons and family members are able to repeat and pass on such signifiers. In this regard Fernández' choice of Darío is important since Darío himself in his poems "Cosas del Cid," "A Colón," and "Rima XV" (where Darío refers to Bécquer) refers to some of the same authors and works that Fernández does. Thus, it becomes plausible that Fernández' intention in including these texts affirms the idea that through literature one may convey and preserve culture.

This same idea becomes further reinforced when one considers that a third calqued text, Calderón de la Barca's La vida es sueño, versed again by Manolo is later repeated by both his wife Barbarita and Pepe.<sup>49</sup> In fact, nowhere in the novel does Manolo actually voice the calques. We learn of them through others. Barbarita relays that Manolo in an attempt to calm her down says to her, "Life, my darling, is a delirium, an illusion. . . a shadow, a fiction whose greatest good is nothing, because life is a dream! Even dreams are only dreams" (61). Pepe, towards the end of the novel, states "It's just like my friend Manolo says: Life is but a dream" (160). Thus, repetition of the texts by others demonstrates that cultural transmission is possible through literature. This is further evidenced when one of the only other Cubans to use calqued literary texts in the novel is Manolo's very own niece, 2 generation Caridad / Connie Rodríguez.

Other characters that voice further calqued texts are not first generation Cubans at all, some are even Anglos. Connie, the very americanized niece of Manolo in two love poems and a letter, pens the calqued verses of Garcilaso de la Vega, Sor Juana and Neruda.<sup>50</sup> In all

three instances, the would be cheerleader, begins the poems with a cheer. In her poem "I AM" she writes; "Bang, bang choo-choo train, c'mon Dolphins do your thing! / I am an empty page / a life without motive / since you left me. / Flow freely, tears, effortlessly" (116). Thus the combination of her cheer with the calqued verses reinforces her cultural hybridity and while it may seem to be rather comical and even absurd, it successfully conveys at the same time the distance between two cultures and world views and their coming together in the character of Connie. This becomes more evident in her choice of title for the poem and its ending verses where the tension and ultimate acceptance of both worlds and their syncretism are apparent; "That is who I am / Caridad 'Connie' Rodriguez" (116). Further evidence that Fernández uses calqued literary texts to demonstrate the character's cultural hybridity is seen in the calqued verses of Connie's suicide letter where Sor Juana's redondilla "Hombres necios" is juxtaposed against a Burger King napkin.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, Fernández' choice of having Connie repeat Neruda's poem "Farewell" is particularly interesting in that Neruda himself titles his poem in English yet conveys his

sentiments in Spanish. Is this not the subtext of Connie's own untitled poem, as she conveys in English sentiments that are actually Spanish?<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the implementation of calqued texts does not reflect, as first it may seem, the complete extinction of culture. On the contrary, they demonstrate at the same time partial loss, maintenance and acquisition—transculturation.

If it is the case that the repetition of the calqued texts by Cuban Americans reflects transculturation, then what happens when Anglos begin to recite lines from canonical Spanish texts? Bill, referred to as the "Alabamian troubadour," seems to absorb the cultural signifiers voiced by the community. While he does recite the famous lines of Elizabeth Barret Browning "How do I love you, let me count the ways" (118),<sup>53</sup> he also declaims the calqued verses of Bécquer's *Rimas* XXI, XXXVIII and XLIV. In the novel Bill states to Connie:

"What's poesy," you once asked me, Connie,  
while fixing your pupil black on my own. To  
reply . . . but why should you put this  
question to me? You yourself, are poesy. . . .  
Connie, sighs are but air and vanish into air;

tears are but water flowing to the sea, when  
love's forgotten, tell me, Connie, where does  
it go, vanishing in mystery.

. . . Connie Rodríguez is an open book, I  
clearly read the very bottom of your pupils.  
Need your accusing lips indulge in useless lies  
so plainly contradicted by your eyes?" (89-  
90)<sup>54</sup>

The use of the calqued literary text on the part of an  
Anglo demonstrates the Anglo's own transculturation or as  
Fernández states "la infiltración del ámbito anglosajón  
por parte de la cultura hispana" ("Subversión" 29).  
Interestingly, another Anglo character, Captain Carter,  
exclaims when he sees Mirta pushing a shopping cart down  
the street in the middle of the night those lines that  
Don Quijote invokes when describing Dulcinea, "She is  
beautiful without blemish, dignified without naughtiness,  
tender and yet modest, gracious out of courtesy and  
courteous out of good breeding, and lastly, of exalted  
lineage" (165).<sup>55</sup> Therefore, while Fernández' various  
calques and intertextuality may be seen as subversive  
because it allows for his Cuban characters to continue to  
transmit cultural knowledge, perhaps, just as with the



Hispanisms voiced by Anglo characters, the adoption of the literary calques and intertextuality by the Anglo characters reveals itself as one of the most subversive acts. Afterall, it is one thing for Cuban Americans to transculturate, but it is another when Anglos begin to do the same. The result, then, is that, despite the Anglos' attempts to marginalize the Cubans and extinguish their language and differentiate themselves from Cubans, in fact, Cubans actually impose their own manipulated version of English—Cuban English—upon the Anglo. In the end, what appears to be the anglization of the Cuban is also the cubanization of the Anglo, showing that transculturation can be a two way street. Thus, the novel is successful in decentering the dominant culture and language.

Generally, critics have responded that the inclusion of these "unconsciously" voiced calqued literary texts by the characters are simply part of the fun that the author has with the reader. Rivero Marín asserts that "their main purpose and meaning are not as important as the sense of exclusivity they offer, the self-satisfied reaction of the reader who recognizes the lines compared to the confusion that they may bring a reader who does

not" (38). Jorge Febles also refers to Fernández' intertextuality similarly when he posits that Fernández "enfoca carnavalescamente el pre-texto para jugar con él al quita y pon, configurando de esa suerte una nueva versión singular e irrisoria" ("El pre-texto" 76). Febles in the same article argues "la desvalorización de estas obras se desprende de su inversión grotesca . . . [que] por otra parte, el mismo hecho de verter los modelos a un inglés caricaturesco les confiere marcada comicidad y ridiculez" (69-70). Both Febles and Rivero Marín are correct in asserting that the author is playing with the reader. Febles is also accurate when he shows that Fernández' games result in a new unique and ridiculous text. However, both scholars fail to conclude that perhaps more important than the games being played is what the new, unique, calqued text comes to represent. In fact, Fernández does not devalue the text by altering it, quite the opposite. When one considers the purpose of the intertextuality as a means of cultural transmission, these texts even in their transformed state appear to be highly valorized by Fernández. It appears that, for Fernández, language and literature contain the keys to transculturation. His manipulation of both

result in a new unique text that reflects a new reality: a reality both Latino, Anglo, and neither at the same time.

One must consider that in order to accomplish both the intertextual and linguistic games analyzed, Fernández relies on the Cuban tradition of choteo that "consiste en 'no tomar nada en serio' . . . en 'tirarlo todo a relajo'" (Mañach 57). More and more in Miami, its residents refer to choteo as vacilón, or as the character Bill Cloonan says "vacillation." This, in large part, is due to a popular morning radio program in Miami called "El vacilón de la mañana." Nevertheless, vacilón and choteo seem to incarnate the same meaning, "es decir, confusión, subversión, desorden . . . el relajamiento de todos los vínculos y coyunturas que les dan a las cosas un aspecto articulado, una digna integridad" (Mañach 67). Thus, we may view Fernández' manipulation of English and these texts in this light. If we refer ourselves to the very first and last chapters of the novel, "Retrieving Varadero" and "Origination," we can understand Fernández' transcultural project clearly. "Retrieving Varadero" is the story of an older woman, Mirta, who in exchange for favors, which start off as simple errands and then turn

sexual, tells her young neighbor Eloy—who is hungry to know anything about his country of heritage—hyperbolic stories of the homeland. Cuba, where on all the beaches:

the sand was made out of grated silver, though  
in Varadero it was also milk with diamond dust  
. . . and there was no need for suntan lotion  
nor sunscreen because the breezes carried the  
properties of aloe and they even unclogged your  
nose while moisturizing your skin. (10-11)

Fernández' and the reader assume the roles of Mirta and Eloy. Fernández, like Mirta, hyperbolizes everything with the sole intention of preserving the culture. Everything must be exaggerated to its fullest, for that is the Cuban way.

In the last chapter "Origination" we learn from Linda Lucia that Mirta, the last known survivor of the disglossia plague is always reciting a poem that nobody understands, not even Linda. Linda then reveals the poem, taught to her by Mirta, stating that after she reads it she almost always faints, but doesn't know why. The poem is none other than the Cuban classic "I Cultivated A White Rose" by Joe Marty:<sup>56</sup>

I cultivated a white rose

in June as in January  
for the friendly friend  
that gives me a frank hand  
and for the cruel one that pulls out  
the heart with which I live  
weeds nor worms  
do I cultivate  
I cultivate a white rose. (203)

The detail included regarding the fact that Linda almost always faints after reciting the poem would seem to indicate what Fernández would call "la esencia hispana del personaje" ("La subversión" 29). Thus memory and language are intricately connected to one another.

The Cuban American scholar, Isabel Alvarez Borland, reveals that in 1996 when an audience member at a panel discussion asked Fernández why he had decided to publish in English, Fernández' replies "I had to write in English so that the future generations of Cubans in the U.S. can read me" (154).<sup>57</sup> Just as Fernández' reply indicates a tone of lament, so does his last chapter. However, all is not lost. Fernández, like Mirta, will not give up so quickly. Through his text he relays cultural information in an hispanized English to, as Vásquez argues, self-

replicate and self-repeat Cuba within the text. As Mirta tells Dr. Helen Kings, "I pay him with memories. It's the best way to fight forgetting. The day we forget, we are all dead. Even the living, because then we are going to be nameless" (34). Fernández further portrays this point not through language but through the absence of language. Notably absent from the novel is the actual word Cuba, voiced only twice in the novel by its characters. Once Manolo repeats the word when reciting one of his poems, and nobody is paying any attention to him. The second time occurs while Manolo and his granddaughter walk along the beach. Manny asks his granddaughter, Tatiana, which way is Cuba. Tatiana<sup>58</sup> responds, "Cuba? . . . But why, Grandpa? Cuba is a restaurant and the air there stinks. It smells like onions and garlic and grease" (200). Thus, due to the absence of the word Cuba, the island ceases to exist for the next generation of Cubans. It is clear, then, that Fernández links the loss of Spanish to the loss of Cuban consciousness. He subverts the language of authority in order to create a seemingly English text that captures and transmits Cuban language and culture to the next generation. The result is a truly Cuban-American text, a

permanent text that provides a Spanglish record of Cuban  
life in Miami.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> "barrio (forenglishonly)" from the collection of poetry Mainstream Ethics (ética corriente).

<sup>2</sup> Fernández is a professor of Spanish at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. The same institution granted him a Ph.D. in Spanish in 1977.

<sup>3</sup> Fernández' M.A. thesis also analyzes Cuban language; "The Lexical and Syntactical Impact of English on the Spanish Spoken in Southeastern Florida." Thesis. Florida Atlantic U, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> "Hybrid Verbs -ar or -ear?" Hispania. 62.2 (1979): 336-338; "English Loanwords in Miami Cuban Spanish." American Speech. 58 (1983): 13-19.

<sup>5</sup> "La revolución y el léxico cubano." Crítica hispánica. 6 (1984): 131-44.

<sup>6</sup> At the time of the novel's publication the actual name of the county was Dade. However, since its publication this name has changed to Miami-Dade.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, this fact is never revealed in the novel. It is only in Fernández' article that this detail is discovered.



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<sup>8</sup> Ilan Stavans states five arguments given for English only:

1. English has been the United States' strongest common bond; 2. Linguistic diversity inevitably leads to political disunity; 3. State sponsored bilingual services remove incentives to learning English; 4. The hegemony of English in the United States is threatened by swelling populations of minority-language speakers; 5. Ethnic conflict will endure unless strong measures are taken to reinforce monolingualism. (Hispanic 178-9)

<sup>9</sup> The events in Miami are significant because by 1981 a constitutional English Language amendment was introduced, the first ever proposal to declare English the nation's official language (Crawford 90).

<sup>10</sup> Disglossia should not be confused with diglossia. Diglossia termed by Charles A. Ferguson "refer[s] to situations where either two varieties of the same language or two different languages are coextensively used in the same society" (Peñalosa 216). Documenting the definition of "disglossia" is difficult, as it does

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not appear in any linguistic reference sources. However, the term appears to be used by many. William O. Deaver, in his study of Raining Backwards, asserts that "disglossia denies other languages and relegates them to non-tongues" ("From Polyglossia" 448).

<sup>11</sup> After publishing Raining Backwards, Fernández goes on to publish a second novel in English—Holy Radishes (1995). Following Holy Radishes, Fernández returns to Spanish in his latest work En la ocho y la doce (2001).

<sup>12</sup> Aparicio asserts that other authors engaging in the use of subversive English include Victor Hernández Cruz, Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, Helena María Viramontes, Judith Ortiz Cofer, and Aurora Levins Morales. Interestingly, Roberto G. Fernández, is overlooked.

<sup>13</sup> As discussed in chapter one, Spanglish is the result of linguistic transculturation. I emphasize the use of both terms—Spanglish and transculturation—to point out that the designation "tropicalization of English" to describe the technique being discussed can be easily substituted by "transculturation / Hispanization / latin americanization of English," which is a form of

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Spanglish. In fact, these scholars do recognize this technique as a form of transcultural representation.

<sup>14</sup> Stavans largely ignores the infiltration of Spanish into English. He fails to include many terms that reflect this phenomenon. One brief example would be the English voice "embark" or "embarkate," used by many Latinos especially in Miami. While this English word to an Anglo speaker would mean to board, or to commence, for the Latino in Miami it has a totally different meaning: to leave someone hanging, or to sell out. For example: "Olga embarkated me; she said she would go to the movies with me today." The Spanish equivalent being: "Olga me dejó embarcado, quedamos en ir al cine hoy." I mention embark specifically because Stavans himself mentions the terms embarcadero and embarciador (both of which I believe to be questionable examples of Spanglish) but never mentions embarkate (Stavans 193). Further examples appear later in the linguistic analysis of Raining Backwards.

<sup>15</sup> Other critics have categorized Fernandez' encoding differently. Rivero Marín establishes the categories of literalizations, double connotations, botched

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translations, and calques (32). While, William O. Deaver, Jr. categorizes the encoding as code switching—both compound and coordinate, loan translations, calques, graphic representation of “broken english,” anomie, stylization and mimicry (“From Polyglossia” 450-51, “Raining” 446).

<sup>16</sup> Both of these terms are linguistic designations that may be used interchangeably (Matthews 45).

<sup>17</sup> Deaver is the first to observe the use of the calque “my little heart” (“From Polyglossia” 451). Vásquez is the first to observe the use of the calque “little sky” (“Parody” 99).

<sup>18</sup> I use the terms 1, 1.5, and 2 generations described by Gustavo Pérez Firmat in Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way (1994). According to the author; 1 generation Cubans are those who were born and raised in Cuba and identify mostly with Cuban culture, 2 generation Cubans are those born and raised in the United States and identify primarily with U.S. culture, and 1.5 generation Cubans are those who were raised in both Cuba and the United States and easily identify with both cultures.

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<sup>19</sup> "Son de la loma" itself is a play on words. It can mean they are from the hillside, in this case the singers, or rather cantantes. It can also mean son from the hillside, as in Afro-Cuban folk music from the hillside.

<sup>20</sup> Vázquez is the first to observe these calques ("Parody" 100).

<sup>21</sup> Fernández is the first to comment upon the use of this calque ("La subversión" 29).

<sup>22</sup> In the previous paragraphs and in Table 1 I have attempted to document every use of a false cognate calque in the novel.

<sup>23</sup> This calque is first observed by Deaver ("From Polyglossia" 451).

<sup>24</sup> Deaver is the first to observe this calque ("From Polyglossia" 451).

<sup>25</sup> In tables 2 and 3 I have attempted to identify every use of a calqued idiomatic expressions in the novel.

<sup>26</sup> Vázquez is the first to observe this calque ("Parody" 100).

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<sup>27</sup> The emphasis is mine and meant to identify the calqued idiomatic expression.

<sup>28</sup> Often these Spanglish cubanisms are referred to as cubonics, derived from the term ebonics which some use to label a certain type of African-American speech.

<sup>29</sup> Vázquez is the first to observe this calque ("Parody" 100).

<sup>30</sup> Deaver is the first to observe this calque ("From Polyglossia" 451).

<sup>31</sup> Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman call this "Tropicalized English."

<sup>32</sup> Here and in the examples to follow I have attempted to document every use of a lexical hispanism in the novel.

<sup>33</sup> Ocala is located north of Miami and in the center of the state. Many Cubans regard it as a haven for conservative Anglo "rednecks."

<sup>34</sup> This chapter, "Bringing the Flag," ends when Mrs. Olsen refuses to leave Miami because she likes living there and Mr. Olsen then burns the house with the two of them in it preferring to die than to succumb to the foreign invasion (108-09).

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<sup>35</sup>I am only able to identify one other calque that finds its way into the English of Anglos. This term is "vacillation" used by Bill Cloonan (49). "Vacillation" from the Spanish vacilón which denotes a party like of atmosphere.

<sup>36</sup> In the following paragraph and Table 4 I have attempted to document every use of morphological Hispanisms in the novel.

<sup>37</sup> For the purpose of this study I will only identify and analyze literary intertextuality. For an excellent analysis of the intertextuality of English and Spanish Pop Songs included in the novel please refer to Jorge Febles' article "English and Spanish Pop Songs as Part of Character Speech: Cultural Hybridity in Roberto G. Fernández's Raining Backwards."

<sup>38</sup> Those scholars of greatest importance in regards to Fernández' intertextuality are Jorge Febles, William O. Deaver, and Mary Vásquez.

<sup>39</sup> Cortés' states:

Hay en esta ciudad un mercado en que . . . hay en él . . . todas cuantas cosas, así de mantenimiento como de vestido y calzado, que

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ellos tratan y puede haber. Hay joyerías de oro, plata, piedras y otras joyas de plumaje, tan bien concentrado como puede ser en todas las plazas y mercados del mundo. . . . Venden mucha leña, carbón e hierbas de comer y medicinales. Hay calle de caza donde venden todos los linajes de aves que hay en la tierra, así como gallinas, perdices, codornices, lavancos, doraes. . . . Venden conejos, liebres, venados, y perros pequeños .

(Cortés 98, 132-133)

<sup>40</sup> As Febles notes, this title perhaps itself is a textual allusion to the popular television show of the 1980s Dallas, and its famous "Who shot J.R.?" episode ("El pretexto" 71).

<sup>41</sup> Febles observes that in Fernández' chapter "The Good Night" the author parodies Lara's "El castellano viejo." However, Febles does not document the specific parody ("A Character's" 31).

<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that Fernández does not limit himself to Spanish texts for his intertextuality. While the great majority of the intertextual references are to



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Spanish texts there are two instances in which they are not: a letter written by Keith to his sister Connie where he parodies a letter written by George Washington December 18, 1776; and when Captain Carter alludes to Cinderella by collecting all the shoes from the neighborhood to try them on dead Connie's feet in order to determine the identity of the body. For the purpose of this study I will only concentrate on the Spanish texts. Deaver first observes the intertextual parody of Washington, while Febles notes that of Cinderella (Deaver, "Stylization" 448: Febles, "Sobre" 165).

<sup>43</sup> Darío's original poem "Canción de otoño en primavera" reads:

*Juventud, divino tesoro,  
¡ya te vas para no volver!  
Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro...  
y a veces lloro sin querer..." (74)*

<sup>44</sup> Darío's original poem "A Colón" reads:

*Desgraciado Almirante! Tu pobre América,  
tu india virgen y hermosa de sangre cálida,  
la perla de tus sueños, es una histérica  
de convulsivos nervios y frente pálida.*

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Un desastroso espíritu posee tu tierra:  
donde la tribu unida blandió sus mazas,  
hoy se enciende entre hermanos perpetua guerra,  
se hieren y destrozan las mismas razas . . .

(237)

<sup>45</sup> Vázquez is the first to mention the use of Darío in Raining Backwards. However it is Febles who first specifically identifies both poems "Tributo a Colón" and "Canción de Otoño en Primavera" in the novel. (Vázquez "Parody" 93: Febles "Sobre" 163).

<sup>46</sup> Febles is the first to observe Fernández' use of Lola Rodríguez de Tió's poem "A Cuba" ("Pretexto" 69).

<sup>47</sup> This portion of Lola Rodríguez de Tió's original poem "A Cuba" reads as follows:

. . . Cuba y Puerto Rico son  
De un pájaro las dos alas  
Reciben flores y balas  
Sobre el mismo corazón . . . (23)

<sup>48</sup> For instance Darío's "A Roosevelt" and Rodríguez de Tió's "A Cuba" and "La Borinqueña."

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Vásquez is the first to identify the Calderón de la Barca text ("Parody" 96-7).

<sup>50</sup> Febles is the first to document Fernández' use of Garcilaso and Neruda ("Sobre" 162-63, 164). In Connie's poem "I AM" she ends the first three lines of her poem with "Flow freely, tears, flow effortlessly" which is from Garcilaso's Égloga I (116). In Égloga I Garcilaso ends lines 5 through 15 with "Salid sin duelo, lágrimas, corriendo" (5-14).

<sup>51</sup> Mary Vásquez is the first to mention the use of the Sor Juana "Redondilla" in Raining Backwards ("Parody" 98). In the novel Connie's letter reads:

Stupid men, who unreasonably attack women,  
without seeing that you are the cause of the  
very thing you blame; if with unparalleled  
ardor you make love to their disdain, why do  
you expect them to virtuously when you incite  
them to sin? So how should the woman who seeks  
your love to be constituted, if the ungrateful  
woman offends and the easy woman disgusts?  
Your amorous teasing gives wing to their  
indiscretions, and after you have made the

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ladies wicked you want to find them very good.  
Who is most to blame in a guilty passion, the  
woman who falls when she is begged, or the man  
who begs when he has fallen (on his knees)?  
(83)

The original by Sor Juana reads:

Hombres necios que acusáis / a la mujer sin  
razón, / sin ver que sois la ocasión / de lo  
mismo que culpáis: / si con ansia sin igual /  
solicitáis su desdén, / ¿por qué queréis que  
obren bien / si las incitáis al mal? / . . . /  
¿Pues cómo ha de estar templada / la que  
vuestro amor pretende, / si la que es ingrata,  
ofende, / y la que es fácil, enfada? / . . . /  
Dan vuestras amantes penas / a su libertades  
alas, / y después de hacerlas malas / las  
queréis hallar muy buenas. / ¿Cuál mayor culpa  
ha tenido / en una pasión errada: / la que cae  
de rogada, / o el que ruega de caído? (109)

<sup>52</sup> Connie's poem reads:

I was yours, you were mine. What more?  
Together we / Made a bend in the road where

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love passed by. / I was yours, you were mine.  
You will belong to the one / Who loves you, the  
one who reaps in your garden what I / have  
planted. / I am leaving. I am sad: but I am  
always sad. I come from your / arms. I don't  
know where I am going. (191)

The original poem "Farewell" by Neruda reads:

Fui tuyo, fuiste mía. ¿Qué más? Juntos hicimos  
/ un recodo en la ruta donde el amor pasó / Fui  
tuyo, fuiste mía. Tú serás del que te amé, /  
del que corté en tu huerto lo que he sembrado  
yo. / Yo me voy. Estoy triste: pero siempre  
estoy triste / Vengo desde tus brazos. No sé  
hacia dónde voy. / ...Desde tu corazón me dice  
adiós un niño. / Y yo le digo adiós. (41)

<sup>53</sup> Febles first notes the Barret Browning text in the  
novel ("Sobre" 165).

<sup>54</sup> Febles is the first to observe the use of Bécquer  
in the novel ("El pretexto" 69). However, Fernández  
himself is the first to reveal some of the actual calqued  
verses within the novel ("La subversión" 29). Bécquer's  
original "Rima XXI" reads "¿Qué es poesía?, dices

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mientras clavabas / en mi pupila, tu pupila azul. / ¿Qué es poesía?, / Y tú me lo preguntas / Poesía eres tú" (122).

Bécquer's "Rima XXXVIII" reads:

Los suspiros son aire y van al aire! / Las  
lágrimas son agua y van al mar! / Dime, mujer,  
cuando el amor se olvida / ¿sabes tú adónde  
va?" (135). Bécquer's "RIMA XLIV" reads, "Como  
en un libro abierto / leo de tus pupilas en el  
fondo; / ¿a qué fingir el labio / risas que se  
desmienten con los ojos? . . . (139).

<sup>55</sup> Febles first documents the Cervantes text which reads, "hermosa sin tacha, grave sin soberbia, amorosa con honestidad, agradecida por cortés, cortés bien criada, y finalmente, alta por linaje, a causa que sobre la buena sangre y campea la hermosura con más grados de perfección que en las hermosas humildemente nacidas" (qtd in "Parodia" 75-76: Cervantes 178).

<sup>56</sup> The original by José Martí is from Versos Sencillos, "XXXIX":

Cultivo una rosa blanca,  
en julio como enero,  
para el amigo sincero

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que me da su mano franca.

Y para el cruel que me arranca  
el corazón con que vivo,  
cardo ni oruga cultivo:  
cultivo una rosa blanca. (45)

<sup>57</sup> Ironically, in his own doctoral dissertation, where he analyzes the Cuban exile short story, after an analysis of anglicisms used by the authors, Fernández asks, "¿Optará con el tiempo por descartar su lengua y adoptar la inglesa como un medio más eficiente para llegar a sus lectores?" (151).

<sup>58</sup> Tatiana is also the name of one of Fernández' own daughters.

## Conclusion

After careful analysis of transculturation and its application to U.S. Latino literature, I have demonstrated that transculturation proves to be a viable and effective theoretical approach that reveals an alternative discourse for the study of this literature. The use of transculturation provides a means that allows for the countering of Eurocentric theoretical approaches whose explanations and very language are often inadequate and ethnocentric. Transculturation goes beyond traditional theories of minority literature because it moves beyond binaries and, whereas traditional theories erase difference by examining similarities, the examination of difference remains fundamental to the transcultural approach. Important in this analysis of difference is that the subaltern acts as an active agent in creating culture and not merely passively absorbing the dominant culture as in more traditional theories. Moreover, whereas other hybridity models emphasize the harmonious end result of cultures in the contact zone, transculturation emphasizes the often-tenuous relationships between the cultures and the painful process of negotiation.



A particularly important benefit of using transculturation in analysing U.S. Latino literature is that it allows for the reclaiming of the Latino's Latin-American intellectual tradition. The importance is two-fold. First, it combats the racist perception that Latin Americans and U.S. Latinos are producers of culture but not knowledge. Secondly, transculturation as a theoretical paradigm, as defined by Ortiz, emerged as an attempt to counter colonial and imperial discourse. Such a decolonizing methodology allows for the validation and legitimization of the unique language of U.S. Latinos, which so often is met with censure.

In my transcultural analysis of Tato Laviera's poetry, I discovered that through transculturation Laviera communicates a unique linguistic and cultural cosmology in Spanglish. This cosmology demonstrates that Latino culture and language come from a long line of past transculturations and that through transculturation Latinos have the capacity for both survival and creativity in the midst of attacks on their culture and language. Laviera's poetry not only reflects a constant theme of transculturation as the path for survival, but also a path for healing, uniting, and better

understanding between different cultures and races.

Laviera's poetry reveals that transculturation can lead to a more humane America and challenges the United States to abandon the acculturation mentality and embrace the more humanizing values of transculturation.

Indispensable to this point of view is Laviera's constant emphasis on the survival of the non-European roots of such transculturations. After all, for the poet, the survival of those African and Indigenous roots through transculturation proves the capacity for survival in the face of possible cultural annihilation. In the end, essential to Laviera's transcultural project is the legitimization and acceptance of both Spanglish and the working class as representations and true creators of Latino culture. Throughout his collections exists the idea that an awakening of consciousness and freedom is directly tied to language, in his case Spanglish.

A transcultural reading of Roberto G. Fernández' Raining Backwards also reveals an intent on the part of the author to preserve Latino culture through transculturation. While using the pretext of the "English Only" movement, Fernández reveals how through linguistic transculturation one is able to subvert the

language of authority even in the midst of all other languages being outlawed. Fernández successfully creates a unique text in which English appears to be the language. However, a careful reading reveals a Spanish subtext, which the author achieves through the Hispanization of English. The seemingly English text serves to displace monolingual readers and causes them to feel like foreigners in their own language. At the same time, through the use of intertextuality with canonical Spanish literary texts, Fernández allows readers to re-read the original Spanish texts in English and thereby preserve a particularly Latino worldview, which then is passed on not only to Latinos, but Anglos as well. The end result is a text that through transculturation passes on Cuban and Latino language and culture to the next generation of Latinos while at the same time it subversively infiltrates Anglo-American language and culture. Fernández' unique Spanglish text proves a critical tenet of transcultural theory: that the subaltern is an active agent in transforming not just their own culture but that of the majority as well.

A transcultural approach offers U.S. Latino authors a means to document a third culture and language in their

writing while at the same time they resist acculturating forces of U.S. society. Through the use of Spanglish, these authors engage in the legitimization of their culture and language. The transcultural analysis of their language reveals that Spanglish is not a mere deficient attempt to express oneself, but rather a creative, valid, and resilient form of expression. Moreover, it affirms that the Latino is an active participant in the transformation of both Spanish and English and demonstrates that their unique cosmology can best be expressed through Spanglish. Lastly, this analysis establishes that transculturation as a theoretical approach not only assists in the better understanding of U.S. Latino literature but also contributes to the advancement of the validity of Spanglish as a literary language.

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