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THE ACT OF PRESERVATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE LATINO CULTURE

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Abstract:

This study deals with the significance of the preservation and transformation of the Latino culture, having an example in the selected poems of Latino-American poets.

In writing about the significance of the preservation and transformation of the Latino culture, Latino-American poets fill the spiritual and cultural vacuum. As potential artists, they recreate the distant homelands in their poems, instilling thereby feelings of rootedness, pride, and a sense of belonging to one's historical and cultural backgrounds. These concepts are important for people living in foreign lands, like the Latino-Americans, to keep their traditions alive in the United States, where such values are often misunderstood.

This paper is written in the New Criticism Approach, 'New Historicism'. That is to understand the relationship between a text and the political, social, and economic circumstances in which it originated.

The most important question about New Historicism is that how literary texts relate to their historical background. This means that this theory deal with how we understand ourselves, how we interact with those around us and how we use power or are an object to power. Another central aspect of this theory is that critics claim a text can never be understood out of his historical context and this lead to make the author a subject to his context and therefore to his historical background, living circumstances, class, family and world view.

Culture considers central in 'New Historicism' because it is connected with society, and society's structure, which is important for a new historical approach. New Historicism is not connected only with the past but it takes history forward into the present with all its discourse on culture, and its components religious and political traditions of the place.

New Historicism's main objective is to see a literary work in the historical background and focus on socio-cultural circumstance. The "textuality of history" with "the history of text" is the main concept of New Historicism. Accordingly, the literary text and the historical situation from which it emerged are equally important because text (the literary text) and the context (the historical conditions that produced it) are mutually constitutive: they create each other. Like the dynamic connection between individual identity and society, literary texts shape by their historical contexts.

The Latino-American women poets believe that "our womanness, heritage, culture, language all deserve preservation. To transform our traditions wisely, we need to know them, learn from them, be inspired and saddened by them, choose for ourselves what to retain."¹ For them, the act of both preservation and transformation of the Latino culture is important in the celebration of positive and negative elements in her traditions like religious values, customs, language, land, and resistance to domestic violence.²

Women Latino poets view themselves as a border person between Mexico and the United States or a bridge between different perspectives and cultures with the responsibility, challenge, and talents to create mutual understanding. They, Pat Mora an example, define themselves as a "denizen of Nepantla,"--"the land of the middle."³ They believe in the great opportunities that exist within this space between the two worlds, the American and the Mexican. They live in that space, in the middle of two cultures, molded by class, privilege, and education.⁴

A lot of American-Lation poets originated after their grandparents left Mexico during the violence that followed the Mexican Revolution.⁵ So, the connection to the Mexican environment affects much of their work in very powerful ways, as their work remain "imbued with the imagery of the desert and of the people of the borderlands"⁶ as Kathryn A. Barros points out. As an example to one of these outstanding poets is Pat Mora.

Mora decided to pen her own words and experiences and began writing seriously by publishing her work in literary journals in 1981.⁷ In 1984, she released her first poetry collection, *Chants* (1984) and in 1986, she released another book of poetry, *Borders*, which gained the Southwest Book Award. In these collections, she evokes the cultural, social, political, and emotional borderlands that single and define the ethnic individual. After the 1990s, she published *Communion, Agua Santa: Holy Water, Aunt Carmen's Book of Practical Saints* (1997), and a *House of Houses* (1997). These works make her receive 23 awards and honors including the Southwest Book Award and the Teachers' Choice award from the International Reading Association.⁸

Locating herself inside the domestic spaces of her family, Mora's collections of poetry knit together the voices of her ancestors to disclose stories of oppression, survival, and triumph. The stories of her poems are centered on the web of family relationships that are plainly native, and then extended to include family histories that "moved her ancestors from Spain and Mexico across the border into the United States." (*Nepantla*, 56) She draws on her family for inspiration "to preserve cultural inheritance, advocate literacy, and reclaim women's strength."⁹ Many of the characters presented in her poems and essays are based on family members as well as on personal and familial experiences. She attracts one of the largest audiences including both children and adults, as her work is accessible to a wide age range because of "her narrative style" and the "healing messages"¹⁰ of the poems she writes.

In a conversation in 2001, Mora tells Karin Rosa Ikas about "the early influences"¹¹ that have influenced her beginnings, naming, Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), Amy Lowell (1874-1925), Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), and Margaret Atwood (1939-) who have been a dominant force at the beginning of her writing career. Other influences include Toni Morrison (1931-), Lucille Clifton (1936-2010), Mary Oliver (1935-), and Alice Walker (1944-).¹² Above all, "there is the importance of family," she says, "and because I am a Chicana from the desert, another strong force is the presence of this desert. In my own family I think the presence of women is another strong element."¹³

Mora's family and her Latino roots have greatly influenced her aspirations as a writer since childhood. Her family is "an incredibly loving household"¹⁴ that provides safety and motivates her to do well in work and life. Her mother, who worked, as an assistant in bilingual classes and as a translator at the University of California, Los Angeles Institute for Social Science Research, has been instrumental in her professional and academic career. She tells Ikas that her mother was the most influential cultural aspect of her life and work: "With regard to my mother's role in my life. I always described my mother as my first good editor. From the time I started to write as a child, I would always take everything to her. Because she had a

very fine sense of language and was always making good suggestions. ... Therefore, I think her voice is a very strong force for me.”¹⁵

Mora includes members of her family, like aunts and grandmothers already dead in some of her poems and essays as examples to be followed, to teach those who are still living. Although her speakers are adults, they are still learning from their predecessors for guidance. Her first children’s book, *A Birthday Basket for Tia* (1992), is about her *tia*, aunt, Ignacia Delgado. Delgado, or Lobo, the wolf, as Mora likes to call her, is very special. “She is in every book,” she tells Ikas, “also in the book of essays, and she is a very strong voice in the memoir, *House of Houses*, too.”¹⁶ In another interview, she explains how “the aunt in *A Birthday Basket for Tia* is one inspiration in my life. She was a wonderful storyteller. And when I was little, I ... liked to listen to her tell stories.”¹⁷

Mora takes pride in her cultural heritage, family traditions, and being a woman: “I take pride in being a Hispanic writer. I will continue to write and to struggle to say what no other writer can say in quite the same way.”¹⁸ She describes her responsibility as a writer, saying: “I write because I believe that Mexican Americans need to take their rightful place in U.S. literature. We need to be published and to be studied in schools and colleges so that the stories and ideas of our people won’t quietly disappear ... deep inside I always wish I wrote better, that I could bring more honor and attention to those like the *abuelitas*, grandmothers, I write about.”¹⁹ The poet encourages everyone to look for his or her own culture and environment to know one’s heritage. She says, “There is an incredible wealth that is there for us when we go back and do this sort of excavating work and find out about our own particular family.”²⁰ “We have a whole generation growing up without ever seeing themselves in print,” she states, “What does it mean if you don’t see yourself in books? There is a strong connection between images and identity.”²¹

By mining the past for familiar tales, Mora establishes a sense of shared history and a sense of community; “from the communal, she moves to the individual and to the private.”²² This allows her to take family stories, deconstruct them, and then retell them with a critical eye.²³ The stories she presents are of the past: “But we can prize the past together,” she asserts, “valuing the positive female and Mexican traditions. We can prize elements of the past as we persist in demanding and creating, change.” (*Nepantla*, 56) In her writings, Mora transmits the value of connection and relationships between the personal, familial, and communal identities and between the land and Latino mythologies. Her poetry makes her focus on the domestic sphere and offer a valuable critique of the social experiences of Latino familyhood within the structure of Latino literature.²⁴ Her concerns are with and for the Latino people who inhabit a harsh land and from that land she brings forth the tales of a shared past to heal the present. “We struggle to

preserve what has given solace in the past,” Mora confirms. (*Nepantla*, 127)

With this goal in mind, Mora sets herself in the role of the “curandera” or the woman healer. In her essay, “Poet as Curandera” (1993), she states: “The curandera incorporates her herbal lore and her attention to the subtle changes in her natural world with traditions and stories of her people... She learns her healing craft not in a traditional medical program but informally, orally, much as many Chicana writers are part of an oral, storytelling traditions.” (*Nepantla*, 127) The curandera poets use “learned wisdom, ritual, solutions springing from the land ... voices from the past and the present, [which] evolve from their culture.” (*Nepantla*, 127) They use the tradition of healing tale and lore, and “elements of commonality” like the importance of family and the retelling of familiar tales to conserve heritage and tradition. These elements are essential to the curandera poet is regarded as “a poet or other purveyor of Latino culture.”²⁵ In this way, the curandera poet, Mora adds, achieves “a healing confirmation” and a “triumph over cruelty and injustice.” (*Nepantla*, 127) The curandera poet creates “an informal atmosphere conducive to holistic healing, the healing of affirmation, of identification, of confirmation, of wholeness.” (*Nepantla*, 128) The process of healing will “ease a pain” and “experience relief.” (*Nepantla*, 128) In this sense, the poet is like “a comedian or singer” who has the ability to make the audience “laugh and forget their personal sadness” by offering them “cures that sting.” (*Nepantla*, 128) Hence, orality, lore, art, and tribal solidarity, all combine together to make the curandera a cultural figure. Mora believes that “writers of color,” including herself, “feel a more responsibility to serve their own. Just as the curandera uses white magic, manipulates the symbols that are part of her patients’ experience base to ease communication.” (*Nepantla*, 131) She thinks that Latino women’s writing, specifically, must be based on this combination: “The Chicana writers seek to heal cultural wounds of historical neglect by providing opportunities to remember the past, to share and ease bitterness, to describe what has been viewed as unworthy of description, to cure by incantations and rhythms, by listening with her entire being and responding. She then gathers the tales and myths, weaves them together, and, if lucky, casts spells.” (*Nepantla*, 131)

As a Latino poet, Mora follows this strategy almost exactly in her poetry and prose as “she engineers an alter-Native form that casts a spell on her reader, weaving the tales and myths of her family into an instructional guide.”²⁶ In this way, she “communes with the family members, both dead and alive” by imagining “their words and [giving] them power to voice their own private concerns while recuperating the camaraderie of the domestic space.”²⁷ In her poem “My Word-house” from *Communion* (1991), Mora imagines a house made of adobe of trees, blooming in the harsh desert, where “walls grow out of the desert / naturally, like agave,

nopal, yucca.”²⁸ Apparently, there are no boundaries in this “word-house,” as there are “no private entrances, no secret locks, / just rough álamo slabs framing windows and doors.” (*Communion*, 86) the poet designs this house of words to let “vines, winds, and strangers enter large, bare / rooms with ease.” (*Communion*, 86) This word house stands as a metaphor for her family house to which she invites the reader to wander in its rooms and meet her family members.

Crystal M. Kurzen thinks that this “imagined space, a house made of houses,” is a place “where all might dwell.”²⁹ Mora creates that place where the men and women of her family can dwell, be heard, and be the storytellers who speak about their Latino traditions. It is also a space where the Latino spirits from her past can find solace and community. The “word house” offers refuge to “men and women” to “pull threads from / their mouths, soak the strong fibers in berries / roots, shells, then weave them as the wind loosens songs.” All this happens “in the kitchen family” where “bread is always rising.” (*Communion*, 86)

In a similar context, Mora writes *House of Houses*, (1996) a family memoir. In this book of essays, she tries to make a “sense of her Mexican-American identity, an identity fragmented by a family heritage on both sides of the border,”³⁰ as a result of economic or political pressures suffered during the depression era. She invites all her relatives, dead or alive; to participate in the imaginative reconstruction of her family’s past. She realizes the power of expressing the truth, pronouncing it through stories that are “essential as water.”³¹ A group of storytellers meets, including grandmothers, aunts, and mothers, who discuss family traditions. For example, her Aunt Lobo keeps a diary about the Delgado family, to “rescue the stories of a traditional Mexican past”³² by sharing “intensely personal stories from her family archive.”³³

Linda C. Fox thinks that Mora is a believer in cultural conservation. In her poetry, she “documents, validates, and dignifies her Mexican heritage,”³⁴ a heritage that has treasures. For Mora, Fox adds, the Latino poet is compared to a “gentle healer who learns her craft informally and lives within a strong oral-storytelling culture.”³⁵ The poet has learned most of her art from hearing others, as she is dedicated to saving the stories of her Latino culture, “of great aunts and grandparents” that “blend together into cultural histories and myths.”³⁶ Hence, her work reflects her commitment to the preservation and the conservation of the Latino culture so that the world will appreciate the “often unnoticed and devalued aspects of her heritage.”³⁷ Just as she longs for her own children to have a recognized identity, she wants all people to feel that they are part of a culture of their own. In addition, she calls for “respect ..., and awareness of other cultures internationally and the differing degrees and kinds of effects that dominant U.S. culture has on subordinated cultures within the U.S. and worldwide.”³⁸ In this regard, Ikas observes “At the central theme in [Mora’s] writing is the

concern for the Mexican and Mexican American cultures and their conservation; another one is the recognition of the interrelatedness of Natural and Cultural Diversity. She explores various kinds of borders - political, cultural, social, emotional, and sexual -and tries to develop new ways to overcome them.”³⁹

For Mora, “the marginalized and subordinated groups” can practice cultural conservation to “defend and recover their heritages in order to generate their futures.”⁴⁰ She thinks that cultural diversity is crucial to human survival, since it actually helps to maintain diversity in general. Consequently, she seeks to recover and preserve heritage, not through quiet reception of tradition, but through conscious connection with ideas and legacy. She affirms, “Pride in cultural identity, in the set of learned and shared language, symbols, and meanings, needs to be fostered not because of nostalgia or romanticism, but because it is essential to our survival.” (*Nepantla*, 36)

This need for survival and recovery is incorporated in Mora’s poems in many ways. In his article “Conserving Natural and Cultural Diversity: The Prose and Poetry of Pat Mora” (1996), Patrick D. Murphy states that in Mora’s poetry the first way of recovery is involved in the retelling of old tales and stories of Latino women and their roles in preserving Latino traditions.⁴¹ Mora confirms Murphy’s statement: “As human beings, we crave for stories. Our curious souls listen with interest not only to tales about one another but also about our cultures, community, and family.” She adds, “We cherish our personal stories; as well we should, for they are part of our uniqueness.”⁴² However, the stories she is seeking for are of “*tias* and *abuelitas*,” aunts and grandmothers, as she clarifies, “We, and all women, need and deserve our past. We can value the resourcefulness of our mothers and the homes they created, the space they shaped for us. There is much to be learned from the strengths of *tias* and *abuelitas*, and from our experiences in cooking, gardening, mothering.” (*Nepantla*, 56)

In the essays of *Nepantla*, Mora invites the reader to pull a chair and have a “cup of *te de manzanilla*,” chamomile tea, and chat with her long-dead relatives of *tias* and *abuelitas*. In presenting stories of and about Latino women, she challenges traditional gender roles, exposing a place for women to record their stories. In this way, she rescues some of the wisdom and passes it along, so that her grandchildren might know the names and habits of their great-great-grandmothers.⁴³ Mora chooses the technique of writing the history of her family by “restaging past scenes of domesticity in the particularly gendered space of the kitchen.”⁴⁴ The kitchen serves as a place of warm gathering to recall the past, sharing not only stories but also recipes of wild herbs, like “*de canela*, *hierba*, *gordolobo*,” and talks about aunts and grandmothers: “I savor each simple gesture in this kitchen.... They’ve all been here, are here, the family of women, nursing one another with teas—*de canela*, *hierba*, *gordolobo*. Straight and erect in their

good health or bent with age and arthritis, sacramental acts for another woman, or a husband, father, or child, steeping an old cure that began underground.” (*House*, 11)

What Mora desires is a kind of recipes to know how women, who are part of her, “measure and combine ingredients in this life, how they define sustenance.” (*House*, 78) She craves for a model to follow, a way of life. She wants to honor those Latino women who have come before her and their knowledge of all things domestic and familial. “I look at my father’s four sisters,” she says, “the Mora women who’ve outlived their two brothers, the women whose hands like their mother’s know kitchen scenes, the glue of food, how to hold families together with tortillas and coffee.” (*House*, 78) She needs a way to remember them by collecting their recipes, not only of food but also of success; “I’m trying to collect family recipes. Do you have any of Lita’s? Could you each give me a favorite?” (*House*, 78)

Mora dedicates the essence of the poem “Family Ties” from the *My Own True Name: New and Selected Poems for Young Adults* (2000) to her grandmother, Teresa McKenna, describing some of her features and her clinging to Latino traditions. The speaker of the poem (probably Mora herself) is recalling how her abuelita “refused to learn English” and “preferred to shop in the grocery stores, / ... buying garlic, onion, chile, beans,” because “hers [is] a life of cooking, cleaning, [and] selling.”⁴⁵ The speaker is astonished at her grandmother’s persistence in not buying gifts for her “of frilly blouses and barrettes,” or “blue jeans,” even “when I shyly showed my abuelita / my good report card or recited the Pledge of Allegiance.” (*My True Name*, 22) Her abuelita prefers white uniforms that are sewed by cannery workers and would like to give her granddaughter similar uniforms as gifts: “my grandmother would smile and hand me a uniform, \ never the right size, but a gift \ I would add to the white stack.” She hides it deep “at the bottom of my closet.” (*My True Name*, 22)

In her poems and essays, Mora creates a place for welcoming the stories of the spirits of dead aunts and grandmothers, “to put the stories and the voices before they vanished like blooms and leaves,” afraid that “unprotected,” they “will vanish ... into oblivion.” (*House*, 272) In other words, if stories remain untold, the past will die, like “blooms” field that “unprotected.” Mora tells Tey Diana Rebolledo, an interviewer, about her mother’s half-sister, aunt Lobo, and how much that figure played a vital part in the creation and re-creation of family tradition for her.⁴⁶ Lobo appears in several works written by Mora as a vital part of her vision of the strong woman character who is maternal yet also a guide. Though she is 90 years old, Lobo’s mind remains sharp; she has no trouble recalling stories for the poet to include in her books and poems. To stress the connection between preserving heritage and Lobo as a storyteller, Mora affirms, “I think the fascination in storytellers has a very personal link in my life, which is that I

have written a lot about an aunt of mine called Lobo, one of my mythic women, who was a great storyteller. I grew up listening to her stories before going to sleep, and so her music became a part of me.”⁴⁷

In “Ode to Spirits,” from *Adobe Odes* (2006), for example, Mora continues to focus on her relationship with many of the spirits of the women who were and are important in her life. In this poem, she writes about her experiences with the spirits of her “grave-defying counselors” moving both through and around her as she finishes her own job during the day.

Daily, you move in me,
briskly walk through the chambers
of my heart
and up and down my bones,
greet me in the morning
with quick smiles,
busy with your tasks,
resistant to the pleasures of leisure—
no tea sipped for hours
as a book cools in the lap.⁴⁹

Mora continues to carry her relatives around within her wherever she goes as they “walk through the chambers / of [her] heart.” (*Adobe Odes*, 17) This allows access to the family myths and cultural traditions, those that could be lost without her careful recording of them. In the poem, she recounts her own tempting of the spirits with “pan dulce” fresh bread and “with questions and pan dulce/ jokes / about the appetite of the dead.” (*Adobe Odes*, 17) She recalls their names: “Mamande,” “Tia Nacha,” “Daddy,” and “Tia Lola” as they refuse to be distracted by her existence, and continue their tasks until the end of the day.

but Mamande, you continue
making beds and Tia Nacha sweeps
the back patio with the spin
.....
Daddy in white shirt and tie adjusts
the curvature of a lens,
a working family even in the next phase.
Tia Lola irons
as her ankles swell, teaches
invisible companions, familia querida,
(*Adobe Odes*, 17-18)

Mora feels obliged to record the precious lives of this “familia querida,” (dear family) she has loved throughout her life, offering much to future generations. In the evenings, the spirits agree to Mora’s request and sit around the kitchen table enclosing her in their arms while offering prayers, and singing “canciones” (songs) in Spanish. Songs and music are

highly appreciated as emblems of cultural practices—even in death. She reconstructs the same family history to her children and grandchildren to inculcate in them the same values: “at night you finally sit \ around the kitchen table, \ irreverent storytellers.” They will “carry me back, enfold me \ in your weary arms, ” and “whisper prayers en espanol, \ canciones that echo through my cells like the tolling of familiar church bells, the movement of the holy spirit, \ campanitas cantando”. (*Adobe Odes*, 18)

Mora realizes that the legacy of the stories of her ancestors will live on long after her generation, like the singing bells of “campanitas cantando.” Saving the stories through generations is a task that allows an integrated self-identity when one is able to look not only ahead but also behind. “Maybe part of the journey is always backwards /... read our / symbols, reunite with the rare spirits we house,” (*Communion*, 81). she says

The second part of the recovery of heritage consists of “reaffirming the situatedness of culture, the relationship of values, beliefs, practices, and character to place.”⁵⁰ Murphy asserts that Mora looks at “environment as a component of cultural heritage and continuity,” evoking the importance of environment and place by cherishing the tradition of the land and the desert.⁵¹ In a similar view, for Hispanic writers, Rebolledo rightly notes, “the southwestern landscape ... meant a long tradition of families not only tied to the land but nourished by it.... Recent writers have looked to the rich and varied heritage of the past to find a regenerative and transforming sense of identity in the present and for the future.”⁵²

Hence, as the flower emanates from the earth so too Mora’s poems to which she refers as the land and/or desert. Özlem Görey observes, “Within the immediate necessity of natural conservation ... [Mora’s] poems have the sense of having actually emanated from the earth.”⁵³

Latino people and the image of the land interweave and mingle in Mora’s conceptions of cultural conservation of family traditions. In her essay “The Border: A Glare of Truth” in *Nepantla*, she outlines her affinity with the land, with its “blooms” and “thorns”: “When I lived on the border, ... I daily saw the native land of my grandparents. I grew up in the Chihuahua desert That desert—its firmness, resilience, and fierceness, its whispered chants and tempestuous dance, its wisdom and majesty—shaped us as geography always shapes its inhabitants. The desert persists in me, both inspiring and compelling me to sing about her and her people, their roots and blooms and thorns.” (*Nepantla*, 13)

Mora told Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak and Nancy Sullivan in a 2009 interview of the importance of land to her: “Every time I ... look out at this tremendous space and think how I felt totally at home there... I do think geography shapes us; our early geography shapes us in complex ways.”⁵⁵ In her world, the desert as an unyielding and complex environment is “portrayed as a place that offers solace and inner peace;”⁵⁶ it is identified too as a mother. She focuses on the desert and the southwestern

landscape she grew up in, in connection with strong Latino women of her ancestors to empower, conserve, and preserve Latino traditions. After all, “Mexican American women from the Southwest are desert women.” (*Nepantla*, 53) This identification is based on “unconventional descriptions of nature—the desert which implicitly undermine traditional images and expectations of women and empower poets.” (*Nepantla*, 30) The desert landscape provides a vibrant backdrop for much of Mora’s work. She loves “the open spaces, the wide sky, all that sun, and all those animals that scurry across the hot sand or fly high over the mountains.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, in her work, the desert is a place of safety for women, where “the worlds of nature and of women are integrated.”⁵⁸ The desert and the females who dwell there have the ability to preserve traditions that provide strength. The poems “Desert Women,” “Mi Madre,” “Bribe,” and “Mi Tierra” represent Mora’s preoccupation with this theme.

In “Desert Women” from *Borders* (1986), for example, Mora presents very strong women who are inspired by the mother desert. From the opening lines, the poet defines her intention, “Desert women know / about survival.” (*Borders*, 80) Survival is a kind of achievement, “an ongoing practice of resistance and self-education.”⁵⁹ Women are strong as the “fierce heat and cold / have burned and thickened / our skin.” (*Borders*, 80) They make their own decisions and endure all difficulties. The Latino desert women, like “cactus,” have an inner strength that women summon in difficult situations, rising up to conquer tremendous challenges and survive since “even in inhospitable places, cactus bears fruit.” (*Nepantla*, 56)

Like cactus
we’ve learned to hoard,
to sprout deep roots,
to seem asleep, yet wake
at the scent of softness
in the air
(*Borders*, 80)

The desert Latino women have other abilities as they can “hide / pain and loss by silence,” no “wail” can be heard, and all “sad songs” are “safe behind our thorns.” (*Borders*, 80) Such endurance gives fruit in the form of power and beauty: “Don’t be deceived. / when we bloom, we stun.” (*Borders*, 80)

Finally, the desert can “teach” men and women the ability to endure “glaring heat / numbing cold / [and] frightening dryness.” (*Chants*, 9) The desert “never ceases to amaze me,”⁶⁰ Mora says, as it is not hostile to human life because the world of nature and the world of women, chiefly, Latino women, are merged in the desert. The desert is both a mother and a muse.

Mora hopes to accomplish such traditional practices by imitating the Indian women’s rituals: “Like the Indians / I ask the Land to smile on me, to croon / softly, to help me catch her music with words.” (*My True Name*, 57)

However, it is not only an imitative relationship of artistic practices, weaving and writing, but also a parallel relationship with the personified "Land" by representing the earth's creativity through the women's artistry. "Guide my hands, Mother, \ to weave singing birds" (*My True Name*, 57) The desert, then, forms "a second persona ... a mother-muse figure,"⁶² helping the poet to write poems, inspired by the land, "Secretly, I scratch a hole in the desert / by my home. I bury a ballpoint pen / and lined yellowing paper." (*My True Name*, 57)

The poem "Mi Tierra" or "my land" from the collection of poems, *Borders* (1986), emphasizes an individual woman-earth strong relationship as the speaker in the poem addresses the land directly. The speaker explains her integration in and within the land. She prefers to walk as her ancestors barefoot. Going barefoot, she can feel the earth move not only 'em hguorht' but in / me, in me." (*Borders*, 79) People assume she does that because of "the high / heels," she wears. In fact, the speaker removes her shoes and "kick / off sandals too" to "press" her "soles closer" to the earth, "to your hot dry skin.")*Borders*, 79) "The speaker is part of an entity and part of a system," Murphy confirms, "with the relationship depicted as participatory and processive."⁶³

A third part of recovering heritage and affirming family traditions in Mora's poems and essays involves the healing power of the land. Throughout Mora's writing, she "employs the imagery of land and matrilineal healing,"⁶⁴ i.e., she draws her knowledge of the healing power the land may offer to Latino women, as a source of delineation of identity in the poetry of Mora means to and pride. Regaining female Latino heritage "reclaim the wild nature of women and nature."⁶⁵ She tries to overcome the restrictions of culture and gender on women of color by redefining her cultural and environmental heritage and reaffirming values of the wild inherent in nature and female. Mora absorbs her power from her women ancestors. "I feel that I walk on the bones of talented women who were never heard," she says, "I am uncomfortable with that and I want change."⁶⁶ She describes, identifies, and recovers the meaning of the Latino woman to rediscover and reaffirm the Latino tradition and "the nature of nature which have been marginalized and distorted."⁶⁷ Rebolledo asserts that the Latino woman appears

as a compelling figure in Chicano literature because she is a woman who has control over her own life and destiny as well as that of others She has a special relationship to and understanding of earth and nature— she understands the cycles of creation, development, and destruction, thus unifying the past, present, and future. She incorporates intuition and rationality; she studies power and bends with it or harnesses it; she takes an active role in her

environment.⁶⁸

The desert, then, becomes a teacher of survival, a nurturer, a “mythic” figure, a refuge to shape a woman’s identity and strength. Mora clarifies,

I took the desert for granted and it was not really until I started writing that I realized that in many ways the desert is one of my mythic women All kinds of spirits dance on it; the wind dances on it, and the light dances on it. Part of why she’s a mythic woman is the desert’s strength. She is a survivor of incredible heat and cold, and sometimes drought. Sometimes you have to be attentive to see the desert’s beauty. She is incredibly beautiful.⁶⁹

Mora links the power of woman with the role of the poet to bridge the “contradictions that people face” and enable the poet to “speak-in Spanish, in English, in poetry—with vitality and integrity.”⁷⁰ A frequent figure that is linked with the land or the desert is the figure of the curandera or the woman healer. The curandera is wise providing necessary insights for those in search for roots. She teaches them, instilling some kind of a mystic inner power. She heals inexplicable illnesses, breaks spells, confronts spirits locked in haunted houses, and works tirelessly to bring peace to her loved ones.⁷¹ Mora investigates that figure with all its implications in the poem “Curandera” from *Chants* (1984). In “Curandera,” Mora describes the close relationship between nature and the Latino woman with her healing power. The desert, plants, wind, and sunlight are all elements that the curandera uses as a way of life, of survival. The curandera lives alone in her house that is situated in the desert, yet both the house and the curandera have been integrated with the desert they live on. “The curandera / and house have aged together to the rhythm / of the desert.” (*Chants*, 32) Such integration makes the curandera possess a close relationship with the desert, similar to the relationship that one may have with a mentor or a teacher. It gives her she needs to know in art and life; “she listens to . . . knowledge about what stories, and she listens / to the desert, always the desert.” (*Chants*, 32) The curandera spends her days “grinding / dried snake,” or “crushing / wild bees” for the to be touched / gnipoh ‘emoc“ ohw ”elpoepsnwot“by her ointments, / her hands, her prayers, [and] her eyes.” (*Chants*, 32) She is capable of communicating with nature as well as humankind.

Imelda Martín-Junquera believes that because of her shamanic qualities, “the curandera has been identified” with aspects of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Both of them “heal the soul and help to mediate between God and worshippers.”⁷²

She wakes early, lights candles before
her sacred statues, brews tea of yerbabuena.

She moves down her porch steps, rubs
cool morning sand into her hands, into her
arms.

(*Chants*, 32)

With her healing gifts and visionary qualities, the curandera is integrated and united with all creatures that live in the desert.⁷³ “Before sleeping, she listens to the message \ of the owl and the coyote.” She closes “her eyes and breathes with the mice and snake \ and wind. (*Chants*, 32) Because Mora has a great love for the desert and believes that “women like herself who grow up in the desert acquire some of its resilience and strength,”⁷⁴ she opens her poem “Gentle Communion” from *Communion* (1991) with a tribute to “Mamande,” who “came with me from the desert.” (*Communion*, 11) Mamande is Mora’s maternal grandmother. Though Mamande is dead since she “can’t hear” the poet, Mora feels connected with her spirit in a gentle communion as the title of the poem suggests.

Mora clothes her grandmother with an aura of spirituality by describing her hands, which are worn “like the pages of her prayer book.” She realizes now that Mamande is dead; it is too late to ask her questions, “questions I never knew to ask” (*Communion*, 11) or how to ask. However, Mora remembers the games they played together when she was a child, “we played a quiet I Spy,” the food they ate, the “peeled grapes,” with their “luminous coolness” (*Communion*, 12), and the closeness they felt as she sat “in her lap” on a “wide-armed chair” (*Communion*, 11) that they once shared together. All these memories are so lively in Mora’s mind that she can still feel their “taste.” Through memory, Mora and her grandmother are connected with the desert, indicating the nourishment to be derived from them, as symbols of heritage—“a heritage that survives and may flourish despite changes, difficulties, ... the barriers of languages,”⁷⁵ and .time

Murphy thinks “the generational importance” of women as healers “is recounted by all the arts they have practiced and learned from a woman like the one on ‘Divisadero Street.’”⁷⁸ The desert’s or the land’s voice remains with the speaker guiding her in the way that she wants to be guided. Mora believes this connection must be maintained wherever the person is in a city or in any place away from home. This is a kind of “a strategy for survival against assimilation and disenfranchisement and a basis for reestablishing and preserving community,”⁷⁹ as Murphy maintains. Without such connection and integration to the land and nature, “the city, shining land of opportunity, signals only struggle and often destruction for [Latinos], their families, and their culture,”⁸⁰ in Tey DianaRebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero’s viewpoint.

Mora believes that discrimination of language could be a handicap, a problem. Her intimate love and relationship with words and language begin early in her life as both her parents are bilingual. “I grew up in a

bilingual home,”⁸¹ she declares. Being bilingual is a family tradition in Mora’s household as she spends much of her childhood listening to stories told by her mother, aunt, and grandmother in Spanish.⁸² As long as she can remember there are always “two languages sort of streaming in and out of [her] mind”⁸³ and she has always had a “sense of being at home in two languages.”⁸⁴ To Mora, “language nurtures ... and it also frees,”⁸⁵ “Quien habla dos lenguas vale por dos / if you speak two languages, your value is doubled.”⁸⁶ Mora’s views concur with the Latino poet Gloria Anzaldúa who believes, “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself.”⁸⁷

In Mora’s poetry, the unique blend of the two languages includes shifts from English to Spanish and vice versa. Instead of considering Spanish as a secondary language, she encourages Latino-American students to communicate with one another in both languages. Mora, herself, had that wrong experience in her school years as she spoke Spanish with her grandmother and aunt but tried to hide her bilingualism at school, hoping to assimilate and be like other American children as she was educated mainly in English and considered it her dominant language.⁸⁸ She mistakenly thought that Spanish did not “belong in school;”⁸⁹ Spanish was more of a home language or family language as it “can often be a very affectionate language.”⁹⁰ Thus, Mora’s main concern is to correct the mistaken “perception that the home language could be a handicap,”⁹¹ to dismantle the fear of having two languages accepted at home but not in school, and to dispel the anxiety of Latino people so “that we could have a multiplicity of languages.”⁹²

Mora notes that having more than one language can help people figure out the world around them and understand it. Being bilingual “allows [her] to name the world in two different ways and also gives [her] two registers in which to work when writing.”⁹³ This can be achieved, Mora believes, when teachers encourage Latino “people to sing out their names, sing out their lives without embarrassment”⁹⁴ in their home language better than oblige them to speak in one language. When Mora includes Spanish in her poems and/or her essays, she provides translations either at the bottom of the same page or by including a special glossary for them at the end of the book, allowing readers to understand how Spanish and English are both essential to the text’s meaning.⁹⁵

The poem “Immigrants” from *Borders* (1986) for instance, tackles this frustrating problem of language Latino immigrants face in the United States. The poem begins with a list of stereotypical American actions and items. Instead of encouraging the Latino sons and daughters to remember their own culture, the parents do everything in an American way. They “wrap their babies in the American flag, / feed them mashed hot dogs and apple pie, / name them Bill and Daisy.” (*Borders*, 15) They buy them

“blonde dolls that blink blue / eyes or a football and tiny cleats.” (*Borders*, 15) It is clear that the immigrant parents try to assimilate at the price of their heritage, not realizing enough that “many who have assimilated by changing their names and forgoing their roots have no way of estimating their spiritual loss,”⁹⁶ as Eileen Simpson confirms.

The idea formed in the immigrants’ perception is to be American; the child must not be different. They force their children to learn the English language, “before the baby can even walk / speak to them in thick English, / hallo, babe, hallo.” (*Borders*, 15) As the poem progresses, the parents try to hide their own origins from their sons or daughters, refusing to speak in their native tongue. Only in the privacy of their bedrooms, do the parents allow themselves to voice their fears in their native tongue and “whisper in Spanish or Polish / when the babies sleep.” (*Borders*, 15) Interestingly, the entire poem is one sentence, listing the fear of the immigrants with no clear punctuation, except for a question mark at the end to indicate this long frustration of the immigrants’ lives. The question remains if the child will ever be an American, or remain an immigrant living in the United States “Will they like / our boy, our girl, our fine American / boy, our fine American girl?” (*Borders*, 15) The English language “hints at Mora’s pursuit of her own calling to write and make a difference in the lives of other women, Mexicans and Chicanas alike.”⁹⁷ For Mora, the persistence to learn English keeps her close to her children and asserts her role as a mother for them when they need help.

Mora’s interest in Latino and Latino-American culture and heritage is a driving force in her writing and the passion she bears for this topic is obvious in her exploration of the frustrations of Latino immigrants in the United States. She believes that “Mexican and Mexican American cultures and their conversation”⁹⁸ and regaining Latino subjectivity and identity as a distinctive minority in the United States can be achieved through education, speaking the Spanish language, and practicing Latino traditions without shame or disgrace. Mora recognizes that “we live in a society that neither values nor respects what we do.” (*Nepantla*, 130) The regaining, therefore, requires struggle, resistance, and self-education.

In the poem, “Tomas Rivera” from *Borders* (1986) for example, Mora is talking about a real person, Tomas Rivera,⁹⁹ and the difficulties he faces as a minority to affirm his identity in the dominant American society. In spite of prejudice and indifference, Rivera comes to improve himself by his own effort. He comes from the wild fields of Mexico to a position of importance that carries class status. Yet, his hands remain always a reminder of his own history as he worked as a field worker, like many other Latino immigrants who worked in the fields of the United States. His hands “spoke of the journey from Crystal City / to Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota;” they were like “a pillow at night, / in bare, cold buildings.” (*Borders*, 13) ‘YetAgainst

the difficulties he endured, “family laughter” remained “his favorite blanket.” (*Borders*, 13)

By developing himself, through education, Rivera set an example by correcting the misconceived ideas about Latinos being dirty and lazy: “we don’t want you, you people have lice \ as the school door slammed \ but Tomas learned.” He has learned “his hands began to hold books \ gently, with affection.” (*Borders*, 13) After establishing himself, “he searched / for stories about his people and finally / gave their words sound, wrote the books.” (*Borders*, 13) The books he wrote are new “he didn’t have” and “we didn’t have” them before. (*Borders*, 13) Concerned with his own tradition and self-education, Rivera comes to rediscover his heritage, which has been marginalized for a long time. Rivera’s pride in his traditions and his own accomplishments enable him to face and transcend many obstacles. Like the farmer who knows best “about the harvest” and remove “bitter weeds,” so too is Rivera. “His hands knew about the harvest,\ tasted the laborer’s sweat in the sweet \ cantaloupes he sliced, knew how to use.” He knows how to use “laughter to remove stubborn roots \ of bitter weeds.” (*Borders*, 14)

Rivera not only discovers his traditions but also establishes a new culture by transforming the old one as he becomes the “famous Chicano, too needed, / his hands too full of us / to sit alone and write green stories.” (*Borders*, 13) Latino culture, therefore, comes to be empowered by the works written by Rivera. This empowered culture affords him a new ground to face prejudice and indifference by transforming him from “the boy from Crystal City, Texas” into “a man whose abrazos still warm / us yet say, Now you.” (*Borders*, 14) Learning and discovering one’s heritage should not end with Rivera but “Now you” is Mora’s call for the other Latinos to participate in sustaining and recovering their heritage and roots. In this regard, Murphy thinks that Tomás Rivera, for Latino-Americans, is “a model to emulate not only for his own achievements and his bridging of class divisions, but also for his efforts to encourage others with similar experiences to build a better life by revaluing their shared roots and place in the world rather than leaving them behind.”¹⁰⁰

Silenced by both discrimination and prejudice, Mora, probably like many Latinas in the United States, has been “educated with few if any references” to the Latino-American history and “literary and human heritage.” (*Nepantla*, 39) To help remedy this problem, Mora supports the need for education and learning to “struggle against injustice, to speak out for cultural conservation and social change.”¹⁰¹ She confirms Murphy’s assertion that “remaining connected with the people rooted in the land is what provides strength,”¹⁰² and such rootedness comes by education.

In the poem “University Avenue” (1986), Mora follows the story of the first generation Latino university students, who are the speakers of the poem, coming from a minority culture and attending college for the first time. The speakers never directly identify who they are, it is clear from

the Spanish words they use; like “abrazos,” “cuentos” and the remedies of “hierbabuena” which “soothes us into morning” (*Borders*, 19) that tell the reader that they are Latino university students. Although the university atmosphere is “unfamiliar” and new to the Latino-Americans, and although they realize that they have the support of family and friends in attending college, they will be alienated from their community as they rise in a socio-economic status. Thus, the students “walk this path ... cautiously” as “guides for those who follow / our people.” (*Borders*, 19)

With such corporal, emotional, and mental tools, the students go forth in the avenue, armed with the culture of their people and the Spanish stories, which echo “deep within” them. (*Borders*, 19) Commenting on this part of the poem, Mora tells Liz Gold in an interview (2005): “When I wrote that [poem], I was thinking a lot about first-generation college students, figuratively, on University Avenue, One of my personal interests is how literature can help us all feel less alienated in this complex world. I was trying to offer that sense of affirmation and that sense of heritage, that we are not alone.”¹⁰³

By using Spanish and English in her poems and crossing cultural borders simultaneously, Mora manages to include her readers to erase language barriers and discrimination to reach a point of communication. “The issue is not so much ethnicity or gender,” she states, “It is about the way we reach a point of communion as human beings sharing this difficult journey called life.”¹⁰⁴ She, to some extent, achieves this point of communion not only in terms of language, but also in terms of heritage and roots.

What is interesting about Mora is her ability to share her Latino world with her readers with all its frustrations and contradictions, enabling them to cross cultural boundaries. She is a language activist with a mission. “One of the reasons that I write,” she says, “is because I want Mexican culture and Mexican-American culture to be a part of our schools and libraries”¹⁰⁵ to conserve heritage, appreciate cultures, and support multicultural education. Not only students, but also Latino people will see themselves, their heritage, traditions, and culture. “Cultures can be bridges,” Mora says, “They’re not walls. When we learn about other cultures, we realize how much alike people are.”¹⁰⁶

Mora cherishes her Latino cultural heritage to facilitate understanding among different people “who can hear / the words we speak / you and I, like but unlike,” and “translate us to us / side by side?” (*Borders*, 10) She advocates change as she tells Sullivan in an interview: “One of the most important quotes in my life, for the last two or three years, has been from Gandhi, “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” I’m very interested in exploring that. But given what I have experienced, given what I have inherited, given the privilege I’ve had, given the scars I may carry, what is it that I can best do? What is the change that I

wish to explore?”¹⁰⁷

To conclude, Murphy thinks that Mora’s poetry is a force toward a “cultural conservation” as “she encourages it through the cultivation of the rich roots of her Chicana heritage.” He continues: “She also reminds us that other voices are speaking out for the necessary preservation of cultural diversity. To all of these heretofore marginalized and suppressed voices we must also attend.”¹⁰⁸ She calls women of all backgrounds and countries to act as preservers of Latino culture. She communicates this message, using her favorite flower imagery a “petaled home,” to preserve and provide historical and cultural power to the whole world.

In towns and cities and villages, mano a mano, hand in
hand,
in mountains and valleys and plains, a ring of women
circling
the world, the ring strong in our joining,
around our petaled home, this earth, let us hold hands.¹⁰⁹

الملخص

قانون حفظ وتحويل ثقافة لاتيني

امل ناصر فراج

تتناول هذه الدراسة أهمية الحفاظ على ثقافة لاتينية وتحولها ، مع وجود مثال في قصائد مختارة من الشعراء الأمريكيين اللاتينيين. في الكتابة عن أهمية الحفاظ على ثقافة لاتينية وتحولها ، يملأ الشعراء اللاتينيون الفراغ الروحي والثقافي. بصفتهم فنانيين محتملين ، يعيدون إنشاء أوطانهم البعيدة في قصائدهم ، وبالتالي يغرسون مشاعر الجذور والفخر والشعور بالانتماء إلى الخلفيات التاريخية والثقافية. هذه المفاهيم مهمة للأشخاص الذين يعيشون في أراضٍ أجنبية ، مثل الأمريكيين اللاتينيين ، للحفاظ على تقاليدهم حية في الولايات المتحدة ، حيث غالبًا ما يساء فهمها.

هذه الورقة مكتوبة في نهج النقد الجديد ، "تاريخية جديدة". هذا هو فهم العلاقة بين النص والظروف السياسية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية التي نشأ فيها.

NOTES

1. Pat Mora, *Nepantla: Essays from the Land in the Middle* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 56. Subsequent quotations taken from the essays of this edition are cited by the shortened form of the collection (*Nepantla*) and the page number of the lines in parentheses after quotations.

2. Jamie Martinez Wood, “Pat Mora,” in *Latino Writers and Journalists: A to Z of Latino Americans* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2007), 151.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 was an uprising of common folk who overthrew the dictator Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915) who became President of Mexico, between 1876 and 1911. For further information see: Stuart Easterling, *The Mexican Revolution: A Short History 1910-1920* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012).

6. Kathlyn A. Barros, “Pat Mora,” in *Contemporary American Women Poets: an A-to-Z Guide*, ed., Catherine Cucinella (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 238.

7. In 1983, Mora hosted a radio program called Voices: The Mexican-American in Perspective, which is concerned about the Mexican American viewpoint on life and society. See Barros, 238.
8. Wood, 151.
9. Ibid., 149.
10. Ibid.
11. Pat Mora, "Pat Mora: Poet, Writer, and Educator," in *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*, Karin Rosa Ika (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2001), 135.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Hector Avalos Torres, *Conversations with Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Writers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2007), 248.
15. Pat Mora, "Pat Mora: Poet, Writer, and Educator," in *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*, 130.
16. Ibid.
17. Pat Mora, *Hispanic Heritage, Pat Mora Interview Transcript*, interview by Scholastic Students, <http://www.scholastic.com/activities/Hispanic/morascript.html>, (accessed August 28, 2015).
18. Pat Mora, "Why I Am a Writer," *Horn Book Magazine*, July-August, 1990, 436.
19. Pat Mora, "To Gabriela, a Young Writer," in *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States*, eds., Linda Wagner-Martin and Cathy N. Davidson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 548.
20. Pat Mora, "Pat Mora: Poet, Writer, and Educator," in *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*, 130.
21. Pat Mora, quoted in *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*, eds., Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio (New York: Routledge, 2013), 379.
22. Barros, 240.
23. Ibid.
24. B. Marie Christian, "Many Ways to Remember: Layered Time in Mora's *House of Houses*," *MELUS*, Vol. 30, no.1 (Spring 2005), 138.
25. Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* (New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2009), 176.
26. Crystal M. Kurzen, "Pat Mora's Literary *Nepantla*: Blueprints for a Word-House Refuge," *Auto/Biography Studies*, Vol. 26, no. 2 (Winter 2011), 359.
27. Ibid.
28. Pat Mora, "My Word-house," in *Communion* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1991), 86. Subsequent quotations taken from the poems of this collection are cited by the title of the collection (*Communion*) and the page number of the poem in parentheses after quotations.
29. Kurzen, 359.
30. Imelda Martín-Junquera, "*House of Houses*," in *Encyclopedia of Hispanic-American literature*, ed., Luz Elena Ramirez (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2008), 159.
31. Pat Mora, *House of Houses* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 247. Subsequent quotations taken from this book of essay are cited by the shortened title (*House*) and the page number of the lines in parentheses after quotations.
32. Martín-Junquera, 159.
33. Ibid.
34. Linda C. Fox, "From *Chants* to *Borders* to *Communion*: Pat Mora's Poetic Journey to *Nepantla*," *Bilingual Review/Revista Bilingue* 21, no. 3 (1996): 220.
35. Ibid., 219.
36. Kurzen, 346.

37. Fox, 220.
38. Patrick D. Murphy, "Conserving Natural and Cultural Diversity: The Prose and Poetry of Pat Mora," *MELUS*, Vol. 21 (1996): 60-61.
39. Ikas, 128.
40. Murphy, 60.
41. Ibid.
42. Pat Mora, "The Seeds of Stories," *The Dragon Lode* Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring 2000) *IRA Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group*: 55.
43. Kurzen, 355.
44. Ibid.
45. Pat Mora, "Family Ties," in *My Own True Name: New and Selected Poems for Young Adults* (Houston, Tex.: Piñata Books, 2000), 22. Subsequent quotations taken from the poems of this collection are cited by the shortened title of the collection (*My True Name*) and the page number of the lines in parentheses after quotations.
46. Pat Mora, "Pat Mora: Interview by Tey Diana Rebolledo," *This Is about Vision: Interviews with Southwestern Writers*, ed. William Balarssi, John F. Crawford, and Anne O. Eysturoy (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 130.
47. "Pat Mora," in *Spilling the Beans in Chicanolandia: Conversations with Writers and Artists*, Frederick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 157.
48. Pat Mora, "Bailando," in *Chants* (Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1984), 59. Subsequent quotations taken from the poems of this collection are cited by the title of the collection (*Chants*) and the page number of the lines in parentheses after quotations.
49. Pat Mora, "Ode to Spirits," in *Adobe Odes* (USA: University of Arizona, 2006), 17. Subsequent quotations taken from this collection of poems are cited by the title of the collection (*Adobe Odes*) and the page number of the lines in parentheses after quotations.
50. Murphy, 61.
51. Ibid., 68.
52. Tey Diana Rebolledo, "Tradition and Mythology. Signatures of landscape in Chicana Literature," in *The Desert is no Lady. Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art*, ed. Vera Norwood and Janice Monk (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 96-97.
53. Özlem Görey, "The Middle Woman from *Nepantla*: Sameness and Difference in the Poetry of Pat Mora," *Interactions: Ege Journal of British and American Studies* (March 2013), 47.
54. Pat Mora, "Marriage II," in *Borders* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1986), 67. Subsequent quotations taken from the poems of this collection are cited by the title of the collection (*Borders*) and the page number of the lines of the poem in parentheses after quotations.
55. Pat Mora, "Interview with Pat Mora," interview by Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak and Nancy Sullivan, in *Conversations with Mexican American Writers: Languages and Literatures in the Borderlands* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2009), 41.
56. Ikas, 128.
57. Pat Mora, quoted in *Indivisible: Poems for Social Justice*, eds. Gail Bush & Randy Meyer (Chicago: Norwood House Press, 2011), 86.
58. Kristin Passman, "Demeter, Kore, and the Birth of the Self: The Quest for Identity in the Poetry of Alma Villanueva, Pat Mora, and Cherrie Morage," *Monographic Review* 6 (1990): 36.
59. Murphy, 61.
60. Pat Mora, "Listening to the Desert: A Conversation with Pat Mora," interview by Darwin L. Henderson, *Ohio Journal of the English Language Arts* 41, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 12.

61. Laura Gutierrez Spencer, "The Desert Blooms: Flowered Songs by Pat Mora," *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingue*, 20.1 (1995): 29.
62. Sylvia Ann Grider and Lou Halsell Rodenberger, *Texas Women Writers: A Tradition of Their Own* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 223.
63. Murphy, 65.
64. Aldama, 154.
65. Eunseong Kim, "Pat Mora's Ecofeminist Perspective: Nature as a Ground of Resistance," *Anglo-American culture*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (2003): 360.
66. Pat Mora, "Interview with Pat Mora," interview by Norma Alarcon, in *Third Woman: Texas and More*, Vol. 3, no.1-2 (Bloomington 1986): 124.
67. Ibid.
68. Tey Diana Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow: A Cultural Analysis of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 87.
69. Pat Mora, "Listening to the Desert: A Conversation With Pat Mora," 12.
70. Robin Riley Fast, "Nature and Creative Power: Pat Mora and Patricia Hampl," *San Jose Studies*, Vol. 15, no. 2 (1989): 33.
71. Ibid.
72. Imelda Martín-Junquera, "Curandera," in *Encyclopedia of Hispanic-American literature*, 87.
73. Fox, ٢٢٠.
74. Charles M. Tatum, *Chicano and Chicana Literature: Otra Voz Del Pueblo* (USA: The University of Arizona Press, 2006), 184.
٧5. Murphy, 66.
٧6. "Tarahumara People--National Geographic Magazine," <http://www.Ngm.nationalgeographic.com>, (accessed August 30, 2015).
77. Murphy, 66.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., 67.
80. Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero, "Spaces," in *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*, eds. Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero: Tucson) University of Arizona Press, 1993), 160.
81. Pat Mora, "Pat Mora: Poet, Writer, and Educator," in *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*, 128.
82. Wood, 150.
83. Torres, 248.
84. Ibid., 244.
85. Pat Mora, "Interview with Pat Mora," interview by Liz Gold, *Conversations with Texas Writers*, eds., Frances Leonard and Ramona Cearley (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 154.
86. Pat Mora, "A Poetry Workshop in Print: Pat Mora," interview by Lee Bennett Hopkins, *Teaching Pre-K-8* (January 2006): 61.
87. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 59.
88. Pat Mora, "Interview with Pat Mora," interview by Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak and Nancy Sullivan, in *Conversations with Mexican American Writers: Languages and Literatures in the Borderlands*, 39.
89. Torres, 252.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid, 248.
93. Ibid.
٩4. Barros, 238.
95. Ibid.

- ⁹⁶. Eileen Simpson, *Orphans: Real and Imaginary* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 225.
- ⁹⁷. Torres, 245.
- ⁹⁸. Pat Mora, "Pat Mora: Poet, Writer, and Educator," in *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*, 128.
- ⁹⁹. Tomás Rivera (1935-1984) is a Latino author, poet, and educator. He was born in Texas to migrant farm workers and worked in the fields as a young boy. However, he achieved social mobility through education—earning a degree at Texas State University, and later a Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) at the University of Oklahoma. He believed strongly in the virtues of education for Latino-Americans. For further information see Jane Medina, *Tomás Rivera* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Inc., 2003).
- ¹⁰⁰. Murphy, 64.
- ¹⁰¹. Frances Ann Day, *Latina and Latino Voices in Literature: Lives and Works, Updated and Expanded* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 2003), 232.
- ¹⁰². Murphy, 65.
- ¹⁰³. Pat Mora, "Interview with Pat Mora," interview by Liz Gold, *Conversations with Texas Writers*, 154.
- ¹⁰⁴. Pat Mora, "Pat Mora: Poet, Writer, and Educator," in *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*, 127.
- ¹⁰⁵. Pat Mora, quoted in *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, vol. 112*, ed., Scot Peacock (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2003), 235.
- ¹⁰⁶. Pat Mora, "Interview with Pat Mora," interview by Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak and Nancy Sullivan, in *Conversations with Mexican American Writers: Languages and Literatures in the Borderlands*, 42.
- ¹⁰⁷. Ibid. It is interesting to find both poets, Mora and Nye, refer to Gandhi to endorse their peaceful strategies for change
- ¹⁰⁸. Murphy, 64.
- ¹⁰⁹. Pat Mora, "Let Us Hold Hands," in *Agua Santa: Holy Water* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 117.

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