

55-Chicana experience on Borderlands in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

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APA: Bayal, A. (2020). Chicana experience on Borderlands in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö8), 705-719. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.822504.

Abstract

This paper aims to suggest how Chicanas in *The House on Mango Street* and in *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* construct their own identity on the physical and psychological borderland between Mexico and The States segregating and separating individuals because of language, culture, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class. How they achieve their self-fulfillment at the end of their odyssey is also presented in this paper. *The House on Mango Street* and *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* are the epitomes of border writing dwelling on the tumult and challenges of physical and psychological borderland between the States and Mexico and explaining the social and economic conditions of the subjects. Borderland dwellers experience illegal migration, economic disparity, social and financial unrest, sense of displacement and frustration. They have hybrid identities and use hybrid language of English and Spanish. This paper discusses male oppression and domestication, American ideological dominance over Mexico and a quest for a dignified life in both novels. Therefore, this study scrutinizes the lives and the motives of the characters in *The House on Mango Street* from the perspective of its female protagonist, Esperanza who is on the threshold of womanhood and the identity confusion of protagonist writer, Gloria Anzaldua herself in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

Keywords: Border writing, American ideological dominance, male oppression, domestication, identity construction, Chicana Feminism

Sandra Cisneros'un Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev ve Gloria Anzaldua'nın Sınır Bölgeleri/ Hudut: Yeni Melez Kadın romanlarında Meksikalı Kadınların Sınır Deneyimi

Öz

Bu makale, Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev ve Sınır Bölgeleri/ Hudut: Yeni Melez Kadın'da, Meksika ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri arasında, bireyleri dil, kültür, cinsiyet, cinsel yönelim, etnik köken ve sınıfsal meseleler yüzünde ayırıştan fiziksel ve psikolojik sınır bölgelerinde ikamet eden Meksikalı Amerikalı kadınların kendi kimliklerini nasıl inşa ettiklerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Entelektüel ve ruhani yolculuklarının sonunda kendilerini nasıl gerçekleştirdikleri de makalede ayrıca sunulmuştur. Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev ve Sınır Bölgeleri/ Hudut: Yeni Melez Kadın, Meksika ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri arasındaki fiziksel ve psikolojik sınır bölgesindeki kargaşa ve mücadeleye odaklanan ve bireylerin sosyal ve ekonomik durumlarını ortaya koyan sınır yazınının en iyi iki örneğidir. Sınır bölgesinin sakinleri yasadışı göçü, ekonomik eşitsizliği, sosyal ve

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ekonomik çalkantıyı, aidiyetsizlik hissini ve hayal kırıklığını tecrübe eder. Melez bir kimlikleri vardır ve İngilizce ve İspanyolca karşımı melez bir dil kullanırlar. Bu makale erkek egemen zulmü ve eve hapsedilmeyi, Amerika'nın Meksika karşısındaki ideolojik hâkimiyetini ve iki romandaki onurlu bir yaşam arayışını ele alır. Dolasıyla, bu çalışma Mango Sokağındaki Ev'in karakterlerinin yaşamlarını ve güdülerini, kadınlığa geçiş arifesinde olan başkahraman Esperenza'nın bakış açısından ve Sınır Bölgeleri/ Hudut: Yeni Melez Kadın'ındaki başkahraman yazar Gloria Anzaldua'nın kendi kimlik karmaşasını irdeler.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sınır yazını, Amerikan ideolojik hâkimiyeti, erkek egemen zulüm, kadını eve hapsedme, kimlik inşası, Hudut Feminizmi

A Glimpse into Feminist Movement: from The Suffragists to Chicana Feminism

"Women are messed over not messed up" (1970, p.76) puts Carol Hanisch, an eminent figure of radical feminist movement of 1970's, in her popular and widely printed article entitled "Personal is political" to sum up the power relations in sex hierarchy, and this motto along with the title itself, were on the placards of the radical feminist protestors and it is still widely used by the feminist movement's supporters. Before an organized feminist movement flourished collectively in England as "the suffrage movement", there had been several female writers who had already referred to patriarchal oppression and domestication of women in their novels including Jane Austen, Bronte Sisters, George Eliot, Mary Austell, and Kate Chopin in both Europe and in The United States of America. Even though today the specific prejudices about feminism have been refuted through the years on the both sides of the Atlantic, women are still "messed over" and cannot be at ease, because of gender identity and also of the politics of social class, ethnicity, language and sexual orientation. Nancy F. Cott, in her book titled *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* published in 1987 claims:

People in the nineteenth century did not say feminism. They spoke of the advancement of woman, or the cause of woman, woman's rights and woman suffrage. Most inclusively, they spoke of the women movement, to denote the many ways women moved out their homes to initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to instigate struggles for civil rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot. Nineteenth-century women's consistent usage of the singular woman symbolized, in a word, the unity of the female sex. It proposed that all women have one cause, one movement (p.3)

Prior to the organized feminist movement, women suffragists were the advocators of the equality in the judicial and electoral rights of the opposite sexes. They were mainly interested in politics such as women's right to vote and to become a member of the parliament for representing, education of women, specifically in technical and medical fields which used to be received inappropriate for women, and employment. Women suffrage movement can be considered as the first organized attempt to take women out of their "domestic sphere" where they have been kept by means of physical and psychological force for centuries and have been held responsible for a wide range of domestic duties ranging from elderly and child care to unpaid household work.

Suffragists' attitudes towards women issue were a revolutionary one when we take the conditions of 20th century world into consideration. However, the first wave feminist movement was an exclusive one as it merely belonged to the white, upper/upper middle class, protestant women and consequently it had an elitist attitude towards other silenced women in different regions and cultures. In her essay entitled "More Room of Her Own" Jacqueline Doyle asserts that feminist literary canon is mostly composed of Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon middle-upper/ middle class women who do not

consider women with marginalized identities worthy enough to be included in it. She is critical of the first wave as the questions of race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation in women's literature were neglected. She refers to Alice Walker, an African American bisexual feminist writer questioning to be a female writer in the States with all her "marginalized" identities within one body, and holds the belief that experience of the women of color in patriarchy is not taken as serious as white women's is. Walker cries out "Why only these? Because they are white and middle class and because to Spacks, female imagination is only that- a limitation that even white women must find restrictive" (1994, p.5). Doyle also refers to another feminist figure, Adrienne Rich suggesting that suffragists does not put the women of working class, and female sex workers in the frame of solidarity and sisterhood. These women "are washing other people's dishes", taking care of other's children and "went on the streets last night in order to feed their own children" (p.9). Wherefore, the first wave feminist movement was an exclusive one since it had "color blindness" and did not dwell on the problems of working class women with different racial and sexual identities.

On the other hand, in the wake of 1970's, there was a paradigm shift in feminist movement and more "radical thoughts" were being uttered fearlessly. Radical feminism saw patriarchy as a whole system exploiting both men and women of workers, homosexuals, ethnic minorities and radical feminists expressed their opposition against liberal feminism, received woman's underprivileged position as the result of women's deprivation of equal opportunities solely. Their claim was that in a male dominant society women are incarcerated in a system in which they are subjected to the systematic oppression and exploitation of men. They have been raped under the permission of state with the marriage licenses, been beaten, harassed and their labor has been exploited as it is unpaid. In her book *Gender and History* Linda Nicholson asserts institution of marriage and motherhood are constituted by the patriarchy in order to sustain women's underprivileged and men's privileged positions (1986, p.10). Consequently, we have two images of womanhood, and the image of sacrificial wives and mothers is in opposition to unconventional single women stigmatized and pushed out of the center to the margins by patriarchy. Through the twenty-first century, radical movement by the dint of Marxist discourse has started to be associated with lesbian feminism, black feminism, postcolonial and border feminism and *l'écriture* feminine, struggling against the patriarchal language in literature empowering man to represent women as weak, docile and submissive. As Helene Cixous indicates in *The Laugh of Medusa* that:

Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement. (1976, p.875)

Cixous especially focuses on women's creative production as a means to set them free from cultural and intellectual restraints. Power of imagination has been a useful tool for women especially on borderlands and periphery locations to do away with the restrictions of man-made reality. Wherefore, third wave feminist movement embraces all marginalized voices by putting patriarchy's institutions taken for granted by the society in question.

Woman's rights movement in so called "third world" is also the result of the political upheaval of 1970's. Chicana feminism occupies a peculiar position among the feminist movements in Latin territory with its unprecedented way of resistance against both American dominance and exclusivism and sexism of Chicano movement. As Cherrie Moraga in her essay "Art in America con Acento" puts:

I call myself a Chicana writer. Not a Mexican-American writer, not a Hispanic writer, not a half-breed writer. Chicana is not the mere naming of one's racial/cultural identity, but it is a politic, a politic that refuses integration into the U.S. mainstream, a politic that recognizes that our pueblo originates from, and remains with, those who work the land with their hands, as stated in "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán." (1992, p. 157).

Chicano movement's identification with the land's indigenous heritage and its practices and also its rejection of cultural and political boundaries imposed upon the States triggered Chicana feminism too. Chicana feminism have found its roots in its refusal to be dominated, assimilated and exploited by Americanism and also Chicano machoism allowing men to assert their presence over women's decisions.

Furthermore, the art produced and practiced by Chicano movement also rejects integration into the mainstream American art. In her essay Norma Khlan asserts Chicano literature emerging out of the post-civil rights movement in the late 1960s and 1970s created an alternative space where dwellers can construct "a common culture, identity and an imagination". Especially Tomas Rivera's writings represent Chicano/as 'desire to have a sense of community, memory and language and they also emancipate peoples' imagination. (2003, p.114-115) Khlan sees "autobiographical fictions" of Chicana writers as a "counterhegemonic activity." "Sandra Cisneros in *House on Mango Street* (1984), Norma Elia Cantu in *Canicula* (1995), Mary Helen Ponce in *Hoyt Street* (1933) and Pat Mora in *House of Houses* (1997)", all discuss identity construction, self-recovery, personal awareness and individual growth and tell the stories of community life and learning from community experience. Wherefore, the autobiographies of Chicana writers resist American imperialism, machoism of Chicano community and also white supremacy (116).

Gloria Anzaldua also in "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers" refers to her "sisters" in an attempt to raise their consciousness against the oppression of male dominance in both American and Chicano culture and problematize male dominant Chicano society and racism and classism of first and second waves of feminist movement.

My dear hermanas, the dangers we face as women writers of color are not the same as those of white women though we have many in common. We don't have as much to lose –we never had any privileges. I wanted to call the dangers "obstacles" but that would be a kind of lying. We can't transcend the dangers, can't rise above them. We must go through them and hope we won't have to repeat the performance. (1980, p.165).

Wherefore, Chicana feminism especially stresses oppression and male dominance of Chicano and American culture and exploitation of Chicana exposed to. It is born out of a necessity stemming from the exclusion of women's issues from the original Chicano Movement against American dominance. Chicana feminism fights for a voice against the oppressive traditions of discrimination and mistreatment of Chicanas in the domestic and public sphere. Chicana feminists struggled against the elitist approach of white feminism and also against racism and patriarchal domination of Chicano society. They especially wrote about social and economic problems in their society such as; unemployment, insufficient health and education services, legal rights, gender politics and female representation in Chicano literature. (Cordova, 1998, pp.380-81)

Chicana feminists also celebrate diversity and include the marginalized, the deprived, the inferior, and the queer into their emancipation movement. As Norma Alarcon puts in her essay "Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of the Native Woman" Chicana feminist discourse established alliances with the women

of other nations, cultures and languages especially in lower and lower middle classes. (1990, pp.249-52)

Chicana feminist writers Gloria Anzaldua and Sandra Cisneros also embrace diverse identities in their novels, refer to the intersections of class, race and ethnicity and deal with the issues of biculturalism, bilingualism, and Chicanas' border experience. They address the issues stemming from racial, sexual and class identity.

Border writing

To Duchak the phenomenon of border (la frontera) and border-crossing also gained attention with the rise of 1970's radical movements shaking the core of traditional Western culture and identity and the decentered and dislocated along with the hybrid identities on the borderland between the States and Mexico were brought to the center from the margins. The Border refers to the international boundary between The States and Mexico. South of Border is Mexico and its dwellers and their customs; and north of the border is the States and its dwellers and their customs. (1999, p.39)

In A World of Ideas (1989) Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes asserts in his interview that: "It's the only border between the industrialized world and the emerging, developing, no industrialized world. We're conscious in Mexico, that Latin America begins with the border- not only Mexico, but the whole of Latin America" (p.506) As his claim indicates, Border crossing becomes a common concept for any Western border where underprivileged groups; masses of immigrants, ethnic minorities, queer or disabled groups face off dominant American culture and its privileged citizens. The border phenomenon deals with the issues of displacement, cultural hybridity and dwellers' experience. Border crossing from Mexico to The States makes new experiences possible and also old divisions of nationality, language and race ambiguous. Hence, Borderland writing is the result of the experience of exile, illegal or legal immigration and economic disparity. It deals with of the tired and deranged state of mind of the hybrid identities and suggests alternative ways of existence for the "queers" of the border territories.

Mexican-American social and political relations

American dominance on Mexican land started with The Treaty Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848) and Chicano/as have been subjected to the systematic oppression and economic exploitation and the borderland witnessed many violent encounters since then. As Anzaldua puts Anglo-Saxons invaded the territories of Texas at the very beginning of the 19th century by depriving inhabitants, tejanos (native Texans of Mexican descent) of their lands. In 1846, U.S waged war to Mexico and the land was occupied by U.S troops. (2007, p. 29) Anzaldua cries out American invasion by the following: "my mother lost her cattle, they stole her land". (p. 30) Some of the Mexicans escaped from American terror. The ones stayed and resisted were a threat for America since it was expanding its territories under the name of a religiously legitimized political movement called "Westward Movement". Consequently, people resisted until the force of American authorities pushed them to further South (pp. 28-30). Mexican American war, lasted from 1846 to 1848 ended with The Treaty Guadalupe-Hidalgo and it created almost 2,000-mile-long border between Mexico and Unites States; from Rio Grande and Gilo River to the Pacific Ocean. In this treaty, Mexico gave the States about 1 million square miles of land, mostly in the present-day Southwest; Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Utah. In exchange, the US gave Mexico \$15 million dollars for these lands and helped

Mexican economy. At the time, all the 80,000 people mostly speaking Spanish were living in this territory and had the choice of becoming American citizens or remaining Mexicans. (Duchak, 1999, pp.310-12)

Howard Zinn also refers to the social and economic problems Chicano/a society face off on the borderland. As he points out in *A People's History of the United States*:

Immigrants, especially the large numbers of coming over the southern border from Mexico, were blamed for taking jobs from citizens of the United States, for receiving government benefits, for causing higher taxes on American citizens. Illegal immigrants, fleeing poverty in Mexico began to face harsher treatment in the early nineties. Millions of whom (Mexicans) migrate legally or illegally across the 2,000-mile border to The United States in search of jobs each year. (2005, p.629)

As Anzaldúa puts in *Borderlands*, after the invasion on Mexican land, Chicanas have been molested, treated brutally and forced into prostitution by the *coyote* (smuggler) taking them to America. Since they couldn't speak the language properly, they were not likely to find a satisfying job consequently; they had to confront with labor exploitation on American land. (2007, p.34). Therefore, Chicanas have had to challenge with social, economic and political oppression and also labor and sexual exploitation.

On the other hand, Borderlands where two different languages and cultures melted into the same pot exist as a disapproval of the cultural and regional purity. As Anzaldúa states in *Borderlands/La Frontera*:

The U.S. border es una herida abierta (open wound) where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over and pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal” (2007, p.25).

The dwellers of the borderlands are the queers, the marginalized and the disadvantaged with their dual identity and language and they have to find new ways to exist and resist the oppression and exploitation against the borderland politics of the States. Homi Bhabha also mentions different aspects of living on the borderland in spite of the sense of displacement in *The Location of Culture* and he says dual identity gives the self an opportunity to meditate upon the new strategies on how to exist and also creates a sense of collaboration among the hybrid inhabitants of the borderlands. (1994, pp.1-2)

Identity construction and self-fulfillment in the oppressive American society

In *The House on Mango Street* Esperanza, a very young Chicana dweller of Mexican-American borderland, feels safe when she puts her nose into her mother's hair “smells like the warm bread before you bake it” (Cisneros, 1991, p.4). She develops the sense of displacement as what she remembers most is “moving a lot” since her childhood and every time they move, household grows bigger. She has to share her bedroom with her sisters and the landlord keeps complaining so Esperanza and her siblings need to be extra careful not to make noise. On the other hand, the house image shown in the American channels is quite different than Esperanza's “sad red house”. In these houses upper class dwellers have “real stairs” and have complacent lives. (p.110) Upper class families

on television don't know much about the sufferings of ghetto lives of immigrants. She is growing up being exposed to the images of rich and satisfied upper class American families living in big houses and she knows that her family is only capable of finding "temporary houses" for her. Hence, she keeps dreaming a house of her own which she is not ashamed of pointing to others. (pp.3-6)

In her essay titled "House Symbolism in the House on Mango Street" Annie O. Eysturoy suggests:

The house is just the opposite of what she had been told would be their house one day, a fact that stands in direct opposition to the words of her parents. This contrast between expectation and reality awakens her awareness of herself as a social being and provokes her own interpretations of the significance the house holds in her life. Esperanza sees the house on Mango Street as a symbol of poverty that she associates with the humiliation she has felt in the past, living in similar places. (2010, p.63)

Where do you live? She said.

There, I said, pointing up to the third floor.

You live *there*?

There. I had to look to where she pointed—the third, the paint peeling, wooden bars Papa had nailed on the windows so we wouldn't fall out.

You live *there*? The way she said it made me feel like nothing. *There*. I lived *there*. I nodded. (pp.8–9)

House stands for many things in *the House on Mango Street*. It represents freedom and individuality and at the same time confinement and failure as it traps and fences Chicanas and many of them embarrassed about their living conditions in the Mango street neighborhood. Esperanza is embarrassed about her living conditions too and alienates herself from the Chicano neighborhood. She feels like an outsider and wants to construct her own identity in terms of her opposition to the dwellers of Chicano community. (Eysturoy,2010, p.68) She even buys the Statue of Liberty for herself from Carlos's store (p.20) reinforcing her aspirations for the future as "the mother of exiles" stands for new beginnings specifically for the immigrants coming from Eastern, Middle Europe and South America. However, Lady Liberty is a token for American way of freedom yet Esperanza needs her own way of freedom.

Furthermore, Jacqueline Doyle also draws an analogy between Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" and Cisneros' protagonist's desire for having a home and she states:

In Cisneros' reconstruction of Woolf's "room of one's own," Esperanza's "house of my own" simultaneously represents an escape from the barrio, a rejection of the domestic drudgery of "home" ("Nobody's garbage to pick after" (108)), as solitary space for her creativity, and a communal expression of women's lives. (2010, p.22)

Through her adolescent journey, Esperanza keeps yearning for her self-exploration and despite social and political reality of the Chicano community, she never gives up on her dream of reaching a new homeland where she won't need more than pen and paper because in Spanish Esperanza means "hope" and "waiting" but it does not mean "sadness" and she does not "want to inherit her grandmother's place by the window" as she inherits her name. Esperanza wants to change her name not to experience the same destiny with her grandmother who was put into domestic sphere by her husband, suppressed and silenced by force. She assures herself "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name like the real me, the one nobody sees" (pp.10-11)

In Esperanza's process of identity construction, Alicia is the only woman whose footsteps Esperanza wants to follow in, so as to escape from this place in which there is "too much sadness and not enough sky." (p.33) Alicia is the only one who "studies at the University for the first time" in order not to be chained down in the domestic sphere and not to assume the role of wife and the mother after the death of her own mother and she functions as a perfect role model for Esperanza. (pp.31-33)

Esperanza's mother is also a very talented woman speaking both English and Spanish, sings operas and paints but she cannot achieve her dreams and says "I could have been somebody" but she had to leave school since she did not have nice clothes as her fellow students had and she was ashamed of wearing them in public. (pp.90-91). It is obvious that the American Dream is no longer valid for everyone, especially immigrants in disadvantaged positions are deprived of it. She is full of regret and wants Esperanza to hold on her education tightly so that Esperanza can achieve her dreams as an independent woman empowered by education.

In her essay titled "Adolescent Journeys: Finding Female Authority in *The Rain Catchers* and *The House on Mango Street*", Christina Rose Dubb draws a comparison between adolescent girls and boys in ghetto neighborhoods and asserts that patriarchy puts pressure on adolescent girls when they come to the threshold of womanhood and they are expected to behave in accordance with prescribed gender roles of womanhood and forced to leave the innocence of girlhood. (2007, pp. 219-20). Second chapter "Boys and Girls" reinforces Dubb's claim. Esperanza's brothers don't talk to her and her female friends outside the house and sisters, brothers, boys and girls seem to belong to symbolically segregated places. Brothers obey their attributed gender roles outside of the house and do not trespass the borders between male and female spheres (pp.8-9).

Dubb also suggests that literature is a way for adolescent girls to understand the world around them and to find their proper places in society. Both Esperanza's mother and Aunt Lupe encourage Esperanza and warn her not to stop writing. Through writing she will be able to expose the inequalities and injustices of the oppressive male dominant society, existing sex hierarchy, corruption and hypocrisy of the male dominance. Therefore, she will be able to challenge against the norms which determines the social propriety and as a writer she can come up with new roles for her fellows. She needs to interrogate her environment and put her experiences into writing. Therefore, she will be empowered by literature. (2007, p.220).

Esperanza visits Elenita, a fortuneteller who is able to see people's fortune on the water, tarot cards and hand palms as she wants to know if she will be able to achieve her dream of having her own house one day. Esperanza is afraid that her "past, present and future" will be centered around "the kitchen table" just as Elenita's life is. (pp.103-05). Elenita says "I see a home in the heart" and later Esperanza realizes that she will have a house which she fills with her creations, namely her stories. Her dream of having a house gains a more collective meaning since the house in her heart does not only belong to one individual, but belong to the disadvantaged fellow sisters in Chicano neighborhood. Therefore, her house belongs to the women who are oppressed, commodified and imprisoned in the domestic sphere. (pp. 63-64)

Therefore, Esperanza is warned to come back for the others who can't find the opportunity to leave their poverty and miserable lives behind. She can make connection with the suffering sisters of Chicano neighborhood through the power of literature. "When you leave you must remember to come

back for the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are. " (pp.103-05)

In the following part, female characters experiencing the terror of male dominance but unable to share a sense of solidarity with one another, will be analyzed and we will see how their situation leads Esperanza observing abuse, intolerance, oppression, and poverty around her, to turn her individual dream into a collective one. In nearly every chapter, patriarchy's control over women's consent and bodies can be seen. They are financially depended on either their fathers or their husbands. In this community we have two women images of wives and single stigmatized women who are not appreciated from the perspective of patriarchal society. They seem to accept their assigned roles and have no power to change it.

To begin with, Marin is a beautiful Chicana girl and her boyfriend with whom she wishes to marry, is in Puerto Rico. She believes that marriage is the only way to escape from her poverty. She babysits and sells Avon Products in order to take care of her cousins. In this neighborhood, women who are bereft of economic freedom and education struggle against socio-economic disparities, and they believe marriage is the only way to escape from their misery. (pp.26-27) Sally is another beautiful young girl whose eyes like "Egypt and nylons the color of smoke" and she "paints them like Cleopatra" (pp.81-82). Her father keeps reminding her of the dangers of being beautiful and abusing her. She is constantly beaten and kept in house by him. As a conservative man, her father wants to prevent her from running away as her other sisters did. She also believes that marriage is the only way to break free from her captivity. (pp.81-83)

In the chapter of "Beautiful and Cruel" Esperanza refers to the image of beautiful women whom she sees in the movies. Powerful female figure with seducing red lips make men dizzy with their beauty and make fun of them. Girl's ideals and aspirations in this neighborhood are determined by what they are exposed to on American channels and they dream of being as powerful and beautiful as these femme fatales. Moreover, on magazines, books and the movies, love and sex are romanticized and idealized, even though there is a huge gap between the reality women experience in Chicano neighborhood and those ideal images reflected by means of mainstream media devices.

Esperanza herself experiences the cruel reality of love and sex at first hand after she has been molested by a Chicano boy in a carnival. "They all lied. All the books and magazines, everything that told it wrong. Only his dirty fingernails against my skin, only his sour smell again." (p.99) Esperanza is desperately waiting for being rescued by her friend Sally and she cries out "Sally, Sally hundred times" but Sally did not hear her. (p.100)

In "Monkey Garden" part Sally also disappears with a Chicano boy named Tito and his friends and Esperanza attempts to rescue her and complains Tito to his mother but Tito's mother, too busy with her domestic chores, does not seem to be interested in Sally's situation. "What do you want me to do, she said, call the cops? And she continues dealing with her errands." (p.97) This part sets a good example showing us how Chicano women can't develop a sense of solidarity among themselves as they are indifferent to each other's' suffrage most of the time.

In "Linoleum Roses" part we see Sally marries to a salesman before she passes to eight grade in school and her husband buys her material possessions which she thinks she is in need but what she actually has is only temporary happiness. Esperanza also acknowledges that "She says she is in love, but I think

she did it to escape.” (pp.101-2) Sally can't escape from her destiny since she is expected to be satisfied with the pseudo-happiness of material things and male oppression she suffers in her father's house continues in her husband's house. Her husband violates her both physically and psychologically and she is not allowed to talk on the phone, look out of the window and socialize with her friends anymore. Esperanza witnesses the experiences of Chicana woman around her and they shape her decisions about her own identity.

The portraits of Chicanos are also represented in the novella and they also have an impact on the identity construction of Esperanza. Esperanza's brother has a friend named Louie and she has a cousin whose "T-shirts never stay tucked in his pants." He steals a yellow Cadillac one day and gives a ride to Esperanza and her friends in it. However, he is arrested by the police and put behind the bars. (pp. 23-25) Chicano males' involvement in criminal activities is provided in this chapter and it is obvious that many of them make money out of criminal activities since U.S does not provide satisfying jobs for the immigrants and employers have their preconceptions against them. Moreover, stigmatized images of ethnic minorities on mainstream media are common and the authority mechanisms of state, specifically the police have harsh and brutal attitudes against them.

Another Chicano character is Geraldo with "no last name" whom Marin goes to dancing. (p.65) He is smashed by a car yet his life does not matter much. He is an illegal immigrant in the U.S and in pursuit of a job to take care of his family. When he is taken to hospital, they found no address, no identity card and no money in his pocket. The doctors and the police are not interested in Geraldo as his life does not matter as much as legal American citizens' life does. In this chapter, Esperanza gives the reader two different point of views. One is majority's point of view including the police and the doctors: "Just another "brazer" who did not speak English. Just another wet-back. You know the kind. The ones who always look ashamed" (p.65) Esperanza, in contrast to the police and the doctors, can empathize and sympathize with Geraldo and has a genuinely naive approach to his situation: "They do not know about the two-room flats and sleeping rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange. How could they?" (p. 66)

In her essay titled "Cisneros's Portrait of a Barrio" Bridget Kevane says:

Throughout these stories, we witness the people who make up the *barrio*, the invisible immigrants and the legal residents who are segregated because of color, race, or economic status. Many of these *barrio* portraits reveal the prejudice and misunderstanding prevalent in North American attitudes toward Latino communities. Each one of these stories gives voice to these problems on an emotional level so that we can identify with the characters and their struggle to survive in a foreign and, often times, hostile environment. (2010, pp. 95-96)

Growing up between two cultures and languages and living in margins, Chicanos are also the victims of the harsh conditions of capitalism in American society and of the brutal treatment by the many white residents. On the other hand, the portrait of married women in Chicano neighborhood also suggests the extremely unhappy and desperate situations of females since they have to struggle against poverty, physical and psychological violence and indifference of their husbands. Rose Vargas is one of those women who has "so many children and she does not know what to do." She is kept in domestic sphere by her husband, the epitome incarnation of patriarchal violence and recklessness, and she is expected to look after her naughty children by herself and at the same time she runs household chores. Her husband does not take care of the children and leaves all the responsibility on the shoulders of Rose and "left without even leaving a dollar for bologna or a note explaining how come." (p.29) Children are so many therefore, she fails watching all of them at the same time. One day" Angel Vargas learned to

fly and dropped from the sky like a sugar donut, just like a falling star, and exploded down to earth without even an "Oh." (p.30)

Another victim of male violence is Rafaela, locked inside the house like other women since she is "too beautiful to look at". She is dreaming of having a hair like "Rapunzel" and dancing in the bar on the corner before "she gets old". However, her desires are oppressed by her jealous husband, the guardian of her prison. She is "still young but getting old from leaning out of the window so much" (pp.77-8). She apparently shares the same destiny with Esperanza's grandmother who cannot speak English. They waste their lives looking out of the windows of their prisons all day and dream of having another life to alleviate the sour taste of the reality.

In the chapter "No speak English", Mamacita living across the street in the third-floor goes through another tragedy in a hostile country. She can't speak English except for saying "*He not here*" when the landlord comes, "*No speak English*" if anybody else comes, and "*Holy Smokes.*" (p. 77) Since Spanish is the bridge connecting her to her home Mexico, Mamacita refrains herself from using English. She tries to hold on her native language, can't integrate herself into the mainstream society and does not engage with the outside world. As a result, she is alienated to her environment and reminisces about her past all the time. She "plays the Spanish Radio show and sings all the homesick songs about her country in a voice that sounds like a seagull." (p.77) Moreover, she warns the baby boy not to continue singing "Pepsi commercial" even though the father insists on imposing the foreign language and American culture on him. Mamacita can't handle with the idea that diverse Mexican culture will be lost in the dominant American mainstream culture and she does not want to be a part of American dream. (p.78) Unlike Mamacita, Esperanza speaks and writes in English to engage with the outside world. Esperanza's identity construction is mostly shaped by the experiences of those women abused and oppressed and forced into domesticity such as Esperanza's mother and grandmother and other female characters.

In the chapter "A House of My Own" Esperanza "says goodbye" to the house on Mango Street by acknowledging the fact that her roots always belong to Mango street and she will spread her stem out of Mango Street to the new worlds. She makes up her mind and asserts "I am too strong for her (Mango Street) to keep me forever. One day, I will go away" (p.110)

Esperanza's dream of having a house is dedicated to all the silenced and disadvantaged women of Mango street and has gained a new aim through which Esperanza becomes the mouth piece and the role model for all women. Her house does belong to herself and her female fellows, but it is "not a man's house, not a daddy's. (p.108)" Friends and neighbors will say, what happened to that Esperanza? Where did she go with all those books and paper? Why did she march so far away? They will not know I have gone away to come back for the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out." (p.110) Esperanza decides to dedicate her dream and success to her sisters in the end and she will come back for them one day.

Esperanza sets an example of how powerful female imagination has been to transgress cultural and geographical borders. She becomes a whole through writing and it is the tool helping her create the connection between two different regions, languages and cultures. Now, she has the access to both her indigenous identity and to indigenous women around her since childhood and to the other side of the border and to the outside of barrio. Therefore, she becomes a bridge between Mexican and American

dualism. In the end Esperanza becomes a model for Chicana sisters as an independent artist whose house is not conquered by a husband or a father.

Dual identity and celebrating hybridity in Borderlands/La Frontera: New Mestiza

As a lesbian Chicana activist, Anzaldua is both the writer and the protagonist of *Borderlands* and she explores the history of her own people with a set of essays and poems in her book on the physical and psychological borderlands. *Borderlands* refers to literal and figurative borders as well as borders between cultures, races, geographies, genders and sexual orientations. Anzaldua deals with the gender politics, oppression of Chicanos by the dominant Anglo-American culture and also of Chicanas by their own male dominant culture.

The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrink with intimacy. (2007, p.19)

Those figurative and metaphorical borders especially traps and fences Chicana women and even protagonist herself admits "I am border woman" (*ibid*) and with this statement she opens her body to the restriction and oppression of American and Chicano culture.

1, 950-mile-long open wound/dividing a pueblo (inhabitants), a culture, / running down the length of my body, / staking fence rods in my flesh, splits me splits me / me raja me raja / This is my home / this thin edge of / barbwire. (24-23) Yo soy un puente tendido / del mundo gabacho al del mojado, / lo pasado me estira pa' 'tras / y lo presente pa' delante. I am a bridge stretching / from the world of the Anglo to that of the wetback/ the past pulls me back / and the present draws me forward. (p.25)

Female bodies on the border become a bridge between Mexico and The States and a hybrid/mulatto space is created there exceeding the borders of dualism such as male/female, Mexican/American, brown and white as they all are the victims of the oppressive and abusive system of American ideology.

What's more is the crimes committed against the non-white residents of the border region is provided in the first part of the book: The Homeland, Aztlan/ El otro Mexico (The other Mexico). Illegal immigration, one of the most serious problems of the Chicano society from Mexico and other Latin American countries due to financial problems and ongoing civil wars continues. Many nonwhite residents try really hard to survive due to economic adversities just as Pedro, an illegal worker on the borderland does.

In the confusion, Pedro ran, terrified of being caught. He couldn't speak English, couldn't tell them he was fifth generation American. *Sin papeles*. He did not carry his birth certificate to work in the fields. La migra took him away while we watched *Se la llavaron...* They deported him to Guadalajara by plane... (p. 26)

Borderland is on the one hand presented as a place having a regenerating power destroying the dualities between cultures, geographies and languages and as a painful and treacherous place where nonwhite dwellers are victimized and treated brutally on the other. However, Anzaldua's objective is to celebrate and embrace the multiple subjectivities borders create. When her body becomes a bridge, she also enables the disadvantaged to move outside of strict duality.

On the other hand, she also manages being a bridge by employing both English and Spanish in her essays and poems. In the preface of her book, she states Chicano/as use “bastard language” (p.20) and this is also an “orphan tongue” (p.80). Latinos accuse her of ruining Spanish language but she uses it as a way to destroy man made borders. Chicana/o language is neither Spanish nor English but “a forked tongue” (p.77) On the other hand, as a woman writer Anzaldúa also does away with the systematic order of language in literature and rebels against male oppression in writing. Anzaldúa also claims that being a writer is equivalent to those of “being a Chicana, or being a queer—a lot of squirming, coming up against all sorts of walls” (94). Her main objective in writing is to “write the myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become” (93) and in that way she rescripts (his)tory and redefines borders. Wherefore, her return to the borderland is achieved through pulling down the walls separating people.

By dint of the celebration and embracement of duality in identity and culture, Anzaldúa points to a consciousness born out of exclusion and inaccessibility of both sides of the border and also questions the rigidity of homogenous identities. Consequently, she creates a new kind of territory, new kind of community and representation depending on the all kinds of diversities. This new consciousness confronts the hegemonic history and culture of the dominant “white” society as well as the Chicano culture. She clarifies this as, “I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will my serpent’s tongue, my women’s voice, my sexual voice, my poet’s voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence.” (p. 81)

El retorno (The return) is the subchapter of the last and the 5th chapter of the book and Anzaldúa celebrates coming back home and her indigenous culture and remembers a certain moment from her childhood in her hometown, located in the Lower Río Grande Valley, Texas: “It's been a bad year for corn,” my brother, Nune, says. As he talks, I remember my father scanning the sky for a rain that would end the drought, looking up into the sky, day after day, while the corn withered on its stalk”. (p.112) Then she ends her spiritual journey as “This land was Mexican once and was Indian always and is. And will be again. (p.113) Anzaldúa in *Borderlands* suggests her reader tolerating ambiguities, rejecting and destroying boundaries and borders and embracing and celebrating multifaceted cultures and languages. As writer and protagonist of *Borderlands: La Frontera* Anzaldúa recognizes all the marginalized and underprivileged identities of the borderland and assures outcasts that another modes of existence are possible only with solidarity and understanding.

Conclusion

Having analyzed female characters in the context of identity construction on the borderland from a feminist perspective, it can be asserted that *The House on Mango Street* and *Borderlands/La Frontera: New Mestiza* primarily deal with Chicana experience and struggle against male oppression in white and non-white community of the borderland. My study is centered around the personal awareness and individual growth of a Mexican-American girl Esperanza, who is on the threshold of womanhood and her neighbors, female family members experiencing the same emotional situations because of the different forms of patriarchal oppression and also around the identity confusion of protagonist writer Gloria Anzaldúa herself. Both Cisneros and Anzaldúa reflect the challenges in the lives of Chicana community by their own unique narrative styles. First part of this paper dwells on the background information of feminist movements from the suffragists to Chicana feminism and it gives us a frame of the dynamics of patriarchal society and the struggle of women against male hegemony. Women’s suffrage suggests the examples such as women’s deprivation of basic human rights and both physical and psychological abuse that they are subjected to. The argument is sophisticated through

some women writers' discourses about woman issue. The exclusion of the underprivileged women of different social and racial backgrounds from the definition of suffering women is also discussed by the discourses of third wave feminists. Chicana feminism's unique characteristic of resistance against male dominance of all sorts is also expressed. In the second part of the paper, the concepts of border, border crossing and border writing are presented and border writing is discussed as a tool to provide the dislocated and displaced with a new form of existence on the borderland. In the third chapter, social and political relations of Mexico and U.S are discussed and inferior position of Mexican legal and illegal immigrants are suggested by means of the provided examples from Gloria Anzaldua's and Howard Zinn's books. This part sets the political conflict between two different cultures and languages and it shows us the extreme xenophobia against Chicano/as dwelling in American territories. The issues of unemployment, socio-economic disparities, exploitation of labor and identity crisis of Chicano/as are also analyzed. In the following chapter, the discussion is Esperanza's identity construction and it is analyzed within the context of the male oppression, exploitation, manipulation, domestication and abuse of Chicana women. In this chapter, Cisneros' hybrid narrative style in which she blends poetry with prose goes beyond the boundaries of mainstream writing. This part is separated into two major sections and the first section deals with Esperanza's identity crisis on her path of becoming a woman and her tendency to construct her identity in terms of her opposition against the dwellers of Mango Street. Moreover, Esperanza's aspiration of having her own house and her affiliations with other female characters are also given. In addition, various forms of male dominance are indicated in the analysis of Chicana characters. Physical and psychological abuse of Sally, the desperate situation of Marin, domestication of Esperanza's mother and grandmother, captivity of female characters into domestication including Rose Vargas and Rafaela, Mamacita's agony and yearning for maintaining her own diverse culture which seems lost in the dominant Anglo-American culture, are analyzed in the second section of this chapter. The oppression and the double standard of capitalist American society over Geraldo, an illegal immigrant, and the victimization of Louie are also included in the second section since the experiences of the male characters that Esperanza witnessed, have an impact on Esperanza's development, too. Lastly, Esperanza's identity construction is completed after she revises her dream of having her own house by including all oppressed women in her dream. In chapter five, Chicana's bidirectional struggle against the sexism of Chicano society and racism of American society are explained in detail. Anzaldua also deconstructs binary oppositions existing on the borderland by employing hybrid language in her opus and her unique literary voice and her enthusiasm to collaborate with other racially underprivileged women consolidate her position in Western female canon. She gives the voiceless their voice back. Therefore, in this chapter Chicana experience on borderland, bilingualism and biculturalism from the perspective of a Chicana character has been discussed and the common experience of hybrid identities paved way to understand border struggle and to resist social, cultural and economic oppression. Both of these books have proved the possibility of a third way of existence. On the other hand, there is no doubt there are many Chicana feminist writers worth discussing to explore new horizons regarding identity issue. Finally, it is essential to say that Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and Anzaldua's *Borderlands* have a revolutionary voice since Chicanas' border experience and problems are addressed and they are given voices by means of these books. However, the oppression and manipulation of patriarchy over females still exist in different forms and shapes and patriarchal hegemony is protected and maintained through different mechanisms specifically in capitalist societies. Therefore, it is essential to assert that all marginalized identities need to be represented in different literary genres so that their voice can be heard in the society and their problems are addressed.

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