

RHETORIC OF ETHNICITY: SELECTED TEXTS OF THE
AMERICAN MINORITY WRITERS RUDOLFO ANAYA,
SANDRA CISNEROS, MAXINE HONG KINGSTON,
AND TONI MORRISON

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To my Mother, Father and Uncle Lee,
with gratitude and much love.

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ABSTRACT

SELECTED TEXTS OF THE AMERICAN MINORITY WRITERS
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Ethnicity is a concept that has received much study in the late 20th-century. Because of America's "mixed salad" bowl culture instead of the "melting pot" image, there is still great ethnic diversity in the society. Further, these ethnicities have been examined in the artistic works of Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, Rudolfo Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima, Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior, and Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street. These minority writers establish clear links among ethnicity, language as a cultural artifact, and rhetoric. They use the characteristics of the child as symbol and child narrators as Aristotelian metaphors to note the minority condition and to persuade the audience of their authenticity.

Additionally, these ethnic writers employ an Aristotelian form of ethos, particularly virtue, to persuade the audience of the goodness of the child narrators and the goodness of other characters. By using Aristotelian metaphor and ethos, Morrison, Anaya, Kingston, and Cisneros engage and

educate the audience about their ethnicities.

The first part of the dissertation establishes the link between ethnicity and rhetoric. The following chapters analyze the child narrators and their situations, applying the rhetorical ideas outlined in the introduction. The last chapter concludes the findings of the study, recognizing the emphasis placed on Aristotelian metaphor and ethos in these minority works.

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CHAPTER I

ETHNICITY AND THE RHETORICAL CONNECTION

Ethnicity is "the 'cup of custom' (patrimony) passed on by one's parents (paternity), from which one drinks the meaning of existence . . . through which one envisions life (phenomenology) . . . It is both a means and an end."

--de Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1975

Ethnicity, a word which has surfaced in anthropology, the social sciences and the humanities, is a relatively new term (Sollors "Theories" x). Apparently introduced to America as late as 1941 by W. Lloyd Warner in *Yankee City Series* (73), the concept of ethnicity has defied concrete terminology. For example, of the 65 rigorous scientific studies noted by Wsevolod W. Isajiw only 13 had working definitions (1). Nevertheless, many anthropologists and social scientists considered the field over-studied. Because of the image of the "melting pot," (Leftwich 252) theorists expected distinct ethnic groups to lose their characteristics and to blend into the generic American culture. However, that integration has not happened. Ethnic groups have not surrendered their unique features. Instead of the "melting pot," the "mixed salad" bowl image has become dominant in late twentieth-century American society. There has been a "resurgence of ethnic nationalism in the United States and around the world . . . but also [an] emergence of

historically new ethnic groups" (Nagel 237). Individuals have "recently recognized and even stressed their ethnicity more than was the case just a few years ago" (Fishman 15). Many factors have contributed to this renewed emphasis on ethnicity.

The big question is, of course, what is ethnicity? Perhaps, as noted social scientist J. A. Fishman asserts, more than anything else, it is historical (16). It is a dynamic manifestation which places varying significance on "the large number of interrelated factors that it subsumes" (16). It is an "aspect of a collectivity's self-recognition as well as an aspect of its recognition in the eyes of outsiders" (16). It is a conduit "whereby individuals are linked to society, i.e., to social norms and to social values" (16). It is a way of understanding "life, society, and the world" at large (16). Moreover, the elements of ethnicity appear to be contradictory in that they are "inherited" and "acquired," "stable" and "changing" (16). One may ask, how can something be stable and changing at the same time? Essentially, culture evolves due to need and situation. Fredrik Barth explains those circumstances as follows:

. . . when one traces the history of an ethnic group, through time, one is not simultaneously . . . tracing the history of a 'culture': the elements of the present culture of that group have

not sprung from the particular set that constituted the group's culture at a previous time. . .

(Barth 323)

In essence, what Barth's classical treatise on ethnicity says is that "cultures change; they are borrowed, blended, rediscovered, and reinterpreted" (Nagel 251).

Furthermore, the components have other aspects. Ethnicity has to do with blood. The one unifying element that all ethnicities reflect is paternity, the "putative biological origins" passed down from "generation to generation" (Fishman 17). Now, whether this kinship is real or imagined, does not matter so long as the "insiders" believe the connection to be genuine. Ethnicity deals with "roots" (Levenson). Because of a common, extended lineage, those identifying themselves within an ethnicity "gain a feeling of continuity, a sense of permanence across time, across death, from eternity to eternity" (19). However, while ancestry seems to be an intrinsic part of ethnicity, race and social class are not. As discussed by Pierre L. van den Berghe, Nathan Glazer, and Daniel P. Moynihan, these elements can be part of an ethnicity but are not exclusive.

In Race and Racism, Pierre L. van den Berghe presents a cogent systematic discussion of the distinction between race and ethnicity. He asserts that the "four principal connotations of race make it confusing" as a determiner of

ethnicity (Sollors "Theories" xxxi). He claims "physical anthropology" . . . "is no longer tenable" (xxxii-xxxiii). Terms such as the "French race" are now synonymous with ethnicity or ethnic group in this sense and should be discarded. Additionally, race is a "polysemous word" which is synonymous with "'species' when one says the 'human race'" (xxxiii). The fourth connotation of race, according to van den Berghe, is the only valid definition. As employed by social scientists, it refers "to a human group that defines itself and/or is defined by other groups as different from other groups by virtue of innate and immutable physical characteristics" (xxxiii). However, even though van de Berghe acknowledges physical appearance as a way of identifying groups of people, the advent of cosmetics, hair dyes, and plastic surgery has made this determiner of race convoluted at best. Hence, the physical characteristics of race can be a component of ethnicity, but they are not stable factors.

Additionally, although a few theorists still assert social class as a determiner, it has also been challenged as a valid factor in deciding ethnicity. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan in Ethnicity: Theory and Experience argue "against class-based forms of social identification and conflict . . . such as capitalism, socialism, and Communism" (xiii). Moynihan stresses, "The more salient ethnicity becomes, the more obsolete are political philosophies of

social class" (xiii). Glazer and Moynihan echo the sentiments of many notables in the social sciences, agreeing "that ethnicity is not class" (xiii). Thus, class does not seem to be an absolute element in determining ethnicity either. Regardless of the battling over content, ethnicity is a way of belonging that has manifested itself all over the world.

Considering the movement of ideas, peoples, entire societies, it is little wonder that ethnicity is still an active ideology. The transient nature of life in the modern era has created a sense of fragmentation, displacement and a desire for permanence. No society has struggled more with these factors than that of the United States. Noted critic and scholar Sacvan Bercovitch likens American identity to the painting Melville "describes in the start of Moby-Dick - a 'boggy, soggy, squitchy, picture . . . enough to drive a nervous man distracted'" ("Fusion" 19). At a conference held in Amsterdam in 1980, Bercovitch offered an approach to describing American identity:

Fusion and Fragmentation - and, not or: for over two centuries, the meaning of America has been defined through that conjunction of opposites. Federalism and states' rights, national and personal independence, Madison's self-protective multiplicity, Whitman's self-en masse, Finney's multi-denominational *American* religion, Zangwill's

melting pot: it amounts to a blueprint of the country's dominant . . . culture. . . . Fusion and fragmentation, we might say, are the twin pillars of liberal hegemony in the United States. (19)

Furthermore, American identity is infused with diversity because of the immigrants who settled and continue to settle in this land. Ethnic sentiments, when applied to Americans, "may be . . . some of the strongest assumptions and some of the most powerful investments in which social man is involved" (Fishman 18). According to Bercovitch, a key element of what it means to be "American is some form of un-Americanness"--in other words, something that deviates from the Anglo-Protestant norm ("Literary" 43). Amid this diversity is a dominant presence, what Bercovitch calls "the rhetoric of American identity" ("Fusion" 19). Because such definitions involve close attention to style, Bercovitch says,

'let me say at once that I assume that the meaning of American was not God-given but man-made, that the men who made it were not a chosen people but spokesmen for a certain way of life, and that their way of life, like any other, involved the constant interaction between spiritual and material needs, symbolic form and social structure. That is, I view the rhetoric as a cultural artifact.' (19-20)

Inevitably, ethnicity, as a cultural artifact and a paternal vestige, has a direct link to language. Language is said to be "acquired with the mother's milk" so to speak (Fishman 19). In western civilization, now, more than ever before, "we . . . recognize how deeply cultural biases can be embedded in our language" (Nelson-Born 1). "Language is not only code but Code" (Fishman 21). Language is not just a "conveyor of ethnic symbols" (21). It is not even an ethnic symbol in itself. As an inheritance of ethnic paternity, language is "'flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood' and, therefore, all the more powerful as a conveyor, as a symbol, and as a *summum bonum*, well worth living and dying for" (19). As a result, language is one of the best avenues to explore a particular ethnicity. All languages and "cultural texts have the potential to bring to the fore the specific and unique characteristics of the culture of [a] particular ethnic group in contrast to the characteristics of other groups" (Winner 412). Leading scholar Joane Nagel says, "Ethnic identity is the result of dialectical processes involving . . . the individual's self-identification and outsiders' ethnic designations . . . what you think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is" (240). Consequently, ethnicity is an active construction by the self and the other. Interestingly, it is a "widespread practice to define ethnicity as otherness" (Sollors 219). Hence, ethnicity

houses languages and cultural texts that are made of the artifacts of the unfamiliar other. Cultural texts provide insights into ethnicity. The reason people "look to literature for an understanding of ethnicity [is] not because ethnicity is writable, but because it is *readable*" (Franco 106). Chicano scholar Dean Franco believes, "ethnic writing is a choice, and results from the author's own ethnic gaze inward, the reading of self as ethnic subject (106).

In a multicultural society with an abundance of minorities such as America has, there is a great need for an understanding of all ethnicities. Social scientist Richard Sennet asserts that the rhetoric of ethnicity persuades a reader to see humanity which is "created out of experiences of difference" ("Rhetoric" 192). The rhetoric of ethnicity displays these differences through cultural "perspectives, thoughts, values, feelings, ideas, and ideologies" (Brummett 145). Moreover, it recognizes a "set of common identifications--in language, food, music, names --when other social roles become more abstract and impersonal" (Sollors xii).

Four of the largest minority cultural groups in America are the African American, Native American, Asian American, and Latino American. Since 1970 there has been an ethnic literary flowering in the United States. Minority voices such as Toni Morrison (The Bluest Eye 1970), Rudolfo Anaya (Bless

Me, Ultima 1972), Maxine Hong Kingston (The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts 1976), and Sandra Cisneros (The House on Mango Street 1984) have brought reflections and awareness of ethnic situations and stories to the fore.

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison's first novel, was written "specially for a black readership," offering the "experience of black women" and a "critical analysis of the internal relations of the entire community" (Doughty 30). Morrison, by far the most acclaimed minority writer of the twentieth century, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993 and heralded in the press release as an author

who, in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality Toni Morrison is a literary artist of the first rank. She delves into the language itself, a language she wants to liberate from the fetters of race. (Nobel 2)

Morrison's work is punctuated by the lyricism of the blues, an art form traditionally associated with Black culture. Morrison says, "The music kept us alive, but it's not enough any more" (LeClair 28). Furthermore, on more than one occasion, Morrison has said, I write "for the village, for the tribe" (LeClair 28). As a novelist of the tribe, Morrison feels, "These people have a story, and that story

has to be told" (McKay 427). Although the ethnic stories and characters Morrison records are turbulent in many instances, the literature reflects the African American culture.

In 1971, Rudolfo Anaya was awarded the Premio Quinto Sol Literary Prize for the best Chicano novel of the year. That novel was Bless Me, Ultima, later published in 1972. The novel was part of a civil, economic, and arts renaissance called the Chicano Movement in the 60s and 70s.

Anaya, a Southwestern writer, deals specifically with the New Mexico area. He says, "The beliefs of my traditional New Mexican culture are grounded in the Catholic religion and Spanish folktales from the Iberian world" (Anaya x). He goes on to say, "These beliefs are influenced by cultural borrowings from the Pueblo Indian way of life. This culture is the backdrop for the novel" (x). Anaya's rhetoric creates an ethnicity imbued with Native American culture. Moreover, the Native American influence is so prevalent that the novel can be predominately read as an Indian text.

Although Morrison and Anaya structured their novels in basically traditional fashion, that was not true of Maxine Hong Kingston and Sandra Cisneros. Kingston and Cisneros were experimenting with genre by combining fiction, folktale, autobiography, history, and other genres. The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts won for Kingston the National Book Critics Circle Award for the best work of

nonfiction in 1976. In an interview in 1989, Kingston said she had been called "the living author whose books [we]re most taught in colleges" (Kingston, Writing 17). She also mentioned an informal survey done on The Woman Warrior at "UC Berkeley book stores and found it in twelve courses in one university" (17). In that work, Kingston creates an intriguing set of stories that outlines a perspective of what it is to grow up Chinese American. Her tales are "a reflection of a personal odyssey of displacement and . . . a search for self and community" (Davis 7). Kingston's world is particularly perplexing to a general audience because of the inclusion of Chinese folklore and structure, unfamiliar to many readers. The ethnic situations and characters she depicts seem exotic and strange.

The House on Mango Street, another set of stories, strikes the average reader as also being different. Sandra Cisneros received the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation in 1985 for that work. In it she writes about the reality of the Latino American, leaving the "Anglo world . . . in the background" (Lowry 149). Her "villains are not Anglos but Latino men" (149). She peoples her world with Latino "male characters that abandon their families, beat their wives and daughters, and make young girls feel ugly" (149). Her 44 vignettes weave a realistic vision of Latino American life in the barrio.

Despite their initial cultural, structural, and thematic differences, these authors all use the same unifying technique, narration by a child to tell the story. They use a child as narrator to demonstrate unique awareness of ethnicities. The child speaker, whose voice is often suppressed, marginalized and powerless, is articulating a truth of experience, which creates a dialogue between the texts, the common denominator seeming only to be the human condition (Gellén 92). Through a rhetoric of ethnicity, these authors persuade their audiences to see their characters' humanity, even in settings and situations that are very different from the reader's.

The device of a child narrator to articulate the ethnic condition is no accident of the pen. Nor are the other rhetorical methods these authors use to appeal to the reader. One of the key techniques can be traced through Aristotle, using the rhetorical canon of invention that he outlined in his Rhetoric. Ethos, a key Aristotelian appeal, is a determiner in persuading the reader of the author's and/or narrator's credibility. In a study done by James L. Kinneavy and Susan C. Warshauer on Aristotle's Rhetoric, *ethos* emerges as the most effective part of persuasion in his later work (174). "The orator persuades by moral character when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence But this confidence must be due to the

speech itself, not to any preconceived idea of the speaker's character" (174). Interestingly, ethos is considered "the most nearly 'ethical' or moral part of an argument. In this regard, *arete*, may also be translated as 'virtue' or 'moral excellence'" (174). Additionally, *arete* is associated with the word *Ariston*, which means 'nobility' or 'aristocracy,' implying "that the ethical appeal is a type of *cultural* appeal" (175). Hence, ethos would be an appropriate avenue to begin the examination of the persuasive devices housed in these cultural texts.

Successfully exploring and locating rhetorical elements in four immensely different ethnicities would be extremely challenging if it were not for the markers situated in the cultures themselves. "Every culture contains its own methods for understanding artifacts" (Brummett 145). For example, during World War II, soldiers had "makeshift bases on a number of islands in the Pacific, bringing with them a world of material goods that astonished and impressed the native people who were already living on those islands" (145). The soldiers eventually departed, leaving behind them a great many military odds and ends. Shortly after their departure, a number of "cargo cults" sprang up with the "expectation that the G.I.'s would return some day, bringing with them renewed prosperity" (145). For the indigenous people, these items were taken into the culture and infused with religious

significance (145). Now, if a cargo cult member happened to come to the United States and were to see a military helmet in a pawn shop window, he would "assume that the store was a religious shrine" of some sort (146). Conversely, to Americans, these old military bits and pieces could just be junk. Such a realization about artifacts "should prevent anyone from assuming that a given artifact has only one and always the meaning that one's own culture would give to it" (146).

Such mistakes could be made by superimposing mainstream American understandings on ethnic artifacts, languages, situations, and texts. For example, in Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima, Cico takes Antonio, the protagonist, to the river. Cico tells him an elaborate story about a fish. Cico punctuates the tale by saying, "The golden carp is my god, Tony" (118). To the average reader, the narrative could seem like a "fish story" told between childhood friends, when in actuality it is a variant of a Native American creation myth. For a Native American, the golden fish is a god totem and not a yarn spun to engage the imagination of a friend. One of the clues to the significance of the carp lies in the solemnity with which the tale is told. The story is carefully handed down through the oral tradition like a rite of passage from one chosen person to the next. "The Indian told Samuel the story; Narciso told me [Cico]; now we tell you [Antonio]"

(115). Hence, the golden carp and the cargo cult's military helmet have symbolic meaning in their ethnicities beyond mainstream American awareness or recognition.

Of the studies conducted so far, mostly traditional anthropologists and social scientists have been the examiners of the concept of ethnicity. Few in the humanities and even fewer in the rhetorical disciplines have looked at the cultural construction of ethnicity. With the renaissance of ethnic awareness and writing, there is new material to study. Ultimately, studying ethnic literature can lead to a better "understanding [of] the national experience" (Bergevin 21). American ethnicities are complex, historical, social, biological, fragmented, fused, dynamic, and rhetorically cultural artifacts. Morrison, Anaya, Kingston, and Cisneros have all created distinct characters, settings, and situations which reflect unique ethnicities. Therefore, authentic representations of distinct ethnicities can be intentionally created in prose. Interestingly, J. A. Fishman argues that "language can often be the most salient symbol of ethnicity because it carries the past and expresses present and future attitudes and aspirations" (3-4). Consequently, a rhetorical definition for ethnicity would be an artistic construction reflecting the author's beliefs about the ethnic experience. Through the use of Aristotelian metaphor and ethos, one can discover how these minority authors draw the

reader into their worlds and construct a sense of authenticity in the unfamiliar cultural surroundings.

CHAPTER II

THE 'CHILD' AS ARISTOTELIAN METAPHOR FOR A PEOPLE

Even though the characters, situations, and settings are often foreign, the uniqueness is one of the techniques that is used to keep a reader engaged with the text. Aristotle speaks of the rhetorical value of deviating from prevailing usage (*exallaxai*), especially by the use of "strange language" (*poiein xenén tén dialekton*) . . . [for] the sheer pleasure of the audience" (Kirby 541). According to Aristotle, "One should make one's language unfamiliar (*xenén*). For listeners marvel at (*thaumastai* . . . *eisin*) things that are distant (*tón apontén* [here a synonym of *xenén*]), and what is marvelous is pleasant (*hédu* [lit. 'sweet']]" (Kirby, Rhetoric 3.2.6 1404b31-33). "This is acknowledged as a common goal in both prose and verse; but, we are told prose has fewer resources in this regard than verse--namely, *kuria* and metaphor" (3.2.6 1404b31-33; cf. also above on 1404b34-36 Kirby). In each of these minority texts, the authors use strange and often perplexing words or phrases to entice but also to educate.

For example, Morrison begins her tale in The Bluest Eye with "Quiet as it's kept." The phrase is intriguing, and few outside her ethnicity would know the meaning. She then leaves

the reader wondering until the afterward of the novel, where she finally explains this insider language. "Quiet as it's kept" was a phrase she heard while growing up. It was something "black women conversing with one another [said], telling a story, an anecdote, gossip about some one or event within the circle, the family, the neighborhood" (212).

Moreover, the phrase

bespeaks a particular world and its ambience . . .
its 'back fence' connotation, its suggestion of
illicit gossip, of thrilling revelation, . . . also
. . . the assumption (on the part of the reader)
that the teller is on the inside. (212)

So one strategy that Morrison uses to make the text inviting and seem realistic is a sort of modified 'insider' English slang.

Rudolfo Anaya in Bless Me, Ultima uses a similar approach. The chapter title is "Uno," and the first two sentences have the words "Ultima" and "llano" (1). Anaya is using a technique called "blending," where words from another language are folded into the English text. His Spanish words seem exotic, western, and somewhat unintelligible. Without too much thought the reader can surmise that "Uno" means the number one. It is the title of the first chapter of the book. Eventually, from the context, the reader discovers that 'Ultima' is the name of a "healer-sage" (Lee 145) of mystical

powers, and 'llano' is the name of the flat lands or plains just on the outskirts of Antonio's town. And, even though Anaya has chosen to lace his text with 'insider' words in Spanish, the focus is on elements meaningful to Native Americans, i.e. medicine people and the land. For Indians, "landscape becomes a cultural text itself, a text that can be read and interpreted" (Hindman 68). Hence, Anaya has purposely focused on 'Ultima' and 'llano' to emphasize their importance and to create an air of verisimilitude through language and idea.

With Kingston's The Woman Warrior, the reader has to shift semantic gears so to speak. Kingston does not use slang, nor does she use 'blending.' Foreign concepts and structure set her text apart for mainstream Americans. The reader learns that there were "seventeen hurry-up weddings" before the narrator's father and his brothers "sailed for America, the Gold Mountain" (3). The average American would probably assume that a 'hurry-up wedding' was due to pregnancy because that is a social response here. Later, the reader learns that the 'hurry-up wedding' was a cultural device to ensure that the young men who left to find work would return to their new families in China.

There is nothing unusual about these words, 'gold' and 'mountain.' Yet, in combination, 'Gold Mountain,' there is a strangeness in the way it is said. In English, one would

typically say, 'Golden Mountain' or a 'Mountain of Gold,' depending on the context. But to understand Kingston's narrator one has to look back in history. Her phrase alludes to "early Chinese immigrants [who] shared a version of the American dream indicated by their colloquial (and still current) Chinese name for America which translates as 'Golden Mountain'" (Chua 61). Chinese immigrants flocked to the West during the California Gold Rush. In 1848, there were three Chinese immigrants; by 1851, there were 25,000; and in 1884, "half of California's farm workers were Chinese" (61). So, Kingston uses concepts that are foreign to mainstream Americans; and, in a sense, Kingston does use 'insider' language by the way she structures her phrases. Although the average reader may not know the history of immigrant Chinese, the phrase "Gold Mountain" sounds alien to the ear, fascinating to the mind, and honest to the author's ethnic experience.

Taking another method, Cisneros' The House on Mango Street does not seem to begin with anything strange or perplexing. Although Cisneros does use blending in her text, she does not open with that device. As matter of fact, she starts with the idea of moving:

We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. . . . By the time we got

to Mango Street we were six -- Mama, Papa, Carlos, Kiki, my sister Nenny, and me. (3)

Furthermore, the prose style is very simple and easily recognizable as a child's speech pattern. Both moving and child-like language are elements the reader accepts as authentic. Yet, the characters' names may not be so familiar to a mainstream audience. A reader can surmise that the child is possibly Latino from some of the names like Carlos and Kiki. Lastly, the idea of a "Mango Street" suggests something tropical and imported, since mangoes will not grow in the temperate climates in the continental United States. Furthermore, by implication, the members of the house on Mango Street may be 'something tropical and imported.' Thus Cisneros engages her readers through very subtle differences, consistent with her ethnic experience.

A cursory examination of the first few lines of each text demonstrates that Morrison, Anaya, Kingston, and Cisneros follow an Aristotelian strategy by using "things that are distant" to create a sense of authenticity and "sheer pleasure" for the audience.

Moreover, Aristotle praises novelty in metaphors (Levin 29). In other words, an effective metaphor should be a combination that has never been seen before. With that thought in mind, the young speakers in these minority texts become significant points of interest. As previously

mentioned, the child narrator and the human condition seem to be the only details these widely different ethnic texts have in common. However, at a more subtle, abstract level, there is another place of confluence, the use of metaphor. In The Rhetoric, besides other intentions, Aristotle "included rendering an account of poetic metaphor. His larger purpose, however, was to explain how knowledge is acquired, and his treatment of metaphor . . . served that purpose" (30).

Aristotle explains the operation of metaphor as "not only a comparison between two elements but [a] creation of a third, new meaning" (Lanham 100). Aristotle asserts,

We all naturally find it agreeable to get hold of new ideas easily: words express ideas, and therefore those words are the most agreeable that enable us to get hold of new ideas. Now strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh.

(Corbett, Rhetoric 3.10.10 1410b)

Indeed 'something fresh' is created in these four ethnic works. Besides establishing a dialogue among the texts, the child-like speaker also acts as metaphor, illuminating ethnic realities in America. Aristotle believes "that one of the most important functions of a metaphor . . . is to teach. . . . It is the metaphor, more than any other figure of

speech, therefore, that increases our knowledge" (Golden 43). Even though these child metaphors do not conform in the strictest sense to Aristotle's patterns, they are analogous as is his most prominent pattern and do satisfy his other requirement. Thus the child narrator creates new understandings while existing in the stories in a state of powerlessness, marginalization, and borderality, just as many minorities exist in this country. As a metaphor/symbol, the child "suggest[s] a reality that goes beyond the physical image" (Byrnes 13). As symbol, the child suggests the potential for growth -- growth for the character and growth for the reader (Chetwynd 77).

Furthermore, the first person narration gives a reader the feeling of immediacy and intimacy, a sense of eavesdropping (Cruz 916); and although these texts have varying styles, in some cases additional speakers and unique structures, the child narrator is given primacy in speech and occurrence. For example, in Morrison's The Bluest Eye, the reader is introduced to the narrator in the first paragraph of the text when the nine-year-old Claudia says, "Quiet as it's kept It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves . . ." (5). The language is intriguing and culturally laden, yet unexplained until after the novel's conclusion.

Furthermore, the child is more than a speaker and a

character in the story. The young narrator is a metaphor for her ethnicity, drawing attention to the minority condition. Claudia fills "burlap sacks with . . . tiny pieces of coal," and lives in "a house . . . old, cold, and green . . . peopled by roaches and mice" (10). She tells of windows stuffed with rags, guilt and self-pity at being ill. . . ." (10-11). Even in a home of such description, being "outdoors" was worse:

There is a difference between being put *out* and being put *outdoors*. If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. . . . Outdoors was the end of something, irrevocable, physical fact, defining and complementing our metaphysical condition. Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weaknesses and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment. Our peripheral existence, however, was something we had learned to deal with . . . (17). Knowing that there was such a thing as outdoors bred in us a hunger for property, for ownership. The firm possession of a yard, a porch, a grape arbor. Propertied black people spent all their energies, all their love, on their nests. (18)

Noted in ethnographic studies, "the [B]lack standard of living did rise, but no matter how hard their families pushed them, . . . [B]lacks were unable to advance much prior to World War II" (Dinnerstein 183). However, with the boom in the defense industries because of World War II, "rural [B]lacks eagerly moved to . . . industrial regions. Factory work paid better than farm labor and urban ghettos, despicable as they were, nevertheless provided better shelter than rural shacks" (251). In succinct prose Morrison has intimated that Claudia's suffering really speaks to the poverty, displacement, and hardship of much of the African American community during and after World War II.

Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima uses a similar technique to establish his child narrator (Antonio) and to reveal glimpses into his ethnic world. The first passage introduces the reader to a six-year-old speaker, a powerful woman, and the presence of the llano.

Ultima came to stay with us the summer I was almost seven. . . . She took my hand, and the silent, magic powers she possessed made beauty from the raw, sun-baked llano, the green river valley, and the blue bowl which was the white sun's home.

(Anaya 1)

Connected to the child in Morrison's and Anaya's works are words or phrases that strike the reader as unusual.

Similarly, Antonio of Bless Me, Ultima reveals some of the nuances of the Native American community after World War II, even though the region has a blended heritage. He and his sisters sleep in an attic "partitioned into two small rooms," where "wooden steps creaked down into a small hallway that led into the kitchen" (1-2). From there,

I [Antonio] was to see the rebellion of my brothers against my father; and many times late at night I was to see Ultima returning from the llano where she gathered the herbs that can be harvested only in the light of the full moon by the careful hands of a curandera. (2)

Through the experiences of a child, Anaya has juxtaposed some of the tensions found in that community. Unrest and poverty are suggested during and after World War II. Further history records that

World War II had a major impact upon the Indians When these people returned to their homes they brought new ideas with them, [where] the young men looked at some tribal matters from a perspective that differed from that of reservation leaders, thus causing friction. (Dinnerstein 266)

Some 200,000 Native Americans left the land for the big city (266).

However, the flight of Antonio's brothers illuminates an

additional force working in ethnic communities. This force is referred to as 'Hansen's Law.' The "best-known modern formulation of generational succession" found in ethnic communities "was developed by Marcus Lee Hansen in . . . 1938, a disciple of Frederick Jackson Turner (Sollors 214). Hansen argues that "what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember" (495). In a minority community, particularly a new immigrant community, the first generation "wanted to forget everything: the foreign language that left an unmistakable trace in . . . English speech, the religion that continually recalled childhood struggles, the family customs that should have been the happiest of all memories" (494). Although Antonio's brothers are not first generation immigrants, they are the first generation in many generations to experience life outside the llano. After exposure to mainstream America and other cultures, the brothers reject the old ways and the place expected by their ethnicity.

Besides alluding to the conflict of World War II and Hansen's Law, Antonio also suggests the animistic aspect of Native American life when he describes Ultima's harvesting of herbs. For Pueblos, one of the indigenous groups in the Southwest, "the whole world appears animate All matter has its inseparable spiritual essence" (Taylor 250). According to traditional Native American beliefs, "everything is a source of 'power,' and as a result it should be revered"

(Lake-Thom 8). That is the reason that Ultima takes such great care when gathering the plants. Moreover, she collects during a full moon, which is "looked upon as a climatic period of the month" (Leach 743), and a god in Pueblo cosmology. The moon and the stars are "the Night People or Fathers of Taos pueblo, and are more prominent in the pantheons of the northeastern Pueblo Indians than in the western ones" (744). Lastly, Ultima is referred to as a *curandera*; although a Spanish word, it literally means 'healer-sage.' By using Antonio and his experiences as metaphor, Anaya has outlined the poverty, escapism, and spirituality of the Native American around the time of World War II.

In contrast, Kingston's The Woman Warrior notes her young narrator in the first sentence not with words or special concepts but shocking family history.

'You must not tell anyone,' my mother said, 'what I am about to tell you. In China your father had a sister who killed herself. . . . Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you.' (Kingston, Woman 3,5)

The reader encounters the young, female narrator at the onset of menses, and one can assume the narrator is Chinese from the reference to her father. Thus, Kingston's first sentence establishes the sex, age, and ethnicity of the narrator.

Additionally, Morrison's and Anaya's stories tend to give the reader a linear timeline, their speakers have names, and the narrators age chronologically. Kingston's child narrator has no name, and her age ranges from as young as six to adolescence, but her age shifts back and forth over the course of the text. Even though such a timeline seems somewhat haphazard, it works to highlight the confusion of the young narrator who is trying to explain the Chinese ethnic experience. She says,

I was born in the middle of World War II (96). Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits in solid America. . . . My American life has been such a disappointment (45). 'Why didn't you teach me English?' (46). My record shows that I flunked kindergarten and in first grade had no IQ--a zero IQ. I did remember the first grade teacher calling out during a test, . . . which I covered with black. . . . I looked at my parents' aliases and their birthdays, which variants I knew. There were secrets never to be said in front of the ghosts, immigration secrets whose telling could get us sent back to China. They would not tell us children because we had been born among ghosts, were taught

by ghosts, and were ourselves ghost-like. They
called us a kind of ghost. (182-83)

Kingston's narrator has pointed out one of the most difficult hurdles in the minority experience, the language barrier. The speaker has no IQ because the examinations are in English and she does not speak the language. Moreover, parents may speak some English but rarely teach the children. Further, mainstream Americans consider a ghost a disembodied spirit that haunts the world of the living. When Kingston's narrator uses the word "ghosts," she is alluding to the thinking, culture, lifestyles, and people of this new society (Wen-ting 80). In other words, Kingston's immigrants only recognize Chinese as people, and on occasion their children are considered non-Chinese.

Lastly, immigrants often were afraid to divulge too much personal information about themselves, not to their children and certainly not to the Department of Immigration. Such behavior may seem strange, but their caution does have a basis in history. For example, "by 1886 the Chinese constituted about half the farm laborers in California. Anti-Chinese feeling on the West Coast induced Congress in 1882 to pass the Exclusion Act, which suspended Chinese immigration for ten years" (Dinnerstein 213). That is one of the possible reasons that the speaker's parents have several aliases. They did not want to be identified by immigration. Another reason

is that "Chinese names are particularly complex" (Leach 782). A "milk name is given to an infant" when a family has lost a child to avoid attracting evil spirits (782). Later boys are given a "fate-name," which is usually very auspicious. "The fate-name is hardly ever pronounced, but it is the child's chief name, apart from his clan or family name" (390). As a student, he takes a "study-name," "examination-name," and a "graduation-name" (390). As the individual continues to mature and becomes established, the names keep changing. This process can carry through until death. With immigration stigmas and name-taking, one can understand the confusion about names in the Chinese community. Thus, through the narrator, Kingston has focused on the language barrier, education, cultural fears, and cultural attitudes of first generation Chinese Americans.

Taking an even more elusive approach to introducing the narrator and her ethnicity, Cisneros' The House on Mango Street begins with what seems to be a geography lesson.

We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, and before that I can't remember. But what I remember most is moving a lot. Each time it seemed there'd be one more of us. By the time we got to Mango Street we were six -- Mama, Papa,

Carlos, Kiki, my sister Nenny, and me. The house on Mango Street is ours, and we don't have to pay rent to anybody, or share the yard with the people downstairs, or be careful not to make too much noise, and there isn't a landlord banging on the ceiling with a broom. But even so, it's not the house we'd thought we'd get. (3)

One notices that the prose style is very simple, and the reader also knows the speaker is a daughter and sibling of the family. However, one does not know exactly the age of the narrator. Yet, the reader can surmise the child is young and possibly Latino from some of the names like Carlos and Kiki. Eventually, the reader discovers that the child is a little girl named Esperanza, and she is perhaps six years old at the beginning of the story.

Further, although the narrator is a young child with a limited ability of expression, she is accurately describing the experiences of many Latino Americans. At the beginning of the twentieth century, "hundreds of thousands of Mexicans crossed the American border in search of a better way of life" (Dinnerstein 122-24). One of the largest waves of Mexicans to cross the border became agricultural laborers (254-55). This arrangement was established during and after World War II between the American and Mexican governments, and the workers were known as 'braceros.' "Over the years

almost five million *braceros*, as these temporary workers were called, came to the United States" (255). The life of migrant farm-workers was very hard and "may be partially responsible for the exodus of many rural Mexican Americans to the cities" (255). Further, the difficulties "facing the urban poor were multifaceted . . . poor housing, poor health, higher crime rate . . ." (281). Surprisingly, the 1975 Census Bureau reported:

almost one third of all blacks and one quarter of the more than 11,000,000 Spanish-speaking Americans lived below the poverty level defined by the federal government, which was \$5,500 for an urban family of four. (281)

The story that Esperanza is telling really speaks to the lack of permanence, the poverty, and the over-crowding found in her Latino American community. She as metaphor/symbol, like the child narrators of Morrison, Anaya, and Kingston, reflects specific aspects of her ethnicity.

In a similar fashion, these child speakers also demonstrate a powerlessness as their ethnicities engage elements in mainstream American society. Noted scholar, critic, and author Alice Byrnes believes that the motif of the innocent child is often used to expose the hypocrisy in dominant cultures (20). For instances, during the time period of Morrison's The Bluest Eye, Shirley Temple was very

popular. She epitomized the dominant culture's ideal of beauty: blue eyes, blond hair, white skin. Morrison refers to this as the 'Master Narrative.' She identifies this as "caste prejudice . . . based upon skin tone" (Moses 626). Because of the dominant white culture, lighter skin is preferred even in the "black community, a caste hierarchy that privileges light skin, blue eyes, and European features . . ." (626). Yet, Claudia, not knowing why, hates Shirley Temple. When Pecola and Frieda have

a loving conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple was. I [Claudia] couldn't join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley Temple. . . . But before that I [Claudia] had felt a stranger, more frightening thing than hatred for all the Shirley Temples of the world. (Morrison, Bluest 19)

This revulsion in Claudia begins at Christmas time and deals with dolls. "The big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue-eyed Baby Doll," which adults thought "was my fondest wish" (20). However, in Claudia, the only desire the doll inspires is destruction (20).

Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs--all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. (20)

Additionally, Claudia has had a different education. On

Saturdays her mother has regularly serenaded her on Black beauty--"this concise, confident, and lyrical deconstruction of the Shirley Temple aesthetic" (Moses 627). So something instinctive in Claudia knows that there is great beauty beyond the mainstream American ideal. Yet Claudia, a symbol of her ethnic group, is powerless against such values--all she can do is destroy "those dolls" (Morrison, Bluest 21).

However, Antonio, the child narrator in Bless Me, Ultima, experiences a different kind of powerlessness. Because Antonio is raised in a Catholic family he is told that being a priest is the best way to help the people. It is his mother's dearest wish that he take holy orders. "You [Antonio] will be like my brothers. You will be a Luna, Antonio. You will be a man of the people, and perhaps a priest." She [Antonio's mother] smiled" (10). A "dilemma . . . arises for the boy: which offers the better theology, an Indian animism or the Christianity of the Easter Week . . . ?" (Lee 147). Interestingly, Father Byrnes and the church, symbols of mainstream American culture, seem to fail Antonio and the people.

Easter Sunday is to be the first time Antonio will partake of holy communion. He has been anticipating this moment for a long time. That Sunday he worked hard to keep himself pure. Because Antonio knew that "the body and blood of the risen Christ [would] soon . . . be with me, in me, and

He would answer all the questions I had to ask (Anaya, Bless 231). Distracted by the other kids around him,

Somehow I [Antonio] couldn't understand, the mystery was beginning to escape me! I shut my eyes tightly and prayed for forgiveness. . . . I closed my eyes and concentrated. I had just swallowed Him. He must be in there! . . . A thousand questions pushed through my mind, but the Voice within me did not answer. . . . I called again to the God that was within me, but there was no answer. Only emptiness. (232-34)

After all the anticipation and preparation, Antonio has no answers, only the rumbl[ing] stomach from the morning fast" (234).

However, the church does not just prove powerless for Antonio; it also fails to save the Agua Negra ranch. An old friend of Gabriel Márez comes to beg the help of Ultima who "is truly *una ultima*, one of the last of an ancient order, a Catholic believer, she nonetheless incarnates a oneness with prior and non-Christian stores of knowledge, the spirituality of the natural order" (Lee 148). The man tells of

the horror that had enveloped his life. . . . The pots and pans, the dishes lift into the air and crash against the walls! We cannot eat. . . . And who can make stones rain from the skies!"

(Anaya, Bless 238)

Naturally, the church would be solicited for aid. A priest is sent for who

blessed the entire house. It did not help. Now he will not come anymore. He says no evil can withstand the blessing by holy water, and so we must be making up stories. . . . My children are like walking zombies, the evil presence moves them like ghosts and the priest says we make up stories! (239)

At length, it is the restorative powers of Ultima that save the family at Agua Negra and not the church. With chanting, incense, and a bonfire of juniper branches, Ultima lifts the curse (245-47).

So, unlike Claudia's helpless feeling against mainstream aesthetics, Antonio experiences a different kind of powerlessness. Antonio thought he would be empowered by some kind of revelation after the communion mass, but nothing happened. The Agua Negra people thought the church would expel the evil spirits, but nothing happened. Antonio and some in his community are unable to connect with the Catholic church. The church of the dominant culture seems powerless to satisfy the spiritual needs of all the community members.

Kingston's young narrator experiences yet a different kind of powerlessness. What would normally empower the Anglo-

Protestant in America does not help her child narrator. The narrator races home saying, "I got straight A's, Mama" (Woman 45). Her mother merely responds, "Let me tell you a true story about a girl who saves her village" (45). The successes "of the girl once rated with a zero I.Q. are cursorily dismissed as her mother, who wants her to remain essentially Chinese, tries to pull her back to her roots" (Williams 336). Moreover, one would think that having a "smart" daughter, even though Chinese discount daughters, would count for something. Yet, "in China there were solutions for what to do with little girls who ate up food and threw tantrums. You can't eat straight A's" (46). Time and again, her parents have threatened to sell her and her sister once they returned to China (46).

Nevertheless, the grades given at American schools do not seem to raise the narrator in the eyes of her mother. Furthermore, having a mother who knows so little of the dominant culture that she "mixes up cowboys and boy scouts," it is impossible to make American successes understood (Ahokas 12). So, even though the dominant culture says the child narrator is worthy by American standards, she is still powerless and dejected in Chinese American society.

Lastly, the Latina is powerless against dominant male possessiveness. Furthermore, there is evidence of this powerlessness running through more than one generation.

Esperanza of Cisneros' The House on Mango Street is named after her great-grandmother. She wishes she had known her because she was "so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. . . . she never forgave him (11). "Her great-grandmother ultimately acquiesced to patriarchal possessive violence" (McCracken 181). The implication is that she was raped, and societal mores forced her to remain with her violator. The great-grandmother was powerless against her eventual husband and powerless against society's dictates.

As for Esperanza, she too is powerless in the face of male violence, especially violence perpetuated by the dominant culture. She experiences not only a rape but racism when her violator says, "I love you, Spanish girl" (Cisneros, House 100). He then "rapes her behind the carnival booth" (McCracken 181). Consequently, Esperanza encounters the same violence as her great-grandmother--the only difference is that she does not stay with her abuser. Esperanza has already stated she does not want to be like her great-grandmother with her "sadness on her elbow" (Cisneros, House 11). So she will tell no one of the attack. As a result, Esperanza proves powerless against the dominant male's force and powerless to seek aid.

Sadly, it seems that mainstream culture has not fulfilled some of the expectations of the child narrators in

these ethnic works. Interestingly, even though they are longing because of the inadequacy of their situations, they really cannot seek understanding in their own ethnicities. These characters live in a borderland between cultures, religions, languages, episteme, and more. In the preface to Gloria Anzaldúa in Borderlands/La Frontera, she states, "Borderlands are physically present whenever 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 shrinks with intimacy" (n.p.). Critics and theorists who explore the borderland see it as a "distinctive cultural space" (Pratt 90). The 'borderality' these child narrators experience is a unique 'no man's land.' It seems only immigrants and minorities are living the same interstitial existence.

Of course, the phenomenon of borderality is certainly not new to ethnic peoples; but it is far more involved than previously explained. So why would someone endure this no man's land? It is because people are looking for "an unsullied geography in which to begin society all over again, in which to wipe clean the slate The United States is at once the home of Utopias and the world's great dystopia" (Osborne n.p.). William Carlos Williams said, "'Begin Again.' There can be a painful kind of brinkmanship involved in

starting anew," and that is just what these child speakers are demonstrating (Williams 333).

The most obvious gap that the child narrator inhabits is the space between infant and adult. They are not unknowing babies and are thus aware of their circumstances, yet they are powerless to do anything about them. Further, one can agree that these young speakers all move from innocence to brutal reality. For example, Claudia in Morrison's The Bluest Eye goes from a nine-year-old obliviously playing with a coat over her head to a reflective older person who says, "Pecola . . . What? Pregnant? . . . Her daddy? (64,188-89). Such knowledge would shake even a child to the core. Anaya's Antonio in Bless Me, Ultima has a similar awakening to the violent world. He is present at four senseless deaths:

that of Lupito, a war-veteran mentally damaged in Japan . . .; that of Narciso, the town's basically harmless drunk . . .; that of Florence, a boy who drowns . . .; and that of Ultima herself, who teaches him that death can be continuity and restoration as well as separation. (A. Lee 146-47)

However, Cisneros' Esperanza in The House on Mango Street has the most savage education. "In the vignette 'Red Clowns,' Esperanza . . . is sexually assaulted by strangers at a carnival" (Kuribayashi 168). She pleads, "Sally, make him stop . . . I couldn't do anything but cry" (Cisneros 100).

Lastly, of the four minority child speakers, Kingston's narrator in The Woman Warrior is perhaps the least traumatized, although her experience is just as evolutionary as the rest. An older, mentally challenged boy begins to follow her around school. Eventually, he is visiting her family's laundry on a daily basis. "He sat on two large cartons that he brought with him . . ." (195). Her family's curiosity about the cartons grows until he leaves the "boxes unguarded" (197). Looking over her mother's shoulder, they discover that "the two cartons were stuffed with pornography--naked magazines, nudie postcards, and photographs" (197). Fortunately, Kingston's narrator does not fall victim to this man's desires; however, she is certainly wiser for the experience. Consequently, the journey from innocence to experience is rather abrupt for these child narrators; and, more importantly, it is a very powerful statement about life in ethnic communities. Nevertheless, the gap between innocence and knowledge is just one of the many borderlands that the child speakers negotiate.

Certainly one of the most problematic border places for minorities is the gap between their native tongue and the dominant language of English. Further, one would think that African Americans who have lived in this country for generations would not exist in a borderland between languages, yet they can/do. For Morrison's Claudia, language

should be power.

Historically, African cultures have communicated through the spoken word, and knowledge has been encoded in spoken forms of literature. Orature thus depends on *nommo*, defined by Asante [author of The Afrocentric Idea 1987] as the power of the spoken word, the belief that all power is ultimately that of oral communication. (Brummett 149)

So in the African American community, Claudia's words should have significance, and for the reader they do. However, in her fictive community: "Adults do not talk to us [Claudia and Frieda]--they give us directions. They issue orders without providing information. . . . We cannot answer them" (Morrison 10). For Claudia, adults talk but do not listen. She is not silent, but she is not heard either. She exists in a space between.

Anaya's Antonio is another young speaker who struggles in a borderland, the space between mother tongue and dominant language. His encounter with English is almost stereotypical of many minority experiences. He has been born and raised in the United States, but is never taught any English. On his first day of school, he "got to the schoolgrounds, but was lost" (60). Antonio is scared and nervous, but fortunately an older school boy offers to help. "He spoke English, a foreign tongue. 'First grade,' was all I [Antonio] could answer"

(60). Miss Maestas tries to put Antonio at ease, but it is short lived because of his new classmates.

She [Miss Maestas] took me to the front of the room and spoke to the other boys and girls. She pointed to me but I did not understand her. Then the other boys and girls laughed and pointed at me. I did not feel so good. (61)

Antonio suffers from the fear, humiliation, and self-consciousness that is brought on because he does not know English. Further, he cannot share this burden with his family because of the portend at his birth. Ultima "offered him all the objects of life when he [Antonio] was just a baby, and what did he choose, the pen and paper" (57). His mother joyously cries, "A scholar already, on his first day of school!" (57). So he cannot say anything at home about his difficulty because it would greatly disappoint his mother. Hence, he is left to flounder alone in that space between languages until he can learn enough English to fit in at school.

Similarly, Kingston's child narrator suffers from the dominant language as well. She too has difficulty understanding the language in the classroom; however, her borderland stems from tone, volume and usage. "When I [Kingston's narrator] went to kindergarten and had to speak English for the first time, I became silent. A dumbness--a

shame--still cracks my voice in two, even when I want to say 'hello' casually" (Woman 165). As with many minorities, Kingston's young speaker falls silent because she fears making a mistake with the language or betraying an accent. She decides if she speaks softly enough, others will not hear these defects. She says, "I had a terrible time talking" (165). Even a simple telephone call would make her "throat bleed" and steal "that day's courage" (165). Such events would ruin her day "with self-disgust when I [narrator] hear my broken voice come skittering out into the open. It makes people wince to hear it" (165). However, Chinese American girls are not voiceless (167). At Chinese school, they screamed and yelled during recess" with no inhibitions (167).

Yet the young narrator's language problem is two-fold. She does not only have to control the volume of her discourse, but also the tone. Normal Chinese women have "strong and bossy" voices (167).

We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine. Apparently we whispered even more softly than the Americans. Once a year the teachers referred my sister and me to speech therapy. . . . Most of us eventually found some voice, however faltering. We invented an American-feminine speaking personality. (172)

Consequently, Kingston's child narrator traverses a

borderality within the dominant language. She limits her speech to what she thinks is culturally acceptable for Americans in volume and tone.

In like manner, Cisneros' child speaker describes yet another ramification of a minority functioning in the borderland between native tongue and dominant language. Esperanza and the other characters in The House on Mango Street do "inhabit a border zone . . ." but they also have to operate in mainstream society (Rosaldo 85). Across the street from Esperanza's home, a man has just brought his wife from Mexico. The whole neighborhood is speculating on why the woman never leaves the apartment. Perhaps it is because she is "too fat" or the "three flights of stair" (Cisneros 77). Esperanza interjects, "I believe she doesn't come out because she is afraid to speak English, and maybe this is so since she only knows eight words" (77). The woman can only say: "*He not here;*" "*No speak English;*" and "*Holy smokes.*"

Further, learning such set phrases is common for minorities. When Esperanza's father came to this country, "he ate hamandeggs for three months. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Hamandeggs. That was the only word he knew. He doesn't eat hamandeggs anymore" (77). Esperanza's father was forced to eat one set meal for months because he did not have the time or opportunity to learn the names of other food dishes. In like fashion, her neighbor does not venture out of

the apartment because she does not have enough skill in English to maneuver the shops and streets in America. Both people are compelled to live border existences, one eating the same food over and over and the other shut up in an apartment.

However, the breach between languages is not the only border space these young narrators must maneuver. They also must negotiate factors between their ethnicity and that of mainstream America. In The Bluest Eye, Morrison juxtaposes the Anglo-Protestant dominant society with Claudia's and Pecola's reality. Morrison asserts that "the western notion of love also taint[s] the lives of the women and minorities subsumed by that culture" (Nelson-Born 5). For example, Pecola Breedlove's "idea of love and beauty has been corrupted by mass culture, i.e. white culture" (5). She thinks she needs blue eyes to be considered beautiful. Moreover, Morrison "foregrounds the violent consequences that can occur when someone's cultural experience is appropriated and absorbed by a larger, dominant culture . . ." (5). Morrison begins her exploration by using the words from school book primers. The 'Dick and Jane' series of "white primer[s]" began in 1930 and were still in use in the 1960s (Doughty 34). They often begin as follows: "Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play.

Who will play with Jane?" (Morrison 3). School books of the 30s, 40s, and 50s had an idyllic setting with a loving nuclear family and perfect house.

Beside this flawless existence, Claudia describes her life in an African American community of the 40s. Her house is "old, cold, and green" (Morrison 10). Her mother and father only glance if "we [Claudia and Frieda] trip and fall" and "cut or bruise ourselves[;] they ask us are we crazy" (10). Moreover, Claudia's clothing has "metal" in her "black garters" that hurt her "legs, but I [Claudia] do not take them off, for it is too cold to lie stockingless" (10). And Claudia's playmate is her sister who comes in to her sick room with "eyes are full of sorrow. She sings to me" (12). However, "in the night, when my [Claudia's] coughing was dry and tough, feet padded into the room, hands repinned the flannel, readjusted the quilt, and rested a moment on my forehead" (12). Even though there is a stark difference between Claudia's life and that of America's Dick and Jane, she still knows love.

Perhaps one would think Claudia's world is pathetic compared to the dominant norm. Pecola's is even worse. Her home is literally a "storefront" (38). As for clothing, parts of her apparel are completely missing, as noted when Marie, one of the local whores, says, "Hi, dumplin.' Where your socks?" (51). Further, Pecola has no playmates. Her isolation

is so punctuated that "she was the only member of her class who sat alone at a double desk" (45). Finally, there is no motherly tenderness, closeness, or concern for this child. Pecola literally calls her mother "Mrs. Breedlove" (43). So it seems that the dominant norm of home, family, and friends, is a far reach from the world of Claudia and Pecola. They exist in that borderland between what society says they should have and what they actually do have.

Unlike the severity of Claudia's or Pecola's predicament, something as simple as the lack of a sandwich can create a border space. Anaya's young speaker feels ashamed because of the difference between ethnic and 'normal' food. On his first day of school, his mother takes special care to pack a good lunch for him. Antonio says, "My mother had packed a small jar of hot beans and some good, green chile wrapped in tortillas. When the other children saw my lunch they laughed and pointed again. Even the high school girl laughed. They showed me their sandwiches which were made of bread. Again I did not feel well" (62). Dominant society dictates that sandwiches are the expected food type, and anything else will push one farther into the space between ethnic and 'normal.'

Moreover, dominant society establishes which religions will be accepted and which will be outcast. Unfortunately, which food to eat is the simplest dilemma Antonio must

survive. Since birth, his mother has wished that Antonio would be "a priest, . . . to hold mass on Sundays like father Byrnes did in the church in town" (10). However, Antonio wonders, "who will hear my confessions?" (10). His statement itself has little significance, but what it implies does-- that he has doubts about Catholicism. Further, Father Byrnes who has been Antonio's spiritual guide lacks commitment and compassion. The one child that Father Byrnes should have been trying to reach, Florence, the atheist of the bunch, is the only child he humiliates and punishes. For being late, "he [Byrnes] grabbed Florence and pulled him out of line, then stood him "in the middle of the aisle with his arms outspread" for the entire class (209). Anaya seems to be criticizing "dogmatic Catholicism" through Father Byrnes as:

[an] ineffectual Irish priest whose sole method of reaching his first communicants is a meaningless catechism. The children respond by rote but have no deeper understanding of the faith to which they are being indoctrinated. (Kanoza 163)

Yet Catholicism is one of the accepted religions of mainstream society, unlike the "pantheistic-like spirituality" of the carp cult (163). Antonio "dreams the legend of the Golden Carp . . . which is protected and half-worshipped by his friends Samuel and Cisco" (A. Lee 147). The fish lives in "fact and fantasy, a literal river fish but

also a source of legend A dilemma thus arises for the boy: which offers the better theology, an Indian animism or . . . Christianity?" (147). Antonio wanders the ground between dominant Catholicism and ethnic Native American belief.

Interestingly, there are several similarities between the borderlands that Anaya's Antonio must walk and that Kingston's child narrator inhabits. Additionally, Kingston's young speaker has to negotiate double binds that deal with food and gender. It is a common belief in Cantonese society that "heroes are bold toward food" (Woman 88). In Chinese history, "the most fantastic eater of them all was Wei Pang [who] could . . . eat scorpions, snakes, cockroaches, worms, slugs, beetles, and crickets" (89). Because of this history, Chinese believe that "big eaters win" (90). As a result, Kingston's young narrator sits down to:

blood pudding awobble in the middle of the table.

. . . The squid eye would keep appearing at
breakfast and dinner until eaten. . . . I

[Kingston's narrator] have seen revulsion on the
faces of visitors who've caught us at meals. (92)

Not only does mainstream society criticize such cuisine, but even fellow Chinese would not eat that food. Kingston's narrator is twice removed from what is considered acceptable food for the dominant culture. She is in a borderality even

few Chinese occupy.

However, that is not true when considering gender. It is no secret that American society has treated and, in some cases, still treats women as second-class citizens. Furthermore, the Chinese community has always undervalued its women, so it is no surprise that Kingston's narrator must endure constant assaults on her worth and place in Chinese and American society. On more than one occasion, friends of the family have said, "'Now when you sell this one [one of the female children], I'd like to buy her to be my maid'" (190). Then there would be laughter. Further, with a house full of girls, their great-uncle is often surrounded by females at the dinner table. He would shout,

'Maggots! Where are my grandsons? I want grandsons! Give me grandsons! Maggots!' He pointed at each one of us, 'Maggot! Maggot! Maggot! Maggot! Maggot! Maggot!' . . . 'He does that at every meal,' the girls told us in English. 'Yeah,' we said. 'Our old man hates us too. What assholes.' (191)

Sadly, "yellow-white gaps abound, be it in language, the relation of space to time, ritual, the status of family or women or children, the nature of eating, or even the loudness of talk" (A. Lee 155). Kingston's child narrator traverses borders with double binds--undervalued by Americans and further undervalued by Chinese. Thus, the borderalities for

Chinese American women are many.

Finally, Cisneros' *Esperanza* illuminates the gap between the rich and the poor in American society--the haves and the have nots. She has a simple request, to be like the other children who are allowed to eat lunch at school. She has fantasized that it will be a wonderful experience. However, the students who eat in the cafeteria have money to pay for hot lunches; *Esperanza* does not. After three days of begging for permission, her mother finally relents. "The following morning I [*Esperanza*] get to go to school with my mother's letter and a rice sandwich because we don't have any lunch meat" (44). Her excitement and anticipation make the day seem especially slow.

But lunchtime came finally and I [*Esperanza*] got to get in line with the stay-at-school kids.

Everything is fine until the nun who knows all the canteen kids by heart looks at me and says: 'You, who sent you here?' . . . I . . . just hold out my hand with the letter. 'This is no good,' she says, 'till Sister Superior gives the okay. Go upstairs and see her.' (44)

To eat in the canteen is a small request, but mainstream society has its rules. Further, Sister Superior does not seem very understanding when it comes to change.

'You don't live far,' she says. 'You live across

the boulevard. That's only four blocks. Which one is your house? . . . That one?' she said, . . . I always cry when nuns yell at me . . . Then she was sorry and said I could stay--just for today, . . . In the canteen, which was nothing special, lots of boys and girls watched while I cried and ate my sandwich, the bread already greasy and the rice cold. (45)

Esperanza has learned that children with money are allowed to use the canteen, but others are not. One knows Esperanza lacks lunch money because she says, "I needed money. The Catholic high school cost a lot . . ." (53). Clearly, there is an invisible boundary between the rich and the poor. Lastly, she experiences a similar discomfort that Anaya's Antonio describes when mainstream students see her tears and her ethnic food. In reality, she is experiencing the borderality when 'two or more cultures edge each other.' Also, she and the other child narrators stand for the minorities that innocently and ignorantly encounter the mainstream culture.

Further, although these child narrators, representatives for their ethnicities, have a difficult time when encountering dominant society, they still show the potential for growth. One of the elements of the child as symbol is the capacity for growth; and each of these young, ethnic speakers

does show the possibility of progressing, and by extenuation, so can their ethnicity. For example, in The Bluest Eye, Claudia and her sister can only think about "the baby that everyone wanted dead" (190). They feel a "fondness for Pecola," but a greater need "for someone to want the black baby to live" (190). During this contemplation, they realize:

We [Claudia and Frieda] had defended ourselves since memory . . . ; we had become headstrong, devious, and arrogant. Nobody paid us any attention, so we paid very good attention to ourselves. Our limitations were not known to us--not then. Our only handicap was our size; people gave us orders because they were bigger and stronger. So it was with confidence, strengthened by pity and pride, that we decided to change the course of events and alter a human life. (191)

They acknowledge that they are still young and not very big, but they have grown strong and confident, so much so, that they think they can change the outcome for Pecola. Of course such an idea is still naive, but they at least try to help her with prayers, offerings, and "magic words" (192).

Conversely, most in their community are saying the baby would be "better off in the ground" (190). For Claudia, the process of ascent is when she comes "to understand the revelation of Pecola's tragedy and her community's role in it"

(Doughty 43).

Antonio Marez of Bless Me, Ultima has a similar realization and growth process. The evil witch Tenorio has killed Ultima's owl. "I [Antonio] did not think she or my father understood what the owl's death meant" (274-75). Antonio intuitively knows that Ultima's life force is connected to the owl, so symbolically Tenorio has killed her. Deborah and Theresa are still in the house and shaken from the violence. "'Take them to their room,' I [Antonio] said to my mother. It was the first time I had ever spoken to my mother as a man; she nodded and obeyed" (275). Even Antonio's mother senses that he is no longer a boy. Although Ultima is very old, Antonio still cannot bear to part with her. However, Ultima says, "We have been good friends, Antonio, do not let my passing diminish that. Now I must ask you to do me a favor. . . . Now, take the owl, go west into the hills until you find a forked juniper tree, there bury the owl" (275-76). Antonio obeys and takes great care so that "the coyotes would not dig it out" (276). He instinctively understands the request.

Then he stops for a moment and watches "the moonlight glitter on pebbles of the llano, the millions of stars in the night sky, and the twinkling of the town in the distance (276). He understands through the land that life does not end "but wing[s] its way to a new place, a new time . . ." (275).

Nevertheless, he also knows that "sometime in the future [he] would have to build [his] own dream out of those things that were so much a part of [his] childhood" (276). Furthermore, he understands that Ultima will not be laid to rest after the "ceremony that was prescribed by custom" (277). He knows this because he buried Ultima in the llano at the foot of a forked juniper tree (277). For the story, Antonio "acts both as her [Ultima's] apprentice and her memorialist" (A. Lee 148). He has grown from a young, impressionable boy, to someone his mother relies on and to someone a powerful curandera trusts.

It takes a desperate act to show that Antonio has potential, and the same is true of Kingston's child narrator. The young speaker in Kingston's work has been hobbled by mainstream society and disregarded by her own, yet she is not defeated. However, what propels her to show character is the fear that her parents are actually considering a marriage for her with the mentally challenged boy. When he hauls in a "third box . . . of dirt," the child speaker cannot tolerate his presence anymore (Woman 200). She says, "my throat burst open," and all her pent-up emotions came rushing forth (201).

'I looked directly at my mother and at my father and screamed. I want you to tell that hulk . . . to go away and never bother us again. You think you can give us away to freaks. They [teachers] tell me I'm smart, and can win scholarships. I can get

into colleges. . . . Not everybody thinks I'm nothing. . . . I'm going to join clubs. . . . And I don't want to listen to any more of your stories. . . . You lie with stories. . . . I want to be a lumberjack and a newspaper reporter. . . . And you leave my sister alone. You try that with the advertising again, and I'll take her with me.'

(201-03)

What appears to be a tantrum from an impudent child is the declaration of years of pent-up emotions finally breaking through--she will not quietly capitulate anymore. She wants to be recognized for her value, intelligence, and ambition. Further, she envisions a future for herself beyond the traditional roles for Chinese women. Lastly, she steps forward as a protector for her sister, promising to leave with her rather than see her in an arranged marriage.

Ultimately, Esperanza in The House on Mango Street harbors a secret desire to escape her ethnic community as well. She attends a wake for Rachel's baby sister, and in the process meets the "aunts, the three sisters, las comadres" (103). The aunts look Esperanza over rather closely and then instruct her to make a wish. "Yes, make a wish. What do you want? Anything? I [Esperanza] said. I closed my eyes. Did you wish already? Yes, I said. Amazingly, at some intuitive level, one of the aunts knew what she has wished.

The one with the marble hands called me aside. Esperanza. She held my face with her blue-veined hands and looked and looked at me. A long silence. When you leave you must remember always to come back, she said. 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. . . . It was as if she could read my mind, as if she knew what I had wished for (105)

A little confused, Esperanza leaves to join her friends who are waiting by the door. She says, "I didn't understand everything they had told me" (105). When she turns back towards the aunts, they "smiled and waved in their smoky way," and Esperanza never sees them again (105).

The ethereal description of the aunts suggests that they are prophetic in some way and that they have mysteriously seen Esperanza's future. Furthermore, Esperanza says she does not understand "everything" they said. She has only partial understanding. Apparently, she has already made a decision to leave the neighborhood, but she knows that she can never truly escape her past or who she is. Such recognitions indicate a growth process beyond the little girl who lived in a red house. Additionally, one has to remember that the name Esperanza literally means "hope," and the aunts have recited

her name more than once. So Esperanza's eventual move from the neighborhood has the potential to be a positive one.

Ultimately, these minority child narrators represent their ethnicities as well as embody the attributes of the child as symbol. Of course, symbols "suggest a reality that goes beyond the physical image" (Byrnes 13). Moreover, the child as symbol has been used as an "innocent mouthpiece" to expose more serious issues (20). Finally, the child suggests an opportunity for growth, the potential for new life, and the eventual understanding that is needed to direct the growth process (30).

CHAPTER III

ETHOS: PERSONAL VIRTUE AND VIRTUOUS CONDUCT TOWARDS OTHERS

Toni Morrison, Rudolfo Anaya, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Sandra Cisneros have created convincing child narrators that operate as cultural metaphors for their ethnicities. Yet, these metaphors still do not completely explain why mainstream American audiences have become engaged in unfamiliar landscapes. As previously noted, one of the answers lies in the key Aristotelian appeal of Ethos. According to Edward L. Pross, scholar and critic, "since the dawn of recorded history one can find ample evidence that men have accepted and believed the opinions of some individuals and rejected those of others" (257). One cogent explanation for such behavior lies in Aristotle's Rhetoric, where he details the components necessary for persuasive discourse. As many have suggested, the text of the Rhetoric was composed over time and was probably Aristotle's lecture notes. At the beginning of an article entitled "From Aristotle to Madison Avenue: Ethos and the Ethnics of Argument," James L. Kinneavy and Susan C. Warshauer note that Aristotle "seems to value the enthymeme (a probability deduction used in rhetoric) over other aspects of the body of proof" (173).

Later, Aristotle suggests that "ethos may constitute the

most effective means of proof because of the persuasiveness of the orator's moral character" (173). Aristotle goes on to say,

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's general character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others; this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided.

(Roberts, Rhetoric 1.2.2 1356a 4-8)

Aristotle complicates this means of persuasion when he focuses on the listener's perceptions. He says, "The orator must not only try to make the argument of this speech demonstrative and worthy of belief; he must also make his own character look right and put his hearers, who are to decide, into the right frame of mind" (2.1.1 1377b 22-24). Applying this technique is something Morrison, Anaya, Kingston, and Cisneros do quite well.

Further, "Aristotle sets out . . . an interesting sample of the conventional values of Greek society," values still respected today (Kennedy 78). Aristotle names nine virtues (liberality, justice, courage, temperance, magnanimity, magnificence, prudence, gentleness, wisdom) in the Rhetoric that are attributes of a moral character (Sattler 58). He

says, "Virtue [areté] is an ability, as it seems, that is productive and preservative of goods, and an ability for doing good in many and great ways, actually in all ways in all things" (Kennedy, Rhetoric 1.9.9 1366b 35). Additionally, Aristotle goes on to say that "virtue is defined as an ability for doing good, [and] the greatest virtues are necessarily those most useful to others" (Kennedy, Rhetoric 1.9.9 1366b 3-4). Hence, the means by which one might appear prudent and good are to be grasped from analysis of the virtues" (Kennedy, Rhetoric 2.1.1 1378a 16-17).

But how does ethical virtue manifest itself in the characters of these multicultural texts? One explanation lies in the selfless acts of the characters. Aristotle says, "Actions are noble for which the reward is simply honour, . . . So are those in which a man aims at something desirable for some one else's sake . . ." (Roberts, Rhetoric 1.9.9 1366b 36-37). Interestingly, two of the ways the child narrators establish their goodness are through personal virtue and virtuous conduct towards others. As for virtuous conduct towards others, Aristotle defines this quality as a "friendly feeling towards any one as wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about" (Roberts, Rhetoric 2.4.4 1380b 36-37, 1381a 1-2). In other words, speakers exhibit a "genuine interest in the

welfare of listeners" (Sattler 58). Or, when dealing with written text, another dimension of virtue towards others could apply to the welfare of other characters in a story.

Another way of understanding ethos, personal virtue or virtuous conduct towards others, is through subjectivity and objectivity. Basically, the communicator personally possesses qualities such that an audience would believe him/her honest and trustworthy. However, there is also an objective form of ethos. In this case, the speaker depicts "the character traits of others by means of description or possibly impersonation" (56). With objective ethos, an orator is speaking for another.

When applying this Aristotelian understanding of ethos to the textual representations of ethnicity, it is not the personal trustworthiness of the minority writers themselves, but the credibility they establish for their child narrators that the audience must weigh. Hence the ethos of the young speakers must be explored to ascertain their possession of or lack of virtue, the underlying fundamental quality that aids a speaker in persuasion.

Nevertheless, even with the unfamiliar backscapes, it seems necessary to mention that "what will work most effectively are the very appeals and arguments which the audience itself finds good, convincing, appealing, and positive" (Kinneavy, Cope, Campbell 28). Already discussed at

length is the fact that the 'child' engenders a humanistic response in an audience. Human beings see their continuity and mortality in a child, thus the reader is poised to relate to the young narrators (28). However, rather than initiate the building of ethos with the attributes of the child speakers themselves, these minority writers start with an objective form of ethos, having the narrators speak in favor of an 'underdog.' Such an approach is a subtle, indirect method of establishing virtue towards others.

An excellent example of this initial ethical indirectness can be seen in Morrison's The Bluest Eye. At the beginning of the novel, Claudia MacTeer has begun a diatribe about how adults react to problems in her ethnicity.

When we trip and fall down they glance at us; if we cut or bruise ourselves, they ask us are we crazy. When we catch colds, they shake their heads in disgust at our lack of consideration Our illness is treated with contempt, foul Black Draught, and castor oil that blunts our minds. (10)

What makes this passage seem all the harsher is that the reader realizes Claudia is speaking about the treatment she receives from her own mother. Claudia lets out a loud cough "packed tight with phlegm" and her mother shouts, "Great, Jesus. Get on in that bed. How many times do I have to tell you to wear something on your head? You must be the biggest

fool in this town" (10). Later, Claudia's mother comes into her room and with "large and rough" hands rubs Vicks salve all over her chest "until she is almost faint" and ready to "scream" (11).

However, what Claudia has outlined is the typical reaction to illness in her community. An outsider would mistake her mother's actions as indifference, possibly cruelty, but what puzzles the reader is the fact that Claudia begins to speak in defense of her mother. It is a precarious time. Her parents and the other adults in the African American community "talk in tired, edgy voices about Zick's Coal Company" (9). They sneak out at night to pick up pieces of coal along the railroad tracks. The largest room in her house is lighted only by a "kerosene lamp" with the rest "braced in darkness" (10). Yet, in the dead of night, when her cough was the worst,

feet padded into the room, hands repinned the flannel, readjusted the quilt, and rested a moment on my [Claudia's] forehead. So when I think of autumn, I think of somebody with hands who does not want me to die. (10)

Still, it might be that the causal observer would think that Claudia's mother is a hard-hearted woman. Yet, Claudia calls the treatment she received from her mother as "productive and fructifying pain. Love, thick and dark as Alaga syrup . . ."

(12). The child understands her mother and the times. At some level she knows the anger is directed at the illness and helplessness her mother feels. Consequently, she points out the mother's good qualities, subtly but with vivid imagery. In the process, the young speaker objectively begins to establish her own ethos as a child who is willing to defend a seemingly irritated mother and as a narrator who understands the complexities of life in Lorrain, Ohio in 1941.

Rudolfo Anaya's young narrator, Antonio, in Bless Me, Ultima, takes a similar approach to begin building his ethos in objective fashion. This child speaker relates the plight of an old woman, another mother figure, he learns about from his parents. He says it is the custom of his people "to provide for the old and sick. There was always room in the safety and warmth of la familia for one more person, be that person stranger or friend" (5). Nevertheless, Antonio can sense that his father is hesitant to bring the woman into their home. He hears his mother plead, "She helped bring them into the world, she cannot be but good for the children" (4). The problem is that this woman is

a curandera, a woman who knew the herbs and remedies of the ancients, a miracle-worker who could heal the sick . . . lift the curses laid by brujas . . . exorcise the evil the witches planted. . . . And because a curandera had this power she

was misunderstood and often suspected of practicing witchcraft herself. (4)

The narrator says, "I shuddered and my heart turned cold at the thought. The cuentos of the people were full of the tales of evil done by brujas" (4).

Eventually, Antonio drifts into sleep and dreams he "could not make out the face of the mother who rested from the pains of birth, but I [Antonio] could see the old woman in black who tended the just-arrived, steaming baby" (5). The old woman "nimble tied a knot on the cord" and "bit off the loose end" (5). Moreover, Antonio recognizes his "mother's brothers" as "they entered ceremoniously" the birthing room (5). Shortly, there is a "thunder of hoofbeats" and "the people of my [Antonio's] father" arrived (6). Even in his dream, it does not take long before the two sides of his family fill the room with "curses and threats . . . , pistols were drawn, and the opposing sides made ready for battle" (7). Yet, with the wave on one hand, the old woman stops the clash. "'Cease!' she cried, and the men were quiet. I pulled this baby into the light of life, so I will bury the afterbirth and the cord that once linked him to eternity. Only I will know his destiny" (7).

The audience knows that the event was actually Antonio's birth and Ultima was the midwife. However, the objective ethos that the child narrator has created is two-fold. First,

the event speaks to the goodness and power of the old woman. Besides bringing new life into the world, she is respected and obeyed by farmers and vaqueros alike. Even though a curandera, the narrator proves that Ultima is not a witch in the negative sense. Second, and in accordance with his own ethnicity, the child narrator demonstrates he has unusual ability. In his dreams he has literally crossed time and seen his own birth. The Native American world is filled with such stories dealing with powerful shaman. For Pueblo, "dreaming has importance in daily life" and "clairvoyance or second sight is practiced" (Parsons 452, 450). Hence, Antonio is no ordinary boy and will one day be a trusted member of his community.

Not nearly so mystical or auspicious, the story of Kingston's aunt, "No Name Woman," is the inadvertent avenue the child speaker takes to advance her ethos. In The Woman Warrior, the young narrator, "using a collective voice--that is, a voice that defines itself through speaking for others, or that tells its own story as interwoven with others," talks of an aunt whose name has not been uttered since before the family left China (Lidoff 30). The aunt had become pregnant two years after her husband left for America, causing disgrace and bad luck. When the villagers discover the pregnancy, they raid the family, "tearing the rice. . . . slaughtering our stock," overturning "earthenware jugs; duck

eggs, pickled fruits, vegetables burst out" in streams (Kingston, Woman 3-5). When the villagers leave, the devastated family finally breaks "their silence," cursing the aunt by screaming: "'You've killed us. Ghost! Dead ghost! Ghost! You've never been born'" (13-14). The aunt responds with "a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water" (16). Interestingly, the "Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one[s] . . ." (16).

Kingston's child narrator can only imagine the aunt's characteristics and the events leading up to her death. Even with all these obstacles, the young speaker does not see the aunt "free with sex" (Woman 8). The narrator believes the "man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil" (6). Perhaps "his demand . . . surprised, then terrified her. She obeyed him; she always did as she was told" (6). The young speaker wants to believe that her aunt "might have separated the rapes from the rest of living," if only she did not have to face her abuser regularly (7). Certainly, the aunt would have "lived in the same house as my [the narrator's] parents and eaten at an outcast table. . . . The powerful older people made wrongdoers eat alone" (7). When the aunt "told the man, 'I think I'm pregnant.' He organized the raid against her" (7).

Even with this terrible transgression of mores, the narrator points out that the aunt made efforts to protect her

child. When the pains of labor came, the aunt "remembered that old-fashioned women gave birth in their pigsties to fool the jealous, pain-dealing gods, who do not snatch piglets" (14). Instead of leaving the child on the ground to die of exposure, the narrator envisions the aunt "pull[ing] it up on to her belly, and . . . open[ing] her loose shirt and button[ing] the child inside" (15). The speaker says the aunt "may have gone to the pigsty as a last act of responsibility: she would protect this child as she had protected its father" (15). Admirably, the child narrator imagines her aunt keeping "the man's name to herself throughout her labor and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her" (11).

But besides being a warning of the dangers of menstruation, why does an aunt that the narrator has never met fill her thoughts? The reason is that in the Chinese American community, there is a balance and equilibrium to life (12). The narrator tries to describe this breach by saying anyone "flaring up into violence could open up a black hole, a maelstrom that pulled in the sky" (12). In the narrator's words, there is a "roundness" to Chinese American life" (13). In her ethnicity, a "family must be whole, faithfully keeping the descent line by having sons to feed the old and the dead, who in turn look after the family" (13). So, if the young speaker cannot reconcile the aunt's life, "unless I [the young speaker] see her life branching

into mine, she gives me no ancestral help" (8). By mentally mending the crack in the family line, the narrator indirectly establishes her own ethos as a champion for the underdog in the minds of a mainstream audience, as a dutiful niece recovering her aunt from obscurity, and as a child who has a very firm understanding of the social complexities in a Chinese American village. The narrator connotes herself as a dutiful child in the first few pages of the text, fascinating the reader with Chinese family history, and in a roundabout way establishes her own ethos.

In a similar circuitous way, while reciting the family history in The House on Mango Street, Cisneros' child speaker recounts the kidnapping, rape, and apparent depression of her great-grandmother; and although there are few lines devoted to the relative, they are packed with meaning. The child speaker notes that Esperanza "was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine" (10). The narrator goes on to say,

She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female--but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong. (10)

Although the speaker never met her great-grandmother, she must have heard stories of the "wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry" (11). The narrator marvels at the

simplicity of events that changed her great-grandmother's life forever. Esperanza claims "my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it" (11). The chain of events is so simple, yet so irrevocable.

Moreover, the narrator says,

she [the great-grandmother] never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. . . . I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.
(10)

Even though the narrator is young, she seems to understand the tragedy of her great-grandmother's life. Some may misunderstand and think the abduction romantic. However, the young speaker emphasizes 'no forgiveness' and 'sadness.' Those are not words attached to the conclusion of a romance tale. Instead, the narrator suggests a kidnapping, rape, and forced marriage that seem to have broken her great-grandmother's spirit. In Esperanza's ethnicity, if it is even suggested that a man may have taken a woman's virginity, it is expected that he will marry her. Never mind, if the sex act is consensual or not, she now belongs to him. After

watching the young wives around her, the young speaker knows that personal dreams often end once a woman is married and that some wives become virtual prisoners in their own homes. The child narrator pictures her great-grandmother at a window, head propped, gazing into what might have been.

Like Kingston's young narrator, Cisneros' child speaker establishes her ethos by speaking for someone she has never met. She describes her great-grandmother's assault, knowing her own family turned a blind eye to the injustice, to the injustice many women in her community suffer. The narrator emphasizes the fact that her great-grandmother, and women in general, are treated like property in the Latino community, "fancy chandelier[s]" to be exact. What makes these revelations all the more significant is the fact that the narrator is a child, perhaps as young as six years old when the story begins.

Esperanza understands the reality of Latinas and helps an unfamiliar audience comprehend as well. All the child narrators in these minority works perform this function. They initially draw a reader into their worlds by speaking for an underdog, illuminating their ethnicities, and creating objective ethos, an indirect form of establishing virtue towards others, which invites the continued attention of their readers. Dr. William M. Sattler, scholar and critic, stresses that "Objective ethos is often considered as an end

in itself, but it is nevertheless important to understand that the delineation of the character of others . . . [will] have a bearing upon the ethos of the speaker (60-61).

Ultimately, "in his discussion of style, Aristotle states (Roberts, Rhetoric 3.6.7 1408a 26-29) that an orator using language appropriate to the age, sex, and nationality of an individual portrayed in the *narratio* will create ethos" (Huges 212). So, even though these minority writers use one of the most indirect methods of creating initial ethos for their child narrators, the technique is effective, and all the more compelling because children are trying to redress some wrong.

More convincing yet are these minority writers' subjective use of ethos, where the speaker's own goodness exhibits qualities of a personal nature--intrinsic goodness and honesty, sound judgment, an interest in the well-being of the audience, together with respected traits of a non-ethical nature--which induce listeners to approve the arguments given in a speech. (Sattler 55-56)

In the case of Claudia from Morrison's The Bluest Eye, she displays a magnanimity of character beyond her years, yet it is quite subtle. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle speaks of magnanimity as "the virtue that disposes us to do good to other on a large scale . . . ," which Claudia does

(Roberts, 1.9.9 1366b 17). She shows a compassionate sympathy for Pecola and others in her community.

For example, Cholly Breedlove has caused his family to be put 'outdoors,' something people in the Black community dreaded more than anything else (Bluest 18). "Outdoors . . . was the real terror of life" and "the threat of being outdoors surfaced frequently in those days" (17). Claudia's mother, Mrs. Pauline MacTeer, has told her that a "'case' was coming--a girl who had no place to go. The county had placed her in our house for a few days until they could decide what to do, or, more precisely, until the family was reunited" (16). Eventually, a white social worker comes to Claudia's door with Pecola in hand. Instead of juvenile curiosity or cautious shyness, "Frieda and I [Claudia] stopped fighting each other and concentrated on our guest, trying hard to keep her from feeling outdoors" (18-19). Claudia not only "liked her" but genuinely befriends Pecola. Claudia "clowned for her [Pecola], and [she] smiled and accepted gracefully the food gifts my sister gave her" (19).

However, the serving of the "food gifts" causes another problem for Pecola, this time in Claudia's house. "Frieda brought her [Pecola] four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup. It is obvious that Pecola likes the child star because she "gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face,"

commenting "how cu-ute" (19). It is eventually discovered that "three quarts of milk" have been consumed since yesterday (23). Claudia's mother is furious, spouting indignations such as "I ain't got nothing to just throw away. Don't nobody need *three* quarts of milk. Henry Ford don't need three quarts of milk" (24-25). Mrs. MacTeer knows that "Frieda and I [Claudia] hated milk and assumed Pecola drank it out of greediness" (23). But Claudia knows it is the cup not the milk that Pecola longed to have and tells the reader so, while she bears the humiliation in silence. Claudia listens to her mother "downstairs in the kitchen fussing about the amount of milk Pecola had drunk. We knew she was fond of the Shirley Temple cup and took every opportunity to drink out of it just to handle and see sweet Shirley's face" (23). However, instead of trying to defend herself, Claudia sits in solidarity with Frieda and Pecola while "insults . . . were being heaped on our friend" (24). They "just sat there: I [Claudia] picked toe jam, Frieda cleaned her fingernails with her teeth, and Pecola finger-traced some scars on her knee--her head cocked to one side" (24).

Finally, the girls can take no more "fussing" and gingerly move outside to the front porch. Still concerned about Frieda's and Pecola's spirits, Claudia tries to rally them with things they could do for fun. They could "go up to Mr. Henry's room and look at his girlie magazines," or they

"could look at his Bible. *That's pretty*" (26). Claudia even suggests seeing "what's in the trash cans" (26). Although these ideas seem silly and are refused by the other girls, they are touching because they come from a caring nine-year-old child.

Sadly, in a matter of two days, Pecola has struggled with family problems and milk consumption, but the most frightening event was yet to come. "Suddenly Pecola bolted straight up, her eyes wide with terror. . . . A brownish-red stain discolored the back of her dress" (27). Pecola is whining with her "legs far apart"; Frieda realizes she is "ministratin'" (27). Because of Pecola's fear and embarrassment, Claudia goes to get water from her mother to clean the blood off the steps. Her mother questions her soundly about the Mason jar full of water while Claudia continues to shield Pecola, declaring "I ain't gonna break nothing" (28). She "poured the water on the steps, sloshed it with [her] shoe, and ran to join them [Frieda and Pecola]" (29).

Further complicating Frieda's and Claudia's good intentions is the neighbor girl Rosemary. Rosemary has seen the series of events and hollers, "Mrs. MacTeer! Mrs. MacTeer! Frieda and Claudia are out here playing nasty! (30). Mrs. MacTeer grabs a switch and whips Frieda soundly and is about to start on Pecola when the make-shift napkin falls to

the ground. However, it is Claudia, the youngest, who steps forward and defends all their actions. "I [Claudia], next in line [for a whooping], began to explain. 'She was bleeding. We was just trying to stop the blood! . . . She's ministratin'. We was just helping'" (31). With this newfound zeal, Claudia even offers to beat up Rosemary for causing all the commotion (31). The narrator has performed several selfless acts that show quality of character in a child of nine.

Morrison knows it is easy to demonstrate nobleness towards others in the safety of one's home with a strict mother watching, but it is another thing to offer support and compassion at school in front of fellow schoolmates. It takes genuine courage to stand by the ugliest girl in town. Even Pecola knew she was ugly, an "ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike. She was the only member of her class who sat alone at a double desk" (45). The courage that Claudia, Morrison's child narrator, exhibits is very much along the lines of the nobleness of deed that Aristotle outlines. He states that "Courage is the virtue that disposes men to do noble deeds in situations of danger" (Roberts, Rhetoric 1.9. 9 1366b 12-14). What could be more socially dangerous than to defend the class reject? When "a group of boys was circling and holding at bay a victim, Pecola Breedlove," Frieda and

Claudia come to the rescue (Bluest 65). Caught up in the excitement of the crowd, Claudia finds her tongue saying, "'You shut up, Bullet Head. . . . I'm calling you Bullet Head, Bullet Head'" (66). Claudia is even threatened with physical violence, "a fat lip," but will not relent (66). She counters, "'Yeah. Gimme one of yours'" (66). Further, it is Claudia who steps forward through all the kids and "picked up Pecola's notebook and Frieda's coat," ending the shouting match (67). Finally, in order to soothe Pecola's damaged feelings, Claudia states "Old Bullet Head, he's always picking on girls" (67). For Aristotle, "Justice concerns not only material goods but also the manner in which people treat each other . . ." (Sullivan 131). So Claudia, in a few brief encounters, demonstrates tremendous subjective goodness towards others by displaying compassion for the underdog, courage in the face of physical and social danger, and a sharp sense of Aristotelian justice. What makes her all the more compelling as a trustworthy character is that she is quite young.

Yet, it is not just Pecola to whom Claudia demonstrates concern. In this particular Black community, there are three prostitutes that live right over the Breedlove's storefront. They are the only others in Lorrain that treat Pecola as a valued being, and Claudia shows some sympathy for the whores. Lorrain is a close-knit Black community, and even though

Claudia's comments are remembrances, "the town well knew" events involving the prostitutes (56). Certainly Claudia's mother does not speak well of the whores. They are "the fancy women of the maroon nail polish that Mama and Big Mama hated" (77). Apparently, Claudia's mother has stated that she would not even allow them to eat off her dinner plates. That is why Frieda responds to Claudia's entreaty to tell about Mr. Henry's liaison with: "No. I guess not. . . . "The Maginot Line didn't eat out of one of Mama's plates" (79). Obviously, Mrs. MacTeer does not like the 'working women.' Yet, Claudia, in a rather backward fashion, demonstrates some consideration beyond her mother and the other townspeople. For example, the reader learns that one of the prostitutes helped "the F. B. and I." (53). Evidently, Miss Marie has dated a man wanted by the F.B.I. She claims "he killed more people than TB. And if you crossed him? Whoa, Jesus! He'd run you as long as there was ground" (53). Miss Marie declares she "was the only one could handle him" (53). Even though, Miss Marie is a whore and is fraternizing with a known criminal, she does the right thing by helping the F.B.I. capture him. In this way Claudia lets the reader know that Miss Marie, though fallen, has some sense of justice.

Certainly, people do not consider prostitution as an appropriate adult goal, and this is definitely a strange topic for a child narrator to demonstrate her ethical quality

of personal virtue. Nevertheless, Claudia hints at why Miss Marie becomes a whore in the first place. She is so poor as a child that when asked about undergarments, she replies, "'Didn't have none. . . . Never saw a pair of drawers till I was fifteen . . . doing day work in Cincinnati'" (54).

Claudia's reminiscence is rather sad when one thinks that a child has never seen underwear until she is in her mid-teens. A white woman that she is working for gives her "some old ones of hers" (54). Further, the memory is sprinkled with humor since Miss Marie says, "I put it on my head when I dusted. When she [the white woman] saw me, she liked to fell out" (54). Even though Miss Marie is a shady character, the reader still laughs. The audience, further, is told that this career prostitute does not use curse words. To punctuate a sentence, Miss Marie will interject "Whoa Jesus, ninety-nine" or some such number. When asked why the numbers, she replies, "Because my mama taught me never to cuss" (54). Thus Claudia's innocent compassion for others reaches beyond Pecola and even helps the reader muster a little regard for hardened whores, the "Three merry gargoyles" (55).

Lastly, Morrison's child narrator has the ability to empathize with other characters, particularly another little Black girl. The reader is to assume that it is more than likely that Claudia experienced the same treatment that Pecola is about to receive at the dry goods store. Pecola has

three pennies and wants to buy some candy at "Yacobowski's Fresh Veg. Meat and Sundries Store" (48). The owner, somewhere "between vision and view . . . senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance" (48). Yacobowski dismisses Pecola because "there is nothing to see" (48). The narrator directly asks the audience:

How can a fifty-two-year-old white immigrant storekeeper with the taste of potatoes and beer in his mouth, his mind honed on the doe-eyed Virgin Mary, his sensibilities blunted by a permanent awareness of loss, see a little black girl? Nothing in his life even suggested that the feat was possible, not to say desirable or necessary" (48).

The reader is told that an "immigrant," not even a native born American, slights Pecola with a vacuous look. The blank stare "has an edge; somewhere in the bottom lid is the distaste. She [Pecola] has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people" (49). As if the humiliation is not punctuated enough, the storekeeper does not want to touch Pecola. Yacobowski "hesitates, not wanting to touch her hand. . . . Finally he reaches over His nails graze her damp palm" (49-50). What quells Pecola's anger and shame are the sweet Mary Jane candies. What quells the reader's indignation is Claudia's allusion to Yacobowski's "loss." Perhaps his callus treatment of Pecola is unintentional because of

something he has suffered. In this way, Claudia demonstrates that she understands how Pecola feels as well as clarifies the poor behavior of a thoughtless old man. Such personal good will could be easily overlooked because it is so subtle.

Unlike Morrison's Claudia, Antonio from Anaya's Bless me, Ultima does not reveal subjective goodness towards others in the face of overt poverty and emotional cruelty. Instead, his personal virtue manifests itself through his mature dealings with his family and Ultima. At the beginning of the story, Antonio is only six years old, yet he understands his father's frustration and occasional drunkenness. He knows that his "father's dream was to gather his sons around him and move westward to the land of the setting sun, to the vineyards of California" (15). Unfortunately, Antonio knows that "the war had taken his [father's] three sons and it had made him bitter" (15). The boy has seen his father "rage against old age" and "cry because the war had ruined his dream" (16). Yet, Antonio tells the reader: "It was very sad to see my father cry, but I understood it, because sometimes a man has to cry. Even if he is a man" (16). Normally such behavior from a parent could frighten a child, but Antonio's reaction reveals a mindful prudence. Antonio's behavior exemplifies the virtue that Aristotle calls "understanding which enables men to come to wise decisions about the relation to happiness of the goods and evils" that face all

mankind (Roberts, Rhetoric 1.9.9 1366b 20-23). So initially, Antonio shows himself to be a conscientious boy towards his father's negative antics.

Furthering the reader's belief that Antonio is of exceptional character, are the events surrounding the death of Lupito. Struggling with post war trauma from World War II, Lupito shot and killed the local sheriff. Narciso and Chávez, the sheriff's brother, come to enlist the aid of Antonio's father in hunting down Lupito. Antonio, who at times can be too inquisitive for his own good, slips "out the kitchen door and into the night" behind his father and Narciso (19). The child witnesses the posse of men, the doomed man's desperation, and ultimately his own father's part in Lupito's death. As any caring friend would be, Gabriel Márez, Antonio's father, is concerned about Lupito's salvation saying, "I wondered how heavy last night's sin will lay on his soul" (35). The irony is that Antonio is not worried about Lupito's soul but his father's. He shows himself to be a good son when he mentions to Ultima that his "father was on the bridge" last night (36). By implication, his father has committed a mortal sin by taking part in a killing, even if the killing was justified. Antonio asks of Ultima, "How can he [his father] go to communion? How can he take God in his mouth and swallow him? Will God forgive his sin and be with him?" (36). The boy's worry is not for himself, even though

he was also at the bridge. Instead, he shows greatness of character by inquiring about his father's heavenly salvation and not his own.

Of course, Lupito is not the only life that is lost because of World War II. In another show of concern, Antonio mentions the rows of mourners visible in the town. He comments that his "mother and Ultima dressed in black because so many women of the town had lost sons or husbands in the war and they were in mourning" (35). Antonio goes on to say, "It was very sad on Sundays to see the rows of black-dressed women walking in procession to church" (35). Moreover, it is impressive that such a young boy feels true compassion for so many; and by extension, the audience believes Antonio to be an honest person who genuinely cares for others.

Besides having a caring nature, Antonio also senses good where others see evil. When Ultima is brought into Antonio's community, many mistake the curandera's skill for that of a bruja. Since a curandera has power, "she was misunderstood and often suspected of practicing witchcraft . . ." (4). Antonio cringes at the thought because he has heard the stories of "evil done by brujas" (4). Antonio admits to his own fears but forgets them all after meeting Ultima. Ironically, their bond becomes so strong that he will risk his life to save hers. For the boy, she has a sweetness that is connected to the earth as are other shaman-like figures in

the Pueblo world. "As Ultima walked past me I smelled for the first time a trace of the sweet fragrance of herbs that always lingered in her wake" (13). Years later, as a grown man, he "would awaken sometimes at night and think [he] caught a scent of her fragrance in the cool-night breeze" (13-14). So even though the child cannot articulate why he does not fear Ultima and does not completely understand her ancient ways, he still offers friendship, respect, and self-sacrifice to a woman so maligned in his town. One has to remember according to Aristotle, "Courage, justice, temperance, and prudence are the most esteemed virtues, and whatever acts produce virtues must also be noble" (Kinneavy, Warshauer 175). In this way, Anaya establishes a subjective form of virtue towards others for Antonio.

In sharp contrast to Claudia and Antonio, Kingston's child narrator has a harder time showing other characters and the audience personal goodness. She is rougher but not so covert about her likes and dislikes. The young speaker in Woman Warrior surprisingly prefers the boisterous kids at her school best. One would think because she "enjoyed the silence" (166) that loud children would offend or scare her away. However, with Kingston's narrator it is just the opposite. She "liked the Negro students (Black Ghosts) best because they laughed the loudest and talked to me as if I were a daring talker too" (166). She values their freedom and

lack of inhibitions, where others may not. She appreciates their willingness to speak to her, while they know she may not be able to speak back. Further, the reader knows that she genuinely likes the Black students because she mentions that one has her mother "coil braids over her ears Shanghai-style" and others because they "enrolled in Chinese school" (166). Kingston's narrator has a benevolence towards these kids that is a rarity in the Chinese American community. Most of the time people who are not Chinese are referred to as 'ghosts,' which she does mention. However, the young speaker employs a specific Aristotelian technique to win favor. Evidently, Kingston wants the reader to know through the narrator that by showing the audience the goodness in others is the way to make them trust the goodness in the main character (Roberts, Rhetoric 1.9.9 1366a 25-29).

In addition to complimenting the Black kids, the young narrator defends the voiceless Chinese girls, of whom she is one. She says although the Chinese girls did not get to participate in the "second grade . . . play" and although their voices are "too soft or nonexistent, . . . One of us (not me) won every spelling bee . . ." (167). She openly praises their accomplishments in American school and in doing so reveals an admirable selflessness. However, the narrator also notes that these same girls in Chinese school "were not mute. They screamed and yelled during recess, when there were

no rules; they [even] had fist-fights" (167). In speaking out for the Chinese American girls, the child narrator is also defending herself. These girls are not voiceless; it is the mainstream culture, oppressive American school system, and English language that have muted them. The young narrator shows the reader that Chinese American girls are perfectly normal in Chinese school, and her own goodness emerges by championing their cause.

Furthermore, she is happy so long as some Chinese Americans do well, just as she is proud that the Han people are too clever to get caught by the immigration ghosts. Sometimes,

the rumor went about that the United States immigration authorities had set up headquarters in the San Francisco or Sacramento Chinatown to urge wetbacks and stowaways, anybody here on fake papers, to come to the city and get their files straightened out. (184)

Of course, most Chinese cry, "Don't be a fool" (184). No Chinese American trusts the Department of Immigration, so naturally Kingston's narrator claims that "the Han people won't be pinned down" (185). Clearly, the speaker is content to celebrate the successes in her community, as expected of a young Asian American girl, even if they are a little misguided.

However, the narrator's greatest show of subjective ethos comes when her parents toy with the idea of marrying her sister and herself off to Chinese men who are advertising in the local newspaper. She comments that

suddenly a series of new workers showed up at the laundry They ate with us. They talked Chinese with my parents. . . . We were to call them 'Elder Brother,' although they were not related to us. They were funny-looking FOB's, Fresh-off-the-Boat's . . . (193)

The narrator sees her mother showing photographs to "an FOB" in the laundry (194). He chooses the younger of the two, and her mother exclaims, "No. No. This one," meaning the narrator (194). The young speaker realizes she can become an "obstacle" and protect her sister and herself at the same time (194). She sets about discouraging the young men by dropping dishes, limping across the floor, spilling soup, rubbing her nose, and raising dust swirls under their chairs, which is very bad luck (194). Finally, the "young men stopped visiting; not one came back" (194). The narrator has saved herself and her sister from loveless, arranged marriages. But in order to do it, she has to appear as a stupid, clumsy girl. She sacrifices her own reputation in the community to help herself and her sister, and she does in it a very astute way. She knows exactly what will chase those men away for

good, and she selflessly becomes their anathema. She demonstrates her intrinsic goodness in a most unusual way with a limp, a slosh, and an itchy nose.

While Kingston's narrator is brazen in establishing good will, Cisneros' Esperanza is child-like. Because the young narrator in The House on Mango Street is perhaps only six years old when the story opens, her goodness towards others comes at first in disjointed snatches. Esperanza is rambling through a laundry list of qualities for the people on her street. The reader hears that one neighbor claims to be "the great, great grand cousin of the queen of France" (12). Benny and Blanca, other neighbors, own the corner store. "They're okay except don't lean on the candy counter" (12). Naturally, these people would fascinate a young child; one claims to be royalty, and the others have candy. There is a refreshing honesty in her tale. Eventually, Esperanza gets to vital information for a community, the criminal element. Matter-of-factly, she spouts, a woman she knows "lives upstairs, over there, next door to Joe the baby-grabber. Keep away from him. . . . He is full of danger" (12). Of course, she is repeating things she has heard; however, each piece of information has a bit of truth to it. For example, "Edna is the lady who owns the building Their mother said no, no, don't ever sell it" (12). The minute she is dead her son "sold it" (12). So when Esperanza warns of the danger from Joe, she is doing

the neighborhood a service because he is a real threat. Hence, she is believable and appears trustworthy.

As the story progresses so does Esperanza's age. Although still quite young, her judgment is getting more sophisticated. She realizes that "those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared. They think we're dangerous. They think we will attack them with shiny knives. They are stupid people who are lost and got here by mistake" (28). She tells the reader that her people are simply misunderstood. People are always afraid of the unknown. She stands up for the Latino neighborhood by saying, "All brown all around[;] we are safe" (28). Her own personal simplicity and pride speak for her community. And in a rather humorous reversal of the Anglo norm, Esperanza mentions what happens when Latinos stray into other neighborhoods. Their "knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes . . ." (28). She knows human nature and understands Latino and mainstream American cultures; moreover her good-heartedness shows the folly in both.

Age in The House on Mango Street is not the only thing that increases, so does Esperanza's personal caring for others. Although she does not like the walk to her aunt's building and does not like the "dark apartment . . . where sunlight never came," she still goes there regularly to read

to her sick relative. She says,

I took my library books to her house. I read her stories. I liked the book *The Waterbabies*. She liked it too. I never knew how sick she was She listened to every book, every poem I read her. . . . And then she dies, my aunt who listened to my poems. (60-61)

Still just a kid, Esperanza has kept a regular commitment to cheer her aunt's spirit. She reads faithfully by a sick bed, struggling with the smell of "sticky capsules filled with jelly, whispering poems "into the pillow" (60). A reader cannot help but be touched by her tenderness and diligence. Such effort helps no one but her aunt. It is even likely that the family would never know if Esperanza quit going to the invalid's bedside because her aunt is not a woman who would complain. So the reader is left with a strong impression that Esperanza does good only because she genuinely cares. These little acts of kindness, no matter how simple, show the reader Esperanza's personal goodness towards others.

Yet, it seems in Esperanza's neighborhood that there are a lot of things to be sad about. There are criminals living next door, the fear of mistakenly entering the *wrong* hood, and diseases beyond the understanding of a little girl. However, the most difficult situation may be the destruction of a friend that a child's intervention cannot stop. The

reader learns that Sally has been called a "name" in the school yard and that a fight has taken place with Sally's making the attacker's "ear bleed" (82). There is the suggestion that Sally has been sexually active because Esperanza entreats, "You didn't, you didn't Sally . . ." (82). Further, Esperanza laments, "You don't have a best friend to lean against the school yard fence with, to laugh behind your hands. . . . There is no one to lend you her hairbrush. . . . You become a different Sally" (82). This event is a very powerful call for help, and one must acknowledge that shared emotions "can reinforce the *ethos* of the speaker," (Kinneavy, Warshauer 180). So what could be more compelling than the downward spiral of an innocent life? Aristotle admits that "the hearer always sympathizes with one who speaks emotionally, even though he really says nothing" (Roberts, Rhetoric 3.7.7 1408a 24).

Evidently, Esperanza intuitively knows that there is no escape for Sally's situation -- perhaps it is one that is often repeated in the Latino community. She even fantasizes,

if you [Sally] opened the little window latch and gave it a shove . . . all the sky would come in. . . . And you could laugh, Sally. You could go to sleep and wake up and never have to think who likes and doesn't like you. (Cisneros, House 82-83)

Esperanza's thought may only be an innocent daydream, but it

is a way of protecting her friend. Eventually, Esperanza hints at why Sally behaves so boldly. She is being battered by her father, "her pretty face all beaten and black," because "his sisters . . . made the family ashamed" (92). All these events are beyond Esperanza's control even though she truly wants to save her friend.

Then it happens, a chance to pull Sally back from destruction and show the reader sincere goodness. Most of the neighborhood kids are playing around a place they named the Monkey Garden. Esperanza wants to race into the garden, but Sally does not want to get "her stockings muddy" (96). Instead, Sally stays "by the curb talking to Tito and his friends" (96). When Esperanza returns, Sally is pretending to be mad because the boys have taken her keys. Finally, "one of Tito's friends" says, "You [Sally] can't get the keys back unless you kiss us . . ." (96). Instinctively, Esperanza knows kissing is wrong behavior and feels "angry inside" (97). She decides the only way to save Sally from these boys is to get help. She races "up three flights of stairs to where Tito" lives to inform his mother. To Esperanza's surprise, Tito's mother merely responds, "What do you want me to do . . . call the cops? And kept on ironing" (97). Not willing to give up on her friend, Esperanza runs back downstairs and gathers up "three big sticks and a brick" (97). Unfortunately, she is made to feel the fool when Sally

simply says, "Go home." Esperanza feels "stupid," "ashamed," and the only thing she gets for all the effort is a dress stained "green" and "a headache" (97).

Yet, the reader sees a girl desperately trying to save a friend. No one, except the reader, knows the lengths Esperanza goes to trying to help Sally. Such valiant effort should strike accord in any audience. Furthermore, saving Sally will bring no benefits to Esperanza, but it does show to an audience goodness of character. Her actions create "the effect of arousing and sharing emotions," which is "identification between speaker and audience" (Kinneavy, Warshauer 180). In actuality, these minority writers all use an audience's perceptions of courage, justice, prudence, self-sacrifice and more to demonstrate their child narrators' subjective virtue towards others.

Goodness directed at others is closely aligned to good moral character and often one bleeds into the other. As mentioned before, one could equate good moral character to virtue or moral excellence, which in essence is a nobleness of spirit. Aristotle asserts that "the Noble is that which is both desirable for its own sake and also worthy of praise; or that which is both good and also pleasant because good" (Roberts, Rhetoric 1.9.9 1366a 32-33). Further, listeners conceive that they may derive advantages from a speaker who possesses such character (Sattler 59). Hence, good moral

character is a multifaceted quality with at least a two-fold implication. In other words, it is good in its own right and good because a character/audience benefits in some way.

Further, "it is not simply the action but the *person behind* the action that merits praise or blame" (Kinneavy, Warshauer 175). Compounding the issue is that "a speaker must exhibit that quality of character that culture, and not the individual, defines as virtue" (175). So, just because someone cares and takes action does not mean the impetus or the outcome will be praiseworthy. The person must exhibit virtue, the action must be for the better good, and both must be in line with the culture perceiving it.

In Morrison's The Bluest Eye, the first time Claudia shows moral fortitude is when Rosemary Villanucci, her "next-door neighbor who lives above her father's cafe," teases her with mouth-watering "bread and butter" (9). Now one has to remember, Claudia is a little girl, and her answer to being slighted is wanting to hurt back. She and her sister Frieda decide to "beat her [Rosemary] up, make red marks on her white skin" (9). Rosemary's reaction will be to "cry and ask" if the girls "want her to pull her pants down" (9). Claudia knows she "will say no" to Rosemary's offer (9). Even though the young narrator is unsure what she "should feel or do if she does," Claudia knows Rosemary "is offering . . . something precious and that . . . pride must be asserted by

refusing to accept" (9). Claudia is puzzled by Rosemary's response to a beating, but intuitively knows she should not allow the disrobing to happen. Claudia proves herself the better person for not looking, for preserving Rosemary's dignity, and for following her culture which says such things are "playing nasty" (30).

Additionally, one of the more admirable and significant statements that Claudia makes appears after Bullet Head and Maureen have done their best to hurt Pecola. Claudia and Frieda have defended Pecola and are walking home. In final triumph, Maureen screams after the sisters, "I *am* cute! And you ugly. Black and ugly" as she runs in the opposite direction (73). It is "a second or two before Frieda and I [Claudia] collected ourselves enough to shout" back insults (73). But slowly Claudia begins to sink "under the wisdom, accuracy, and relevance of Maureen's last words. If she was cute--and if anything could be believed, she *was*--then we were not" (74). A nine-year-old child begins to ponder her own worth. "What was the secret? What did we lack? Why was it important?" (74). Concluding, "guileless and without vanity," she is "still in love" with herself. She feels "comfortable" in her skin, "enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness" (74). There is a wisdom in what Claudia says, even if the examples are a little simplistic.

Basically, she is happy and at ease with herself, "comfortable in her skin." She knows who she is and is satisfied with her lot. Her response shows moral character, just as Aristotle's definition of the "best person, the man of moral excellence" (Sullivan 13). He is the man or woman who "embodies human nature at its best. He [or she] is a person who enjoys internal harmony, an integrity of mind and emotions," which is exactly what Claudia has described in herself (13-14). Moreover, she has no elusions about herself. She knows she is "nicer, brighter" than Maureen, and is also "still lesser" (Morrison, Bluest 74). She has a stability and pride.

In another instance Claudia displays bravery and compromise. Mr. Henry, their boarder, has given the girls a quarter to buy ice cream. On the long way to Isaley's store, Frieda turns and says, "'I don't want ice cream. I want potato chips'" (75). Claudia replies, "'But I want ice cream'" (75). Frieda counters, "'Then let's go to Miss Bertha's. You like her candy, don't you?'" (76). Worrying, Claudia mentions "'that crazy old Soaphead Church lives there. . . . He scares me'" (76). Claudia knows there is safety in numbers, and she is also aware that Frieda *really* wants potato chips, so she graciously acquiesces to her sister. Claudia is content so long as her sister is happy and she gets something sweet. That conduct is commendable for a

nine-year-old child.

Nevertheless, Claudia's quintessential moment comes at the end of the work when it is discovered that Pecola has been impregnated by her father. Claudia cannot fathom people's reactions to Pecola's news: "disgusted, amused, shocked, outraged, or even excited by the story" (190). Yet, no one is saying, "'Poor little girl' or 'Poor baby'" (190). Worse still, no one wants "the black baby to live" (190). Claudia cannot comprehend the "overwhelming hatred for the unborn baby" (191). Frieda's and Claudia's dream of buying a bicycle with seed money slowly vanishes as the reality of Pecola's situation materializes. Bewilderment turns into anger when Claudia says,

I thought about the baby that everybody wanted dead, and saw it very clearly. It was in a dark, wet place, its head covered with great O's of wool, the black face holding, like nickels, two clean black eyes, the flared nose, kissing-thick lips, and the living, breathing silk of black skin. No synthetic yellow bangs suspended over marble-blue eyes, no pinched nose and bowline mouth. (190)

Claudia senses a great wrong is being committed; and, in all her innocence, she thinks she and Frieda can make it right. Claudia admits she does not know "limitations" (190), so she helps formulate a ritual to save Pecola and her baby. They

will "pray" to "Him to let Pecola's baby live" (191). In order that He knows they are sincere, the sisters will give up the dream of owning a bike, be good for a whole month, offer up their seed money, and plant the remaining flower seeds (190-91). Although there is an element of childish naiveté in the offering, Claudia is willing to give up her dream, her share of ready cash, and the possibility of any other money for the summer, if only Pecola's baby will live. That is a tremendous sacrifice for a little girl.

Additionally, she is trying to redress a wrong that she feels has been committed by her community, the lack of concern for Pecola. Certainly, Morrison's child narrator is exhibiting what Aristotle called moral excellence. Further, Aristotle has no room in his ethical theory for the well-meaning fool; the good person is one who shows his good . . . by both his sensitivity and his competence" (Sullivan 13-14). The child in Claudia truly believes their sacrifice will work, and it is her greatness of spirit that allows her to see the real tragedy, the total destruction of Pecola's life. Morrison has created a child narrator that is vulnerable, naive, generous, selfless, confident, brave, and more. For those reasons, she is persuasive and the reader believes in her.

In contrast to Morrison's Claudia, Antonio from Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima has an enormous sense of duty. He

demonstrates a good moral character through the responsibilities that are given to him and the responsibilities he takes on himself. For example, at the story's onset, Antonio, who is only six years old, is tending to his household chores. He changes the animals' drinking water, feeds rabbits and chickens, milks the cow and turns her loose, and collects eggs all before breakfast (7). A little later he is working in the garden, reclaiming "from the rocky soil of the hill a few more feet of earth to cultivate" (11). His mother "wanted a garden and I [Antonio] worked to make her happy. It was hard work. My fingers bled from scraping out the rocks The sweat was sticky on my brown body" (11). That is a tremendous amount of hard work and responsibility for such a young boy, even in a farming community. Yet, Antonio performs his duties well and without complaining. He shows an admirable character.

More impressive yet is that Antonio promises to look after the welfare of a total stranger. The family has decided to invite Ultima, a powerful curandera, to move in with them. Antonio's father has spent the morning collecting her from Las Pasturas. When Ultima arrives, Antonio's mother urges her children forward as it is the "custom to greet the old" (12). Both of Antonio's sisters give the correct, polite greeting of "Buenos días Grande," but he does not (12). Instead, he blurts out, "Buenos días le de Dios, Ultima," a far too

familiar greeting for a youngster (13). Antonio's mother starts to "mumble apologies" when Ultima quiets her (13). The curandera turns to Antonio and says, "I have come to spend the last days of my life here" (13). To everyone's surprise, Antonio answers, "You will never die, Ultima I will take care of you--" (13). Certainly, the boy takes care of many lives at his home, animal lives, but to care for the welfare of another human being is a great obligation. Moreover, Antonio means it; he will faithfully watch after her, which, unbeknownst to him, will eventually involve risking his own life. He reveals moral determination to the readers.

In another instance, Antonio's responsibilities become grave. An uncle "had been bewitched; a bruja has put a curse on him. . . . Now he was on his deathbed" (86-87). Ultima's aid has been enlisted to save the uncle. As she prepares "the herbs and oils . . . to affect her cure," she passes Antonio and whispers, "'Be ready Juan--'" (88-89). His physical energy and link to the family are necessary to the cure. Antonio's heritage is steeped in Pueblo history and shamanism, hence it is not unusual to find someone cursed by magic. The reader is even told that Ultima "learned from the greatest healer of all time, the flying man from Las Pasturas--" (89). Further, Antonio willingly accompanies Ultima to help his uncle and admits to being "proud" to "walk

in the footsteps of a curandera" (93). When asked by Ultima, "You are not afraid, are you Antonio?" he answers, "'No' . . . and takes "her hand" (96). Moreover, he faces down Tenorio, the brujas' father, and is nearly trampled by the "black horse and rider that went crashing by . . ." (99). Antonio does not run from the sinister presence. He has heard hundreds of stories "of the evil done by brujas," yet he does not falter (4). He feels a responsibility to his uncle and Ultima, and he will see this mission of mercy through. Anaya's child narrator displays courage in the face of evil, a sense of duty to family and friends, and a belief in the healers known in his community.

Nevertheless, Antonio's most courageous manifest of personal virtue again deals with Ultima and the evil Tenorio. Two of Tenorio's daughters have died, and Tenorio believes Ultima is to blame and wants revenge. Antonio has seen Tenorio kill Narisco, and the boy knows there will be an attack on the curandera; it is just a matter of time. It is August, and Antonio has enjoyed the "work and good food" at the Luna farm (264), when he hears that Tenorio has been "drinking all day and howling out his vengeance on la curandera, Ultima" (266). Antonio knows the situation is serious when his uncle Pedro says, "This time I must act--" (266). On his way back to his grandfather's home, Antonio encounters Tenorio. The man is "drunk with whiskey and hate,

and he meant to run me [Antonio] down! . . . The huge, killer horse swept by me, but Tenorio's foot hit me and sent me spinning to the floor of the bridge . . . I rolled and the hooves came down beside me" (268). Many young boys would have been crying in terror and would not have had the presence of mind to defend themselves against an adult or a well-trained horse, but Antonio shows courage and quick thinking. He sees "the sensitive flank" where "the spurs had cut open" the horse and hit it (268). The horse bolts in pain allowing Antonio to run "in the opposite direction" and falling "headlong into the brush at the bottom of the sandy bank and lay still" (269). Antonio has managed to ward off Tenorio's attacks and conceal himself. Antonio "could see him [Tenorio] through the thick branches, but he could not see me" (269).

At this point, many children would be frozen with fear, thankful they were alive, and not thinking of another's safety. Yet, because of Tenorio's rantings, Antonio knows that the bruja has found a way to hurt Ultima; and no one knows the danger, not even his uncle. Antonio is ten miles from home but races "through the brush with only one thought in mind, to get to Ultima and warn her of Tenorio's intents" (270). He is willing to sacrifice everything for her because "Ultima personified goodness, and any risk in defense of goodness was right. She was the only person I [Antonio] had ever seen defeat evil where all else had failed" (270). The

sound of an owl reminds Antonio of his purpose, and he runs with new resolution. I [Antonio] ran to save Ultima.

. . . I felt light, like the wind, as my even strides carried me homeward. The pain in my side was gone, and I did not feel the thorns of the cactus or the needles of yucca that pierced my legs and feet. (272)

This young boy is out in the middle of the desert after dark, ignoring the pain of scrapes and cactus thorns; and his only concern is Ultima, the woman who upon their first meeting he promised to care for. Tenorio succeeds in beating Antonio home and fires the fatal shot that will kill Ultima. Still, that is not enough to satisfy this evil man. Tenorio turns "with his evil eye blazing down the rifle's barrel--he aimed at my [Antonio's] forehead and I [Antonio] heard the shot ring out" (274). However, it is Tenorio who has been shot by Antonio's uncle, and it is he who falls clutching "at his stomach" (274). But the damage is done; Ultima is dying. Antonio makes her one final promise--to bury her owl at the base of "a forked juniper tree," a promise he honors (276). In Antonio, Anaya creates a character who will sacrifice himself for a friend. That is one of mankind's highest actions, to think of others before oneself; and Antonio risks his own life, the reader is told, to keep goodness in the world. In a way, it is the age-old battle between good and

evil that every person faces. That is the reason that the reader can identify with Antonio. The boy's selflessness demonstrates a greatness of spirit. As a result, the audience likes Antonio, believes in Antonio, and admires the virtue of Antonio.

Almost a polar opposite of Anaya's Antonio is Kingston's child narrator. She is not heroic or selfless; she is not battling universal evil, and the narrator does not have that 'bigger than life' quality. In fact, she is just a little, confused girl with obstacles to overcome, personal and situational. The reader is told that the narrator grew up on her mother's stories from China. Oftentimes the stories are so graphic that they bother the young speaker. One particular story that was told to her is about a child that was born with a congenital defect, "without an anus" (Woman 86). The child narrator has torturous nightmares, picturing "a naked child sitting on a modern toilet desperately trying to perform until it died of congestion" (86). She would "flick on the bathroom lights fast so that no small shadow would take a baby shape, sometimes seated on the edge of the bathtub" (86). Other times at night she would hear "an infant's grunting and weeping coming from the bathroom" (86). The child speaker believes that her mother has given her "pictures to dream--nightmare babies that recur, shrinking again and again to fit in my [young speaker's] palm" (86).

Most of the time, a child would scream for mama and ask the mother to make the bad dreams go away. Yet, there is goodness in the child narrator that compels her to help these phantom babies, regardless of her fears. She would curl her fingers "to make a cradle for the baby," the "other hand an awning" (86). She would "protect the dream baby, not let it suffer, not let it out of my [young speaker's] sight" (86). However, she fears "in a blink of inattention, I [young speaker] would mislay the baby" (86). In other dreams, the baby would slip between her fingers because her fingers "cannot grow webs fast enough" (87). She tries again and again to help these babies, but her subconscious mind will never let her succeed. The baby dies in the story her mother told; and try as she may, the child narrator cannot save her dream babies either.

Besides the clash of Chinese story-talk with Western realities, the child narrator must deal with superstitions and political correctness. The young speaker tells her "Hawaiian teacher, 'We Chinese can't sing 'land where our fathers died.'" She argued with me about politics, while I meant because of curses" (167). Apparently, if one mentions an event that he or she hopes will not happen in Chinese society, a curse is set in motion. The Chinese have a theory about unguarded utterances. Inadvertent sayings are "like chickens that come home to roost" (Willoughby-Meade 39). What

one wishes would not happen will happen if said aloud. Therefore, a verbal curse is a kind of spoken jinx in the East that deposits bad luck upon others or unintentionally on oneself (Leach 271).

So, the child narrator is not refusing to sing the phrase because she is an immigrant and her relatives did not give their lives for American freedom. Instead, she is being a dutiful daughter and conscientiously avoiding cursing her father. Further, the reader knows that the young speaker is honest and direct because she could just mumble through the phrase or not sing at all. Instead, she takes the time and trouble to explain a cultural difference to her teacher, even though the teacher makes the wrong assumption.

Another instance of understanding comes when the child narrator confronts the "girl who was quieter than" herself (173). "One afternoon in the sixth grade I [young narrator] and my little sister and the quiet girl and her big sister stayed late after school for some reason" (174). The young speaker, after luring the silent one "into the girls' lavatory" begins to pinch, pull, and yell at the silent girl (175). The narrator is convinced that with enough incentive the silent girl will speak. In reality, the reader knows that the young narrator sees herself in the silent girl and the possibilities that they will never have if they do not speak up. The child narrator screams,

'You don't see I'm trying to help you out, do you?
. . . Don't you ever want to be a cheerleader? Or a
pompom girl? What are you going to do for a living?
If you don't talk, you can't have a personality.'
(180)

The young narrator's own insecurities have come flooding out, all the while knowing she has carried out "the worst thing I [young narrator] had yet done to another person" (181). And even though this behavior is anything but virtuous, the child speaker has had to look deeply into herself and into her own future. Furthermore, she knows picking on the silent girl was wrong and that there would be retribution. The child narrator acknowledges the impending punishment by saying, "The world is sometimes just, and I spent the next eighteen months sick in bed with a mysterious illness" (182). The point for the reader to remember is that the young speaker knows the punishment is "just." She does have a sense of justice which reveals moral character, no matter how submerged. Moreover, the child narrator's actions honestly depicted some of the harshness of childhood.

Actually, the child narrator has few illusions about herself. She sees her sister as:

neat while I [young narrator] was messy, my hair
tangled and dusty. My dirty hands broke things.
. . . And there were adventurous people inside my

head to whom I talked. With them I was frivolous
and violent, orphaned. I was white and had red hair
. . . (189)

Clearly, the young speaker is bluntly honest about her peculiarities and makes no apologies for them. That is a show of frankness in itself. So collectively, a reader can find good moral character in Kingston's child narrator; it is there in the qualities of concern, devotion, honesty, justice, and candor.

Different still is the way moral character manifests itself in Cisneros' *Esperanza*. She shows values similar to mainstream audiences, even though she is reared in a Latino world. According to Aristotle, any time a speaker likes what the reader likes that person will be highly regarded (Roberts, Rhetoric 2.4.4 1381a). As a result, the audience sees her personality and choices as good. For example, in The House on Mango Street, *Esperanza* is commenting on some very unruly kids:

They are bad those Vargases, . . . The kids bend trees and bounce between cars and dangle upside down from knees and almost break like fancy museum vases you can't replace. They think it's funny. They are without respect for all things living, including themselves. (Cisneros 29)

Esperanza, though a child, sees the value in human life, any

life. By calling the children "fancy museum vases," she is saying that life is precious, unique, and fragile. Even though these kids are ill-behaved, they have worth, and someone should care. Also, the reader should recognize the truth in what Esperanza is pointing out--that troubled kids are always someone "else's" problem when they should be everyone's concern, just as when "nobody looked up not once the 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'" (30).

Obviously, life is a wonder that should be appreciated, even the life of a tree, according to Esperanza. She has a reverence for all living things that extends to the "raggedy excuses planted by the city" (74). She appreciates the "four skinny trees" next to her house, whereas others do not even notice them (74).

 Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep. (74)

Esperanza admires their resiliency and demonstrates a keen sense of awareness. She values nature even if it is in the form of four scrawny trees. She senses that the trees will not give up on life--that they claw at the ground and the sky

to cling to existence. Furthermore, Esperanza establishes for the reader parallels between kids and trees, noisy, undisciplined, and growing. She cares about all that is around her, is invested in her community, and demonstrates virtues that society commends.

Another of those virtues is responsibility. Esperanza is the first to be told that her grandfather has died. "Your *abuelito* is dead, Papa says one morning" in her room (56). She is told first because she is the "oldest" and is expected "to tell the others" (56). It will also be her responsibility to "explain why we can't play. I [Esperanza] will have to tell them to be quiet today" (56-57). In an even greater show of character during the bereavement, Esperanza holds her weeping father when he "crumples like a coat and cries" (56). She "hold[s] and hold[s] and hold[s] him" (57). She demonstrates a strength that even a parent can rely on.

Yet, Cisneros never lets the reader forget that Esperanza is a child, as when she gets caught up in a contest over name calling. For instance, Esperanza tells her sister, Nenny, and Lucy Guerrero that there are "at least ten different names" for clouds (36). Nenny asks, "Names just like you and me?" and begins naming the clouds (36). "That there is Nancy, otherwise known as Pig-eye. And over there her cousin Mildred, and little Joey, Marco Nereida and Sue" (36). The game starts harmlessly enough, but Lucy begins

including insults with the cloud names by saying, "Looks like Esperanza's ugly face when she comes to school in the morning" (36-37). Esperanza immediately counters with "Who you calling ugly, ugly?" (37). Naturally, Lucy cannot be outdone, so she answers, "Your mama, that's who" (37). At this point, it is no longer a game to Esperanza. Her sense of family pride and love for her mother do not tolerate even a passing slur. She hollers back, "My mama? You better not be saying that, Lucy Guerrero. You better not be talking like that . . . else you can say good-bye to being my friend forever," and Esperanza means it (37). Although a child, she can overlook a great many indiscretions, but her love of family she will never shirk. So, when the reader notes Esperanza's respect for life, commitment to responsibility, and love of family, it is commendable because these positive moral qualities are apparent in a young girl.

Actually all four child narrators (Morrison's Claudia, Anaya's Antonio, Kingston's young speaker, and Cisneros' Esperanza) display Aristotle's definition of personal virtue and virtuous conduct towards others, and by extension suggest the good qualities and intentions of their creators, and in an even farther remove imply the good attributes found in these ethnicities. This telescoping effect combines to create a compelling ethos through the use of ethnic child narrators. Furthermore, "as a general principle, ethos may be viewed as

the dominant factor in rhetorical communication across cultures" (Okabe 555). Moreover, the values the child narrators display are closely aligned with mainstream American values. Ultimately, "persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible," and Morrison, Anaya, Kingston, and Cisneros are "credible" (Roberts, Rhetoric 1.2.2 1356a 5). These minority writers are convincing because their child narrators are believable, engaging, unique, and, most importantly, virtuous.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, Rudolfo Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima, Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts, and Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street are parts of the minority tapestry that comprises American rhetoric and literature. These authors have created in prose authentic ethnicities that can seem foreign to mainstream audiences. They have peopled their neighborhoods with child narrators who engage the readers with their humanity.

Furthermore, the young narrators of these ethnic texts reveal virtuous behavior in themselves and towards others that mirrors the moral excellence described by Aristotle as the "virtue that disposes us to do good . . . on a large scale (Roberts, Rhetoric 1.9.9 1366b 17). One example of that goodness can be seen in their relentless defense of 'underdogs' in their communities. In other instances, their selfless acts of courage and compassion demonstrate a nobleness of spirit.

Interestingly, two elements that are very prominent in these minority texts are Aristotle's concepts of metaphor and ethos. Moreover, these elements establish links between the

works. Morrison, Anaya, Kingston, and Cisneros create child narrators that are Aristotelian metaphors for the minority condition. Still, it is the Aristotelian appeal of ethos that creates the sense of authenticity and trust in these artistic pieces and that initiates persuasion.

Moreover, Aristotelian ethos is an unlikely discovery because in the West logos has been privileged for establishing communication. However, it is apparent in these minority texts that ethos creates the bridge between the audience and the texts and among the texts themselves. Thus for these minority works, ethos is the fundamental rhetorical device that creates connection.

Clearly, the ethnic worlds in these minority texts are unique, but in reality the focus is not so different. In other words, the texts are distinct at the particular level but not at the universal level. The struggles these child narrators go through demonstrate the process of making American identity, and through rhetoric they communicate to each other and to the audience. Paradoxically, what makes them so different is what makes them so American.

Ultimately, America has a multicultural society that is becoming more diverse every day. Hence, Americans are as Sacvan Bercovitch states: a culture of fusion and fragmentation. In the end, a person may cling to ethnicity because it is a

. . . part of a collectivity's highest (or deepest) cultural symbolism, a symbolism that is wholistic and that serves profound integrative functions[;] it is vital that we grasp these meanings, for in doing so we are likely to grasp something truly vital not only about ethnicity, but about a society or culture as a whole. (Fishman 23-24)

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