“My woman’s voice, my sexual voice, my poet’s voice”: Poetics of Sensuality as Reclamation of Memory and Self in Yesika Salgado’s *Tesoro*

I am built of colors. I have named them holy and they each bring the poems to me. look at the cursive of my flesh. it is how the stories arrive. it is how they leave. with me. intact. inseparable. complete.

-Yesika Salgado, “Canela” from *Tesoro*

**Introduction: Salgado’s Poetics of Sensuality and a Framework of Resistance**

Within Yesika Salgado’s second poetry collection entitled *Tesoro*, stories comprising familial grief and love, linguistic and bodily identity, sexual awakening, relationships, and decay in living and dying are presented within five sections. Salgado explores the tension between memory and erasure, particularly for Latino/a individuals in the city of Los Angeles where Salgado’s poems are mostly set, and its relations to questions of collective trauma and intersectional suffering. This tension is additionally depicted through the dichotomy of trauma and healing, wherein Salgado’s meditations upon familial strife, perseverance, grief, and death raise questions about reclamation of one’s self as a way to begin healing generational wounds.

The framework of Salgado’s poetics has been raised within several discourses concerning language, memory, and survival. Gloria Anzaldúa addresses the importance of language as connection to one’s identity in her essay “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” from her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* Anzaldúa asserts that ethnic identity is “twin skin” to linguistic identity, underscoring the importance of accepting her language(s)— and *having* them accepted— in order to accept herself (39). In a similar way, Allison E. Fagan’s chapter “Negotiating Language” offers a contextual understanding of the difficulties that surround the asserting of linguistic identity. Fagan extends Anzaldúa’s discussion of this linguistic tension enveloped within linguistic identity by addressing the decisions involved in representing Latino/a texts. This connection between language(s) and identity can be further delineated within Karina Oliva Alvarado’s work with cultural memory in her essay “Cultural memory and making by US Central Americans.” Alvarado examines artistic works that she argues contributes to “diverse constructions of Latinidad in the United States through counterpoetics, countervisuals, and counternarratives” (Alvarado).

While Salgado’s collection, as a whole, serves as a counterpoetics to the oppression of cultural identity and community, her poems that seem intentionally to invoke the senses are perhaps the most powerful in achieving what Alvarado describes as reactivating perceptions of home or belonging. In particular, her poems “Tesoro,” “Canela,” “A Guanaca in Los Angeles,” “La Americana,” “Tamales,” “Mami’s Cooking,” “Survival Tactics,” “Echo Park,” and “She Names You Corazón” offer visceral, corporeal experiences in carrying and responding to trauma and celebration. Salgado’s invocation of the senses through language, food, and the body reveals the ways in which her poetry confronts forms of cultural erasure through generational trauma, colorism and racism, while also preserving collective and individual memory in relation to family, culture, language, and self. Moreover, she elevates experiences of joy and liberation within her poetry through celebrations of memories revolving around language, food, and the body— all of which Salgado reflects through representations of her family, her city of Los Angeles, her Salvadoran culture, and her brown body.

**“I am my language”: Salgado’s Sensual Resistance to Monolingualism**

Salgado negotiates the tension between visceral trauma and healing by invoking the sensual, specifically through language, food, and the body. One of the most prevalent ways in which Salgado’s poetics invokes the sensual throughout her collection is through the constant negotiation of language. In “Negotiating Language,” Fagan discusses the accommodation-resistance spectrum many Latino/a authors are confronted with in either “[accommodating] or [challenging] the linguistic abilities of one’s readership” (210). As an author who utilizes code switching and both Spanish and English throughout her work, Salgado is quite literally negotiating the earlier tensions underscored in “Tesoro” in her uncertainty of being fully “american” or fully Salvadoran through language. Negotiating identity through language is one of the central issues taken up in Anzaldúa’s “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.” Within this essay, Anzaldúa asserts:

Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as

legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex, and all the other languages I speak, I cannot

accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes

without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I

would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers

rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. (39-40)

Within this passage, Anzaldúa describes the frustrations of always being expected to speak a certain way for a certain audience— not by her own will or desires, but by theirs. In the demands and expectations to speak only English or to translate Spanish to allow English speakers to remain comfortable and unchallenged, or in the expectations not to use variations of Spanish she prefers, Anzaldúa’s autonomy becomes suspended and, as a result, so does her identity. Fagan extends Anzaldúa’s assertion by examining the ways in which Latino/a authors choose to engage with the accommodation-resistance spectrum. A choice that holds the most resistance towards the monolingual English speaker is to write either entirely or heavily in Spanish, so as to frustrate the reader: “By metaphorically displacing the ideal monolingual American reader and by producing texts whose poetic and cultural signifying require crosscultural competency, contemporary US Latino and Latina writers are marginalizing and even potentially excluding the monolingual reader” (Fagan 212). By marginalizing— or even excluding— the monolingual reader, Latino/a authors reclaim not only their own linguistic autonomy, but also arguably their own sense of self from the demands and expectations of a normative white ideal reader.

Salgado’s collection negotiates language in a way that slides up and down the accommodation-resistance spectrum. Some of her poems are written entirely in English, with most of the poems throughout the collection code switching in both Spanish and English. One poem that is significant, though, in this discussion of linguistic resistance is her poem “A Guanaca in Los Angeles,” which is the only poem in the collection written entirely in Spanish. By including a poem in her collection that is entirely in Spanish and offers no translations, Salgado seems to take up Anzaldúa’s call to “legitimate” the tongue by choosing to not accommodate the expectations of any monolingual readers. In a sense she is freeing herself from accommodations and the question of legitimacy entirely by writing this particular poem the way *she* wants to write it. In addition to “A Guanaca in Los Angeles,” Salgado’s “Tesoro” offers a poignant moment directly engaging with this tension of the accommodation-resistance spectrum: “*were you born in El Salvador?/* y le digo que no / he says, *then you are an American/* y le digo que no /I write this half in Spanish /mitad en Inglés /to show him I’m not really /una americana /or completely anything at all” (59). By underscoring that she is not “completely anything at all” through her negotiation of language— “I write this half in Spanish/ mitad en Inglés”— Salgado resists another’s desire for her to be neatly categorized as either “American” or “Salvadoran.” Rather, she writes in both Spanish and English to express her own agency in denying any label or oppressive force imposed upon her body. Salgado points to her body as a transnational site, one not categorized or defined by the limitations of national borders and its problematic historical divisions and categorizations of people. Salgado’s transnational treatment of her body as a site wherein her languages can coexist and extend outward from her, she challenges the “temporary” status given to her through oppressive forces of colonization. Her Spanish will not be made “temporary” or impermanent by the expectations to speak and write in English. Rather, she resists these oppressive forces through her *making permanent* both languages on her own terms. Language is a way in which Salgado constantly evokes the sensual by playing with the accommodation-resistance spectrum; depending on the reader’s own linguistic abilities, the poems will enact different emotional or visceral responses of comfort, discomfort, frustration, confusion, or clarity throughout the experience of consuming the collection. In doing so, Salgado not only creates an embodied linguistic experience for the reader, but also reclaims an embodied linguistic identity for herself.

**“Come taste this”: Food Invoking Cultural Memory in *Tesoro***

Salgado also negotiates her embodied trauma and healing by invoking and celebrating the sensual through food. As food is often linked with the intimacy of gathering, community, and cultural tradition, Salgado’s celebration of food is one way in which she transcends the suspension and erasure of trauma and reclaims a space of belonging. Salgado’s poetics as they invoke food, in particular, engage in what Maurice Halbwachs calls postmemory work. According to Halbwachs, postmemory work “actively reconstructs collective memory— transmitted *intergenerationally* from person to person, *transgenerationally* from one generational group to the next, and *intragenerationally* ‘from within age groups as communities of memory’” (Alvarado). Within Salgado’s poems invoking the sensuality of food, familial and cultural memory are often associated with the eating, sharing, or preparing of food. For example, in her poem “La Americana,” she writes: “my grandmother / would laugh at my sadness / what did I know of love? / I couldn’t wash my own calzones / didn’t know how to palmear any tortillas / I burned the rice” (34). In this interaction between the poem’s speaker and a grandmother figure, Salgado depicts a certain disappointment the grandmother feels in the speaker. In illustrating this disappointment, the speaker’s lack of experience and ability to prepare food— tortillas, rice— also expresses a certain sense of loss the speaker feels in their cultural connection to both food and their grandmother.

In the poem “Tamales,” Salgado offers a more celebratory perspective of food through memory. She writes: “Mami. Tía Marina. Tía Reina. Tía Paz. Tía Morena. Tías with names forgotten. borrowed Tías. adopted Tías. cousins old enough to be Tías. all busy at the table … I am a little girl with her curls pulled into bun. today I get to hold a ladle and scoop the masa onto the banana leaves. I pass it along to a Tía who adds the salsa. another adds chicken. another potato. another ejote. another wraps it and drops it into a pot the size of my body” (15). Within these lines of the poem, the speaker witnesses the women in her family— her mami and tías— preparing tamales for Christmas. There is comfort and admiration the speaker expresses in watching the women in her family prepare tamales, and the poem’s form of taking on a childhood memory further invokes the sensuality of food as postmemory work. There is a connection established between these women intergenerationally because they all partake in a shared domestic space doing domestic work, but empower and bestow agency to one another due to the sharing of knowledge and company. Furthermore, the speaker ends the poem with: “my sisters call my name. I ignore them. I am learning magic today” (15). By describing the experience of watching the women in their family prepare tamales as “learning magic,” Salgado elevates the sensuality of food preparation not only to a celebratory level but to a nearly sublime level. This memory recollection of a young girl witnessing the magic of her mami and tías preparing tamales invokes the senses in a reconstructive belonging both transgenerationally and intragenerationally. Additionally, Salgado’s celebratory portrait of this moment between a young girl who has not yet experienced the sense of loss depicted in “La Americana” and the older women in her family negotiates trauma and healing generationally and reflectively.

This intergenerational proto-feminist bond is, perhaps, further echoed in her poem “Mami’s Cooking,” where Salgado writes: “her smile as we eat and say que rico. her dancing eyes when we ask for more. Mami and the way she feeds us her neverending heart. come taste this. I saved you some. *do you want me to pour it into a bowl? I was waiting for you”* (9). The imagery of mami saving food for her children, emphasized in “the way she feeds us her neverending heart,” and the mami’s words that she was waiting for her children, reveals a safety and belonging within the sharing of food. As the young girl witnessing the women in her family preparing tamales was magical, the speaker in “Mami’s Cooking” recognizes a part of herself in both her mami’s cooking and the act of sharing food together. The call for the speaker— or even the reader— to “come taste this” additionally invokes the sensual and intimacy of sharing food within individual and collective memory, as well as within Salgado’s poetics.

**“I am a brown woman who writes poetry about her brown life”: A Language of Flesh in *Tesoro***

In negotiating embodied trauma and sensual healing, Salgado also invokes the body in order to find joy and celebration in belonging. While the trauma she identifies within her poetry is also visceral, imposed upon her body and remaining within her body, her poetics also reclaim the body as a site for sensuality and intimacy— for her own self and for those to whom she gives consent to touching her body as well. Consent is significant in the case of Salgado’s celebration of her body because of colonial relationships imposing experiences of unwanted intrusion and attention. This is shown in earlier excerpts from poems like “Tesoro,” addressed in lines like: “maybe now I’m all american/ pero yo nunca quise eso /is this how it that works?/ la colonization,/ gentrification/ vienen aunque nadie las quiera/ how do I resist being taken?/ como le hago para sentirme /less lost?” (58-59). Salgado centers much of the trauma held within her body as embodied suffering caused by violence and unwanted attention, stemming from oppressive forces of white supremacy like colonization and gentrification. Another poem that conveys this nonconsensual and unwanted attention to the body is “Survival Tactics,” where the speaker interacts with a white man on a dating app. In the first stanza of the poem, the reader learns that a white man on a dating app is telling the speaker of the poem that he “likes curvy Latinas” and that he always wanted to sleep with someone like her, a “smart kind of ‘Mexican’” (Salgado 62). Within this opening scene, the transgression already occurs: a white man begins to fetishize the speaker’s body based on her appearance. He hypersexualizes her curves, while also (incorrectly) assuming her racial identity and casually sending a racist comment about Mexican people.

The body as a site of trauma associated with white supremacy is further underscored in the second stanza of the poem. Salgado writes: “white man offers to buy me/ tickets to any concert/ says he can spoil a little brown girl like me/ he’s already dreaming about it/ how holy that would be/ how saved I will become/ white man is already colonizing/ teaching me he is God,/ I don’t know better/ it’s his job to show me/ after all I am brown/ meant to be walked on/ like soil/ hands/ backs” (62). These lines further reveal the body to be a site of constant trauma— of both phantom traumas and new traumas— for those Othered under the condition of white supremacy. Particularly, the imagery of the speaker being walked on invokes a strong visceral reaction of pain and humiliation, with both “soil” and the body— “hands,” “backs,”— nonconsensually carrying and holding the violence being perpetuated by a white man’s casual racism on a dating app, the remnants of more violent forms of racism and colonization. This is only further echoed through the gendered aspect of colonization: land is often portrayed to be feminine and serves as the historical target of conquest. Salgado’s parallel between the land and human backs being walked on, paired alongside a white man targeting her body for his own conquest, underscores the gendered aspect of colonization that targets not only a feminine landscape, but feminine bodies.

It is important to emphasize the body as a site of Salgado’s reclamation of self. While the body serves as the site of trauma and suffering in her poetry, so too does it elevate joy, sensuality, and intimacy for her own relationship with her body and her consensual relationships with others. This reclamation of autonomy and the body is important in the light of *testimonio*, or the “[creation of] knowledge and theory through [one’s] experiences” (Latina 8). In using a poetics of sensuality that centers the body, a site of colonial trauma under white supremacy, Salgado validates the body as not only a site of significant knowledge for combatting colonization, but as a site of healing from trauma as well. In *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*, the introduction stresses the Latino/a *testimonio*’s capacity to capture how the body (both individually and collectively) remembers trauma: “the alchemies [that] disfigured our bodies; and yet, somehow we had found moments or processes of resistance, memory, and recovery” (Latina 14). Salgado’s poetics of sensuality fall under the genre of *testimonio* because through her stories and imagery revolving around language, food, and the body, Salgado finds moments of resistance, memory, and recovery. In playing with the accommodation-resistance spectrum in negotiating Spanish and English in her poetry, she finds resistance. In invoking intimate memories between herself and family involving the eating, sharing, and preparation of food, she finds memory. And, in celebrating her body and the intimate (consensual) moments between her body and other bodies, she finds recovery.

Another framework to consider Salgado’s celebration of the body comes in Roberta Hurtado’s “Language of the Flesh: Colonial Violence and Subversion in the Poetry of Judith Ortiz Cofer.” Within this essay, Hurtado examines Cofer’s poetry under a lens she calls “language of the flesh.” According to Hurtado, “language of the flesh” describes a presence wherein depictions of human embodiment “[combat] colonial discourses of ‘bodies’ under surveillance, [promoting] a project of healing” (108). By re-taking the site of colonial violence, both of which are imposed upon and within the body, Salgado creates a new space of embodiment for healing and recovery. In her poem “Canela,” Hurtado’s concept of “language of the flesh” is perhaps most apparent in Salgado’s language alone. In the poem’s opening, Salgado writes: “I am a brown woman who writes poetry about her brown life. I read it out loud and my accent curls the corners of my words. I am made of two languages coiled into the braid of my tongue. I belong to this country and to the one who birthed my mother” (3). With these lines, Salgado emphasizes her experiences through an embodiment of who she *is*; she begins by describing herself as a “brown woman who writes poetry about her brown life,” removing herself from the surveillance of colonial discourse— as earlier imposed upon her in “Survival Tactics.” Rather than being talked *about* by a white man through racist assumptions and ownership, the speaker in Salgado’s “Canela” speaks for herself. She also touches into the sensuality of the body by describing the “two languages coiled into the braid of [her] tongue” as well as how her accent “curls the corners of [her] world” (Salgado 3). In this moment, Salgado bridges her physical body with the bodies of her languages, each full and vibrant in shaping the speaker as who she is. Additionally, Salgado invokes a birthing imagery when she writes “I belong to this country and to the one who birthed my mother.” Birth denotes physiological, geographical, and emotional facets of one’s identity as human bodies and the land itself are centered in the significance of the birth. Where one is born, and to whom, informs a perception others construct of the person’s identity moving forward. This perception becomes more invasive and dangerous, however, when one’s birth or birthing is within the systemic oppressions of colonization and anti-blackness in the U.S. However, birth is also a very personal and intimate bodily experience, and ideally a private one. Birth is an effective metaphor for Salgado’s own poetics in reclaiming her body as a site of healing because birth is a site of both trauma and recovery; the process of birth takes an immensely physical—even violent— toll on the body, causing at times physical scars and emotional wounds like postpartum depression. However, birth also creates a site of healing within the body— not only in the birth of new life, but in the more timely process of recovering from the trauma of giving birth. In this way, Salgado’s invocation of birth in these final lines not only serves to reemphasize her belonging to both El Salvador and the US, but her belonging to her own body and its recovery as well.

Another instance in which Salgado’s poetics of sensuality adopt “a language of flesh” is in her poem “Echo Park.” In the beginning of the poem, the speaker shares: “on Saturdays we used to hop on the 4 headed downtown. we’d jump out at Echo Park Blvd. first, we’d hit up Fashion Forever where they sold the stretchy jeans that forgave my panza. they never lasted very long but they did the trick. one time we had a few extra dollars and my white eyeliner looked pretty dope. my best friend’s baby-oiled hair caught the light just right. we took some glamour shot pictures” (30). Within this poem, the embodiment Salgado invokes occurs on multiple levels. First, she situates the poem on Echo Park Blvd., in Los Angeles, a particular “body” Salgado centers throughout her collection. The tension Salgado feels in being “fully american” or “really from” El Salvador is often negotiated through Salgado’s choice to embrace Los Angeles as a “body” or place with which she feels comfortable identifying with. Los Angeles almost becomes its own character in several of Salgado’s poems due to the significance its “body” carries in Salgado’s own embodiment of belonging. Next, Salgado celebrates her own physical body by deriving joy from the “stretchy jeans that forgave my panza” and her “white eyeliner [that] looked pretty dope” (30). Salgado embraces her body *as it is*— as *she* sees, feels, and loves her own body. In saying the stretchy jeans “forgave” her “panza,” or stomach, she suggests that she is fat; however, the tone of this poem does not suggest a negativity to the idea of fatness. Rather, the poem’s tone seems to embrace and find moments of happiness in the speaker’s fatness. Additionally, the speaker’s admiration for her makeup offers another moment of recovery as she is admiring her own body and appearance rather than being the object of admiration for another, like the white man on the dating app in “Survival Tactics.” The difference in agency regarding the body is significant in “Echo Park” because Salgado reclaims autonomy for the speaker through “a language of the flesh.” Lastly, there is also a sensuality in the embodiment between the speaker and her friend. The speaker notes her friend’s “baby-oiled hair” catching the light “just right,” offering her friend a similar elevation of joy and admiration. However, unlike the “admiration” the white man in “Survival Tactics” imposed upon the speaker— where the words were a dictation of his desires— the admiration the speaker in “Echo Park” attributes to her friend leads to a shared, consensual experience of having a glamour photo shoot together, an activity that allows the women to engage in bodily recovery and celebration together. In this way, both women not only retain their own autonomy, they also reclaim an agency that is often taken from them through colonial violence. They are also able to share a form of bodily appreciation and, perhaps, sexuality that is not defined by a male or colonial gaze.

Sensuality expressed through the body as a reclamation of self and healing is also conveyed in Salgado’s poem “She Names You Corazón.” The poem centers a loving and romantic relationship between what seems to be two women-identifying people. Throughout the poem, the experiences of the two women are often expressed most palpably through the body. For example, the speaker’s lover in the poem is described with special attention to the mouth: “she says she experiences everything twice, even love. first in one language then another” (Salgado 41). This centering of the lover’s mouth through the importance of language conveys the necessity of the body in what *makes* experience. For the speaker’s lover, language is not only a way to communicate, but also serves as an entry way into embodied experience wherein she is *present* with others. Additionally, the speaker in the poem describes intimate moments between herself and her lover: “she stretches her arm against yours. *look baby, cafe con leche.* laughs and presses her mouth to your chest. you don’t know if she is talking to you or your heart” (41). This private moment between the speaker and her lover is expressed primarily through the body, with the intimate touch of the lover’s arm resting against the speaker’s, the emphasis of voice and laughter, and again the sensuality of the mouth as it is pressed against the speaker’s chest. In expressing these private and loving moments between the two women through bodily experiences, Salgado reclaims the body from a site of trauma and suffering. She celebrates the body as belonging not because of how bodies “identify” or how one can “categorize” bodies under colonial discourses; rather, she removes the body from this site of surveillance entirely and creates space for the body to belong by visceral, sensual experience alone— through experiences like walking down the busy streets of Los Angeles, pulling on a pair of comfy jeans, taking photo shoots with a friend, or being kissed while falling in love.

One of the most poignant moments in which Salgado centers the sensuality of the body is in the poem “Tesoro.” The poem ends with a stanza describing the speaker’s memory of her mami keeping all her baby teeth in a jar, along with her father’s gold and her grandmother’s jewelry. She reflects on how Spanish was the only language she knew during this time of her young childhood, when her mami would place her fallen baby teeth into a jar. She recalls spitting out her baby teeth because she was told something “more permanent” was coming, echoing the eternal suspension of indefinite obscurity and temporariness Rodríguez describes of the Salvadoran diaspora (Salgado 60). This line can also refer to the expectation that a “more permanent” English language is supposed to substitute for the Spanish of the speaker’s youth, a type of loss present within numerous poems in *Tesoro*. Salgado’s decision to write in both Spanish and English then, becomes even more significant due to the resistance in allowing her Spanish to become “temporary” or “lost.” After sharing these memories, the speaker asserts: “if you love me, even a little, I will call you corazón. small and pretty. like the first tooth my father pulled out of me. look at it. aqui esta. es mio. yo lo creci. aqui dentro de mi” (Salgado 59). The sensuality within this stanza also centers the mouth— the speaker’s loose baby teeth, the idea of “spitting out” what is only temporary, the awaiting of something more permanent to arrive in its place. The mouth also evokes the imagery of creation, wherein one’s voice emerges as a vessel for invention and expression, guiding us to the meaning within the next line of the poem. The imagery of the speaker’s father pulling out her loose baby teeth, followed by the very intimate words “aqui esta. es mio. yo lo creci. aqui dentro de mi” (“here it is. it’s mine. I grew it. here inside of me”) conveys the connection between memory and the body. Salgado, again, removes colonial discourse from the site of the body by removing the surveillance that often ensconces bodily experiences for people of color in the US. While this stanza does address the fear of temporariness that Rodríguez addresses of immigrant communities under colonial surveillance, the tone shifts to focus completely on the speaker’s own autonomy in *growing* these parts of herself in her own body, however “temporary” they might be. She emphasizes her ownership over these parts of herself, while also embracing others in her life who have shared these parts of herself with her. Her father retracting the loose baby teeth from her mouth, her mami collecting the baby teeth into a jar, and the baby teeth then sharing a space with intimate belongings from her father and grandmother all suggest that the reclamation of the body as a site of celebration and joy not only reclaims autonomy for the *self* but community and memory for the *collective.* Additionally, Salgado’s speaker seems to address the reader when saying that they “will call [them] corazón,” conveying a sense of collective recovery and healing that the *testimonio* genre speaks to.

**Conclusion: Reclamation of Memory and Self through Sensuality**

By reclaiming visceral experience through language, food, and the body, Salgado’s poetics reclaim sensual embodied presence, thus also reclaiming agency and identity within her intersectional experiences. Salgado’s poetry confronts the conditions of cultural erasure through the oppressive forces of colonization and white supremacy, delineating the traumatic impressions left upon and within the body as a result of suffering. While Salgado emphasizes that the body does remember these traumatic experiences throughout various poems in her collection, with particular emphasis on the nonconsensual or unwanted attention imposed upon her under the surveillance of a colonial gaze, her poetics of sensuality also usurp the colonial discourse of the “body” by celebrating sensual embodied experiences based around language, food, and the body. Her *Tesoro*, as illustrated through her poems “Tesoro”, “Canela”, “A Guanaca in Los Angeles”, “La Americana”, “Tamales”, “Mami’s Cooking”, “Survival Tactics”, “Echo Park”, and “She Names You Corazón,” utilizes a poetics of sensuality to elevate and commemorate her family, her city of Los Angeles, her Salvadoran culture, and her brown body. By invoking sensual experiences, Salgado reclaims the visceral as a way to resist erasure caused by generational trauma, creating space for readers to also confront these traumas and for collective recovery and healing.

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