

SFL Portolan Project

Interview with Sylvia Moreno-Garcia

Chicago, USA, 2019

- Mary Anne Mohanraj: Hi. I'm Mary Anne Mohanraj and I'm here with Sylvia Moreno-Garcia. We are here doing an interview for the Speculative Literature Foundation. We're able to have Sylvia here because she's here for the Deep Dish Reading Series here in Chicago co-sponsored by Plurality University and Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. And so, thanks so much for doing this interview with me and we were just gonna chat a little bit. I had some questions about, sort of your cultural heritage, science fiction / fantasy writing in the areas where you've lived, and then a little bit about your own work.
- Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Sure.
- Mary Anne Mohanraj: Okay. Sounds good. So, you were born in Mexico.
- Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: That's right.
- Mary Anne Mohanraj: And so if you could tell us just a little bit maybe about how you came to science fiction and fantasy. How you started writing it but also, what science fiction and fantasy, what the scene was like in Mexico when you were growing up?
- Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Okay. My mother, my father too, but mainly my mother, was a big fan of science fiction and fantasy so we're talking 1970s books.
- Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.
- Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Of around that time period. So she had a lot of the people that were coming up in that era. Anne McCaffrey - *Dragonflight*, some Robert Silverberg, *The Book of Skulls* I think, and that kind of work. She also had Golden Age, things from a little bit earlier - Asimov's ...
- Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.
- Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Ray Bradbury. All those kinds of people. And H.P. Lovecraft. She introduced me to H.P. Lovecraft. There was not and there is not really a science fiction and fantasy scene in Mexico
- Mary Anne Mohanraj: So no conventions or ...
- Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: No conventions when I was growing up and the books were not easy to find. So if you went into a bookstore, you found maybe,

like four authors there, like all of them translated.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So Tolkien, Tolkien was there. Stephen King was big, yes. Also, he was translated; *Pet Cemetary* that kind of stuff. And maybe people like Anne Rice

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Who had been doing her vampire books. And then maybe one or two more people would be in that bookshop. And that would be it. And it was kind of everything that there was.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So those books that you were reading translated into Spanish?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yes.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And then your mother's books were in English?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: My mother's books were both in English and in Spanish.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And in Spanish.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: There was a bigger science fiction and fantasy scene in Spain.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So you could sometimes get, those Spanish editions would sometimes wend their way down in to Latin America

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's really interesting.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So, so there is one big dedicated Science Fiction and Fantasy store in Spain. I think in Madrid and so she could order books from there. Or sometimes they would wind up in Mexico. The deras roca I think at the time they would import them.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: But she either had to find them imported or buy them in English. So she could read.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And also I could read English since the age of four. I was being taught English. So that's how I wound up reading all of those. Of course, very famous books were translated and maybe even, a couple of Mexican editorials might put out things like

Fahrenheit from Ray Bradbury. Things like that, they'd make it. But there was no local production scene.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

There was a very small time period in the 80s when it, it seemed like there might be a scene because there were several, several people who were writing science fiction in Mexico who kind of coalesced around a magazine that started at the time and they were kind of writing in that and ... but then that magazine closed.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

The money dried up and it kind of, like, completely disappeared.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Right.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

So what there was and what there really is nowadays is literary stuff.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

And sometimes in literary magazines or imprints you find these things that have some genre elements or cross-elements or things like that.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

But really there was no big commercial scene, there were no cons, no culture of that. Now it's also changing a little bit, I think.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

Pop culture. Like Game of Thrones. Like that kind of stuff is accessible and people know about it.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Right.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

But that doesn't extend to literature and to local literature production. There's no science fiction and fantasy imprints in Mexico.

Mary Anne Mohanraj:

Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia:

Of any note.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And in Spain?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And in Spain, it's also the same thing. There's very few science fiction and fantasy imprints with any kind of money and funds and distribution. So there's some small, kind of tiny indy press efforts, throughout like Latin America and Spain but nothing like the editorials that we're used to here like Tor, like Del Rey, like Ace to build up that community, that culture and also there's no way to kind of bring them together in things like Clarion workshops or any kind of organized form of study also, any kind of academic study. There's no ICFA [International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts] happening.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So there's all these things are not simply there for book production.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right. Can I ask, you and I talked the other day about *Cosmos Latinos* which is this anthology of Latin American science fiction which I'm, which I love. I think it's really interesting.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Mmhm.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It's from some decades back.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah. A couple of decades back.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So were those stories originally, do you think, and I should be able to go look this up, but were they published in literary magazines and then found and collected?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yes, that's right.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Okay.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah. The science fiction magazine that I mentioned was actually funded, I think, by the National Council of Technology and Science in Mexico. [It] was the one that was giving the funding to find a place to place some of these science fiction stories. So, yeah, they're often coming out in literary magazines, uh, poetry journals.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Stuff like that. Or collections of people but that are not coming out from any kind of commercial science fiction and fantasy production. So yeah, and those were collected actually, I don't

even remember what University Press ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: ... [inaudible]

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: I'm thinking, I'm thinking it was, I want to say U of T Texas but it's probably not. But it was a university press. Or maybe Nebraska.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So, there have been some efforts by academicians in the United States ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: ... to kind of like, corral all these different things and do a study of what constitutes Latin American speculative fiction. But it's all being done, first of all, in the United States for the most part. And it is happening at a certain academic level which is looking for certain elements that are perhaps, yeah that they like, more literary things.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Magic realism. All that kind of stuff.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And I, I think when we talked before, we were talking about how *Cosmos Latinos* has, a lot of stories that are centred on class issues ...

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yup.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: ... fear of technology, automation, ehm, factory workers and their ...

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: ... employers, and so there's a very strong thread there but it's, it's interesting to me because it seems really different from what I'm seeing out of the emerging, the last few years of writers from, Mexican American writers, Mexican writers, who seem, a lot of the stories are more about family and kinship and, religion and it's almost a completely separate set of themes.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yep.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And I don't know how much of that is diaspora versus homeland, or just what those editors were looking for at the time perhaps.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yep. I think it's, I think there's definitely a big difference between the diaspora and like native people of Latin America, who are still living there, producing there.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Like absolutely it is two different modes of writing. But I also think that there's different expectations from publishers. The things that they want to see. For example, a lot, or they wanted to see in decades past, in, in the realm of the literary and I think this extends through the realm of the commercial too, like Young Adult and that kind of stuff, is things like immigrant stories.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: That's what we're good for, right. Like, write your immigrant story. And if you don't have a, if you don't have a painful immigrant story ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: ... then you don't kind of fit.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So, you know, if you're someone like me who speaks English, you know, fairly fluently, you know, like, then it's like you don't fit into our story of our doom and gloom. And so, so that's not the kind of story that publishing really wants to see and highlight.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: South Asians, they want an arranged marriage novel and ...

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Well, yeah [inaudible] ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: ... ideally she should flee, to be rescued by a white man at the end, right.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yes, exactly. So there's the certain tropes that are very appealing and exotic and maybe if, and so maybe it's a self-fulfilling prophecy in a way. But I also do think that the concerns of a lot of immigrant stories that I've read, tend to be between the old and the new world.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: You know, my parents are very strict and they have these ideas, or whatever, and I don't. And I'm here in the United

States and I don't fit in, or in Canada. And it's kind of like a back and forth thing. And of course ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: ... you're not going to see that if you're writing about being in Buenos Aires and, or in Colombia and being a journalist who is facing things like being, the fear of being shot in the head by a guerrilla member or somebody from, or somebody from the police. It's a very different set of anxieties, expectations, and thoughts. One theme that I find reoccurring in several stories that I read and I, a couple of them I arranged to be translated for *The Dark* where I edit, is that there was an anxiety of the post dictatorship.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And I think this is widespread throughout, throughout Latin America. The memory of the dictatorships and how it haunts your daily life. Almost any country in Latin America faced a dictatorship harsher, or less harsh sometimes, some of them faced ethnic cleansing like in Guatemala. So that comes out in the writing. So they're writing these, in this case, it was a zombie story, but it was also at the same time it was a story about the post dictatorship. And, and what happens after when you're left with this kind of memory, haunted by kind of ghosts of that time.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It's so, Nola Hopkinson and Uppinder Mohan edited this anthology, *So Long Been Dreaming*, which is postcolonial science fiction, and which I thought was very powerful. But this is, it's sort of another, it's a more specific version of that, I guess, right that it's the, post dictator is not the experience of South Asia, right? That's not you know, that's not how it played out there. And so, it's really interesting. It's a, I haven't seen anyone writing or talking about that, yet. So ...

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah. And, and for example, there also anxieties about security in Mexico we have, and in many parts of Latin America, Central America, we have a very insecure situation, with drugs with cartels, with, you know, police attacking the population rather than defending them. So that's reflected obviously in the writing. That's why we have a lot of, that's why we have a thriving I think [inaudible], thriller scene in Latin America is

because it reflects our anxieties. So in the United States, you don't necessarily have those anxieties. You don't, you know, necessarily walk around as a, you know, second generation person thinking about things like, what if, you know, the narcos come into my house and blow my brains off tonight? You have other things. So, there's, like, very different modes of production. And I think one of the problems with publishing is wanting everything to be just one story and this *specific* story and not being able to even think, you know, would it be interesting if we could tell this other story. But going like, No. We only want to tell this tale. It has to fit these parameters. And if it doesn't, then it's something that's not, you know, going to be viable. And so that, I do think, it's a problem.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's, I mean that's why it's so important, right, to have people like you also in editorial, in publishing, right. So that there's, so that we have a broader base.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah, a broader base. It's been, it's been very narrow, I think, historically. And so there have been somewhat Latin American people that have also been translated in the mode of magic realism. But that's also very limiting in the same way because, like we said, the, if you're, for example, have a story about fear of automation that doesn't fit the magic realism mode, and maybe there are, you know, some stories about automation that have gone, you know, science fiction stuff that I haven't, you know, paid much attention to. But the things that editors would immediately translate and be interested in would be things that mimic Allendes, you know.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: [Inaudible]

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And they would be like, well, if it's not like Allendes, if it's not magic realism, then it's not Latin American in a way. Which is very strange, a very strange thing.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: You know, it's, it's not this category, then it is not part of this nationality. And we don't think, when we think about American production of books, well, if it's not science fiction, then it's not American, right? Like, that's kind of like, well there might be more there, so.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's fascinating, I think, you know, and I'm hoping that it's opening up a little. I, you know, I look at characters like Miles Morales in Spider Man, and I actually personally think that the animated Spider Man movie *Into the Spideverse* is like the best Spider Man movie, possibly the best superhero movie I've ever seen. And so, I'm hoping that people are starting to see other possibilities and that editors and publishers and movie people will all be more open to that. But we have to kind of also maybe sometimes wedge the door open a little further, right. Every, every writer, every reader, sort of. Maybe if the readers are demanding of [a] wider variety of stories that might, that might encourage editors to take, publishers to take a risk on them, too. If I could swing to Canada.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Mmhm.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: You, you moved to Canada in your early 20s?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yes, that's right. In my 20s.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And you've now been there for quite a while.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yes.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And you've raised your kids there. How is the Canadian sci-fi scene been with, been for you? I know, from when we were talking before you said a lot of your work is actually showing up at literary festivals rather than sci fi cons per se. So maybe if you could talk about how that all plays out?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah. All this, the science fiction fantasy scene compared to the United States, and perhaps England is much, much smaller in Canada. And literature in general is centered around Toronto, all kinds of literature. And it's the same thing with fantasy and science fiction that's kind of like the center of the universe. So in Vancouver, nothing kind of kind of happens. For example, our, our science fiction and fantasy con for this year was just cancelled. Got notice that it's not going to happen. It had been dwindling for several years now. So it was, it was sort of expected. But also, I feel there's no interest sometimes in grooming local talent.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno Garcea: It's a bit, it's a bit like, it's a bit like why Canadian comedians go to the United States?

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: You know, there's all these famous comedians and they end up becoming really huge stars in the US, not necessarily, you know, back in their homeland. And I think it has to do with the fact that there's very few dedicated Canadian, similar to Mexico, Canadian science fiction and fantasy imprints.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: There's Chizine, which is in Toronto, and there's Edge, but they're both very small in comparison to American imprints.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And I'm sorry, I'm trying to remember, is Aqueduct? No, they're not in Canada. I feel like that I know at least one or two more that I should be able to name, but they're, they're few.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: There are. Yeah. Very, very tiny. I mean, there's mine, you know, Innesmouth Free Press, but they're very tiny kind of efforts. And the grant system that a lot of publishers use in order to stay afloat doesn't necessarily favor commercial genre, such as crime, such as romance, such as science fiction and fantasy. So that revenue, that stream of money is not available generally, to, in order to help construct a Canadian, a healthy Canadian science fiction and fantasy scene. So there's, so there's not a lot of money. And when there's not a lot of money, there's not a lot of resources. When there's not a lot of resources, things just kind of happen.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: The universities are also mostly not interested in science fiction and fantasy as a field of study. So that's, again, another funding avenue that is locked away when you don't have, also, the academic interest.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yes.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: The possibility of academic presses picking up some of the, some of the stuff and issuing things similar to *Cosmos Latinos*

or things like that, is not, it's just not gonna happen. So it's a very difficult place to, to be as a writer. And I also think that you know, yeah, they're not nurtured, they're not whatever. And for example, in my case, I'm never invited to anything. Almost anything science fiction and fantasy within Canada. I did go to Winnipeg, I must say that Honda did invite me a couple of times and I met some lovely people there.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: But even like, nearby cons, don't, you know, wouldn't ever think about asking me about going. Literary festivals do. Even though I've had only very few things, appear in literary magazines and things like that. I think literary festivals have a stronger tradition of wanting to embrace diversity and to look for those people you know, and try to find them and then see, okay, well, you know, we don't have any Latin American writers represented. Should we, you know, maybe look for some and finding some, or that kind of stuff. You know, they have, also, more money because they ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah. Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: ... you know, have a Toronto network. But whenever I have been invited to speak, it has been through those, through those channels. Through the literary channels more than the, the commercial, speculative stuff. And, and yeah, frankly, I think it is because there's just not a culture of fostering it.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm. [Inaudible]

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Everyone else looks so shiny. You know, they want to bring Americans. Americans are cool, you know, like they're cooler, they're better than us. And it's like, Okay. [laughter]

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Ah, that's interesting. That's really interesting. I, you know, it's it's only recently I think in Worldcon in San Jose, there was the Mexican initiative.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So that was just two years ago, was the first time where I really was able to interact with several Mexican writers. And that was really exciting. And I'm hoping that our genre will, will start

making more efforts in that regard and opening things up a little bit more.

I want to talk about your own work a little bit, if you can. Your latest book is *Gods of Jade and Shadow*, ...

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yes.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: ... which came out a few months ago? Is that right?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yes, thanks for looking.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And, maybe if you can just talk a little bit about, in your work that I've read so far, I've read your short fiction, it seems to me that there's, oh I don't know, really interesting issues around class and religion, gender and sexuality. My students, I think, are going to have very meaty discussions about all of those things in your work next week. So maybe if you can just talk a little bit what are the major themes in *Gods of Jade and Shadow*. And tell people a little bit about the book, maybe?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah, *Gods of Jade and Shadow* is set in the 1920s in Mexico, and it is a quest story. It's a young woman who must help a Mayan god of death recover his throne.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So they start off and you get them and they end up in Baja, California. So if you draw a line on a map, that's the complete opposite, you know, one peninsula to the other peninsula. And, and yeah, I mean, my protagonist Casiopea Tun is, is an indigenous, is of indigenous extraction.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Her daughter was a Maya, a Mayan. That's why her last name is Tun. And she, it is supposed to feel like a spoken story, because a lot of the narrative of the mythological elements, they come from the *Popul Vuh* ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: ... which is originally a narrative tale which was later on transcribed and that's how we access it now.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Interesting, yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: But the way that the story is spoken, it has certain rhythms, and one of the interesting things is that, if you've ever done any research about Mayan, it is very poetic. And the way that people speak it nowadays still regularly amongst each other has this very poetic quality. The way they talk to each other is a lot more elaborate than the way I'm talking to you right now.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Oh, okay.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So there's this. And there, and the reason why I'm a writer, one of the reasons why I'm a writer, is because my great-grandmother, who couldn't read or write, she would tell me stories at nighttime. Folktales and so she would share those stories with me. And, and I feel that a lot of times in western and American book culture, current book culture, we don't think that oral history is very valuable.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: We think that if it is not written down and written down in a certain shape, it is not worthy.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Hmm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And I thoroughly dislike that notion. A lot of indigenous people share knowledge orally and it's not less valuable just because it's spoken. And, and I liked also the idea of trying to approximate that within, within a novel. But also giving you the feeling that this is a folk tale. Because folktales have certain shapes and ways of telling that I really like. So, for example, a hero must go on a quest. And she must speak with three, three speaking animals, let's say a goat, a cow, and a cat, you know.

And it's three, it's specifically three, always, you know. And after the three, then you know, she can do this and and do that. So there's, there is this sense of rhythm, to things that, that are spoken, that I wanted to capture. But there's also a certain inherent freedom when you're speaking, because you get to remake the story for your audience in a way every, every time that you're telling it.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So I wanted to have that sense out of a folktale. That this is something that even though we're reading it in book form, perhaps is at the same time being spoken.

So there's these parts where you can, you can hear an omniscient narrator who is, you know, telling you about what's going on.

And we had a prologue at the beginning that my editor told me to cut. Where it was, specifically it said: This, here, we shall begin to tell a story, we shall tell a story about" whatever, whatever. And that was mimicking exactly the rhythms of the *Popul Vu*.

They talk like that during the book. It says, you know, "this is the story of the Maya people who", whatever, whatever.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And, you know, you can feel it when you're reading it, that this is something that somebody was standing up and saying. And so I wanted that feeling. But we cut the prologue but there's still that omniscient narrator. And I don't think people nowadays, like omniscient narrators.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: I think some people, people who don't like my book are like: "Ahh, it's a lot of telling", But I feel like telling is such an important part of Latin American culture.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: I mean, you don't read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and you go like: "that's a lot of telling". It is, but it's also, when you're narrating certain kinds of stories, for example, mythic stories in this case, or in the case of *One Hundred Years*, when you're trying to tell the story of a nation really, in one single book, you can't do it by showing, you know.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: If you showed everything then it would be this bloated ten volume tome.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is already a big book.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: It already feels like forever. It will feel like forever twice over!

So, you know, it's a very good book, but it has a lot of telling embedded into the story.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah. [laughter]

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And I think there's a lot of telling in many other well known Latin American books because we don't mind the telling so much.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yes, no.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: You know, it's like, you know, it's just a, embedded into our lives. When you're talking to somebody who's not used to that, I think sometimes they go like, "Oh, I don't like it". Well, they think telling is for children's ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: They say: "This is a children's story, because it has a lot of telling".

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Hmm, that's interesting.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Well, you know, I don't think so necessarily. I just think we denigrate children's stories quite a bit. We think, you know, that is bad. You know, when, when something sparks our childlike glee in you, you know, it's like, it must not be a fully formed thing. It must be crappy, to be honest with you.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And if it doesn't make you work, then it's not, not serious.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yeah. if it's not serious and depressing, And it's also not a depressing book.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Which people say, you know, like, "Well, Mayan gods were very bloody and whatever," and it's like, but that's not the story I wanted to tell. I wanted to tell a story that was embedded with this glee of storytelling that my, my great-grandmother had, you know. It's ... yes, there's monsters and witches and things that will eat you. And she would say that, you know, "this thing could

eat you. This monster could eat you if you're not careful". But there was also a sense of the fantastic. Of how wonderful it was to exist in this world in which there were witches and monsters and all these weird and strange things. And yes, it was a dangerous world but it was also a world filled with magic. And so to me, I wanted that world filled with magic. Not necessarily like this is a terrible sad, you know, story and it's incredibly depressing. And and I was like, well, it's not *Catcher in the Rye*, you know.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I just think that is a lot of why people love Norah Jones's Broken Earth series. Because I think it has that, that incredible sense of wonder which is part of the heart of our genre, right and tapping into that.

So I'm really looking forward to reading your book. I think, I think I've blocked out time next week.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Okay.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So it's going to be next in the queue. So we should, we should wrap up. But I'm going to leave with, if you could just tell us a little bit about what you're sort of working on now, upcoming projects and things you're excited about. And where people can find you.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Okay, yeah. Well, you can always find me on Twitter: @sylviamg or at my website: sylviamorenogarcia.com.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: I have two books coming out next year. One is coming out in February. And it's not a speculative fiction book. It's my first crime novel.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's exciting.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Yep. called *Untamed Shore*. So 1979, in a Mexican shark fishing village. And I call it a coming of age mixed with a noir.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So a young woman who meets three tourists and then gets in trouble and has to get out of the trouble.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Mmhm.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: And then the other one in June, I think, 23 of that same year, of 2020, I have *Mexican Gothic*, which is my second with Del Rey. And that is exactly what it ...

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Sounds like ...

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: ... sounds like. It's a Mexican gothic novel. It's set in 1950 in the countryside, in High Place. And there's this young woman who has to go to this isolated mansion in the countryside because her cousin might be in trouble. And then she starts to unravel the secrets in that mansion. So it is a full-on gothic with all the gothic tropes. So if you liked those trashy novels of the 1960s, with the covers of a young woman in a white dress running away from the house, it is exactly that kind of book.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: *[laughter]*

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: But I say, it's trashy but classy. Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Nice. Nice. Yeah, I believe it. Yeah. All right.

Well, on that note, thank you again, Silvia Moreno Garcia, author of *God of, Gods of Jade and Shadow*, and forthcoming novels, and editor at ... and the name of your press again?

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Innsmouth Free Press. But I also am co-editor of The Dark Magazine, which is always looking for short stories. And we have a huge number of people of color writing in our pages. I think 65, 70 percent this year, people of color. But we don't have enough indigenous writers.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Okay.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: So if you're an indigenous writer and you're watching this Canadian or American, or, you know from another part of the world we just don't get any. And I've asked everybody and I'm gonna have to ask again.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Alright, we're gonna send up the bat signal, right, so. Alright, thank you so much Silvia. It's been, it's been a delight.

Sylvia Moreno-Garcia: Awesome. Thank you.