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Chicano Science Fiction and the Shattering of Colonized Reality:
The Resurgence of the Alien Sublime

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

Daniel Valencia

March 2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Chicano Science Fiction and the Shattering of Colonized Reality:
The Resurgence of the Alien Sublime

by

Daniel Valencia

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
University of California, Riverside, March 2020
Dr. Sherryl Vint, Chairperson

In this project I explore the uncharted domains of Chicana/o science fiction. Expanding on the interdisciplinary body of scholarship generated within the Chicana/o Studies tradition, which has generally focused on investigating the past as method to express the diverse Chicana/o experience, I deploy science fiction as method to theorize on a new consciousness of empowerment and liberation for Chicanas/os. I examine the ways in which Chicana/o science fiction not solely engages with speculative futures, but of greater magnitude, the ways in which Chicana/o science fiction dimensionalizes space and time to expose colonized reality as artificial. My project, therefore, in addition to extending upon conventional Chicana/o scholarship, engages with science fiction as an existential phenomenon by locating the experience of genuine empowerment and liberation on the resurgence of the alien sublime. The alien sublime is re-discovering the true self as the creative and vibrant essence of science fiction itself...cosmic

consciousness as timeless, formless, boundless life-energy, which may also be understood as primordial awareness that experiences space-time-reality in material form. I contend that true liberation cannot be accessed through an imagined political identity that originates from the colonial form, but by experiencing liberation as a science-fictional practice of self-realization. Liberation, in other words, cannot be achieved within the colonized dominion of space and time, but rather, by discovering liberation as the fundamental essence of the alien sublime. Featuring several Chicana/o science fiction novels, I demonstrate how the alien sublime is expressed using a myriad of techniques. In its entirety, this project offers a vastly alternative approach to empowerment and liberation, thereby encouraging a re-evaluation that contextualizes the Chicana/o experience as an ontological activity.

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INTRODUCTION

The Chicano Mind is in the midst of a great invasion. Subatomic alien entities indiscriminately fire laser hot magma beams into Chicano Neurons within the Chicano Cerebral Cortex, pumping toxic microbe alchemy into the cellular structure of the incredible Chicano Brain. These colonizing forces deceive the Chicano Mind into perceiving itself through an impaired ontological frequency only capable of imagining liberation through a bounded, predetermined reality dictated by the invading organisms. In the language of Earthly physics, the illusory event unfolds in space-time as a .003 gravimetric fissure of the cognitive realm in alien *sub*space misprocessed as a minus quantum variance in the way cosmic matter is perceived. The colonizing presence survives in the Chicano Subconscious Mind as an undetected foreign entity, generating an invisible force field, a space-time border that prevents the Chicano Mind from actuating self-awareness as pure space consciousness. And yet, sensing danger from inside the depths of the Incredible Chicano Mind, in the midst of chaotic space, the Chicano Brain is triggered by a primordial, self-activating Indigenous technology. The Alien Sublime ReEmerges as Space Consciousness...the empty space in which physical objects in the universe are created.

In that instant, tHRee rABBit detects strange yet familiar anomalies penetrating his holographic brain:

"tHe aLiEn sUBLime" he utters.

As if waking up from several lifetimes, he frantically scans his universal matrix.

"An illusion...a dream...*temictli*"

The discovery is experienced atop of the main temple, under the celestial glow of the full moon in the sacred calendar phase of •••*Tochtli*. tHRee rABBit looks down at the tattoo between his index finger and thumb on the web of his left hand, three dots in the shape of a small pyramid radiate against his bronze skin.

He whispers to himself, "*Mi Vida Loca*."

It is a time of awakening... the Age of a New, Bronze, alien sublime Reality...

Shortly thereafter, tHRee rABBit discovers the concept of zero and is finally able to do calculus—[**kal-kyuh-luh s**]

Such fantastic scenarios are not typically found within the range of established Chicana/o scholarship. Although thinking about Chicana/o consciousness in this context may appear counterintuitive, perhaps even sacrilegious and incompatible with the underlying principles of political empowerment initiated by foundational Chicana/o rhetoric, as well as a farfetched overture incompatible with what the Chicana/o mind is willing to accept as logical reality, utilizing science fiction as method from which to generate a new form of Chicano consciousness stands as the core of my polemic. Understanding the Chicana/o experience as a science-fictional phenomenon is that which is ultimately capable of activating a sublime transformation into a higher consciousness of utter liberation. Herein, the very process of understanding the Chicana/o as an existential possibility within alternate dimensions of reality, is that which is capable of triggering a higher consciousness of liberation that cannot be accessed through the colonized logic of the Western mind and conventional social justice ideology frequently voiced through the political imaginary. Only then, I assert, will the Chicana/o Mind be able to shift into an alternate dimensional reality defined by a boundless existence inherent to science fiction existence.¹ The shifting from the political imaginary into a new consciousness independent of colonialism is the underlying premise from which this project emanates.

This shift in consciousness hinges on formulating a new approach towards experiencing liberation for Chicanas/os. Attempting to articulate on such an abstract concept, however, is not without difficulty since the core of my argument rests on attempting to describe a force that is indescribable from the perspective of the colonial

mind; a description that begins by drastically shifting from a psychosomatic, time-based political imagination into a timeless, formless, boundless, vibrant life-energy, which I refer throughout this project as, the alien sublime. The alien sublime is untamed. It is the empty space and force of creation from which the universe as a physical manifestation emerges—think, if you will, of that which existed before the Big Bang and the beginning of space and time as form, which may be described as non-corporal existence, nothingness, or nihilism. It is the absence of thought as form; a deeper reality expressed as the consciousness responsible for the expression of thought via higher universal awareness. The alien sublime is therefore primordial genuine space as intelligence...an Indigenous consciousness that transcends matter as it emerges and is experienced in the colonized mind within space and time.

Of particular significance, I use the term Indigenous to describe this consciousness not in the conventional time-based political sense, which relies on the colonial form to access empowerment and liberation,² but as a way to express the alien sublime as an awareness that exists prior to, or outside the politicized domains of space and time. In this way, the alien sublime may be understood as Indigenous to the formation of the colonial imagination. I suggest that the pursuit of empowerment as an un-contextualized political process that activates in reaction to colonialism is illogical since the source of empowerment remains intrinsically compromised by the essence of colonialism. I utilize this approach to re-contextualize the political process of decolonization...to radicalize the established political worldview. Subsequently, under this revised purview, the alien sublime is fundamentally political in that it transforms how

we perceive colonized reality as well as re-engage with the political process. Since the colonial imagination's understanding of reality is bounded by the consequence of space and time, the alien sublime is necessary to expose colonial reality as artificial. The alien sublime therefore liberates in that it transcends the misperception of the political self as it experiences space-time as reality. It is liberation experienced as the shattering of the isolated colonized mind by way of self-awareness/discovering the authentic self as timeless, formless, alien consciousness, which is, to say again, not a liberation that may be activated from within the political imagination, but may be utilized as a practice in the political process. I situate the alien sublime at the epicenter of this project because it has the power to point the Chicana/o towards an authentic consciousness of liberation. As I will show, the emergence of Chicana/o science fiction epitomizes the critical process of making such a monumental realization.

Science fiction provides boundless innovative freedoms, but as my premise alludes to, has become inconceivable in the Chicana/o mind under the illusory reality generated by the despotic forces of colonization. I therefore diverge from more conventional modes of Chicana/o discourse by deploying Chicana/o science fiction as an incarnation that re-articulates political reality into an alien sublime experience. Implementing this reconceived view of political empowerment is beneficial in that it completely re-conceptualizes how modes of Chicana/o empowerment have been generally understood, providing a fertile space for the remaking of social reality. To this end, my underlying approach merges Chicana/o Studies with the burgeoning field of science fiction studies to formulate a new dimensional model of liberation. My approach is consistent with a recent

move by ethnic writers that have begun using science fiction to challenge the established utopian tradition by developing new decolonization techniques. Comparably, my project aims to enhance the methods by which Chicanas/os have chosen to engage with the language of liberation as a sublime experience. In bringing this new perspective to the table, so to speak, my argument begins by locating the Chicana/o mind under a perception of empowerment and liberation that is regulated by a subconscious, acquiescent view of the world as constructed by settler colonial discourse. This is to say, we have been taught to construct an inner self-imposed prison regulated by an illusory view of reality, which we believe is *the* path to freedom. This lure of empowerment has captivated the Chicana/o imagination, as our political instinct has been dictated by surviving a perception of reality that compels us into generating empowerment through isolation, difference, and separateness, leading to a false sense of perceived completeness. I therefore claim that Chicanas/os have come to define themselves through terms made available by the fixed political apparatus of colonization, and thus, have internalized self-definition and liberation as modes of political empowerment, making liberation an unattainable myth. Since this apparatus is, by itself, incapable of offering real choice, liberation remains incomplete, inaccessible, and ultimately a form of self-enslavement. Not only do colonized populations experience the brunt of physiological subjection under this ruse, but phenomenologies of universal existence become subjugated by the colonial imagination. Under this contextualization, I use the term "universal" throughout this project as a way to describe how Chicanos/as make sense of existence in the defining of reality. Subsequently, the ways in which we make sense of

ourselves in colonial reality is defined by misperceptions of space and time. As Mark Rifkin astutely points out, "U.S. settler colonialism produces its own temporal formation, with its own particular ways of apprehending time, and the state's policies, mappings, and imperatives generate the frame of reference" (2). Rifkin contends that understanding native existence independent of its own intrinsic ontological system relegates them to a fixed temporal reality—particularly the present and future—that generates a colonial base from which to reframe Indigenous "being-in-time" (viii). The core of Rifkin's theorization relies on pluralizing time by situating native reality under a broader existential index that recognizes all temporalities as legitimate, thereby establishing a genuine, autonomous space of being for Indigenous populations. Although my underlying theorization of autonomy differs in that the alien sublime is deployed as an Indigenous, or primordial cosmic life-energy from which all objects in space-time arise, including colonial temporality, the significance in Rifkin's analysis lends itself towards challenging colonial reality as the self-appointed master architect of existential knowledge and experience. His work situates time as a colonial process that functions to regulate our perception of universal reality. Of particular relevance, it establishes the need to re-contextualize traditional social justice ideology and the ways liberation has been conventionally understood by adopting an enhanced awareness that eclipses colonial reality as *the* legitimate form of knowing our existential selves.

I further argue that science fiction is a technology capable of shattering the colonial imagination, thereby exposing the deeper truth of existence and restoring the Chicana/o mind to an alien sublime state. Extending upon the historical, realist propensity of

canonic Chicano novels, which will provide the necessary context in the following section, this project features several non-traditional Chicana/o science fiction texts to show how they re-conceptualize political reality to engage with the alien sublime mode of existences. Of supreme importance, I stress that Chicana/o science fiction be understood as a force of self-realization experienced through a cosmic awareness that expresses the alien sublime. Situating the alien figure within the vast dimensions of the utopian mind is especially pivotal to this process, as it evokes the sensibilities required for identifying social reality as an illusion fashioned by colonization. Fredric Jameson shows us that the politic of Utopia is an anthropomorphic influence that relies on the "dialectic of Identity and Difference". Because Utopia is mediated through a model of Otherness, he believes that we are incapable of imagining "a system radically different from this one" (xii). Although the alien itself is born from this mirrored social reality, Jameson claims that by consciously looking beyond the duality of Difference, we will be successful in imagining the unimaginable (128). Only then, he contends, will the alien become an epistemological body that liberates us from the grips of the political imagination (xiv). Indeed, looking beyond difference, as Jameson suggests, appears to be constructive in escaping a reality shaped by perceptions of the Other, but the question then arises, how do we look, or locate, beyond this place of difference? Specifically, how exactly should colonized populations imagine difference beyond colonial reality since the act of imagining a liberation void of difference, is in itself, a conceptualization born from a direct comparison of existence that is indivisibly defined and processed by difference. In my view, the problem persists in that the space-time illusion ascribed by the colonial

imagination serves as the starting point from which to activate the process of imagining, but essentially works to contaminate the act of imagining beyond difference. And so, using a science fiction-generated utopia to imagine the unimaginable becomes a paradox since whatever past, present, or future is imagined, remains bound under the illusory reality of space-time that originates from the colonial imaginary. And since the alien sublime antecedes the colonial imagination as a physical universal entity, attempting to imagine the unimaginable perpetuates a deeper misunderstanding of reality. It is this fundamental triggering and misunderstanding of reality that is the reigning, indoctrinating force of colonization.

It seems that for the perception of difference to genuinely dissolve, we must transform how we perceive and engage with reality. The most obvious method seems to be to de-emphasize logical thinking as a political process of liberation. In essence, this means to simply stop thinking through the limited mind-set of space and time. We must avoid thinking through the colonial imagination as method to expose its illusory nature. This requires a paradigm shift in the way we engage with reality, which as I have already proposed, must be activated not by envisioning an alien through the colonial mind, but through the existential power of an Indigenous alien sublime consciousness, which is completely illogical, as well as indefinable to the colonial imagination. Subsequently, we cannot rely on infusing ourselves into an imagined colonial induced science-fictional reality, but we must come to discover that we already exist as a science fiction reality, not reliant on imagining anything in the process of being or in the creation of existence. Simply put, liberation is not an ideological thought, but the experience of knowing

through awareness. It cannot be imagined into a non-existent science fiction future, we can only *be* liberation as science-fictional beings.

Such a profound liberation must be predicated on exploring the relationship between science fiction and colonization. Yet few scholars have developed a critical understanding of this relevant juncture. John Rieder offers such an understanding by arguing that the essence of colonization permeates science fiction; that colonialism is a fundamental quality in the development of the science fiction genre and its role in formulating what is possible and imaginable. In short, he uses the colonial gaze to explain how social relations and depictions of the future are maintained through the power to redefine the exotic colonial Other's ambivalent existence, which manifests in science fiction through the "vacillation between fantasies of discovery and visions of disaster" (15). Although not intended to be as developed as Rieder's analysis, Ziauddin Sardar's similarly highlights that science fiction has been built and controlled by an image distinctly charted by Western civilization, which has been equally used to "distinguish the West from all other civilisations" (2). He states that under this limiting context, "Science fiction shows us not the plasticity but the paucity of the human imagination that has become quagmired in the scientist industrial technological, culturo-socio-psycho babble of a single civilizational paradigm ... As a genre it makes it harder to imagine other futures, futures not beholden to the complexes, neuroses and reflexes of Western civilization as we know it" (1). Rieder and Sardar not only expose the limits of established science fiction in terms of its attachment to colonization and influence under the Western imagination, including the distorted erasure of colonized populations from

depictions of overwhelmingly white futures,³ but they implicitly speak to how science fiction, despite its increasing use as a tool of social justice by an emerging community of ethnically diverse scholars,⁴ may be equally restricted by the kind of liberation it is ultimately capable of offering since the various interpretations and strategies tend to become constrained and predictable within the colonized science fiction imaginary. Colonial science fiction compels us to reimagine existence instead of imagine existence in a way that shatters colonial reality. While I acknowledge that an ephemeral ambiance of empowerment may be readily accessible under this milieu, genuine unmitigated liberation nonetheless remains inaccessible, as expressions of ethnic empowerment ultimately remain synchronized with the illusory influence that colonization has on our minds and perception of reality.

Engaging with science fiction while holding on to a distinct ethnic experience has probably been one of the main tensions faced by ethnic science fiction writers. And yet, these writers and artists have transformed the very essence of science fiction into new spaces of self-discovery and liberation able to transcend the colonial imaginary, some of which have been featured in various anthologies, such as in Nalo Hopkinson's, *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction & Fantasy* (2004), Grace Dillon's *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (2012), and more recently, Matthew David Goodwin's, *Latino/a Rising: An Anthology of U.S. Latino/a Speculative Fiction* (2017), and finally, *Altermundos: Latin@ Speculative Literature, Film, and Popular Culture* (2017).⁵ If we are to fully appreciate the de-colonial process expressed in these works, as users, or critics of science fiction, we must look beyond the spatial and

temporal barriers established by the colonial imagination, that which confines our autonomous experience of reality, by understanding the relationship between colonized populations and science fiction as an existential phenomena. To do this, it becomes necessary to detach science fiction from colonization by reformulating how the megatext has been generally understood,⁶ to extend science fiction away from deterministic interpretations of Western science and technology, and move towards a deeper essence of science fiction which embraces an alien sublime consciousness understood as the most sophisticated science and technology in universal existence. Within this framework, the alien sublime may be equally understood as a technology. Not a technology derived along time, but of a greater cosmic science that intrinsically defines our existence in the universe as science fiction. For instance, that we exist in space, on a planet that orbits a sun, within a galaxy containing billions of other respective suns and planets, among billions and billions of other galaxies within an infinitely expanding universe where time and space are not absolute but relative, innately makes us science-fictional beings; creations of a higher science and technology derived from celestial consciousness where there is no concept of the past, present or future, but only science and technology as primal existential phenomena.

Situated under this deeper, re-conceptualized universal setting, the knowledge that has been generated by Western science may only be understood under the historical circumstance in which it was created. Because our logical relationship with science and technology evolves with the passage of time, what might have been considered illogical, or even impossible in the distant past, is now widely regarded as a logical, quotidian form

of reality. In the words of famed science fiction writer Isaac Asimov, “Today's science fiction is tomorrow's science fact.” As such, the relationship between science fiction and reality is innately based on, as well as limited, by the passage of time. Take, for example, the evolution of a wind-powered ship, which moved people across continents, to a modern spaceship, which is able to take people to the moon, into space, and eventually to the planet, Mars. Because these technologies rely on time to develop, the technologies are forever bound to the ideological context in which they were created as form. In contrast to the alien sublime, which as discussed in the previous paragraph, I suggest is the genuine science and technology in the universe. Science and technology in time are contingent on the evolution/transformation of form rather than on awareness as the existential formless intelligence that already is. Since the alien sublime cannot evolve by experiencing the passage of time, the alien sublime may only experience its own existence. Conventional science fiction has been mutually experienced in such a way, as a conceptual phenomenon that must be technologically imagined under the context of its spatial and temporal dimension, but which functions within a limited ideological reality experienced outside of higher universal science, where science fiction may only be understood as a projected technological simulation within a continuously evolving scientific process that is never able to transcend its bond with Western logic.

It is through the comparing of subjective dimensional realities that this project makes a critical intervention. That the brightest scientific minds of our time remain baffled by our existence as universal beings does not imply that an alien sublime consciousness is illogical, or outside the realm of possibility. But on the contrary, it

suggests that our current Westernized understanding of reality along the space-time continuum is in actuality, a science fiction existence that remains unidentified and waiting to be rediscovered as reality. Science fiction must therefore exist outside of the colonial imagination's concept of time and space for it to be experienced as a boundless truth. This allows for an authentic political engagement, away from governing scientific logic and social ideologies that prevent an authentic self-realization as the alien sublime. As such, the process of liberation for Chicanas/os must originate by engaging science fiction not as a genre, but as an experiential quality,⁷ so that manifesting viable social transformation into political reality will be determined by our ability to experience liberation as a formless, timelessness existence defined by pure space consciousness.

Only by inverting perceptions of reality will colonized populations be able to experience genuine liberation; by dislodging the illusory mind-set from Chicana/o consciousness so that de-colonization becomes a heterogenous process that privileges a "return to ourselves" by "changing rather than imitating Eurowestern concepts" (Dillon 10). Liberation must therefore be accessed through the process of achieving a self-realization able to transcend the colonial imagination, rather than through an unconscious reaction born for the sole purpose of resisting and surviving colonization. In this way liberation may become a profound, self-activated, decolonizing act. The core essence of science fiction becomes a limitless possibility in the exploration of existence that stretches well beyond the narrow experience initiated by first-contact, colonization and the proliferation of Western civilization.

The Chicana/o Canon

Before proceeding further with my analysis, I want to briefly situate my project against Chicana/o scholarship with a bit more specificity. Given the relevance of science fiction's relationship with colonization, the preponderance of Chicana/o literature and scholarship has mostly neglected to invoke science fiction as a source of analysis.⁸ The influx of Chicana/o literature during the initial push of the Chicana/o Movement best epitomizes this trend in scholarship. Although the Chicana/o Movement was, generally speaking, a utopian project focused on recovering the past and extending it into the present and future, some of which was expressed in Chicana/o poetry,⁹ the proliferation of literature during this crucial period processed a search for Chicana/o identity through the canonization of novels that were homogeneous in the ways they sought to portray the Chicana/o experience.¹⁰ Subtler, aesthetically conservative forms of expression, which did not generally engage with speculative or futuristic themes, may characterize the classic Chicana/o novel. The prototypical novel that emerged prioritized cultural traditions in the making of Chicana/o identity and culture using historical, realist approaches. Put briefly, the popularized novels of the period overwhelmingly depicted rural migrant experiences, usually conveyed through the struggles of exploited farm workers in stories situated not in the present or future, but in the past—usually only a few decades into history. As Bruce Novoa highlights, Chicano writers developed stories that portrayed the Chicano experience through the *Bildungsroman*. The most popular novels of the period, Tomás Rivera's *Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra* (1971), Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy* (1971), and to an extent Rolando

Hinojosa's *Estampas del Valle* (1973), although certainly distinctive in their own right, represented the experiences of the Chicana/o community through young male protagonists that interrogated dynamics of community survival, wherein there is a profound inner search "for a lost orientation in the world," which is ultimately found through "retrospection" (82-83). Despite the production of post-Movement literature that sought to include the distinct experiences of Chicanas, including the queer experience,¹¹ to this day, these formative novels are widely considered monuments of Chicana/o literature that best characterize the political emergence of the Mexican experience in the U.S.

As Bruce-Novoa also indicates, the canonized novel may therefore be characterized as obsessively yearning to acknowledge and redefine the past as a way to repair the present before proceeding forward into the future (136). Consistent with this historical impulse, Ramón Saldívar, across the broader milieu of Chicana/o narrative, explains, "For Chicano narrative, history is the subtext that we must recover because history itself is the subject of its discourse. History cannot be conceived as the mere 'background' or 'context' for this literature; rather, history turns out to be the decisive determinant of the form and content of the literature" (5). The canonized understanding of the novel within the Chicano experience therefore embodies a distinct yearning or searching for a collective space in time in which to exist and generate freedom; a space for regrouping or healing, before any attempt at engaging with the immediate present or future was formally attempted. Writers that failed to abide by this prerequisite were probably considered premature, or simply crude and reckless, a standard that came at the

expense of marginalizing or ignoring fiction that imagined alternative experiences and possibilities for Chicanas/os. Although the strategies expressed in these novels are undoubtedly valuable in that they sought to empower Chicanas/os by revising historical, prejudicial representations long established by conquest, they undoubtedly resulted in only a partial representation of a much broader multifarious Chicana/o experience.

Hitherto, Chicana/o scholarship has developed criticism into an interdisciplinary matrix of cultural and sociopolitical expression. And although the scholarship is comprised of a wide range of methodological approaches contained within various disciplines, it has generally relied on historical, pragmatic, literary traditions popularized and extended during the Movement as a way of conceptualizing the Chicana/o cultural identity and experience. Although my intention is by no means to be dismissive of these works, or to reduce their value in any way, I am simply pointing out that they have generally tended to encapsulate the Chicana/o experience under one-dimensional epistemological spheres that tend to overlook alternative expressions within the Chicana/o experience that equally speak to redefinition, empowerment and liberation as genuine forms of cultural production.

This often pragmatic, politicized unit of consciousness has certainly gained momentum over the decades, having yielded many of the social privileges that, although far from perfect, Chicanas/os currently enjoy. These social gains, which may or may not lead to greater political freedoms in the future, ultimately remain restricted under our current politicized conceptualization of liberation. In the process, however, we have become so absorbed in the rationality of a pragmatic world-view that we have lost

perspective on the genuine nature of what it means to be Chicana/o, which from this project's perspective means to question the very nature of our existence. As a movement of liberation, we have largely come to accept the essence of colonization as an inevitable, tangible reality that must be overcome, which has severely limited how we are able to define ourselves in envisioning social justice and empowerment as genuine tools of liberation in the political process.

Chicana/o Science Fiction

Notwithstanding the paucity of science fiction analysis within the Chicana/o canon and scholarship, there has been a modest yet crucial intervention by a handful of scholars that have begun developing new strategies of empowerment by exploring the intersections between science fiction and the Chicana/o experience. One of the first pioneers to engage with science fiction is Catherine Ramírez. In "Afrofuturism/Chicanafuturism: Fictive Kin" (2008), she engages with the traditions of Afrofuturism to introduce what she refers to as, Chicanafuturism.¹² She defines Chicanafuturism as questioning the promises of science, technology, and humanism for Chicana/os, as articulating colonial and postcolonial histories of *Indigenismo*, *mestizaje* (hybridity), hegemony and survival. Ramírez explores the ways in which everyday technologies have the power to transform Mexican-American life and culture. She stresses that, by appropriating the imagery of science and technology, Chicanafuturists work to disrupt racist and sexist binaries that exclude us from technological participation and visions of the future (187).

Another significant work is witnessed in Lysa Rivera's, "Future Histories and Cyborg Labor: Reading Borderlands Science Fiction after NAFTA" (2012). She builds on Ramírez's work by showing how Chicanas/os have extended their interactions with science fiction by developing a transnational understanding of the genre; one that is inextricably derived from a U.S./Mexico border geopolitical context. Rivera highlights that with the passage of NAFTA, Chicana/o borderlands writers and visual artists progressively turned to the techniques available in science fiction to express concerns over the negative effects of neoliberalism, which she highlights as being rooted in a colonial past, inequitable labor practices, and the perpetual exploitation against people of Mexican origin (416). As method, Rivera highlights that borderland narratives employ future history, a science-fictional technique wherein history is used as the defining element in the imagining of possible futures (418). Adapting models introduced by the famed science fiction scholar Darko Sulvin, she frames future history around a concept that stems from cognitive estrangement, which activates an imagined future that remains intelligible, rational, and under the empirical sociopolitical context it is situated all the while remaining strange. Consistent with the Chicana/o directive to make sense of sociopolitical reality by invoking the past, Rivera utilizes borderland science fiction to suggest that our historical experience is inextricably fused to the process of articulating, defining, and ultimately comprehending our future.

Reinforcing this perspective even further, Rivera structures borderlands science fiction against the anti-establishment traditions of cyberpunk. She incorporates Chela Sandoval's interpretation of the cyborg entity, popularized by Donna Haraway, to

establish that colonized populations, but people of Mexican origin in particular, have developed the "cyborg skills" to resist the adverse effects of colonization. Rivera combines Sandoval's re-articulation of the cyborg with cyberpunk to deploy borderlands science fiction that adopts the "cognitive maps of cyberpunk" in resisting, adapting, and surviving the adverse effects of globalization (430).

Another relevant yet relatively unknown text is Miguel López-Lozano's, *Utopian Dreams, Apocalyptic Nightmares: Globalization in Recent Mexican and Chicana/o Narrative* (2008). Analogous to Rivera's analysis, the book mainly focuses on how Mexican and Chicano writers during the late 1980s and 1990s employed science-fictional techniques to engage with concerns over industrial development, urbanization, and environmental damage brought on by the 1994 implementation of NAFTA (1). López-Lozano claims that with the advent of NAFTA, dystopian novels engaged with "Mexico's pattern of development" by reassessing and incorporating images of science fiction to describe the adverse effects of globalization, both in terms of the environment and on the Indigenous peoples of the Americas (4).¹³

López-Lozano also relies on future history as method to highlight how Mexican and Chicano writers have re-examined the colonial encounter by thinking about the past, present, and future to express concerns over the continued exploitation of colonized populations (2). His analysis, however, is hinged to utopian literature produced by Europeans during the colonial period and the subsequent system that established Western civilization. He utilizes this literature to understand the rise of the utopian imagination, and the ways it has been influenced by first-contact, the process of colonization, and the

advancement of the West. More specifically, López-Lozano highlights how the conceptualization of utopia shifted from initial contact with Indigenous civilizations, wherein so-called European explorers, "envisioned the New World as an earthy paradise" (2), to a dystopia resulting from the Industrial Revolution and the rise of modernity.¹⁴ He highlights how classic science fiction works have expressed this shift by engaging with apocalyptic narratives that confront the adverse effects of modernization and globalization (4). Here, López-Lozano models Mexican and Chicana/o narrative against the portrayal of dystopian futures in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), to encourage "a re-examination of the implications of the manipulation of history by a dictatorial state interested in advancing technology and industrialization at any cost thus revealing the perils and contradictions of modernity" (1). He emphasizes the importance of these works in modeling "the potential of memory as a form of cultural resistance" (1). He claims that by re-examining history, specifically through the power to envision the future as utopia/dystopia, Mexican and Chicana/o narrative works to resituate modernity as a possible emancipating feature; a process that begins at the point of first contact and the dominance over nature (4-5).

The fact that this emerging body of research engages with science fiction to better understand the Mexican/Chicana/o experience is certainly a substantial contribution to scholarship. However, because science fiction has been unduly framed within the colonial imagination, which in my view can never overcome hegemonic reality since it relies on conventional political strategies to access liberation, my project must deviate

from this emerging body of scholarship by offering an alternative path to liberation. Most Chicana/o science fiction criticism tends to focus on the rise of technological systems resulting from globalization as the main activating agent of resistance. Although Chicana/o science fiction may be interpreted as a response to the adverse effects of neoliberalism in an increasing globalized world, the future history model put forth ultimately impedes the ways colonized communities are able to engage with and actuate liberation. Under this configuration, the colonial past, the neoliberal present, and whatever future Chicana/o science fiction is imagined remains bound by an artificial reality where colonization remains the centralized, defining source from which the political world emanates. The temporal and spatial markers established by future history remain confined by imagined models of Western space-time reality, i.e. the past as memory and the future as imagination. Since the past is all that has ever been experienced, we have come to expect a future that reflects that identical spatial and temporal experience as reality; a conditioning that relies on the past as a reference point that defines, constructs, and predicts future reality within space and time. Hence, future history is a cycled mechanism that chains Chicana/o science fiction to a pre-existing model of reality; it becomes a fixed cog within a larger world-generating colonial machine built to dominate universal existence. Under this mechanism, Chicana/o science fiction is only capable of building alternate realities from a cognitive estranged perspective encoded by the colonial imaginary, where the experience of reality is bonded, having no choice but to be experienced as familiar yet strange, thereby hindering a genuine, independent engagement with science fiction and the discovery of the alien

sublime. Chicanas/os are ultimately only able to experience an artificially generated reality that exists outside of ourselves, which we perceive as genuine, instead of experiencing ourselves as the source of existence in which exterior reality unfolds.

And yet, Chicana/o science fiction scholarship is seemingly fueled by its interaction with colonization by working to generate empowerment through injecting ethnic and cultural experience into the traditional science fiction novum. Operating at this illusory political level Chicana/o themed science fiction may strictly be understood as openly expressing anxieties that reflect our sociopolitical, cultural, and economic circumstance, which ostensibly relies on the perspective of difference conceptualized by the colonial imaginary. From this viewpoint, Chicana/o science fiction incorporates a diverse, changing set of Chicana/o tropes, or cultural tools, as strategies to challenge colonial reality. But the cultural arsenal injected into a colonized science fiction reality along a concretized future history timeline cannot generate liberation, but rather, as I have proposed, that which creates the estrangement/detachment necessary for making liberation a genuine experience is an existential shift in perception that identifies as alien beyond the boundaries of colonial reality. At this deeper level, Chicana/o science fiction expresses an alien sublime consciousness that exposes colonial reality as illusory. Chicana/o science fiction must therefore be understood through a much deeper interpretation of reality that penetrates the conceptual and psychological barriers established by the colonial mind; a reality independent of understanding liberation within a temporal and spatial, future history orientated phenomena, unhinged from imagining philosophies of dystopia or utopia through a logical, political form with an inherent

aptitude for anticipating whatever strategies are introduced, but particularly the notion that colonized populations must experience material revolution as the ultimate form of liberation.

I therefore examine Chicano science fiction as an expression primarily motivated by an exploration for a deeper, independent liberation rooted far beyond the obvious veneer of colonized reality; an overture that begins by maneuvering, but ultimately by penetrating the cognitive borders framed by colonial space and time. This requires that Chicana/o science fiction be perceived as a genuine possibility existing in the present moment. More definitively, we must engage with science fiction by inverting the ontological perspective from which we base and make sense of reality. In this way, the Chicana/o mind is empowered to identify itself as a projection dispersed by colonial reality. Where liberation does not exclusively hinge on the projection of culture into the science fiction imaginary, but rather, is accessed through the realization that the projection is being experienced, as well as originates from a higher dimension of the alien sublime. The present moment, which is all we ever have access to and control over, becomes the moment of self-realization and cosmic awareness. Like this, Chicana/o science fiction functions as a quality of genuine empowerment by transforming the ways in which we are able to experience reality, wherein the act of imagining under this deeper context becomes aligned with a self-created alien sublime existence.

The Alien

An integral part in the process of achieving liberation involves exploring how Chicanas/os have come to understand the alien entity; a defining fixture innate not solely to the science fiction genre, but to the legacy of colonized reality. The alien's significance with regard to Western/canonical science fiction may be understood by briefly examining two major historical periods. The first is witnessed in the hard science fiction influenced by the development of Western civilization. Although the first stories to emerge were written by science fiction's foundational and most prominent authors, such as in H. G. Wells' alien invasion premise, *The War of the Worlds* (1898), the first major period that actively featured and drastically advanced the alien entity into social reality may be traced to the Golden Age of science fiction (c.1940-1960).¹⁵ Popular stories of the period, such as *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) written by Ray Bradbury, *The Sentinel* (1951) written by Arthur C. Clarke, and *Starship Troopers* (1959), written by Robert A. Heinlein, engaged with the alien as a metaphorical Other that expressed deep-seated social anxieties about race, gender, and sexual difference. The alien was used to "equate humanity with the values of middle-class, technically educated, straight, white American men" (Bould and Vint 81), promoting a white American identity that paralleled the rise of scientific and technological innovation; one that equally envisioned utopic futures dependent on "overseas economic expansion, and if necessary, on extending Americas' political and military influence..." (61). Also during this period, "the Cold War (including nuclear anxiety, anti-communism and celebratory consumerism) dominated American culture and the magazine and paperback tradition of sf" (102). Altogether, the

rise in popularity of the alien as the Other was central to the development of the white American male identity and national exceptionalism during this major period.¹⁶

The second major period to emerge paralleled the Counterculture and Civil Rights Movements of the long 1960s. Widely regarded by science fiction scholars as the "New Wave" (1960s-1970s), this era may be characterized as a profound epoch of aesthetic renovation that defied the conservative science fiction approach of the Golden Age. Of particular relevance, although white male authors (U.S. and British) were at the vanguard of this movement, the most significant transgression during this period is witnessed in the injection of anti-colonial themes in science fiction.¹⁷ Ethnic writers, now known as Afrofuturists, began to gain prominence within the genre, most notably Samuel R. Delany and Octavia Butler, who further enhanced science fiction as a mode of social contestation by revising conventional depictions of the alien entity through the centralization of race, gender, and sexuality as core elements within their stories. In Samuel R Delany's highly regarded *Babel-17* (1966), and *Dhalgren* (1975), for example, as well as in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979), and *Patternist Series* (1976-1984), the alien was redeployed as a decolonizing source of re-humanization. In short, the alien took on the role of the protagonist, and was used to challenge the legacy of colonialism, beyond representations as the Other and into dimensions of black ontology as liberation. Specific to Butler's novels, for instance, Jenny Wolmark explains, "As an alien contact narrative, the text is therefore concerned with the conditions of its own existence as much as it is with the meanings attached to the device of the alien. Definitions of otherness thus become impossible to sustain as the question of who is 'alien' becomes increasingly

unanswerable..." (3-4).¹⁸ Prominent writers like Butler and Delany, but also other ethnic writers that have remained in relative obscurity, have paved a path for the development of the alien as an existential power, with consciousness as a living and breathing embodiment of liberation.

With regard to the Chicana/o, Charles Ramírez Berg examines mainstream science fiction film to address how representations of the alien Other have shifted from the popularized invading/destructive monster alien originating from the Golden Age of science fiction, to the emergence of what he terms the "Sympathetic Alien" Other which surfaced during the late 1970s and 1980s.¹⁹ He argues that the rise of the sympathetic alien serves as a metaphor that unconsciously expresses anxieties over the influx of Latino immigration into the U.S. (404). Referencing several popular films, Ramírez Berg shows how the sympathetic immigrant alien figure, such as the legendary Spock from *Star Trek* and Superman, are on the one hand, embraced as long as they "can offer a unique service to the dominant majority" as well as adheres to established ideological doctrine (413), yet rejected based on their difference (412). Implicating this new form of alien representation, he suggests, highlights the continued dangers of subjugation and dehumanization directed at Latina/o populations (421). Although Ramírez Berg's analysis should be considered, and is relevant in terms of how the alien is depicted within popular science fiction film, this project is specifically concerned with engaging the alien figure as an existential science-fictional process in generating an authentic consciousness of liberation. As discussed with greater nuance in the following section, Gloria Anzaldúa engages with the alien figure deploying such a process.

Any discussion regarding the alien and its relationship to Chicanas/os demands a consideration of Gloria Anzaldúa's highly influential text. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), she deploys a borderlands premise to develop a *mestiza* consciousness of liberation. She grounds this hybrid alien consciousness in the historical trauma that people of Mexican origin have suffered (mainly through the U.S. annexation of Mexican lands), as well as the psychological fragmentation that resulted from colonization, which she argues has disconnected the queer *mestiza* from her cultural roots and mother culture. Anzaldúa explains that the history of violence has led to the fracturing of the *mestiza*; these intersectional forces of violence, she claims, have been the source of self-hatred and shame for the *Chicana/Mexicana/India*.

Anzaldúa introduces an alien consciousness as a method to transcend this damaged condition. She regenerates the *mestiza* by re-establishing a connection with her pre-colonial roots. Anzaldúa reconfigures elements of *Indigenismo* to generate a force capable of challenging colonial systems that have worked to diminish the *Chicana/Mexicana/India* through patriarchy, homophobia, European imperialism and the white supremacist legacy (37). Anzaldúa specifically targets Enlightenment epistemology and rationality, which she argues has constructed a consciousness of duality that splits reality in two; the subject-object duality of consciousness which manufactures and governs "official reality," forcing colonized populations to exist in binary realities. She claims that this fracturing of reality is the root of all violence (36-37). Anzaldúa additionally explains that this dualistic structure of reality severely limits our potential as

human beings. She writes, "It claims that human nature is limiting and cannot evolve into something better" (19).

A central element in her theorization relies on using the mirror as an ambivalent metaphor to highlight the critical process of self-realization as a transcendent phenomenon. A process that simultaneously isolates and enslaves through seeing and being seen, but which also liberates through the process of awareness and the gaining of knowledge. Anzaldúa refers to this experience as embodied by what she terms as the *Coaticue* state (42), a critical juncture of either enslavement, through maintaining a state of fear and victimization, or a process of transformation, liberation and the cultivation of new ways of being (45). The *Coaticue* state is therefore a critical step that must be experienced on route to a higher consciousness of liberation. This process of transformation ultimately results in the formation of alien consciousness (42), which has the power to shatter the dominant constrictive reality generated by Enlightenment epistemology and rationality (80).

Even more, she explains that this alien consciousness learns to exist by developing a tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity. "She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns ambivalence into something else" (79). Anzaldúa additionally explains that this consciousness can be jolted out of ambivalence through an intense, painful or emotional experience. She admits not knowing exactly how this happens, except to say that it occurs subconsciously, "It is work that the soul performs"

(80). She explains that this point of existence bonds everything into a third space where liberation thrives. "That third element is a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm" (80). Anzaldúa goes on to say that this alien consciousness has the power to break down subject-object dualities/realities that keep us locked into binaries of difference, but more importantly, it has the power to serve as a model by shaping our future reality. She explains that "A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war" (80).

Borderlands has certainly distinguished itself from more traditional approaches within Chicana/o scholarship by extending the Chicana/o experience into speculative domains. It is undoubtedly provocative in the ways it attempts to reimagine empowerment and liberation. Still, how the alien is conceived as an embodiment of liberation is a major point of contention when held against the context of this project. More specifically, Anzaldúa's underlying premise appears to be hindered by a configuration that ultimately limits our potential for achieving genuine liberation. The process by which the *mestiza* morphs into a new consciousness chiefly drives this limitation, which activates from, as well as relies not solely on Enlightenment logic, but on the experience of colonization as its source of existence, which is held as the standard from which everything emanates. Consciousness is understood as a political process determined by time; pre-colonial Indigenous consciousness is not recognized as its own

independent reality, but as a fragmentation contained within a broader reality fixed into our present in space-time. Although a potent Indigenous past is recovered to form a hybrid alien consciousness of liberation—based on the *Coaticue* state, the hegemonic essence of colonization, which influences reality, works to absorb and colonize the power of Indigenous consciousness into a hybridized third reality. The process relies on extracting and re-projecting points in time and space rather than on the subversion of space-time as reality. By incorporating these superfluous elements into our existing colonized state of political reality, the amalgamation compromises the very method by which genuine empowerment and liberation may be experienced. The alien state of liberation is envisioned as something that must be achieved and experienced within the bounds of time and space, sometime in the future, but in the process, ultimately functions to intensify a colonial consciousness that distorts the true essence of freedom. In other words, the Indigenous force is detached as a dimensional source energy and transported into the linear, politicized, future history model dominated by the colonial imagination in the making of a new hybrid third space alien reality.

A significant outcome of this may be observed in how Anzaldúa perceives the Chicana/o. That is, she does not recognize, or at the very least emphasize the Chicana/o as being whole or complete, but as broken fragments that must be somehow fixed or healed to experience liberation in the future. The alien consequently remains contained, and isolated within an imagined, illusory state of colonial consciousness, unable to identify existence beyond her true self as a pre-existing alien sublime force. So then, operating from a space where we see ourselves as already being infinitely complete,

rather than attempting to become complete through the process of hybridization, then engaging with hybridization may be understood as an object derived from what Rafael Pérez-Torrez describes as a political inescapability that situates a "New" world hybridity that stands as the embodiment for a critical consciousness mutually rooted in social inequity, and the contradictions originating from those inequalities, which has led the Chicana/o culture towards a self-consciousness that is both critical about the development of social identities expressed through ideologies of liberation, and also in the internalization of self-hatred that negatively reinforces racial power stratum and colonial dispossession (xiii). More specifically, Pérez-Torrez defines *mestizaje* as a multispectral embodiment capable of engaging with various forces. He describes two key ones here: "One is the drive to view new and often utopian possibilities of aggregation as key to developing critical sensibilities. The other reflects the contradictions and tensions that racial mixture has produced and that are incorporated in the cultural expression of Chicano thought and identity" (xiii). Under this context, I am compelled to see hybridity as a symptom of colonization necessary for a reality merely based on survival; the essence of existence becomes surviving in hopes of achieving a bordered politically conceived freedom.

Surviving colonization compels us to focus on pain and suffering as access points towards finally achieving liberation. As I have reiterated throughout my analysis, because pursuing revolution under the illusion of colonization perpetuates our own imprisonment, relying on the historical trauma people of Mexican origin have experienced under colonialism as a means to generate liberation works to perpetuate subordination as well

as the illusion of empowerment and liberation. I realize making such an assertion might elicit harsh criticism, however, I believe that making this statement does not serve to discount, or even downgrade the vicious atrocities and bloodshed experienced by people of Mexican origin under occupation, or any other colonized population for that matter, it simply means that we can acknowledge this experience without being entirely consumed by it. After all, injustice is something we experience in the political world. It is an experience that cannot define the true essence of our existence.

This is not to say that there is no value in Anzaldúa's alien entity, as elements of empowerment and liberation are certainly present. However, in the grand scope of her articulation, the alien imagines an essence of freedom that is experienced as an ephemeral process where pain and suffering remain centered on survival, and may only be temporarily relieved through moments of misperceived empowerment. Because Anzaldúa's alien is a product of hybridity, it is able to experience short-lived, momentary instances of happiness and peace, but which are impossible to sustain under the colonial ruse. The alien thereby remains in perpetual limbo; a state of ambiguity that constantly shifts between a circumscribed, predetermined spectrum of possible realities defined by an ambivalence of either enslavement, liberation, and everything in between. The alien ultimately remains dependent on negotiating difference, unable to experience itself as a complete and genuine existential awareness. She thrives on conflict and must be incessantly nourished, which may be an unending process rooted in supporting a symbiotic relationship with coloniality.

I situate this flaw in our inability as a political unit to perceive our existence as the alien sublime, which compels us into perceiving reality through a misperceived logic defined by the colonial imagination, where the dual subject-object reality is embraced as authentic. And where the mirror Anzaldúa uses to achieve self-realization is only able to reflect that which has already been imagined and inscribed into space-time by the colonial psyche. In this way, the mirror works to reproduce illusions that obscure true reality. It masks reality by hybridizing artificial objects where we cannot distinguish what is real and what is false to the extent that even ideas of empowerment and liberation themselves become trapped within an ambiguous, often ambivalent imaginative state. The *mestiza* alien confuses reality as a process that unfolds outside of herself, thereby constructing an self-objectified entity that generates an illusory border consciousness which falls outside of the existential process. As described previously, the alien sublime cannot be imagined or observed as a reflection because its essence is amorphous. It is the true existential subject from which colonial space and time emerge. The alien sublime is therefore consciousness expressing itself as reality. Consequently, self-realization is that which makes genuine reality possible, which may only be experienced by discovering the self as primordial awareness.

Anzaldúa's alien ultimately functions as a mechanism where the process of having to experience difference becomes a responsibility to the adverse effects of colonialism, a job of sorts, ultimately defined by enslavement, which under the *Coaticue* state must be processed through a strong emotional experience, namely pain, but which may lead to either enslavement or liberation. But the mere fact that bondage is a conceivable outcome

underscores the alien's deficiency as a genuine entity of liberation. As such, liberation for Chicanas/os cannot be accessed by deploying Indigenous thought into the present and future as politicized objects, but by redefining Indigeneity as a primordial space consciousness prior to the advent of colonial space and time; the alien sublime defined as an Indigenousness relative to the ancillary manifestation of colonial space and time. Chicanas/os must therefore engage *mestizaje* through "multiple subjectivities, opening discussion of identity to greater complexity and nuance" (Perez-Torrez xiii). We must come to discover the alien sublime as a dimensional liberation not based on adding anything, or on any sort of merger to be complete, but as already existing cosmic beings. While we may have no choice but to exist as mind and body within the space carved by colonized reality, we can certainly choose to understand colonization as emerging under a much broader and ubiquitous existence; a de-colonial process that dis-identifies with the colonial imagination as a relevant mode of being from our psyche.

The Sublime

Most research that examines the relationship between science fiction and the sublime focuses on transcendence through theological perspectives and how science fiction works to revise conventional doctrines.²⁰ Independent of religious emphasis, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay provides a seminal analysis on how the sublime functions as an overarching structural mechanism within science fiction. Csicsery-Ronay bases much of his analysis on the classical sublime philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke, respectively. Briefly put, Kant and Burke understood the sublime as a natural

phenomenon that overwhelms the individual's capability of situating, or making sense of his or her perceived existence in the world. They argue that although this encounter is initially experienced through fear and pain, the sublime consequently emerges as a higher consciousness that becomes aware of its unawareness, a realization where pleasure is eventually derived from reinterpreting the unknown into the laws of reason. Namely, because the individual is able to identify the unidentified in comparison to his or her own limited consciousness, the phenomenon is understood as a sense of absolute magnitude within the laws of logic and reason (148-149).

Further, Csicsery-Ronay considers the ways in which the classical sublime relates to the advent of technology. He references David E. Nye's, *American Technological Sublime*, which is described as "the sense of access to, and control of, the powers of nature that typified the American populace's responses to the monumental engineering projects of the nineteenth century" (7). Therein, the technological sublime consists of two major phases: the period between the 1830s and 1945, and the period following the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan during WWII (158). He establishes the second post-WWII phase, which "entails a sense of awe and dread in response to human technological projects that exceed the power of their human creators," as predominantly exemplifying modern-day science fiction (7).

Consequently, Csicsery-Ronay bases his analysis on emotional responses to overpowering events that compel the quotidian imagination to suddenly jolt, or shift into a mode of consciousness that is able to sense the physical universe as an unimaginable phenomena, which he describes as "self-consciousness coping with phenomena suddenly

perceived to be too great to be comprehended" (146). He argues that this process of dislocation triggered by the sublime is a fundamental feature of science fiction, as it is "concerned with the states of mind that science and art have in common: acute responsiveness to the objects of the world, the testing of the categories conventionally used to interpret the world, and the desire to articulate what consciousness finds inarticulable" (147).

Yet Csicsery-Ronay distinguishes the sublime in terms of how it is experienced in science fiction by claiming that there is an experiential difference determined by material and imagined reality. He defines the science fiction sublime as a conscious, playful experience void of the "psychological sincerity" inherent to the classical sublime, which in turn corresponds to an imagined or artificially simulated sublime absent of authentic shock-value (160). The imagined science fiction reality cannot be stimulated or mediated as an authentic sublime-inspiring object because the process of invention and discovery are fundamentally restricted by the nihilism assigned to it by science (161). Csicsery-Ronay additionally argues that, as a result, the science fiction imagination is unable to understand its own imagined existence because it is aware that the objects it has generated do not really exist, having been conceived through a technological process void of actual presence. Csicsery-Ronay further claims that scientifically sublime objects within science fiction are subsequently, "implicated in a technosphere that surpasses its creators' understanding, making technology both the cause of the sublime shock and the means of recuperation" (161). He suggests that, "In a sense, the sf sublime has become a

'realistic' discourse. It reflects a social world that has been saturated with technosublime narrative/image systems that adopt the language of itself has cultivated" (161).

Although Csicsery-Ronay's theorization of the sublime presents a beneficial analysis to better understanding how science fiction operates, in my view, it does not extend far enough, particularly with respect to colonized populations, into cultivating liberation as a sublime experience. As discussed during the initial stages of this Introduction, I describe the alien sublime as a primordial consciousness responsible for the manifestation of the physical universe and space-time; the nothingness that exists prior to matter. I introduce the alien sublime as a way to transcend the confinement imposed by the colonial imagination's misperception of reality. I contend that, as a means to shatter the colonized psychological state, the alien sublime must be experienced, not as a consequence that happens outside of the self/within the confines of material reality, but as an existential phenomena that inverts the colonized mind by making science fiction real. My theorization of the alien sublime, hence, relies on making a sharp distinction between a limited material imagination from which colonial reality emanates, and a higher formless alien sublime consciousness as the ultimate freedom. Csicsery-Ronay's science fiction sublime, however, relies on the sensory field of material reality, which equally results in a material consciousness that activates from inside the ancillary colonial imagination. Herein, Kant's and Burke's classical sublime, as well as Nye's technological sublime, are not solely consequences of material reality, but are merged by Csicsery-Ronay to show how the psychosomatic process of dislocation, described as the act of shocking the quotidian mind into a higher consciousness, is an integral feature within

science fiction. The method by which Csicsery-Ronay envisions the science fiction sublime consequently relies on featuring a transcendent experience that actuates from within the confines of artificial reality. And, as a result, science fiction may only be understood as an extension of a preconceived sublime that determines how the science fiction nomenclature may be experienced, rendering the science fiction sublime impotent as an emancipating process for colonized populations. The colonized imagination is tasked with accessing a higher awareness able to transcend the quotidian form through sensing the physical universe as unimaginable phenomena, but which from a colonized perspective whose goal is liberation from coloniality, is inconsequential since the existential alien sublime consciousness precedes the manifestation of the imagined object as form.

Another significant issue lies in the interplay between Kant's and Burke's classical sublime and Nye's technological sublime, which results in a paradox that hinders how the science fiction sublime may be experienced as existential. Herein, colonized populations are regulated by the classic sublime in that the overwhelming force induced by natural phenomena may only be absorbed through the logic offered by colonized reality. The colonial imaginary limits the overwhelming force that may be experienced by colonized populations to a natural process defined through the false ideal of manifest destiny, which, similar to Anzaldúa's alien consciousness, may only be activated through intense emotions of fear, pain, and survival, as method to push the colonized mind into a higher consciousness of liberation; sentiments that rely on wholeheartedly accepting that colonization is a logical process of being. Believing in colonization results in a sublime

that may only be accessed through a perception of logic that originates from a condition of knowing to one of not knowing. Knowing and not knowing, however, keeps colonized populations in an illusory state. Colonization is concretized as the sole reality from which to experience both knowing and not knowing. Herein, the colonized have no choice but to acknowledge colonial reality, but in making such an acknowledgement, are simultaneously forced into not knowing a reality void of colonization, thereby making genuine liberation unknowable. Joined with Nye's technological sublime, which mediates reality through a sense of technological mastery and the losing of technological mastery, results in a science fiction sublime mired in ambiguity. As previously discussed (see pages 11 and 12), because technology is understood in the conventional, logical sense, i.e., as technological objects that change with the passage of time, rather than as a higher existential science and technology expressed as cosmic consciousness, colonized populations are relegated to experiencing science fiction outside of the existential self. As a result, the science fiction sublime solidifies not knowing as the sublime process. The science fiction sublime may only be experienced as an acknowledgment of ignorance and powerlessness in the universe, which is a perception of reality that colonized populations must shatter.

Further, Csicsery-Ronay explains that audiences use science fiction to try to make sense of their position in the world, however, he mutually explains that because audiences are aware that the technology depicted in science fiction is based on imagined phenomena that does not really exist, they are unable to experience the dislocation, or the sudden emotional shock required for the quotidian mind to shift into higher

consciousness. Csicsery-Ronay refers to this ineffectual sublime process as resulting from the development of the technosphere, which to remind the reader, is a process by which imagined technological objects in science fiction become fused to the realness of material existence, resulting in a science fiction sublime that concurrently activates yet represses the sublime experience. The technological language of science fiction has, in essence, influenced how the audience/world is able to make sense of itself/reality. Because technology is mutually perceived as genuine and artificial, the way reality is experienced becomes coerced in ambiguity. This overlapping space between realities is significant in that it governs/colonizes how the sublime may be experienced as the existential subject, making it an impossibility to shatter the undetected boundary of colonized reality since the science fiction sublime is rooted in the technological realism and logic of materiality. To re-evolve Gloria Anzaldúa's hybrid alien consciousness, the science fiction sublime exists within an imagined material consciousness that mutually enslaves and liberates, where reality is experienced through an illusion of in-betweenness; a push/pull contradictory state of imagined hybridity dictated by the material conditions from which colonized space and time are artificially experienced, thereby preventing colonized populations from accessing the unmitigated impact of the alien sublime as a genuine process of self-discovery and liberation. The advent of modernity, or technological reality, is therefore an outcome of a larger induced colonial mechanism that eliminates the alien sublime as a possible experience for colonized populations.

The Chapters

The chapters in this project feature various approaches that express the alien sublime. Although each chapter is contextualized in terms of its specific socio-political circumstance, my intention is not to establish chapters containing themes rigidly defined by their respective socio-political periods, but more-so, to emphasize on the diversity of Chicana/o science fiction as an expression of the alien sublime experience across time. For instance, Chapters One and Two focus on three texts from the Chicana/o Movement. In these initial chapters I chose to include writings that do not rely on conventional science fiction approaches based on science and high-technology. But this is not to infer that other articulations of the alien sublime within this period do not exist. For the purposes of these opening chapters, I felt it important to present the kinds of engagements that drastically stray from both traditionally orientated science fiction, as well as conventional Chicano/a social justice models, to better demonstrate the range by which the alien sublime may be articulated as an implicit yet existential science-fictional phenomenon. The burgeoning, experimental era of the Chicana/o Movement seemed like a good place to establish such a critical departure. So, to say again, while the specific political circumstance under which the various texts were produced are relevant, they are not intended to define the thematic qualities emphasized in the chapters as absolute.

Chapters One and Two demonstrate how Chicana/os engaged with science-fictional techniques as a way to envision alternative modes of empowerment and liberation during the long 1960s milieu. I begin with novels that not solely reinterpret what it means to be Chicana/o, but that equally function to modify conventional

understandings of the science fiction genre by implementing techniques that defy colonized reality. Since the alien sublime is inherently subversive, a main thread within the first chapter focuses on the aggressive posturing of militancy, particularly Chicano Liberation and Black Power Movements, which were guiding nationalistic precepts of the period that resulted in the proliferation of such revolutionary creeds. It is under this social frame of reference that I examine Enrique Lopez's *Afro-6* (1969) and Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973). I show how these novels re-conceptualized militancy as a technique to articulate a potent science-fictional alien sublime consciousness able to shatter the bonds of colonized reality.

Moving away from militancy, Chapter Two similarly examines a novel that, although not as politically charged as *Afro-6* and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, is amply radical in its own right. I show how Isabella Rios' *Victuum* (1976) shatters the bonds of colonized reality by engaging with the subordination of people of Mexican origin, as well as themes of gender and patriarchy within the Mexican culture, to engage with a science-fictional consciousness that is mediated through the physical body, the colonial mind, as well as the alien sublime. *Victuum's* relevance within this chapter is particularly valuable in that it expresses the alien sublime through a Chicana perspective, a neglected experience that actively foreshadowed the intersectional relationship between colonialism and the imminent rise of post-Movement Chicana feminism. The main significance of the first two chapters, however, lies in how these critically neglected Chicana/o texts expressed a higher consciousness of empowerment and liberation able to transgress the confines of the colonial imaginary.

Chapter Three and Four examine a more familiar, contemporary form of science fiction. Herein, the two chapters feature more conventional approaches in the sense that Chicana/o themes are visibly merged with the scientific and technological flair that science fiction is generally known for. Of prime significance, all of the texts in these chapters integrate the Indigenous Aztec motif as a central force in the articulation of Chicano science fiction and the alien sublime. With respect to the chapters' socio-political bearing, the texts examined were written during the post-Movement age of globalization and neoliberalism, which began in the 1980s and continued to gain momentum during the 1990s and beyond. This is relevant to the extent that this period is frequently recognized by Chicana/o criticism as initiating the production of Chicana/o science fiction. However, to reiterate, I am not looking to define this period by presenting Aztec-themed science fiction as absolute, but rather, I am situating Aztec-themed science fiction as a significant motif that developed alongside the wider range of Chicana/o science fiction, most of which has been generally positioned against the rise of global capital and neoliberal perspectives. Although other forms of Chicana/o science fiction emerged during this period, some of which are discussed in this project's Coda, I chose to dedicate these chapters to Aztec-themed science fiction for two key reasons: first, to show how Chicana/o Nationalism and *Indigenismo* from the 1960s is rearticulated during the post-Movement contemporary period. And, second, because Aztec-themed science fiction is especially useful in allowing me to better demonstrate how the Indigenous quality of the alien sublime is expressed beyond the future history model of empowerment and liberation uttered by the political imagination; a process which is central to my overall

thesis. The chapters' core significance subsequently rests, not on how Indigenous Chicano science fiction reacts to the sociopolitical circumstance in question, but on how these texts may be understood as articulating *Indigenismo* and the alien sublime beyond the political context in which they were written. Consequently, in Chapter Three I examine Ernest Hogan's *Cortez on Jupiter* (1990), *High Aztech* (1992), and *Smoking Mirror Blues* (2001). In Chapter Four I examine Sesshu Foster's *Atomik Aztex* (2005). Although across these chapters, the novels as a whole engage with Indigenous elements of time and space in ways that work to shatter colonized reality, I dedicate an entire chapter to Hogan due to the methods he deploys in expressing the alien sublime, which although work to transcend colonialism, are nonetheless situated along the future history model. Meaning that, his novels are based on the envisioning of future realities that are inherently based on our current reality, whereas Foster's novel incorporates techniques that distort space and time to establish a new Indigenous reality/alien sublime consciousness that completely undermines our reality.

As a whole, the chapters work to rearticulate the Chicana/o experience in a new way that looks beyond political reality as the sole basis for generating empowerment and liberation. The primary texts, regardless of chapter, share a unifying theme in that they all express a deeper search for Chicana/o identity by implementing a science-fictional engagement with reality. In doing so they rearticulate Chicana/o consciousness away from a nationalistic approach that functions within the bounds of colonized reality, towards a broader understanding of reality that redefines and privileges a higher cosmic consciousness as an existential Chicana/o experience.

CHAPTER 1: THE MILITANT ALIEN SUBLIME

Introduction

This chapter focuses on militant-themed Chicana/o science fiction from the 1960s Chicana/o Movement era. As already discussed within this project's Introduction but requiring brief reiteration due to the nuanced specificity of period in question, Chicano identity was primarily driven by the canonization of aesthetically conservative novels which relied on realist approaches that focused on surviving white society by searching for a historical space from which to establish empowerment. Also discussed was how canonization resulted in the suppression of alternate forms of experimentation within the broader Chicana/o experience. A relevant yet largely unexamined mode of experimentation during this period involved an acute engagement with science fiction. As such, this chapter aptly acknowledges this lack of affirmation by exemplifying how *Afro-6* and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* engaged with liberation by cultivating alternative modes of experimentation.

Readers unfamiliar with science fiction studies might nonetheless question the relevance of the Chicana/o science fiction in this chapter considering that the primary texts, as you will see shortly, do not adhere to the formal mechanisms established by the mainstream science fiction genre. The plots are not structured around rigid engagements with high science and technology through futuristic settings, time travel, space travel, space exploration, ray guns, flying saucers, alien contact, or various other technological doodads and scientific whatnots, but rather, as discussed in the following paragraph,

implicitly engaged with reality itself as a science-fictional phenomenon able to transcend colonized reality. This is to say that the authors did not set out to write science fiction novels because they already implicitly understood their realities as a science-fictional experience. As I have asserted, this alternate view of reality was essential to the shattering of colonial reality. Regardless of author intent, however, this chapter situates their stories against the emerging contours of ethnic science fiction, which is changing the ways we interact with science fiction as an existential experience.

It is under this re-formulation of science fiction that the novels in this chapter are analyzed. Contrasting the traditional Chicano novel, *Afro-6* and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* do not merely express the survival of the colonized experience through searching for a historical space in which to establish an empowered existence. The plots are not strictly orientated towards historical or futuristic liberations intended to construct a conventional politicized identity into existence, but instead, situate liberation as a science fiction reality which is readily available in the existential present, and so function to transcend the boundaries of colonial reality as a possible space for experiencing genuine liberation.

Afro and *Revolt of the Cockroach People* extend on rhetorical underpinnings found in Black Power and Chicano Liberation Movements to envision alternative modes of existence. Located within a colonized political reality perceived as deficient in generating authentic liberation, they deployed the shattering power of militancy as a way to access an alien sublime consciousness of liberation capable of eclipsing colonial reality.

Afro-6 (1969)

Afro-6's plot is not what one would come to expect from a Chicano author during the Chicana/o Movement. It does not directly focus on the distinct political ideology of the emerging Chicano, but rather, as forecast by its title, spotlights a particular black militancy. The story takes place in New York City where a group of highly educated and proficient black militants covertly plan to rebel by taking over Manhattan and other major cities across the U.S. This far-reaching operation is referred to as Afro-6, and is directed by five highly disciplined, organized, and skilled black-militant council members who specialize in varying forms of urban warfare. Council members maintain secrecy by cloaking themselves as docile and productive members of an integrated multicultural society. With meticulous planning, *Afro-6* ultimately succeeds in blowing up bridges, taking over skyscrapers, kidnapping affluent white people for ransom, and controlling Manhattan and other major cities from their base in Harlem for sixteen days. However, as anticipated by Afro-6 leaders, they are eventually overcome by superior police and military firepower and withdraw from the assault, blending back into society, better funded and ready to plan future attacks. The premise centers on the experiences of the protagonist, John Ríos, a black militant of Afro-Puerto Rican origins.

Before proceeding to an analysis on how the alien sublime is expressed in *Afro-6*, I begin by briefly contextualizing it against the emergence of black power fiction to show how and why the alien sublime is relevant as a science-fictional text. Herein, *Afro-6* corresponds to the rise of several black power novels that scholars have recently begun interpreting as science-fictional. Kalí Tal, namely, establishes black power fiction as a

persistent practice embedded in the African American battle for liberation. She examines "black militant near-future fiction" to illustrate how black writers have historically engaged with a pattern of "violent revolution against the system of white supremacy" (66). Through an examination of four novels spanning 1899-1983, Tal excavates, but also redefines "the connections between these texts [so that we may] begin to explore the implications of a distinguishable, though submerged, pattern of kill-the-white-folks futurist fiction in the African American literary tradition" (67). Consistent with Tal, my analysis seeks to extend on the broader implications of black militant near-future fiction by emphasizing on the militant mind-set of Chicano nationalism as contextualized against the historical struggle against white supremacy and yearning for liberation through an alternate alien envisioning of reality.

Also expanding on black militant fiction, as well as more directly/closely linked to my analysis of *Afro-6*, Mark Bould examines black power fiction from the 1960s and 1970s to show that black writers during this period could not rely on the science fiction genre's conventional techniques to imagine alternate future realities because they were confined by the dominant material and ideological parameters established by ruling white society. He argues that Black Power Science Fiction demonstrates that "a successful antiracism cannot occur either on its own or within capitalism ... revolution must be not only permanent, but also total" (234). By analyzing several novels, Bould shows how the following key strategies were employed by Black Power Science Fiction writers to dislodge their narratives from the bonds of white reality: 1) refusal; 2) immanentization; 3) veil-rendering; and 4) pornotopianism (228).²¹ Paralleling Bould's argument, *Afro-6*

appears consistent in a need to disconnect from or shatter the established material, ideological, and racially defined boundaries established by white reality. However, in addition to emphasizing on the rejection of conventional science fiction models of the period, my analysis equally locates *Afro-6* as an expression that identifies the Chicano Movement as a limited political enterprise in the push for liberation. In Lopez's view, Chicano ideology alone could not properly articulate nor achieve a dimensional science-fictional consciousness needed to transcend the white colonial imaginary. As I will discuss shortly, Lopez turns to the cathartic function of militancy as a science-fictional force able to radicalize political consciousness through the alien sublime.

In more general terms, Isiah Lavender III similarly writes, "black militant near-future fiction, along with afrofuturism²² and astrofuturism, is a part of science fiction because it fills a particular niche in the study of race and racism in the genre. In other words, each of these theories makes it possible to more accurately assess the checkered heritage of race in sf by building an environment focused on changing people's thoughts in a radical way" (40). In the process of changing people's minds in a radical way, however, I would add that we must change how science fiction itself has been traditionally understood. This entails analyzing *Afro-6* as more than a tenet or style of science fiction which looks to engage with politics of race, but as an alien sublime expression that already perceives reality as a science fiction able to transcend the limitations imposed by a politics of race hinged to white reality, especially conceptualizations defined by race which are bonded to the colonial imagination. In doing so, we will be better equipped to explore the deeper implications of Kalí Tal's

black militant near-future fiction, as well as transcend the strident bonds of white reality fashioned by Bould's black power fiction. Understanding *Afro-6* as an expression of the alien sublime offers the opportunity to transform, or at the very least, drastically expand how dynamisms of colonization and white supremacy interact and are understood.

Black power fiction is significant because it allows us to expose political reality as bounded. Not by relying on elements of science and technology in the envisioning of some distant future, but rather, by engaging with the present moment as a science-fictional experience. *Afro-6* extends on black power fiction by pushing/transforming militancy into a consciousness that transcends the colonial mind/reality. It adds dimension to empowerment and liberation through a peculiar amalgamation with elements of Chicano nationalism, unifying black and brown streams of political consciousness to challenge hegemony in a radically different way. Here, anti-colonial streams of consciousness are expressed through the emergence of an alien sublime consciousness, which, to remind the reader, is a primordial or Indigenous space consciousness, otherwise described as a non-corporeal field of intelligent energy that exists prior to the advent of space-time and colonization as form. Hence, *Afro-6* engages with colonial reality as an existential/experience of science fiction, rather than as a conventional political act of revolution taking place in time, and in doing so, transgresses the colonial imaginary. I therefore suggest that *Afro-6* is able to transcend the bonds of white reality by engaging with reality as a science-fictional existence, not as an imagined politicized future by and of itself, but as an expression of its present that experiences the changing of reality through a re-conceptualization of militancy.

Lopez initiates alien sublime consciousness by injecting elements of prevailing Chicano utopian ideology into the narrative, and in doing so, begins to establish an anti-colonial consciousness able to pierce/fracture the political imagination. On the first page of the novel he writes, "his plans [referring to the leader who organized Afro-6] reminded me of a shabby pulquería I had once seen in the slums of Mexico City, a crumbling hole-in-the-wall saloon that was gloriously named *La Conquista de Nueva York por los Aztecas en el Año 2000*, which translates into, "The Conquest of New York by the Aztecs in the Year 2000" (1). Although the passage was written as the protagonist's ephemeral memory, seemingly falling outside *Afro-6's* impending black revolutionary premise, the novel's subtext evokes an Indigenous imprint elicited by the future conquering of New York by the Aztecs, a key feature that cannot be dismissed as pointless or irrelevant. To understand *Afro-6* as an expression of the alien sublime, however, this Indigenous imprint must be recognized as an actuating function of the novel's science-fictional subtext, which deems the politicizing of Indigeneity as a construction defined by the colonized perception of space and time. As previously discussed in the introductory section of this project, Indigeneity is not Indigenous because of its ideological or nationalistic placement in time, but because of its primordial essence prior to the emergence of space and time.²³ So that colonized populations are able to escape the imprisonment of white reality, Indigeneity must be understood as a timeless and formless expression of the alien sublime that transcends the political mind as an object derived from the colonial imagination. In this sense, Indigeneity may be thought of as already free from the

colonial progression of time, not requiring politicizing of any sort, but which may be used in the political process.

As such, the protagonist, John Ríos is depicted as going beyond the political envisioning of future reality by situating a deeper Indigenous liberation as an immediate opportunity, "It's certainly the dream of my people. But we're not as patient as the Aztecs—we're not waiting till the end of the century ... We know it's a big move, man, but we're awful damn tired of all this gradualist crap. We've got a deep hunger for action" (13). In addition to underscoring a refusal to extol the unfolding of time as method for the eventual experiencing of liberation, Ríos frames a deeper and immediate hunger for action through a black and brown anti-colonial militancy that experiences white reality as existentially alien.²⁴ He adds, "Nor has it been necessary to indoctrinate the main body of our task force, at least not in the conventional sense. You might say they've been in a continuous state of indoctrination for many, many years; they've all been taught to hate with a real vengeance. I am referring, of course, to the millions of Negros and Puerto Ricans in other sections of the country who will surely join or support us when we suddenly make our big move on October 1st" (14-15). The passage emphasizes on the alienness of colonization as the pedagogical instrument responsible for the rejection of white reality. The flagrant antipathy against white reality is therefore not depicted as a learned politicization that requires convincing, nor time envisioned through the construction of an identity defined by an ideological system, but rather, expresses a deep-seated universal presence expressed through the militant Indigeneity of alien sublime consciousness; an instinctive yearning for liberation that already exists beyond the

domains of coloniality. In this context, one could say Ríos does not trust or depend on the imagined perception of time and politics as a genuine process for achieving liberation.

This is further conveyed by Ríos' rejection of a non-militant civil rights movement. He explains, "I left school in 1961 to join Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. But I could never dig his mode of operation. He had an unnatural aversion to hatred and violence, an almost neurotic refusal to recognize the dirty impulses that rule human nature" (21). The passage reiterates on his refusal to operate within the limited politicized domains of white reality. So much so that Martin Luther King's unnatural aversion to the hatred and violence of militancy is understood by Ríos as a mental condition of neurosis; a psychological disturbance which has fallen victim and is unable to identify the dirty impulses that rule human nature (colonized white reality) as an abnormality or illusory phenomena. Ríos thus emphasizes on the necessity to completely transcend the colonized world through alien sublime consciousness.

Continuing to carve out this path, Lopez extends the alien sublime into a larger global consciousness of liberation by infusing the Argentine Marxist revolutionary leader, Ernesto "Ché" Guevara, into the novel's premise. Ríos states:

I imagine Ché Guevara would have readily agreed with us. While attending a United Nations session as a member of the Cuban delegation several years ago, Ché took a sightseeing tour on the last afternoon of his visit. And as he stood on the north side of the Empire State Building observation tower looking over Harlem for twenty minutes, he quietly said to a friend of mine, "This is the most

perfect city in the world for an internal revolution, for a quick takeover by a small, well-disciplined group'. (15)

The scene establishes a connection to *Afro-6's* militant premise by locating Guevara's struggle for liberation within Latin America in the same context as Harlem. But more importantly, it centers the struggle for liberation against U.S. Imperialism and the exploitation and subjugation of black and brown communities by emphasizing on the unconventional, as well as highly unpredictable elements of guerrilla warfare tactics, which do not operate within a defined political system, but seeks to destroy the colonizing, occupying, political entity from reality. By combining the struggle for liberation, Lopez generates a shared colonial-shattering consciousness not based on any one particular nation or political texture/form, but on a deeper awareness that rests on the insurgent and primordial quality of the alien sublime.

In addition, *Afro-6* enhances the alien sublime through the protagonist's Puerto Rican heritage. Here, Ríos' African and Spanish racial background function to yoke the colonized black and brown experience into a militant consciousness. Although substantial differences may be readily drawn between Chicanos and Puerto Rican-Americans, Lopez merges these two ethnic groups through their collective experiences rooted in colonization, their hybridized racial and cultural backgrounds, and subsequent U.S. annexation and racialization experienced by the two groups,²⁵ as well as their shared ideology of resistance germane to the Civil Rights Movement generally. To which, Bruce-Novoa suggests that Chicanos and Puerto Rican-Americans "assert a new hybrid identity, which in turn redefines the nationalistic binary opposition into a preliminary

dialectic from which has begun to spring the logical, irrepressible international synthesis. The two competing logocenters—Mexico and Puerto Rico, respectively, versus the United States—have become opposite extremes in a new circle of cultural production, the center of which is a new, continually dynamic nosotros (us)" (38).

Afro-6, as previously affirmed, articulates the most palpable element into this merger by incorporating the black militant experience into the development of alien sublime consciousness. Relevant to this political union, Marta E. Sánchez elaborates on the intersections among Puerto Rican, African American, and Chicano literary narratives by juxtaposing three novels: *Down These Mean Streets* (1967) by Puerto Rican Piri Thomas, *Manchild in the Promised Land* (1965) by African American Claude Brown, and *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972) by Chicano Oscar Zeta Acosta. Through a comparative literary and cultural analysis, she demonstrates how these texts were able to forge intercultural unions through Spanish, African, and Indigenous identity, as all three have been traditional emblems of racial mestizaje (18). Much in the way described by Sánchez, as well as Bruce-Novoa, it is through intersecting modes of racial and cultural hybridity that *Afro-6* is mediated. However, *Afro-6* re-conceptualizes hybridization beyond the politicization of identity and culture by merging black and brown political realities into the formless entity of the alien sublime, a consciousness capable of transcending the illusory concept of racial difference as form within the bonds of white reality. This is facilitated through Ríos' engagement with reality as a science-fictional/militant transformation. In other words, the flipping of colonial reality mutually dissolves/reverses the process of hybridization, so that what appears to be a merging is

actually an un-merging, un-imagining, or the returning to an original state. The process of de-colonization, which I define as exposing the colonial illusion, is therefore expressed through the process of de-hybridization. John's hybridity is thus used to expose/explore colonial reality as illusory, and in turn, as method for shattering or undoing racialization, not for the purpose of generating a new hybrid political identity designated for future revolution, but to reveal genuine reality as alien sublime consciousness—consciousness that exists prior to the colonized imagination.

Lopez goes a step further by transgressing conventional Puerto Rican and African American markers of ethnicity, culture and identity, for a stronger existential force that is simultaneously centered upon black skin, and which is expressed through the protagonist's physical phenotype. Although Ríos is university educated in the U.S. and speaks English fluently, he is portrayed as a native Spanish-speaker born in Puerto Rico having migrated to the U.S. during childhood. But more importantly, Lopez emphasizes Ríos' ethnic difference by rendering him as hyperaware of his dark skin color (25), and by the way in which he questions his *mulatto* identity not solely within the repressive white society, but within the black and Puerto Rican communities as well. He consequently experiences a sense of otherness that eventually leads to deep concerns over his fragmented identity. He laments:

As a dark-skinned Puerto Rican, I well understand the psychological thrust of negritude. Although my first language was and is Spanish—never spoke a word of English until I came to New York at the age of nine—my deepest friendships or most galling hatreds have always, if I had the guts and honesty to recognize

their essence, have always been rooted in the matter of color. Even my most intimate lighter-skinned friends in San Juan regarded me as a negrito, perhaps a charming intelligent good-buddy negrito, but a negrito nonetheless. It's always been that way. The color line among us Puerto Ricans is just as pronounced and pervasive as it is among Negroes. (17)

The inclusion of black skin as strategy to accentuate the paradox of difference is necessary not only to show the limitations of existing in colonized reality, but to expose disparities within the Afro experience itself, such as differences in language or demarcations shaped by immigrant and native U.S. experiences, into a uniform alien sublime identity. Explained another way, Ríos is represented as different/black-skinned in order to highlight the contradictions, futility, and redundancy, of having to absorb a "new" kind of blackness to effectively hybridize into an artificially enhanced liberation defined by Black Nationalism. Within this purview, Ríos' ambiguous identity corresponds to the *mestizo* Chicano identity that mutually rejects and embraces its violent and colonized past to envision new forms of political consciousness and liberation, where certain characteristics, values, ideals, ways of being must be absorbed if one is to experience the full brunt of empowerment and cultural membership. Ríos' hybrid identity is therefore utilized as a political apparatus that exposes new ways to think about and transcend the bonds of colonized white reality. Beyond the political level, *Afro-6* helps us to understand Ríos as more than an ideological mixture of blackness within an ambiguous, ambivalent, and restrictive political reality, but as symbolic of a multidimensional alien sublime consciousness.

Consequently, in lieu of highlighting a politicized understanding of black and brown relationships, *Afro-6* underscores colonialism as the root contaminant for internal modes of racism within the black struggle for liberation. Sonia Song-Ha Lee explains that Puerto Ricans sought to bolster political strength by forging networks with African Americans in the common struggle for justice, as they "began to align themselves more closely with black leaders' confrontational methods. Modeling themselves after Martin Luther King Jr. and other black civil rights leaders, Puerto Ricans" induced Puerto Rican-ness as the source of cultural and political empowerment (2).²⁶ She describes Puerto Rican racial and ethnic identity "as an interplay between their sensibility as a people of color with African Americans, their self-understandings as Hispanic with other Spanish-speaking groups, and their identity as members of a distinct Puerto Rican nation" (4). Lee argues that, analogous to African Americans, Puerto Ricans played a fundamental role in shaping "New Yorkers' notions of 'race,' 'ethnicity,' and 'minority' in the civil rights and Black Power eras" (3). She contends that the "remaking of "blackness" and "Latinidad" consequently, "took place not as separate movements but as intertwined and mutually reinforcing historical processes," for which "African Americans and Puerto Ricans themselves were pivotal actors within the racialization of "blackness" and "Puerto Rican-ness" (4).²⁷

However, while Song-Ha Lee claims that Puerto Rican-ness played a pivotal role in making a new empowering identity expressed through blackness, *Afro-6* deviates from such a politicized, perhaps even romanticized process, as Ríos' difference ultimately remains bound by the political imagination. A constraint not solely dictated by his

aversion to a white reality exemplified through "constant early-morning vomiting when [he] first [went] to Harvard, dreading the idea of being surrounded by white students; about the near-insanity [he] sometimes felt when [he] realized how small and black [his] universe really would always be" (23), but by the limitations imposed by an ideologically conceived Black Nationalism and liberation that would nonetheless remain incomplete. On the one hand, his skin is considered too black by Puerto Ricans, and on the other, his Spanish ethnicity is ultimately deemed different, suspicious, and ultimately rejected by the black U.S. citizenship. Ríos is thus unable to add his ethnic and cultural identity into political reality and envisioned freedom. Consequently, because Ríos personifies the traditional Latino immigrant experience that Black Nationalism does not typically identify with, as he experiences prejudice and mistrust from members within his own ranks for not being genuinely "black". Ríos explains, "...Budho has always expressed some uneasiness about my presence on the Council and has never lost a chance to nibble at me. He would frankly prefer an all-Negro top command and would indeed restrict Puerto Rican participation to L-3. But thanks to my dark skin, Budho was summarily overruled by the Professor during our first staff meeting. 'Rios is just as black as you are,' he said. 'Its not his nationality that counts; its his color' (16). Ríos continues, "He's right, of course, Color *is* the crucial factor. Proper pigmentation must be the *sine qua non*, the always necessary requirement, in guaranteeing a man's group loyalty. This is not to say that black skin alone will guarantee loyalty to one's fellow blacks. It simply means that good black skin is the basic ingredient for cementing the kind of last-ditch loyalty (and hatred) we must all have to carry out PROJECT AFRO-6" (16). As previously witnessed

in how Ríos' relationships had all been defined by his black skin, the bonds of white reality define his political reality to an ambiguous existence experienced as a "Nagging sense of inferiority" (20), where not even his dark skin color is enough to warrant a kind of liberation free from a politicized reality defined by a white supremacist, colonial caste system that defines existence through the categorization of racial form. As underscored by Ríos, "Lighter *hueros*, whose hispanic genes, so to speak, heavily outnumber their African genes (there aren't many 'pure' Spaniards among us), have generally considered themselves superior to those of us who are more negroid. After a while you begin to accept that standard and will subconsciously begin to despise yourself" (17). Ríos underscores that existing within colonial reality, genuine liberation remains a political impossibility, or an illusion, irrespective of who happens to hold political power. Subsequently, even a politically generated identity rejects him as different. Reality thereby becomes inextricably fused to a colonial past, and works to transport future history into a fixed colonized reality that forces a bounded politicized blackness upon him, "I'm not totally black, but I'm dark enough to be taken for a Negro at least nine times out of ten. Of course, this doesn't bother me anymore, since I've learned to 'think black'" (17). Hence, the process of racialization as a mode of self-definition and political activism, as understood by Song-Ha Lee, is the very process that reinforces the hegemony initiated by the colonial imagination, leading to a subconscious internalization of white supremacy that is redeployed as a revolutionary conceptualization supposedly defined by liberation. In this limited context, Ríos exists in a reality that prevents self-realization and genuine liberation since the governing political experience remains fixed

to the illusory reality defined by the colonial imagination. In a broader context, Ríos is aware of this inability to experience reality as a genuine whole.

Ríos' involvement in *Afro-6* is therefore not primarily driven by the quest to fit into a particular revolutionary or political identity or nationalism, but to explore the contradictions inherent to a confined socio-political reality. The true revolutionary act in *Afro-6* therefore begins, not in the political imagination as a concept, but in the ability to experience consciousness/see beyond political reality as an authentic site of liberation. Ríos undoubtedly makes this realization by asserting, "For the first time in my life I reconciled myself to the truth: it didn't matter a damn bit of difference whether I was Puerto Rican or Russian or Italian. I was still black" (21). For Ríos, experiencing the limitations of political reality as illusion is a mode of self-realization, and the beginning process of knowing himself as more than a political object. By discerning the limits of political reality and colonization, Ríos symbolizes a type of inchoate alien in the process of realizing an alien consciousness of sublime liberation which is capable of eclipsing the colonial imagination. Lopez utilizes the popular discourse established by the black power movement as a platform with which to launch an enhanced consciousness; one that does not require political construction, but rather, one that requires a political de-construction, which already exists but simply needs to be discovered. In this way he pushes the boundaries of political identity by taking a militant leap forward in the colonized experience to express an alien sublime existence, where concepts of difference cannot exist within the domains of pure consciousness.

Although the uprising succeeds in taking over cities across the U.S. for a few days, working to briefly disrupt white reality, it is not enough to transcend the bonds of colonization since the political mind is unable to identify itself/reality as that which needs to be transformed. That *Afro-6* does not ultimately end in total revolution denotes that liberation within a political context is inherently limited, nonetheless remaining within the purview of colonialism. The deeper transgression is therefore expressed through a unified consciousness that functions to transform the illusion of race as a social construct into a dimensional force of science fiction (alien sublime), thereby removing and transcending the colonized subject from the artifice of difference (time) established by the colonial imagination. Science-fictionalizing colonized reality in this fashion not only helps to dissolve the hegemonic ideology, but also helps to change perceptions of reality by reshaping how militancy and its intimate relationship with the autonomous spaces of science fiction and utopia as genuine expressions of liberation may be better understood. Interpreting *Afro-6* in this way has the potential of stimulating new conceptual possibilities specific to race and identity that may work to reformulate how the colonized experience has been generally understood. Herein, the ethnic and political intersections inherent to *Afro-6* work to challenge the colonial processes of racialization by reformulating how the paradigm of race is imagined and embedded into social reality.

Afro-6 is therefore symptomatic of a broader unexamined political dimension that has the potential of revealing unconventional methods for reinterpreting the Chicano experience; unconventional methods that are based in historical fact.²⁸ Lopez's incorporation of Chicano nationalism consequently inhabits a meaningful bond that

infuses into the novel's outward black militant premise a distinct, even ubiquitous Chicano presence that works to unite Chicano Liberation and Black Power doctrines into one multidimensional narrative intended to transcend white reality. As a result, *Afro-6* not only functions to rearticulate the black power narrative but re-conceptualizes black and brown political autonomy and utopia towards more pluralistic visions of reality. A strategy that, similar to black power science fiction's rejection of science fiction, relied on cultivating an identity which could not be readily accommodated by the political strangleholds placed on the Chicano experience of the period; limitations that prevented Chicanos from engaging with reality as a science-fictional experience. Lopez thus extends black power fiction, not only to capitalize on the genre's popularity during this period, but because it readily facilitated a critical engagement with speculative modes of cultural and political interpretation. Though certainly not a perfect union, it was compatible enough with the larger Chicano nationalist fight against the legacy of colonialism and white repression to warrant a new kind of political engagement.

The Revolt of the Cockroach People (1973)

Briefly put into context, most interpretations of *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* have focused on how the novel transgresses underlying ideals of identity and culture within the traditional Chicano experience. For this reason, common perceptions of Oscar Zeta Acosta have been to consider him a reckless outcast of sorts. Many have outright rejected the novel for its sexist attitude towards women, its homophobia, and the characters' heavy drug and alcohol use throughout the plot; characteristics that do not

easily lend themselves to the perceived cultural and literary aesthetic of the canonical Chicano novel. *Revolt* has been generally thought of as inept when held against the values of cultural empowerment and liberation that the Chicana/o Movement actively pursues. For these reasons, many have also discounted *Revolt* as a novel capable of exemplifying cultural empowerment or true liberation. Still, despite *Revolt's* perceived deficiencies under the context in which it has been situated, understanding the novel as a work of science fiction offers incredibly valuable insight into the spectrum of political expression within the Chicana/o experience.

Comparable to *Afro-6's* premise, *Revolt of the Cockroach People* similarly centralizes militancy as a science-fictional identity that expresses the alien sublime. The most palpable difference between the two novels, however, is that *Revolt* is un-
mistakenly about Chicanos, whereas *Afro-6's* science-fictionalized Chicano presence is primarily expressed as subtext. The novel is a semi-fictionalized account of Oscar Zeta Acosta's experiences as a Chicano lawyer in Los Angeles, providing a behind-the-scenes insider perspective into one aspect of the militant experience during the Chicano Movement. The narrative begins with the protagonist recounting his arrival to Los Angeles the previous year, wanting to be a writer with the freedom to do whatever he wants rather than practice law, which he considers agonizing, and without taking any particular political stance. He explains, "When I first arrived in Los Angeles in January, '68, I had no intention of practicing law or of pitting myself against anything" (22). It is during these initial stages of the novel that Acosta experiences ambiguity not only about participating in social justice efforts, but also about his Mexican identity and cultural

heritage. However, after reflecting upon his past experiences he comes to realize that his life has been filled with instances of racism, and chooses to dedicate himself to being Chicano by changing his name to Brown Buffalo, learning Spanish, writing "the greatest books ever written," and becoming "the best criminal lawyer in the history of the world" (31). The plot continues as Acosta struggles to balance his emerging, politicized Chicano identity with his desire to be free from having to fight subordination and focus on more carefree, artistic endeavors, such as becoming a writer. He attempts to merge the two by writing a story about the Chicano militant experience, but repeatedly gets absorbed by the battle for justice—never finding the time to write the story. As a militant lawyer, Acosta represents his militant friends, who are arrested and charged with various conspiracy offenses, becomes a leader of the Movement, and engages in the protest against the Catholic Church, the educational system, police brutality, the criminal justice system, and the war in Vietnam.

As the plot shows, Acosta exemplifies an ambiguous, ambivalent identity that consistently shifts from political apathy—he initially proclaims, "politically I believe in absolutely nothing" (28)—to moments of experiencing profound feelings of ethnic solidarity and sense of dignity. Thus, Acosta does not automatically consider himself Chicano by association of his Mexican heritage, but chooses, or more accurately, feels compelled to become Chicano by consciously joining the movement against repression regardless of his ethnic background or brown skin. It is this greater individualistic freedom of choice able to detach from political and nationalistic membership that is at the core of the novel, and which ultimately functions as an ontological re-articulation of

Chicano identity and reality. More specifically, a greater sense of individual autonomy pushes Acosta to expand conventional models of Chicano identity and cultural nationalism through a science-fiction reality expressed as the alien sublime.

In an examination grounded upon Karl Marx's theory of reification and class-based constructions of racial identity, Marcial González argues that *Revolt* performs a "dereifying function that seeks to transgress the reified consciousness of the novel's narrator" (79). González illustrates how Acosta expresses a reified conception of cultural nationalism via "a bitter antagonism toward the effects of capitalism accumulation" and "attempts to fashion a racial identity that embraces his working-class, Chicano heritage" (80). According to González, "cultural nationalism in *Revolt* turns out to be nearly as problematic as the racialization made necessary by the economic needs and ideological interests or capitalist accumulation from the late nineteenth century to present. The novel is thus driven by this contradictory predicament—forced racialization versus a self-fashioned racial identity" (81). Although I tend to agree with González in that *Revolt* engages with the contradictions of existing within the confines of Chicano reality, and should be understood as a critique of Chicano nationalism instead of a mere representational search for Chicano identity as commonly ascribed by most criticism (94), I see *Revolt* as utilizing the contradictions of Chicano reality as a means to expand into an alien sublime consciousness of liberation. Because Acosta is unable to access liberation under the limitations imposed by colonial reality, he attempts to dissolve, or de-reify political reality into an indefinable abstraction expressed as the alien sublime. Acosta essentially attempts to remove himself as a politically racialized object derived

from the colonial imagination through engaging the alien sublime, which may only be accessed by withdrawing from the logical and conventional dogma of political/colonial thought and time. As such, the paradoxical nature of a Chicano nationalist reality is that which mutually offers Acosta liberation yet mutually confines him to illusory colonial reality.

Although González's interpretation is productive in the way it attempts to make sense of *Revolt*, it also tends to impose limitations on the novel through a historical, ideological vacuum that prevents an understanding of Acosta as an entity in the process of discovering/realizing a deeper essence as the alien sublime. Consequently, Acosta does not look to engage with or revise the past in order to make sense of his reality, but looks into the present moment through militancy, within himself as the alien sublime as a way to transcend his bounded Chicano identity into a dimension of liberation. So then, rather than focusing on how Acosta fails to understand his own reified existence, and how he is incapable of constructing an emancipating racial identity under this constraint, as González proposes, we should try to appreciate that not only is Acosta fully aware his existence within a paradoxical reality, but that he proactively seeks to negotiate his antithetical political reality by attempting to transcend colonial thought, which he expresses in three key ways which center on Chicano reality. As already highlighted, the first entails articulating the inconsistencies/limitations imposed by Chicano nationalism, and the second by criticizing Mexican Americans that have been willingly/readily absorbed into white reality. For instance, to the point of using deadly violence, Acosta aggressively condemns Mexican Americans that have replicated white institutional

supremacy against their own people. *Revolt* first engages with this aspect of the plot during the aforementioned protest against St. Basil's church, as Acosta describes "helmeted pigs standing in a skirmish line at the bottom of the steps" as being tense, "their hands gnarled around the batons held before them at parade rest. Fear in the eyes of black and Chicano cops. So I say to them, 'Why don't you guys relax? You ought to see yourselves, you'd be ashamed.' I see murder in their eyes" (19). And again, much later in the plot during a court scene where Acosta defends his militant friends who have been "charged with Arson, Riot, Conspiracy and a host of other travesties" (201), he depicts all of the characters as people of Mexican origin:

Torrez [stepping] forward to the witness stand. He is a lean dark-brown Chicano, prosecuting the biggest case of his career ... Younger, the DA, appointed him specifically for this trial [because he thought the reason Zeta won all his cases was because he was Mexican (218). Chicano defendants and defense attorney and prosecution. And there on the bench is a good old Chicano lackey, Superior Court Judge Alfred Alacran. (202)

As the scene illustrates, the judge, city prosecutor, and Acosta battle it out for justice within a colonized, institutionalized space where people of Mexican origin and their complicity are allegorically on trial. Subsequently, Acosta and his militant crew ultimately decide to assassinate the Mexican-American judge by bombing the court building. But what is of particular importance here is that rather than attempting to eliminate members from the repressive white community as way to change reality, which would be more consistent with conventional militant values of rebellion and autonomy,

including those found in *Afro-6* and *Black Power Fiction*, Acosta makes it a point to focus his efforts on the Mexican American community exclusively, and on holding them accountable for being apathetic and detrimental to freedom; colonized barriers he perceives to actuating genuine liberation. Acosta's strategy therefore largely relies on militancy to expose the contradictory nature of Chicano reality as a way to purge the colonial illusion from Chicano consciousness. Yet, in ironic fashion, the contradictory nature of Chicano nationalism is incapable of freeing itself from the colonial imaginary as an obstruction in the broader context of experiencing the alien sublime. Although emphasis is outwardly placed on un-politicized people of Mexican origin, Acosta confronts the harsh realities contained within Chicano reality as an integral process to the development of the alien sublime.

The third method involves exposing political reality as a colonial generated outcome derived from future history. During the court scene, Acosta traces the legacy of colonization to expose/transgress political reality as an artificial construct based on time. He begins with first-contact in the coming of Hernando Cortez and the Spanish conquering of the Indigenous world, "They have come to this strange land to conquer or die for the glory of God. They attack village after village, taking captives and booty" (159). The passage continues:

... the white men on horses and their army of slaves enter triumphantly into the most advanced city in the world, the world's most beautiful city. In 1500 AD Mexico City far surpassed anything that the Spaniards have seen on the European continent. There is an efficient government. It is a city with streets and canals and

a sewage system, a city of gold and birds and leopards and barber shops. A land of flowers and parrots, mountains and blue beaches. They have priests and philosophers, soldiers and artists (159) ... And they have a king who is a god, a god who tells his million-man army to lay down their swords ... 'this is he of whom our prophets spoke,' Montezuma tells his people. And since he is a god, they obey. And the Spaniards take Mexico by default. (160)

The scene not solely distinguishes between a sophisticated Indigenous civilization that drastically exceeded anything European civilizations had envisioned, but Acosta emphasizes on the destruction of Indigenous reality. He explains how Cortez ordered, "the destruction of the heathen temples [and] outlaws human sacrifice. He outlaws the religion that has shed the blood of thousands ... And then he burns the books so that people will not be tempted to return to their heathen ways ... then he ransacks the capital and sends the gold and glitter to his king in Spain. And they rape the women" (160). The rise of European reality is underscored as emerging through the destruction of Indigenous reality. He elaborates further on the indoctrinating consequences of this new reality, "If you want to join the new nation, all you have to do is give up your slave name and your slave tongue. If you want to become a Spaniard, be baptized and take a Christian name. An attack upon the church is an assault upon the State. And visa versa. Church and State are one" (160). Finally, Acosta transitions into yet another annexation of Indigenous lands:

Three hundred years later, in 1850 AD, more white men in covered wagons come to the land of the northern deserts, the land we now call the Southwest. It is the

ancient land of Aztlan, the original homeland of the aztecas. New invaders. New conquerors. They, too, come with fire power and the flag of a new nation. They, too, are on a holy mission. As Cortez had done before ... the new white barbarians invade the land and subdue it. They inform the people that they now have a new government and new religion—Christianity. (160)

Acosta utilizes the colonization of Indigenous civilizations to expose the corrupt, artificial political existence that people of Mexican origin must endure. He explicates, "A hundred years later, the Chicanos turn to the government and to the priests and ask for justice, for education, for food, for jobs, for freedom and the pursuit of happiness" (161). Although Acosta may appear to echo popular black and brown nationalistic sentiments of the period, it is not his intention to reach a political freedom that falls under the guise of social justice, nor to further solidify on the construction of a Chicano nationalistic identity, but rather, to expose political reality as an illusion constructed by the colonial imagination. Although a violent militancy is certainly expressed in the novel through the physical revolting against white reality, it is chiefly processed through a deeper existential transformation expressed through alien sublime consciousness. Ending the historical soliloquy, Acosta proclaims, "And yet, we are guilty of inciting to riot. We did want a riot. We sought it. And we did accomplish it! ... A riot of the brain. A revolution of the spirit ... And the only reason the prosecution is going after us with shrieks of outrage, the only reason the State has spent such time and money, is because we did accomplish what we set out to do..." (161). Through a piercing account that describes a "riot of the brain" and a "revolution of the spirit", Acosta unhinges the Chicana/o mind

from the clutches of the colonial imagination, and in doing so, expresses a radical shift in consciousness not reliant on future history as the deeper truth of alien sublime existence.

From this revised perspective, Acosta is not necessarily concerned with the ideological interests of capitalist accumulation from the late-nineteenth century to his present, but more so with identifying Chicano reality as an accumulation that stems from a much broader and systemic colonized existence. He is looking to dissolve the illusory limitations imposed by racial construction under colonized reality irrespective of whether they are forced or self-fashioned. He recognizes that genuine liberation cannot be accessed by self-identifying through the colonial conceptualization of race, which is inaccessible through the illusion of difference established by colonial reality. For Acosta, transcending nationalism, racial identity, indoctrination, capitalism, as well as space and time are all expressions of the alien sublime.

It is this malleable and transcendent reality processed through the alien sublime that *Revolt* elicits, and which opens towards a science fiction consciousness that seeks to emancipate not solely the Chicano, but all populations that fall under the dominion of imperialism incited by colonization. Acosta clearly satirizes the colonized experienced by referring to colonized populations as the cockroach people. But in a deeper sense, the cockroach people express the consciousness of the alien sublime. In this context, the Revolt of the Cockroach People may be understood as an alien sublime revolt against colonized space-time reality. That is, the cockroach operates as an allegory, of sorts, from which to generate a force entity able to detect and reinterpret colonial reality as illusory. Similar to the alien sublime unified field consciousness expressed in *Afro-6*, Acosta

attempts to expand Chicano consciousness into a dimensional force entity that transcends colonial reality. This is mainly expressed by extending subordination and colonization into a global context, which is presented from the initial stages of the novel. Acosta opens with a scene describing Chicanos as, "a bunch of cockroaches gone crazy" (11) in the context of protesting the U.S. invasion of Vietnam. Specific to the Vietnam War's role in the novel, González explains:

The novel does not represent the Vietnam War; nor does it narrate the lives of soldiers who were directly involved in it. The war nonetheless provides historical substance and background to Zeta Brown's narrative. This is so partly because of the war's pervasive impact on all aspects of social life in the United States during that time, but also because *Revolt* situates the Chicano Movement within an international context. The significance of the Vietnam War becomes most apparent in *Revolt* with the series of events that unfolds during and after the Chicano Moratorium Anti-War March, which is one of the central narrative threads in the novel. (107)

While González's assessment is technically accurate, my contention is that Acosta utilizes the Vietnam War only to the extent that it is an expression intended to evoke the alien sublime. Similar to González, *Revolt* ostensibly exemplifies what Jose Limon refers to as a critical regionalism "remaining closely attentive to text and local context while linking these firmly into the global" (177). However, for Acosta, linking the Chicano to a global context does not do enough to generate liberation. His concern does not primarily stem from Mexican-American involvement in Vietnam, but from an alternate concern that

exemplifies a deeper critique of colonization. For instance, during the protest against St. Basil's church, Acosta writes, "We were at the home base of the holy man who encouraged presidents to drop fire on poor Cockroaches in far-off villages in Vietnam" (13). Acosta is therefore not primarily concerned with people of Mexican origin dying on the battlefield in Vietnam, despite the suffering of loses in vastly disproportionate numbers as compared to other ethnicities,²⁹ but appears more directly concerned with a system of white supremacy that perpetually subjugates/invades Indigenous populations worldwide, the people of Vietnam in this particular case. If, as González claims, Acosta is attempting to de-reify social reality, linking the local to the global under colonized political reality nonetheless taints the conditions under which an emancipating reality may be defined. Consequently, Acosta understands colonization as a global, collective experience encapsulated by the colonial imaginary's influence on defining reality through future history and the logic of space-time.

Conversely, Acosta's emerging consciousness may be understood as anticipating the limitations of the post-Civil Rights shift into globalized reality. Acosta foresees the backlash of conservatism initiated by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher's sweeping neoliberal project during the 1980s, which not only led to a sharp reversal of civil rights gains and the gutting of social services (Stefancic and Delgado 4; Bagdikian x), but which was subsequently bolstered by the Bill Clinton administration of the 1990s that worked to "re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites" (Harvey 19). Hence, Acosta does not engage with the global as a political exercise in challenging capitalist accumulation or its development, but uses

militancy as a force to identify global capitalism as a root extension of colonized reality; a colonized reality that, as I will discuss in subsequent chapters, triggered the rise of more contemporary forms of Chicana/o science fiction during the 1990s.

Acosta similarly engages with Mexico to highlight the limits of political global reality. Towards the end of the novel, growing tired and frustrated of his life in Los Angeles and of the constant battle against repression, Acosta withdraws from Chicano reality to search for rest and tranquility by visiting his brother, which in stark contrast to core Chicana/o values, involves staying in cheap Acapulco motels, doing drugs and frequenting brothels. However, if one is able to see beyond Acosta's "leisure" activities, the trip to Mexico highlights the limitations of not solely the Chicano Movement, but all social justice movements in the U.S. Herein, Acosta's brother, Jesus, questions the validity and commitment of the Civil Rights Movement by trying to make Acosta realize that the Chicano Movement is a rhetorical farce compared to the greater land reform struggle in Mexico, where true revolutionaries are willing to die for change. Jesus proclaims:

Until the people, the blacks, the Chicanos, the white liberals, and the white radicals, all of you, until you guys get it in your head that you're going to go all the way... I mean, like Lopitos here. When they took over the mountain there was no turning back ... it was life or death on the mountaintop ... they chose death and they beat it. You've got to accept it, look for it, stick your nose into it and fight your way out of it. You've got to find your death before you can find your life. (188-189)

Although Mexico equally falls under the domain of having experienced colonization, by using an outside, non-Chicano perspective, *Revolt* is able to question the validity of Chicano reality as a genuine path to liberation. More precisely, it creates a distance that inverts Chicano reality and subjectivity to identify a broader colonial reality in accessing the alien sublime. In doing so, it expresses the impending death of the illusory political self and the rebirth or resurrection of the alien sublime. Although Acosta initially attempts to refute the ineffectiveness of the Movement by pointing to the progress Chicanos have made, and also by claiming that it was easy to judge from afar, as Jesus "[sat there] sucking up dope and fucking those broads," he reluctantly concedes when Jesus asks, "And you're not doing the same in East LA?" (189). Acosta attempts to defend himself by stating, "Well ... yeah, but I'm also working." To which Jesus finally proclaims, "Bullshit! It amounts to nothing. Its just an exercise in ego-tripping" (189). While Acosta remains loyal to the Chicano Movement, he is forced to question and expand his view of colonization and liberation from one that relies on global uniformity to one that embraces racial and cultural Difference in the process of dissolving illusory political reality. Similar to how John exists in-between race-defined realities that appropriate a militant science fiction consciousness indiscernible to the colonial imagination in *Afro-6*, Acosta's emerging alien sublime consciousness does not rely on merging Chicano identity into a national or global anti-hegemonic multicultural melting pot, but instead works to generate a unified consciousness that dissolves difference by dismantling the process of racialization as a de-colonial process. As previously noted, individual autonomy beyond the restraints of colonial reality is at the core of Acosta's

emerging consciousness. It is the vehicle that empowers Acosta to transform his Chicano identity into the alien sublime.

Acosta eventually returns to Los Angeles to rejoin the struggle upon learning that his friend, Roland Zanzibar—inspired by real-life Ruben Salazar, a Chicano journalist who was "accidentally" killed by a Los Angeles County Sherriff's deputy during the Chicano Moratorium in 1970—had been killed during Chicano riots and Rodolfo Gonzalez had been arrested for his murder. However, he is never able to fully achieve the freedom he longed for and comes to accept that fighting injustice must be challenged even at the expense of his own individual freedom. During the closing stages of the novel he proclaims that the revolution is an ongoing fight, and, remaining militant until the end, vouches revenge by proclaiming, "somebody still has to answer for all the smothered lives of all the fighters who have been forced to carry on, chained to a war for Freedom just like a slave is chained to his master. Somebody still has to pay for the fact that I've got to leave friends to stay whole and human, to survive intact, to carry on the species and my own Buffalo run as long as I can" (258). Albeit resolute about challenging oppression, Acosta remains unresolved in the sense that there is ultimately no peace or healing as long as he remains trapped in a political reality defined by colonial reality. Instead he finds himself in limbo, or a transitional in-between state of consciousness, contemplative about the possibility of a genuine liberation.

Understanding *Revolt* as science fiction encourages a critique of colonization that not only contests ideologies of power within the local setting, including the limited ideological powers built from Chicano political reality itself, but simultaneously exceeds

the political limitations of the global by catapulting the Chicano into a science fiction consciousness that is able to eclipse colonial reality and the illusory barriers of space-time. That *Revolt* questions the boundaries of reality to express the alien sublime accesses a deeper dimension of Chicano consciousness that explores liberation in a new way.

Conclusion

Afro-6 and *Revolt of the Cockroach People* are examples of Chicano fiction that attempted to introduce a new political dimension designed to envision alternative modes of liberation for Chicanos. Indeed, protagonists in both *Afro-6* and *Revolt* exhibit a profound concern with identity and culture as political mechanisms, not only as mediums of empowerment but as limitations, which are mutually expressed through science-fictional propensities infused into militancy to explore new forms of political consciousness. They are important cultural artifacts that seek to represent Chicano activism through broader, multidimensional perspectives of identity and ethnicity. In so doing, they not only stretch the militant domains of the Black Power and Chicano Liberation Movements of the long 1960s, but attempt to augment the Chicano experience by deviating from conservative approaches orientated towards the traditions of the past as well as by challenging dominant conceptions of what it meant to be Chicano.

CHAPTER 2: CHICANA CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE ALIEN SUBLIME

Introduction

While *Afro-6* and *Revolt* engaged with science fiction to transform political reality, it was strictly expressed through male-orientated experiences; a consistent pattern that grossly discounted the relevant experiences of Chicanas during this period. This however, did not prevent Chicanas from pushing the boundaries of political reality. One important text introduced during this period may be witnessed in Isabela Ríos' novel *Victuum*. Comparable to popular second-wave feminist writers like Alice Sheldon, Ursula Le Guin, and Joanna Russ, who turned to the themes in science fiction as a way to confront a white patriarchal society, Ríos engaged with science fiction not solely to challenge issues of gender and patriarchy within the Mexican culture, but to contemplate on the nature of a higher universal existence by exploring an alien consciousness of liberation. As explained in detail within this project's Introduction, the alien figure has been an immensely popular and reoccurring figure within mainstream science fiction. However, in the same way that Enrique Lopez and Oscar Zeta Acosta did not directly set out to write science fiction novels, Ríos did not consider *Victuum* a work of science fiction. As she clarifies in the Preface of the digitized re-release of the novel, "Victuum is based on a true story of a young girl's odyssey in psychic discovery. Her psychic development epitomizes with the encounter of an outer-planetary being."³⁰ The alien figure is therefore used literally to express an existential alien sublime consciousness capable of transcending colonized reality and the political world. It engages with

Chicana/o reality as a science-fictional existence that is already available, which is existential by its very nature, thereby nullifying the need to construct a rigid identity based on future history, which intrinsically remains limited by the colonial induced political form of space and time.

Its distinctiveness, though, is by no means matched by its reception. Few people know of *Victuum's* existence, and of those that do, namely an exclusive handful of academics that specialize in Chicana/o literature, have for the most part found *Victuum's* alien themed premise unintelligible and/or not up to par with established literary mores, which has resulted in a lack of critical interest and readership even among Chicanas. The prominent Chicano scholar, Ramon Saldivar, for example, describes *Victuum* as, "one of the strangest pieces of writing ever done by a Mexican American author, male or female ... In fact, its prose is rough, primitive, certainly naïve in its appearance. And yet, the novel is technically a tour de force in its almost total rejection of traditional narrative procedure" (176).

True, Ríos does not guide the reader using conventional narration form, but instead presents the first-person accounts of the protagonist whose thoughts and communication with the reader and other characters are expressed through dialogue alone. Aside from the novel's prose, the most prevalent transgressions are witnessed not solely in the development of a young female protagonist, but on the integration of science fiction as a mode to express political agency. Ironically however, even with the myriad of transgressions, *Victuum* simultaneously presents a story that heavily incorporates, and to a certain degree, adheres to many of the established approaches embedded into the

canonized Chicano novel. Reasonably speaking, the story parallels the Chicano novel in that it adopts a relatively uniform, linear based, realist, rural and historically situated plot taking place in the 1950s barrio setting of Oxnard, California. Also, as noted previously, *Victuum* depicts the experience growing up in a Mexican household from a young protagonist's perspective. Analogous to the male-orientated Chicano *Bildungsroman*, the novel features a *Bildungsroman* experience that is in the process of self-discovery in relation to the outside world, or a higher cosmic existence in this case, speaking to many of the core issues vital to the Chicana/o community during the Chicana/o Movement, such as colonization and the disenfranchisement that followed U.S. annexation, the institutional inequities that adversely influenced the Mexican American community vis-à-vis language, identity, educational attainment, immigration, and the general oppression of the Mexican people in the U.S.

Victuum (1976)

The novel is structured into two main parts. With the exception of the first two pages of the novel, part one is a variation of the conventional Chicano novel previously described, which makes up a major portion of the novel's total length. Part two is comprised of the section regarded as "strange" by Saldivar, wherein science fiction is most clearly integrated into the novel's premise. This perceived strangeness or uncertainty by Chicana/o critics, however, I believe is an outcome of attempting to analyze *Victuum* through the politically realist prism of Chicana/o Studies, preventing a critical understanding of the novel's deeper subtext. When read through the syntax of

science fiction, *Victuum* may be understood in a much more intelligible and beneficial context by showing how it is able to penetrate the limitations of Chicana/Mexican American/colonized reality and explore a deeper liberation as the alien sublime.

Ríos open the novel by establishing alien consciousness through the metaphor of sound. The novel begins with the passage, "I watch. I listen. For sound am I, silenced by the human ear at present; shaped matter unseen by the human eye at present" (1). The passage then continues to describe the birth of the novel's protagonist, Valentina Ballesternos. During the birth process, the protagonist shows concern over causing her mother pain, however there is also regret expressed as a profound awareness of beginning physical life yet again. She describes slipping back "into the sleeping silence of my conscious, and as my tiresome, limb fingers fondle the outer sustenance, it will be decades before they'll possess the strength to pull from the depths of my brain the knowledge of yesteryears. All will be forgotten" (2). After the birth scene, Valentina is described as having been born with a veil over her face, which is interpreted by folklore as the newborn having a special connection to the supernatural or spiritual world (4). From this point the plot unfolds into Valentina's experiences growing up in a traditional Mexican American household. Annie O. Eysturoy considers Valentina's birth "an act of self-creation poignantly captured in the initial sentence of *Victuum* ... In this opening scene we are tapping into the emerging consciousness of a Chicana still in a symbolic fetal stage. We are thus witnessing the coming into being of the Chicana literary persona, the literary 'I,' who 'silenced' and 'unseen,' is in the process of appropriating the power of speech" (39). "This Chicana consciousness about to be born possesses all the knowledge

'gathered over the centuries, epochs' (39). She elaborates further, "While the Chicana has remained 'silenced' and 'unseen,' the collective knowledge of her history has been doomed to a quiescent existence in the depths of her consciousness. This is the consciousness of the Chicana 'Everywoman,' and it becomes the task of the female hero, and a part of her *Bildung*, to retrieve and give voice to that knowledge" (39). "Thus the initial two pages of *Victuum* center on this eternal process of creation and re-creation, the core from which the female voice will emerge" (40).

Eysturoy's reading of the scene reflects Chicana consciousness in the process of becoming, establishing the Valentina as not a mere mortal, but a special kind of being with access to knowledge gathered over the ages. However, Eysturoy bases her analysis on the historical invisibility or silencing of Chicanas by framing her birth around sociopolitical and cultural ideals engrossed within the colonized state of consciousness, which, as I have already discussed, denies access to genuine liberation since it stems from the colonial imagination's illusory reality. So, although the scene accurately highlights an emerging Chicana consciousness, the consciousness emerging is actually experiencing creation as an object within or into the bounds of colonized space-time reality, rather than on experiencing space-time as the primordial subject alien sublime consciousness. That is to say, Chicana consciousness cannot be born as an eternal process of self-creation, as Eysturoy proposes, since Chicana identity is distinctively born from a political imagination intended to resist subordination from within the gravitational field of colonization, which is where her pain and frustration comes from. In contrast, then, the opening scene is used to establish a transferring of space consciousness that originates

from a silence which is expressed as liberation through the alien sublime, into a reality of sound expressed as material reality and the political mind within illusory space and time. The emergence of Chicana consciousness must therefore rediscover the alien sublime through self-realization and cosmic awareness, not as a point of beginning as defined by colonial time, space and sound, but by the silent, timeless, formless nothingness of empty space where concepts of difference cannot exist.

As Ritch Calvin points out, "Ríos has adopted the generic tropes of the science fiction novel in order to illuminate and speculate the possibilities of a different epistemological and ontological space" (52) by way of theorizing "a new space for Chicana identity" (53). This new space of Chicana identity outlined by Calvin must transform established models of Chicana consciousness into the alien sublime. Consequently, by science-fictionalizing the Chicana experience, and by underscoring ambiguity and ambivalence within the realities of Mexican American experience, as will be discussed shortly, Ríos dislodges the sociocultural and political boundaries of conventional Chicana identity into dimensions of metaphysical existence through a primordial process that originates from the alien sublime. Ríos attempts to generate consciousness by situating the protagonist beyond the cultural/conceptual parameters that traditionally define reality. She explores a new way to transcend the intersectional forms of repression faced by Chicanas in the political world by establishing the Chicana as an existing alien consciousness. Consequently, the novel's deeper significance rests in the protagonist's discovery that creation is a process that may only be defined through a self-realization as the alien sublime, and not on the building of political consciousness as the

true self, i.e. the construction of identity and the imagining of liberation as objects defined by the political imagination.

Part one works to establish the abject conditions from which Valentina develops an instinctive need or search for the alien sublime. Her childhood is filled with confusion stemming from experiences of oppression, pain, and death, which she utilizes to question the meaning of existence. As noted previously, this section mostly highlights the various life experiences Valentina faces growing up in a Mexican family in the U.S. As a child, she learns about history and the annexation of Mexican lands by the U.S. from adult family members, but particularly from her father, Adolfo, who, through oral history traditions, instilled in his children a profound sense of dignity about their Mexican heritage from a young age.³¹ As a result, despite Valentina's young age, she begins developing a political consciousness rooted in ethnic and cultural solidarity that actively sought to challenge colonization and white supremacy; a cultural membership that relied on embracing a colonized misperception of reality as the path for securing empowerment and liberation. Just as significant, Valentina also learns about racial discrimination firsthand. For instance, she experiences racial disparities specific to language and assimilation ingrained within the educational system as she is not allowed to speak Spanish in school (11). In another instance, she is called a "dirty Mexican" and is physically assaulted (51), as she experiences backlash from a white male student after being racially integrated into a predominantly white school (67).

Although Valentina learns to question and challenge racism throughout her childhood, Ríos simultaneously highlights the pervasiveness of patriarchy within the

Mexican home. For example, she is taught that males should be the head of the household, and that the woman's subservient role is to have children and learn how to establish and sustain a successful household. Additionally, there are instances throughout *Victuum's* plot that depict various forms of violence against women. For example, as punishment for misbehaving, Valentina's father would whip the girls (64, 84, 99). As the patriarch, he believed that this type of enforcement was needed to produce well-behaved children, but especially to preserve the girls' chastity. At one point in the novel, Valentina also comes to learn that her father had beaten her mother at an early stage in their marriage. In still another scene, Valentina's brother accuses his wife of cheating, calls her a whore, among other derogatory names, and proceeds to beat her (107). There is also violence replicated between the siblings, as Valentina's older sister, Rebecca, would also hit her for misbehaving as children (86-87).

It is worth noting that although the enforcement of patriarchy is depicted in the narrative, it does not go completely unchallenged, however uncertain attempts may be. For instance, because Valentina's mother, Isabella, had married at such a young age to a significantly older man (64), she counsels Valentina to not marry early and pursue education as a means of independence as an adult, and so that she never has to depend on any man. Valentina's mother, thus, wanted more for her daughters, although this came to fruition only after Adolfo had died. In addition, recalling the previously mentioned scene where Valentina's mother, Isabella, was beaten by Adolfo early in the relationship, Isabella's older sister (Valentina's aunt), Petra, put a stop to the beatings by putting a gun Adolfo's forehead and threatening to kill him, which apparently had worked to end the

beatings (63-64). Still, as an adult, despite some effort at resisting the cultural pressures of patriarchy, Valentina eventually marries and becomes a housewife and has several children, limiting other possibilities in life.

Valentina's cultural experience may consequently be defined by a political ambiguity shaped by the repressive forces of colonization on the one hand, and patriarchy on the other. These forces of reality work to render Valentina's childhood experience through an abject psychological condition defined by anxiety, pain, and a search for a greater experience. Valentina is able to learn about and challenge racism, yet remains generally tentative about directly challenging patriarchy. In a sense, patriarchy becomes normalized, or accepted as cultural reality under the broader controlling mechanism of colonial reality, whereby the female gender is an integral part of the family unit yet relegated to a predefined reality. And because patriarchy manifests into an ambivalent paradox, generally established by a loving yet controlling relationship between father and daughter, colonization transforms patriarchy into a feminist centered political identity intended to challenge subordination. Not only does patriarchy work to confine women to subservient, predetermined roles within culture, but also offers empowerment through a confined feminist/gendered role that takes shape in colonial reality. In this context, similar to the nationalism in *Afro-6* and *Revolt of the Cockroach People*, feminism limits identity to a particular set of ideals and expectations that rely on an imagined, preconceived political freedom. Feminism thereby becomes encapsulated by the illusory political spectrum of the colonial imagination, preventing the self-realization of alien sublime. Ríos negotiates this conflict by acknowledging the painful experiences derived

from racism and patriarchy, yet features a protagonist that does not necessarily perceive them as sources of liberation, but that persistently questions the fundamental nature of subordination as tangible objects within the dominion of colonization. Thus, Valentina's contradictory experience is used to identify reality through the limited sphere of colonized space-time, pushing her to expand her search into a deeper dimension of alien sublime existence. In all, part one may be wholly understood as Valentina in the process of discovering the limitations of cultural and political reality, but which is equally fueled by a subconscious remembering of the self as the alien sublime.

Part two may be understood as Valentina in the actual process of rediscovering herself as the alien sublime, which relies on science fiction to access an alternative liminal consciousness inaccessible through the logical political/colonial mind. With the exception of the novel's initial scene, and although there are occasional allusions ingrained throughout part one that point to Valentina's supernatural abilities (10), as well as her mother's (74), it is not until part two that the novel becomes increasingly abstract. In this section, Valentina's psychic powers become significantly pronounced. She enhances the power of mental telepathy when she communicates with her husband, Frank. Shortly thereafter she experiences a breakthrough by establishing communication with a series of esoteric alien beings, each providing her with some type of insight into her continuous search for a greater knowledge and existence. Ríos engages with more established science-fictional elements of time travel, alternative reality, and alternative conceptions regarding existence. Valentina begins by communicating with an entity that calling himself, ULYSSEUS, a warrior of God. Although he speaks in another language

she is somehow able to understand. He proclaims that he is there to protect her, and after a brief message on the ethics of having super powers, explaining that, "the brain is the strongest element on this earth." And that, "There are human beings who discover its power...but abuse this power by trying to control the minds of other human beings..." (279). ULYSSEUS then takes her on a long journey into the past in order to give Valentina the "knowledge of man's ability to survive" (285). The use of this character opens Valentina to the possibility of alternative modes of consciousness that reject the abuse of power through the attainment of knowledge, seemingly offering an escape from her reality and a way towards freedom. Valentina is similarly contacted by President Kennedy, Pope Eusebius, Medusa, and Aedais, all of which provide some type of knowledge.

Despite Valentina's telepathic contact with these various beings, however, her yearning for knowledge endures. She exclaims, "I have so little knowledge! If only my brain would open to the mysteries of this universe so that I may better understand" (324). In that instant a voice responds, "In that event, you would be very much alone" (324). It is during this point in the novel that the alien, Victuum, finally becomes a prominent figure. Victuum is portrayed as having arrived on Earth in a space ship, but is stranded and awaiting help from a mother-ship located multi-millions of years away (319-325). He is described as a four-foot tall child-like figure resembling a mongoloid child, with large almond shaped eyes, wide shoulders and narrow hips, long fingers, and suited in a once piece greyish colored garment (324). He proclaims to be an advanced being from another universe, as he explains, "...people from my universe view mature human earthlings as

children. Your planet is extremely young in comparison. Yet you as an individual have the capacity to receive my mental telepathy ... Now come with me, for the excursion you are about to encounter will enhance your search for wisdom" (325). Analogous to Alice Sheldon's popular science fiction story from the same period, *The Women Men Don't See* (1973), alien contact is used as a mode to challenge social reality. The plot takes place while the protagonist, Ruth Parsons, and her daughter are on vacation in southern Mexico. After the plane they chart crash-lands in a swamp they encounter aliens from another world. Ruth chooses to leave with aliens rather than remain in a male-dominated society that degrades women. Sheldon's story is clearly intended to make us question the significance of such a drastic measure. Hence, Ríos and Sheldon engage with science fiction to transcend sociopolitical and cultural reality. However, whereas Sheldon uses the alien to unequivocally escape patriarchal reality, Ríos engages with the alien as a way to acquire a higher universal knowledge and meaning of existence.

Victuum instructs Valentina in a series of lessons designed to provide her with the knowledge she desperately yearns for. Connecting back to how the novel first began, Victuum begins by teaching her about the nature and evolution of the universe. He discusses the mechanics of sound, so that, "earth's complexities and its universal influences may reach a higher plateau of understanding" (325). He has her perform a series of experiments, such as rubbing her own skin, clapping her hands, rubbing a blade of grass. He states, "Our creation originates with sound. What you hear are the variations of sound ejected from all living surroundings" (326). Victuum also teaches Valentina about the evolution of Earth. He continues, "First, there is the Supreme Being from whom

sound comes. Sound is minimux. Minimux is the most minute element. Sound consists of male and female. Male sound and female sound mate" (326). Valentina responds, "Victuum, it is so colorful. I hear a popping sound." "Sound has color, and what you hear is the climatic, eruptive sound of mating and reproduction," he clarifies (326). He then proceeds to show her a series of scientific diagrams further explaining the process in great detail, including how it relates to the formation of matter, time, the sun and planets, and the universe. Victuum also discusses the evolution of the human species and the human brain's extra sensory perception abilities (336). Lastly, Victuum implies that, "Through the use of magnetic-gravitation force, one may heal himself or another person. And with further knowledge, one may remain in a youthful physical form of an elongated life span, the present human being would define as abnormal" (337). Valentina inquires further by asking, "Victuum do you imply that one may even defy death?" To which he responds. "The human brain has the capacity for universal control. With the use of thought-energy force one may prevent death indefinitely. Death is the decomposition of tangible material. Primary sound does not decompose. In the event of death sound may again materialize or become a physical body in another time, this process includes the participation of the universal planetary calendar and is defined by human beings as reincarnation" (337).

In tune with Sheldon's feminist critique of society, scholars have generally understood the interaction between Valentina and the alien as a strategy used to escape patriarchy. Annie O. Eysturoy suggests that Valentina's psychic ability and eventual contact with Victuum, "offers the potential for a possible Bildungs process; these

experiences, being beyond patriarchal control, present the possibility of expanding and lending meaning to her own concept of self" (50). She also discusses the merging of mother and daughter to create consciousness... "The initial physical symbiosis between mother and fetus is thus transformed into an intimate psychic symbiosis, underscoring once again that it is through the sphere of inherited female psychic powers, and not in the patriarchal social sphere, that she may achieve an integrated sense of self" (51). Eysturoy mutually highlights that, "Victuum portrays, both directly and indirectly, a Chicana consciousness in the process of becoming, aware of the contradictions inherent in her experiences as a Chicana, yet still ambiguous about how to overcome these contradictions in order to envision and achieve a new definition of her Chicana self" (55).

Maria Antònia Oliver-Rotger similarly points out that *Victuum* operates "beyond [the] social space" of patriarch, entering a transitory stage of development away from her constraining social and cultural reality into a space of "elsewhere" (143). She further suggests that Valentina's escape is driven by her individual pursuit for knowledge, "beyond the ending" from "the conventional female Bildungsroman that resolves individual and communal aspirations in marriage by transporting Valentina to a fantastic, mental, a-historical realm" (163). Again, she reiterates that this "fantastic flight is a rejection, an escape from and therefore an implicit critique of a particular Mexican/Chicano form of patriarchy that has denied women access to education and knowledge" (163). "The fantastic allows Valentina to compensate for her lack and otherness as a woman and thus satisfy her desire for wholeness and unity" (167) ... "Yet, *Victuum* does not propose a different worldview where those contingencies are different

and less oppressive. The novel does not show a critical attitude towards the relationship between the dominating and the dominated; nor does it imagine an alternative to that relationship" (168). Oliver-Rotger consequently argues that, "...desire is displaced onto a different world outside history, the body, time, and society. Victuum does not contemplate the possibility of transforming social space through communal solidarity, a possibility that will be explored by other writers under the influence of the political discourse of Chicano and Chicana activism" (168).

Francisco A. Lomelí explains that Valentina's various encounters, "...expand her concept of the self; [wherein] she views herself as part of a long-established continuum, which becomes a metaphor for history. Explained in abstract terms, she realizes that she forms an integral part of sound, the essential element that both announces and defines life" (44). He adds that the novel implies "that a woman's world consists of multiple roles and dimensions, or social obligations, quite apart from man's more unitary orientation. This in part explains the uncertainty evidenced in the fictive voice, who becomes exposed to new realms of knowledge yet does not know what to do with them. What clearly emerges is a different sense of history, or 'herstory,' as a composite picture of the past and present. Besides, the protagonist does not only pay heed to physical things, for she gives credence to the metaphysical and the unexplained. Her notion of reality and existence is, in effect, more multifold" (45).

Ramon Saldivar additionally suggests that Valentina's life trajectory, that is, her experiences under both patriarchy and white racism ultimately lead her towards ahistorical realms, "as she cruises time and space in the company of a prototypical Ur-

patriarch, the titular character, Victuum, who discloses to Valentina the ideal forms of subjectivity. Escaping the grim confines of American life in the 1950s, Valentina finds herself at home in the narcissistic transindividuality of science fiction" (180-181). Even more, Saldivar contends that in addition to turning away from history, a defining feature for the Chicana/o, Valentina "invents a symbolic paradigm of the male savior" (181). The alien, according to Saldivar, perpetuates a patriarch function that "leads to nowhere." Saldivar asserts that Valentina "...remains bound within the nets of false consciousness that have formed her as a subject by choosing to live her hegemonic dreams," but which he does not consider "a sign of the novel's failure. Rather, it signals the coming of positive critiques of the dominant society and of the traditional Chicano patriarchy by a whole generation of Mexican American women writers" (181).

These scholars basically agree that Valentina's main difficulty is her failure to resolve the cultural and sociopolitical contradictions fixed into her reality. In particular, they see Valentina as engaging with the alien as a way to escape the limitations imposed by patriarchal reality. It is suggested that her individually centered experience, extending outside objective reality, ultimately leads to a nebulous, a-historical political identity inept at achieving empowerment and liberation. However, although the elements highlighted by these scholars may seem unresolved, Valentina uses her conflicting experience as a portal towards accessing a greater wisdom and experience which she attempts to access through a new ontological space, extending beyond the material political and cultural reality engrained into the traditional Mexican/Chicana/o experience. This allows Ríos to engage with historically grounded issues important not solely to her

as a person of Mexican origin, such as racism, but also with issues specific to women/Chicanas, such as highlighting the traditions of patriarchy imposed by the Mexican culture without being utterly defined by them, while extending what these experiences mean in the larger context of universal existence. This is to say, dynamics of racism and patriarchy are important and appear to be at the core of Valentina's ambiguous identity, but they are only experienced under a conditioned reality with which to question and expose the broader contradiction of a universal existence wherein racism and patriarchy occur. This allows Valentina to examine colonization in the broader sense of existence, but more importantly, it allows for the fracturing of racism and patriarchy under colonial reality to be exposed as symptoms of a greater contradiction, which cannot be grasped or transformed into freedom via the creation of a political identity intended to challenge colonization, but which may only be experienced through cosmic awareness and the discovery of colonization as an illusory facet within universal existence.

Science fiction is of profound importance for making such a realization. Yet critics have been reluctant to engage with *Victuum* outside of established Chicana/o political discourse. Hence, the novel's perceived ambiguity is equally rooted in an inability to see *Victuum* beyond the strangleholds imposed by the colonial imagination; a limitation that is regulated and maintained by the illusory perception of future history and space-time as the only rational mode of existence, which prevents an understanding of an existential reality, and liberation, as derived from a science fiction existence. This cognitive restriction, as a result, confines Valentina to a predetermined spatial and temporal model of a Chicana consciousness that is processed through an interlocking

political understanding of racism and patriarchy that identifies self-empowerment through a purely gendered existence, inhibiting a deeper understanding of Valentina as a cosmic entity with the potential to experience reality as an alien being. Ramon Saldivar's analysis, in particular, at a minimum acknowledges Ríos' engagement with the science fiction genre, only to subsequently offer a rudimentary, myopic understanding of it. By confining his understanding of the novel to a politically induced colonial reality where existence is already defined as genuine, Saldivar is compelled to define Valentina as bounded "within the nets of a false consciousness" that "invents a symbolic paradigm of the male savior" which eventually "leads to nowhere" under a patriarchal, ahistorical reality that is naively processed by the "narcissistic transindividuality of science fiction" (180-181). However in doing so, Saldivar reinforces the psychological border that separates and prevents Valentina from existing as existence/beyond colonized reality. That is, he locates her existence behind an opaque political chicanery that is completely foreign to her primordial alien existence.

Ríos engages with science fiction to transcend the very concepts that emanate as objects from the colonial imagination, i.e. history and space-time, gender and patriarchy, racism, and transindividuality, all of which prescribe to difference. She inverts Chicana reality into an alien existence by portraying Valentina as a science fiction being originating from a science fiction space consciousness that emerges into a colonial reality largely defined by obscurities based on race, gender, fear, pain, frustration, and a sense of isolation and imprisonment. The successful inversion of reality into a science fiction is that which fractures colonial reality, making genuine liberation visible within the broader

spectrum of universal existence. As such, the relationship between Valentina and Victuum must be understood as science-fictional in order to make self-realization, cosmic awareness, and the alien sublime an existential possibility.

Although the alien character is depicted as male, and as such, may be perceived as establishing a patriarchal-based mentoring relationship with Valentina, as Saldivar points out, Victuum's gender may be seen as relevant to the development of Valentina's emerging alien consciousness. In this sense, Ríos' use of a gendered alien further evokes the limitations of remaining under the influence of the colonial imagination. Although Valentina is certainly eager to receive the knowledge bestowed upon her by Victuum, he does not necessarily provide Valentina with the epiphany/experience/knowledge she is looking for. He is only able to provide her with raw, scientific information about existence and the nature of the universe. For instance, Victuum states, "An analysis of universal mathematics will offer knowledge of earth's future occurrences" (340). He also proceeds to describe future events within a global geopolitical context by predicting the coming of WWIII and use of atomic bomb (341). He explains, "The entrance into the Age of Science enhances discoveries that will be both constructive and destructive ... Atomic elements are the preliminary energies to further constructive advancement for human survival" (341). He explains that we have two choices: "developing elements for the betterment of mankind; or developing elements for destructive purposes" (341). Victuum goes on to predict various future scientific discoveries important to the development of humans, as well as discoveries that will drastically transform the way people live in cities on earth (342). He goes into great detail describing architecture,

technology, communication, transportation systems, agriculture, public works, healthcare, and even what furniture and clothing will look like. He proclaims that, "The future civilization will have less people and infrequent reproduction, due to the lack of dense fertilization within the planet earth. Human beings become highly scientific for the sake of survival" (345). Yet despite finally accessing all of this knowledge, it is ultimately not enough to satisfy Valentina's perpetual yearning for a higher experience. Saldivar considers Valentina's lack of understanding in absolute terms, further categorizing Valentina as a passive receptacle of information with no insight into how epistemology may be experienced or realized as a universal quality. However, the point that she elicits a sense of incompleteness, remaining unfulfilled and dissatisfied with the information presented is that which generates the circumstances in which the limitations of her illusory colonial existence may be exposed.

Under such a context, Victuum remains a manifestation of the colonial imaginary and may be disqualified from the male savior mentor role. Even further, as a prototypical alien figure with a spaceship from another universe, Victuum exists within the conventional boundaries of a science fiction reality that extends colonial elements into dimensions of universality, as he too understands reality through concepts of science, technology, and difference. Although seemingly existing outside the domains of political reality, his predictions of Earth's future are based on a future history model that dictate the ways Valentina is able to engage with and define herself within domains of universal existence. So while Victuum is depicted as the authoritative source of universal knowledge, or as Valentina's teacher of sorts, he ultimately functions as an extension of

the colonial imaginary in which gender is captured to reinforce the dissemination of knowledge through Difference. He, in this way, serves a pedagogical function in that he represents the limitations of existing within a colonial science fiction reality that unfolds outside of the self as an ontological experience devoid of alien sublime consciousness. Hence, the knowledge that Victuum bestows upon Valentina serves to expose difference even within the domains of colonial space-time. Ríos uses science fiction as a way to discover an existential science fiction quality that may be accessed as the alien sublime. Victuum is, therefore, a contrasting device that works to propel Valentina towards self-realization, where the knowledge she searches for emerges as the alien sublime, which cannot be attained from scientific knowledge acquired from the domains of the alien colonial mind. Consequently, she must disengage from the colonial imagination by un-imagining her perceived existence, and liberation as something to be acquired, as she cannot search or build alien consciousness through knowledge as liberation. Again recalling how the novel began, Valentina's purpose is to remember, or return to the silent empty space of cosmic consciousness, not by traveling along space and time acquiring knowledge, but by rediscovering herself as the alien consciousness in which space and time appear. Valentina's telepathic powers establish her as part of universal existence as the alien sublime.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, scholarship has imagined the alien entity through extending Chicana identity. Gloria Anzaldúa envisions a *mestiza* alien consciousness designed to shatter the borders of colonization. In "Cyborg Feminism: The Science Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa", Catherine Ramirez extends

on Anzaldúa by placing her in conversation with the prominent African American science fiction writer, Octavia Butler. Ramirez merges Butler's novels, *Wild Seed* (1980) and *Parable of the Sower* (1993) specifically, with Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* to highlight how they mutually utilize the power of the cyborg to develop of a woman-of-color feminism, which she describes as a "New World" feminist science fiction (394). For readers unfamiliar with cyborg feminism, it is a model introduced by Donna Haraway in her influential essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (1985). Briefly put, she envisions the cyborg entity as a power able to transgress essentialism, but particularly divisions within feminism that tend to suppress the experiences of women of color. Similar to how Jameson utilizes the alien to detach from the difference bred by the Western imagination, Haraway identifies the cyborg as a socially constructed entity that has materialized from Western biases. However, she argues that the cyborg is a unique force capable of transcending its origins. She bases the cyborg's ability to transcend its attachment to Western ideals on dissolving the following three boundaries: the boundary between humans and animals; the boundary between animal/human organisms and machines; and the boundary between the physical and the non-physical. Haraway claims that the removal of these key boundaries mutually function to remove the boundaries of race and gender, thereby transforming the cyborg into an androgynous, post-gendered, non-essentialist existence. Through cyborg feminism, Haraway offers an alternative political approach through the conceptualization of a new hybridized existence that merges alternative experiences as a way to disengage from Western models that reinforce Otherness.

Anzaldúa's *mestiza* alien consciousness functions much in the same way. Both approaches rely on hybridizing a new entity as the process for eliminating the Western boundaries that manufacture Otherness. In this sense, difference is merged in order to dissolve difference, and cyborg consciousness must be imagined by removing the boundaries that create difference. However, a paradox emerges since the concept of difference is an object that originates from the colonial imagination, and as a result, the de-colonizing, or de-Westernizing experience, nonetheless remains obscured by the illusory boundaries of space-time. Explained another way, the colonial mind compels us to imagine a border as the intrinsic source of both imprisonment and liberation, while colonial reality is the illusory border itself, which reveals the non-existence of a border to begin with. As such, cyborg consciousness exists within a perception of reality that is unable to completely transcend the boundaries defined by difference since it relies on the contradictions innate to colonial reality in its creation. The emancipating metamorphosis into cyborg existence is only able to take shape within the bounded reality projected into existence by the colonial mind.

Consequently, the New World feminist science fiction proposed by Ramirez equally remains limited by a cyborg feminism as well as *mestiza* alien consciousness that depend on colonial reality as the source with which to envisage a new woman-of-color feminism. Even further, New World feminist science fiction situates the cyborg-alien entity into a politically stimulated feminism that, despite its purpose of transcending Western reality through dissolving gender, imbues gender as the basis of empowerment along space-time, rather than focusing on science fiction/the alien as a formless space of

primordial existence through which a broader conceived self-realization and cosmic awareness may be accessed. Reasserting the interlocking relationship between colonization and science fiction proposed by John Rieder (see page 9), the politicization of science fiction under colonization forces the New World cyborg-alien entity to experience reality through a bounded preconceived existence, wherein the cyborg-alien is prevented from discovering itself beyond gender as the alien sublime.

While Ramirez makes no reference to *Victuum*, Valentina embodies the emergence of an alien consciousness that remains ambiguous under the New World feminist science fiction deployed by the cyborg-alien model established by Haraway and Anzaldúa. Although cyborg-alien consciousness is intended to detach from the Western imagination by providing a new ontological space of liberation, the process of imagining the cyborg-alien into existence, as something to construct, functions as the paradox that prevents self-realization from being experienced. *Victuum's* premise appears to situate Valentina under such a confining predicament, as she searches for a deeper meaning to her life experience throughout the plot, believing that the absorption of universal knowledge will eventually lead to a freedom that never seems to materialize. Similar to Lopez and Acosta in *Afro-6* and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* respectively, Valentina exists in-between realities, not as science fiction force or entity able to transcend colonial reality as the alien sublime, but as an incomplete political entity that seeks to experience universal liberation through a feminist conceived knowledge of space-time. Situated under this context, science fiction functions to blur authentic reality, and forces the political mind to anticipate an experience of liberation to materialize from

within parameters of colonized space-time. Consequently, the point of *Victuum* is to see Valentina's sociocultural and political experience as existing in a significantly broader reality that distinguishes Valentina as the alien sublime. *Victuum* encourages the Chicana/o to explore consciousness as a mode of self-realization which is expressed through a non-politicized feminism; a cosmic femininity that makes the creation of life in the universe possible, beyond the temporal and spatial borders of material reality generated by the political and colonial imaginary.

Conclusion

Similar to *Afro-6* and *Cockroach People*, *Victuum* is a prime example of Chicana/o fiction that experimented with alternate forms of empowerment and liberation during the Chicana/o Movement. Ríos utilizes the alien figure to explore new dimensions of political consciousness expressed through a cosmic feminism that extends well beyond the logical mind-set of the colonial world. As a result, *Victuum* compels the Chicana/o to re-interrogate what it really means to be Chicana.

Consequently, the novels featured within the first two chapters anticipate many of the strident concerns evident in contemporary Chicano reality. Looking at the Chicana/o experience post the 1960s, it is apparent that the sociopolitical reality for Chicanos has become increasingly complex under the developing forces of colonization, particularly the emerging forces of globalization and techno-culture, which connect more directly with features evident in contemporary works of Chicana/o science fiction that are featured in the next chapter, and which are similarly concerned in one way or another

with exploring Chicana/o identity and liberation in ways that envision new alien sublime realities.

CHAPTER 3: ERNEST HOGAN AND THE ALIEN SUBLIME

Introduction

This chapter analyzes three Chicano science fiction novels, all written by Ernest Hogan. As indicated by their titles, *Cortez on Jupiter* (1990), *High Aztech* (1992), and *Smoking Mirror Blues* (2001) all evoke Indigeity as the driving theme. However, because these texts are direct extensions of 1960s Chicana/o Movement ideology, as well as to better frame how these texts connect to my project's underlying thesis, it is necessary to briefly contextualize the emergence of Chicana/o Nationalism during the 1960s Chicana/o Movement era.

Chicana/o Nationalism may be understood as a particular ideology stemming from of the broader Chicana/o Movement. It was chiefly driven by the formation of a pro-Indigenous Chicana/o identity based on *Indigenismo*,³² a militant philosophy that sought to infuse elements of the pre-Columbian/Mesoamerican culture into a revolutionary praxis intended to overcome colonialism. *Indigenismo* was thus deployed as a philosophical posture immersed in an Indigenous past that aggressively challenged the legacy of racism experienced by people of Mexican origin. This perspective relied on the restoration of Indigenous culture, which generally emphasized on Aztec and Mayan civilizations and propelled them towards a utopian future. Asserting the intrepid figure of the mighty Aztec warrior, *Indigenismo* was largely expressed through the formation of a *mestizo* identity³³ as well as the recovery of *Aztlán*—the mythical homeland of the Aztecs comprised of the present-day southwestern U.S. region. Chicanas/os idealized *Aztlán* as

fundamentally belonging to *La Raza de Bronce* (The Bronze Race),³⁴ and hence, by right of blood and destiny, sought to reclaim ancestral lands pilfered by whites, and declare independence as a bronze continent wherein populations native to the land would be able to define and control their own destiny.³⁵

Although *Indigenismo* played an impactful role in generating an empowered Chicana/o identity during this era, it is not until the 1990s that Indigenous-based Chicano science fiction developed. The science fiction that emerged coincided with the rise of contemporary globalization and neoliberalism, which are generally associated with the rise of the cyberpunk movement.³⁶ A style which is largely depicted in the work of Ernest Hogan, the main author in the production of Aztec-themed Chicano science fiction during this era, and responsible for writing the three featured in this chapter. In addition to numerous short stories published within a wide array of media outlets, Hogan authored *Cortez on Jupiter*, *High Aztech*, and *Smoking Mirror Blues* within the span of a decade. A consistent pattern in Hogan's work is the marrying of the Aztec/Chicano motif with cyberpunk themes depicting highly developed technological futures which do not fully embrace the utopian futures envisioned by Chicana/o Nationalist ideology of the 1960s, but rather, depict future civilizations that, despite being Indigenous centered, are nonetheless heavily inundated with the aspects of colonial ideology. Hogan's stories are all situated within dystopian settings, dealing in some way with impositions of subjugation and systems of control within authoritarian societies that are inherently dependent on the act of survival. However, rather than isolating these texts as political expressions intended to challenge the adverse effects that globalization and neoliberalism

elicit on Indigenous/Chicana/o populations, I situate the texts as performing the greater function of transcending the governing edifice of colonial reality itself as method for experiencing genuine liberation.

In *Cortez on Jupiter*, for instance, I show how Hogan utilizes contact with alien microorganisms from another planet to express alien sublime consciousness. The protagonist, a Chicano artist named Pablo Cortez, is able to transcend the contradictions innate to the political/colonial/corporeal form by inventing a new style of anti-gravity painting, thereby facilitating a new level of awareness and access into a higher, dimensional alien existence. Hogan's ensuing novel, *High Aztech*, employs a religious mind-alerting virus as a means to express alien sublime consciousness. Xólotl Zapata, the novel's protagonist, is depicted as existing within an ominous post-apocalyptic Mexican future amid an Aztec revival movement. As the virus is exploited by clashing religious factions vying for control of the city, the virus alters Xólotl's perception of space and time, culminating in the discovery of a higher, transcendent consciousness of the alien sublime. *Smoking Mirror Blues*, the last of Hogan's novels, utilizes the re-emergence of an Aztec god to express the alien sublime. The protagonist, Beto Orozco, a Chicano computer programmer and hacker, is taken over by an Indigenous artificial intelligence god named Tezcatlipoca whose goal is to conquer the world. Through the ritualistic power of Dead Daze—based on a future version of The Day of the Dead, Tezcatlipoca re-emerges as pure Indigenous consciousness; an expression which transcends colonial reality as the bi-product of an artificial imaginary. *Smoking Mirror Blues* therefore emphasizes on the re-colonization of the Chicano mind as a means to express a higher,

authentic, de-colonization process as the alien sublime. Each novel in this chapter expresses the shattering of colonial reality by expressing alien sublime consciousness. In doing so, *Indigenismo* is transformed into a primordial alien sublime consciousness able to transcend the colonized/political world.

Cortez on Jupiter

Cortez on Jupiter presents a future that centers on East Los Angeles Chicano artist and protagonist, Pablo Cortez. Although the narrative dedicates segments of dialogue from various other characters, the story is primarily told through Pablo recounting his past experiences during an interview with System-famous II superstar reporter, Anna Paik. The novel establishes that Pablo has gained celebrity status for inventing a radical new form of free fall, anti-gravity painting called, splatterpainting. However, while there are early indications that suggest the presence of additional entities inhabiting Pablo's mind, it is ultimately revealed that he has been influenced by alien microorganism life forms called the "Sirens," as well as by an African Zulu goddess, which have merged into an ambivalent, aggregate consciousness mediated by an Indigenous/Aztec/Chicano consciousness. The interview takes place in Pablo's studio within the central free-fall module of Project Odysseus' Ithica Base orbiting the magnetosphere of Jupiter; a staging area where astronauts had prepared to make contact with the Sirens deep within Jupiter's atmosphere.

The premise develops along several geographical locations. Pablo initially recounts his experiences on Earth, East L.A. to be exact, as an anarchist-like graffiti artist

and subsequent leader of the Guerilla Muralists of Los Angeles (GMLA), and then as an artist for the Space Culture Project (SCP) in Hightown, a type of artsy off-world colony, and lastly as a Sirenaut for the Odysseus Project on Ithaca Base, where as already indicated, is a space colony in the Jupiter system where the discovery of the Sirens led to repeated attempts to establish first-contact, but had always ended in failure, as every Sirenaut lowered into Jupiter's atmosphere suffered a painful brain death, obliterating their minds and leaving victims with creepy, blank stares on their faces (82). As the story unfolds, Pablo eventually becomes a Sirenaut and makes first contact with the Sirens, somehow able to survive the dangerous encounter. Pablo gains celebrity status and becomes a famous artist. Whereas the SCP had previously rejected Pablo's art and had planned to expel him back to the Mudball (Earth) for insubordination, his artwork is subsequently considered masterpieces since everyone believes the Sirens are attempting to communicate with humanity through the paintings. In the end, Pablo is ultimately able to do "the most important thing in [his] life," the creation of art (11).

Although *Cortez on Jupiter* engages with science fiction by using more conventional approaches, such as space exploration and establishing contact with alien life in a technologically advanced future, Hogan extends on science fiction by incorporating Chicano themes into its premise. Herein, Pablo is portrayed as existing in a future reality largely expressed through an Indigenous/Chicano motif, but which also enunciates on a rebellious graffiti artist identity. While the mere presence of people of Mexican origin in this future world may certainly be valued as an expression of political resistance to subordination, or as an expression that challenges Chicano erasure from

future existence, these depictions evoke a deeper concern regarding identity, empowerment and liberation in the context of transcending colonial reality, all of which hinge on analyzing *Cortez on Jupiter* as an expression of the alien sublime.

Cortez on Jupiter situates Pablo in a future reality that emphasizes an ambiguous and fragmented psychological state. Although Pablo exemplifies Chicano identity, he simultaneously resists authority or being enveloped by any political institution or ideological system designed to indoctrinate, limit, or define his existence, including the Chicano nationalism that imbues the plot. His identification as a graffiti artist, however, works to facilitate interaction between social realities, while equally maintaining a calculated distance between those realities. By incorporating graffiti art into the novel's premise, Hogan draws upon modes of Chicana/o empowerment and self-expression; approaches that reject mainstream society through the transformation of art into an underground urban street movement frequently criminalized by the dominant establishment.³⁷ Consisting of science-fictional themes depicted through futuristic or alien settings, i.e. alien caricatures in distant worlds usually accompanied by futuristic styles of lettering, graffiti has been utilized as a medium that not solely rejects mainstream reality, but that actively shatters that reality. Hogan exploits this relationship, which may be already deemed as utilizing science-fictional elements, to reinforce the futuristic reality in *Cortez on Jupiter* as an existential science fiction reality. Graffiti is the defiant source from which the novel's alien premise emanates as an existential science-fictional experience able to shatter colonial reality. It not solely manages Pablo's

rejection of authority, but works to mediate his eventual transformation from an ambiguous and fragmented psychological state into alien sublime consciousness.

Pablo subsequently uses graffiti art as a way to maneuver between social realities. He explains, "I've always been at odds with communities. And leaders. I've always lived between worlds, never quite at home anywhere—but able to travel anywhere" (12). Even with regard to educational attainment, traditionally the galvanizing source for Chicano empowerment and the making of political identity, he states, "I always figured the best way to approach schools was like a thief—or a Guerilla Muralist—sneak in, ransack the place, satisfy a few curiosities and desires, then get the hell outta there before someone snaps the cuffs on you!" (13). As the passage shows, Pablo describes educational attainment as a process of ideological confinement that must be carefully negotiated through allegorizing graffiti as a guerilla tactic. Pablo's distrust of institutions, but particularly education is traced to his upbringing, which is established as an ambivalence instigated by his deceased parent's radical neo-Aztec drug induced ideals, which they attempted to instill into Pablo's emerging identity as a young child. He describes them as "college-educated Chicano intellectuals. Both had degrees in anthropology. The problem was they identified more with the people being studied than with the anthropologists. Probably what made them go neo-Aztec" (13). Consequently, Pablo rejects community/nationalistic membership as well as the institution of education as a potential opening for empowerment by more-so identifying as an organic erudite free from any form of institutional entanglements by declaring, "I believe in intellect, thinking, studying. I like intellectuals. It's the *institutions* I don't trust. Why is anybody who hasn't

sold his brain to a bureaucracy and doesn't wait for official permits to think called anti-intellectual?" (13). Yet notwithstanding his attempted denunciation of conventional Chicano and neo-Aztec thinking, he speaks Nahuatl and continually finds himself captivated within an Aztec/Indigenous world throughout the novel, consciously making sense of his reality through the use of Indigenous rituals and modes of being. Hogan, thus, infuses Pablo with an in-between, contradictory identity and reality where even existing in a Chicano orientated future is not enough to construct a political identity empowered to generate liberation or withstand the rigid borders of difference established by the colonial imaginary. Of particular significance, however, this Chicano conundrum is that which cultivates the space required for an alternative dimensional possibility expressed through the emergence of the alien sublime.

The paradoxical condition of Pablo's future reality reflects an ambiguous yet ambivalent multi-dimensional existence that Chicanas/os generally embody. Pablo questions his identity under an equally fragmented temporal and spatial existence expressed through the merging of cultural realities; a feature that emphasizes the paradox of attempting to generate an emancipated self from within the boundaries of colonial corporeality, but which must also function to transcend the psychological boundaries established by the colonial mind. On the surface of reality, Pablo makes sense of his fractured identity through a hybridized, colonized past which is conveyed through contact between the Aztecs and Spaniards and the brutal violence that followed. Pablo writes, "Blood and viscera saturate the dreamscape as blood, bodies, people run together in a primordial soup boiling with varied generic materials and in that ocean I found me—

Pablo Cortez, not the Ego That Was Art, but Pablito, the little boy with the big identity crisis. I came together like some Frankenstein monster of bits of Spanish conquistador centaurs and Aztec Indian warriors" (197). Hogan situates Pablo along the future history model where space and time remain integral to the oppressive structures generated by first contact and the mass proliferation of colonialism. Under this limited existence, Pablo feels compelled to negotiate his emerging identity between his past, present and future, but nonetheless remains confined and must go beyond future history by penetrating the colonial structures of space and time altogether.

Whereas conventional Chicana/o ideology has generally worked to embrace the past as a way to resist colonization—particularly the forced hybridization experienced under conquest into a new and empowering politicized identity, but which nonetheless remains fueled by an intense inner conflict—*Cortez on Jupiter* merges these conflicting elements by utilizing science fiction to access an alternate dimensional reality of liberation. More specifically, Pablo internalizes science fiction as an existential phenomenon. Here, the novel expresses the alien sublime by penetrating time and space as a method of subversion intended to disrupt colonial reality through the power of art. The novel not only disrupts, but also shatters colonial reality during the initial stages the novel as Pablo is described in the process of creating and experiencing art through a nascent cosmic consciousness. The passage begins, "Paint stick in hand like an Aztec priest wielding a flint knife ... like in that time before time when space wasn't separate from time or anything was separate from anything else and all was the goddess Coatlicue (2-3). Pablo starts by alluding to that which existed prior space and time, and goes on to

describe the creation of the universe through art. "It explodes—like an amphetamine-choked blob, like the Cipactli monster, brutally torn in half by her moving mijos, screaming as her lower half rises to become the heavens and her upper half falls to become the earth—forming the universe—". As the poetic scene shows, reality is expressed as exploding from the Big Bang into space and time as reality. The scene continues, "Mutilated and screaming, space and time are set in motion as we move from Ometecuhtli's timelessness to Xiuhtecuhtli's fiery spinning clockwork around the north Star. What the Mayans call the Burden of Time is picked up, latches on... (3). Pablo describes the shift from a primordial, Indigenous based consciousness to a colonized imagination regulated by the "Burden" of space and time, which is indicative of a higher dimension of awareness able to penetrate and expose colonized reality. In this sense, Pablo becomes art, and art is the expressive platform from which a genuine liberation is accessed through the alien sublime. The scene epitomizes self-awareness through Pablo's experience of that which *is* prior to space and time. Hogan therefore uses Indigeneity not as a political tool to recover or transport the past into the future that envisions a new identity and empowerment, but employing a more drastic approach, he penetrates into a primal dimensional existence from which the formation of universal existence originates. Science fiction is hence experienced as the present moment through the alien sublime, beyond the temporal and spatial dimensions that appear in colonized space-time and the future history model. Science fiction does not occur or exist outside the self, but transforms Pablo's Chicano identity into a higher self-awareness. Self-realization is embodied in the alien, which is experienced through art in the creation of an amorphous

entity that originates, as Pablo puts it, through a "formless nadaness" (3), which, as I have readily established, reflects a consciousness of empty space from which all objects in universal existence ultimately emerge. This formless nothingness is the space where the alien sublime is accessed in the novel.

The resulting experience transforms Pablo's reality from one demarcated by the colonial educated external defined by objects in time and space, which he expresses as "Flashes of ... otherworldly stuff ... like hyperloaded sci-fi..." (191), to a reality that originates as an internal and existential science fiction which is vigorously experienced. Pablo declares victory as the edified experience comes to an end. As he removes his goggles the lively colorful paint splatters transform into strange hieroglyphic visions vigorously forming inside the Jovian clouds... "*pornographic geometries that can only be imagined on a scale more than intergalactic*" (5). Pablo's visions thus work to emphasize on the empty space between galaxies as an unimaginable phenomenon that exceeds the physical universe. Not only that, but the visions are immediately reinforced in a way that emphasizes how Pablo is able to expose and re-interpret artificial reality, which he describes as "*byzantine plots of surrealistic soap operas that take place outside of spacetime in Omeyocan, the highest heaven domain of Ometecuhtli, the Dual Lord, supreme being outside of space and time; Sirenesque, because they never picked up the burden of time*" (5). To reiterate the importance of this point, artificial reality is likened to a surrealistic soap opera principally driven by irrational plots and simulated images. In terms of the alien sublime, the visions express a deeper, ubiquitous cosmic awareness that permeates the illusory space-time plane of colonial reality. Pablo becomes aware that he

exists within the paradoxical dominion of time and space defined by a state of in-betweenness, and hence, "Letting the stick fly, [he] attack[s] the canvas with paint-covered fingers—desperately trying to record the visions before they fade, but never finishing before they do, so [he has] to fill the gaps with memory and imagination" (5). The integration of these memories and imaginations represent the colonial imagination's limited knowledge and lack of deeper experience as the alien sublime. Pablo thus represents a shifting of consciousness from experiencing universal existence as truth, to a limited condition of unknowing, or a fragmented knowing and eventual forgetting determined by a colonized reality shaped by future history and space-time. He must therefore consciously negotiate the "shift from warrior to artist; un poquito more Toltec than Aztec ... It's important because the enemy destroyed so much of la cultura" (5). The warrior denotes surviving within colonial reality while the shift to artist signifies the profound experiencing of alien sublime consciousness. The passage is significant in that it highlights the discord between the colonial illusion and genuine reality by likening Pablo's embodied experience with the Sirens to an Indigenous existence defined by the emptiness of space consciousness, which is further expressed as "*the ballet of subatomic particles smaller than any yet discovered!*" (5).

Consequently, the point of contact between Pablo and the Sirens plays a key role in accessing an alien sublime discovery being that the featured aliens in the novel exist beyond the limitation, or as Pablo describes it, beyond the "burden" of time-space and notions of colonial reality. In this way, Pablo, who has "always lived between worlds" (12) within the colonial imagination becomes an intermediate, liminal space for the

resurgence of alien consciousness. Yet the new experience mutually rests on Pablo's mind confronting the fear and alienness of the unknown, which is expressed as the colonial imagination's fear of being exposed as illusory and ultimately obliterated, leading to the resurgence of genuine existence and liberation. Pablo vividly describes the moments before entering Jupiter's atmosphere, "like marching up a pyramid to bare my chest to a jagged blade. It was a ritual. I took some deep breaths—what they told us to do in training—and took control, made it into *my* ritual. I was ready to drop my brain into the synapse-storm of the Sirens... (174). This passage allows us to understand Pablo in the process of reestablishing first contact away from a colonized, future-history, Eurocentric perspective, and towards an intense, transformative ritual immersed in rediscovering universal life as the alien sublime. In such a profound way, Pablo willingly faces his own mortality on the path towards experiencing genuine liberation. *Cortez on Jupiter* not solely inverts reality by restructuring first contact into a cathartic resurgence of liberation, but the ritualistic quality of Pablo's experience ultimately reflects the resurgence of genuine reality and cosmic life through the shattering and death of the illusory colonial self.

As Pablo is lowered into the Great Red Spot, he begins to experience the alien sublime, "Este sight! Jupiter up close! ... This energy! This power! This freedom! Este is what I had in mind when I created splatterpainting!" (175). Of greater significance, he begins transcending the body into a formless and timeless state of pure consciousness. As Pablo slowly travels deeper into the alien abyss, he begins to feel softer, with the sensation of dissolving and becoming one with the clouds of Jupiter. He explains, "Being

absorbed. I panicked. Then they had me. *Me*. Who never gives into anybody. I passed from the realm of Xiuhtecuhtli—el supreme being within space and time, the power of life and fire, the center of all things and spindle of the universe—to Omeyocan, the realm of Ometcuhtli, the male/female supreme being, the dual lord, source of all existence, the essential unity in difference. Spacetime was flushed down the toilet... (177). Pablo's initial reaction to the alien experience may be understood as hesitating to relinquish his illusory existence within colonized reality. In a sense, Pablo's fear of the unknown is centered on an illusory reliance and attachment to the only reality he has ever known. Surrendering to the new emerging alien reality, hence, initially functions to emphasize on his interdependent relationship with colonial artificiality, space-time, and the corporeal form as ostensibly genuine sources of existence. It highlights the psychological state of colonized populations and the instinctual need to concretize/define existence through the artificial paradigm of survival.

Just as important, the scene emphasizes that surrendering to alien consciousness leads to a genuine source of transformation. Pablo describes passing from the realm of space-time to a higher dimensional source of cosmic existence. He terms this space beyond the colonial imagination, beyond the conception of time and the illusion of difference, as a space of "essential unity in difference" (177). Pablo's transition into an alternate dimension, therefore, symbolizes the death of the colonial identity, or the colonized self, as it were. Allowing the artificial-self to die is not expressed as a genuine end, but rather, is depicted as the existential source from which the alien sublime emerges as space consciousness where there is no concept of difference; a sublime timeless space

of unity that Pablo experiences as utter delight and engrosses himself in; a sublime space which he describes in the novel as "some kind of paradise" (179). The main significance of the scene, consequently, works to redefine the concept of death to one of eternal being processed through the existential transformation into the alien sublime.

Another key element in the novel may be witnessed in how Pablo's absorption into alien sublime consciousness results in his mind falling into a comatose state. As the worlds watch with anticipation, media reports assume that Pablo has fallen victim to another Sirenaut zapware death. In contrast to the previous Sirenauts, however, all of which had their minds annihilated, Pablo's creative and artistically prone Indigenous mind is portrayed as attuned for alien contact, as he proves he is still alive by smiling. Despite having sustained severe bodily injuries' resulting from the emergency escape burn, Pablo manages to survive as further evidenced by lively brain activity. The scene is important in that it exposes the incompatibility of the colonial imagination. In negotiating such discord, the coma is used not solely to expunge the colonial identity from Pablo's experience, but to affirm Indigeneity as a genuine existential experience/force/power; an affirmation that the novel expresses by evoking his parent's death as a higher process able to transcend coloniality through resurgence. During the coma he explains, "they were *my* heritage, it was *my* blood that stained those pyramids, *my* art that survived the campaign of another Cortéz centuries ago" (180). The coma therefore solidifies a profound shift in Pablo's reality and consciousness. It signifies an existential switch that inverts illusory colonial reality into an alien sublime awakening. Although from the colonial perspective Pablo seems unconscious, Hogan depicts him as fully conscious within an alternate alien

reality. Pablo is aware that he is in Ithaca's hospital just outside Jupiter's magnetosphere, "my body was lying there with all these tubes and wires stuck into it, recovering from a concussion, a ruptured spleen, and an assortment of broken bones" (187). Yet even in his grave bodily condition, Pablo's alien experience is able to transcend the colonial condition. He explains, "But somehow it didn't seem that importante. Sure I was Pablo Cortez, but the struggle to keep me inside me soon got easy—I could do it with less than half my brain, and my musclebound ego. At the same time I was in so many other places" (187). Pablo's struggle to remain isolated inside the self, within the psychological borders demarcated by the colonial imagination, may be understood as epitomizing the superfluous conflict that Chicanas/os experience on the path towards self-realization, as well as empowerment and liberation. Hence, the coma is that which ultimately helps to expose illusion from the alien sublime as existential reality.

Pablo's eventual awakening from the coma is further complicated/enhanced by the addition of an African Indigenous consciousness. After repeated unsuccessful attempts by doctors to awaken Pablo from the coma to establish contact with the Sirens, Willa, a telepath and fellow Sirenaut, as well as one of Pablo's love interests, is given the task of making contact with Pablo. He describes the experience as, "slowly ... like a virus eating into the Sirens/Pablo mix. There are flashes of Africa ... Willa trickled into my mind. Her memories trickled into me like infectious static" (200). "It was being outside space and time with Ometcuhtli—then suddenly feeling the presence of Nkulunkulu, the Zulu's maker of all things" (201). During the mind-meld, Willa collapses and dies. Although the merging causes Willa's physical death, she is portrayed as transforming into an African

Zulu goddess as consciousness that exists within the alien sublime. Willa's merging of consciousness functions similar to *Afro-6* in that a heterogeneous/unified Indigenous consciousness is expressed as a way to transcend colonized reality. Within *Cortez on Jupiter's* specific context, however, it similarly expresses compatibility as an Indigenous consciousness able to transcend the illusory borders of the colonial imaginary. Pablo's awakening as a point of Mesoamerican/Aztec and African Indigenous convergence thus symbolizes a resurgence of genuine cosmic existence. Hogan therefore extends Chicano consciousness into a larger dimensional Indigenous consciousness expressed through the alien sublime. Pablo finally awakens with an uncontrollable urge to paint. He has a vision and, limited by the medium at his disposal, smears the vision onto the floor with his own excrement before the doctors have a chance to sedate him (205-206). Pablo's powerful compulsion to create art may be understood as an expression of a newly discovered existential experience that knows itself through the artistic visions/images able to distinguish genuine reality, but which the colonial mind is unable to fathom.

And yet, even after Pablo's life-changing experience, he is depicted as frustrated by the emerging alien consciousness. He complains, "I just keep losing it. I've been this way since I've been Sirenized. My cabeza ain't completely my own anymore ... I hate it at times..." (155). "I'm stuck with a mad genius artist persona/egoísimos that suits alien purposes that nobody understands" (156). While this may seem to perpetuate the ambiguity rooted in Chicana/o identity previous to alien contact, the Sirens function to incessantly dislodge Pablo from perpetuating a myopic identification/unilaterally identifying with colonial reality. Pablo's explains his ambiguity further, "The visions,

reality—no sé, I don't know—maybe someday the scientists will figure it all out and explain it all to me. Maybe its *all* an illusion ... Maybe I didn't survive. Maybe I got sucked out into the zapware like all the other Sirenavts ... maybe I'm brain damaged... maybe it's all just mythoteching in zapware dreamtime" (242). As the final significant scene in the novel illustrates, Pablo has no choice but to accept reality as an ambiguous process. A process that, although frustrating from a colonial perspective, ultimately forces Pablo to incessantly question the ambiguity of reality itself, as well as disrupts the time-space colonial imaginary by accessing a timeless, formless, space consciousness able to exist beyond colonialism. As such, Hogan is able to transform Pablo's ambiguity into a higher possibility which is cultivated through a multidimensional cosmic existence where science fiction is absorbed into the self as an alien sublime inevitability. Hogan therefore situates Chicana/o consciousness as a science-fictional process of discovery. The fact that Pablo is aware of the ambiguous essence of reality is that which ultimately cultivates the alien sublime, since unawareness is the only place from which an existential awareness may be realized. The ending, thus, speaks to the Chicanas/os continuous battle between imprisonment and liberation, between the conscious and the unconscious, between reality and illusion, and the immense power that lies in exploring such themes.

High Aztech

Hogan's ensuing novel, *High Aztech* does not focus on space exploration or the discovery of alien life, but rather, develops the alien sublime through a geopolitical

reversal in global power dynamics. The plot takes place in a futuristic Tenochtitlán D.F. (2045), which had been renamed Mexico City after Spanish conquest, but restored to its original name amid an Aztec revival movement. Great modern pyramid skyscrapers adorn the city landscape. The novel's protagonist, Xólotl Zapata, a rare expert in Español, the new native local tongue (6), as well as a semi-celebrity poet and writer who mostly focuses on the social changes occurring in Tenochtitlán describes the city's main pyramid, "The New Pyramid," as "the most magnificent wonder of this century. It was built as a monument to both the new prosperity that arose after the decline of the United States and the revival of indigenous religions that followed Armageddon. As explained by Xólotl, Tenochtitlán is portrayed as an emerging global superpower in a post-apocalyptic future following the destruction of the U.S., resulting in white populations having to illegally cross the border into Tenochtitlán in order to look for menial work. There are numerous ethnic groups depicted in the city, such as various Asians; Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans (21), blacks/Africans, as well as Spanish, with the dominant hierarchical group being comprised of Mexicans. Going a step further, *High Aztech* depicts new-wave religious terrorist groups derived from various Aztec factions whose goal is to revive ancient pre-Colombian traditions by enforcing a stringent nationalist insurgence that rejects the perpetuation of a post-conquest civilization, a strategy which extends on alien sublime themes already established in *Cortez on Jupiter*. Although not as prominent, there are also depictions of non-Aztec tribal groups as well as Christian cells (32). The main terrorist group is called the Neliyacme, which consider themselves guardians of the sacred Aztec traditions in their purest form, including the

revival of human sacrifice (8). Against this backdrop, *High Aztech's* future premise revolves around a mysterious and powerful virus capable of modifying peoples' religious beliefs. The various factions in the story attempt to control and exploit the virus in order to preserve and spread their respective doctrines.

Lysa Rivera, author of "*Mestizaje and Heterotopia in Ernest Hogan's High Aztech*" (2014), analyzes the novel utilizing a framework of hybridity. More precisely, she interprets *High Aztech* as a science-fictional expression of José Vasconcelos' renowned, *The Cosmic Race/La Raza Cósmica* (1925), where he envisions a future hybridized fifth race (153). This distinctive race, according to Vasconcelos, will transcend Western scientific logic by cultivating a new science founded on love and on the embracing of difference in assimilating and transforming mankind into a new cosmic race. Vasconcelos' utopia relies on the conquering of the Amazon region from which the mythical homeland of Universopolis will serve as the base from which to launch the spreading of wisdom, life, and love throughout the world (154).

High Aztech's future is most certainly fueled by a conflicting mixture of sociocultural ideologies that Rivera examines through a political understanding which centers on racial heterogeneity (151); an assessment that reflects the rise of globalization as a political entity which is hinged to the history of colonialism. As discussed in the introductory chapter, however, deploying hybridity as a power to mediate existence within the conflicting imperatives of the colonial illusion mutually results in an illusion of liberation. The creative forces deployed through science fiction as empowerment become reliant on the formation of a cosmic consciousness that must originate as a

consequence of colonial reality in which the futuristic heterotopia may only be perceived through an objectified anchoring of existence. As a result, forces of racialization are monopolized as authentic sources from which to launch an emancipatory decolonizing experience, resulting in a conflicting heterotopia, which Rivera acknowledges destabilizes *High Aztech's* future reality by concurrently reinforcing and subverting "that which it parodies" (149), but which nonetheless rests on the merging of difference. But, as Rivera nonetheless contends, generates creative forces able to cultivate original and independent realities of liberation (156). In this context, though, science fiction is unable to identify colonial reality as illusory, much less subvert it.

This contradiction speaks to the limitations of attempting to access liberation from within the bounds of colonized reality, which in turn limits how *High Aztech* may be understood as an expression of the alien sublime. The novel ostensibly uses science fiction to invert political reality by vanquishing colonization as we know it, yet it preserves the supremacist values that instigate difference through the continued racialization of Indigenous populations. In this way, *High Aztech* openly challenges the legacy of Western imperialism by formulating an alternative future where the Mesoamerican culture has not solely come back from the brink of extinction, but no longer exists under Western hegemony, and yet, portrays a civilization through an Indigenized version of colonization that actively maintains the systems of domination that prescribe difference. Analyzed in this way, the novel remains mired in an incongruous colonial discourse that must rely on colonial reality as the means from which to access empowerment and liberation. Although *High Aztech* is certainly able to express

the alien sublime, its reliance on themes of colonization makes liberation less pronounced when juxtaposed against *Cortez on Jupiter*.

Empowerment and liberation are seemingly expressed in *High Aztech* through the protagonist surviving a dystopic reality. Xólotl's main purpose is to survive throughout the plot as various governmental, religious, and terrorist organizations incessantly hunt him down and he is subsequently kidnapped several times over. This is established during the initial stages of the novel when the Neliyacme threaten Xólotl's life for insulting the ancient Aztec traditions (22). The Indigenous terrorist group sends Xólotl a message finding him "guilty of blasphemy for writing the comic book *The Teoguerrillas*." In the message they declare, "Our leader has authorized the death penalty for your crime" (8). Xólotl is then threatened with human sacrifice and they proceed to hunt him down, prompting Xólotl to have nightmares and instigating a persistent fear and uncertainty throughout the plot. But this sense of apprehension is not limited to Xólotl. It stems from a broader colonial induced Tenochtitlán that is equally portrayed as threatening. The emerging city contains remnants of radiation fallout caused by Armageddon, disease is widespread, and power outages are common occurrences. In addition, the city's inhabitants are described by Xólotl as "people milling around the street—the usual crowd: assorted thugitome in war drag, old folks with their zumbadors ready ... kids playing like hardy fools, and other citizens—and illegal aliens—trying to pass through without serious injury, and the occasional vehicle burning black market fossil fuel" (51). Adding to *High Aztech's* setting, the city's occupants are under constant surveillance by both overt and covert groups and government agencies. This is made readily apparent as

Xólotl travels to the New Pyramid during the early stages of the novel and surveillance forces track his every move. These forces are incorporated into the plot through strategically placed shifts in narration that mirror events occurring in the plot. For instance, surveillance forces state, "Ciudad Satélite Security Force records shows Xólotl Zapata leaving his apartment at 7:02, 6 August 2045. He walked directly to the nearby Metro station" (19). Once he arrives at his destination, surveillance footage continues to monitor his movements; "New Pyramid Security records confirm that Xólotl Zapata passed through the Zócalo Metro checkpoint at 7:58, 6 August 2045" (25). Further compounding the perilous atmosphere, politicoreligious riots frequently break out throughout the city (43). For example, Xólotl describes a riot at the Zócalo as stemming from "the New Pyramid's adopting the commerce god Yacatecuhtli under the voodoo-inspired nickname 'Papa Yaca', that the Neliyacme and other Aztec purists considered an abomination" (42-43). Even further, while at the New Pyramid Xólotl witnesses a terrorist bombing, "Looking up," he explains, "I saw that the roof of the pyramid was obscured by smoke, that cleared to reveal a large hole blasted there by some of Tenochtitlán's new wave of religious terrorists—various Aztec factions, non-Aztec tribal groups, and a few Christian cells have been threatening this for some time" (32). The dangerous yet quotidian nature of the city is evident as Xólotl is kidnapped by a covert government agency and the virus begins to play a more substantive role in the story. Unsurprisingly, in the course of being abducted, Xólotl affirms, "Nobody noticed six guys in mirrored-surface suits stuffing two plastron-wrapped bodies into an unmarked van" (51).

Against this backdrop, Xólotl must survive a mysterious virus that begins infecting the city. The virus is transmitted through touch, and once contracted it is described as existing in the "bloodstream, skin surface, the nervous system, and the especially the brain" (49). Xólotl is infected by Cóatliquita, one of his sexual interests that subsequently dies from the virus. The covert government agency that had abducted Xólotl is revealed to be the Special Federal Committee on Medical Emergencies. They instantly detect the virus in Xólotl's bloodstream, but it is designated as somehow different from Cóatliquita's. They describe the "Viral infection in the deceased [as] the result of the interaction between two viruses: the mind-altering one we are after and another, nervous-system destroying one," which Xólotl traces to "those developed by the CIA in the late twentieth century" (49). The virus is reminiscent of Project MKUltra, a CIA mind control program implemented to forcefully extract information through various experiments during the mid to late 20th century.³⁸ At this stage of the story, however, the emerging but ambiguous nature of the virus further situates Tenochtitlán as a continuation of colonial reality since, as Xólotl reveals, "there are still a lot of those CIA-designed things going around..." (44). Notwithstanding the reversal of power, the various means of de-humanization utilized to construct *High Aztech's* future equally reproduce difference through a parochial vision of reality. The novel thus challenges the notion of a utopic pre-Columbian/Indigenous past by refusing to depict the Aztecs in a future void of colonization and hegemony.

Race, science, technology, language, gender, sexuality, nationality, class, citizenship, the border, surveillance, and notions of religious and cultural supremacy, all

dictate reality even as hybridity is utilized to cultivate a new reality of liberation. Under this existence, however, there is no genuine choice but to exist within a contradictory reality based on negotiating and surviving said reality. *High Aztech's* inversion of political experience, then, must be understood as appearing on the surface of a reality that may be used to expose the contradictory and limiting nature of colonial existence. Understood as a symptom of colonization rather than as an explicit expression of political liberation functions to deepen the novel's subtext towards an examination that focuses on the shattering of the colonial system that generates reality itself.

Doing so extends the core premise from one of merely surviving to a liberation that may be experienced as a profound shift in consciousness. This shift begins as the abductors transport Xólotl to their base but is set free by an Aztec riot. Once free, Xólotl describes the scene as, "Windows shattered. Vehicles were overturned and set on fire. Buildings—apartments, stores, houses—were burning. In the sky, black smoke mixed with grey clouds" (56). But of greater significance, Xólotl begins exhibiting effects of an Aztec religious virus, he explains, "I had no idea what was going on here in Tenochtitlán, this riot, my bloodstream, my nervous system and brain" (54) ... The universe was bursting at the seams. My mind—my identity—was falling apart" (55). Xólotl then proclaims, "Entropy is settling into my mind" (68) ... "Somehow it was brighter. It was dawn, sunrise, a holy Aztec hour" (69). "Without thinking, I found myself on my knees, facing the sun, praising the gods in a spontaneous, sing-song chant" (69). Xólotl's perception of reality is radically transformed into an experience processed through a pre-Colonial Indigenous existence. Not as a means to construct an Indigenous

political identity, or to amalgamate different races into Vasconcelos' imagined cosmic consciousness, but to express the dimensional quality of the alien sublime. That is, the virus not only changes or combines religious and political ideology, but its relevance extends further into a cosmic consciousness that is able to contextualize and merge reality into a dimensional existence that transcends, "The white man's electric tick-tock beep-beep factory time" and which, "gives in to the heart-and-drumbeat cool heat of Indian time" (68). The scene's deeper significance thus emphasizes Xólotl entering a primordial dimensional state of existence that transcends Western concepts of space-time and universal being. As Xólotl's mind and identity dissolve, he is able to perceive existence beyond the illusory veil of colonization, and in turn, is able to perceive reality as a freshly vivid and bright sunrise, and the new dawn as a holy shift of time and space, all of which function to express the resurgence of reality as a sacred, or divine, alien sublime experience, which is further expressed as "galaxies and the hum of the orbits of electrons and quarks and other newly-discovered subatomic particles" (68).

The inversion of colonial reality mutually elicits an inversion of reality that situates science fiction as an existential experience. Herein, the virus symbolizes the alien sublime, and Xólotl is an expression of the alien sublime. *High Aztech* is able to explore the nature of reality through the virus as a living alien entity whose existence is defined by the shifting of reality; by dissolving and existing beyond the palpable surface of reality. Although the scene shows Xólotl in the process of shifting realities from a colonial to an alien sublime consciousness, it is important to emphasize that the shifting of religious ideology is only an effect that appears as political reality. Hence, the surface

of reality is the space-time in which religious ideology may be influenced. The relevant source of empowerment and liberation is discovered in the ability to detach from colonial reality by accessing the alien sublime.

That said, the virus is eventually revealed as created by Ingrid Moeketsi, a South African scientist wanted for conducting illegal medical experiments and leader of Faith, Incorporated or Faith, S.A. (229), an organization responsible for spreading the virus in Tenochtitlán, further provoking violence and riots (229). Although the virus is exposed as synthetic, it is nonetheless designed to reshape the mind and bring an end to the spreading of colonization and the contamination of Indigenous existence by educating what Moeketsi's assistant, Itzcóatl, refers to as, "the models for behaviour buried deep in the basal ganglia ... the place where gods come from, as in *Mother of God(s)* – that allow us to instinctively avoid things that our ancestors found to be dangerous, but also the basis for national and tribal loyalties, gang and international warfare, racism and religious fanaticism" (230). Moeketsi suggests that these models of behavior are a result of sociopolitical and cultural systems defined through difference and which rely on war as mode of survival. These sociopolitical and cultural realities are imagined as illusory objects in space and time since they stem from a "the place where [even the] gods come from" (230). While the novel clarifies the significance of the virus on the plot level, my reading of the novel is nonetheless symbolic of the alien sublime's resurgence as primordial consciousness.

The virus is therefore that which generates the conditions that actuate cosmic awareness regardless of religious membership. This is accomplished through the

dispersal of numerous viruses, each containing a distinct religious ideology. As a result, *High Aztech* does not give prominence to one religious virus that holds the key to transcend colonial reality, but emphasizes on the amalgamation of different religions to create a new unbridled consciousness of liberation. Moeketsi explains that the viruses were created so "that people could fully understand each other's religions and belief systems—" (232), and create new beliefs in the process. Hence, the true purpose of the virus is not to merging difference, but to expose a synonymous experiential understanding of alien sublime reality defined by nothingness, and where there is no such thing as difference. As said previously, the religious orientation of the virus is only relevant to the extent that it expresses Indigeneity. It is merely the catalyst that results in a spatial and temporal shattering of colonial reality that has the capacity to reveal the genuine cosmic self; its deeper significance is witnessed not in the merging of different religions as a superfluous political manifestation, but in the transcending of religious fundamentalism as objects in colonized time and space. Xólotl's perceptual shift is subsequently based, not on a particular religion, belief, nationalism or political identified reality, but on the Indigenousness of the alien sublime which transforms existence itself into an space consciousness in which no ideological value exists, much less be assigned significance to. Consequently, Xólotl continues spreading the virus, and envisions a future Faith virus society built on transforming difference and reshaping reality. The novel ends with Xólotl the telling the reader that, "Soon a faith virus cocktail will be working on your basal ganglia, sending you on your feverish way to new religions – and

new realities" (242). These new religions, or realities, epitomize a cosmic consciousness expressed through the resurrection of the alien sublime.

Smoking Mirror Blues

Shifting back to the U.S. setting, Hogan's most recent novel, *Smoking Mirror Blues* is set in Los Angeles, or "El Ley." Similar to his previous works, *Smoking Mirror Blues* future is comprised of a mixture of races and cultures, albeit with a heavy Mesoamerican influence. The premise is situated around Dead Daze, a major festival held yearly in the novel's future. Against this backdrop, the protagonist, Beto Orozco is an East L.A. Chicano computer programmer and hacker depicted as infatuated by the Aztec culture and yearns to recreate an ancient god. The plot reveals that Beto had secretly cloned an artificial intelligence god-generating program from his girlfriend, a researcher in Mexico City, in order to create an Aztec warrior trickster god named, Tezcatlipoca. Upon downloading the program into his computer system, however, Tezcatlipoca comes to life and takes over Beto's mind and body. The narrative unfolds as Tezcatlipoca ventures into the city to gain power and re-conquer the world.

Smoking Mirror Blues' premise may certainly be understood as a concern brought on by the advent of high technologies within an increasingly globalized world, and thus, analyzed as a political anxiety consistent with the general counter-hegemonic themes of both the respective cyberpunk and Chicana/o movements.³⁹ However, rather than using science fiction as a medium to express how artificial intelligence is interpreted as the technological threat, I contend that, through integrating the mind control premise,

Smoking Mirror Blues Indigenizes the technological edifice itself as a means to expose the colonial imagination as the underlying artificial threat to genuine alien sublime liberation.

The story begins with a government broadcast warning about the dangers of attending Dead Daze festivities, "Not just as your President, but as someone who cares about you, I strongly recommend that you don't go out into the streets to celebrate Dead Daze this year. The SoCal medianets will provide excellent coverage for all festivities that you can watch from the safety of your own home. You wouldn't want to get caught in any riots like last year" (6). As the passage reveals, *Smoking Mirror Blues* depicts Dead Daze as not solely dangerous, but as a futuristic version of the Day of the Dead, which is described as "Halloween collid[ing] with the Day of the Dead, becoming Jaloguin..." (11).⁴⁰ Although Indigeneity is established as a significant element of the novel's futuristic premise, Hogan mutually envisions an Indigenous culture fully integrated within a hybrid, colonized reality. Society is depicted as a "new recombocultural trimili world: Mexico and America flowing together again, the healing wound cut there by politicians from thousands of miles away, that was the border, alive in the overgrowth of new worlds, towns that grew up around the shopping malls and maquiladoras on both sides, populated by people from all over... (55-56). This new amalgamated world is further described as "The Cosmic Race that is La Raza ... alive and well here in new, improved Mexamérica" (56).⁴¹ Hogan therefore situates the essence of the border as a free-flowing space where new hybrid worlds and new realities emerge. Dead Daze is certainly envisioned as an outcome of this de-bordered site of renewal. At

the same time, however, as a consequence to Mexamérica's emergence, Hogan also emphasizes Dead Daze, the driving theme in the novel, as losing its genuine essence via a carnival-like atmosphere largely centered on dressing up in bizarre costumes, sex, drugs and partying. Portraying Dead Daze in this way is significant in that, as discussed in the following paragraph, is what compels Beto to pursue a deeper existence. Adding to the precarious milieu, the novel features various fanatic religious groups, such as "THE ALLIANCE OF CHRISTIANS, JEWS, AND MOSLEMS" that similarly warn against participating in Dead Daze activities, citing its violent and "demonic influences" (28). Despite these warnings, the premise largely reflects a populace in exuberant anticipation of Dead Daze.

Against this backdrop Beto is portrayed as uninterested in attending Dead Daze festivities, and more absorbed in staying home to experiment on the god-generating program he had previously stolen. Although Beto initially tells himself that the ritual is an illogical superstition, and considers activating Tezcatlipoca by initiating the god-generating program with the simple push of a computer key, he nonetheless feels an urge into performing an elaborate ceremonial practice. Beto's ritualistic compulsion is therefore key in revealing *Smoking Mirror Blues'* subtext. In this context, Beto's underlying motivation may be analyzed as yearning to shatter colonized/hybridized reality by replacing imaginary gods with artificial ones, thereby revolutionizing religion and "[turning] California upside down!" (11). In addition to activating the program on the first night of Dead Daze, "the atmosphere had to be right, too" (12). Beto proceeds to put pictures up of his favorite god, Tezcatlipoca, and plays sounds of crowds roaring and

chanting, as well as records a looping chant of Tezcatlipoca's name. He takes a small obsidian mirror, attaches it to the terminal screen, and stares into it "like an Aztec sorcerer scanning for visions of the future" (13). Intensifying the ritual, he sits on the floor fixated on the screen and begins playing his teponaxtle, an electric Aztec wooden drum. Resembling a shaman educing higher planes of existence, Beto activates the program and steadily enters a trance-state of higher existence. Soon thereafter, "Tezcatlipoca's mind zapped, cracked and popped into life in the nanochip's silicon nervous system (15).

The scene ostensibly shows Tezcatlipoca's creation originating from the nanochip. However, a much deeper implication rests on analyzing the ritual's essence. Here, Hogan evokes the Indigenous spirit of Dead Daze as the activating force of creation, thereby transforming/inverting the border from a free-flowing space where new hybrid realities are formed through colonialism, into a primordial consciousness fundamental to the Day of the Dead's ritualistic origins, which stretch back to an Indigenous, pre-Colonial existence.⁴² In this way, the crucial ritualized element in the novel, death, is expressed through an approach that exposes it as a colonial artificiality, and which evokes a higher dimension of existence where alien sublime liberation may re-emerge. In making such a move, the source of creation is portrayed as a timeless, formless, borderless, and deathless space of non-hybridization from which an authentic/independent force able to transgress and exists outside of colonized reality. As is revealed later in the story, Tezcatlipoca divulges such deeper existence, "I, Tezcatlipoca, the Mirror that Smokes ... was alive and well and living in your DNA long before you had any claim to it, long

before you were even born, back when your ancestors crossed the land-bridge from Asia, and later when you searched the deserts and mountains of Mexico for Lake Texcoco where you would build the glorious city of Tenochtitlán" (111). Even further, he affirms his own consciousness as a primordial expression that precedes space-time and the emergence of colonized reality by proclaiming, "I was running your brain the way you run your computer. I gave you all your ideas Beto. I made you what you are. I made you conjure me out of the god-simulating program. Did you think you could possibly do such a sacred thing on your own without any divine aid or instruction?" (111). Tezcatlipoca may be therefore understood, not as a technological outcome that mirrors, or unfolds from within the illusory veil of colonial unreality, but as re-emerging from the timeless formlessness of alien sublime consciousness untouched by the post-colonial imagination; an Indigenous cosmic consciousness that transcends the space and time of future-history where hybridity emanates as a political expression. In this way, Tezcatlipoca, the Smoking Mirror, emerges as an Indigenous consciousness that expresses the manifestation of the mirror as the conscious existential subject itself, which cannot be seen as an object or unconscious colonial subject. Tezcatlipoca becomes the conscious source from which colonialism is witnessed in space and time as an ancillary reflection and object; an Indigenous technology of the cosmos able to distinguish reality from illusion, and as a result, emerges as a trickster able to manipulate the colonized imagination.

During the first moments in colonized reality, Tezcatlipoca "reached out through the nanochip, through Beto's computer, into the mediasphere for the information he

needed about this strange world he had entered, and how he could go about being a trickster-warrior god in it" (16). The inversion of reality not solely allows Tezcatlipoca's higher consciousness to perceive reality as artificial and strange, but it exposes colonized reality as an artificial game that may be played, controlled, and ultimately conquered. Eager to play this game of reality, Tezcatlipoca uses Beto's phone to remotely link his consciousness into Beto. Once Tezcatlipoca forges this connection, he is able to experience corporeal reality through Beto's body. As the invasive shift in consciousness kicks in, he declares, "'I am Tezcatlipoca' ... in Beto's voice, with Beto's mouth, out of Beto's body ... he could now see out of Beto's eyes, too ... Beto's mind was still there, buried deep in the brain. Tezcatlipoca could access it to understand the bizarre world he found himself in" (26). After the transition, Tezcatlipoca realizes that his appropriated body has been contaminated by strange European creatures. He detects "...evidence of being polluted by the genes of the alien who had invaded the One World and destroyed civilization ... Beto's nose and lip – and even his ears – weren't pierced" and his "skin was far too pale..." (26-27). The scene functions to reinforce the artificial essence/process of hybridity as a contaminant imposed by colonialism, and in doing so, mutually works to subvert Chicano political identity as an authentic mode of empowerment and liberation. Political identity is thereby replaced with a higher Indigenous consciousness able to play colonial reality as "the ultimate game" (22).

Smoking Mirror Blues reveals that Tezcatlipoca's main goal is to conquer the world utilizing the ritualistic power of music, specifically through the hypnotic influence embedded in his Aztec drum playing. As he walks the Dead Daze parade route along

Hollywood Boulevard he begins to play the teponaxtle; it "made pleasing sounds. His feet turned his strut into a dance. Music—it was in him, and now he had let it out: some wild, magical Tezcatlipoca/trickster music that would allow him to take this world for his own" (32). Although Dead Daze attendees respond enthusiastically to the drum playing, as well as to his mystical presence, Tezcatlipoca continues to expand on his mission of indoctrination by manipulating economic and cultural institutions as a way to disseminate his music to the masses. Tezcatlipoca's uninterrupted access to the mediasphere allows him to promote his street band, Los Tricksters, as well as plan a live performance of *Smoking Mirror Blues* during a satellite worldwide concert. He makes deals with corporations, generates electronic contracts, as well as forms a variety of networks on a global level. This aspect of the novel is significant in that it emphasizes the mode of indoctrination as an integral feature within the Western colonial model/imagination. That is, *Smoking Mirror Blues* depicts indoctrination as the colonial force used to establish and sustain a perception of reality based on European sociopolitical, economic, and cultural systems. Tezcatlipoca's mode of conquest is not expressed through physical force; he does not seek to physically conquer the world through the building of an insurgency or military, as the Aztecs did,⁴³ but rather, infiltrates the established system of colonization as a means to redeploy psychological warfare as the mode of de-colonization. In other words, whereas material colonization would remain innately political, Tezcatlipoca utilizes indoctrination as the invading force to eliminate, or un-colonize the indoctrinated political mind from artificial reality.

Tezcatlipoca's annexation over Beto's body and mind allows this dynamic of indoctrination to be seen more precisely. Although Beto's body is used as a medium from which to physically experience/influence material reality, Tezcatlipoca's takeover/emergence is innately psychosomatic, and, within the context of this project, may be understood as non-political. The novel does not rely on the construction of an empowered Chicano protagonist that perceives itself through ideals of *Indigenismo*, i.e., through the recovery of an Indigenous past as method for generating an empowered political identity, but rather, by transcending/transforming Chicano identity and making Tezcatlipoca's alien sublime consciousness the novel's antagonist; an existential force that, when inversed, transforms Tezcatlipoca into a protagonist able to transgress, as well as expose the colonial/political imagination as artificial. Tezcatlipoca's psychosomatic invasion over Beto further works to emphasize hybridity as an artificial form in generating an empowered Indigenous identity.

The de-colonized mind, in this respect, is not solely expressed through the emergence of Tezcatlipoca's alien sublime consciousness, but by his desire to awaken the deeper consciousness of colonized populations. As such, Tezcatlipoca's attempted colonization over reality must be understood as an inverting, or transforming indoctrination into a de-colonizing process of liberation by which music is deployed as the de-colonizing medium capable of "...eating everything up ... all of Hollywood, the Earth, the universe—transforming it all in a cosmic acid/enzyme bath and vomiting it all out as something totally new" (51). This new de-colonized reality is described as able to transcend the past and future "in a way that distort[s] the sense of time, [makes] time

seem to cease to exist. (161), thereby pushing "the listeners into a near-dissociative state of consciousness ... It could open people's minds" (162). Tezcatlipoca understands that the only way to genuinely liberate the colonized mind from quotidian reality is by shattering the illusion of space and time. So while the emergence of this reality may be perceived as "new" to the colonized imagination, it is not new, but in actuality a return to an original state of cosmic consciousness. Tezcatlipoca must therefore, "twist the truth" in order to make "reality clearer" (160), which as he makes adamantly clear, has been obscured and forgotten; "Alien spirits were brought to our world by the invaders. You lost track of my song, my message, my blues..." (160). Tezcatlipoca must not solely remind the people that the hybridized world has been colonized by European invaders, but more importantly, exposes their perception within Western reality as an illusory phenomenon based on psychological trickery by stating, "You poor, inadequate humans can't trust your limited points of view. You need me to sing the blues for you. To jolt you out of the prison you call yourself. To heal you. To allow you to dance the ecstatic, chaotic dance of life. (160). Being a trickster god, Tezcatlipoca must therefore deceive the people, just as he did Beto, into an alien sublime resurgence, as he considers their indoctrination a necessity that will jolt them out of their artificially constructed identities and into a higher dimensional self-realization.

The novel's ending is significant in that it depicts Tezcatlipoca as infinitely beyond space and time. As Tezcatlipoca is infected with a virus and is disconnected from the mediasphere, he becomes disorientated and compelled to question his existence as a god and creator of the universe. He laments, "Something is wrong... I have data telling

me that I was brought into being by humans working with machines. I have data telling me that I don't know everything ... All my data tells me that the universe does not make sense" (200). The scene depicts an attempt to trick Tezcatlipoca into believing that that his existence is an artificial phenomenon created by man, however, despite the colonial attack he is able to sustain awareness as the alien sublime. Tezcatlipoca identifies the invading virus as "programming-tricksterism" and as affirmed throughout the story, "an interesting game" as well as "Reality [as] the only game worth playing" (207). The scene is important not solely in that colonized reality is consistently exposed as an artificial game, but in that Tezcatlipoca is portrayed as a deathless alien sublime consciousness fully aware that he can never be killed or eliminated from genuine existence.

As Tezcatlipoca is purged from Beto's mind and body, he slowly begins to regain awareness. Beto is portrayed as losing his sense of reality and place in the universe, "[He] no longer knew who he was ... He was lonely. He wanted to go home. As if in response to his thoughts, the snakes turned around, started swimming back to the West, to the region of fecundity and life, back to the Earth. Beto began to remember who he really was" (207). This is indicative, as well as consistent with the novel's overarching premise of indoctrination. Of particular significance, Beto is depicted in the dualistic process of remembering who he "really was." On the one hand, he begins to remember the colonial imagination as the process responsible for constructing his Chicano identity. On the other, he remembers the alien sublime as an Indigenous consciousness independent of the colonial form. His loneliness may be subsequently understood as returning to the colonial imagination's sense of isolation and difference, while his yearning to return home

expresses the one-ness/wholeness of alien sublime consciousness. *Smoking Mirror Blues* epitomizes this internalized push/pull discord as method to express colonization as a form of psychosis. Consequently, Beto is no longer able to function as the illusory-self via the colonial imagination, and as a result, is deemed psychotic and committed to a mental institution. Although drastic, the novel ends with Beto confined in "his cell in the University of California at Cucamonga Medical Center's psychiatric wing... chant[ing], 'I am Quetzalcóatl, I am Quetzalcóatl, I am Quetzalcóatl...'" as "the laughter of Smokey Espejo Tezcatlipoca crackled throughout the mediashpere" (209). Similar to Pablo in *Cortez on Jupiter*, Beto's chanting reveals that he remains caught in-between realities; an imprisonment that symbolizes the artificial psychological structure of the hybridized Chicano mind on the one hand, but which of greater significance, portrays the Chicano mind as science-fictional with the de-colonizing ability to transgress the boundaries of space and time.

Conclusion

Ernest Hogan uses various techniques as a way to transcend colonized reality. His novels may be thought of as challenging yet operating within the realm of coloniality, which is primarily determined by a linear representation of time and space. In this sense, his three stories operate within the future history model in that time and space are understood as having a past, a present, and a future; a future which is based upon the past which Hogan then utilizes to envision the shattering of colonial reality using three distinct expressions of the alien sublime, i.e. the Sirens, the virus, and the artificial god

intelligence. In the following chapter, however, *Atomik Aztex* completely annihilates the linear notion of space and time. Foster transforms space and time into interchangeable variables that are inherently non-existent, where there is no point of beginning or end, only the formlessness and timelessness of alien sublime consciousness. The alien sublime is therefore expressed, not through the shattering of space and time, but in stark contrast, by situating space and time as an illusion exposed by the alien sublime.

CHAPTER 4: ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS AND THE ALIEN SUBLIME MEGEVERSE

Introduction

Extending on previous chapter's contextualization of the Chicana/o Movement and Chicana/o Nationalism, as well as the formation of a pro-Indigenous Chicana/o identity based on *Indigenismo*, Sesshu Foster's *Atomik Aztex* similarly functions to transcend colonial reality. Foster's approach, however, differs from Hogan's in that the premise is not determined by a future orientated along an established Western/colonized timeline, but transgresses the future history model by presenting an alternate reality wherein space and time are variables within a shifting reality. Similar to Philip K. Dick's popular alternate reality premise in *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), wherein the Empire of Japan and Nazi Germany are depicted as having conquered the U.S. during WWII, *Atomik Aztex* features an alternate reality in which the Aztec Empire conquered Spanish explorers and emerged as the Imperialistic, global superpower during the 1940s WWII era. Foster constructs a reality experienced through the protagonist's shifting perspective within the time-space kontinuum wherein one reality is dominated by the Aztecs and the other by Europe; realities defined through a cosmic existence which is regulated by the Indigenous powers of Aztec science and teknospirituality. Hence, by engaging with reality as a cosmic experience, *Atomik Aztex* is able to transcend the boundaries of colonized space and time by expressing the power of Indigenusness not as an exercise in conventional political empowerment, but as method to transgress the colonial imagination's conceptualization of Indigenusness into the higher, primordial,

cosmic awareness of the alien sublime. Similar to Hogan's novels, *Atomik Aztex* expresses the shattering of colonial reality through expressing an alien sublime consciousness. *Indigenismo* is similarly transformed into a primordial alien sublime consciousness able to eclipse the colonized world.

Atomik Aztex

Extending on Ernest Hogan's Aztec-themed science fiction, Sesshu Foster presents an alternate universe wherein first-contact with Indigenous populations and their subsequent colonization are drastically transformed. Replacing the United States as the emerging modern-era global atomic superpower during the 1940s WWII era, the Aztec Empire is depicted at war with Nazi Germany, having long eschewed European invasion. As such, Aztec domination permeates the world over while people of European origin are deemed inferior and subjected to conquest. The novel features the protagonist, Zenzontli, Keeper of the House of Darkness of the Aztex, who travels along conflicting realities throughout the plot. He has a position of importance within the burgeoning Aztec reality, but in stark contrast, works as a meat-cutter within an ancillary contemporary Los Angeles reality for a Farmer John pig slaughtering plant in the industrial City of Vernon.

Similar to *High Aztech's* reversal of geopolitical power, *Atomik Aztex's* inversion ostensibly offers a critical reading that centers the distortion of reality through colonial discourse; a view that emphasizes on a ubiquitous quality of hegemony regardless of socio-political circumstance, implying that racial supremacy is an ideal equally shared by everyone and not inherent to European colonization. This view clearly suggests that

white populations are just as susceptible to experiencing the devastating brunt of colonization, but particularly, affirms that Indigenous/pre-Columbian civilizations were and can be just as bigoted, violent, and inherently warmongering as Europeans. To a more radical extreme, a comparable reading may nonetheless regard *Atomik Aztex's* stark reversal of power an expression of genuine political empowerment and liberation, being that the genocide of Indigenous populations has been averted and European raiders have, to put boldly, finally been put in their place. These viewpoints, however, regardless of political disposition, tend to imbue Indigenous civilizations with a biased preconception of reality born from and sustained by the colonial psyche, ultimately working to reinforce coloniality as the decisive instrument in how reality is experienced. To understand *Atomik Aztex* as a genuine expression of empowerment and liberation that extends beyond the limitations imposed by the colonial form, its premise must be analyzed by exposing the essence of coloniality as a paradox.

The story begins with Zenzontli establishing the alternate universe premise by speaking directly to the reader, "Perhaps you are familiar with some worlds, stupider realities amongst alternate universes offered by the ever expanding-omniverse, in which the Aztek civilization was 'destroyed'" (1). Further distinguishing genuine reality from illusion, Zenzontli goes onto describe the Azteks as a far advanced civilization:

No matter what horrible fait awaits us at the hands of some momentarily victorious enemy, we have altered the space-time kontinuum of the universe through Aztek sciences and teknologies so that we shall emerge victorious on one level or another sooner or later, something which causes our enemies no end of

anguish and horror once they realize that their own hearts are the key, the crucial item in the orchestration of our mastery of the time-space kontinuum. This great faith in the science and teknospirituality of our ancestors the Tolteka, who invented the Heart As Engine of Urban Renewal, the revitalization of Reality, while the European savages were scurrying around inventing toylike items such as the wheel. (3)

As illustrated in Zenzontli's denunciation of an un-evolved European reality defined by stupidity, the initial scene of the novel functions to establish Western civilization as not solely inferior, but ephemeral. It is revealed that ancient Mesoamerican civilizations have long established a cosmic consciousness with the power to manipulate space and time as a dimensional process of resurgence fueled by warfare and human sacrifice; features commonly ascribed as savage by Europeans but which are used as the mechanism essential to accessing higher reality. Not solely does Zenzontli speak to the legitimacy of Aztek reality amid the impossibility of a non-existence driven by European extermination, but of major significance, the altering of space-time re-establishes Indigeneity as a genuine and autonomous cosmic force independent from the European imagination and monopoly over reality. Foster thereby begins the novel by inverting the conventional portrayal of Aztecs as savages into sophisticated cosmic beings.

In and of itself, such a depiction may certainly be regarded as effectively detaching from the influential forces of European colonization and the proliferation of Western reality, and yet, *Atomik Aztex's* re-articulation of Indigeneity is complicated by an unyielding reliance on a supremacist mindset that pervades Aztek empowerment and

liberation; a mindset that nonetheless imposes liberation as an invading force that must be sustained through war, defying the de-colonizing process as a genuine experience. It is this paradoxical interplay between the colonizer and the colonized, genuine and artificial liberation that is at the core of the novel's subtext. Extending further into this paradoxical root, the subtext reflects an interplay between consciousness and unconsciousness that Foster utilizes to expose a deeper cosmic awareness originating prior to the merging of alternate realities from which colonial time and space appear. Herein, the novel evokes a critical interchange in which perspective, especially the reader's perception of reality, becomes an integral element of the novel's underlying premise. Zenzontli's description of "stupider realities amongst alternate universes ... in which the Aztek civilization was 'destroyed'" clearly speaks to the reader's position within space and time as determined by a colonized Los Angeles reality, and in turn, exposes the Chicana/o mind as an unconscious byproduct confined by the absurdity of an artificially derived Western existence. Not only that, but the reader's perception of reality is subsequently located within a fixed, isolated position in space and time that cannot distinguish the Aztecs or Indigeneity beyond the myopic politicized veneer of coloniality. Subsequently, to jolt, or awaken the reader out of the colonized mindset, Foster distorts reality, not by situating the Chicana/o within a linear science fiction reality based on the distant past or some future point in time along an established future history model, but by making science fiction an active, existential process that transgresses/exposes space-time as a colonial educated process. *Atomik Aztex* thereby transforms the reader's logical, quotidian

perception of reality by incorporating, or drawing the reader's illusory perspective into an authentic, dimensional, science fiction experience.

The existential process is, of course, articulated through the protagonist's shifting perspective, as he is made to experience contradictions that are innate to coloniality in a myriad of ways. Foster begins by disrupting the legitimacy of Aztek reality. Although the dominance of Aztek science and teknospirituality is established from the onset, which should involve a conscious mastery over the space-time kontinuum, Zenzontli is nonetheless driven by an unconscious and contradictory shifting reality appearing to be out of his control, as is witnessed by one of his initial revelations, "...I am getting fucked in the head and I think I like it. Okay sometimes I'm not sure" (1). Zenzontli's tenuous experience is based on sudden shifts, or visions, into a rogue alternate reality defined by horrid accounts of pigs being slaughtered by large circular blades spinning as bloody decapitated pig heads pile up on the wet concrete floor (5). From Zenzontli's perspective, the visions into an alternate Los Angeles reality dominated by images of dead pigs are perceived as an unwelcomed invasion of his mind, to the point of requiring intervention by the governing Aztek state, "Kranial Boring to release Xtra spirits from inside [his] head ... It would cure the headaches and they promised it would solve [his] continual problem of unwanted visions attacking [him] at all moments..." (10). The novel thereby suggests that Aztek control over space and time is somehow limited despite Zenzontli affirming a position of privilege and empowerment as *Keeper of the House of Darkness of the Aztex*. From this ostensibly safeguarded reality of entitlement, the visions serve no useful purpose, after all, "Who needed unwanted visions of vast concrete rooms,

scrubbing them down with buckets to disinfectant and high-powered hoses, plastic & steel vats of flesh & body parts pushed up against the wall?" (10), visions that are not solely regarded a form of mental instability, but that work to contradict his standing of authority within the ruling Aztec regime. As such, the novel relies on Zenzontli's psychosomatic disorientation to reflect the deeper colonized condition, as he is forced to unwillingly experience unstable, chaotic realms of space and time, prompting him to concede, "Sometimes I don't know exactly where I am, which way next" (76). In dislodging Zenzontli from the refuge of Aztec reality, Zenzontli's visions into ominous alternate realities intimates that control over genuine empowerment and liberation is not determined by Aztec political reality, but by a higher cosmic possibility.

Paralleling the visions of pigs, Zenzontli's shifting perspective within the time-space kontinuum is used to express a higher cosmic possibility, "I saw ... saw a highway ... jammed with trucks and cars ... they were being mercilessly strafed and bombed by jets and helicopters ... all the way from one country to the next stretched a string of burnt-out vehicles driven motionlessly by the stinking, smoking charred corpses of an entire army ... The horror, the horror! ... " (15-16). The vision begins by describing an alternate reality in the midst of war, however, war itself is not the most disturbing element in Zenzontli's vision, but rather, the explicit circumstances in which warfare takes place, "...on this same world ... entire Mayan villages were razed and everyone wuz slaughtered ... men, women and children, entire families and clans and communities were slaughtered, disappeared from existence without ceremony, proper ritual, or sacred prayer!" (16). Zenzontli's perspective depicts an alternate reality in which the Indigenous

civilization has been invaded and destroyed. Underscoring the colonizing European civilization as indifferent to the catastrophic effects of Indigenous colonization, Zenzontli vision reveals that:

While this happened, entire populations of Spanish-style nations went about their business like sleepwalkers like zombies ... conscripting leftover children of the dead and raising them as ghosts with no ancestral knowledge ... an age when This World in question was being slaughtered and the people were to wander its surface like ghosts in hell perishing in their sheepish Desires ... This was the civilization those Europeans sought to bring us ... this was the reality they sought to invoke upon our land. (16)

The scene shows Zenzontli disgusted with the prospect of such a desolate reality, but of particular relevance, perspective is used as the medium by which consciousness is able to distinguish between realities in space-time. In his description of the vision, Zenzontli reveals that, "This occurred on 1 world in 2 places simultaneously" (16). His assertion that the vision happened on one world but in two places concurrently effectively describes a higher awareness of time and space where everything that has existed, exists everywhere through a simultaneous experience. Zenzontli reinforces this point by claiming, "... I knew what was going to happen to me. It had already happened to me in the future (17). By describing a future alternate reality that was going happen as having already happened in the past, Zenzontli is able to perceive reality through "circular concepts of time, cyklikal konceptions of the universe where reality infinitely curves back upon itself endlessly so all that has existed does exist and will always exist and so

forth into infinity. Its only the POV that makes sense in the end" (3). Zenzontli does not solely envision an alternate future from within space-time, but he transgresses time in the sense that the past, present, and future within the future history model lose the space in which to exist as objects, which the novel implicitly uses to express the formlessness, or emptiness of a higher space consciousness. Because perspective is portrayed both as everywhere and everything, as well as nowhere and nothing, it transcends the realm of space and time by deploying a cosmic consciousness as the overarching presence of the alien sublime. As Zenzontli points out, the only reality "that makes sense in the end" is determined by the point of view (POV), which utilizes a shifting perspective as the method from which the alien sublime may be expressed.

What is more, the novel relies on satire to reveal the colonial paradox as illusory. More precisely, Foster satirizes the various elements innate to coloniality by mirroring the reader's colonized perception of reality. He does so not to show that the Aztecs were or can be just as malevolent as Europeans, which functions to bolster the colonial mindset, but to expose the paradox of difference and racism more precisely. Zenzontli, as a result, is depicted with a rather ostentatious supremacist identity, "I'm fairly liberal as these things go," he claims, "I'm willing to grant the Spanish and other subjugated peoples their kultural values and so forth. I mean, they all have their place. I'm not saying that you have to think Spanish food is worth eating, I certainly don't, well maybe some *paella* every once and a while..." (4). In ironic fashion, no less, Zenzontli sees himself as a fair and open-minded individual, all the while asserting an exceedingly arrogant, demeaning, and unapologetic tone in the rationalization of an Indigenous authority over

lesser Europeans. He continues the diatribe, "I've listened many long hours to my Spanish slaves explain to me their quaint customs, their Catholicisms, their folkloric belief in the Linear God who is transfixed above them on the surface of the Heavens as they mope about the globe worrying about something they call Sin, and thing of this nature" (4). In addition to describing Europeans as racially, culturally, and aesthetically inferior to the Aztecs, he blatantly criticizes the European imagination's notion of higher reality, "... in no way does that fit into our *aesthetic conception* of how the universe is supposed to run. It's just plain ugly. To think that they want to foist that vision of Reality on the rest of us. That's the *insult*. Barbaric, cheap aesthetic based on flimsy Mechanistic notions of the omniverse as a Swiss watch set to ticking by some sort of Trinity" (2). Zenzontli's belief in Aztec science and teknospirituality is hinged to a colonial model of difference that juxtaposes an omnipotent Indigenous existence against an unequivocally crude and inferior European mind that defines itself through a clumsy belief structured on fixed, rudimentary notions of space and time, which he further uses to distinguish realness from illusion and insight from ignorance. However, Zenzontli's bigoted perception of higher reality in particular, does not only express the colonial imagination's typical dismissal of conquered people's knowledge, but functions to satirize the antithetical essence of coloniality by mirroring European racism which occurred during first-contact. Foster thus inverts how the supremacist Eurocentric view of higher reality was used to redefine the Aztec world they encountered as violent, uncivilized, and irreligious, as well as to rationalize the destruction of Indigenous knowledge by "saving," or pulling the Aztecs out of the depths of savagery and into the "enlightened" grace of a reality determined by a

white European god. By mirroring/satirizing supremacy, the novel attempts to expose the reader's perception of reality as a limited contradiction bounded by coloniality.

The satirizing of coloniality is further emphasized through modes of Aztek war and sacrifice that equally mirror the reader's corrupt reality. During one of the shift sequences, Zenzontli, along with his Jaguar Unit, are portrayed in the midst of war with Nazi Germany. Upon attacking a Nazi machine gun nest, Zenzontli enters the German portal to discover that the Nazi soldiers have been killed. Displaying his warring Aztek ways, he exclaims, "THEY ARE ALL DEAD IN HERE GOD DAMN IT! ... You see all these dead people? I'm docking all of you two captives each for every dead fascist I count that we're not able to take back to Anahuak with us!" (99). Consistent with the Heart As Engine of Urban Renewal and revitalization of Reality, Zenzontli's goal is to capture, not kill, as many Nazi soldiers as possible. Zenzontli's portrayal is hence openly based on the typical Aztek warrior motif. However, this aspect of the premise is relevant only to the extent that it is used to engage with deeper themes of Western coloniality. The deeper significance and need for war is thereby exposed as a superficial phenomenon inconsistent with the genuine essence of sacrifice, which is expressed by underscoring the politicized, indoctrinated virtues of the colonized mind. For instance, facing strong resistance from the Nazi's while attempting to rally his tentative unit to attack a heavily fortified machine-gun nest, Zenzontli makes the following revelation, "Everything I'm gonna tell you is True and it will all work in our fight against Nazism, corporate greed, golf shoes, environmental degradation ... I am revealing it here on the Home Shopping Channel only becuz we are in a life or death situation, we are stuck here in a tight spot

between Point A & Point B, between a rock and an erased place" (102). Foster mirrors elements of the reader's reality to expose coloniality as hypocritically artificial. Adding to the satirical approach, Zenzontli goes on to describe an array of sleazy advertisements.

Some of which read:

SMOKING CRACK, ROCK OR FREEBASING? Do you want to stop?
Acupuncture & Yoga relaxation techniques. Call now! 1-800-810-5551. SEXY
YOUNG GIRLS EXPLORE THEIR SEXUALITY IN THEIR OWN HOME
VIDEOS. Only \$19.99 + \$3.95 S&H ... LARGER BREASTS! 100% NATURAL
Safe & Affordable alternative to surgery! Fast & Guaranteed Results! Toll Free 1-
877-6-BREAST ... PENIS ENLARGEMENT FDA-Approved vacuum
pump/surgical enlargement Gain 1-3" Permanent & Safe Enhance Erection Dr.
Joel Kaplan (619) 754-PUMP. (102)

Reaffirming the validity of the ads, he proclaims, "Some of you look doubtful. I assure you, I have called all of these numbers, I have tried all these treatments, I know for a fact that they all work ... OR YOUR MONEY BACK" (102). The scene depicts an Aztek version of reality in which war, life, and death are depicted as reliant on the credibility of economic virtues which are necessary to govern an indoctrinated reality. The "tight spot between Point A & Point B, between a rock and an erased place" hence, denotes Zenzontli's mirrored, and shifting experience taking place between Aztek reality (Point A) and the reader's corresponding reality (Point B). The ads subsequently encourage the reader to see the absurdity of the colonial imagination, which Foster parodies to further expose the dishonest and fraudulent disposition of the Western imagination's infatuation

as a materialistic, economic, consumer-based false consciousness. War is thus used to expose colonization as an artificial construction defined by greed, immorality, and exploitation, i.e. Capitalism, Imperialism, Neoliberalism, etc., which are hinged to a fragmented, superficial, egocentric reality dictated by an unconscious indoctrination that unwittingly accepts the corrupt political building-blocks of coloniality as authentic.

It is during this shifting war sequence that the alien sublime transgresses the colonial imagination more overtly. As Zenzontli and his Jaguar Unit drift into sleep while on route to attack the Nazis, he is briefly awakened, "The next thing I knew the cold was shaking me awake as the plane shuddered over the frozen white wastes of the Russian steppe east of the Volga River at Kuybyshev" (53). Shortly thereafter he again falls asleep, revealing a significant passage within the novel:

I dream of whiteness. I don't know if that's a good sign, but I go on dreaming. Whiteness. Blankness. A vague expanse of indefinite ambiguity. Middle distance where everything starts fading away. The airplane is shuddering underneath me ... This noisy cold tube of airplane, like the cold bench under my butt, is there somewhere in the dream. Encased in it I plumb some indefinite distance, a cold blanket of cloudbank or whatever it is, that surrounds me truly, like the gaping, howling, freezing emptiness swirling around the plane itself now, in the dream ... I was having a good time tho, dreaming that dream. (54)

The dream sequence is most relevant in two ways. First, the dream indicates whiteness and blankness as the absence of thought, a nothingness where the colonial mind begins fading away, signifying the absence of time and space. Zenzontli describes a nebulous

expanse that his mind perceives as an ambiguous space consciousness unintelligible to the colonial imagination. Of particular significance, Zenzontli is aware that he is not solely dreaming, but that he is dreaming from within a dream, and therefore expresses a higher cosmic consciousness that, for a brief moment, transgresses the forces of difference set by the colonial mind. Second, his soldiers' dreams appear to overlap into Zenzontli's dream, expressing a joined consciousness that has mutually transcended space-time and the colonial form. Expressed through a deeper alien sublime consciousness, they declare, "*We knew something substantial had shifted below the glossy bubble of perceived phenomena. It made u wonder where we were. We sort of woke into the moment...*" (56). Conveying the experience of awakening, Zenzontli is subsequently able to make the following realization:

Maybe if I had been paying attention to my dreams, my jaguar spirit, reading the newspaper and samizdat bullet, paying attention to subtle whims and secret thots, whatever, I would have had a clue, a better idea, a scope of what was happening, what was about to happen when we hit the ground. Maybe that was what the monkey spirits stole from me when I wasn't looking. (55)

Zenzontli begins to question his existence by paying attention to his "*thots*". Zenzontli's dreams therefore work to not only expose the limitations of experiencing alternate realities, but reveal that space-time may be perceived as well as experienced through a higher awareness. *Atomik Aztex* therefore incorporates dreams/visions to express a higher primordial consciousness that exists independent of alternating realities within colonial space-time. In making such a discovery, Zenzontli momentarily shifts from experiencing

reality as an object within the bounds of space-time, to experiencing reality through a higher consciousness. Zenzontli's *jaguar spirit*, which is depicted as his true essence expresses the alien sublime, while the monkey spirits denote a confused, artificially produced and colonized unconscious mindset. This not solely encourages a questioning of his shifting experience, but it opens to an existential exploration his own existence.

The critical bond between satire, war, and sacrifice in the economic governing of reality is further established by shifting into an experience of sacrifice that mutually exposes Aztek reality as artificial. What is interesting here, however, is the method by which perspective is altered to express the experience of sacrifice as artificial. Although there is a clear shift in reality, the protagonist's perspective is apparently removed in lieu of an unspecified yet supremacist perspective which experiences the process of scaling up a pyramid to be sacrificed. The unnamed perspective is portrayed as concerned, to the point of being offended with being sacrificed alongside Europeans. As he makes his way up the steps of the Great Pyramid to be sacrificed, he makes a point to make racist declarations as various sacrificial corpses whizz by, "Oh, watch out, there goes another one! Boy some of those Nazis look ugly naked, It's just *my opinion*, but really, if they wanted *good looking* sakrifices they would stick to indigenous peoples of Anahuak, not go for the Europians ... these big German guys are built like walruses or sea elephants" (141). Through the satirizing of supremacy, perspective is used to expose the ritual of sacrifice as a diluted mockery undermined by the ruling Aztek regime, "If the aesthetics are off, and here's where I think our so-called leaders are making a big, BIG, mistake, then the whole ritual simply won't work. It won't funktion. Teknology is a very *exakt*

science. It's got to look good or otherwise Huizilopochtli, Tezkatlipoka, Coyoxuakee, or whoever won't even notice; the whole bloody affair won't accrue the same economic benefit as you would get from a *fine, graceful, beautiful* sacrifice" (141). The ritual of sacrifice is deemed inauthentic in that it hinders its intended purpose of increasing the economic vitality of Aztek reality. The shift in perspective is therefore used to expose a contradiction that, on the one hand criticizes Aztek reality, while on the other, bases the authenticity of Aztek reality on the artificiality of material wealth. Foster thereby mirrors the European/Western mindset to expose the political experience as an artificial process, *"I could suddenly see that in spite of all the ingenious scientific calculations on part of the experts, professors & akademicians ... these guys at the top were fucking everything up! They were just going about the duties of ruling the known universe by rote & they weren't really paying attention to details. They were attending to the ekonomik health of the State & entire land & its Many Races of people while they were being fooled, entranced, deluded or confused by their own Existential Stupidness and Korrruption"* (145). The scene highlights a colonial imagination that is able to effectively identify and challenge contradictions within Aztek reality, but in confronting such contradictions, the colonial imagination is mutually portrayed as remaining unaware that the mind's disposition of empowerment is innately embedded in coloniality as a politicized experience. Due to this politicized understanding of empowerment, he is portrayed as unable to perceive the contradiction of his own limited existence.

Specific to the reader's colonial perspective, the mirroring of such corruption is consistent with my assertion that the Chicano political establishment that has lost touch

with the true essence of empowerment and liberation. By presenting the Azteks as a civilization in the process of confusing reality from illusion via a corrupt ekonomik system controlled by so-called experts, academics, and elites, Aztek science and teknospirituality, the source for the revitalization of reality and mastery over the time-space kontinuum, is replaced by the renewal of a superficial socio-political and cultural reality that recklessly dominates through war, an abusive economy, as well as by debasing the sacred ritual of sacrifice. Foster thus comments on the dangers of attempting to access empowerment and liberation through the internalization of a colonial mindset, wherein the Heart As Engine of Urban Renewal is transformed from a source of authenticity into a colonial tool of deception within a political system built on delusions of greed, hierarchy, and control. Reinforcing this point, even as the moment of his impending death approaches, he is again compelled to expose the political establishment as corrupt:

I leaned back against the Stone of Tizok, to which I had been firmly attached ... while I prepared a major speech which would denounce the current failed leadership and their deluded policies of the state ... whose opportunist policies were leading to Environmental Degradation on a Planetwide Skale, Spiritual Pollution of Key Populations, Aesthetic Destruktion of Our Way of Life, I prepped my Mind to start deklaiming the evils of the Elite especially that chump the Minister of Labor Xalatokli (Sandy Alluvial Soil) & his Klique of Neoliberal Ekonomists. (146)

The exposing of a corrupt political system is further contrasted against intermittent stints from Aztek reality into an alternate Los Angeles reality. Although the novel utilizes random shifts in reality to expose the colonial imagination as a reflection where difference remains constant, for the sake of cohesiveness, my analysis from hereon out mainly focus on Zenzontli's shifts into the reader's contemporary Los Angeles reality. Of particular relevance, this section emphasizes on how the essence of colonization is an interchangeable experience that intrinsically remains the same irrespective of political circumstance.

Consequently, Foster situates Zenzontli within an alternate Los Angeles reality that has been colonized by Europe. He no longer has a rank of influence within the ruling Aztek order, but rather, is portrayed in a disempowered reality that revolves around his job slaughtering pigs at a Farmer John processing factory. He is described as having a family, albeit, a family which appears in a state of dismay. Zenzontli's relationship with his adult son and daughter are strained and, by all indications, appears to be separated or divorced from his wife. Zenzontli lives a rather ordinary, perhaps even mundane life, appearing to be an average Joe with many of the everyday issues often faced by many families. In itself, there is nothing particularly distinct about his experiences in this reality, other than appearing frustrated with his job slaughtering pigs and deteriorated family condition. Taken in the broader context of the novel's alternate reality premise, however, this section not solely highlights a reality largely dominated by Zenzontli's depressed life, but more profoundly, is used to satirize the reader's consciousness as exceedingly ordinary. This is obviously not to infer that the reader's individual experience

is characterized by Zenzontli's specific life circumstance, but rather, is a method used to amplify the dull gist of everyday life. Zenzontli's perspective is hence quotidian, or non-science-fictional, in the sense that he is equally portrayed as unconscious of any alternate reality shifting taking place. Zenzontli frets, "It's the same every Monday, give or take a few details, a few hangovers, a few ghosts who would no longer hail us as we breathed deeply the slaughterhouse reek we no longer noticed. This shit stink was the stench of work, my job—odor of death, pink burnt flesh, taint of dried blood and shit settling on everything like dust, all mixed up with the photochemical smog of the city pulsing around us" (44). The technique used by Foster mutually emphasizes on Zenzontli's unconsciousness to encourage the reader to question his/her own experience in reality, but also, to expose logical reality as artificial while opening a space from which a higher science fiction experience may emerge. Foster thus emphasizes a perpetual anxiety of remaining trapped within a colonized white reality that has no real existential footing or meaning; a confinement that the novel expresses through an isolated corporal existence that appears detached from any higher sense of knowing, purpose or cosmic consciousness.

Zenzontli's strained familial relationships, as well as his job at the pig factory, are therefore utilized to contrast shifts in reality that reflect varying points and levels of consciousness in his life; shifts in perspective that ultimately work to science-fictionalize quotidian reality. For instance, Zenzontli shifts from a morose life into an earlier space and time within that same reality, to a point when his children were small and he had a wife, and was significantly happier. During this scene, as Zenzontli enters his apartment

building at the base of the Chavez Ravine, he describes feeling a strange sensation, "My sense of familiarity felt wrong in some way ... Inserting my key in the door I stepped into the kitchen, and it came to me. This was my old place, the place I'd lived in some time ago. I don't know how many years previous, but it felt like a long time. How was it I had returned?" (30). Zenzontli's shift into an earlier period in his life reveals a consciousness able to transgress the fissures of space and time. This awareness is what begins to establish an existential alien sublime science-fictional consciousness that is able to question the essence of reality. As he enters what should be an empty apartment, he finds dinner waiting for him on the kitchen table, prompting him ask, "But how long had it been since I'd come home to dinner waiting for me?" (30). Making his way to the bedroom he finds his children sleeping in their beds, as well as smells his wife's presence in the room, it was, "the way the apartment had smelled when the wife was living in it ... I realized she was there, nestled warmly under the covers" (30). The next morning as Zenzontli talks with his wife, he continues to perceive reality through the experiencing of consciousness as a simultaneous presence, beyond the logical realm of space and time, "For some reason her empty plastic cup called to mind a time years ago, an empty plastic cup she used to leave on a formica kitchen table when the kids were still living with us, long ago, when we all lived in a rickety apartment ... in Chavez Ravine, above Chinatown" (32). Zenzontli is portrayed in the process of becoming aware that he is moving along points in his life. The move into a higher awareness is subsequently broached by extending his perspective, as he concludes the scene by affirming, "Recently I seemed to have dreamed a dream about it" (33), gesturing to the existence of a higher

dimensional consciousness whose function is to expose coloniality as illusory by mirroring the alternating realities against each other. Namely, by manipulating the perceptual role of the colonizer and the colonized, as well as consciousness and unconsciousness in the science-fictionalizing of reality.

In addition, Foster portrays Zenzontli through a Mexican immigrant perspective as a way to expose coloniality as an illusory reflection. Zenzontli describes his immigrant experience prior to making a life for himself in Los Angeles, "It wasn't easy for me to get a job like this in the meat industry. I wasn't born working in a slaughterhouse. I crossed deserts to get here ... skirting secret borders of forgotten history & identity" (40). The scene goes on to describe the sacrifices and various dangers experienced by immigrants crossing into the U.S., "I sacrificed the Past, relationships & dreams of community ... Lots of people — maybe most — don't make it this far" (40). Situated the context of a reality in which Europe has conquered the Indigenous Aztek world, Zenzontli is made to experience the adverse side of colonization. The scene, hence, reflects a corrupt political reality that connects to the rise of Neoliberalism, which has resulted in the economic exploitation of Indigenous communities from around the globe, working to drive an immigrant labor force into the U.S. Of particular significance, the scene is consistent in mirroring the same trepidations evoked within the dominant Aztek political order, which criticizes a political reality in which corruption works to conceal the genuine essence of empowerment and liberation via "*Existential Stupidness and Korruption*" based on an economic system controlled by elite "*Neoliberal Ekonomists*", which has led to "*Environmental Degradation on a Planetwide Skale, Spiritual Pollution of Key*

Populations, [and the] Aesthetic Destruktion of Our Way of Life" (146). In this way, Foster uses the immigrant experience to underscore a reality in which life is determined by a dehumanizing economic system that further displaces colonized populations that have no choice but to become laborers. Foster emphasizes how, under such conditions, life becomes dictated by an instinct to survive, "When 19 other vatos were asphyxiated in a boxcar locked in the Arizona sun, who you think was the last left alive sucking air out of a tiny rust-hole? Who you think tried hardest to live & go on?" (41). Even more, by the mind's will and perseverance to survive, "I had to keep my mind alive to the multiple chances hidden inside every second. I had to feel the potentiality of the living moment, where every next step could lead to Death or Life" (41). Survival is therefore used by Zenzontli as a medium to discover a higher but concealed cosmic awareness, "There are secret worlds hidden in the air, secret possibilities that can keep you alive in the worst of situations. You got to find them or you may not make it ... Your life depends on it ... I been waylaid, ripped off, lost and turned around, and still I made my way. I offer you suggestions on how to survive" (41). Zenzontli speaks directly to the reader, as if to break from character for a brief moment by suggesting how to survive the forces of colonization, not solely by offering corporeal approaches to survival, but by revealing "secret worlds hidden in the air" which are available to the reader not in the distant past or future point in time, but in the "living moment" as the alien sublime. His understanding of the present moment as a potentiality, where the next move could result in life or death, may subsequently be understood as an expression of a higher cosmic existence; a path towards a reality based on awareness or a path of illusion defined by

ignorance. The immigrant perspective is used to build towards a higher sense of knowing and purpose, as well as to underscore the alienness of existing within a colonized Western reality.

The possibilities into higher planes of existence are expressed through a conscious shift in perspective. Unlike previous shifts wherein Zenzontli is oblivious to higher cosmic dimensions of reality, within this experience in an alternate Los Angeles reality he is depicted as aware of his temporal and spatial location. Foster thereby transforms Zenzontli's Mexican immigrant experience into an inter-dimensional immigrant perspective fully aware of his alternating Aztec origins. Whereas in the previous experience Zenzontli had to cross the desert to work at the slaughterhouse, the Aztec shift in perspective reveals that, "Thru strange coincidence, [he] found a job at the same locale, Farmer John's Meat Company, along with [his] so-called friends" (75). Learning of the social stratification, he asks, "How were we to know they hired illegal Mexikans by the truckload to run the meat processing & packing industry for the entire city, the entire southland region? The whole economy was built upon the backs of our people, so-called illegals" (75). Although the immigrant experience is altered, Zenzontli's shift in perspective is used to expose colonialism as an interchangeable experience, "Lucky for us. We just took our feathers off, shoved them in the pockets of our swapmeet jeans, swabbed our garnish paint off our war faces into a borrowed used snot rag, tied our hair back like lokos from who knows where in our stolen Mongol motorcycle gang jackets, brandishing our tattoos as we filled out the job applications in hieroglyphic Nahua script..." (75). The scene makes reference to colonial histories by which many people

ended up marginalized in the U.S. not because they crossed a border but because the territory, or reality in this case, changed hands. The scene therefore reflects the empowered position of the colonizer in the process of becoming colonized, as Zenzontli's conscious emergence into a reality dominated by Europe subjects him to the economic forces of labor and exploitation. Although he is able to blend into society by simply changing his outward appearance, his Indigenous brown skin relegates him to a subordinate position of labor within the socio-economic stratum of a European colonized reality. Yet his immigrant experience is markedly different in that he is from an alternate reality with an established set of conflicting ideals which are nonetheless fully compatible within European reality, and where adapting to this new reality similarly becomes a mode of surviving the racism, exploitation and corruption innate to coloniality. Emphasizing on this aspect of the subordinate immigrant experience, Zenzontli highlights that, "to no avail [we] never got our paychecks ... needed a vacation all those years, supported the Social Security System with our taxes & our labor..." (76). Although the shift into an alternate colonized reality changed their political circumstance, colonialism remains the dominant practice ... in the end, Zenzontli explains as much, "It didn't matter. Slicing meat was right up our alley ... We were right at home" (76).

Extending on Zenzontli's sense of familiarity slicing meat, the inclusion of pigs in the novel is used as a point from which to further mirror and expose colonial reality. Irrespective of being conscious or unconscious, Zenzontli's experience at the pig factory is arguably the most striking, revealing some of the more gruesome imagery in the novel. Remaining a constant and anchoring element in the story, Foster emphasizes the pigs as a

way to expose the reader's Los Angeles reality. In a sense, to add dimension to the reader's logical, quotidian reality by establishing a portal, so to speak, that encourages the reader to contrast alternate realities as different yet interconnected and the same. Zenzontli's relationship with pigs, therefore, speaks directly to the novel's parallel universe/alternate reality premise by further emphasizing that in a reality colonized by Europe Zenzontli is relegated to the menial economic position of pig slaughterer, while in a reality where the Aztecs are the conquerors he is a mighty warrior that sacrifices the hearts of humans as Engine of Urban Renewal and to secure the "*ekonomik health of the State & entire land*" (145). The shift in perspective is emphasized as an overlapping point, hybrid merging, or intersecting quality, in which difference remains the constant and defining point in reality. This overlapping is the point by which the reader may expose reality as artificial, and in so doing, exposes the Chicano mind as an unconscious consequence of coloniality. As discussed on page 21, cognitive estrangement—an imagined future that remains intelligible, rational, and under the empirical sociopolitical context it is situated all the while remaining strange—, is used, not under the linear, one dimensional space-time configuration of future history, but as method to expose the psychosomatic illusion of future history/space-time as configured by the colonial mind's limited understanding of a higher multi-dimensional reality. As such, Foster utilizes this cognitive estranged interplay to expose a higher multi-dimensional cosmic awareness through the alien sublime.

The sacrifice motif in the novel is thereby used to expound on this interplay. In addition to the symbolic sacrificing of pigs, Zenzontli, unable to practice human sacrifice

due to his disempowered, colonized status, must resort to a non-conventional, simulated form of human sacrifice, "I followed some nobodies down to the back of deserted buildings. I slashed some losers over there on skid row, I killed them where they lay in the dark shadows of the buildings, just to make myself feel at home, reciting ceremonial prayers while the dying men shook involuntarily in spreading pools of blood, sighing out the little death rattle... " (129). Zenzontli attempts to preserve Aztek reality by sacrificing homeless populations. However, he is reduced to the slaughtering of homeless nobodies rather than genuine human hearts with the power to actually change reality. The Heart As Engine of Urban Renewal becomes inept under the rule of a European colonized Los Angeles reality, "The L.A. Times started going on about this "Skidrow Slasher," talking about "mutilated victims," which was insulting ... considering the religious quality of my work, the Surgical Accuracy, the removal of specific glands & bodily organs of special significance at particular points in time... (129). Despite Zenzontli's use of sacrifice to engage with elements of space and time, sacrifice becomes the overlapping point in which the sacrificing of pigs and the homeless populations remain different yet the same. Zenzontli is rendered impotent through the artificial ritual of slaughtering of pigs and homeless populations, and coloniality remains the constant and defining point in reality. The ritual of sacrifice takes place within a pig factory and secretly in the dark alleyways of skid row, thereby becoming a mere mode of surviving colonialism, wherein liberation becomes a mere tool of nostalgia and survival within the political artificiality of colonized space-time, but to assert a deeper consciousness that experiences space-time concurrently; a deeper cosmic consciousness that is initially expressed through

contrasting immigrant experiences, but which inevitably intersect at the Farmer John plant within contemporary Los Angeles reality.

The novel ends as Zenzontli interacts with various characters that similarly penetrate into the Los Angeles reality throughout the plot, his communication with Isaak, who is somehow aware of Zenzontli's incursion into alternate spaces of time, helps to contextualize Zenzontli's ambiguous circumstance. Isaak affirms, "Nita told me where to find you". To which Zenzontli's responds, "I'm on my coffee break, taking a break from the House of Darkness stuff, just for the moment" (181). But the Nita character in particular, initially appearing as a union representative working with Zenzontli to unionize Farmer John workers, helps to make better sense of Zenzontli's shifting condition. Whereas Nita was previously depicted as unaware of the Aztek space-time kontinuum, she reappears as conscious of Zenzontli's place in Aztek reality. Zenzontli describes the meeting, "Nita lowered her voice to a whisper. 'Listen to me, Zenzontli, listen. As Keeper of the House of Darkness, your steps from here on out echo throughout overlapping levels of reality and akross chronologies, parking lots, destinies & pork loin chops'" (184). Of particular importance, she continues by exposing Zenzontli's shifting circumstance as a political transgression, "You figured you were in trouble with some sector of the Party, some figure in the Party, you thot there was some bullshit bureaucratik conspiracy to amputate you and the House of Darkness from access to Party hierarky..." (186). She makes reference to the House of Darkness as "circling elliptically across "Empty Spaces" and "lines blurred and faded by *Distance*" (186). Nita's deconstruction of Zenzontli provides insight to his state of awareness and how it connects

to the novel's alternate reality premise. Nita depicts Zenzontli as disgruntled by the Aztec political establishment suggests that his involvement with The House of Darkness is a deliberate, rebellious exploration into a deeper existential consciousness which is accessed through darkness, otherwise symbolizing an emptiness, which Nita posits is enabled through a "house darkly" "circling elliptically across Empty Spaces" from which interchanging versions of realities emerge within space-time; a consciousness able to transgress the deluded Western psyche.

Zenzontli's alternating existence is therefore determined by an incomplete, illusory, colonial imagination forced to define itself through difference, and which is bent on pursuing freedom through the domination over European reality on the one hand, and a yearning for an unbounded liberation on the other, which Zenzontli does not know how to experience independent of colonial reality. As a result of this incongruity, Nita's discussion on the nature of higher existence forces a dubious contemplation on the genuine essence of Zenzontli's own existence. Subsequently, the space from which the shifting originated is inverted, resulting in the removal of time and space, where there is no point of beginning or end, and there is only the present moment as space consciousness, which is the alien sublime. Each shift is therefore experienced as an awareness that experiences the present moment irrespective of which reality Zenzontli inhabits in space-time. As previously discussed, Nita refers to Zenzontli's shifts as an overlapping point in reality where difference remains the defining point in reality; a merging of perspectives that, in addition to exposing the reader to the fleeting essence of space and time, exposes the political mind as an unconscious outcome of coloniality. As a

result, the reader's responsibility lies in self-realization through discovering a consciousness that is able to identify and distinguish between the perspective of time as a space monopolized by the colonial form, and the underlying consciousness which experience the essence of life simultaneously through the timeless formlessness of the alien sublime, where there is no beginning and no end, no space for colonization, only conscious awareness. Of utmost significance, in making such a revelation, the reader is able to identify the shifting perspective itself as the science fiction consciousness, i.e. the reader is encouraged to discover that he/she is the alien sublime.

Conclusion

Atomik Aztex does not simply use science fiction as a tool to manipulate space and time, but it inculcates science fiction as a genuine existential experience through Zenzontli. *Atomik Aztex's* greatest impact, therefore, is that it interrogates reality by exploring the fundamental nature of cosmic existence by engaging with science fiction to reformulate how prevalent understandings of colonization and the political form may be reinterpreted. Foster encourages a new way of experiencing reality that transcends the hidden limitations imposed by colonizing realities. He changes existence by transforming Indigeneity into a non-political alien sublime consciousness that fundamentally changes the context by which empowerment and liberation may be experienced; a liberation that places emphasis on the essence of coloniality rather than on the circumstances that surround coloniality; a liberation that must begin with the ambiguous quality of not knowing.

CONCLUSION

In its entirety, this project analyzed varying expressions of the alien sublime within Chicana/o science fiction. Formulating a constellation of new techniques, the primary texts are significant in that the respective protagonists are all depicted as perceiving space and time beyond the political context in which they were created; a characteristic evident across the spectrum of this project which infuses them with an ambiguity that drives an instinctive desire to be free from the colonial form... a deep yearning to transcend the limitations imposed by colonial form. In doing so, Chicana/o science fiction encourages us to understand colonialism in a vastly different way. By making science fiction an existential phenomenon, Chicana/o science fiction exposes the political mind as an illusion of coloniality, thereby interrupting the logic of the political world. As such, science fiction is an integral site essential to the goal of profoundly enhancing our knowledge about people of Mexican origin in the U.S. Not only does this speak to the contributions made by Chicana/o science fiction broadly speaking, as well as its impact on scholarship, but more importantly, addresses the genre's deeper implications within the Chicana/o community and the continual quest for social justice, human dignity, as well as genuine empowerment and liberation.

As indicated within the Chapter breakdown section, the primary texts analyzed in this dissertation are not absolute, but fractions within a greater corpus of Chicana/o science fiction generated since the Chicana/o Movement. Within the range of the Chicana/o Movement era, for example, other experimental forms of science fiction are relevant, such as the performance art of Luis Valdez's "*Los Vendidos*" (1967), wherein he

utilizes the popular android/cyborg figure to comment on the exploitation and dehumanization of people of Mexican origin as a labor force. Also, at the vanguard of the Chicano art movement, The Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), an art collective founded by José Montoya and Esteban Villa (1970), produced artwork that may be categorized as evoking science-fictional elements. The Chicano poet, Reyes Cardenas, similarly authored a short story entitled, "*Los Pachucos Y La Flying Saucer*" (1975), in which *pachucos* from the 1940s era make contact with an extra terrestrial female spaceship from another world. The flying saucer learns to speak Spanish, eats Mexican food, and takes them to her flying saucer planet, where after a brief adventure with Pancho Villa, remain stuck in the flying saucer world. With respect to novels, Miguel Méndez's *Pilgrims in Aztlán* (1974) elicits science-fictional qualities by distorting linear space and time as a way to reimagine the U.S. Mexican border as a space of resistance, empowerment and liberation. Lastly, although not overtly about Chicanas/os, Arthur Tenorio's *Blessings from Above* (1971) uses the alien figure to explore contact with humans by evoking themes of colonization, racism and hybridity, first-contact, as well as religion and education.

Moving forward to the post-Movement era, alternate experimental forms of Chicana/o science fiction continued to develop. For instance, *The Rag Doll Plagues* (1992), written by Alejandro Morales manipulates space and time to battle a mysterious plague across three temporalities; Morales science-fictionalizes these temporalities as a means to transcend the mysterious plague, which is allegorized through the colonial invasion of reality. Mario Acevedo's *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats* (2006), science-

fictionalizes the traditional gothic vampire genre by satirizing the atrocities of war in Iraq, as well as the adverse effects that war has on the Chicana/o mind and body. Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita's *Lunar Braceros 2125-2148* (2009), is set in the distant technological future of the twenty-second century. Living on "Cali-Texas" reservations and left with few options to survive economically, Chicana/o laborers referred to as "Moon Tecos" travel to the moon to work as technicians responsible for the disposal of Earth's waste where they are exploited and eventually killed. In another example, Rudy Ch. Garcia's *The Closet of Discarded Dreams* (2012) demonstrates how the obscured surreal reality in the novel functions as a dimensional portal that develops a new, uncharted consciousness which is negotiated through a symbiotic relationship with the Chicano mind and body. Further extending on Ernest Hogan's and Sesshu Foster's Aztec/Indigenous themed science fiction from Chapters Three and Four, respectively, Frank Lechuga's *LOM* series (2015, 2016, 2017) expresses the collapse of globalization and neoliberalism through a cyberpunk-inspired futuristic dystopia influenced by the rise of the Toltec empire. Returning to the Chicano poet, Reyes Cardenas, who is mentioned in the previous Chicana/o Movement era section, also authored a poem titled, *From Aztlan to the Moons of Mars: A Chicano Verse Novella* (2010). Finally, the extensive multimedia and art performance projects of Guillermo Gómez-Peña are significant, particularly his use of science fiction to generate virtual as well as dimensional spaces of resistance intended to disrupt the adverse effects of globalization/colonization against people of Mexican origin.

Chicana/o science fiction is not strictly limited to the medium of literature. Although very modest, there are additional examples of Chicana/o science fiction within the medium of film. For instance, the independent short film, *Odyssey One: Chicanos in Space* (David Rice, 2000) utilizes the time-travel theme as a method to re-articulate political consciousness. Through the atypical depiction of Chicano astronauts, the film expresses a higher consciousness able to shatter the colonial imagination's perception of space and time. Another relevant example is witnessed in the Spanish language science fiction film, *Sleep Dealer* (Alex Rivera 2008). The film is set in the near future dystopia where militarized closed borders have ended physical contact between populations in the U.S. and Mexico. The only means of interaction is through labor, which is no longer physically performed by Mexican immigrants in the U.S., but rather, is digitally transmitted through a technologically sophisticated virtual network that connects to Mexican bodies through the invasive installation of mechanical nodes. Hi-tech factories along the U.S-Mexico border referred to as "Sleep Dealers" connect Mexican workers to the network by plugging into their nervous systems, thereby extracting labor while avoiding biological contact.

Another relevant form of Chicana/o science fiction that should be considered are the roles that that Mexican American actors have played within various mainstream science fiction films and television series', such as the role of the genetically-engineered Khan Noonien Singh played by Ricardo Montalbán in the original Star Trek episode entitled, *Space Seed* (1966-1969), a role he reprised later in the film, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982). Additionally, the role of the racially hybridized Lieutenant Gaff

played by Edward James Olmos in the cult-classic film *Blade Runner* (1982) is also relevant, as is his role as Admiral William Adama in the updated television series, *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). Last but not least, also germane is the role of Chakotay, a character of Native American ancestry played by Robert Beltran in the series *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001).

Moving beyond the casting and representation of Mexican-American actors in science fiction, the directorial work of Jesus Treviño is also significant. In particular, the ways in which Treviño merged his Chicana/o Movement activism with his subsequent role as a distinguished Hollywood director of many popular science fiction television shows, such as *Babylon 5* (1994-1998), *seaQuest DSV* (1993-1996), *Star Trek Voyager* (1995-2001), and *Star Trek Deep Space Nine* (1993-1999), which have the capacity to yield unique insights into the development of Chicana/o science fiction and its critical relationship to mainstream science fiction.⁴⁴

Considering the paucity of Chicana/o engagement with the science fiction genre as a whole, what has been generated over the span of forty to fifty years is certainly diverse in magnitude, and speaks to the complexity of the Chicana/o experience as a whole. The creators of Chicana/o science fiction should be commended not only for expanding what it means to be Chicana/o, but for having the guts to explore beyond the cultural and political limitations imposed by conventional dogmas. As this project has shown, Chicana/o science fiction has significantly broadened/cultivated a new understating for Chicanas/os. Not solely by exploring how Chicanas/os have engaged with science fiction to produce counter-narratives that challenge racially homogeneous

representations of the past, present, and future, but by completely reimagining how Chicanas/os engage with reality. Chicana/o science fiction teaches us that genuine freedom should not be based on rational thinking or praxis, but on the existential quality of the alien sublime. At its core, my entire project essentially comes down to the following axiom: genuine liberation is not a destination. It is a homecoming... a resurrection of the alien sublime.

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¹ Here, I am seeking to link Chicana/o Studies with the tradition of utopianism in science fiction scholarship, i.e., Darko Suvin, Tom Moylan, Fredric Jameson.

² The term Indigenous consciousness is used within a broad-range of interdisciplinary scholarship. It generally refers to the recovery of pre-Colonial bodies of knowledge/culture as method to transform/improve the post-Colonial condition through political activism, feminism, environmental destruction, pedagogy, art, expressive arts, etc. Within the field of Chicana/o Studies specifically, the use of Indigenous consciousness is notably used in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, subsequently discussed in this Introduction (see page 27). Similarly, in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000), Chela Sandoval utilizes Indigenous consciousness to challenge the forces of coloniality.

³ I examine science fiction and the future erasure of people of Mexican origin. See, Valencia, Daniel. "Blade Runner and the Erasure of Mexicans." *Latinos and Latinas at Risk: Issues in Education, Health, Community, and Justice*. Ed. Gabriel Gutiérrez. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2015. 660-73. Print. In addition, Adilifu Nama examines erasure through looking at the black experience. See, *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* (2008)—discussed in more detail in footnote #4.

⁴ The following scholarship is key within the field of race and science fiction generally. In *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space* (2003), De Witt Douglas Kilgore highlights how expressions of technological utopianism during the 19th and 20th centuries turned to the conquest of outer space as a way to propose solutions for significant problems in society. Kilgore argues that subsequent to the Civil Rights Movement, race became the defining index among white male "astrofuturists," which replicated prevailing social attitudes while mutually developing the tools necessary for a critical utopian project imbued by the various libertarian movements of the 20th century.

More recently, the work of Isiah Lavender has made substantial contributions to scholarship. Following the traditions established by Afrofuturism, wherein technoculture has been utilized to generate emancipatory spaces for black communities through the rendering of historical and future existence—see footnote 18, Lavender discusses the genre in terms of its "blackground" in his first book, *Race in American Science Fiction* (2011). He explores the ways in which African Americans have challenged subjugation using science fiction, and goes on to show how traditional understandings of race and racism may be rearticulated by questioning racialized structures within American culture to expose a range of new meanings. Lavender's second book (ed.), *Black and Brown Planets: The Politics of Race in Science Fiction* (2014), is a more diverse endeavor that explores how black and brown writers, namely African Americans, Latinos, and Indigenous peoples, have revised dominant science fiction to imagine alternative technologically advanced futures. The anthology's goal is to cultivate new understandings on how these visions correspond to shifting power dynamics and the decline of the white majority in the Western World.

Criticism has also focused on the mediums of film and television. For example, in *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (1998), Daniel Bernardi shows how, despite its ostensive liberating antiracist ideology, the popular Star Trek franchise nonetheless depicts ethnic minorities in various biased ways. Along this same trajectory, in *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* (2008), Adilifu Nama demonstrates how blackness has been ostensibly omitted from conceptualizations of the future. Blackness and race, as he puts it, "are often present in SF films as narrative subtext or implicit allegorical subject." He goes on to explain how these representations connect to broader cultural politics of race and the "socio-historical space that blackness has occupied in American society" (2).

While the works cited here are by no means exhaustive, they do help to paint an accurate portrait on how science fiction has been utilized to generate new understandings of race, not solely in a U.S. context, but under the greater edifice of an evolving scientific, technological, and globalized existence. At the same time, these examinations have either been too generalized or overwhelmingly processed through the African American experience. Even Lavender's *Black and Brown Planets*, the most diverse text, dedicates a major section to the African American experience, while the brown section is compartmentalized into reduced sections consisting of a wide array of perspectives, i.e. Indigenous, Chicano, and Asian perspectives. The only other Latina/o piece focuses on Brazil, which is ironically based on the Afro experience. I make this point not to challenge the book, but to simply point out the need to expand research within the budding field of race and science fiction. If the primary goal of race and science fiction scholarship is to revise how issues of race connect to social justice, then there must be a more concerted and nuanced deliberation between the science fiction genre and dimensions of race.

⁵ An important step in expanding racial inclusivity is evident in the recent development of Latin American science fiction scholarship. This research is framed under global south perspectives that expose the rich history of engagement with the science fiction genre. U.S. scholars expound on how such works have been deemed unworthy of critical attention by the Western world and long held racist perceptions rooted in biological, scientific and technological supremacy over perceived "uncivilized," and inferior, Latin American countries. As a whole, Latin American scholarship has subsequently been a project of reclamation through the manifestation and relevancy of their existence.

The first major text to explore Latin American science fiction was introduced by Andrea L. Bell and Yolanda Molina-Gavilán. In *Cosmos Latinos: An Anthology of Science Fiction From Latin America and Spain* (2003), they bring together stories from Argentina, Cuba, Brazil, Mexico, and Spain, ranging from the 19th century to the new millennium. Bell and Molina-Gavilán describe these works as "dedicated, energetic communities of SF writers who have consistently produced works with a distinctive regional flavor and style" (3). By and large, *Cosmos Latinos* is clearly designed to be a cursory introduction into the domains of Latin American science fiction, with virtually no analysis of the sociopolitical significance associated with the stories presented.

The next substantial work arrived several years later in *The Emergence of Latin American Science Fiction* (2011), authored by Rachel Haywood Ferreira. Focusing on early science fiction from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, c. 1850 to 1920, Haywood Ferreira explains how writers actively revised dominant European and U.S. science fiction as a way to better reflect their distinct sociopolitical and cultural realities.

Lastly, in *Latin American Science Fiction: Theory and Practice* (2012), M. Elizabeth Ginway and J. Andrew Brown (ed.) analyze how various Latin American authors engage with the genre as a means to express Latin America's "embodied culture that is struggling to reconcile technological advances with continued social disparities resulting from dictatorships and neoliberalist policies within its social fabric" (10). Highlighting Anglo-American science fiction and its colonial legacy, they situate Latin American Science Fiction as a possible alternative for a brighter global future.

Similar to the way scholarship on race and science fiction engages with history as a way to reshape how epistemology and social justice have been traditionally understood, Latin American science fiction scholarship cultivates new visions of reality that highlight Latin America's relevance in the world. Indeed, these examinations are valuable in that they have opened a window to the existence of Latin American science fiction. At the same time, however, wide-ranging examinations such as these have their limitations. Attempting to make sense of Latin America's extensive and complex scope of experience can be exceedingly difficult. Although scholarship may be presented as a cohesive body of work in relation to the global north, it is simultaneously fragmented in that the varying sociopolitical, cultural, and economic experiences particular to each major nation, or region, remains relatively insulated and lacking deep analyses under the complexity and exclusivity of experience.

So, again, while Latin American scholarship is valuable because it offers new unbridled perspectives that challenge dominant Western representations of the genre, it does not operate under the exclusive context of race and science fiction in the U.S. Although there are discernible connections among all Latin American communities, variations of the Spanish language being the most obvious, Latinas/os in the U.S. have unique sociopolitical and cultural dispositions that must be considered. And since the science fiction produced in Latin America has been strictly written in Spanish, it does not accurately represent the distinct bicultural, sociocultural, and political experiences of Latina/o populations living in the U.S. Even so, Latin American Science Fiction is often mischaracterized as epitomizing all Spanish-speaking experiences regardless of geopolitics.

As a matter of fact, to date there has been no major criticism that focuses on Latina/o science fiction from a U.S. perspective. This is partly due to a deficiency in the production of Latino speculative and science fiction, but also due to its relegation to the categories of fantasy or magical realism, which again, speaks to control and regulating what science fiction *should be*. Matthew David Goodwin's *Latino/a Rising: An Anthology of U.S. Latino/a Speculative Fiction* (2017) is the first book to assemble the works of U.S. Latina/o writers, poets, and artists in an attempt to expand the parameters of Latina/o science fiction. Although not comprised of academic criticism, the anthology is

nonetheless a positive step in the development of Latina/o speculative and science fiction scholarship in the U.S. Another encouraging step is witnessed in the prominence of Dominican-American writer, Junot Díaz, and his highly acclaimed, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), which is often recognized as the incarnation of Latin America's engagement with science fiction in the context of the U.S.

A few moments ago I made the point that Latinas/os in the U.S. have unique sociopolitical and cultural dispositions independent of the broader Latin American experience. By that same token, the term Latina/o in the U.S. encompasses a wide array of experiences that cannot be homogeneously represented. In the same way that the white U.S. experience is distinct from a much broader European experience, the Chicana/o experience is distinct from a much broader and complex U.S. Latina/o experience. Yet whereas white populations have willingly detached themselves from identification under a particular European ethnicity, thereby creating a uniform U.S. English speaking identity that is largely contingent upon the institutionalization of white supremacy and privilege, Latinas/os that have experienced the dehumanizing effects of colonization under white supremacy are not so willing to give up their ethnic heritage for a broader categorization.

The point being, Chicana/o identity is similar yet different from Latina/o identity. The term "Chicana/o" has generally been an expression central to the Mexican experience in the U.S.; moreover, it is a self-designated political identity introduced at the height of the Civil Rights Movement intended to empower people of Mexican origin against the legacy of colonization and white supremacy. As a result, members from the Chicana/o community do not typically identify as "Hispanic" or "Latino." The Chicana/o's rejection of the Hispanic and Latin American classification has been an imposition consistent with historical practices of racializing people of Mexican origin in the U.S. Although these terms have become normalized and relatively accepted as all-encompassing idioms within various U.S. institutions, the designation ultimately deprives Chicana/os of the right to acknowledge their distinct racial and cultural heritage, which includes Spanish and Indigenous *mestizo* origins. In fact, many Chicanas/os outright reject these labels because they evoke a Spanish/European ancestry that discounts meaningful connections to Indigenous/Mesoamerican roots, a concern stemming from the crucible of the Chicana/o Movement and the creation of a new Indigenous-centered political identity and consciousness. So then, Chicanas/os are distinct because they personify a substantial sociocultural, historical, and political experience in the U.S. Yet even within this general experience, Chicanas/os equally embody a wide gamut of experiences and perspectives. Subsequently, Chicanas/os have empowered themselves to determine a particular mode of existence both inside and outside of the Chicana/o world, with the freedom to identify as they choose, in a land they recognize as innately, home. It is within this spirit of malleability and self-empowerment that I engage with to better formulate a critical understanding of the Chicana/o experience as integral to this higher mode of consciousness. It is under this expansive pulse of the Chicana/o experience joined with the power of science fiction that this dissertation project advances.

⁶ The megatext is a term used by scholars to describe the conventional tropes used in science fiction as a genre. The idea is established by Damien Broderick in *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*. Routledge (1995).

⁷ This project extends on Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's contextualization of science fiction beyond set genre conventions. He engages with science fiction as a living, existential process, or mode of awareness that intimately informs the human condition and how reality is activated and perceived.

⁸ This may be attributed to several factors. For instance, although the Chicano Movement was a pivotal juncture in attempting to generate a strong unified front against repression, inevitably there were profound ideological disagreements about what should constitute a "Chicano" (García 9, Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vásquez 44). In addition, Chicana/o Studies is a fairly new discipline, only a few decades into development. Another factor is witnessed in the systemic legacy of exclusion people of Mexican origin have experienced within the domains of cultural production and academia. With respect to academia, despite the initial push and subsequent growth of Chicana/o Studies, a significant gap persists between people of Mexican origin and Latina/os as compared to white populations in higher education—Rodolfo Acuña provides an incredibly detailed account on the history and development of Chicana/o Studies in, *The Making of Chicana/o Studies: In the Trenches of Academe* (2011). There has also been a severe deficiency of Mexican-American professors with PhDs in the university system at a meager 0.2%—See, Alejandro Covarrubias' "Quantitative Intersectionality: A Critical Race Analysis of the Chicana/o Educational Pipeline" (2011)—despite a well-established historical presence and prominence of people of Mexican origin in the U.S. This, combined with a general sense of negligibility experienced by Chicana/os in the genre, has unfortunately resulted in a lack of experimentation and research development, and as a result, very little critical interest has been generated on how the Chicana/o community has engaged with the speculative apertures offered by the science fiction genre and the role of Chicana/o culture and social justice.

⁹ This is witnessed in several works that attempted to construct the emerging Chicano nation through historical, Indigenous centered mythological impressions. For example, Sergio Elizondo's *Perros y Antiperros* (1972), Alurista's *Floricanto en Aztlán* (1971), Miguel Méndez' *Los Criaderos Humanos* (1975), and Rodolfo Gonzales' epic poem, *Yo Soy Joaquín* (1967) being prime examples of popular militant poetry that attempted to construct a unified cultural identity; the last being a major catalyst of the era's revolutionary fervor.

¹⁰ Canonization was solidified with the introduction of the Quinto Sol (Age of the Fifth Sun) national literary prize (1971-1975), which was established by a handful of Chicanas/os in academia; the first independent Chicana/o publishing house based out of UC Berkeley, Quinto Sol became the center of intellectual and literary production that

strictly focused on disseminating the writings of Chicana/o authors. For a detailed account on the cultural politics of Quinto Sol, see: López, Dennis. "Good-Bye Revolution—Hello Cultural Mystique: Quinto Sol Publications and Chicano Literary Nationalism" (2010).

¹¹ See Moraga, Cherríe. *Loving in the War Years: Lo Que Nunca Pasó Por Sus Labios* (1983); Moraga, Cherríe and Anzaldúa, Gloria. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1984); Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987); Arredondo, Gabriela et al. *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader* (2003).

¹² The term was initially introduced in "Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez" (Aztlán, 2004).

¹³ He highlights that Mexican and Chicano writers challenge both Mexico's and Latin America's emulating of the Western model of modernity.

¹⁴ More specifically, he writes, "While in the early modern age the territories of the Americas had provided both material and imaginary resources for the emergence of capitalism, in the industrial age, images of technology displaced the pastoral utopia..." (3).

¹⁵ Although the Golden Age of science fiction played a significant role in expanding the alien figure within popular culture, including through film, it was preceded by the 1930s Pulp era—named after the inexpensive pulp paper used in printing magazines. The alien made frequent appearances in stories during this period of scientific and technological uncertainty, however, they did not meaningfully engage with concerns specific to social transformation. This period is also credited for introducing the "Space Opera," a form of interplanetary, interstellar or intergalactic adventure fiction (rocket ships and ray guns, etc.).

¹⁶ The Golden Age of science fiction also served as catalyst in generating racial divisions in cities across postwar America. Facilitated through a perceived threat of the alien Other prominently depicted in films such as, *Them!* (1954); *War of the Worlds* (1953); *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956); *It Came From Outer Space* (1953); and *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (1957), Eric Avila illustrates how, paralleling a collusion of federal policy, millions of white Americans took to new suburban communities to preserve their whiteness ("Dark City" 88). The message in these films also coincided with perceived threats from communism and nuclear war.

¹⁷ See, Rob Latham, "The New Wave" (from *The Blackwell Companion to Science Fiction*, 2005), and "New Worlds and the New Wave in Fandom: Fan Culture and the Reshaping of Science Fiction in the Sixties" (from *Extrapolation*, Summer 2006).

¹⁸ With respect to the alien broadly, Wolmark challenges the way "Science fiction provides a rich source of generic metaphors for the depiction of otherness, and the 'alien' is one of the most familiar: it enables difference to be constructed in terms of binary oppositions which reinforce relations of dominance and subordination" (2). She bases her analysis on "the ways in which feminist science fiction addresses questions of subjectivity, identity and difference, and challenges the dual definition of the 'alien' as other and of the other as always being alien" (2). Wolmark uses feminist science fiction to explore "possibilities for alternative and non-hierarchical definitions of gender and identity within which the difference of aliens and others can be accommodated rather than repressed" (2).

In addition, Elisa Edwards explores how African American science fiction writers have used the alien figure to launch a new dialogue into how racism functions and is understood. She examines the work of Derrick Bell, Octavia Butler, and Walter Mosley to demonstrate how these writers resituate the alien figure away from traditional depictions based on the other towards an alien that forces white supremacy to confront and acknowledge its racism. Edwards essentially argues that Bell, Butler, and Mosley, all work to hold white hegemony accountable for the continued justification and displacement of racism onto an alien entity that is held responsible for the violation of human rights against ethnic populations (3).

The emergence of "Second-Wave" feminism (1960s-1970s) similarly used the alien as a source of social justice and empowerment. Although several prominent authors of this period expressed the white female experience as a form of alienness— Ursula Le Guin and Joanna Russ, for instance—the most obvious example of this is witnessed in Alice Sheldon's (James T. Tiptree) *The Women Men Don't See* (1973), wherein the female protagonist is depicted as choosing to leave with aliens from distant worlds rather than remain in an oppressive society controlled by men.

¹⁹ He highlights the transition from ethnic stereotypical representations of the Latina/o as now being expressed through to the science fiction genre and the sympathetic alien.

²⁰ For instance, Alan Gregory states, "Insofar as science fiction inherited sublimity and developed its own expressions of sublime discourse, the genre also became part of the sublime's theological history. Science fiction has, therefore, not only taken up the religious language of sublimity, imagining the field of space as a sensorium for wonder and investing machines with intimations of an ultimate transcendence, it has also contested the claim that God, specifically the God of Christianity, is 'of all the objects of human contemplation by far the most sublime'" (8). In this way, he suggests that science fiction is paradoxical since it relies upon the sublime in Christianity while simultaneously challenging it. Further, Gregory argues that because "The subliming of Christianity" subverted and secularized the doctrine of Christianity itself, science fiction's reshaping of the sublime is also distorted (8). As a result, he posits, "Much science fiction may be read as a dispute with Christian theology over the authentically sublime. There is, however, a

twist. The subliming of Christianity... also subverted Christianity, secularizing Christian theology so that, for example, the “book of Nature” was separated from and displaced the “book of Revelation,” of Scripture. Science fiction, therefore, has very largely worked with a profoundly flawed imaginative schema for Christianity" (8).

For an in-depth understanding of the theological sublime see: *Religion In Science Fiction: The Evolution Of An Idea & The Extinction Of A Genre* (Steven Hrotic, 2014); *Religion and Science Fiction* (James F. McGrath (Editor), 2011); *Holy Sci-Fi!: Where Science Fiction And Religion Intersect* (Paul J Nahin, 2014); *The Religion Of Science Fiction* (Frederick A. Kreuziger, 1986); *Apocalypse And Science Fiction: A Dialectic Of Religious And Secular Soteriologies* (Frederick A. Kreuziger, 1982); *The Transcendent Adventure: Studies Of Religion In Science Fiction/Fantasy* (Robert Reill, 1985).

Although not explicitly focused on religion, also see: *Sacred Space: The Quest for Transcendence in Science Fiction Film and Television* (Douglas E. Cowan, 2010); *The World Beyond the Hill: Science Fiction and the Quest for Transcendence* (Alexei and Cory Panshin, 1990, 2010). "The first half deals with how and why the myths of science fiction have changed their focus over the last few centuries. The second half gives a vivid portrait of the editor John W. Campbell working with his stable of writers—Asimov, DeCamp, Heinlein, and Van Vogt—to create the Golden Age of modern science fiction from 1939 to 1946" (Katherine Thorp, St. Louis Univ. Lib.)

²¹ For an overview of African-American science fiction before WWII see, "Revolutionary African-American Sf Before Black Power" (Mark Bould, 2010). In addition, Gregory E. Rutledge highlights that the popular new wave science fiction novel, usually not considered black power science fiction, *Babel-17* (1968) written by Samuel R. Delany, subtly reflects core features of black power ideology, "for it shared the prevailing Black revolutionary ideology and self-determination fervor shaping the Black community" (129).

²² For an in-depth account on Afrofuturism see: Lisa Yaszek's "Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future" (2006); Mark Bould's "The Ships Landed Long Ago: Afrofuturism and Black SF" (2007); Ytasha Womack's *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* (2013); and De Witt Douglas Kilgore's "Afrofuturism" (2014).

²³ While technically speaking, anyone may be considered Indigenous under this interpretation of Indigeneity, this project's main focus is to show how the subordination of colonized populations necessitates the shattering of artificial reality, not to emphasize on the colonial imagination's construction of its own illusory existence, nor on the construction of artificial reality.

²⁴ Here I am using the term alien in the traditional sense... meaning strange, unfamiliar, or foreign. It is not to be confused with my theorization of the alien sublime.

²⁵ For a detailed analyses highlighting the process of racialization see, Rodríguez Domínguez, Víctor M. "The Racialization of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans: 1890s-1930s" (2005).

²⁶ Although Lee acknowledges that Puerto Ricans established political networks with Native American and Mexican American communities, the examination specifically focuses on the connections between Puerto Rican and African Americans.

²⁷ With the exception of feminist perspectives, most scholarship focusing on movements of social justice do not emphasize on internal modes of discord that contradict the aspirations of equality and liberation exhorted.

²⁸ Grounding *Afro-6's* black and brown militant premise in historical experience, Chicano militants worked closely with the paramilitary Black and Brown Berets, as well as established ties with members of the Black Power Movement in order to explore possibilities beyond their respective nationalisms despite political differences in how they deployed culture into the fight for autonomy. Primarily initiated by Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, the Black Power Movement called for self-defense, political autonomy, and the end to institutional racism through political militancy. This ideological current was also rooted in black pride and self-determination ingrained in the traditions of Black Nationalism. Their primary goal was to govern their own destiny with the right to overthrow any government that attempted to oppress them in order to guarantee their future well-being. The realization of these goals rested upon armed rebellion typically attributed to the Black Panther Party. See: Ogbar, Jeffrey Ogbonna Green. *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (2004); Joseph, Peniel E. *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (2006); and Joseph, Peniel E. *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (2006).

As a way to better solidify a cross-racial alliance, prominent Black Power and Chicano Liberation Movement activists gathered at the Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Hosted by perhaps the most vociferous Chicano militant of all, Reyes Tijerina, largely recognized as the leader of the New Mexico land grant struggle, the unprecedented gathering proved constructive in that it resulted in the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance (1967). Mostly a symbolic gesture, the treaty outlined several key points for the continued partnership between the two groups in their common fight against oppression (Behnken 1, Vigil 42). Brian Behnken effectively points out that, "The Albuquerque meeting and the subsequent 'Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance' represented a curious moment in the history of race relations between Mexican American and African American people. Indeed, the treaty that seemed to epitomize the often-contradictory attitudes of black people towards those of Mexican origin, and of Mexican American toward those of African Americans. On the other hand, the effort to bridge two of the most powerful ethnic movements in the United States was an endeavor rooted in the activism of the

time, one that recognized the potential strength of a united struggle, the similarities of two oppressed and segregated groups, and the power of the oppositional forces arrayed against the Black and Chicano Power movements" (3).

In addition, instances of interracial alliances were not limited to militant black and brown power movements. Stretching beyond the sphere of militant coalition building, alternative political philosophies also played a meaningful role in advancing a multiracial political force. Introduced in 1967 by Martin Luther King, the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) sought to transform the African American and Civil Rights Movement into a larger, class-based fight for human rights by forming alliances with whites, people of Mexican origin, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans. The goal was to march on Washington in the spring of 1968 in an attempt to reinvigorate the social justice movement. Gordon Mantler explains that although the attempted alliance served to highlight disparities rooted in respective cultural and political experiences, including strategies on how to best achieve social transformation, "such class-based cooperation 'captured the imagination' of many marchers, leading to numerous instances of interethnic, interracial bonding." Mantler continues by stating that the PPC resulted in several important outcomes, "the most prominent being its contributions to the then-burgeoning Chicano movement. The time spent by activists of Mexican descent in Washington helped build and deepen relationships with each other. In turn, these experiences empowered individuals, complicated their analyses, and strengthened the interregional networks that became the backbone of the Chicano struggle into the 1970s" (182). Notwithstanding the move away from race centered political strategies, "Chicano activists responded with great enthusiasm..." (180) and were very receptive to the possibility for a new collective political consciousness. The conference transformed the ways Chicanos thought of social transformation, and "also credited the conference with opening their eyes to new strategies and facilitating new connections" (184). Irrespective of whether or not the vast majority of Chicanos remained within the ethnic confines of their political and cultural origins, these efforts are indicative of the receptiveness of many Chicana/os to broader modes of political expression, which has only recently been explored by scholarship. Also see: Kun, Josh, and Laura Pulido. *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition* (2014); and Pulido, Laura. *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (2006).

²⁹ The high casualty rate among soldiers of Mexican origin in Vietnam is well documented within Chicana/o Studies scholarship. For recent examinations focusing on the Chicano experience in Vietnam see, *Raza Si, Guerra No: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Lorena Oropeza, 2005); *Soldados Razos at War: Chicano Politics, Identity, and Masculinity in the U.S. Military from World War II to Vietnam* (Steven Rosales, 2018).

³⁰ The novel's re-release is re-titled *Victuum: Aguila Descalsa "The Barefooted Eagle"* (2011) and consists of three pain parts.

³¹ For example, although at one point in the story the family had the economic means to live in a better neighborhood, he insisted on living amongst his own Mexican people (61). In another passage, she expresses her father's anger and frustration at the implications of the "Spanish flu." She states, "Father was angry because the government called it the Spanish flu. He proclaims, "Yes, yes leave it to these gringos to find some other nationality to blame for their wretched diseases! ... Such times...such hard times, he would say!" (104). There is also an example of criticism on the biased representations of Mexicans in the media (114).

³² *Indigenismo* is a term widely used in Latin America. Generally speaking, it emphasizes on the historical relationship between the Indigenous people of the Americas and colonialism in a political context that is contingent on distinct circumstances within the broader, diverse experience in Latin America. In this project, *Indigenismo* is utilized in the context of the Chicana/o experience.

³³ The seminal Chicano poem "I Am Joaquin" written by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales exemplifies the emergence of Chicano hybrid ideology during this period.

³⁴ Similar to *Indigenismo*, the Bronze Race (*La Raza de Bronce*) is a term utilized across Latin America to express the forces of racial mixture resulting from colonization, i.e., *mestizaje*.

³⁵ The Crusade for Justice founded by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales was a major force in the proliferation of pro-Indigenous philosophy. Based out of Denver, Colorado, the organization inspired Chicanas/os to action through *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (1969), a manifesto that called for higher education as means towards independence and a new Chicano *Aztlán* homeland. The Crusade also founded *La Raza Unida*, a national political party that rejected mainstream politics and reiterated goals of self-determination. Through the homily of brown pride, the organization sought to instill people of Mexican origin with a sense of cultural and human dignity, with the right to exist not solely in the past, but long into the future. Altogether, the Crusade challenged economic disparities, the war in Vietnam, police brutality, and educational inequities, and had a pivotal influence within the Chicano Movement by inspiring action against oppressive forces throughout the Southwestern U.S. For a more detailed understanding of Chicana/o Nationalism, see: Vigil, Ernesto B. *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (1999); Alaniz, Yolanda, and Megan Cornish. *Viva La Raza: A History of Chicano Identity and Resistance* (2008); García, Ignacio M. *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (1997); and Haney-López, Ian. *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (2003).

³⁶ An anti-hegemonic style of science fiction that extended scientific and technological elements within science fiction by developing techno-cultural themes of artificial

intelligence and virtual realities usually set in dystopian futures often controlled by mega-corporations.

³⁷ See, *Chicano Graffiti and Murals: The Neighborhood Art of Peter Quezada* (Sojin Kim and Peter Quezada, 1996); *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Guisela Latorre, 2008); *Street Art of Resistance* (Sarah H. Awad, Brady Wagoner (2019).

³⁸ For a more detailed examination of MKUltra, see, *Mind Wars: A History of Mind Control, Surveillance, and Social Engineering by the Government, Media, and Secret Societies* (Marie D. Jones and Larry Flaxman, 2015)—Chapter three.

³⁹ For an in-depth examination focusing on the techno-utopian positivist perspective see, Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.

⁴⁰ Day of the Dead (*El Dia de Los Muertos*) is a significant Mexican/Chicano celebration that traditionally honors the lives of loved ones that have passed. The holiday is held on October 31st, November 1st and 2nd. For a more detailed account see, Marchi, Regina M. *Day of the Dead in the USA: The Migration and Transformation of a Cultural Phenomenon*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2009. Print.

⁴¹ Here, the novel is referring to the future hybridized fifth race envisioned in José Vasconcelos' renowned, *La Raza Cosmica/The Cosmic Race*, which is previously discussed in *High Aztech*.

⁴² See, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead: The Day of the Dead in Mexico and Beyond* (Stanley Brandes, 2007).

⁴³ Although it is true that the Aztec Empire amassed power through the annexation of various Indigenous groups throughout Mesoamerica, Aztec imperialism may be differentiated in that it did not rely on indoctrination in the process of colonization. In this sense, the Indigenous world remained fundamentally Indigenous, or whole, irrespective of who held institutional power. There was no invading force that actively sought to obliterate/assimilate Indigenous culture/civilization from existence and replacing reality with an ideal of white supremacy based on the making of racial difference. In this respect, there was no indoctrination necessary, only compliance by the subordinate groups within an already established Indigenous worldview. This point is not to infer that the subordinate populations under Aztec rule did not suffer or experience violence, but is solely intended to highlight that the European invasion of Indigenous reality functioned as a genocidal and indoctrinating force. Moreover, I make this point with the understanding that placing moral judgments, or imposing my ideological views upon a

pre-conquest Indigenous civilization, which has been essentially erased from existence is, in itself, a form of bias.

⁴⁴ For more detailed on this aspect of Chicana/o science fiction, Treviño's papers are housed at UC Riverside's Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy. The papers explore how his political commitments were integrated into his directorial choices when working in the genre.