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Latinidades and the Repository Function of the Poetic

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by

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Dedication

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation's critical nexus—the intersection of archival theory, archival practice, and poetics—is directly concerned with the poetic original and its flowerings, with attention to their archival functions in a contemporary context. Reading the poetic as a type of Anzaldúian narrative nepantla allows for the exploration of cultural and sociopolitical tensions that force the creation of a transformative space. My use of the term narrative nepantla is drawn from Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of the nepantla as a borderland in-between state which is the product of cultural and sociopolitical othering. I am relating narrative to nepantla space in order to situate my research on Latin American poetics within fringe, de-centered, border-oriented perspectives which articulate the violence of their own genesis. Critically reading hybrid texts which translate the poetic into variant mediums is part of the process of inscribing official history with a spectrum of counter-histories which have resisted erasure. Like an archival document or object in a museum or government office, the poetic is a part of a larger system of production and sociocultural reality—but the poetic does not depend on an institutionally mandated call for collection and cataloguing. This dissertation addresses Latin American perspectives

which are often tethered to traumatic events past, cultural erasure, and contemporary sociopolitical crises on a paradoxically personal-public scale. Ethnic minority counter-histories, art movements, testimonies, and ceremonial practices are in danger of erasure due to the lack of efforts to identify and preserve. Critically reading and researching the realities manifest in the narrative nepantla poetic, using decolonizing methodologies, may mitigate the erasure of racialized and marginalized American histories which are decolonizing systems of knowledge. Poetic discourse can be accessed and understood in critical terms that orient the spectrum of poetic form toward a decolonized reality. These chapters touch upon works by Julia de Burgos, Maceo Montoya, and Luis Valdez. Works by Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg are also explored in relation to Gloria Anzaldua's poetics in *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

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Introduction

The argument in this dissertation is divided into four primary parts. Chapter one argues that the repository function of the poetic is that it allows for borderland perspectives to exist in relation to paradoxical modes of discourse. I call such archival spaces narrative nepantlas, as they archive a bordered and othered perspective which is contending with the inexpressible. Chapter two argues that hybrid poetics which archive the counter-historical are a product of translatability. The elements which allow for re-signification from medium to medium is the poetic. Chapter three argues that the "Indian" trope assumes the erasure of an actual Indian body. Gloria Anzaldúa's embodied "poetics Americana" serve to reclaim the brown body and its indigenous reality. Her poetry decolonizes the "Indian" trope. In chapter four, I argue that Luis Valdez' *Zoot Suit* uses pachuco poetics to disrupt and destabilize a status quo conception of Chicana/o/x reality. Valdez uses pachuco poetics to render a hybrid and decolonizing system of symbols and histories which directly contradict the official record of actual real-life events. Collectively, these chapter-oriented argumentative points serve to support my central thesis: The poetic can hold the breath of marginalized epistemic perspectives in language, visual art form, and music. The poetic delivered from marginalized, fringe-oriented perspectives should be understood as a natural resource for decolonization. In addition to challenging the validity of official records which are designed to support the colonially rooted power of a Euro-American status quo, such poetics support the social justice and consciousness raising work needed in an increasingly anti-Latina/o/x, authoritarian and xenophobic America.

The focus of chapter one is the Western oriented conception of archives and poetics, as they may relate to our conception of history, space, and authority. Understanding the archive as a tradition which is deeply connected to political power, social norms, and the process of acquiring, cataloguing, preserving, and assessing documents (and the offices or people which produce them) is the beginning of being able to change the purpose and conception of "the archive." While my research does not attempt to reconceive of government archives and institutional archives relating to legal systems and economic transactions, it does attempt to reorient the conception of the archive toward the inclusion of perspectives in danger of erasure from the ethos of our communities. The project of cultural preservation is widely supported outside of the United States, where there are archaeological sites and buildings which represent empires and epistemic perspectives long past. However, in the United States, the project of cultural preservation at an intellectual, metaphysical, and material level is often the work of community organizations, regional non-profits, and academic institutions. When sites like Chavez Ravine are razed to build Dodger Stadium, the remnants of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop become diasporic. There are photographs, police and legal documents, and the family members of the displaced who may have memorized their family's story of Chavez Ravine. Somewhere, there may be journals from residents that narrate their experience. None of these documents, objects, oral stories, private papers, or ephemera are in one central archive. There is no museum which is dedicated to the preservation of Chavez Ravine at a material or metaphysical level. There is no site to preserve, unless you count the Dodgers home plate as "home" in another sense. The best

archives of Chavez Ravine are musical and dramatic: Ry Cooder's *Chavez Ravine* and Culture Clash's *Chavez Ravine*. These works, one musical and one dramatic, each have elements of the poetic, through lyric and monologue. They may not be "true," and they may not archive "things" from Chavez Ravine, but they do hold the epistemic perspective and counter-cultural histories which are unique to the three barrios. The purpose of chapter one's exploration of theoretical underpinnings in relation to "the archive" is to demonstrate that critically reading the archival function of the poetic is one way to advocate for counter-historical perspectives which are often erased, obscured, or bull-dozed over in the interest of financial and political gain. I also define my conception of the poetic and the narrative nepantla, as they are the primary ingredients of decolonizing poetics.

Chapter two considers hybrid texts which contend with translatable poetics and their unique ability to render the counter-historical in embodied terms through the spiritus, or breath of the poetic from speaker to reader. Research on Julia de Burgos' *Cancion de la verdad sencilla* and *El mar y tu* gives us insight to Taino indigeneity, Afro-Latinidad, Puerto Rican diaspora, and the Puertorriqueña palimpsests the poet carved into and created. Research on Maceo Montoya's use of form in *Letters to the Poet from his Brother* speak to the legacy of Chicano arts and activism, and to the systems of racism and oppression which continue to other brown bodies. Texts from de Burgos and Montoya contend with the poetic in visual and linguistic form, which allows for a

collaborative discourse unique to a multimedium poetic. As narrative nepantlas, their works serve to archive the counter-historical realities of Latinidades in an American context.

In chapter three, I consider the trope of the "Indian" from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, to Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: A New Mestiza*. Reading these three texts as archives not only compels an against-the-grain reading of Whitman and Ginsberg's works, but an against-the-grain conception of the American melting pot project. Reading these works in conjunction with one another show that the "Indian" has been located in the American imaginary, or literary discourse, as a ghost. The revitalizing work Anzaldúa produced corrects some of this erasure, though it is from an indigenous Chicana perspective. Poets of the Native American Renaissance and after have explored indigeneity from a sovereign tribal perspective, which makes their works both counter-historical and subversive in epistemic terms. Native survivance has insisted on the recovery of autonomous forms of validation which subvert some of the power dynamics of genocide and colonization. The problem of mestizaje is that it is derived from a new world project designed to subsume the indio into a new Spanish race. My focus is on Anzaldúa in this chapter because she directly contends with this erasure.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I explore Luis Valdez' *Zoot Suit* as a case study for counter-historical poetics which are derived from "official history" in a direct and narrative-oriented way. Not only does Valdez employ a translatable poetic through an array of medium types, but he does so in order to directly contradict the official

record. And, in the course of this work, he remembers the pachuco patois captured in Lalo Guerrero's music for a new generation. While *Zoot Suit* has been the subject of scholarly works in the past, there has not been a focused exploration of its pachuco poetics. This mode of critical engagement has led to a new understanding of the musical-drama as a project which overtly seeks to decolonize the Pachucada, Chicanada, and Latinidades at-large.

The purpose of this dissertation is to begin a longer project on ethnic American poetics and archives. In order to read the archival function of the poetic, and understand what it "does" or "can do," scholars must continue to decolonize their methodological perspective and allow texts to be their own theoretical guide. The content of chapter one is necessary for the framing of this research, but it was compiled subsequent to reading the subject texts touched upon in chapters two through four. This work focuses largely on iterations of Latinidad, which include queer, African, and indigenous realities. Originally, I had started this dissertation with the intent to touch upon poetics from Native American, African American, Asian American, Middle Eastern, and Jewish American writers. However, beginning this project served to highlight the need to confer each epistemic perspective and each system of cultural reality with the attention necessary to follow the text to its historical, material, textual, and cultural referent. Reading poetics as an archive in its own right is time-consuming, as it negates first impressions. Engaging with a text in order to locate precisely what it is recovering, remembering, or contradicting means that a brief foray into its archival function could serve to undermine its potential "work" in a contemporary context. As I continue to

research these other Americas, my intention is to also work with an interdisciplinary group of archivists, scholars, and community advocates to develop new ways of preserving American cultures which decolonize archival science, literary scholarship, education, and social justice work.

Chapter 1
The Articulation of Emptiness

In our grief we beat the walls of adobe,
and our only legacy was a net of holes.
On our shields was our protection:
but not even shields can hold such emptiness.
We have eaten sticks of firewood,
we have chewed salted grass,
adobe stones, mice, dust ground from the earth, even the maggots.
All this came to pass with us.
-Excerpt from "And All was Destroyed"[1]

Narrative Nepantla and the Poetic

Poetry is kinetic. It remains in motion, catapulting into new terrains, long after the original author has written or uttered each syllable in their own tongue. This dissertation's critical nexus—the intersection of archival theory, archival practice, and poetics—is directly concerned with the poetic original and its flowerings,[2] with attention to their archival functions in a contemporary context. This focus is the result of reading without privileging one epistemic perspective over another. Reading in this manner allowed me to erase the borders between eras of American literary works, between schools of critical thought, and between epistemological systems of time and knowing.

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[1] From a fragment of a Nahuatl poem recounting the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan, collected in 1528 by Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún. Translated by David Guss into English from the Spanish translation by Miguel Angel Asturias in *Poesia precolombina* and Angel M. Garibay K. in *La literatura de los aztecas*.

[2] See Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator": "The history of the great works of art tells us about their antecedents, their realization in the age of the artist, their potentially eternal afterlife in succeeding generations. Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter come into being when in the course of its survival a work has reached the age of its fame…The life of the originals attains in them to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering" (73).

The development of new, critical borders concerned with archival theory and poetic form have informed the reading and re-reading of subject texts for this project; but, the primary gain from reading in this manner has been the elucidation of epistemological paradoxes and limitations that exist in what Gloria Anzaldúa would have called a nepantla. In "Exploring Nepantla, el Lugar de la Frontera," Anzaldúa explains: "Nepantla is the Nahuatl word for an in-between state, that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another, when changing from one class, race or gender position to another, when traveling from the present identity into a new identity" (63). Reading the poetic as a type of nepantla is what called my attention to its repository function.

The cultural and sociopolitical tensions that force the creation of a nepantla space can be articulated via the poetic. Accordingly, the nepantla space of a storyteller-artist-poet has a repository function—it is the literary equivalent of an archival-grade box (containers which protect items from degradation[3]) or *fonds* (the archived collection of documents produced by an individual or organization[4]). The poetic holdings within the textual nepantlas that this dissertation explores are indicative of their fringe, de-centered, border-oriented nature. In some cases, the medium of language and the form of the line

[3] An archival-grade box is acid-free, and it protects the contents from light, dust, and dirt.

[4] See *Processing the Past* by Blouin and Rosenberg. In "Authoritative History and Authoritative Archives," they identify the 1898 *Dutch Manual* as the source of the term *fonds* from the concept of "*réspect des fonds*." The nineteenth century archival science book argued that the archivist was duty-bound "to respect the organic link between the documents and the activity that produced them." In practice today, archivists refer to the entirety of a collection produced by an organization or family—which may have sub-*fonds*, series, sub-series, files, and documents—as a *fonds*. Generally, an archive assembled by an individual collector is not referred to as a *fonds*.

bleeds into visual territories of expression. The subject texts discussed in these chapters show that as the poetic can populate and express emptiness with the turbulence and ferocity that has forced one into a nepantla state, it can also preserve that which has been razed and the components of its erasure. The poetic can hold, preserve, invigorate, and remember the tensions and violence of nepantla-making; the narrative nepantla space, in poetic terms, is a record of its own genesis. Like an archival document or object in a museum or government office, the poetic is a part of a larger system of production and sociocultural reality—but the poetic does not depend on an institutionally mandated call for collection and cataloguing.

Archival theorists, archivists, and literary scholars have variant and often contradictory aims. Blouin and Rosenberg's observations about the tensions between archivists and historians in *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* could also apply to archivists, archival theorists and literary scholars:

> In the future, the most significant mediations of the record are likely to occur before it is even created, the consequence not of serious reflection among archivists and historians after documents come to the archives, but of the way electronic systems are structured and records retention policies are articulated…Historians will surely benefit from this, but their full possibilities will only be realized through an understanding of how these systems are constructed, not simply through awareness of what records they hold…Both will need to have a reasonably clear idea of their systems' limitations, as well as their real possibilities, for historical scholarship.

Blouin and Rosenberg have asserted that the institutional archive is limited by its own administrative architecture, and there is a need for dialogue between the archivist and the scholar in order for both parties to understand the archive as a system with variant commitments to the institution and to the production of scholarship. It follows that

archival theorists could not study and develop what Trudy Huskamp Peterson calls "first principles" of archival science without beginning to consider how scholars have, can, and should engage with the archive. Peterson asserts, "Archival theory is as much a map of where archivists have been as an atlas for future travels" (126). I believe that the repository function of the poetic is another layer which demands consideration in the development of new topographies for "future travels." Literary research with a critical understanding of archive theory, history-making, and the archive should play a significant coordinating role in the production of new atlas pages for future scholarly travel in the archive. In addition to accessing and studying archival material, research in the vein of critical analysis of prosody and its hybrid offspring has the potential to introduce new contexts to the archive itself. The associations archivists and historians make between artifacts are often limited to Western terms of understanding records in geographic, institutional, and linear terms. Study of poetry and the poetic, in its spectrum of translations from art form to art form, understands the record as a living text. The histories, epistemic perspectives, and systems of signification from marginalized perspectives can provide insight to the unofficial relevance of extant official archives.

In reflecting on Blouin and Rosenberg's findings, I am reminded that the normative flow of the archival process in a digital age moves from the construction of a database at the category and label level, to the accession of items, to the management and maintenance of the archive itself, which has physical and digital components. The institution, which holds the traditional archive, constructs it with attention to validating its own mission statement and authority. As a literary scholar working with a critical

space involving archival theory and the alternative, non-traditional archive of poetic discourse, I am less concerned with validating extant "first principles" of archival science or poetics than with exploring the fringe-oriented articulations of consciousness which allow for the paradoxes that the introduction title alludes to, "The Articulation of Emptiness." Emptiness, or what I think of as the void in our collective consciousness when it comes to fringe-perspectives and their sometimes counter-historical observations, is manifest in pages, things, and instruments. The articulation of emptiness is the antidote to the psychological lack or repression of voices from the fringe, which have been silenced by a Euro-American centered status quo and the archives that lend them institutional authority. The repository function of the poetic invites epistemological paradox; the study of these artworks and their frequently paradoxical contents can contribute directly to the forging of new "first principles" that reflect the cultural and sociopolitical commitments of fringe-oriented perspectives, rather than the aims of an institution empowered by and representative of the status quo. By allowing alternative archives, like those in poetic form, to contribute to the production of a set of "first principles" that are not universal, but culturally particular in nature, the topography of archival science in an American context will begin to reflect the terrain of world-views that are obscured, alongside those world-views which have obscured them.

The "trouble" amongst the theoretical perspectives that inform my work is mitigated by first acknowledging that like canonical pieces of literature, traditional archives are not without their own discourse which validates counter-historical perspectives—each can and should be read in ways that bring the marginalizing

tendencies of their era of production into focus. Further, the groupings of subject texts in each chapter may be subversive in nature, but many are now widely accepted as part of the American literary canon by the reading public and academia. However, their potential contribution to the formulation of new archival practices and their significance as alternative-archives, which make substance of an often trauma induced emptiness, has not been adequately explored. Anzaldúa's concept of the "Coatlicue[5] state" describes some of the conditions which trauma-driven crisis can elicit.

In chapter 4 of *Borderlands*, "La herencia de Coatlicue/ The Coatlicue State," Anzaldúa theorizes that Chicanos "blame ourselves, hate ourselves, terrorize ourselves. Most of this goes on unconsciously; we only know that we are hurting, we suspect that there is something *wrong* with us, something fundamentally *wrong*" (67). In the previous three chapters, Anzaldúa had touched upon the violence of conquest, colonization, and assimilation. Using her own experiences as microcosm for the impact of ancestral trauma

[5] In chapter 4 of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa describes Coatlicue, the Aztec goddess, as a presence in her contemporary reality: "Coatlicue is a rupture in our everyday world. As the Earth, she opens and swallows us, plunging us into the underworld where the soul resides, allowing us to dwell in darkness" (68). She goes on to explain that "…la Coatlicue is the consuming internal whirlwind, the symbol of the underground aspects of the psyche. Coatlicue is the mountain, the Earth Mother who conceived all celestial beings out of her cavernous womb. Goddess of birth and death, Coatlicue gives and takes away life; she is the incarnation of cosmic processes" (68). See Patrizia Granzier's "From Coatlicue to Guadalupe: The Image of the Great Mother in Mexico" for an examination of Aztec mythic figure Coatlicue, mother to Huitzilopochtli, in relation to mother archetypes in Mexican culture. See Ann De León's "Coatlicue or How to Write the Dismembered Body" for a critical exploration or Coatlicue in relation to pre-Conquest knowledge recovery and its place within the development of Mexican national identity. See Octavio Paz' "The Power of Ancient Mexican Art" for an account of the re-discovery of Coatlicue in 1790 and the subsequent relocations of the Aztec statue.

and contemporary oppression of Chicana/o/x individuals and queer persons, she established that being othered in relation to white, colonizing forces is a series of acts dating back to conquest and through to the Euro-American status quo driven present. Given this contextualization of emergent Chicana and queer identity, which can be applied (in some degree) to most ethnic minority and non-binary queer Americans, the suspicion that "there is something *wrong* with us" is a symptom of internalizing the systemically drawn line between those beneficiaries of colonization who dominate a space and those *others* who are pushed out of a space and into the borderlands. She describes the "Coatlicue state" as a type of willing ignorance prolonged by depression:

> I don't want to know. I don't want to be seen. My resistance, my refusal to know some truth about myself brings on that paralysis, depression—brings on the Coatlicue state. At first I feel exposed and opened to the depth of my dissatisfaction. Then I feel myself closing, hiding, holding myself together rather than allowing myself to fall apart…In the Mexican culture, it is called *susto*, the soul frightened out of the body. The afflicted one is allowed to rest and recuperate, to withdraw into the *underworld* without drawing condemnation. (70)

Theoretically, the Coatlicue state immediately precedes the transitional/transformative nepantla space; they are closely related conditions many marginalized and oppressed peoples experience. The works of experimental poets like M. NourbeSe Philip, Susan Howe, and Charles Reznikoff[6]—all poets who come from marginalized perspectives—have been studied in light of their bringing the archived text into the poetic present. The chapters of this dissertation take a converse approach by viewing the poetic archival material in its own right. The critical bent of each chapter is designed to unpack,

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[6] See *Zong!* by M. NourbeSe Philip, *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* by Susan Howe, and Charles Reznikoff's *Holocaust* and *Testimony*.

recognize, and discover the original holdings of the text and its sociocultural flowerings in an increasingly diverse, yet stratified America. The "America" that I discuss throughout this dissertation is not the hegemonic power of global politics and economics. The Americas explored are the lived-in, other Americas of indigenous tribes, mestiza/o/x peoples, diasporic communities, and multilingual tongues. In the fringe of Euro-American norms, narrative nepantlas which archive these other Americas can take shape and their poetic holdings can be examined.

Decolonizing Poetics

Referencing the poetic as *spiritus*, or breath, underscores the sensory-oriented impact of the archival American poetics that will be the focus of this dissertation. The poetic is not an empty vessel that we pour into; it is the substance that is poured. The poetic is too the sound or image which reverberates from the narrative nepantla. Texts—narrative nepantlas—which manifest iterations of mestizaje, indigeneity, blackness, and other border perspectives are the focus of this research. Such texts are often tethered to traumatic events or conditions,[7] cultural recovery, and contemporary crises on a paradoxically micro to macrocosm scale. Marginal, or fringe perspectives paradoxically weave new narratives and unravel extant tropes, histories, and collective memories—they can construct and tear down at once. Individuals who occupy this border-oriented space have often been the subject of poems that viewed them as a collective anomaly, and as a

[7] E.g., conquest, displacement from ancestral lands, slavery, holocaust, legally sanctioned marginalization, civil war, and discrimination.

collective other. More recently during the postmodern and digital ages, fringe-oriented artists have articulated the border-dwelling self in situ, within the narrative nepantla, through an array of mediums.[8] Understanding border-oriented texts as part of and conversant with the literary canon and popular cultural systems of symbols will illuminate the transfiguration of racialized tropes and othered bodies. In a 2017 interview, poet M. NourbeSe Philip explains the necessary process which emerges when a decolonizing voice is using the language of a colonizing force to hold their perspective:

> I begin from a position of extreme distrust of language and do not believe that [E]nglish—or any European language, for that matter—can truly speak our truths without the language in question being put through some sort of transformative process. A decontaminating process is probably more accurate, since a language as deeply implicated in imperialism as [E]nglish has been cannot but be contaminated by such a history and experience.

Recognizing the act of narrative nepantla making with a primarily Western set of referents as subversive calls attention to the destabilizing force of such artistic production. Accordingly, the linear tradition of poetic form is destabilized toward a spectrum of formal materializations.[9] To transpose, or to translate, is to flower from the original in a foreign discourse which alters, yet carries, the original. To translate is not to

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[8] See Roman Jakobsen's concept of "intersemiotic transposition." In "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (1959), he defines such transpositions as being a characteristic of transferring poetry between languages or between non-verbal art mediums.

[9] See works by ASCO Art Collective (Harry Gamboa, Jr., Gronk, Willie Herrón and Patssi Valdez), Judith Baca, Nani Chacon, Greg Deal, Shephard Fairey, Roberto Gil di Montes, Jaque Fragua, Aaron Huey, Yolanda Lopez, Jose Montoya, Pepón Osorio, Cheyenne Randall, Royal Chicano Airforce (Ricardo Favela, et al), The Painted Desert Project, various artists associated with the United Farm Workers Union, Luis Valdez, Ernesto Yerena (Hecho Con Ganas); Kehinde Wiley; Maria Frank Abrams; and Tom Philips.

enfold and regurgitate the original in a replication of its formal and poetic entirety; to translate is to locate the original and alter its formal elements of signification in a way that allows for a recontextualization of form, language, and the narrative itself.

The poetics within the narrative nepantlas considered in this project can alter and expand our conception of history toward the inclusion of previously deemed inauthentic or irrelevant histories. In formal terms, the poetics which hold counter-historical narratives often draw from epistemological systems that understand time, space, language, symbols, and history in non-Western terms. Epistemically hybrid texts unfurl in non-binary terms that refuse to settle on the usual planes of good vs. bad or white vs. black poetry. Such texts can also interfere with the common distinctions between life and death itself. Innovative poetics are embedded with counter-cultural ways of knowing and historicizing. And, the archive within a narrative nepantla is its own epistemological system. Each text archives and produces knowledge, or histories, that annex hybrid systems of production, representation, and memory that can be understood only through following each of these threads back to their source, to the extent that the text (and its intertextuality) will allow. These sources may not always be validated or recognized by Western literary criticism, or explored in archival terms, because they reject colonizing principles for critical understanding. The notion of a single America is as much a fallacy as modernism's metanarrative. This project recognizes the "foreign" or "other" as part and parcel of an American literary tradition that is composed of Americas, and sovereign indigenous nations which reside in its postcolonial borders.

Ethnic minority counter-histories, art movements, testimonies, and ceremonial practices are in danger of erasure, despite some heroic efforts by to identify and preserve them. Perhaps the at-risk status of these elements is a product or reflection of what many intellectual figures have argued is a "postracial"[10] and "postcolonial"[11] society. The erasure of such culture and knowledge is subsequent to conquest, colonialization, slavery, and Westward expansion in the Americas. Efforts to remember such knowledge can be subversive in the sense that the filling of gaps in minority cultural discourse can undermine the status quo's imperative to assimilate the other while continuing to marginalize the other.

Nepantla narratives have a repository function akin to a library archive or a federally held collection. Elements of intertext represent fonds, sub-fonds, series, and items that have been collected, and sometimes recovered, via the poet-artist instead of the

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[10] For a critical view on postracialism in the twenty-first century, see Kathryn T. Gines' "A Critique of Postracialism." Gines defines the postracial project: "The idea of getting after, past, or beyond race is not new and has been conceptualized in numerous ways including, for example, various forms of assimilationism, racial eliminativism, and/or colorblindness." In her article, Gines argues that the belief that race *and* "systemic institutional racism" are obsolete concepts is false. She explores the history of "postracial" claims and the emergent forms of racism which "perpetuate systemic institutional racism."

[11] "Postcolonial" is a term which is most associated with a postmodern theoretical perspective. While the colonies and colonial project in empire-building and legal terms may be considered a practice of the past, there are other modes of colonization which persist. See Dorothy Figueria's "The Profits of Postcolonialism," where she argues that postcolonial criticism "often overrides the national historical situation and exegetical context. Because little reference is made to culturally specific details, the discourse of postcoloniality mimics colonial thinking. Although postcolonial theory problematizes the binaries of Western historicism, it still orders the globe according to the single binary opposition of the colonial and the postcolonial" (250).

archivist.[12] The poetics within nepantla narratives can and should inform the trajectory of archival science related to remembering, recovering, and building upon borderland perspectives; they instruct the archival theorist and the archivist to derive the terms for accession and access from the materials directly, which would necessarily consider the cultural commitments of the materials. In a recent search of the MLA database, peer-reviewed postmodern criticism of American poetry yields only 122 articles. There is a sea of material that remains to be read, and re-read with critical attention that moves beyond the binary-based, cursory perusal of a reader armed with a critical model that guarantees only one of two outcomes. The critical space can be a multivalent crossroads[13] where the moment of production, form, aural qualities, and memories are in a state of interplay and construction in multivalent terms.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Western perspective theories on literature, poetics, and space inform part of this project's critical scope, as it reads fringe poetics—narrative nepantlas—as being part of

[12] Here, I draw a distinction between the two because archivists have traditionally not taken part on the production of the records that they keep, though they do make decisions about what is worth collecting and how it should be accessioned.

[13] Here, I am using the concept of a "crossroads" as it is articulated in Gloria Anzaldúa's "To live in the Borderlands means you" in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. In the poem, Anzaldúa captures the borderland qualities which culminate in the architecture for a new space, a crossroads. In stanza six, the speaker asserts: "In the Borderlands/ you are the battleground/ where enemies are kin to each other;/ you are at home, a stranger,/ the border disputes have been settled/ the volley of shots have shattered the truce/ you are wounded, lost in action/ dead, fighting back…" (27-33). In the eighth, final stanza, the speaker explains: "To survive the Borderlands/ you must live *sin fronteras*/ be a crossroads" (39-41).

American literatures at-large. At the eighteenth and nineteenth century fin de siècle, Emile Durkheim wrote in "Book 1, Chapter 1" of *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893) that art is "absolutely refractory to all that resembles an obligation, for it is the domain of liberty. It is a luxury and an acquirement which it is perhaps lovely to possess, but which is not obligatory…" He views art as the antithesis of that which is indispensable: morality. He calls morality, "the daily bread without which societies cannot exist." In this dichotomy, he reasons that the art end of the scale is recreational and indeterminate; there is no specific end. Morality, on the other hand, is a force driving the individual to pursue a "definite end." The liberty in art is a product of its endlessness, while the obligation in morality is a product of its limitations. He goes on to argue that with individuals as in societies, the "intemperant development of the aesthetic faculties is a serious sign from a moral point of view." Consider that Durkheim's notion of unmoderated aesthetic, or artistic, capabilities as amoral is a central tenant of authoritarian political regimes from Hitler's Third Reich to Donald Trump's MAGA.[14] In Durkheim's conceptualization, immorality is synonymous with deviance and failure to succumb to the "definite end" of a status quo's moral code.

Failure to assimilate would necessarily be at the "art" end of the Durkheim scale. The contemporary correlative function of his exploration of morality and art—in relation

[14] See sociologist Eve L. Ewing's article "Why Authoritarians Attack the Arts" for a look at anti-arts rhetoric from Hitler to Trump. Ewing argues that authoritarian regimes target the arts and artists because "Art creates pathways for subversion, for political understanding and solidarity among coalition builders. Art teaches us that lives other than our own have value. Like the proverbial court jester who can openly mock the king in his own court, artists who occupy marginalized social positions can use their art to challenge structures of power in ways that would otherwise be dangerous or impossible."

to labor and its parts—is salient. In "Book 3, Abnormal Forms," Durkheim's characterization of his rapidly changing world could apply to the twentieth to twenty-first century fin de siècle:

> Profound changes have been produced in the structure of our societies in a very short time; they have been freed from the segmental type with a rapidity and in proportions such as have never before been seen in history. Accordingly, the morality which corresponds to this social type has regressed, but without another developing quickly enough to fill the ground that the first left vacant in our consciences. Our faith has been troubled; tradition has lost its sway; individual judgment has been freed from collective judgment. But, on the other hand, the functions which have been disrupted in the course of the upheaval have not had the time to adjust themselves to one another; the new life which has emerged so suddenly has not been able to be completely organized, and above all, it has not been organized in a way to satisfy the need for justice which has grown more ardent in our hearts.

It is not surprising that Durkheim was criticized for his sociological mapping of a nationalist perspective which foreshadowed the Action Française, Italian Fascists, Russian Bolshevists, and essentialist American movements of the twentieth century (Mitchell 88). The preface to the 1933 translation of *The Division of Labor in Society* explains that Durkheim's nationalism came from his theory of a collective conscience, which is closer to the concept of the unconscious in psychoanalytical terms. Durkheim theorized that "primitive societies" were governed by the collective conscience which existed outside of and with greater power than the individual. In contrast to this, he reasoned that the cult of the individual permeated modern society. He asserts in the conclusion that for modern society, the collective conscience was inadequate. It is ironic that a secular Jewish Frenchman, who believed that religion is an iteration of the collective conscience, is understood as both the father of sociological study and a supporter of nationalist agenda. However, the relationship between Durkheim's

placement of the arts and placement of morality is informative. His brand of logically driven nationalism is familiar in part due to the similarities between his world and the world today. With the increasingly xenophobic hostility the Trump administration has normalized in politics, executive-branch "law-making," and the MAGA nationalist movement, perhaps the moral vs. immoral dichotomy can shine light upon the indignant perspective many xenophobic Americans take in regard to any individual who asserts their ethnic identity, aesthetic freedom, or non-Western moral compass in America today.

Henri Lefebrve's writing on poetry in *The Production of Space* (1974) does not support Durkheim's binary understanding of art and morality. His attention to poetry in relation to space supports my understanding of language as a tool which can transform our understanding of reality. And, his work also affirms that dominant tropes, used in poetics and rhetoric, have an "obligatory" or cursory meaning which the status quo determines. He writes in *The Production of Space*:

> Words themselves go beyond the immediate, beyond the perceptible - that is to say, beyond the chaos of sense impressions and stimuli. When this chaos is replaced by an image, by an audible representation, by a word and then by a concept, it undergoes a metamorphosis. The words of spoken language are simply metaphors for things. The concept arises from an identification of things which are not identical - i.e. from metonymy…[language is] a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people. (131)

Lefebvre equates image and spoken word with metaphors which give rise to the formulation of canonical signification. If this is the case, then interrupting canonical signification via new, culturally and linguistically hybrid articulations from the margins can interrupt systems of signification that obscure fringe-oriented perspectives.

Lefebvre's engagement with the poetic and poetry in relation to space(s)—architecture, economic systems, philosophy, visual art modes, urbanization, and life/death cosmologies. This perspective substantiates the reading of poetry in relation to the lived-in world and its institutionalized systems of oppression, as these spaces—intellectual and material—are as grounded in status quo regulatory function as canonical metaphor.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Michel Foucault questions if the signs which comprise a language create meaning, or if they make what he calls a "statement," through juxtaposition. In his conceptualization of "statement," he argues that contrast between one sign and another can create meaning and establish each sign's "character" (84). Understanding that the sign, or the poetic sign within a narrative nepantla, does not possess a singular quality forces the reader to view its "statement" making properties in light of its relation to other signs. In relation to reading fringe poetics, the absence of innate character renders subversive tropes—those which are contrary to their typical "character"—as potentially decolonizing agents of language and culture. The establishment of a new "character" for a widely used sign requires that the landscape of signs around it be deconstructed and rebuilt in support of a new "character." While the decolonization of sign systems may not have been Foucault's primary concern, his questions and exploration of answers recognizes that the existence of meaning requires a spectrum of referents which establish the nature of the sign's meaning. Recognizing the deconstruction of socially conditioned sign systems, *and* the architecture of new sign systems is a necessary part of uncovering the "statements" which may have been obscured by the cultural and linguistic limitations of a Euro-American and monolingual

set of readers, writers, and artists. In this way, counter-histories, as a series of "statements," require that standard signs and their referents be upended. Foucault's reasoning also illuminates the work of those producing linguistically hybrid texts. For example, the inclusion of a Spanish-language word in a predominantly standard English set of lines may be necessary because there is no appropriately correlative sign in English. The writer imports the word from one system to another, but the "statement" created is new by virtue of its placement in relation to a foreign system of signs. Foucault goes on to determine:

> We must not seek in the statement a unit that is either long or short, strongly and weakly structured, but one that is caught up, like the others, in a logical, grammatical, locutory nexus. It is not so much one element among others, a division that can be located at a certain level of analysis, as a function that operates vertically in relation to these various units, and which enables one to say of a series of signs whether or not they are present in it. The statement is not therefore a structure…it is a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they 'make sense', according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation (oral or written). (86)

The research in this chapter and the chapters to follow seeks to read each narrative nepantla's "statements" in vertical terms. The poetics in each piece will "make sense" only when the "sort of act" being carried out is brought to the surface "through analysis." The vertical line is not the circumlocution of horizontal line sign systems; the vertical line is the action or impact of their collective statements. Because the time and space orientation of each text differs with each reading, ongoing study of its era of production is

too necessary. Failure to understand both historical context and contemporary significance would result in a limited understanding of the text's collective statements and actions.

If Foucault's vertical line theory is a useful way to conceptualize the emergent quality of meaning, then Paul Ricoeur's notion of a poetic parallel can be useful in terms of negotiating the interplay of symbol and narrative as it establishes the poetic's terms for interpretation. In the "Preface" to Time and Narrative (1983), Ricoeur argues that there is a parallel between living metaphor, which he also calls metaphorical utterance, and narrative. He describes it as follows:

> In the Rule of Metaphor I defended the thesis that the poetic function of language is not limited to the celebration of language for its own sake, at the expense of the referential function, which is predominant in descriptive language. I maintained that the suspension of this direct, descriptive referential function is only the reverse side, or the negative condition, of a more covered over referential function of discourse, which is, so to speak, liberated by the suspending of the descriptive value of statements. In this way poetic discourse brings to language aspects, qualities, and values of reality that lack access to language that is directly descriptive and that can be spoken only by means of the complex interplay between the metaphorical utterance and the rule-governed transgression of the usual meanings of our words.

Consider Ricoeur's acknowledgement that there are "usual meanings of our words" which govern how a metaphor *must* transgress. A metaphor is not a metaphor *unless* a rule is broken. While Ricoeur is likely thinking in linguistic terms, metaphors in fringe-poetics often transgress in terms of breaking from sociocultural rules which reach further than the common meaning of words. Sociocultural norms dictate which narratives *can* be described, *should* be described, and *may* be studied. Ricoeur is referring to metaphors like Lord Byron's "She walks in beauty, like the night" (1). Here, the simile describes

"she" indirectly as the "night." The rule broken is that the "night" should describe a time and quality of the dark hours in a day, but in the poetic metaphor, it indirectly describes the subject of the poem. I am suggesting that not only is the transgression of poetic description necessarily interfering with the common rules of language, but that poetic narrative nepantlas transgress by breaking rules of common decency. For example, in "We Call them Greasers" in "Part II" of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa captures the point of view of an American landgrabber and rapist in the early nineteenth century West. After describing how he drove of the "greasers" who "Weren't interested in bettering themselves,/ why they didn't even own the land but shared it" (9-10), the speaker remembers that there were some who "refused to budge" (30). He describes burning them out of the rancho and then raping one of the women while her husband was forced to watch. The speaker explained that he "felt so much contempt for her/ round face and beady black eyes like an Indian's" (38-39) that he sat on her face until she suffocated to death. Then, he told "the boys" to lynch her husband. In "We Call Them Greasers," rules of language are broken because the invocation of two words in Spanish—ranchos and mañana—are deployed by the speaker as words to metaphorically describe Mexican vermin. But, the poem is also describing an act of sexual violence and murders which sociocultural norms dictate as inappropriate in relation to poetic narrative. The Euro-American status quo has come to accept such images of violence in fictional terms, as a brief aside in film or television. And, medical practitioners and law enforcement expect victims of sexual violence to narrate the immediate aftermath of the event in the

controlled and sterile space of a hospital or police station. Anzaldúa's poem transgresses by using metaphor to describe sexual violence in immediate and public terms.

Ricoeur goes on to suggest that the living metaphor is a reinscription of narrative; it describes that which is "inaccessible to direct description." And, he argues that in a metaphysical sense, the indirect narration of reality—using metaphorical utterance—"could be the revealer of a *being-as* through the act of *seeing-as*. Ricoeur's theory on the space of what he calls the "poetic sphere" is close to what I call the poetic narrative nepantla. I would add to his point—metaphorical utterance and narrative discourse are unfolding within the poetic sphere—that the archival function of this parallel is to indirectly hold a living archive. For example, Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* describes the experiences and observations of the poet at a microcosmic level, and black America at a macrocosmic level. In part "III," the poem reads:

> Not long ago you are in a room where someone asks the philosopher Judith Butler what makes language hurtful. You can feel everyone lean in. Our very being exposes us to the address of another, she answers. We suffer from the condition of being addressable. Our emotional openness, she adds, is carried by our addressability. Language navigates this.

The primary metaphor in this stanza is the invocation of "you" when the perspective indirectly being described is that of the lyrical "I." By circumnavigating a first-person, lyrical I, the poet is able to describe the disconnect between the real-time order of events and the time it takes to process them. Other metaphors include being "in a room" to describe being isolated, and "lean in" to describe both curiosity and the power structures at work in the room (which make Butler the center and "everyone" else, except "you," potential beneficiaries of her address). "You" is removed, as "you" describes the

behavior of everyone else in the room. "Our very being," minimally, describes consciousness. Using the phrase "exposes us to" describes danger in relation to an atypical threat of being spoken to by another person; this is a metaphor because the status quo validates vulnerability and danger when threatened with bodily harm, not metaphysical harm. The lines describe not only the perspective of the implied lyrical I, and the invoked second-person you, but the subject of "Judith Butler." All three perspectives are wrapped up in the line, "We suffer from the condition of being addressable." The line "language navigates this" is simultaneously describing something Butler said, and the descriptive power of the poet. From Butler's described perspective, "this" describes "the condition of being addressable." From the implied lyrical "I" perspective, "this" describes the paradoxical addressability and in-addressability of the observer, a black female poet. While the speaker can be assaulted by what the next stanza calls "the ambition of racist language…to denigrate and erase you as a person," they are also unable to address themselves in real-time; hence, the emergence of a second-person "you." In the two stanzas which follow, the first describes "you" as addressable, and the second describes "you" being un-addressable by virtue of being "unseen by the two men." One of the two men says "to the other that being around black people is like watching a foreign film without translation." Here, the clearest metaphor, a simile, is used to describe black people. Rankine uses language to navigate the description of that which is "inaccessible to direct description." The metaphor of black

people being foreign films is turned on the "two men." The louder metaphor, constructed by the poet, is that their inability to see her and their characterization of black people describes their racism.

In relation to one another, these three stanzas archive a series of interrelated non-events, in historical terms. In the chapter on "Historical Intentionalaity," Ricoeur claims that:

> …history as a science removes the explanatory process from the fabric of the narrative and sets it up as a separate problematic…For historians, the explanatory form is made autonomous; it becomes the distinct object of a process of authentification and justification. In this respect, historians are in the situation of a judge: placed in the real or potential situation of a dispute, they attempt to prove that one given explanation is better than another…The truth is that the event is what distinguishes the historian's concept of structure from that of the sociologist or the economist. For the historian, the event continually appears in the very midst of structures.

When reading a poetic narrative like Rankine's, Ricoeur's observation that historians have history-making power—because when faced with incongruous accounts, they favor one narrative of the event over another narrative of the event—says something about the compromised authority of the poet. The judgment of the historian disarms the authority of the poetic narrator in two ways. The "truth of the event' supersedes the truth of individual experience. And, the issue of "event" status conferral threatens the mortality of the living metaphor as an archive worth preserving as an iteration of history. For example, the historian may read a transcription of the Butler-Rankine talk and judge that record as the official record of the event. The event taking place is an academic, intellectual one. Rankine's "III" in *Citizen: American Lyric* would be passed over, rendering it a non-event and non-historical. In order for systems of social oppression and

othering to be valid, histories like Rankine's, those which resist the judgment of event-oriented historians, need to be annexed into an American conception of archived history worthy of study and inclusion in relation to the national narrative. In order to understand the compulsions of the archive, we must begin to understand it as a living entity.

In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995), Jacques Derrida reasons that *le mal d'archive*—archive fever—is the death drive of the archive working against itself. He understood the significance of the Greek root word for archive, "arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, and address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded." Those with political power "were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law," so important documents were filed at their homes. The archons held political power, law making power, law keeping power, and the power of holding "official" documents (9). I would add to Derrida's exploration of the archive's origins that if the archon holds documents and power, then any documents held at the arkheion would be considered authoritative. The paradox is that the archon collects and holds important documents, but the danger emerges that all documents held by the archon would be considered authoritative and lawful. He writes:

> The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. (10)

The imposition of law and the power to interpret the archive in light of its own authoritative needs—to both locate authority and validate authority—renders the

centralized, document-driven archive a threat to any epistemic perspective which fails to support its consigned power.

Derrida reasons that "Consignation aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or secret which could separate (secernere), or partition, in an absolute manner." This conceptualization of the archive can help illuminate the homogeneity of status quo driven culture and power. Derrida's understanding of the archive as a locale which does not support hybrid authorities or document systems of a paradoxical and incongruous nature mirrors Anzaldúa's conception of bordered space. Bordered spaces are spaces which reject nonconformists; such deviants are pushed from the central locale of the space to the borderland, where incongruity is the norm and authority is moot. The Anzalduian borderland, in light of Derrida's exploration of the "single corpus" goals shaping the archive and its authority, is populated with an array of untethered and undocumented archives without locale. According to Derrida, the archive is simultaneously producing and collapsing its own authority: "…if there is no archive without consignation in an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpression, then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive and thus from destruction" (14). The productive characteristics of the archive promote what Derrida calls memorization, repetition, reproduction, and reimpression of its holdings. Given Derrida's conception of the

archive and its relationship to authority, it follows that archives which support colonial authority and colonially-rooted authority actively participate in the reproduction of the oppressive corpus it validates.

However, Derrida does go on to reason that by creating and propagating archives which elicit the repetition compulsion, the archive necessarily supports the Freudian death drive; therefore, the archive may reproduce, but it also supports its own destruction. Derrida calls the death drive created by the archive *mal d'archive*—archive fever (14).[15] If, in Freudian terms, an individual's compulsion to live (Eros) is tempered by its opposite, the compulsion to die (Thanatos), then Derrida is reasoning that the authority of the archive possesses both a will to live and a will to die. This dichotomy is useful when considering that political systems, economic systems, and cultural norms which inform the authoritative function and locale of the archive. It is possible that the marginalizing archive and its contents can be altered toward a specific type of *mal d'archive* which uses its antiquated interpretations of its contents and authoritative function to destroy its oppressive authority. I would argue that the accession of new documents and new interpretative authorities from the borderlands can aid in supporting the death drive and transformation of extant, circumscribed archives. As cultures and Americas change over time, the annexation of diverse and representative sets of archival authorities will necessarily support the intermittent destruction of an emergent "authority." In order to destabilize the archive, the nature of its holdings must change and the compulsion to root

[15] Some additional translations of *mal d'archive* include the sickness of the archive, the evil of the archive, and the difficulty of the archive.

out heterogeneity must be disrupted. The centralization of archival locale and authority must decentralized. Reading narrative nepantlas as archives accomplishes these goals; reading through the borderland and into a nepantla's transformative space establishes a spectrum of cultural and sociopolitical authorities that negate the conglomeration of power into a single corpus. The requisite destabilizing force can be found in the nature of nepantla narrative poetics, which is the focus of this dissertation's research, because it resists documentation and centralization in bureaucratic terms.

In addition to being a destabilizing force, I would argue that nepantla narrative poetics have translative properties which can teach and ensconce the reader. In Chapter 1 of *Alternating Current*, a collection of essays written from 1959-1967, Octavio Paz articulates his perspective on poetry: "Understanding a poem means, first of all, hearing it. Words enter through our ears, appear before our eyes, disappear in contemplation. Every reading of a poem tends to call forth silence. To read a poem is to hear it with our eyes; to hear it is to see it with our ears." In addition to calling attention to the aural nature of poetry, Paz calls attention to the space-making impact of the poem. Silence is aural space. Paz calls readers "poets." He reasons that the reader-poet makes meaning through their discourse with a poem. I would add his point that silence can confer the nepantla space of a poem to a new occupant. If words "enter through our ears" and then "disappear in contemplation," then it is the nepantla which has invited and allowed for the construction of a new narrative space. The reader-poet must decipher what they "see" with their "ears." In archival terms, this invites a spectrum of cross-references and new catalogue terms. The poem becomes part of other systems of meaning, and new

autobiographical contexts. For fringe-oriented perspectives, the conferral of such space is both respite from borderland violence and the translation of the poetic from one spiritual order to another.

Paz calls the process of understanding a poem "a conversion into an echo, a shadow, nothingness." The religious import of "conversion" is not accidental. When he states that "Comprehension is a spiritual exercise," he is alluding to the process of transfiguration in the vein of a scientific experiment. For Paz, poetry "has ceased to be the handmaiden of religion or philosophy; like science, it explores the universe on its own…Poetry is a form of knowledge, of experimental knowledge."[16] If, in Catholic terms,[17] the transfiguration—the illumination of Jesus with his own divine light—was the "culminating point" of Jesus' public life, then the experimental project of the poem is to locate and know the divine light of the poet(s). The listener converting the poem's meaning to "an echo, a shadow, nothingness" is a witness to this transfiguration. Paz goes on to reason that the resultant silence is akin to the limitless power of God:

> The poem must provoke the reader: force him to hear—to hear himself…Poetic activity is born of desperation in the face of the impotence of the word and ends in the recognition of the omnipotence of silence. No one is a poet unless he has felt the temptation to destroy language or create another one, unless he has experienced the fascination of nonmeaning and the no less terrifying fascination of meaning that is inexpressible.

Applying Paz' notion of "poetic activity" to poets from colonized ethnic communities renders the "the impotence of the word" a product of conquest, not just complicated

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[16] See chapter two of *Alternating Currents*, "Knowledge, Drugs, Inspiration."

[17] Paz was educated in Catholic schools and later studied Buddhism and Hinduism.

narrative. And, the poet's compulsion to "destroy language" becomes a decolonizing act. Perhaps, poetry which leads to conversion is necessarily the product of life experience outside of the status quo standard. Certainly, those living in the borderlands would have more experience with the "inexpressible" as their realities have no grounding in a single dominant discourse.

Chapter 2
Hybrid Poetics and the Counter-Historical

Reading Intertext and Collaboration

Collaborations between poets and artists in a Western tradition date back to the earliest religious texts. For example, the psalms and illuminated manuscript pages place the image and the verse in conversation with one another. While not all collaborative texts come with an account of their genesis—an explanation as to if the collaboration predates the page or is the result of editorial influence—such texts are consumed (by the reader) in the wake of an interplay between mediums. The advent of printing presses in the fifteenth century saw initial advancements in engraving, which were followed by sixteenth and seventeenth century techniques in wood block illustrations. The emergence of daguerreotype and photograph technologies from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries brought real-world images into the paper folds of literary texts. Dynamic laser print techniques have made reproductions of paintings, drawings, and other on-canvas or paper mediums reproducible in high quality art books. The high-speed digital spaces of the twenty-first century have allowed for the dissemination of new and rarely studied out of print texts. The collaborative texts which are touched upon in this chapter represent only a few examples of such texts within a spectrum of printed and digitized books.

This chapter primarily considers works by poets Julia de Burgos and Maceo Montoya; their texts archive collaborations between art mediums. And, each text can be read as a distinct "history" of the poet's narrative nepantla perspective. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault describes intertextuality as follows:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. And this network of references is not the same in the case of a mathematical treatise, a textual commentary, a historical account, and an episode in a novel cycle; the unity of the book, even in the sense of a group of relations, cannot be regarded as identical in each case. The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it: its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it lows its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse.

Foucault's articulation of "the book" as a construction, and a representation of "a complex field of discourse," frames my focus on hybrid texts that hold a poetic (a *spiritus* or breath) and *re*member in complex terms. The breath has presence in poetic manifestations which use language, and sometimes in poetic manifestations which use language and visual symbols. For example, Jean-Michel Basquiat's notebooks (1980-1987) are filled with phrases, fragmented poetry, drawings, and the marks of daily wear and tear. Some of his drawings mounted on canvas draw from the notebook-page multi-medium aesthetic. His 1984 acrylic on canvas piece, "Famous," features a two-sided canvas which mimic the front and back sides of notebook paper. On the side with the words "FAMOUS" written across the midline region in black paint, there is a black skull-like shadow lit with a grey-green halo. The white eye, red eye, white nose cavity, and white teeth are centered in the upper half of the canvas. Underneath and around the skull and the imperative, smaller words and images emerge. The graffiti like doodles and words are formed in patterns. One of the primary patterns reads "SPIRITUS" in a rectangular box, floating above a child-like drawing of a car. Underneath the car, a caption reads: "La Cucaracha Slot Racer. The pattern deployed in frequent use around

"SPIRITUS" is the phrase "FACE GETS BLACKER + BLACKER." Reading Basquiat's "Famous" as a piece of hybrid poetics and in relation to "history" leads to two primary insights.

The first is that the language in play is as hybrid as his cultural reality. It is a Spanish-English hybrid which invokes Basquiat's Puerto Rican heritage ("la cucaracha"), reality as a racialized black man living in America ("blacker"), and the punk-aesthetic which brought the self-taught artist from the urban streets of New York to the Latinate form of breath: "spiritus." The floating skull is black, like a cockroach, and like the artist. It is a disembodied relic which cannot take a breath. Like the skull, the imperative—"FAMOUS"—is in heavy black paint, which makes what the word signifies (fame) as lifeless as "face" above it. In the background, the graffiti proper which covers the majority of the canvas is the realm of a "real life" which unfolds in a series of like-events and gestures. Reading this archive in relation to official "history," we can read the hybrid poetic work of art as a counter-historical archive which undermines the status quo-oriented stereotypes about him, and about other black men. An official "history" from a contemporary perspective would state that the artist is untrained and black, which both come with an array of marginalizing assumptions. In the era of slavery, official "history" would have categorized the artist as inhuman; he would have been a commodity for sale. These modes of "history" obscure the artist's reality as a Latin American,[1] as a voice for

[1] See Naiomy Guerrero's "America's Most Expensive Artist is Latinx—but No One Knows It": "Last month, Jean-Michel Basquiat set the record for a work sold by any American artist (next in line is Andy Warhol) and left the art world buzzing when his dynamic painting from 1982 sold for $110.5 million at Sotheby's. Basquiat is almost exclusively referred to as a black American artist, although his father, Gérard Basquiat,

Afro-Latinidad, and as a living (and breathing) person who has been trained though a self-guided curriculum of survival. The "spiritus" is minimally repeated as a visual-linguistic phrase because the voice in the canvas has learned to breath quietly, rarely, and toward a disruptive end which allows the breath to remain enclosed and protected in the rectangular, coffin-shaped box which holds life in plain sight. Like the hybrid poetic texts from de Burgos and Montoya, Basquiat's "Famous" establishes "a network of references" (Foucault) to circumvent the boundaries of linear history, art medium, and genre. While each text is using the poetic toward a different end, they each materialize cultural memory in a way that alters the original system of signification or purpose of form.

In this chapter on hybrid poetics and the counter-historical, I will argue that the element which allows for re-signification is the poetic. In addition to mining the discourse between art mediums in a text, the research which informs critical analysis of these texts is derived from a decolonizing methodological perspective. The "history" held within a narrative nepantla's hybrid poetics is necessarily counter-historical in relation to the official and marginalizing history affirmed by the status quo. Where the project of postcolonial whiteness has often presented black, brown, red, and yellow success as proof of a post-racial meritocracy, the spiritus of each collaborative poetic argues otherwise. These texts are realized in spite of and through the historical discourse

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was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and his mother, Matilda Andrades, was born of Puerto Rican parents. The positioning of Basquiat's identity as exclusively black highlights the ongoing invisibility of Latinx artists in the U.S. art market, a result of a historic lack of private patronage, underexposure, and widespread confusion about what constitutes Latinx art, as opposed to Latin American art."

which has othered their embodied and disembodied realities; the physiological[2] and metaphysical internalization of being racialized (in order to support the emergence of whiteness) can be circumvented through poetic discourse.

The theoretical works of Frederick Douglass ("the color line"), W.E.B. Du Bois ("double consciousness"), Frantz Fanon ("epidermal racial schema"), bell hooks ("the drama of Otherness"), Laura Hyun Yi Kang ("the metaphoricity of yellowness"), Cherrie Moraga ("the internalized oppressive imagery"), Gerald Vizenor ("native survivance"), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak ("subaltern consciousness and historiography") are relevant critical guides to navigating narrative nepantla spaces. Their works, along with Anzaldúa's, have informed my critical understanding of race, narrative, and memory, while not serving to limit the exploration of the hybrid poetic text as an archive with its own distinct cosmology. James Baldwin's conceptualization of the "Negro advantage," is particularly salient in today's sociopolitical climate wherein "ethnic" America and "multicultural" America are viewed in monolithic terms. Baldwin argues in "From *Nationalism, Colonialism, and the United States: One Minute to Twelve—A Forum*" (1961) that:

> …what is not publicized, and what is not known at all, is that there is a great captive white population here too. No one has pointed out yet with any force that if I am not a man here, you are not a man here. You cannot lynch me and keep me in ghettos without becoming something monstrous yourselves. And furthermore, you give me a terrifying advantage. You give me this advantage: that whereas you have never had to look at me, because you've sealed me away along with sin and hell and death and all the other things you didn't want to look at, including love, my life was in your hands, and I had to look at you. I know more about you,

[2] See Shannon Sullivan's "Inheriting Racist Disparities in Health: Epigenetics and the Transgenerational Effects of White Racism."

> therefore, than you know about me. I've had to spend my life, after all—and all the other Negroes in the country have had to spend their lives—outwitting and watching white people. I had to know what you were doing before you did it.

Historically, an array of ethnic minority[3] communities were targeted for lynching in the American South and Southwest. Today, the xenophobia directed at Muslim, Latina/o/x, immigrant, undocumented, refugee, and queer communities which are read as foreign, has served to teach us that "whiteness" is still a synonym for violence.

In "As Much Truth as One Can Bear" (1962), Baldwin reflects on the work of canonical American writers (Crane, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Whitman). Building on the earlier work of Philip Rahv, he argues that the binary between a "Redskin tradition" and a "Paleface tradition"[4] is representative of "two strains in American fiction." Here, Baldwin is not referring to fiction as a genre of literature; he is referring to the "fictions" of an ethnic other, as they are deployed in a literary text. He gives two works of poetry as examples of such fictions: Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Hart Crane's *The Bridge*. While the former is a subject of chapter three, I will briefly touch upon Crane's work which gives some foundation for hybrid poetics discourse in an American tradition of literature. Baldwin, like many modern writers and literary critics, writes of Crane's *The Bridge* (1930) in terms of its shortcomings. However, rather than

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[3] See Ken Gonzalez Day's *Lynching in the West: 1850-1935* which "attempts to correct the historical record…to reveal to the nation that—like the lynching of African Americans—Native Americans, Chinese, and Latinos of Mexican and Latin American descent were lynched in California."

[4] See Philip Rahv's "Paleface and Redskin" from 1939, which provides the basis for Baldwin's use of the terms.

posit that the book is without poetic unity,[5] Baldwin recognizes that the Crane poem is problematic because of its white fiction: "And what was Hart Crane attempting to celebrate, in his indisputably Paleface fashion, in that magnificent failure which he called *The Bridge*? It seems to me that the truth about us, as individual men and women and as a nation, has been and is being recorded, whether we wish to read it or not." The paradoxical categorization of *The Bridge* as a "magnificent failure" is potentially describing the irony of attempting to render the Brooklyn Bridge a metonym for a unifying American exceptionalism, and Crane's inability to articulate the disproportionately high threats of violence non-white and non-heteronormative people had to contend with in the decades leading up to WWII.

In symbolic terms, Crane's queer reality is archived in the spaces between the stanzas and the photographs from Evans.[6] His reality is what is left unsaid. The parallels between the careful architecture of each poem and each image of the bridge are visual

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[5] "Crane himself found the reception of his work distorted by the reviews of his closest literary friends (Tate, Winters), limited as they were by a new critical, Eliotic theory, one which could not allow for a poem to function rhetorically as part of the history making business—a theory that demanded of history the very rational continuity Crane was bringing into question, a theory that thought modern culture essentially disconnected from the past. These early critics assumed that, to be successful, Crane's poem must involve the creation of a unity, an (impossible) joining of the traditional and the modern" (Clark Doeren 20).

[6] In 1930, Hart Crane and Walker Evans' *The Bridge* was published by The Black Sun Press in Paris; only 285 first edition copies were printed. Later that year, Liverlight Books in New York published the first American edition. The Eakins Press Foundation worked with renowned hand-gravure photograph printmaker, Jon Goodman, to publish nine of Evans' Brooklyn Bridge images alongside Crane's "To Brooklyn Bridge." The 1994 art portfolio situates the Evans photographs alongside their initial publication context—the poem—but in a newly realized vintage print method edition.

symbols of the bordered spaces Crane had to navigate as a queer man: the literary and urban restrictions of a "Paleface" perspective. The placement of "To Brooklyn Bridge" next to an Evans photograph of the bridge taken from an up-shot perspective[7] affirms the fiction of the "bridge" as a new altar to worship an American brand of divinity. An arch of the bridge rises from behind the truss and decking to mimic the shape of a church's stained-glass window. The discourse between the Evans photograph and the Crane poem affirms an American domination of the skyline, the eyeline, and the project of "Liberty." Perhaps, Crane was overly committed to the project of Paleface optimism for "Liberty" (4) and "…panoramic sleights/ with multitudes bent toward some flashing scene" (9-10). As a poet, Crane is responsible for the fiction of his own optimism[8] *and* the fiction of "Powhatan's Daughter" in part two of *The Bridge*.

It is the trope of "Pocahontas"[9] which remains the most "magnificent failure" of the text. The bridge (America) is a product of a sexualized settling of a feminine, indigenous land (Pocahontas) by the masculine forces of the new world colonial power (America). The dispensable immigrant labor required to construct the Brooklyn Bridge is obscured, along with the indigenous lives required to render an American landscape for the bridge to dominate. Like "Powhatan's Daughter" who "spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die" (2.4), the "other" Americas must be subsumed to make way for an all-

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[7] Here, I am referencing the photograph printed for the 1994 art book production.

[8] Crane committed suicide by jumping into the Gulf of Mexico in April 1932, less than two years after the publication of *The Bridge*.

[9] The daughter of Chief Powhatan of the Tsenacommacah nations was called Amonute or Matoaka.

consuming national contruct. As a hybrid text, what *The Bridge* archives is the disarming nature of American optimism and industry. The beauty of Crane's poetics and Evans' photographs capture a modern-era American fantasy which later texts sought to deconstruct. Julia de Burgos is an appropriate foil to Crane, as she was beginning to write an "other" America in roughly the same era. And, like Crane, she was an alcoholic poet with a scandalous romantic life. While Crane had the advantages of white respectability, which failed to insulate him from depression, de Burgos had only the intermittent protection of her husbands. Like Crane, the protections afforded by respectability failed to protect her from herself.

El mar y Julia: Poeticas Puertorriqueña as Latinx Palimpsest

My research on the poetry of Julia de Burgos began with a text-based method for identifying the principles of analysis. Theoretical impositions of European and Euro-American frameworks for critical engagement with texts by Latino/a/x persons (mestiza/o/x and indigenous) often mimic the process of colonization. Such texts warrant and demand scholar-based inquiries which first attempt to conceptualize the epistemic architecture of the text and its era of production. The contemporary function of a counter-historical text should also be deconstructed using the conceptual markers located in the text itself. While mestizaje within Latinidades assumes European influence, it does not and should not assume a European center.

Julia de Burgos' 1939 collection *Cancion de la verdad sencilla* (1939) and the posthumously published *El mar y tú: otros poemas* (1954) are textual assertions of

Latinidad via a distinctly Puertorriqueña palimpsest. These texts are an early interruption within American poetics, by virtue of their Spanish-language tongue and invocation of song (to connect) and sea (to other). De Burgos—the nationalist, alcoholic, and poet—spent her youth surrounded by mountains around her village, and water at the periphery of Puerto Rico itself. Song and water are invocations which appear throughout her published work, and their metaphorical deployment in each text is met with engravings from artist and founding member of the Center for Puerto Rican art, José A. Torres Martinó.[10] The collaboration between de Burgos and Martinó—born in 1914 and 1916, respectively—is a lesson in translatability that blurs the distinctions between modern and postmodern, and between poetry and visual art. These texts archive and deploy counter-histories as a latent memory holds and deploys a collection of images, sounds, and people once forgotten.

De Burgos' poetics are etched between the lines and into the margins of works by earlier Puerto Rican feminists and like the pants-suit wearing labor organizer and writer Luisa Capatillo[11] and the Puerto-Rican independence revolutionary and poet Lola Rodriguez de Tió.[12] The palimpsestic nature of de Burgos' poetics lends itself to the

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[10] Torres Martinó studied at the Pratt Institute in 1934 and the Brooklyn Museum in 1946. His work was shown at the American Contemporary Gallery in 1947. Some of these years in New York intersect with de Burgos' years (1942-1944 and 1946-1953). He outlived de Burgos by many decades. His long career included short story and essay writing, painting, graphic design, radio, and print making ("José A. Torres Martinó").

[11] See *Absolute Equality: An Early Feminist Perspective* by Luisa Capetillo.

[12] Rodriguez de Tio's works have not been translated into English for publication. *Mis Cantos* and *Mi Libro de Cuba* were published in the late nineteenth century.

articulation of "Puertorriqueña" as one who is simultaneously flame, light, and water. In her poetics, the lines consume, animate, and guide at once. The rolling r's and vowel-driven demarcation of lines in their original Spanish establish the poet as a revolutionary at war with translatability. In the theater of island politics of the early to mid-twentieth century, de Burgos' poetics perform that which cannot be translated. The *cancion* (song) and *los otros* (the others) are simultaneously the product of colonization, a refusal to be re-colonized, and a push toward decolonization. In the theater of mid-twentieth century American poetics, de Burgos' island tongue reaches for and invites translation into English, as a songstress might reach beyond the stage and into a crowd, reimagining the audience as a chorus and as an extension of self.

In the margins of her published work, there remain echoes of Julia, the daughter of German-African-Spanish (and likely Taino[13]) parents. From her father, de Burgos

[13] See "What became of the Taino?": "Relegated to a footnote of history for 500 years, the Taíno came roaring back as front-page news in 2003, when Juan C. Martínez Cruzado, a biologist at the University of Puerto Rico, announced the results of an island-wide genetic study. Taking samples from 800 randomly selected subjects, Martínez reported that 61.1 percent of those surveyed had mitochondrial DNA of indigenous origin, indicating a persistence in the maternal line that surprised him and his fellow scientists. The same study revealed African markers in 26.4 percent of the population and 12.5 percent for those of European descent. The results encouraged a Taíno resurgence, with native groups urging Puerto Rican schools to take note of the indigenous contribution to Caribbean history, opposing construction on tribal sites and seeking federal recognition for the Taíno, with attendant benefits" (Poole). While researchers commonly declare the Taino population of Puerto Rico "extinct" by 1530 (see Kathleen Deagan's "The Archaeology of the Spanish Contact Period in the Caribbean"), new DNA analysis shows that the children of Taino, Spanish, and African parents survived. It is more accurate to state that the Taino culture had been erased and supplanted by Spanish culture and language with a new world *criollo* influence. Samuel M. Wilson's "Surviving Wuropean Conquest in the Caribbean" provides a useful synopsis of the complex Taino chiefdoms which Columbus "discovered" upon his arrival.

inherited a love for the hills of Carolina, which run like a backbone from east to west through the island. When de Burgos was hospitalized later in life, the nurses at Harlem hospital marveled over her kinky hair which she inherited from her half-African mother (Pérez Rosario 10). In her political life, de Burgos was a Puerto Rican nationalist and Secretary General of the Woman's United Front for a Constitutional Convention (Agüoeros). In her creative life, she was a poet whose lines bring her "self" into being in masculine terms, and as her own dominating force. De Burgos' poetics embrace the page with sexual, violent, and artistic ferocity. The poet was a self-proclaimed *jibaro*—what the continental U.S. may have referred to as a hillbilly—yet, she was compared to Nobel Prize in Literature winner Gabriela Mistral[14] in her own lifetime. De Burgos struggled with alcoholism and unhappy marriages, but in the 1940's, she was in publication talks for a new collection with an introduction by Pablo Neruda, who liked the poems she gave him to read when they met in Cuba (Agüoeros). The trappings of financial success eluded the poet who left Puerto Rico to work as a journalist, but soon found herself without news-work; at the end of her life, she had been working factory jobs in New York. The aforementioned introduction may have been lost in Neruda's vast cache of ephemera archived in Chile, or seized in 1944 by the FBI when the offices[15] she worked at in Washington DC were raided and her manuscripts likely seized. Or, she may have

[14] Gabriela Mistral won the Nobel in 1945. Her work has been translated into English by Ursula LeGuin. See *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral*.

[15] De Burgos moved to Washington D.C. with her husband, Armando Marín, for nine months.

died before Neruda could follow through on his promise. The work in question was eventually published as *El mar y tu* in 1954, the year after her untimely death on a Puertorriqueño street in Harlem.

When a poet's life, death, and work converge to render an icon, study of their work typically reflects the high degree of deference given to their memory. In English-language criticism, this is not the case for de Burgos. In the twenty-first century, only eight peer-reviewed articles in English have been published and made available through the MLA International Bibliography database. The literary and visual arts world has been compelled to engage with de Burgos' work to a much higher degree. The Puerto Rican and Nuyorican movements in poetry from WWII to the present flower from de Burgos' subversive and self-validating themes. An entire chapter of Vanessa Pérez Rosario's *Becoming Julia de Burgos* is focused on the visual art flowerings of the poet's work and life narrative. Pérez Rosario writes:

> For Latina artists, remembering Julia de Burgos becomes a tool for self-preservation, recovering history, cultural affirmation, and public mourning. Through their work, they validate the power and resilience of living communities. In the political context, Latina artists deploy Burgos's story, her poetry, and her death as symbolic sites for claiming full American citizenship rights for all Latino/as. (139)

While some Latina artists annex de Burgos' work and life into their own work, an examination of the poet's work in its own context of inscription is lacking. Accordingly, the concepts of historical and poetic palimpsests guide this reading of de Burgos' *Cancion de la verdad sencilla* and *El mar y tú* from a text-based level.

In historical records, palimpsests exist in manuscripts and in works of art; many would argue that sociology is the study of an array of cultural palimpsests. Creative

Writing professors at University of Virginia aptly situate the palimpsest in the form of the physical text, which calls the writer's attention to the import of form. They contextualize the palimpsest in terms of a manuscript. The palimpsest of the page is one in which an earlier text has been blotted away and the vellum or parchment reused for another. The motive for making palimpsests seems to have been largely economic. Medieval ecclesiastical texts were often written over the washed away print of an earlier work. Reusing parchment was less laborious than preparing new skin. Early Church officials also wanted to "convert" pagan Greeks texts to the word of God; their writing over of the pagan page was an act of conversion. The palimpsest foregrounds the fact that all writing takes place in the presence of other writings—the trajectory of power moves within the palimpsest from the people speaking language to the language speaking people. The ephemeral presence of the first imprints of ink to page linger underneath, in between, and in the margins of the more recent, more vibrant body of text. In this way, palimpsests—as a paradox of ghost and living text in a single formal element—subvert the concept of the author as the sole origin of their work. The "meaning" of a work is deferred from the author to a spectrum of signification chains. In the visual arts, one may see early palimpests in the recently dated Borneo cave art filled with animal and nature figures (Wei-Haas). The caves also feature 20,000 years old stenciled images of the hand over the outline of hands from 10,000 years earlier. The flowerings of the poet's work amongst Latina artists is definitely palimpsestic, as many deploy her image and poems. The text itself may not be a palimpsest in the washing away or over a physical page, but

the reproduction of her image and words is a type of rewriting and reorienting of an extant text. In regard to de Burgos' published work, the palimpsests in question are intellectual, political, and narrative-oriented.

Poetics theorist Michael Davidson details his conceptualizations of palimpsest and the palimptext in his 1997 work, *Ghostlier Demarcations*. Of the palimpsest he writes: "…the poem is the palimpsest of the quotidien…a writing upon other writings in which prior traces are left visible, in which the page retains vestiges of its evolution." Davidson's conceptualization of the palimpsest invites a critical engagement with de Burgos' poems in relation to how they annex "traces" of their evolution. Such traces are overtly experiential (autobiographical) and cultural (communal) in nature. Of the palimptext he writes:

> …I have inflected the palimpsest to include specific forms of textual production. My portmanteau *palimptext* describes modern writing's intertextual and material character, its graphic rendering of multiple layers of signification. The term also suggests the need for a historicist perspective in which textual layers refer not only to previous texts but to the discursive frame of the present in which they are seen…the palimptext is not a final, ultimate version, but an arrested moment in an ongoing process of signifying, scripting, and typing.

De Burgos' works should be understood as a nascent root of Puertorriqueña poetics. Through an array of "arrested moments" of signification, de Burgos' work has spoken of and for Puerto Rico. In the era of de Burgos' lifetime, her poetics were modern in the sociocultural and Latin American art sense of things, and a precursor to the postmodern in the Euro-American sense of things. Now, somewhere between the postmodern and digital age, her poetics is doubly subversive as a postscript from the grave, rallying for

Puerto Rican and Latin American equality in an American national context. Puertorriqueña poetics itself can be traced back to her, one of the few Puerto Rican poets of the modern era to write original works in English, her second language.

These last two poems penned by de Burgos while hospitalized—"Farewell in Welfare Island" and "The Sun in Welfare Island"—were mailed to her sister in Puerto Rico (Pérez Rosario 12). They signal the shift from thinking Boricuen in Spanish to thinking Nuyoriquen in English. They were finally published in 1997 for an English-reading public in *Song of Simple Truth: The Complete Poems of Julia de Burgos* (translated by Jack Agüoeros). The English translations of poems referenced in this chapter are from Agüoeros' edition. The Spanish-language publications of each book provide the textual basis for my critical examination of the hybrid poetics manifest in de Burogos' poem and Martinó's engravings. These de Burgos-Martinó narrative nepantlas remain connected to other systems of expression and signification which stretch back, toward the 1493 "discovery" of Boriken, the island now called Puerto Rico. These texts invoke the slave trade which brought Africans to the island in 1513.[16] In the lines of her work, there are remnants of the Taino dance and oral history, which sustained constant attack from colonial Spanish rule. In the margins of her collections, there are the echoes of the WWI-era "gift" of citizenship to Puerto Ricans which immediately increased the number of expendable soldiers for the war draft. And in the Latina artist flowerings of

[16] See William F. Keegan's "West Indian Archaeology.2.After Columbus," which details the impact of Spanish discovery on the Caribbean, the sharp decline in indigenous Taino population, and the importing of black slaves to replace the disappeared Taino labor.

her work, there is a reach toward the mid-twentieth century diasporic hemorrhaging of Puerto Ricans from the island to the urban streets of New York barrios.

The repatriation of de Burgos' remains from a Potter's Field in Manhattan to her childhood home in Carolina served to complete her bodily journey, and marked the beginning of a beatification of her archived-in-poetics voice. The lines of "Song of Simple Truth" and "The Sea and You" echo through the discourse of her death like a collection of love-letters bleeding over from earlier works like "Poema para mi muerte" ("Poem for My Death"). The two English-language poems, in comparison, function as epithets penned by the poet for her own grave. Anzaldua's nepantla and Benjamin's flowering are critically relevant concepts which work to locate the space created by and the survival of de Burgos' work.

The Song and the Sea

> There was a man named Yaya who had a son Yayael, whose name means son of Yaya. Yayael wanted to kill his father. When Yaya found out that his son wanted to kill him, he had him exiled for four months and then killed him himself. Yaya put his son's bones in a gourd which he hung from the ceiling of his house, and here it hung for some time. One day, Yaya wanted to see his son and said to his wife, "I want to see our son Yayael." His wife felt great joy, brought the gourd to her husband, and turned it over to empty out the son's bones. Large and small fish came out of the gourd, and they realized that their son's bones had turned into fish and decided to eat them… Later, one day when Yaya was out in his lands, the four children of a woman named Itiba Tahuvava came to his house. Their mother had died giving birth to the four and the first one to be born was Caracaracol, whose name means scabby or leprous…the others did not have names…While they were eating, they heard Yaya returning, and in the confusion that followed, when they tried to put the gourd back in its place, it fell and broke. So much water came out of the gourd that it covered the whole earth and along with the water fish of all sizes came out too. This is the origin of the sea.
>
> -Taino Myth of the Sea, translated by Doris Vasquez from a report by Father Ramon to Christopher Columbus in 1505

In the title poem of *Canción de la verdad sencilla*, the discourse between de Burgos and Martinó's poetic narratives immediately open up to either side of pages 58 and 59. Martinó's engraving is at left, underneath the final two stanzas of another poem, "Cancion de la presencia." The first five and a half stanzas of de Burgos' title poem are at right. The engraving is the penultimate text in the collection, while de Burgos' poem is its culminating narrative. The English translation of "Song of Simple Truth" reads:

> It is not he that takes me ...
> It is my life that in his life palpitates.
> It is the warm call of my soul
> which has gone to sing among his rhymes.
> It is the restlessness of my spirit travelling
> which has found an eternal path in his course.
>
> He and I are one.
> One and the same forever among the summits;
> wellspring embracing rain and land;
> cast in a blast of wave and breeze;
> white hand lacing stone and gold;
> cosmic hour joining night and day.
>
> He and I are one.
> One and the same forever in the wounds.
> One and the same forever in the conscience.
> One and the same forever in happiness.
>
> I shall emerge from his breast at certain hours
> when he sleeps the pain in his pupils, ,
> in each echo drinking from me the eternal,
> and in each dawn carrying a smile.
>
> And I shall be light for his hands
> when they turn to climb the days,
> in the sacred struggle of the instinct
> to save itself from gusts of suicide.
>
> If he were led astray one day from the road

It is not he that takes me ...
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which has gone to sing among his rhymes.
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when he sleeps the pain in his pupils,
in each echo drinking from me the eternal,
and in each dawn carrying a smile.

And I shall be light for his hands
when they turn to climb the days,
in the sacred struggle of the instinct
to save itself from gusts of suicide.

If he were led astray one day from the road.

The speaker introduces a masculine "he" in line one: "It is not he that takes me…" While a cursory reading of the poem establishes a male-female interplay in a metaphysical *and* physical sense, reading the poem in light of Taino oral tradition renders the sea masculine, as Yayael was the son of Yaya. The palimptextual narrative of Yayael as origin of the sea places de Burgos in a dialogue and sensuous relationship with water, the element isolating Puerto Rico from the American mainland. When the speaker asserts that their life "palpitates" in "his" (2), that the "warm call" of their soul "has gone to sing

among his rhymes" (3-4), and that their restless spirit "has found an eternal path in his course" (5-6), the connotative meaning is that the masculine force is not dragging her out to sea. Rather, she is swimming into the sea. The Martinó engraving echoes this reversal of the masculine-feminine dynamic; the female form is in the foreground beneath lines which are simultaneously land and water. A masculine arm and hand reach down from the sky, in the curve of a wave, to meet the arm of the female form. Yet, it is the female form which meets the most lines in the engraving; she is cut from the earth *and* the sky. Line one establishes that *he* is the first invocation and *she* is the second invocation; this structure holds for the first three stanzas of the poem. The second stanza lines, "One and the same forever among the summits;/ wellspring embracing rain and land" (8-9), underscore the identification of *he* as *water* in the form of rain and *she* as *land* because of their first and second ordering.

In the third stanza, the speaker asserts that "He and I are one./ One and the same forever in the wounds./ One and the same forever in the conscience./ One and the same forever in happiness" (13-16). The parallelisms from lines 14-16 create an aural palimpsest wherein the "wounds" are written over by the "conscience," and the "conscience" is written over by "happiness." Like the Martinó engraving at left, the lines mimic one another just enough for a single deviance to create a new image. Metaphorically, the lines in this stanza describe the borderland of water (surrounding Puerto Rico) and the metaphysical connection to home in spite of disconnect.

In the fourth and fifth stanza, the speaker pivots and reverses the order to a feminine *I/me* and a masculine *he/his*. The first line of stanza four reads: "I shall emerge

from his breast at certain hours" (17). When the speaker references "he sleeps the pain in his pupils" in line 18 and "drinking from me the eternal" in line 19, the emergent palimptext is the poet's relationship to alcohol. In this dichotomy of hang-over pain and the masculine (alcoholic) drinking the life force of the eternal (the poet), the lines create the narrative nepantla which tolerates the speaker's parasitic reality. In the engraving, it is the feminine body which is in a state of repose. The masculine arm, with a shadow masculine profile, splits through the top of the far right third of the frame in an inversion of spatial orientation. The inversion is communicated via the upside-down orientation of the masculine body; for him down is up and up is down. The masculine nature of drinking and drunkenness is embodied via the disorientation of the male figure.

The first line of stanza five reads: "And I shall be light for his hands" (21). The hands are described as climbing, struggling, and in flight from "gusts of suicide." Here the underbelly of Puerto Rico's impoverished majority of the mid twentieth century, depression following alcohol abuse, and the violence inflicted on racialized others are metaphorically described through the metonym of the hands. The hands are the hands of the slave, the hands of the nearly erased Taino, and the hands of the suffering and displaced who medicate with alcohol. *He* is running from the threat of self-annihilation, while *she* is simply "light." In stanza six, the speaker asserts that if "lunatics" should divert him "from the road" (25), then "a light fired by my spirit/ would announce to them the return to my life" (27-28). In this stanza, under the threat of death, *she* becomes *his* life. The final two lines feature a repeat of line one from the poem: "It is not he who takes me…" (29). This line is followed by a resolute and clear proclamation: "It is his

life that runs through mine." Circling back to the Taino origin story for the sea, Yayael's life runs through his mother; it was his father who ended his life. The element of water, an unpredictable force, is as potentially violent and destructive as an alcoholic. The embodiment of the sea is only possible in the feminine form, as the masculine consumes while the feminine (poet) illuminates and fills. The sea experienced as a single plane is a portal for life and death (or rebirth); it is an in-between space which holds memory, trauma, and survival. The "other side" of this single plane is the sky, which makes the sea whole in "The Sea and You." De Burgos' "Song of Simple Truth" is not far from mirroring the work of the Taino conception of a Supreme Being. "Yucahu Bagua Maorocoti, Lord of the Three names, Icon of the Tripointed Stones, brings together the three basic factors which so happily blend in the West Indies: land, sea and man" (Arrom). De Burgos' poetics are didactic in that they show how the feminine force is embodied, yet representative of metaphysical light. In comparison to the official "history" of mid twentieth century America, the point being made by de Burgos subverts the status quo conception of women as flat and static figures under the care of men. The land ("road"), sea ("wave"), and man ("his life…his breast…his hands") converge in the poem and in the engraving; these three parts are manifest in word *and* in image. The hybrid poetic is close to an indigenous Puerto Rican conception of the divine.

For the Boricuen and for the Nuyorican, the sea is an element of life after death; the bones of the son feed his father, feed his mother, and feed his neighbors. If we look beyond a Western condemnation of filicide and understand the stripping of the son down to bones as a kind of living relic, then we can understand the ancestors and the

community. Even those who are corrupt (or of corruption) are provided for through the son. The water is man, and the sea holds fish, or life itself for those on the island. The title poem from *El mar y tu*, "The Sea and You," reads:

> The race of the sea over my door
> is a blue sensation between my fingers,
> and your impetuous leap through my spirit
> is no less blue, is born in me eternal.
>
> Through the color of awoken auroras,
> the sea and you swim to meet me,
> and in the madness of loving me into a shipwreck
> break the ports and the oars.
>
> If I but had a ship of seagulls,
> to detain you for only one moment,
> and scream my voice so that you battle
> in a simple duel of mystery!
>
> May one in the other find your own voice,
> may you interlace your dreams in the wind,
> may you fasten stars to your eyes
> so together you can give off your starbursts.
>
> May it be a duel of music in the air
> the open magnolias of your kisses,
> may the waves dress in passions
> and passion dress in sailboats.
>
> May the sea and you stretch
> the color of awoken aurora in a dream
> that will take my ship of seagulls
> and leave me in the water of two skies.

In the first and second stanzas, the speaker is touched by the sea and then on the brink of being shipwrecked and subsumed into the sea. "Ports" are a construct which may warrant destruction as they are the historical site of slave trade and the twentieth century exportation of the island's primary resource: its people. The last four lines of the poem

return to the image of an aurora over the sea. In a palimptextual sense, these lines speak of black bodies delivered as beasts of burden or cargo for sail, of the exodus from the island to New York, of de Burgos' own migration from Puerto Rico to Cuba to New York, of her failed marriages, and of choosing to live in a borderland wherein there are no peripheries and no beginnings or endings. Metaphorically, the last four lines describe each of these intertextual narratives. Consider the irony of an "awoken aurora in a dream." Somewhere in the Puerto Rican nexus of slavery and Afro-Latinidad, the poem subverts consciousness to divorce it from material reality and align it with a metaphysical state of un-consciousness. The undoing of the material, man-made world is the space wherein the "aurora" can become conscious. In relation to the wave of work-seeking Puerto Ricans who flocked to New York in the 1940's and 1950's, Puerto Rican diaspora are living in a borderland; they were "othered" in both Puerto Rico and the island of Manhattan. The sea, the aurora, and the "water of two skies" describe their borderland, which is no land. The poet's personal migration path was decidedly island-oriented[17]; the lines address each iteration of herself as "you." The "ship of seagulls" carries the sound of the coastlines she skirted throughout her adult life. The self-reflexive "me" is as much a plea to herself as it is a plea to the poetics deployed on the page. The leaving of the self in "the water of two skies" could also describe the doubling over of her selves; in the absence of a male counterpart, she duplicates herself.[18] The engraving by Martinó, which

[17] De Burgos moved from Puerto Rico, to Cuba, to Manhattan.

[18] See her poem "To Julia de Burgos." Miriam DeCosta-Willis' essay, "Sandra María Esteves's Nuyorican Poetics: The Signifying Difference" explores a flowering of de Burgos' poem from Esteves. DeCosta-Willis argues that "To Julia de Burgos" (1930)

introduces this section of the book, is a flowering of the poem. The poetic allows the de Burgos-Martinó poetics to inform one another as they form a narrative nepantla. "The Sea and You" and its adjacent engraving inscribe and deploy extant counter-historical perspectives. The visual metaphors in the engravings and the linguistic metaphors in each poem describe points within a spectrum of Puertorriqueña otherness. Like culture and the life experience of an artist or poet, knowledge and perspective are composed of non-linear references. The hybrid poetics of the image and the word support a decolonizing epistemic perspective which subverts the status quo function of Spanish and English—both languages of conquest and colonization—and the aesthetic preferences of the modern art era.

In black and white ink, the artist's translation of de Burgos' work is manifest in a sensuous engraving of a woman's naked body, from neck to knee, unfurled in the midline of the engraving. The feminine form establishes a shoreline where there is no land. The point of reference becomes "her" body. The foreground of the engraving features waves which also invoke the undulating lines of the Puerto Rican mountain range of de Burgos' youth. The feminine body fills most of the engraving surface; the body is black—negative space—outlined by the white lines made with an engraving tool. Like a sculpture, the form is carved out of the medium, not painted onto it. Over the bended knee of the form, white speckles appear as the water spray of waves breaking on the

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"attacks the conventional roles-as doll, lady, or wife-that restricted women in her country. The poet-narrator, who describes herself as an unfettered female, engages in a simulated dialogue with her alter ego, a *housewife, resigned, submissive, / tied to the prejudices of men*."

beach. This breaking of the wave renders the body a part of nature; the female form *is* an island with a shore. A series of parallel lines cut into the top third of the visual plane mimic the movements of waves. Lines in the shape of childlike bird drawings in curving vertical spurts create pockets of wind and two sails in the background of the body. Like the lines in "The Sea and You," Martinó's engraving unlocks palimptextual contexts to render an image out of a void and a narrative without words.

Understanding "The Sea and You" and "Song of Simple Truth" as fulcrums for the final two poems de Burgos penned in English will allow for an appropriately elegiac reading. "Farewell in Welfare Island" is intertextual with the poet's mortality; as her voice drifts from Spanish to English, so too is her life drifting from the living to the dead. The poem serves to challenge the official "history" of her death: alcoholism and cirrhosis of the liver. The content challenges medical assumptions about disease and addiction. De Burgos is not a witless, drug addled, or insane hospital patient. Rather, "Farewell in Welfare Island" (1953) is alarmingly self-aware, cognizant, and sane. The poem reads:

> It has to be from here,
> right this instance,
> my cry into the world.
>
> Life was somewhere forgotten
> and sought refuge in depths of tears
> and sorrows
> over this vast empire of solitude
> and darkness.
>
> Where is the voice of freedom,
> freedom to laugh,
> to move
> without the heavy phantom of despair?

Where is the form of beauty
unshaken in its veil simple and pure?
Where is the warmth of heaven
pouring its dreams of love in broken spirits?

It has to be from here,
right this instance,
my cry into the world.
My cry that is no more mine,
but hers and his forever,
the comrades of my silence,
the phantoms of my grave.

It has to be from here,
forgotten but unshaken,
among comrades of silence
deep into Welfare Island
my farewell to the world.

The despair of the speaker is as stark as the sterilized whiteness of a hospital space. The first-line imperative, "It has to be from here" is repeated three times. The first section following line one contends with the speaker's intimate relationship with "solitude" (7) and "darkness" (8). The "phantom of despair" (12) has supplanted "the voice of freedom" (9) which permeated her previous works in Spanish. The three rhetorical questions serve to not only mourn what has been lost, but they serve to archive the cultural and political commitments of the poet: "freedom" (9), "simple…beauty" (13, 14), and the "warmth of heaven" (15). By articulating the loss of these elements, the speaker is paradoxically remembering the "Life somewhere forgotten." The poem is like a Taino *cemís*, a relic (bones of a highly regarded individual) adorned in artfully woven doll-like trappings. The Taino understood the *cemís* "as active agents with power to affect events." From an indigenous perspective which survived in the mountains of Puerto Rico, "such forces were treated with great respect, their names and actions

recounted, their presence central to certain ceremonies…This in essence made them central to events and involved the lives of their descendants and community members" (Ostapkowicz 322). While de Burogos could not deliver herself to Puerto Rico, she did send her poetic relics. "It has to be from here/…my cry into the world./ My cry that is no more mine,/ but hers and his forever…" (17, 19-21)." The sentiment of her second English language poem, "The Sun in Welfare Island," is similarly elegiac. The sun shines "in despair/ at my sorrowful heart" as the speaker surrenders to the solitude of dying. However, the closing lines—"and all of me is loneliness/ in a rebellious heart" (29-30) indicate that the poem itself, an archive of de Burgos' voice, remains alive and subversive in its inclination to circumvent erasure.

In a contemporary American sociopolitical climate which has continued to marginalize and other Puerto Ricans, de Burgos' work is an indication of how far a poetics at odds with the dominant English-language tradition of poetry can carry a line, or throw a life-raft of resistance and rebirth. The nearly 5,000 deaths in the aftermath of September 2017's Hurricane Maria have given de Burgos' poetics a new palimpsestic context: survival and mourning in an era of rebound efforts to erase and colonize bodies and voices that perform an*other* América. The voicing of Puerto Rican otherness in her work is an iteration of Latinidad that belies a status-quo driven conception of "Latino" as monolithic brownness; de Burgos' poetics of resistance and rebirth invite other expressions of Latinidad, as a melody invites its equal and distinct counterpoint.

Like Crane's *The Bridge*, de Burgos' hybrid poetics are concerned with the concepts of liberty and freedom. Where Crane's "Liberty" seeks to cauterize the

hemorrhaging of a modern era sense of instability, de Burgos' "freedom" is integrally connected to her sense of marginalization via the imposition of limitations related to gender, race, socioeconomic status, and culture. The flowering of her Puertorriqueña poetics continues in the works of Nuyorican Poets Café founders Miguel Algarín, Miguel Piñero,[19] and Pedro Pietri[20]; Piri Thomas[21]; Giannina Braschi[22]; Judith Ortiz Cofer[23]; Sandra Maria Esteves[24]; and the translator from Spanish to English of de Burgos' works, Jack Agüeros.[25] Victor Hernández Cruz' *Beneath the Spanish* (2017) lives as a "country-less" Puerto Rican, much like de Burgos. Unlike de Burgos, the now-resident of Morocco explains that he has "become a citizen of the world, through blood and

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[19] See "Nuyorican Identity" by Regina Bernard-Carreño, which touches upon these poets and their work as part of a larger Nuyorican poetics movement which avoided strictly academic contexts.

[20] See Pietri's 1973 collection, *Puerto Rican Obituary*. Molly Appel's "Writing Out of the Obituary: Puerto Rican Indebtedness and Poetic Learning in the Work of Pedro Pietri" links his work to "part of an anticolonial project, makes a critical link between social resilience and pedagogical resistance and the ongoing effects of US colonialism on the Puerto Rican community. In the poetry of this collection, Pedro Pietri identifies a pedagogy of indebtedness as a racial capitalist tool for the cultural, economic, and physical death of Puerto Ricans

[21] While Thomas is most known for his memoir *Down These Mean Streets* (1967), his spoken word poetry is well known amongst Latina/o/x artists and writers. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture holds the "Piri Thomas Papers."

[22] Braschi's published poetry is written in Spanish; English translations have been published. See *El Imperio de los Sueños* (1988).

[23] See Ortiz Cofer's *A Love Story Beginning in Spanish* (2005).

[24] See Esteves' *Portal* (2007).

[25] Agüeros was a translator, poet, and director of El Museo del Barrio in East Harlem. See his collection *Sonnets from the Puerto Rican* (1996).

communion I grow identity branches, various, through words, music, and experience, this life is an adventure." In the "Proloco" to his collection, the poet explains that writing is "an act of translation of the imagination and its linguas, a desgeografication, crumbling shapes like a cubist work patching up continents." This contextualization of his collection can be understood as a flowering of de Burgos "awoken auroras" from "The Sea and You." The awakening happens at the other side of reality, the imagination or dreams. *Beneath the Spanish* vacillates from stanza-oriented poetry to prose poems which are hybrid in terms of how they *re*member, what they *re*member, and what they stand in tribute to as elegy or ode. While Taino epistemic perspective is part of the subtext of de Burgos' works, it rises to the surface of many Hernández Cruz poems. Read in relation to sociocultural recovery of Taino knowledge in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the latter's poems archive a shift in indigenous remembering which uses the imagination to fill-in the blanks between official anthropological and archaeological histories. In "Cuban Taino Cacique Meets Spaniard and the Translator," Hernández Cruz recreates the climate just before Columbus' arrival: A Shaman "calls to other shamans of the/ Key door soul/ tells them a strange scent/ Novo in the air lingers,/ not the blue nature of salt which is the sea/ a mirror posted toward/ the sun" (12-18). Like de Burgos' "water of two skies" from "The Sea and You," Hernández Cruz' sea is "a mirror." Both poets situate the sea-sky mirroring as a space of stability. De Burgos as a named reference may not be deployed in *Beneath the Spanish*, but the influence of her

poetics is certainly embedded in Hernández Cruz' foundation of referents. In 1975, when asked if he "identified with any of the poets on the island of Puerto Rico like Luis Pales Matos," the poet replied:

> Yeah, of course. Pales Matos I like very much and Julia De Burgos also. I was very glad that a recent evening of Puerto Rican Poetry at the Y here in New York was dedicated to her. We Puerto Ricans have been very lucky. Despite the fact that Puerto Rico is a small island and we as a nation are a small people, we have had a rich and abundant literary history. What we don't have in land area we have in words. I identify with and read the whole of Latin American literature, some of the most exciting prose writing of the earth is coming out of there.

Hernández Cruz' aptly situates de Burgos' Poeticas Puertorriqueña as part of "the whole" of Latin American literature. Another poem in *Beneath the Spanish* may serve to illuminate the translatability of Spanish, Spanglish, and Latina/o/x English poetics. In "Spanish Language," the poet recalls a phrase his mother would say to him as a child: "*Mira lo que te voy a decir*, Look at what I am going to tell you, but she spoke it, do you hear or see language, I conclude finally that the Spanish is intense, images, colors yes. Bright is my view of the movie of my past…" Reading hybrid poetics from a place which recognizes their subversive and counter-historical archives requires that the visual, aural, sociocultural, and sociopolitical contexts of such poetics be read from the text toward its intertextual invocations. Contemporary Chicana/o/x poetics from a West Coast perspective often employ multimedia systems of signification in their texts. Critical understanding of Latin American literature in a U.S. American context has sometimes approached Latinidad as a monolithic entity. Tracing the hybrid poetic from de Burgos to a contemporary Chicano poet helps break up such conceptions of Latinidades.

The Chicano Palimptext: Art, Death, and Altars

Maceo Montoya's *Letters to the Poet from His Brother* is a hybrid text with prose poems, essays, letters, prints of paintings on the page, and art-grade paper prints in the left inside leaf. Color, typeface, and the pivots from one medium to another mimic the change in tone of voice family members may take with one another, depending on the occasion. Argument, eulogy, celebration, and storytelling populate the narrative nepantla of this visual and textured system of poetics. The histories embedded in this text are multigenerational, multicultural, and they archive death and mourning in a way which transforms loss to art. Like a Day of the Dead altar, the text is an archive of an*other* America.[26] In "Imagining a More Expansive Narrative of American Art Author(s)," Tomás Ybarra-Frausto explains that Latino art is a three-legged stool:

> Today in conceptualizing Latino art, we have what I would call a three-legged stool. One leg of the equation is the canonical culture of the United States. Another is Latin American visual culture. And the third leg is Latino culture, which is the most wobbly. We still have to create the archives and write the narratives. For the metaphorical stool to become sturdy, all three legs have to be present: U.S., Latin American, and Latino components. I think this is doable, and that archiving data is a key step toward building a more inclusive narrative (10).

While *Letters to the Poet from His Brother* holds an intensely lyrical poetic voice, it accomplishes the work of the "sturdy metaphorical stool" which Ybarra-Frausto references. And, it is an archive of data in poetic form which produces "inclusive

[26] See Regina Marchi's "Hybridity and Authernticity in US Day of the Dead Celebrations": "…U.S. Day of the Dead celebrations often present alternative visions of the Latino experience aimed at inspiring social change…cultural citizenship develops during a range of public activities and performances through which historically oppressed populations exert their place within the larger civic arena" (274).

narrative." In "The Chicano Artist" chapter of the book, the histories of Maceo Montoya, his brother, his father, and composite portraits of his Latino neighbors converge. All three Montoya men have personal history with Chicano art, as students, teachers, and artists in their own right. In the "Prologue" to the book, M. Montoya explains that after his brother Andres died from leukemia, he would pick up his brother's award-winning collection of poetry, *The Iceworker Sings*, and start reading any poem at random. Filled with grief, he would put the book down. The partitive organization of *Letters to the Poet from His Brother* is a palimptextual aspect of M. Montoya's engagement with his brother's book; not only are the brothers in a state of discourse, but their books are in a state of discourse.

"The Chicano Artist" is composed of three portraits and three numbered prose poems. The pages of the book are unnumbered; the six-page chapter is a series of islands in a system of poetic islands. The narrative nepantla manifest in the book is one which invites reordering and shuffling. The title, "The Chicano Artist," echoes all three Montoya artists. M. Montoya's father, Malaquias Montoya,[27] is a renowned Chicano artist, and his brother Andres was an award-winning poet. The left side of the page is a portrait of an old man in charcoal, with his face tilted back so that the nose points up and into the distance. The shadows of the charcoal make way for the white of the figure's shirt and a white, saint-like halo around his head. The expression is one of grief; it is a

[27] Malaquias Montoya co-founded the Mexican-American Liberation Art Front in 1968. His silkscreen prints, drawings, paintings, and have been exhibited at the Smithsonian and other renowned museums. His work as a muralist has been widely documented by the art and culture writers of California. See Terezita Romo's 2011 publication on the artist's works, *Malaquias Montoya*.

living man and a choking man captured in a state of sustained breathlessness. The tightening of lines around the throat of the subject indicate the closing of an airway. At right, the title of the poetry section is printed at the top of the page. The roman numeral "I" indicates the beginning of the prose poem, "The Chicano Artist."

> I.
> My father is a Chicano artist. In Elmira, a town with just eight streets, where there was no one to tell you any different, Chicano meant what my father said it meant. You woke up early. You made your bed as soon as you got up. You didn't take long showers. You did your chores without complaint. You were always on time. Always. You did your homework before everything else. If you played it, you practiced it, and you practiced hard. You strove day in and day out to be better. Better how? To be guided by love, by selflessness. Better in that way. You were to be fair. You were to be honest, even more so about your failings. You were to be, above all, humble. You empathized with the poor everywhere, but especially the campesino, the fieldworker, because no one worked as long or as hard or as long or in as difficult of conditions. In our household the campesino was king and our Grandma Lucy who worked a lifetime in the fields was a saint. In our household, art was a tool wielded to fight injustice. It had the potential to transform the world, to preserve forever the memory of those forgotten, to give a voice to the humblest of our people. All of this was what it meant to be Chicano.

The prose poem, set in a carefully type-faced with clean edges square, is the visual antithesis of portrait at left. The organization of the type mirrors the ordered household described by the speaker. Using a primarily second-person point of view, M. Montoya addresses himself and his brother at once. Only the initial invocations in the first two sentences of "My father" suggest that the "you" being addressed is absent. Metaphorically, "my father" also describes the distinction between relationships siblings may have with their father. M. Montoya had a father who was a "Chicano artist," while his brother had a father who was likely something/someone else.

The prose poem describes the Montoya brothers' childhood in Elmira as a lesson in timeliness, brevity, responsibility, and self-respect. It is a litany of actions and

behaviors with the weight of commandments. The poem confers authority to the father when it states, "Chicano meant whatever my father said it meant." The prose poems show the reader what Chicano means, to the father and his sons: "You empathized with the poor everywhere, but especially the campesino, the fieldworker, because no one worked as hard or as long or in as difficult of conditions. In our household the campesino was king and our Grandma Lucy who worked a lifetime in the fields was a saint." Here, the divine figure is not the artist, the poet, or his brother. The divine figure is the elderly grandmother at a microcosmic level and the fieldworker at a macrocosmic level. The portrait at left gains more significance when the speaker proclaims: "In our household, art was a tool wielded to fight injustice. It had the potential to transform the world, to preserve forever the memory of those forgotten, to give a voice to the humblest of our people." Given these lines, the portrait at left is a saint of the fieldworker ilk and a gesture toward the legacy of art activism which M. Montoya accessed through his father. Reading the prose poem "I" as a caption for the portrait alters its narrative. It becomes supplementary in relation to the larger issue: to archive "those forgotten." By addressing his brother, implicitly through the invocation of "you," the poet-artist has also archived an iteration of his brother as a child.

The poetic within these conversant mediums connects to palimptexts at the level of family *and* Latinidad. Turning the page brings the eye to poems "II" and "III." Now, "The Chicano Artist" is contextualized as a triptych; it is an altar. The triptych form is also a subversive space associated with social justice movements like El Movimiento. In

"The Chicano Southwest: Catholicism and Its Meaning," Mario T. Garcia defines Chicano Catholicism:

> Chicano Catholicism is the very embodiment of Vatican Council II's call for inculturation and the recognition of diversity within the universal Church. In the Southwest, Chicano Catholicism has brought together Native American influences, native Hispanic ones, those brought across the border by Mexican and Central American immigrants, and just as importantly influences from other American ethnic groups in particular Irish-American Catholics. Chicano Catholicism in the Southwest in this sense is truly a borderland religion encountering and negotiating with varied religious cultural influences. (22)

One of the altar contexts for "The Chicano Artist" is its dedication to the social justice work the Montoya family has been tasked to address. It is a subversive form or altar because it rejects the institutionalization of worship and the notion of a single catholic practice. Rather, the poetic is translatable into language *and* image, which makes the hybrid poetic a catholic, or universal poetic. The hybrid poetics of the piece are held within the borderland religious text, which is a narrative nepantla. Poem "II" begins again with the poet-artist and the father:

> II.
> My father used to give me drawing lessons. A profile is done like this, he'd say, and he would draw a man wearing a bandana with an indigenous nose and a big mustache and maybe, to make me laugh, he'd place this man on a skateboard. I copied this drawing again and again and again. I used to copy my father's signature, too. Staring at one of his prints I'd write my name, mimicking the double M and the scribbly slant. It is no wonder my signature resembles his. People will sometimes comment that my work looks like his, too. How could it not, I wish to say. We cross our arms the same, we worry the same—pacing back and forth, turning impossibilities into certainties—and there are times when I look down at my legs, walking, one foot in front of the other, and I see not my own gait, but his. I can no more differentiate my mark on the canvas than I can change my sigh, my laughter, the sound of my voice.

The speaker's childhood is the focus of this poem at the center of the triptych. He describes being taught to draw by his father. The second poem speaks to the portrait

situated with poem "I": "A profile is done like this, he'd say, and he would draw a man wearing a bandana with an indigenous nose…I copied this drawing again and again and again." These descriptions from the prose poem render the first portrait a collaborative piece between him and his father. And, the focus on indigeneity aligns the triptych with the culturally subversive traditions of altars which began in Mexico.[28] The grief-stricken saint is a version of his father's drawing; it is a correlative image-based narrative, or a palimptext in relation to the poem. While the father paints the figure "on a skateboard" to make the speaker laugh, it is the recollection of the adult poet which is comedic. The rewriting of the image in language is a reshaping of the image in the hand of a poet, and not a child learning to draw. The distance between the speaker in prose-poem "II" and the father collapses with the invocation of an array of copies: the speaker copies his father's drawing, signature, style of painting, body language, and gait.

The final sentence in "II" asserts, "I can no more differentiate my mark on the canvas than I can change my sigh, my laughter, the sound of my voice." The line is describing more than M. Montoya's feelings about his father and their similarities; it is metaphorically describing the collaborative nature of identity. By nature, a child is an

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[28] See "Icons Behind Altars: Maria Izquierdo's Devotional Imagery and the Modern Mexican Catholic Woman" by Celeste Donovan. She argues that: "The construction of home altars, around which the faithful gather to pray for divine intervention, miracles, and blessings, is a Mexican custom that marks a fusion of the ritual practices of colliding cultures…the altars quickly gained popularity and were also erected in private residences. In that era of conquest and conversion, the animistic beliefs and religious practices of the indigenous population suffered systematic repression by these Spanish missionaries, but they did not disappear. Native rituals and European theology fused into a syncretistic Christianity and persisted in influencing the unique character of the popular practice of Mexican Catholicism."

extension of their father. In Montoya's case, the physiological line and artistic line overlap. In an interview with NBC Latino, M. Montoya explained that *Letter to the Poet from His Brother* "charted my development as an artist coming to terms with my brother's death and my father's influence…I saw *Letters* as a bookend to a period of my life." At the center of "The Chicano Artist" is Montoya's first-person contention with his "my voice" as echo of his father's voice. The flowering from father to son in this poem is a translation of literal, cognitive, embodied, and aesthetic layers.

In the final poem of the triptych, "III," Montoya asserts: "I am an artist like my father, yet what he does remains a mystery."

> III.
> I am an artist like my father, yet what he does remains a mystery. I know what it';s like to make something. I know the labor involved, the tedium, the long periods of looking, the capricious and redemptive moments of inspiration. But sometimes, when he's not there, I enter my father's studio and I look at the charcoal drawings pinned to the wall, or a painting on the easel, a silkscreen in progress, or maybe I find next to a coffee mug an old faded book turned to an essay on Art and Ervolution. My fther is an artist, I say to myself, my father is an artist, but no matter how many times I say it, it remains such a strange and unfathomable thing. In my father's studio, all around me, I see the laments of many lifetimes, I see expressions of rage and indignation, I see hopes that won't die. In truth, I see the spirit of a young man, a man unknown to me.

The invocation of *you* from triptych part "I" does not repeat in parts "II" or "III." However, the poem continues to speak to A. Montoya. The form of the triptych mirrors the "time" of childhood in "I" (when both brothers were children), adolescence in "II" (when Montoya practiced creating by mirroring his father), and adulthood in "III" (where Montoya is enlightened about his disconnectedness with "the spirit of a young man" who is simultaneously his father and his brother). In the final poem of the piece, the altar comes to fruition as Montoya ages beyond the poetic iteration of his father and deceased

brother. Reading the triptych backwards allows Montoya to recognize the stranger he encounters in his father's studio; this stranger is manifest in things and not the man himself. If in "III" Montoya asserts that "…my father is an artist, but no matter how many times I say it, it remains such a strange and unfathomable thing," then the recognition in "II"—"People will sometimes comment that my work looks like his…We cross our arms the same, we worry the same…I see not my own gait but his"—rectifies the disconnect between father and son. The first lines of the three parts can also be read in and out of order. From one to three, the first lines read as a litany: "My father is a Chicano artist…My father used to give me drawing lessons…I am an artist like my father, yet what he does remains a mystery." The altar is to "The Chicano Artist" who resides in father, son, and the "spirit" of youth lost in his father and deceased brother.

The next turn of the page introduces two portraits of Latin American men in charcoal. Both are mustached and captured in a grainy texture and framing which resembles old passport photos. Their images complete the expectation for two additional images attached to "The Chicano Artist" triptych while also serving as the introduction to the next section, "Letter to the Art Critic: Colombia University, New York City, 2004." In this epistolary form piece, the metaphors at work employ a poetic system of signification. The content of the letter reveals that the two portraits which complete the triptych are of fieldworkers. This connects the images to the moral lessons of poem "I." Montoya has conceptualized his own work as oriented toward the Chicano civil rights movement:

> I'm trying to channel them. I also feel a responsibility to expose a wider audience to the Chicano Movement. In every way, as an artist, writer, and educator, I stand

> on the shoulders of that generation of activists, and yet Chicano contributions to the civil rights movement – let alone our country as a whole – are too often overlooked.

Featuring the two fieldworkers as the transitional space which connect his personal and public narratives describes his personal commitment to participating in the uplift of Latinidades.

The structure of "Letter to the Art Critic" ensures that it is read as a piece of public discourse; it reads as an open letter to the elite who push Chicanos into the borderlands just outside of the reach of the art "world." Montoya's letter archives at least three lines of "history." The first is his interaction with his neighbors who are Mexican laborers. The second is his coming to terms with his own failures as an advocate and artist. And, the third is the interaction between Montoya and an art critic he addresses in the letter, Mr. Saltz. All three of these narrative lines are viable at the literal level, and the metaphorical level. Montoya remembers showing his paintings to "a group of undocumented workers" with whom he had been playing soccer with. He explains:

> We spoke for almost an hour about the work. They asked questions, gave me compliments, and took particular pleasure in recognizing their housing structure and hangouts…These were men who had left their homeland, ranchos and pueblos in Michoacán, Sonora, and Jalisco; they had left their families and had made a dangerous journey into the unknown, hoping for a better life. A common story, maybe, but singular in every way. None of them had gone beyond primary school. But they understood my work, understood why I was painting their stories.

In the space of a remembered non-event, a showing of art but not an art show, Montoya literally elevates the men to figures with history. Metaphorically, he describes the phenomenon which transpires when racialized and dehumanized communities see themselves reflected in a palette derived from their human, borderland experience. The

memory also serves to show Mr. Saltz, the art critic, that aesthetics value is understood through experience and not through specialized training. When readers discover at the end of the letter that Mr. Saltz failed to see the portrait subjects as "men and women," the account is given an allegorical function. Montoya is presenting portraits of men who are valiant in the *real* and dangerous world. The subtext is that Mr. Saltz should learn how to be a *real* art critic, and understand that the world of the salty, white art critic is not as dangerous as the world of brown immigrants.

The letter is not only to Mr. Saltz; it is also to M. Montoya's brother who has died. In this implied address, Montoya has an embedded confessor. While the art critic is disengaged and needs to be taught a lesson, his brother, as the primary recipient of *Letters to the Poet from His Brother*, is hearing M. Montoya's confession. The poet-artist laments that his artworks, which he believes must "respond with clarity and directness to the ills I see in the world, the ills I see directly in front of me," are not enough. He goes on to wish that his "paintings were something more useful, something simple but practical, like a cool washcloth or a soft bed." M. Montoya's guilt is over not being able to register an undocumented worker's car for him, which made the painting he delivered a consolation prize. He remembers that when he explained to Alfredo that he couldn't take care of the registration, it felt "like an excuse." The poet's lament is that at a material level, "The people whose lives I paint don't need paintings; they need basic things like registration stickers so that they don't have to drive in constant fear." In a twist of rhetoric, the scenario also implies that the people who *need* the paintings of undocumented workers are people like Mr. Saltz.

In the final section of the letter, Montoya remembers his encounter with Mr. Saltz. He frames the account by stating: "I create fictions in the hope that I will help others to see differently, to make an emotional connection to that which is different, misunderstood, or altogether unseen." Here, the intent of the artist is also the intent of the advocate for Chicano civil rights. The realization that Mr. Saltz "made no connection" to Montoya's work is heightened when the artist-poet asserts: "You entered my studio and made no connection to my work. I even think you felt disdain for it, certainly condescension." Through the figure of Mr. Saltz, Montoya is describing the marginalizing and dehumanizing gaze of a Euro-American status quo "critiquing" the foreign. The art critic is a pile of *salts* on the wounds of the oppressed and othered whom Montoya pieces together in his portraits, works of fiction. The resolution for Montoya is not in expecting an answer from Mr. Saltz. The resolution is in the metaphysical realm when he states: "I want them to know that there is an artist whose thoughts are with them in their suffering." When art will not suffice, and material goods or legal documents are out of reach, being a witness *will* suffice. In addressing the moral and aesthetic shortcomings he perceived in Mr. Saltz, Montoya has advocated the simple and possible act which any member of the public can "do": witness. In terms of testimonio, Montoya has craft a didactic narrative nepantla of poetics drawn from his own familial legacy and the diasporic familia of Chicanos and Mexicanos at-large. At the altar for his brother, Montoya has offered images of the living who embody an aesthetic sense of visual balance and storytelling derived from an innate ability to *see* and a surprising ability to subvert the erasure of the *critic*.

The works of Chicana/o/x poets Lorna Dee Cervantes,[29] Juan Delgado,[30] Laurie Ann Guerrero,[31] Juan Felipe Herrera,[32] Alejandro Murgia,[33] Alberto Rios,[34] and Tomás Rivera[35] have yet to be widely studied as poetic archives of a hybrid and counter-historical nature. However, their borderland perspectives collectively advocate for the preservation of counter-histories which defy the silencing process of assimilation, and which *re*member statistical data in human, embodied. Maceo Montoya's *Letters to the Poet From His Brother* was followed by another hybrid and collaborative texts with one of the poets listed above, Laurie Ann Guerrero. M. Montoya paintings and Guerrero's poems work together to form a hybrid poetic elegy to the latter's grandfather, Gumecindo Martinez Guerrero. For many Latina/o/x poets and artists, remembering and archiving

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[29] See Lorna Dee Cervantes' *Suenos* (2013), which has a foreward from Juan Felipe Herrera.

[30] See Juan Delgado's *A Rush of Hands* (2003), and the collaborative documentary piece on San Bernardino, CA *Vital Signs* (2013). The latter features photographs from Thomas McGovern.

[31] See Laurie Ann Guerrero's *A Tongue in the Mouth of the Dying* (2012), which won the Andres Montoya prize for poetry in 2012. And, see her collaboration with Maceo Montoya, *A Crown for Gumecindo* (2015).

[32] Juan Felipe Herrera was the U.S. Poet Laureate from 2015-2017. See his collection, *Notes on the Assemblage* (2015).

[33] Alejandro Murgia was named San Francisco Poet Laureate in 2012. See his collection published by City Lights Books, *Stray Poems* (2014).

[34] Alberto Rios was the first Arizona State Poet Laureate from 2013-2015. See his collection, *A Small Story About the Sky* (2015).

[35] Tomás Rivera was the first Chicano chancellor in the University of California system. From 1979-1984, Rivera was the chancellor at UC Riverside. The educator and poet's collected works were published in 1991 as *Tomás Rivera: The Complete Works*.

through loss is a multimedium process, as the real-world has yet to normalize the preservation of Latinidad-oriented spaces as "space." The borderland is archived through metaphysical and material structures of the imagination because it is a poetic way to hold things and ideas in place for those in the future to benefit from. And, in the absence of a clear line to indigenous epistemic perspective, the poetic archive imagines clarity and places it within the spiritus of the poet. Through literary arts production, the indigenous epistemic perspective can be re-embodied through spiritus. This serves to disrupt the status quo conception of "Indian" as a disembodied trope.

Chapter 3
Poetics Americana: From Whitman and Ginsberg to Anzaldúa

A New World Poetic

Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg seem to dialogue through time. "A Supermarket in California," from the latter's *Howl and Other Poems*, would have us believe that the two are still talking and walking the streets of Berkeley at night. Whitman's America and Ginsberg's America are of different shapes, perimeters, and growth trajectories. Yet, they are in close proximity in part because Ginsberg self-identified as a Whitman acolyte, and in part because of their queer, male perspectives. The poets visualize the Indian as a fleeting presence that is more anthropomorphic than embodied, engage with Mexico as an idea or state-of-mind, and deliver themselves through America. This is not to say that they deploy these tropes identically. Whitman's Indian is an old world icon that has been subsumed by the poet, while Ginsberg's Indian is a street angel in transit. The United States of America grew exponentially during Whitman's lifetime, which can help us make sense of the poet's tendency to personify the nation in masculine terms that take up a significant amount of space and breath. Ginsberg's America was too expanding, but not toward the West Coast. America in the 1950's was synonymous with the military-industrial complex, and it is accordingly addressed in *Howl* as one side of a dichotomy: America vs. the counter-culture. The poets are also looking to the border with different expressions: Whitman is either pitying or disgusted, and Ginsberg is nostalgic. Where Ginsberg's twentieth century Mexico is a place where counter-cultural defectors go to escape the American status quo, Whitman's

nineteenth century Mexico is almost a purgatory—Mexicans are stuck in between the crime of being born Mexican and the hope of being subsumed by America. Examining how Whitman and Ginsberg engage with the Indian, U.S., and Mexico in their poetry is an integral first-step toward understanding how Gloria Anzaldúa (Chicana, feminist, poet) meets the same tropes at an intersection of new mestiza consciousness. From this intersection, Anzaldúa *re*members the Indian, the Mexican, and the American as the india, mexicana, and norteamericana. Anzaldúa refuses to subsume, observe from a distance, or truncate her mestiza American experiences into *the* American experience. Like the early Chicana feminists at the First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in 1969 who refused to believe that race trumped gender or gender trumped race, Anzaldúa acknowledges and envelopes her other-ness without privileging one aspect over the other and without asserting herself to the detriment of another. Anzaldúa's embodied poetics Americana should be understood as a reclamation of the aforementioned tropes used by Whitman and Ginsberg from a border perspective that lives in the Indian-Mexican-American body (of land) itself. Perhaps the thread that connects all three poets is one composed of form: free verse, chant, enjambment, and the long-breath line.

Ginsberg looked to Whitman as a fulcrum from which the American chant could pivot and turn in a new, postmodern context. If Whitman rings through the lyric, then Ginsberg rages through it as a carnal transfusion that may be rejected. Like Whitman, Ginsberg floats at the top of the end line, and refuses to fail as his breath and rage is transfused into you, the reader. Like Whitman, Ginsberg is a poet of the streets and of

people—they define their eras by conducting polyphonic movements that necessarily pick out other-ness as subject in a way that upends power structures. Such systems attempt to erase the nuts and bolts that refuse to "fit in" and hold-up the machine. We can understand Whitman as a mid to late nineteenth century poet contending with social structures in distress and in flux. Ginsberg is too such a poet, though the mid to late twentieth century theater of conflict has been upgraded to atomic proportions and gargantuan economic systems. Anzaldúa 's late twentieth century work critiques systems of belonging and validation from an alien perspective that resonates with Ginsberg's articulation of insanity, and with Whitman's characterization of the Mexican and Mexico as other. But, Anzaldúa 's set of symbols are more clearly subterranean in their preoccupation with locating non-Western principles for orienting the self in the world.

Anzaldúa 's lyrical self is embedded between the lines of her poetry and poetic prose; she takes on the American landscape of literature and imposes her lyrical self over the paragraph, the page, the chapter, and the book itself. Where Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* saw itself mature and grow voluminous in its attempt to formulate a life's work, an American work, and where Ginsberg wrote lines, stanzas, parts and poems that litter the American poetic tradition as a scattered pile of cocktail napkins in the form of *Howl*, Anzaldúa is compelled to translate her poetic. She projects the lyric onto a prose-based narrative, and into a series of poems that embody via the simulacrum of form in *Borderlands/La Frontera*[1]. Her poetics could be understood as deeper than street level—

[1] The second part of *Borderlands/La Frontera* which features poems predates the "essay" section. The essays were written subsequent to the poet's attempts to find a publisher.

where Whitman sought to collect every type of person from the streets and plains of America, and Ginsberg sought to drown the apathetic streets with the rigor of consciousness, Anzaldúa dug into the earth beneath the concrete to find herself in a pre-conquest aesthetic that she could brand onto her skin as a talisman.

Whitman, Ginsberg, and Anzaldúa each present a poetics Americana that is drawn from the landscape itself, that invokes a language of inclusion (in subject, form, and the quilting together of tongues), and that attempts to relocate the indigenous body to a new form via the lyric itself. The works of these three, queer poets are performing resurrections that re-write the Indian as a trope for indigenous belonging (Whitman), an angel of other-ness (Ginsberg), and as deity (Anzaldúa).[2] In this chapter, I will argue that reading these poets as participants in an American lyric tradition that collapses the "I" into the land, and the Indian into the resurrected "other," exposes the interdependent nature of form/ breath/ aural trajectory and the calling up of Indian-ness from the fringe/ the streets/ the self. In terms of mestizaje, poetics Americana *is* a mestiza/o/x poetic. The socio-politics of libertad, democracy, language, sexuality, justice and truth are stakes in the road of national historical production. The physical *re*membering that is required in order to become and to be heard as part of this production is one which must be sucked in as the breath and rolled out in a tongue that adopts the foreign, rolling *r* and the syncopated, uvular word as its own natural state. It is a becoming that requires the

[2] The scope of this chapter is concerned with non-tribal perspectives that engage with Indian-ness as a trope or aspect of mestizaje.

aboriginal[3] plains—geographical and linguistic—of the native *and* the capitalistic intersections of commerce and culture for reification. It is a becoming that sets the Indian and the Mexican apart in cultural and sociopolitical terms. The beginning of poetics Americana is perhaps rooted in this process of distinction. The trope of the Indian woman and the body of the Indian woman are two different entities; the trope transcends via Whitman, the trope keeps watch via Ginsberg, and the trope is *re*membered, via Anzaldúa, into the mestiza body itself. For Whitman, America is the body becoming and stretching out over North America, while the Indian is an idea, memory, specter, and sound.

Old World Erasure, Peyote Angel Transformations, Alien Encounters

Fifteen years prior to the publication of the first 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman contributed "The Inca's Daughter" (1840) to *The Long Island Democrat*. The thirty-two lined, iambic tetrameter poem is an early example of the poet's engagement with the indigenous woman as a trope which represents the transition between embodied aborigine and incorporeal ideal.

> Before the dark-brow'd sons of Spain,
> A captive Indian maiden stood;
> Imprison'd where the moon before
> Her race as princes trod.

[3] Whitman used the term aboriginal to refer to "Indians." He viewed "Indian" as a misnomer. Here, I am using it to encompass native commitments to the American landscape from sovereign tribe and mestizaje-oriented perspectives.

The rack had riven her frame that day—
But not a sigh or murmur broke
Forth from her breast; calmly she stood,
And sternly thus she spoke:—

"The glory of Peru is gone;
Her proudest warriors in the fight—
Her armies, and her Inca's power
Bend to the Spaniard's might.

"And I—a Daughter of the Sun—
Shall I ingloriously still live?
Shall a Peruvian monarch's child
Become the white lord's slave?

In the initial four stanzas, the old world body of the Incan daughter is one which cannot be sustained in a post-conquest America, and the ideal is one which is to be consumed—as a piece of nutritional fruit—by the new world American. The Incan daughter is described as having been, in the course of a day, reduced from the state of a princess to being tortured at the rack by Spanish conquistadors (1-5). The Indian maiden is rendered as icon through her refusal to cry out in pain (6), her ability to speak to the Spaniards and concede that the "glory" of her "race of princes" is gone, her articulation of a belief in an afterlife that resembles the Christian idea of heaven[4], her refusal to become a slave, and her final act of honorable suicide.

The poem turns midway (line seventeen) with her refusal to submit to the new world dichotomy that places her in the role of supplicant and the Spaniards in the role of new gods:

[4] The Incan daughter refers to the afterlife as: "the free spirit's place of rest" (18).

"No: I'd not meet my father's frown
In the free spirit's place of rest,
Nor seem a stranger midst the bands
Whom Manitou has blest."

Her snake-like eye, her cheek of fire,
Glowed with intenser, deeper hue;
She smiled in scorn, and from her robe
A poisoned arrow drew.

"Now, paleface see! the Indian girl
Can teach thee how to bravely die:
Hail! spirits of my kindred slain,
A sister ghost is nigh!"

Her hand was clenched and lifted high—
Each breath, and pulse, and limb was still'd;
An instant more the arrow fell:
Thus died the Inca's child.

The final sixteen lines of the poem are punctuated with trochaic foot imperatives at the start of a third of the lines, with the moment just before death accented with a spondaic foot that gives way to a return to the order of iambic feet: “Each breath, and pulse, and limb was still’d;/ An instant more the arrow fell” (30-31). The final line of the poem assumes a metric form that audibly puts the Incan daughter to rest: “Thus died the Inca’s child.” The spondaic foot of “Thus died” metrically aligns with “Each breath” that the native woman represents. The formal symmetry is communicating that it is not only her body that is transformed into a didactic trope for Americans, but “Each breath,” or all Incan and aboriginal bodies that are sites for mining new world principles for order. Order is created by virtue of the Incan woman’s suicide by poisoned arrow—which is itself an archaic, old world weapon by new world standards.

By killing herself with a poison arrow, in a Cleopatra-like refusal to become subjugated, the Incan daughter is symbolically refusing to engage with a Spanish-new world continuum of violence. Her self-sacrifice and courage release her from suffering, and preserve the old world continuum of a "race of princes" as an artifact in a museum. The final two feet of the poem are iambic: "the Inca's child." The upswing stress of "child" connotes longing. But, in its place, "A captive Indian maiden" (2) becomes a new world model for courage and liberty in the shadow of intrusive forces. In didactic terms, Whitman's poem presents the indigenous woman as an icon for old world stoicism. This is in direct contrast to the passion and eroticism that prompted many of Whitman's early critics—such as Charles Dana from the *New York Daily Tribune*—to dismiss the language of *Leaves of Grass* as being "too frequently reckless and indecent.[5]" The Incan daughter is stoic because she cannot be violated by virtue of her refusal to commiserate with the Spaniards or compromise her father's (the Incan race's) legacy.[6] What Dana understood as "naïve unconsciousness" should more likely be attributed to Whitman's new world democratic ideals that placed the body at the center of politics. Where the Indian daughter had to become disembodied in order to remain relevant as an icon for physical *and* philosophical stoicism in a new, democratic system, Whitman

[5] Dana's review posits that Whitman's vulgar language "appears to arise from a naive unconsciousness rather than from an impure mind. His words might have passed between Adam and Eve in Paradise, before the want of fig-leaves brought no shame; but they are quite out of place amid the decorum of modern society, and will justly prevent his volume from free circulation in scrupulous circles."

[6] She is too stoic in the philosophical sense in that she seems impervious to pain, committed to the preservation of virtue, and submits to the necessity of her death in order without fighting against her misfortune.

understands the new world American body as one which *must* be occupied and experienced in a natural, polyphonic, and cacophonous sense.

The trope of the native becomes a foundational figure in *Leaves of Grass*, precisely because of Whitman's understanding its value as one which was not in the native body or in the potential for native contribution to the new world of today and tomorrow; the trope of the native is valuable in its function as a symbol for old world custodian and icon that differentiate North, Central and South America from the European, Asian, and African continents. Thanks to the native population, Whitman has a new trope to mine for the benefit of the new American race; a race which should be distinguished from the mestiza/o/x of Central and South America because such persons are a byproduct of native commiseration and Spanish barbarism.[7] In the first 1855

[7] Whitman's portrait of the Spanish in "Inca's Daughter" may also speak to the failure of Simon Bolivar's Pan-Latin American dream for governance, Gran Columbia. The unified sovereign states of Venenzuela, Ecador, Bolivia, Peru and Colombia were anti-slavery long before America's abolitionist movement. However, the government of Gran Colombia (1819-1831) could not sustain a federal system of democracy, and the centralization of power was the beginning of the end for Bolivar's liberated, unified Latin America. In Peru, Bolivar (a creole) would have been neither Spaniard, Incan, or American—the exclusion of a mestiza/o/x people from the poem reflects Peru at conquest, but it is too a criticism of mestiza/o/x peoples at-large. Consider that Whitman highlights the courage and refusal of the Incan daughter to be degraded to the status of slave. Bolivar and other creole or mestiza/o/x peoples would be the offspring of degradation. I would argue that Whitman would say "naturally," Bolivar's concept of democracy is too a degraded form—he did not support a federalist's balanced distribution of power advocated for by Whitman. Bolivar, and other politicians' integral to the liberation of Latin America from Spanish, Portuguese, and French rule, felt that a strong centralized government with life-long-presidency was the key element to democratic stability in South and Central America.

edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman focuses on a more palatable union of a white hunter and squaw bride. Following images of the poet as a farm worker, hunter, and sailor, Whitman takes the position of observer:

> I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far-west…the bride was a red girl,
> Her father and his friends sat near by crosslegged and dumbly smoking…they had moccasins to/ their feet and large thick blankets hanging from their shoulders;
> On a bank lounged the trapper…he was dressed mostly in skins…his luxuriant beard and curls/ protected his neck,
> One hand rested on his rifle…the other hand held firmly the wrist of the red girl,
> She had long eyelashes…her head was bare…her coarse straight locks descended upon her/ voluptuous limbs and reached to her feet. (36)

The lines racialize this couple's potential offspring as having a mute or unspoken indigeneity and a dominating whiteness. The squaw is only legitimized by virtue of being paired with the hunter as a bride. Her own people are incapable of validating her in American terms, and they accordingly fade into the landscape as an afterthought or memory. Unlike the Mexican mestiza/o/x, the imaginary children of this couple would be a step closer to nobility *because* the American subjugates the Indian; he does not convert the Indian. If the hunter is read as a personification of new world America, and the squaw is read as the personification of the old world Indian, then their union is not one which preserves the old. Rather, the image presented represents the final step of old world erasure—the severing of the native (squaw) from her now defunct, static heritage

(the seated male elders). The placement of the squaw in this poem demonstrates that the Indian is a transitional figure[8]; her body is one of the bodies through which America realizes its destiny.

It should be noted that Whitman's attitude toward native peoples as a transitional presence may have been altered by his experience as a clerk with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. While employed at this office in Washington D.C. during the Civil War, the poet met with tribal delegations face-to-face. The poet's notebooks/journals from this time period include some brief comments in regard to the positive nature of their interaction. In the 1891-192 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the positioning of the squaw bride and hunter has been altered: the two are holding hands instead of the hunter holding the bride by the wrist, which connotes a more intimate and equal relationship. It is possible that Whitman's edit is intended to mitigate the tenor of American masculinity as a mechanism for control. It is also possible that the edit reflects a change in the poet's perspective on

[8] In the 1891-1891 version, there are several sections that have been added to part I of *Leaves of Grass*. "The Sleepers" was a title given to new additions that integrated several scenes from part six of the 1855 edition. In the 1855 edition, this dream-like, transitional, ghost-like figure interacts with the Whitman family and the poet changes locations to assume the identity of a slave or freed slave at the banks of a river. It is, strangely, a precursor to the devil on Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857) wherein the devil in disguise jumps on and off the riverboat, creating chaos. From this perspective at the river's edge, the poet speaks in the voice of a slave: "Now Lucifer was not dead…or if he was I am his sorrowful terrible heir;/ I have been wronged…I am oppressed…I hate him that oppresses me,/ I will either destroy him, or he shall release me…./ How he laughs when I look down the bend after the steamboat that carries away my woman" (112-113). The squaw is a memory that fades away into the landscape and into time. The slave's woman is sold down the river which is an indication of actual slave trade practice during the era, and a practice the speaker associates with evil. Whitman's variant characterizations of these two marginalized and oppressed female bodies betray the poet's liberal, Northern sensibility: black slaves need to be saved and red natives need to disperse or be subsumed by "America."

the native body post-Wounded Knee (1890), wherein a winter blizzard covered the bodies of over 200 Lakota who were murdered by American troops. The bodies were photographed, and the photographs were sold en masse—a newsman like Whitman would have seen images from the 1890 massacre. The edit from a squaw being held by the wrist to the hunter and squaw holding hands could be understood to represent the need for mutual peace and amicability, or it could be understood as the state of peace achieved once the late nineteenth century Ghost Dance movement and native resistance to Euro-American development and forced removal came to a final halt.[9]

In addition to the trope of the native woman, Whitman's development of a new American poetic in *Leaves of Grass*[10] engaged with the remnants of aboriginal languages in a way that transmutes the native icon into a native sound. Whitman's death-bed edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1891-1892) articulates his intent and methodology: "I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,/ And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps" (192). He goes on to question, in a section that lists types of men, women and children in state of distress: "What living and buried speech is always vibrating here…what howls restrained by

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[9] The Ghost Dance movement is rooted in Paiute traditions from the 1870's. It "began" when Wovoka, a Northern Paiute, had a vision during a solar eclipse. The massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 marks the "end" of the movement being a perceived threat by the United States military. For an account of Wounded Knee, see Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. For a history of the Ghost Dance Movement, see Michael Hittman's *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance Movement*. The Ghost Dance movement survived and is still celebrated today within the Native American Church.

[10] This chapter focuses on the first, 1855 edition, and the final, 1891-1892 edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

decorum…/ I mind them or the resonance of them…I come again and again and again" (line 34, later version page 195, this is the last line of section 8 with a word change). It is from this point of poetics Americana—the intersection of the sensuous, the resonant, the living, and the dead—that Ginsberg picks up Whitman's poetic line[11]. The "Beat Generation" poet picks up the "howls restrained" and examines their state in a postmodern New World.

Ginsberg's 1956 publication of *Howl and Other Poems* engages with the transcendent, disembodied "indian" as angel. Like Whitman, Ginsberg's howl is erotic, repetitious, and brought into being via the lengthy intake and exhale of breath required to get through the line. However, where Whitman's howl is "restrained by decorum" and released in what could be understood as the equivalent of a nearly silent orgasm, Ginsberg's howl is unleashed in its starving-for sex, fix, light, visionary voluminous-ness. The Native's "peyote" and the "indian angel" we meet in part I of "Howl" take up rhetorical space in the poem that is often glossed over as being incidental, when its function is cardinal. The "indian angel" and the Native's "peyote" are of a discourse that disembodies the Native and transfers their relevance to an iconographic, otherworldly function. Where Whitman subsumed the native through his "poet of the cosmos" imperative, Ginsberg has found a way to ingest native ethos and spirituality though

[11] Ginsberg explains in the "Dedication" to *Howl and Other Poems* that several phrases and the title were taken from Jack Kerouac, the "new Buddha of American prose" (3).

peyote[12]. Where Whitman saw the Indian as a memory, Ginsberg saw a subversive practice and a living, native church[13] that he incorporated into the inaugural section of his three-part, howling meditation.

The first three lines of "Howl" anchor the remaining seventy-five lines of part I: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,/ dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,/ angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night…" (1-3). The "angelheaded hipsters" are caught in between; they are "dragging themselves" through a transitional time of day that is neither enlightened, nor enveloped in shadow. This state of limbo could be understood as a madness, or hysteria inducing factor. The compounding of heavenly body and earthly body in "angelheaded" reads as a play on "bullheaded" that connotes both state-of-mind and visual misnomer. If "the best minds of my generation" are the subject of part I, then the psychological-physical manipulation of the "head" is the anchoring concept that line

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[12] Ginsberg writes of a legal case involving the Navajo Native American Church's use of peyote in Arizona. In *Collected Poems*, "Who Will Take Over the Universe" reads: "The Indians won their case with Judge McFate Peyote safe in Arizona—" (5). The annotation for this reference includes part of Judge Yale McFate's decision: "Peyote is not a narcotic. It is not habit forming…There are about 225,000 members of the organized church, known as the Native American Church, which adheres to this practice…The use of peyote is essential to the existence of the peyote religion. Without it, the practice of the religion would be effectively prevented" (Kindle Location 13736). The NAC's peyote sacrament/ceremony is one in which the hallucinogenic properties of the plant circumvent the resistant qualities of the individual toward transformation and integration with the world around them.

[13] Ginsberg describes *Howl and Other Poems* as being "religious." He does on to describe the audience's reaction to "Howl" as surprising him to at first, but a validation of his characterization/intent (*Howl Original Draft Facsimile* 152).

thirteen builds upon: "Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn, ashcan rantings and kind king light of mind,…." Line thirteen is the last of three lines that interrupt a seven line run of "who" driven anaphora. "With dreams…/ incomparable blind streets…/ Peyote solidities of halls…" (11-13). The initial words in each of the three interrupting lines are oriented in the "head" space. Dreams are indicative of sleep, subconscious knowing, and the conceptualization of goals for the future. Sight is oriented in the head and refers to both natural and supernatural types of "seeing." Peyote marks the end of the interruption; it is a substance that impacts *how* and *what* a person sees in the world around them.

"Peyote solidities of halls" can be understood as the corporeal, material paradox of space and non-space. Through ingesting peyote, there is both the opening of a path or hall toward transformation, and a filling up of the space between the individual and the external world—the individual is both transported and transformed. Ginsberg experienced peyote in 1952 and clustered together his memories of the experience in line 13 of "Howl."[14] Ginsberg's letters, particularly the lengthy piece sent to Richard

[14] In the "Author's Annotations" from *Howl: Original Draft Facsimile*, Ginsberg writes that the "'backyard green tree cemetery dawns' ref. Bill Keck's apartment on East 2nd Street off Second Avenue, in New York City, overlooking cemetery…The author tried peyote (sold from East 10th Street storefront) two days later," after visiting with Keck on April 17, 1952. Ginsberg recounts his first experience with peyote in his Journals and described the trees as vibrating (125). In what is labeled "Draft 1" in Howl: Original Draft Facsimile, the triad or "short line free form" (153) borrowed from William Carlos Williams is still in place. Line 13 is one of the longest clusters in part I with five line breaks per verse. Ginsberg called the triadic clusters "verses," and the long-line cousins

Eberhart dated May 18, 1956, articulate the poet's debt to bop music, rhythm and musical structure: "The lines are the result of ling thought and experiment as to what unit constitutes *One speech-breath-thought*…I have leaned more toward capturing the inside-mind-thought rather than the verbalized speech" (153). The focus on "head-space" is clearly articulated in the poet's descriptions of his own work, and in his methodology for editing. Assessing line 13 as a "one speech-breath-thought" reveals that Ginsberg's spaces and places—halls, backyards, rooftops, storefronts, Brooklyn, light of mind—are as much internal as they are external.

Peyote is a sacramental tool that can assist in traversing the perceived distance between the two. Accordingly, Ginsberg draws out his foray into native faith practice in part I: "who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking visionary indian angels who were visionary indian angels," (25). The subjects being modified here remain "the best minds of my generation" (1). The visual presented in this line is eerie, ghost-like, and self-reflexive in its Rumi-esque "what you seek is seeking you" circularity. While the indian angel could be both Native and India-n, its placement in Idaho corresponds to the location of at least five federally recognized Indian Reservations. The solitary nature of the indian angel means that there is no validating perspective; no other form to confirm its embodiment or disembodiment. The "best minds" are therefore being presented as possible ghosts or mystics who have escaped the confines of the body. There is too an implication that the same "starving hysterical mad" minds are the same angelic entities

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that we know from the final version of "Howl" (as quoted above) are referred to as "Strophes."

that are most apt to provide divine guidance to the world. The "indian angel" is one which transcends the Christian, Judaic[15] and Buddhist[16] conceptions of angel, while contradicting none. All three can "become" through the "indian angel" who is oriented at street-level, and not in the heavens.

While Ginsberg's invocation of "peyote" and "indian angel" are at least gesturing toward a living native culture and its place in a postmodern world, the focus is still on the internal head-space or the divine brought down to earth. In his annotation for this line in *Howl: Original Draft Facsimile*, he cites Gary Snyder's *The Old Ways* and asserts that "American Indian old ways included 'vision quest' as mark of maturation, or resolution of life crisis. Some among the postwar generation of white Americans initiated themselves into this tradition" (128). Whitman did not anticipate the survivance of native peoples, faith practice, or sovereign land spaces. Where Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* subsumes and moves through the native, Ginsberg's "Howl" pauses on the trope/tradition and holds it in the mind-spirit-breath. It does so while simultaneously unleashing the antithesis of that which it seeks to resolve—the mercilessness of society (154)—onto the page. If "Howl" is a private, individual act of mercy, and is "consciously built on a *liberation* of basic human virtues" (154), then part of Ginsberg's resolution to the problem is to articulate alternative methods for transformation—the peyote vision quest

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[15] The seraphim are one type of Judaic angel. In the tradition of the Kabbalah, they are one of the ten types of ranked archangels. The seraphim are mentioned twice in "Howl," and the "Kabbalah" is mentioned just before "indian angels."

[16] The Buddhist devas—invisible and enlightened entities—are the closest thing to what the Western world understands as "angels."

is one such method that provides a base line for reimagining lunacy as the step before consciousness. For Whitman, consciousness would have been akin to the emergence of an American race. For Gloria Anzaldúa , the dichotomy of internal-external awareness makes way for a third orientation—that of the borderland.

Borderlands/La Frontera (1987) was published more than 130 years after *Leaves of Grass*, and more than 30 years after *Howl and Other Poems*. Its engagement with poetics Americana's "native" is accordingly distinct from Whitman's and Ginsberg's. The poet's "native" is as much drawn from her "india" self as it is from poetic tradition. It emerges as much from El Movimiento and Chicana feminism as it does from English language poetics. Anzaldúa echoes a strophe in part I of "Howl"—"who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht & tortillas dreaming of the pure vegetable kingdom," (52)[17]—in her "To Live in the Borderlands Means You." Like Ginsberg's "verses" in early drafts of "Howl" that were based on William Carlos Williams' triadic line, Anzaldúa employs anaphora and structures the length of each line in the verse to correspond to the intake and exhalation of breath. In the fourth verse of the poem, Ginsberg's line is echoed: "To live in the Borderlands means to/ put *chile* in the borscht,/ eat whole wheat *tortillas*,/ speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;/ be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints" (18-22). Where Ginsberg's rotten animal "borsht" and "tortillas" are up against the dream of vegetarianism, Anzaldúa 's "*chile* in the borscht" and "whole wheat *tortillas*" are surreal constructs within the world itself. The surreal is

[17] Ginsberg is referencing his mother's cooking of "lungen (lung stew) and Russian borscht (beet soup) when not eating nature-community vegetarian" (*Howl: Original Draft Facsimile 133*).

drawn out further through the "absurdity" of the hybrid accent/language, and the irony of a borderland persona being called into question for traversing the space that most directly corresponds to the lived experience of mestizaje.

The title of the poem runs into the first line: "To live in the Borderlands means you/ are neither *hispana india negra Española*/ *ni gabacha*, *eres mestiza*, *mulata*, half-breed/ caught in the crossfire between camps/ while carrying all five races on your back/ not knowing which side to turn to, run from" (1-5). The mestiza figure is not resolved or reified; the mestiza figure is in a state of fissure and aversion. The mestiza body is described as a theater of conflict, wherein there are warring camps at either side—but, she is her own heroine in a way that mirrors Ginsberg's "visionary indian angel" that is seeking a version of itself. Anzaldúa goes on to reason that "To live in the Borderlands means knowing/ that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,/ is no longer speaking to you,/ that *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*,/ that denying the Anglo inside you/ is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black" (6-11). The denial that Anzaldúa articulates is a denial of not only race, but of cultural heritage. The internal fissure and silencing are mitigated by virtue of her breathing into the verse—naming that which is being denied resurrects it and reverses the trajectory of forgetting. Naming the denial is an act of *re*membering. And, although the "*india*" is no longer speaking to the mestiza, the final poem in the text ("Don't Give In, *Chicanita*") sees her resurrected as spirit and contextualized as part of the pre-conquest, Azteca system of time—El Quinto Sol.

The final poem in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* is addressed to Missy Anzaldúa, who was raised collectively by all of the women in the Anzaldúa

family. The direct, personal nature of the address writes the self into being in a way that preserves the continuity of living as a crossroads "*sin fronteras*" (217) for the next generation. "Don't Give In, *Chicanita*," reads as part oral history and part prophecy: "And yes, they've taken our lands…But they will never take that pride/ of being *Mexicana*-Chicana-*tejana*/ nor our Indian woman's spirit./ And when the Gringos are gone—/ see how they kill one another—/ here we'll still be like the horned toad and the lizard/ relics of an earlier age/ survivors of the First Fire Age—*el Quinto Sol*" (17, 23-30). Anzaldúa is recalling the native spirit from its function as trope; she is denying Whitman's American race and completing the task of Ginsberg's "visionary indian angel." In place of a masculine, American race, Anzaldúa argues that "we'll be members of a new species/ skin tone between black and bronze/ second eyelid under the first/ with the power to look at the sun through naked eyes" (32-35). While this is a rhetorical strategy that establishes dark skin as the new norm, it is also one which presents a new receptacle for a mestiza, "alien" consciousness that is currently evolving (99). The form of the book itself reflects the poet's attempt to relocate the new mestiza consciousness into a receptacle that tolerates hybridity and an orientation toward "awareness—an experiencing of the soul" (61). The book itself is designed to be such a receptacle. It includes prose, prosody, bits of song, and tongues of various dialects. It is also numbered with chapters 1-7, and in poetic movements of I-VI. The final part of the

text could actually be understood as a beginning, "Part VI. El Retorno." As part VI[18], it is the beginning of the end of El Quinto Sol (the fifth sun)—it is both afterword and foreword.

Anzaldúa 's inverse poetic has been constructed by shifting away from standard conceptions of immigrant-alien, time, history, Indian-ness, and the "book" itself. It could be argued that the new mestiza consciousness is also indicative of a new system of gender politics. Anzaldúa, like Whitman and Ginsberg, presents a type of becoming that is carnal and genderqueer. As Whitman's poetic subsumes male and female into his singular multitude, and as Ginsberg's poetic renders the sex act as a hyperbolic imperative that proclaims "real" human experiences (126), Anzaldúa 's lyrical poetic primarily locates the carnal internally[19]. Leyla in "Interface," la diosa in "*Cancion de la diosa de la noche*," and the fully formed "I" of "*Cihuatyotl*, Woman Alone" should be understood as alien entities that have birthed themselves—they are an indication of the corporeal product of the new mestiza consciousness that is articulated through the subject and form of the text. The text could be understood as a simulacrum for the mestiza body itself. In "*Cihuatyotl*, Woman Alone[20]," the form of the poem, justified at left and right

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[18] Part VI includes the poems "*Arriba mi gente*," "To live in the Borderlands means you," "*Canción de la diosa de la noche*," and "No se raje, chicanita" ("Don't Give In, Chicanita").

[19] Not all of Anzaldúa 's poems in *Borderlands/La Frontera* are lyric, or personal, in nature. Many of the poems—"A Sea of Cabbages," "We Call Them Greasers," "I Had to go Down"—are explicitly narrative.

[20] The poem is in part IV of the second, "poetry" section of the book that shares its title. It is the last of seven poems in Part IV—five predominantly English poems and two in Spanish. The epigraph to this section (174) is the poet quoting herself in a seven-line,

like a box, takes the shape of forcibility and containment. This oppressive force is named in the poem: "*Raza*/ father mother church*"* (1-2). Anzaldúa 's lyrical "I" voice fills up the box, but is spread thin in some areas (blank space) and congested in others (*"Raza india Mexicana norteamericana*" 28). There is a balance of descriptors that are commonly gendered as being masculine ["erect" (4), "hard" (13), "battle" (26), "hardened" (33), "fully formed" (33)] and feminine ["arch" (4), "soft" (14), "tender" (15)]. They are used to describe both the "I" in the poem and the enraged "*Raza*" that seeks to take her over—the lyric refuses to engender in static, fixed terms. The "I" in the poem feels an alien to her own people because of her genderqueer[21] identity, but she circumvents the oppressive nature of the space by asserting: "I am fully formed carved/ by the hands of the ancients…./ But my own/ Hands whittle the final work me" (33-36). Through accepting a paradox of belonging and not belonging to *Raza*, the "I" is able to "whittle" its alien self into being. Leyla in "Interface" is similarly drawn from the lyrical self.

Spanish language poem. It foregrounds the content of part IV as being the poet articulating her love for women in the language of the people, her people, that alienate her lesbian aspect: "Yo llamo a mujer,/ canto por mujer./ bubierta con serpientes vengo yo,/ al lugar del encuentro me acerco,/ repito conjuros para provocar amor./ Clamo por mujer./ Ya llego, llamo" (1-7). The poet does not translate the epigraph into English, which is an indication that part of the content or message is culture-specific. The English translation is as follows: "I call to woman,/ sing for woman./ Covered with snakes I come,/ to the meeting place I go,/ I repeat spells to bring love./ I cry for woman./ I come already, I call."

[21] Anzaldúa referred to herself as a Chicana feminist, lesbian; terms like genderqueer had yet to populate the discourse of late twentieth century theory. I refer to her poetic as genderqueer because it encompasses both sexuality and gender identity. And, I use genderqueer because it is a term that underscores critical discourse and theory on border and queer politics—Anzaldúa 's poetics are as theoretical as they are lyrical or narrative.

The speaker of the poem has an erotic relationship with Leyla, who is without form, by meeting at the interface or "border between/ the physical world/ and hers" (23-25). The speaker is never identified in gender specific terms, but is likely a woman living with her roommate Lupe. The disembodied Leyla enters the body of her lover and incubates there until she is birthed and given form. The speaker gives form to her own sexual satiation and sexual self "personified" to a degree because Leyla "could pass" (71) for human. At the end of the poem, the speaker takes her home to Texas for Christmas: "Is she a lez, my brothers asked./ I said, No, just an alien./ Leyla laughed" (113-115). Like la diosa in "*Cancion*…," Leyla is made viable in our "world" through the mestiza body. La diosa, the goddess, is inspirited (74) by the woman who has "no keeper" (3) and who absorbs and converts the "filth you relegate to Satan" (67). By inspiriting the goddess, the woman "in love" with her own kind (73) comes to meet "Night" who is both lover and mother (83-86). La diosa, who can be understood as an aspect of the speaker, "lifts" them as the "moon eclipses the sun" (105-106). In theoretical terms, both of these poems are presenting the feminine (moon, mestiza, womb) as more than mother or daughter. Neither Leyla's lover-mother nor la diosa's soul seeker-giver require a male counterpart—they each hold the qualities needed for giving life to "alien" aspects of themselves within themselves.

The form and content of Anzaldúa 's poetics Americana is advocating for genderqueer liberation and self-realization via a lyrical perspective that is a "borderland" stakeholder. The borders of sexuality, gender, national identity, cultural commitments, socioeconomic classes, economic systems, political affiliations, religious practice or non-

practice, and language serve to alienate any individual who cannot fit themselves into the space allotted to them within the border. The resident of the borderland and the new mestiza consciousness that is a product of la frontera are necessarily alien in relation to the laws, customs, and social norms that create points of physical, psychological, spiritual and social fissure. The American race that Walt Whitman attempted to conjure did not subsume the alien or the mestiza in Anzaldúa . The mestiza/o/x remains alien in America by virtue of their border orientation. The mestiza/o/x cannot be subsumed because it can only birth itself, and it can resurrect itself.

In our contemporary political climate, the "immigration issue" is a polarizing and often vitriol inducing topic for debate amongst presidential candidates. When politicians discuss immigration reform, they are by default discussing a US-Mexico border issue that also involves South and Central America. It is often a discourse that allows for encoded racism and hate-speech that threatens the lives and liberty of alien Americans who are the embodiment of mestizaje (e.g., undocumented resident-aliens, legal resident-aliens, American-born children of undocumented resident-aliens). The theory embedded within Anzaldúa 's poetics Americana should be understood as more than a salve to treat the fissures and breaks within the land and the self. The theory of a new mestiza consciousness of la frontera enacts the steps that it advocates through the medium of poetry: it carves itself into the space on the page and in the mind, establishes a new language for articulating the self as a "crossroads" ("To live in the Borderlands means you…" 42) of culture and ancestry, acknowledges and embraces multiethnic nature of mestizaje, and it mitigates erasure by *re*membering ancient systems for understanding the

time and world that we inhabit. These tools are more than theoretical; they are a living art practice that can mitigate the impact of hate speech. Within the tradition of poetics Americana, Anzaldúa 's lyrical "india" can be understood as a mitigating factor that contradicts the disembodiment of Whitman's "Incan Daughter," and as a response to Ginsberg's wandering "visionary indian angel" that brings the vision quest to fruition. Understanding how the concept of "America" is archived within the poetics of these three poets may also help to shift our sociopolitical climate away from exclusion and toward the liberation that each of their poetics echoes in formal terms.

America, America! norteamericana

Whitman imagines the United States themselves as "the greatest poem" (5) in the preface to *Leaves of Grass*. But, he fails to acknowledge that America's iconic greatness is, in part, the result of polices toward native peoples that were just as brutal and democratically sanctioned as those that he criticizes Mexico for in his journalism and poetry. He reasons that discovery opened up the western continent to the "pride of the United States" which "leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy the breed of fullsized men or one fullsized man unconquerable and simple" (6).[22] The hunter is the personification of this non-urban, uncomplicated, and

[22] Whitman continues to articulate the American master race in the 1855 "Preface": "These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them" (19). The "American states" that he is referring to is both the state-of-being of an American, and the

hyper-masculine pride of the United States. If the squaw is a symbol for native submission, then the dream-like sequence involving a red squaw in "The Sleepers" is indicative of a self-imposed erasure. In this poem, the red squaw happens upon the "old [Whitman] homestead" (2). She is already fixed in the past—she is a memory being recounted to Walt by his mother. The native figure is described in essential terms: free, elastic, exquisite, beautiful (1855), fresh (1891-1892), full, pliant, and pure. Whitman's mother tells him that although she had no work for the squaw, she brought her close to the fire and cooked for her. This description reads as a last meal scene wherein the "nearly grown girl" (1) is privileged to serve to the condemned. The squaw only stayed for the morning and "went away" (13) as children who died during this era were apt to do. The finality of her departure mirrors death because she "never came nor was heard of there again" (17). It is also implied that she may be a spectre or ghost, as only the young, future Mrs. Whitman encounters the red squaw. The parents are not mentioned outside of being said to live at the homestead with their daughter. The longing that Whitman's mother feels for the red squaw is also a type of haunting.

By the mid-1850's, Whitman was encountering only remnants of native culture. The homesteading culture of America, as it was encouraged by the Indian Removal Act (1830) and as it unfurled even further west post-Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), had already displaced native tribes and relocated most of them west of the Mississippi. Through essentializing the red squaw, Whitman upholds his mother's American fixation

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democratic American state within the nation. Not only is the American race natural, but so is a democratic nation of states.

on the native and ensures that the spectre is captured as an icon. The squaw is to be yearned for in the way that one yearns for the essential qualities of the divine to be transferred into themselves. While Whitman's mother is "old" in comparison to her young self in the story, the red squaw remains in a state of natural grace and beauty—this is not indicative of the actual state of the native woman displaced from her ancestral lands and dispossessed of the means by which to sustain a tribal lifestyle without Euro-American interference and management. The red squaw in "The Sleepers" is a native sleeping beauty who is woven into a new American folklore as an icon for old world dignity—in this way, she is akin to the Incan daughter. Both are oriented in a nostalgic recollection of a past that is as impossible to change or reverse as the aging process itself. "The Sleepers" is not one of Whitman's articulations of America's new world democracy. However, the poem's red squaw should be understood as being a foundational, iconic aspect that inspires America's "soul" (6).[23]

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[23] If the 1855 version is the natural expression of a specific "moment" of American liberty in poetic form, the culminating text is a library of expressions and images compiled over a lifetime of observation, interaction and witness. The variances between the two books could also be said to reflect the maturation of "American" institutions that supported the reconstruction of the South, the settling of the West, and the building up of federal and state infrastructures. Within the nearly 40 years between the first and final edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the landscape of America radically and rapidly changed through violence, legal maneuvers, and technological advances: The Alamo, The Mexican-American War, the onslaught of immigration from Europe and Asia, the California Goldrush, and Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that led to the annexation of the States that would come to represent the American West in our national consciousness, the Trail of Tears, the Civil War, the end of slavery, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the urbanization of American towns, increased travel and commercial production, and Wounded Knee. Between and within these historical moments, Whitman developed an American poetic that sought to mitigate the distance between types of people (different "races," sexes, and classes) with a universal, transcendent lyric. As America's system of governance and law became more complicated and identified in explicit terms, so did

For Whitman, America is indicative of first the United States, and second, an American master "race" that he sings into the landscape of North and South America (he also mentions Central America as the isthmus between the two).[24] Within this poetic, the indigenous figure is amongst the "mythical" elements that he argues is not greater than "the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable" (“Preface” 6). He goes on to reason that, “There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait awhile…perhaps a generation or two…dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place…the gangs of the kosmos and prophets en masse shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest.” (“Preface” 1855, 25)[25]. The American poet is the individual who can interpret. The native, slave, immigrant, female, child, prostitute, and criminal portraits that weave throughout *Leaves of Grass* are included because the poem is a work of

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each section of the book. I don’t think that Whitman’s body/racial politic is one which is intended to erase (although in practice it does). It is one which attempts to transcend and mitigate difference.

[24] In the "Preface" to the 1855 version of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman speaks of America in terms of it being "a live nation" (6). As with a person, the nation is a living subject for the poet to translate into images that are built by snapshots of non-construct. For Whitman, the American poetic is one of liberty that manifests itself in his signature free-verse from 1855 forward. Post-journalist experience and post Mexican-American War, Whitman's concept for American poetics unravels from the metered deliberateness of 1840's "Inca's Daughter.” However, there are variations in form between the 1855 and 1891-1892 versions of the text that are notable: he removes entire lines referencing indigenous persons, favors ellipses in the 1855 and changes them to mostly to commas in the 1891-1892 version, and moves away from the non-structure of the 1855 edition (which reads as one long poem with a few extended line or page breaks) to the detailed titling of sections and poems in the 1891-1892 version.

[25] Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things…They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.

democracy, and because these are the subjects being interpreted by the "new world order" priest. However, the marginalized figure that is interpreted by the poet cannot be mistaken for subject. The subject, or central melodic line of the poem, is comprised of the American race and state. "America" is embodied and carved out by the poet; the native, slave, immigrant, prostitute, and criminal are largely repetitive, oblique place holders (one line holds a single pitch while the other moves up and down) for the more fleshed out and nuanced expressions of democratic self and eroticism in the poem. They remind the reader of where they are, America, so that they can know who they are by virtue of lessons in democratic (inclusive), articulate (interpretive) and natural (native) methods for orienting the self in the world.[26]

The blending of the old and new is a central tenant of Whitman's American poetic. In the 1855 edition "Preface," he writes of being a stonecutter shaping a sculpture of America with words[27]. The people of an American race are the "solid and beautiful forms" of the future. The extant people (natives) living in the "unsurveyed interior" are

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[26] The erudite student is able to embody America in the same way that the poet does: "The talented, the erudite…they are not unappreciated…they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does its work…An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation" (26). "Preface" 1855.

[27] "The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. ...he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes../He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them..To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events...--the tribes of red aborigines—the weather-beaten vessels-…--the first settlements..—the rapid stature and muscle—the haughty defiance of '76, and the war and peace formation of the constitution…the union—the perpetual coming of immigrants—the wharfhem'd cities and superior marine—the unsurveyed interior…Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonecutters and plans with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms" (7-8).

without solid form (without bodies). They are the "old" enfolded into and embodied through a new American race. Whitman's conception of an American body is one which enfolds the native, the immigrant, the descendants of the colonial settlers and participants in the American Revolution; it is one which is reflective of a common nineteenth century strategic move to include marginalized peoples and mitigate racial difference by arguing for a synthesized, unified, liberated race made up of all races.[28] However, the process of enfolding is one that necessarily fails to acknowledge cultural dissonance. How can the "old" [native] be enclosed and included within terms that render it obsolete? Whitman goes on to assert that the poet is supposed to "indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects…they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls" (10). The conceit betrayed here is that the American poet is indicative of the new world race that can address humanity at a corporeal and spiritual level. What is being implied is that the "old" world lacked access to this transcendent path. When Whitman goes on to refer to "the poets of the kosmos in the real body and soul…the poets of the kosmos advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and stratagems to first principles" that "dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit" (18-19), the poet of the kosmos that he is referring to is an American

[28] In the 1855 "Preface," Whitman reasons that liberty is at the center of an American ethos. He argues that liberty does not abandon the soldier, prisoner, slave, or martyr. Liberty is an instinct that cannot be discharged from the until "I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master…when all like and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth…" (17-18). Liberty is also not a commodity that can be bought and sold; it is a library for "Any one and every one" (19).

mechanism for mining through the "old" in both native and European contexts.[29] The dissolution of poverty and conceit is embodied through the American race, and articulated through the poet.

Ginsberg held up Whitman as *The* Elder Poet who "gave world permission to speak with candor" (2) and who "opened up poetry's verse-line for unobstructed breath" (3). These lines from "Preface: Improvisation in Beijing" (*Collected Poems*, Cosmopolitian Greetings Poems 1986-1992) elucidate the positive impact that Whitman's poetics Americana has had, and continues to have, on our national poetic discourse. Even as *Leaves of Grass* betrays many of the sociopolitical attitudes that marginalized, erased, and disembodied the old world, it is also a work that renders an unfailing American optimism. Ginsberg takes this breath of optimism from Whitman and magnifies it to "talk back to Whitman" (23)[30], and through this discourse, reawaken postmodern America to the real, the probable, and the possible.

Ginsberg and Gregory Corso contextualize the initial reading of "Howl" at San Francisco's Six Gallery on October 17, 1955, as one which picks up a poetics Americana

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[29] He writes in the 1855 "Preface": As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since in North and South American were less than the small theater of the antique or the aimless sleepwalking of the middle ages!" (6).

[30] Whitman's October 21, 1984 "Preface" can be understood as an Ars Poetics. And, it demonstrates that he and Anzaldúa share many of the same sociopolitical and spiritual commitments: "I write because poetry can reveal my thoughts, cure my paranoia also other people's paranoia./ I write poetry because my mind wanders subject to sex politics Buddhadharma meditation./ I write poetry to make accurate picture my own mind…./ I write poetry because writing sexual matters was censored in United States./ I write poetry because millionaires East and West ride Rolls-Royce limousines, poor people don't have enough money to fix their teeth./ I write poetry because my genes and chromosomes fall in love with young men not young women…"

that had been silent since Whitman. The two assert that the scene "resembled anything but a poetry reading" and that it was "such a violent and beautiful expression of their revolutionary individuality (a quality bypassed in American poetry since the formulations of Whitman)…that the audience was left stunned, and the poets were left with the realization that they were fated to make a permanent change in the literary firmament of the States" (*Howl: Original Draft Facsimile* 163). The poetics Americana presented in "Howl" is one that emerges from the official history of governance, military campaigns, popular culture, and literary production as a vaccine to inoculate against static conformity and as a collection of mercies capable of instigating mutiny. While a change in course for literary tradition may have been fated, what likely stunned the audience at Six Gallery had to do with the imperatives that "Howl" unleashed into the converse of literary firmament, the mire of the streets.

The streets of 1956 were contending with a sociopolitical shift of their own. "Howl" is speaking in the aftermath of WWI (1914-1918), WWII (1941-1945), and the landmark case of Mendez v. Westminster (1947) that ended the legal segregation of schools in California. Warfare had assumed global proportions, and the military assaults of WWII had the power to flatten entire cities with the atom bomb. At home, an intimate form of hand-to-hand combat in local courts and communities emerged as second and third-class citizens fought as much for their humanity as they did for equality. Ginsberg's invocation of those "who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas ["Anarchy" in the draft version] and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war" (6) presents the surreal as the new reality. The implied subject is the

university student (probable anarchist), and the action being taken is the act of seeing through the institutional privilege of the university system (possible mutiny). The "scholars of war" are an extension of both the institution *and* the military. In his footnote to this line, Ginsberg references his own undergraduate years at Columbia, where "scientists helped split atoms for military power in secrecy" (*Howl: Original Draft Facsimile* 125). The line renders both the lyrical perspective of the poet and a counter-cultural gaze that sees through the obstructions of the military-industrial complex[31] and academia.

"Howl" is speaking from the periphery of McCarthyism (late 1940's-1956), desegregation in the South with Brown v. Board of Education (1954), Korea (1950-1956), and the closure of Ellis Island (1954). The poem was accused of and put on trial[32] for being lewd, obscene, and indecent (*Howl: Original Draft Facsimile* 173) in an America of Eisenhower and Nixon, Marilyn and DiMaggio (1954-1955), *Lady & The Tramp* (1955), and Marilyn and Miller (1956). The Cold War (1947-1991) was well underway, and the horrific tragedy of Vietnam (1965) was on the horizon. To consider the sociopolitical climate of the poem's production is to begin to understand its part in translating Whitman's poetics Americana into a post-Industrial age, and its usefulness to America today. The fairy tale simplicity of a Disney film, and the romance of America's

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[31] See Eisenhower's "Farewell Speech": "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."

[32] See *Howl on Trial: The Battle for Free Expression*, edited by Bill Morgan and Nany J. Peters. The introduction is by City Lights publisher and poet, Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

bombshell with first its star athlete, are undermined by the Monroe-Miller union. The actress' sex-symbol image is complicated by her second marriage to public intellectual and playwright Miller.[33] To hold up the instability of such popular cultural narratives on one side, and the theaters of America's military-industrial complex on the other, is to recognize the polarization of our collective American narratives and the way in which "Howl" refuses to deny the space in between. Ginsberg is beginning to address the gaps that Gloria Anzaldúa comes to conceptualize and transform via a new mestiza consciousness that is rooted in the borderlands; he is repopulating the American landscape with a new set of archetypes that are more complicated than the red squaw, negro, half-breed, slave, savage, Mexican or immigrant of Whitman's era.

The regular intervals of immigrants (et al.) who populate the Mannahata of *Leaves of Grass* are relics in Ginsberg's world. If the aforementioned archetypes were an integral part of Whitman's American race, then Ginsberg's "Chinamen of Oklahoma" (27), "human seraphim" (37), "loveboys" and "old shrews" (40), "suicidal dramas" (46), and the "madman bum and angel" (76) are upending the concept of "race" altogether. These misfits are placed amongst those "who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism,/ who distributed Supercommunist pamphlets in Union Square weeping and undressing while the sirens of Los Alamos wailed them down, and wailed down Wall, and the Staten Island ferry also wailed,/ who broke down crying in white gymnasiums naked and trembling before the machinery of

[33] Miller won the Pulitzer Prize for literature in 1949, and was blacklisted following his 1956 appearance in front of the House Un-America Activities Committee.

other skeletons" (31-33). In these three lines, the breath supports a running together of events, conditions, and systems. The free association springs from a memory—Ginsberg recalls burning the self as part of a "specialized fad" at Colombia (*Howl: Original Draft Facsimile* 129)—and unfolds into a litany that petitions for the recognition of protestors, "Supercommunist" activists, the victims of nuclear warfare, the victims of conflict surrounding the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, the victims of Wall Street, the laborers who are ferried into the city, and the victims of the Holocaust. The lulling, repetitive "w" and "s" sounds in the trio could be understood as an effort being made by Ginsberg to hypnotize the reader/listener so that they may "recognize" a reality that the status quo suppresses.

In the midst of Civil Rights protests that followed the desegregation of educational institutions in the South, of Hollywood Blacklisting that stifled political and artistic liberty, of veterans returning from a war in Korea that saw over 40,000 American soldiers and 10% of the Korean population killed, and the closing up of immigration ports in favor of immigration quotas, Ginsberg's poetics Americana engendered compassion and action. The characterization of "Howl" as both archive and living text is one which the poet himself felt compelled to confirm in the publication of *Howl: Draft Facsimile*. He writes in the "Author's Preface: Reader's Guide" that "it has become a social and poetical landmark, notorious at worst illuminative at best…an emotional time bomb that would continue exploding in U.S. consciousness in case our military-industrial-nationalist complex solidified into a repressive police bureaucracy" (xi-xii). As a landmark, "Howl" carves its era's surreal, counter-cultural, and insane—and its

era's mechanisms of oppression—into the page in perpetuity. As an emotional time-bomb designed to mitigate apathy, "Howl" is becoming increasingly relevant in the wake of Russia's threats to already destabilized regions of the former U.S.S.R. as it attempts to assert itself as a global economic and military power, and the militarization of America's domestic police force. "Howl" picks up Whitman's exhale of transcendent-reality and translates it into transcendent-realities that do not erase or subsume the other. Rather, the "other" is magnified (as a time-bomb) and "America" becomes an incidental space used to contextualize suffering, insanity, and yearning.

Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* emerges from the literary production of its time[34] as a small (11 poems), portable (paper bound) avalanche of profundity. The poet's long lines, lyrical imperatives, consistent use of anaphora, and musical-like arrangement of movements within each poem, are drawing on Whitman's lyrical poetics of inclusiveness. The final lines of "Howl" are Whitmanesque in their mystical optimism: "Holy forgiveness! mercy! charity! faith! Holy! Ours! bodies! suffering! magnanimity!/ Holy the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul[35]!" (126-127). The transcendent nature of the soul and the process of transcendence itself

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[34] In terms of literary production, Wallace Stevens' *The Collected Poems* (1954), E.E. Cummings' *Poems* 1923-1954 (1954), and Charles Olson's Black Mountain College recordings (1954) of what would become *The Maximus Poems* (1940-1970)34 were rubbing up against the likes of Dr. Seuss books and the new allegorical forms of fantasy from the UK (e.g., Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*).

[35] From Whitman's 1891-1892 edition of *Leaves of Grass*: "The soul is always beautiful…it appears more or it appears less…it comes or lags behind,/ It comes from its embowered garden and looks pleasantly on itself and encloses the world" (from "The Sleepers").

through exclamation, breath, and the body can be understood as an echo of Whitman's line from "Song of Myself": "Through me forbidden voices,/ Voices of the sexes and lusts…voices veiled, and I remove the veil,/ Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured…/ Divine I am inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from…" (50-51). The clarification and transfiguration of "forbidden voices" implies forgiveness and mercy. Anzaldúa's subject-matter is more attuned to forgiveness of the self, injustice, and the holiness of bones than she is with the holiness of the soul.

Anzaldúa 's America is one which is both pre-Conquest *and* postcolonial. It draws from the myth of Aztlan, Aztec deities, corridos, popular music en espanol, the Catholic tradition of relicry, and the American landscape itself. Like Whitman and Ginsberg, Anzaldúa uses a lyrical poetic to write herself into being with attention to the "other" and her own "otherness." She builds on their exclamations of inclusion and transcendent reality by knifing mestizaje into the palette of poetics Americana. Accordingly, she also assumes a narrative third-person limited voice or a lyric-narrative (she assumes the "I" perspective that is not her own) first person voice in several of her poems—this should be understood as a way to translate native oral tradition into an American poetic. It is also a way to adapt the poetic itself toward a multiplicity of language, referent, and history. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) was published in an America that was only beginning to engage with Chicano/a discourse as part of popular culture. In the context of the Regan-Bush era, the winding down of the Cold War, the Iran-Contra affair, the global AIDS crises, civil unrest in Central and South America (particularly the civil war in El Salvador from 1980-1991), and the "We

Are the World" effort to send humanitarian aid to Africa, Anzaldúa 's text is remarkably localized. The narratives tell the story of individual types—daughters, grandmothers, field workers, and lovers—that contend with forms of injustice as a matter of course.

Part of the impact of Anzaldúa 's border locale is linguistic and stylistic. The influence of globally acclaimed Gabriel Garcia Marquez' magical realism, El Movimento in the U.S., Chicano/a performance art (ASCO, Culture Clash), the United Farm Workers Union's Teatro Campesino (1965-present), Luis Valdez' *Zoot Suit* (1979), and the work of Chicana feminists who collaborated with Anzaldúa on *This Bridge Called My Back" Writings by radical Women of Color* (1981) cannot be measured in precise terms. But, their influence can be located in the subject matter and language that collects and distributes their tropes in didactic and dramatic terms. Poems that do engage with the explicitly otherworldly, supernatural, or divine do so in a way that translates the fantastic into the tangible world that we live in. Not all of Anzaldúa 's poems render experience in surreal terms, but many do draw on the narrative complexity of magical realism and the unbelievable in a border context. To read Anzaldúa is to accompany the poet on her vision quest, and to "see" that the "india" is alive within the new mestiza. The "india" also provides a spiritual dimension to self-realization that mitigates the loss of a cultural anchor to a system of archetypes that addresses the needs of a new mestiza consciousness. Without the breath and transfiguration of Whitman's *Leaves*, and without the violent mercy of Ginsberg's "Howl," Anzaldúa 's poems in *Borderlands/La Frontera* would not have been able to incorporate mestizaje into an English language, American poetic tradition.

The Superstitious, the Lunatics, and the Mestiza/o/x

The Mexican and Mexico as trope within poetics Americana has been studied by Glenn Sheldon in *South of Ourselves: Mexico in the Poems of Williams, Kerouac, Ginsberg, Levertov and Hayden*. He writes: "From the decade of the 1950's…Mexico was still generally viewed as *south* of our selves, remote and removed from our national identity…these border crossings become curious but important postcards, slices of life, or documentaries on our national identity at the mid-century mark" (6). My research has shown that poetry archives, *re*members, inscribes, and invigorates its subjects in "slices of life" that render the microcosm of a poem part of national discourse. In closing, I would like to touch upon Whitman's commitment to democracy in relation to Mexico long before mestiza consciousness was being cultivated. Whitman's democratic ideals were necessarily tied to Manifest Destiny and the formation of an American "race." In an editorial he wrote for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1846, Whitman exclaims: "What has miserable, inefficient Mexico - with her superstition, her burlesque upon freedom, her actual tyranny by the few over the many - what has she to do with the great mission of peopling the new world with a noble race? Be it ours, to achieve that mission!" Mexican politics were in crisis before the Mexican-American War as Santa Anna sought to centralize power at the federal level and abandoned many federalist principles of the democratic system that elected him to office. In this opinion piece, Whitman insists that Mexico parodies democracy, and feminizes the entire country as a way to rhetorically insist upon the region's submission to America's (implied) masculine dominance. America fertilizes North America, as a man would a woman. The land, as a woman, is

there for the taking of Americans. What is not articulated in literal terms, but gestured to in rhetorical terms, is that the "great mission" of spawning a "noble race" *cannot* be undertaken by Mexico because it is a culture that produced a mestiza/o/x people.

The Spaniards had children with, and married many natives of Mexico based on a culture of Catholic conversion. The American policy[36] carried out by the United States Department of War's Bureau of Indian Affairs—where Whitman worked in 1865—was to forcibly remove natives from ancestral lands, confine those who survived death marches to concentration camps called reservations, and forcibly assimilate Indian children through the boarding school system. If the wretched (miserable), old world (superstitious), tyrannical (anti-democratic), Mexican mestiza/o/x is the opposite of American nobility, then Whitman's poet of the kosmos is one oriented in a racialized personification of Euro-America as all things, and all people. Accordingly, the Mexican and the Indian are reduced to symbol and therefore left without the clarification and transfiguration promised to "forbidden voices/ …voices veiled" (50 "Song of Myself"). Perhaps the entropic state—without body and without a place in History—of the native and the mestiza/o/x in Whitman's poetic is precisely what makes these figures cousins to

[36] I would argue that the policies of the American government toward tribal peoples were a direct result of the Protestant doctrine of salvation through God's grace (e.g., through being chosen by God, or an antinomian understanding of salvation). This is in direct contrast to a Catholic theology of grace through *acts* or good works (e.g., a process of living your faith in order to receive salvation). These theological differences account (in part) for the variant policies of indigenous removal and erasure. In the U.S., native peoples were removed to concentration camps called reservations, were killed, or died of disease. In Latin America, most native peoples were subsumed into a new world Spain ethnic identity which is now referred to as mestizaje. The former did not "mix" with the "savage" who was not chosen by God for salvation, and the latter converted survivors of conquest and colonization as part of the "good works" project.

Ginsberg's lunatics. And, perhaps it elucidates the dismemberment and erasure of culture and history that Anzaldúa is contending with in her poetics of *re*membering. Like Anzaldúa, Chicano playwright, poet, and director Luis Valdez used his artwork as a platform to discover and archive indigenous Chicana/o/x knowledge. At the crossroads of documented official history, urban Los Angeles, style as resistance, and the counter-histories of the pachuco, *Zoot Suit re*members Pachuco poetics in a uniquely dramatized hybrid text narrative nepantla.

Part II, Chapter 4
Pachuco Poetics: The Posture of Resistance and Lyrical Remembering

Situating the Pachucada

Luis Valdez' *Zoot Suit* time travels along a continuum of mestizaje, from indigeneity to the postcolonial body of resistance. The mestizaje of El Pachuco remembers the Aztec warrior, the Mexican, and America-at-the-fringe by translating the intersection of urban Pachuquismo,[1] popular music, cultural hybridity, and social justice into a drape and stance of mythic proportions. The drape of El Pachuco is more than a zoot suit; it is a remembering and reconfiguration of an ancient Aztec god. Valdez believes audience members "in the know" would not "fail to recognize him [in the film] as a reincarnation of the ancient god Tezcatlipoca." The black and red drapes donned first by El Pachuco and then by Henry Reyna—"*tinta negra y roja* of the lord of education, the dean of the school of hard knocks" (Valdez qtd. in Orona-Cordova 100)—are the material goods of decolonization[2] and resistance. Valdez' El Pachuco is imbued with traits typically associated with revolutionary, prophetic, and deified figures. Pachuco poetics in *Zoot Suit* is built on the premise that language can simultaneously dismantle the oppressive systems of colonization/assimilation and propagate the survival

[1] "Pachuquismo" refers to the collective practices of the pachuco/a/x subculture predominantly associated with Mexican-American youth. Those acting out Pachuquismo "came to signify resistance, style, and style as resistance" (Ramirez 2).

[2] I am using the term "decolonization" to refer to the process and actions taken by colonized peoples and their descendants to reclaim and remember indigenous knowledge and epistemic perspective, and to call attention to the intellectual and spiritual oppression enacted by the status quo, which benefits from a white-privileging colonial legacy.

and remembering of ancient indigenous wisdom. In relation to poetics Americana, pachuco poetics is a paradoxical stakeholder. While it is an iteration of America amongst a spectrum of Americas, pachuco poetics is rooted in a pre-Conquest and pre-colonial epistemic perspective. It is disruptive and subversive in its coopting of the English-language to render a hybrid and decolonizing system of symbols and histories.

The duality of El Pachuco-Henry allows pachuco poetics to articulate and archive the hybridity of Latinidades[3] in the twentieth century and beyond. Pachuco poetics in *Zoot Suit*, embodied by El Pachuco and Henry, is simultaneously private and public, destructive and inventive, and aurally smooth and hard. The rise of anti-Latinx hate-speech and policies in an increasingly right-wing, and extremist sociopolitical reality gives Valdez' *Zoot Suit* new prescience: as Henry is cast as a villain by the status quo and a survivor of criminalization by Latinidades, so too are Latinx immigrants and asylum seekers of today. The formal elements of pachuco poetics fixate on truth in a hostile environment and lift brown bodies toward a consciousness liberated from the sociopolitical norms of colonizing and criminalizing whiteness. When Latinidades hears pachuco poetics in *Zoot Suit*, it hears the resonant counter-history of mestiza/o/x peoples. When Latinidades hears pachuco poetics in *Zoot Suit*, it is given access to a system of knowledge intended to support the perseverance and flourishing of brown bodies. Such perseverance and flourishing are in spite of the "postcolonial" spaces which often fail to

[3] Latinidades refers to the cultural commitments of a diverse set of Latina/o/xx persons and negates the conflation of Latinx persons into a monolithic group. See Marta Caminero-Santangelo's *On Latinidad: U.S. Latino Literature and the Construction of Ethnicity* for pan-ethnic and trans-racial focus on Latinidad in an American context.

archive, acknowledge, or integrate Latinidades' kinetic sociocultural commitments and reality. Pachuco poetics archives, renders, and deploys these commitments and realities by shaping the formal elements of language, embodiment, cadence, intertext, and song toward a "sin fronteras"[4] consciousness.

To understand pachuco poetics as an embodied archive is to invest Chicana/o/x poetics at-large with a power normally limited to government-sanctioned agencies and offices. In "Towards a Chicano Poetics: The Making of the Chicano Subject, 1969-1982," José David Saldívar asserts:

> Chicano poetics[5] must necessarily include a holistic, formal, social, sexual, and differential perspective of Chicano discourse and culture. A Chicano poetics, moreover, must include some characterization of our culture, and that characterization, in turn, must be derived from sets of texts in which Chicano culture is manifest…Chicano poetics, instead, must be part of our liberation from tokenism, condescension, racism and oppression, and that is why it is well worth pursuing. (11)

Saldivar conceptualizes a Chicanx poetics which works outside of official archive producing spaces in order to include, reflect and manifest Chicanx realities. Although Valdez had already written and produced *Zoot Suit* for the stage and screen by the time

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[4] Here, I am referencing Anzaldúa's poem "To live in the Borderlands means you" (216-217). She writes: "To survive the Borderlands/ you must live sin fronteras/ be a crossroads" (40-42).

[5] Although Saldivar's thoughts on Chicano poetics are built on the mid twentieth century conception of "Chicano" as being synonymous with Mexican-American, the term has shifted in the twenty-first century to include other Latin American cultural systems. My use of Chicana/o/x supports the definition given by Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A.): "Chicanx is also an identity many Americans of Mexican or mestizo descent have assumed in order to recognize their indigeneity in the United States…the term Chicanx is grounded in a philosophy not nationality. To be Chicanx is not a birthright; rather it is a state of mind."

Saldivar penned his succinct and explicit terms for producing worthwhile Chicano poetics, it is important to note that the hybrid drama's pachuco poetics anticipates each of Saldivar's terms. *Zoot Suit* addresses differences in intergenerational experiences via the characters Henry, his younger siblings, and his parents. Valdez' Pachucada[6] may be grounded in the relationship between Henry and El Pachuco, but pachucas are also captured in their transgressive dress, behaviors, and speech. The Los Angeles of the Reyna family and 38th Street Gang is not one presented in isolation from the status quo; figures from the justice system, other oppressed groups, and the press are captured in terms of their impact on Henry and collective intimates. These elements result in a holistic pachuco poetics delivered via dramatic narrative. The monologues, melodrama, blocking, and engagement with established parameters for musical theater in *Zoot Suit* reflect Valdez' awareness of formal tropes and expectations within American literature, drama, music, and film. While Valdez sometimes confounds expectations for form in the play, he does so in order to demonstrate an archetypal element of the pachuco experience.

The sociocultural aspects of *Zoot Suit* are directly conversant with the past via 1940's era songs by National Folk Treasure[7] Lalo Guerrero; the present via plans of action carried out by El Movimiento from 1969 to the present; and the future via

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[6] The "Pachucada" is a term used to refer to the collective cultural practices and attitudes held by and acted out by pachuco/as. See *Wild Tongues* by Rita Urquijo-Ruiz for more om the Pachucada.

[7] The Smithsonian Institution recognizes Lalo Guerrero as a National Folk Treasure. In his lifetime, he also received the National Medal of Arts from President Bill Clinton. Guerrero's autobiography *Lalo: My Life and Music* and "The Lalo Guerrero Collection" of notebooks, interviews and correspondence at University California Santa Barbara Special Collections provide primary source insights to his long musical career.

engagement with the "next" generation of Latinidades, other marginalized peoples, and potential allies in the audience. The interplay between Henry, bad-girl ex Bertha, good-girl novia Della, and forbidden-fruit Alice allows for the exploration of Chicana/o/x sexuality in terms of social deviance, Chicana martyrdom, and sociocultural segregation, respectively. The figure of El Pachuco is Valdez' vehicle for differential engagement with the Chicana/o/x experience and its connections to Aztlán, popular American culture, and the urban landscape. El Pachuco's self-respect and respect for Latinidades is balanced with a commitment to farce, which is both an integral aspect of comedy-driven Chicana/o/x culture and a nod to the extant tradition of American theatric humor. In the years prior to and in the years since Saldivar's conceptualization of a Chicano poetics "worth pursuing," Valdez' *Zoot Suit* has archived "Chicano discourse and culture" for a diverse audience by placing Latinidades and the Pachucada at the center of his poetic landscape.

Zoot Suit is too an intertextual piece, with components which draw on May-June 1943 press coverage of the Zoot Suit Riots,[8] the murder at Sleepy Lagoon, and WWII.[9] Many scenes in the play are built around Lalo Guerrero's original pachuco-swing songs. Additional songs in the play, written by starring actor Daniel Valdez,[10] are modeled after

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[8] See Mauricio Mazón's *The Zoot Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* for a thorough analysis of the May 31, 1943 Los Angeles riots.

[9] See Eduardo Obregón's *Murder at Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suit Riots, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* for an account of WWII era Los Angeles, the Sleepy Lagoon murder on August 1, 1942, the subsequent trials, and the riots which followed less than a year later.

[10] Musician-actor Daniel Valdez is the younger brother of Luis Valdez. He played Henry Reyna in the original Los Angeles Aquarius Theatre, New York Garden Theater on

Guerrero's pachuco rendering of lyrics and music. D. Valdez used Guerrero's songs as a blueprint for pachuco poetics in the form of song.[11] These musical intertexts articulate the Chicana/o/x experience directly because they are coming from figures within the Pachucada. These musical intertexts are deployed as lines and lyrics which undermine a false yet official history. The pachuco poetics embedded in each song archive and articulate living Chicana/o/x experiences with systemic marginalization, criminalization, and oppression. *Zoot Suit's* poetics, which are potential spaces of consciousness raising, archive the counter-historical realities of pachucos, pachucas, their antecedents, and their descendants. *Zoot Suit*'s monologues and songs are a collective ode to the past and directive for the growth and survival of Latinidades in years to come. In *Zoot Suit*, pachuco poetics liberates the pachuco-Chicano from potential erasure by archiving the Pachucada in its own hybrid language and code-switching cadence. The figure of El Pachuco uses pachuco poetics to resist efforts to render the Pachucada as a set of caricatures. Through pachuco poetics, the suffering and survival of Henry eludes condescension in private and public spheres (e.g., the familial home, the dance hall, a court of law). Collectively, as advocates for Latinidades, the characters in *Zoot Suit* resist and liberate the Pachucada and Chicanada from the inherent violence of racist and

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Broadway, and film productions of the play. He returned for the 2017 Center Theater Group production at the Taper, as both "Enrique" and music director.

[11] D. Valdez contextualizes his and his brother's discovery of a zoot suit narrative as being the result of eight years of research into Chicana/o/x history. Luis Valdez explains: "The music of Lalo Guerrero is the music of the zoot suit era. It is the voice of the pachucos set to music, set to song, to rhyme. If it hadn't been for Lalo, we wouldn't know the sound of the pachuco dialect, the patois, because he saw it as an artist, as a musician back in the 1940s and recorded it" (*Lalo Guerrero*).

oppressive Euro-American patriarchal forces determined to snuff out Latinidades in the context of an anti-pachuco and anti-Mexican Los Angeles. As a text, *Zoot Suit* is embedded with its own theoretical principles for analysis which demand a real-world derived context (i.e., pachuco Los Angeles), and an embodied archive (i.e., El Pachuco and Henry Reyna, et al.) for otherwise abstract formulations of a distinctly Chicana/o/x poetics.

Analytical Lenses "In" and "Out" of The Pachucada

Understanding Valdez as an early leader of El Movimiento, via his founding of El Teatro Campesino[12] in 1965, is key to contextualizing the 1978 stage production of *Zoot Suit* as a culminating *and* inductive sociopolitical act of decolonization. The play claims space within American popular culture for Latinidades, which orients brown bodies—like those of United Farm Workers Union members and Chicano Moratorium marchers—toward a self-determined consciousness derived from a sense of belonging instead of a sense of erasure. The function of the play as a sociopolitical and sociocultural exercise in composing a "self-determined identity" derived from "its own base" (Valdez qtd. in Orona-Cordova 98) of song, brown bodies, and brown spaces, cannot be adequately explored through Euro-centric schools of theory. For example, Baudelaire's flâneur, and Lefebvre's triad of space-types each proffer tempting lenses for examination of a text like

[12] See Yolanda Broyles-González' *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* for a study focused on the collective nature of the theater group's creative production.

Valdez' *Zoot Suit*. However, the application of such lenses should be limited to dramatic representations derived from the Euro-American status quo and not imposed on dramatic representations derived from the Pachucada.

Consider that one could mistake El Pachuco for the flâneur, "a mirror as immense as the crowd…a conscious kaleidoscope which in each movement represents the multiform life and the moving grace of all life's elements" (Baudelaire). But, El Pachuco is not a mirror. He is a "smoking mirror"[13] in the vein of Tezcatlipoca (Valdez qtd. in Orona-Cordova 100) who cannot represent "the multiform" and "all life's elements" because he is defined in large part by virtue of his efforts to dismantle the power of immense Euro-American centered forces which have been and are designed to other, marginalize, and silence him. El Pachuco is not in a state of uninterrupted mirroring, observing, and expressing, like the flaneur. Consider that one could mistake the "internal authority" (Valdez qtd. in Orona-Cordova 100) of El Pachuco for a "social space" touchstone for Latinidades. But, Lefebvre's conception of social space as having a history with a "generative past" which has left "inscriptions upon the writing-tablet, so to speak, of space" (110) does not contend with the issues of erased inscriptions or erased spaces which cannot be uncovered or recovered through a surviving link or connection to contemporary contexts. To impose theoretical lenses which are not attuned to the legacy of colonization experienced by Latinidades or the annexed history and contemporary sociopolitical relevance of Valdez' seminal drama would be to fail to respond to the

[13] "Tezcatlipoca is the *smoking mirror*. He is the god of the nocturnal sky, god of the ancestral memory, god of time and Lord of the North, the embodiment of change through conflict" (Tristán).

text's formal elements that demand to be read as the result of theoretical practice in their own right. When used as theoretical models to examine Valdez' depiction of the status quo[14] the "flâneur" and "history of social space" can serve to decode the Western landscapes which other El Pachuco, Henry, and Pachuquismo. Analysis of the Pachucada must necessarily be grounded in the set of intertextual references embedded in the play, and in theoretical perspectives developed and articulated from a border-oriented episteme.

Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of "la facultad" is of and for the borderland created by mestizaje; it references an embodied way of knowing that circumvents social conditioning and "reality" as it is held in place by the status quo. La facultad, as part of Anzaldúa's border consciousness theory in *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, is part fear-driven response to being conditioned toward a hyper-sensitive awareness of the potential dangers of being an "other" in opposition to the sociocultural norms of the *upper* Western world, and part connection to the *under*world of the soul (60-61). Experiencing la facultad at the level of soul awareness is an integral aspect of border consciousness raising and crossroads building. At the crossroads of various status-quo systems, the transformative drape and stance of the pachuco can circumvent the limitations of their limiting borders. The pachuco *is* a crossroads, in an Anzalduian sense, because he is "sin fronteras," or without borders. The pachuco is neither American nor Mexican, and neither sinner nor saint. The pachuco is a paradoxical figure who

[14] For example: Valdez' characterizations of the press, the justice system, the police force, and military-uniformed rioters.

exhibits behaviors associated with each binary type, yet embodies such behaviors toward a crossroads liberated from the borders which other them. The pachuco in *Zoot Suit* coopts the sociocultural veins of various bordered and limited epistemic landscapes in order to create a transformational space wherein what is contrary and offensive in a bordered land becomes true and sustainable within his "sin fronteras" crossroads. La facultad is more than a concept related to border consciousness theory; it is a mode of knowing that acknowledges and depends upon the break-down of colonial categories and the epistemic supremacy of monolithic white American-ness. El Pachuco, with his angled stance, models resistance to the straight-and-narrow rational of the status quo. Through the monologues peppered with Caló,[15] and the lyrical elements of each song El Pachuco and chorus perform in the play, *Zoot Suit* remembers the past in embodied terms. The embodied poetics of the Pachucada become an atlas through which Latinidades may contend with the past, resist in the present, and build into the future.

Anzaldúa writes that "we" are taught to "ignore, forget, kill those fleeting images of the soul's presence and of the spirit's presence" within the body. She goes on to state: "Like many Indians, and Mexicans, I did not deem my psychic experiences real…I allowed white rationality to tell me that the existence of the other world was mere pagan superstition." She positions white rationality as being a tool of Western culture's

[15] See George C. Barker's "Pachuco: An American Spanish Argot and Its Social Function in Tucson, Arizona" in El Lenguaje de los Chicanos (1975) for more on the emergence of Caló in pachuco youth. Lalo Guerrero, a Tuscon native, was one of Barker's sources. See Mary Ellen Garcia's "Pachucos, Chicano Homeboys and Gypsy Caló" for more on the linguistic history and trajectory of the languages through a spectrum of geographical and cultural iterations.

othering of "savage" and "primitive" peoples who inhabit another "mode of consciousness." The other mode "facilitates images from the soul and the unconscious through dreams and the imagination" as much as it inhabits the "real" and rational world (58-59). The pachuco is one such "savage" when he is judged by the status quo. It is Henry's grasp of la facultad which allows him to "facilitate" a dream-like, imaginative, surreal, yet embodied connection to El Pachuco. El Pachuco is embodied, as Henry is embodied, but he is too of the underworld by virtue of his being an iteration of Tezcatlipoca. This Aztec god can inhabit all spaces—earth, heavens, and underworld—at once. When El Pachuco is addressing Henry in the solitary confinement Scene in Act 2, he wonders why the protagonist has not yet learned to "Not to expect justice when it isn't there." El Pachuco calls Henry and the audience's attention to the danger of limiting his realm of understanding to the "real" or rational world of the status quo.

He directs Henry to accept that "No court in the land is going to set you free." Considering this direction in light of la facultad, El Pachuco is directing Henry to a type of liberation oriented in a connection to the soul and not the material upper-world of white rationality. He goes on to advise Henry to "Learn to protect your loves by binding them/ in hate, ese! Stop hanging on to false hopes./ The moment those hopes come crashing down/ you'll find yourself on the ground foaming at / the mouth. ¡Como loco!" Understanding the rational world as one which deems la facultad a savage or magical impossibility confers the protective power of "hate" with new meaning; "hate" for that which seeks to limit, delegitimize, and dehumanize you is born of "love" for the soul connected awareness which la facultad makes possible. If Henry fails to resist defining

his state of consciousness in terms of the status quo's rational world, then he will necessarily turn into the crazy animal they understand him to be. It is not only Henry's physical liberty which is at stake; he is in danger of becoming imprisoned at the deeper level of his emotional and soul-oriented reality.

There is an element of comedy in *Zoot Suit* which breaks through the gravity of life and death situations in the play.[16] El Pachuco is the character most often "shifting gears"[17] from somber to playful as way to connect to the audience and bridge shifts in plot focus. Anzaldúa's concept of la facultad is related to fear-based sensitivity and subterranean soul connection, which would make a poor lens through which to consider the wacky, juvenile behaviors of El Pachuco and Henry's gang.[18] Tomas Ybarra-Frausto's work on the concept of "rasquechismo" is a fitting lens through which to examine the comedic behaviors of the Pachucada. A rasquache, one who has rasquechismo, is a type of deviant who prefers low-brow, tacky, or blue-tinged aesthetic; the rasquache is never in line with "approved taste and decorum" (155). Like Anzaldúa's border consciousness concept of la facultad, rasquechismo is derived from and reflective of the Chicanada. Rasquechismo differs in its anchoring in Chicana/o/x rational and emotional sensibility because it adds a dimension of "aesthetic choice" (155). Ybarra-Frausto notes that Valdez' early actos for El Teatro Campesino featured a barrio

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[16] For example: Henry being jumped by 10 members of the Downey Gang, the zoot suit riots, and the 38th Street Gang being on trial for the murder at Sleepy Lagoon.

[17] See Act 1, Prologue; Act 1, Scene 1; and Act 2, Scene 5.

[18] For example: Lupe and Rudy in Act 1, Scene 4; the 38th Street Gang in Act 1, Scene 6; and the courtroom Scene in Act 1, Scene 11.

rasquache sensibility (159). Like the barrio driven actos, *Zoot Suit's* Pachucada embraces the rasquache. To be a rasquache is dangerous because it subverts "good" taste as it is constructed and supported by the status quo. The Pachucada carries a specific type of "low" aesthetic related to fashion as a tool for domestic warfare. To stroll and dance in the zoot suit is to publicly declare your enmity for the status quo, and announce your superior "low" taste to the public. In this way, the revolutionary *and* comedic elements of the Pachucada can be understood as elements of rasquachismo. The drape of a zoot suiter gives an era-specific focal point for the WWII era Pachucada. The aesthetic arm of rasquachismo is an integral ingredient to reviving and retelling the murder at Sleepy Lagoon and the Zoot Suit Riots from a pachuco perspective.

The notion of Henry et al.'s history[19] being rewritten is two-fold. In a Western sense, the "official" histories produced by the press and justice system from 1942-1943[20] are negated by the play's remembering of events from a justice-oriented perspective. In an Aztec sense, the protagonist Henry Reyna transforms and connects to a multitude of histories before and after the 1940's. Accordingly, *Zoot Suit* is a space wherein Western concepts of linear time collapse in favor of a cyclical sense of time held by many

[19] See Pomona College's *Zoot Suit Discovery Guide* to review newspaper articles, letters, and photographs related to the zoot suit riots and murder at Sleepy Lagoon. The real-life Henry Leyvas was picked up, along with 600 other Chicanos, in a citywide dragnet.

[20] See Pomona College's *Zoot Suit Discovery Guide*. Gene Sherman's June 2, 1943 *Los Angeles Times* article posits "native-born youths of foreignborn parents" and juveniles in a home "where the parents speak no English and cling to past culture" have a greater tendency toward delinquency.

indigenous peoples of the Americas, including the Aztecs.[21] In *Zoot Suit*, the Aztec of pre-conquest America, the Aztec of conquered and colonized America, the mid twentieth century Mexican in Los Angeles, the WWII era pachuco, and the 1970-80's era Chicana/o/x activist converge.[22] The spiral timelines of each ancestor-type are condensed and fused toward a new center of transformation in the symbiosis between El Pachuco and Henry.[23] Henry is inhabiting the "center" of this time spiral, which is often captured in the surreal scenes within the play.[24] Accordingly, it is Henry's history which has the potential to be rewritten.

Aztec indigeneity is also echoed in the symbology of the red and black zoot suits worn by El Pachuco and Henry in the film version of the play. The representative function of these colors does not cross epistemic boundaries to become synonymous with Western color symbology, which would read red and black as colors associated with a Christian understanding of "devil." Valdez conceived of El Pachuco as a pachuco-boogie translation of the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca. The conquest-era texts left by Franciscan friars

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[21] See Kay Almere Read's *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos* for an anthropological exploration of Aztec cyclical time and the role of transformation, apocalypse, rebirth, and ancestral time twisting.

[22] Here, I am using "America" to refer to "The Americas" (i.e., North America, Mexico, Central America, and South America), which include the areas of Mexico and Guatemala ruled by the Aztec empire at the time of conquest.

[23] In the foreword to *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*, Jorge Huerta characterizes El Pachuco as Henry's *nahual* (other self): "The character of El Pachuco also represents the Aztec concept of the *nahual*, or other self as he comes to Henry's support during the solitary Scene in prison…The strength he receives from his other self is determined by his ability to get in touch with his *nahual*."

[24] See Act 1, Scene 4; Act 1, Scene 10; Act 2, Scene 5; Act 2, Scene 6; Act 2, Scene 9.

who conflated Tezcatlipoca with Lucifer reflect their inability to understand Aztec symbology within its own epistemic context (Tristán). The red and black of Tezcatlipoca denotes his association with the east (symbolized by the color red) and the jaguar (symbolized by the color black, or obsidian). As a polymorphic god, Tezcatlipoca can create *and* destroy to protect and promote the life of Tonatiuh, the fifth sun god (El Quinto Sol. El Pachuco can similarly create *and* destroy to protect and promote the life of Chicana/o/x peoples.[25] Like the warrior sun Tonatiuh, the Pachucada warrants protection from a cataclysmic event which would erase their presence from the landscape. There would be no sixth sun after Tonatiuh, as there would be no Pachucada after assimilation. While the 15th century Spanish conquest and subsequent European colonization of the Aztec (Mexica) peoples failed to erase them from the landscape of the Americas, their descendants remain at-risk. *Zoot Suit* presents the Euro-American status quo as a systemic threat to the mestiza/o/x descendants of the Aztec peoples. The status quo in the setting of the play and the status quo of the audience are both working within the parameters of a colonial legacy of white privilege. The primary threats leveled at the Pachucada are death, criminalization, and forced assimilation.

Susan Brison's work on trauma touches upon the need for victims of trauma of varying degrees (e.g., slavery, the Holocaust, sexual assault) to externalize their experience by telling their story to an empathetic listener (57). In terms of collective traumatic memory, the Chicanada Valdez speaks to and of via *Zoot Suit* contends with

[25] At various points in the play, El Pachuco vacillates between inciting Henry to violence or drawing Henry closer to restraint. See Act 1, Scene 3; Act 1, Scene 7; Act 1, Scene 8; and Act 2, Scene 9.

the Zoot Suit Riots, criminalization, WWII, and Vietnam in the space of one hybrid drama and its poetics. Today, we can annex further collective traumas with the caging of children from Latin America in detention centers, sexual abuse of these children at the hands of state-appointed guards, and a wide array of traumas inflicted on asylum-seeking and immigrant families who were forced apart. The reports on ICE efforts to coerce adult and "tender age" detainees to give up any rights to be reunified with their family members, or the government's failure to seek justice for sexual assault victims at child-detention centers are new trauma-narratives which Valdez' play speaks to in the language of survival and resistance.

The pachuco poetics of *Zoot Suit* speak of a collective trauma unique to ethnic Americans who are othered due to their shade of skin, socioeconomic status, dominant language, dominant speaking accent, and lack of representation in a status-quo ruled system of governance. When Brison argues that "as a society, we live with the unbearable by pressuring those who have been traumatized to forget and by rejecting the testimonies of those who are forced by fate to remember" (57), she could easily be speaking of the victims of the Zoot Suit Riot beatings, the wrongfully convicted and incarcerated Chicana/o/xs whose futures were sacrificed as an offering to white insecurities, or the vast number of Latina/o/x persons—immigrant, asylum-seeking, naturalized, American born, and indigenous to the Americas—who have been vilified and othered by the 45th American president and his followers. In lieu of succumbing to the pressure to forget or ignore the pattern of violence against brown bodies in "postcolonial" America today, we can revisit *Zoot Suit* and its pachuco poetics as a mapping of how to

remember in order to recover and build narratives toward expressions of a collective will to be heard and recognized as vital beings in the national American/a/o/x landscape.

Like Brison, Kelli Lyon-Johnson draws on the work of psychoanalyst Dori Laub. Lyon-Johnson's thoughts on survivors of the civil war in El Salvador and its "dead-body politics" shed light on some of the trauma rooted in Latinidades, then and now: "Forgetting through silence and absence is an act of political oppression and violence. In contrast, remembering becomes an act of political agency and cultural survival" (209). She goes on to argue that Latin American writers narrating fictional renditions of real-life traumas "extend the memory community to include Latino/as and Anglo readers in the United States. They also invite the reader to participate in the act of testimonio" (222). Brison and Lyon-Johnston both stress the importance of the trauma narrative being consumed or witnessed by an "empathetic listener" (Brison 57) or "participant and co-owner of the traumatic event" (Lyon-Johnson 222). The poetry in El Pachuco's monologues and the pachuco songs in *Zoot Suit* orient trauma narrative in an embodied space deployed on a stage for the purpose of being heard, witnessed, and remembered within the trappings of popular entertainment.

The formal elements of the play are subversive in terms of how that which is entertaining is too directed toward manifesting the Aztec concept of time as a cyclical system, and the create-destroy nature of Tezcatlipoca. These two themes affirm the Aztec-derived underpinnings of *Zoot Suit*[26] and the indigenous ways of knowing it seeks

[26] "Chicanos, any way that you cut it, are native Americans…there is the other, the ignored part, the despised part, the dehumanized part, which is indigena. And it seems to me that part cannot be ignored forever" (D. Valdez qtd. in Brookman).

to remember. Valdez' *Zoot Suit* acts as a salve over layers of collective trauma experienced by those within the Chicanada. Through pachuco poetics—translated into dialogue, instrumentation, lyrics, visual compositions, costumes, blocking, lighting, dance, and stage-designs—*Zoot Suit* embraces its Chicana/o/x otherness and remembers traces of indigenous knowledge which affirm belonging and survival. Poetics allows for the paradoxical construct of experiences which the Chicanada did and does continue to grapple with at various levels of assimilation, socioeconomic status, and education. The challenges Chicana/o/x persons may have with integrating seemingly disparate systems of cultural reference become clear when Valdez references pachuco-era specific film and music, and sociopolitical themes embraced by El Movimiento. Yet, the pachuco poetics deployed in *Zoot Suit* manifest the reality of the Pachucada as a subversive, anti-establishment, and popular *American* perspective.

Popular Entertainment, El Movimiento, and the Pachucada

The initial production of *Zoot Suit* at the Center Theater in Los Angeles ran for a record breaking 11 months of sold out shows (Huerta). The popular function of the play packaged social activism in some of the trappings of 1930's-1960's musicals. Valdez' characters dance and sing, and the chorus of girls who sing with El Pachuco are as glossy as Ziegfeld Girls. El Pachuco commands the dance floor (i.e., stage) when he sings and postures in a manner which subverts the image of quick-footed classic Hollywood stars Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly. Where Astaire and Kelly exhibit a confounding level of

speed and dexterity in their performances,[27] El Pachuco often seems to glide across the floor at a pace offensive to the notion of dance as a series of appropriate "steps" one can learn or master. The musicality of the play embraces the choreographic lines of an energetic dance floor, which are familiar to anyone who has seen *White Christmas* (1954) or *Westside Story* (1961). However, the aspects of set-design, costuming, ambient dialogue, and physical posturing are that of the Pachucada. In the film version of the play, El Pachuco and the chorus girls are often framed as a living frieze; they remain just outside and at the edge of the "real" world Henry and the 38th Street Gang inhabit. As a Classical Greek Chorus would use song and dance to convey additional information about the plot of a drama,[28] El Pachuco and the trio of singers reflect on and inscribe subversive sociocultural contexts to the plot-driven scenes in *Zoot Suit*. From the 1972 stage production at the Aquarius Theater to the 1981 film, the work of Luis Valdez, Daniel Valdez, and Broadway choreographer Patricia Birch sculpted a subversive and embodied performance space for pachuco poetics captured in monologues and songs. The sociopolitical issues of dance on stage and in film predate *Zoot Suit*, which adds another layer of subversion to the musical elements of the play.

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[27] See Astaire's performances in *Swing Time* (1936) and *Holiday Inn* (1942). See Kelly's performance in *Anchors Aweigh* (1945) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952).

[28] See Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi's "Theorizing the Chorus in Greece" which touches upon Plato and Artistotle's related yet variant expectations for the Classical Greek Chorus: "The chorus…emerges as a most effective vehicle of communal discipline, solidity, and stability, promoting and reproducing established ideological doctrines from and for the entire dancing and singing community" (23). She also writes that "Aristotle was well aware of the chorus's cultural pervasiveness" (26). Valdez capitalizes on the sociocultural power of the chorus and creates a subversive El Pachuco-led chorus.

Musicals often featured stars dancing in black-face, as Fred Astaire does in *Swing Time* (1936) and Judy Garland does in *Everybody Sing* (1938). Even renowned African-American jazz performer Cab Calloway—the most famous zoot suiter of the big band era outside of Tin Tan[29]—was marginalized in his musical appearances. For example, *Manhattan Merry Go Round* (1937) presented him and his orchestra as performing at "Cab Calloway's Cottonpicker's Club." Calloway was not even credited for his appearance. Hollywood often failed to credit performers like Calloway, or erased ethnic difference by changing the names and physical appearances of their stars. *Cover Girl* (1944) star Rita Hayworth, who spent her youth dancing on stages in Mexico with her Spanish-Roma father (McLean 8), is perhaps the closest thing the Latinx American community of the 1940's had in terms of a "star" who was connected to the Pachucada through her own "ethnic" past. Hayworth was born Margarita Carmen Cansino, but her name, body shape, voice, hairline, and hair color were whitewashed by the Hollywood studio system (McLean 8). Her connection to the Pachucada is apparent in her cultural references and in her work as an advocate for the real-life pachuco youth accused of the murder at Sleepy Lagoon.[30] Hayworth and other musical stars from the era of the Zoot

[29] See "Los Angeles Zoot: Race, Riot, the Pachuco, and Black Music Culture" by Douglas Henry Daniels for a careful examination of some intersections between black and pachuco spheres in an American context.

[30] See the March 1944 letter from Hayworth's husband, Orson Welles**,** to the California Parole Board: "I am convinced that the boys in the Sleepy Lagoon case were not given a fair trial, and that their conviction could only have been influenced by anti-Mexican prejudice."

Suit Riots and Sleepy Lagoon murder were not reflecting the Pachucada in their work, which stands as the product of a Euro-American centered status quo designed to privilege whiteness and other ethnic minority groups.

The musical aspects of *Zoot Suit* are not only subversive in terms of how they work against and undermine our expectations for a 1940's era musical setting, but they direct the audience to a specific negative space somewhere in the void between caricatures of "other" and characters that affirm the preeminence of whiteness in musicals of the era. A distinctly Chicana/o/x space for song and dance which is of and for the Pachucada has been elided in most popular musicals and films of the 1940's. Valdez and Birch's musical scenes are counter-histories which speak to the void through Chicana/o/x musical history in theatrical *and* sociopolitical contexts. While the Pachucada was not archived in a large-scale musical production in the 1940's, the youth and student activists of El Movimiento started the process of recovering lost histories through organizing and advocating for representation in a wide array of American arts traditions which have historically marginalized Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x American communities.

Just under a decade after the 1969 signing of "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan,"[31] Valdez moved Chicano art and culture from the *actos*[32] space of the United Farm

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[31] The plan is the product of the First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in Colorado, led by Rudolfo "Corky Gonzalez,"

[32] The short plays written by Valdez for El Teatro Campesino were designed to transform the audience into allies who would support social justice, highlight inequity, neutralize the opposition through satire, provide hope for a solution to injustice, and express the emotional realities of marginalized peoples. For more on the actos written by Valdez, see Carlota Cardenas de Dwyer "The Development of Chicano Drama and Luis Valdez's Actos."

Workers Union picket lines to the popular drama space of West-Coast theater (1978) and then East Coast theater. In 1979, *Zoot Suit* became the first and only Chicano play to open on Broadway. The West and East Coast productions ran concurrently for a time, though the Broadway production lasted only 4 weeks.[33] In the 1960's and 1970's, El Movimiento had carved out a space for Chicano arts and culture in its multi-part plan for decolonization. Number six in the seven-part list of Organization Goals in "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan" reads:

> 6. CULTURAL values of our people strengthen our identity and the moral backbone of the movement. Our culture unites and educates the family of La Raza towards liberation with one heart and one mind. We must insure that our writers, poets, musicians, and artists produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture. Our cultural values of life, family, and home will serve as a powerful weapon to defeat the gringo dollar value system and encourage the process of love and brotherhood.

Through Tezcatlipoca-rooted El Pachuco, and the integration of "real" historical events from previously silenced perspectives, Valdez directly invokes the "revolutionary culture" of the "Chicano, Mexican, Latino, Indigenous inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlan" ("El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan"). The power of a status-quo version of the past is challenged, undermined, and repudiated by *Zoot Suit*. In El Movimiento, art is seen as an articulation of culture and a fundamental tool for "consecrating the determination of our people of the sun." *Zoot Suit* does more than dramatize the 1940's pachuco experience; the Reyna family, 38th Street Gang, and El Pachuco are sanctified as icons who connect the inhabitants of contemporary Aztlan with

[33]The Playbill for the Broadway production lists a preview day of March 10, 1979, an opening date of March 25, 1979, and a closing date of April 29, 1979.

their "sangre" or blood, the source of ancestral power. Valdez' story of pachuco/a/x Los Angeles *is* a narrative of determination *for* the people of the sun. The hybrid nature of the play's commitments to decolonizing Chicana/o/x arts production and popular entertainment models mirrors the hybridity of its pachuco poetics.

Zoot Suit is also conversant with the demands and organizing principles outlined in "El Plan de Santa Barbara," the founding document for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA). The Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education drafted the plan in 1969. Cesar Chavez' work with the United Farm Workers Union in the 1965 Delano Grape Strike and Boycott and the subsequent founding of Teatro Campesino galvanized Chicano youth to act and articulate their plans. "El Plan de Santa Barbara" makes the university system its primary landscape for recovering the past, decolonizing the present, and building toward new, self-determined consciousness for Chicano-Mexican-Latino-Indigenous America. The opening lines of the manifesto read:

> For all people, as with individuals, the time comes when they must reckon with their history. For the Chicano the present is a time of renaissance, of renacimiento. Our people and our community, el barrio and la colonia, are expressing a new consciousness and a new resolve. Recognizing the historical tasks confronting our people and fully aware of the cost of human progress, we pledge our will to move. We will move forward toward our destiny as a people. We will move against those forces which have denied us freedom of expression and human dignity.

Concepts like "history," "new consciousness," "destiny" and "human dignity" are rendered in *Zoot Suit* via the intertextual nature of writing over and in between narratives drawn from official history. *Zoot Suit* also echoes the Spanglish palette of both plans by integrating Caló into the play's dialogue and monologues. Valdez' play affirms that the Chicano "renacimiento" is clearly one born of linguistic and cultural hybridity. The

Reyna family—literally, kings and queens of Los Angeles—is emblematic of many immigrant-to-first generation Chicana/o/x families who experience cultural, social, economic, and physical battery by the Euro-American status quo.

In addition to presenting the working-class Mexican-American Reyna family as a humanizing factor to subvert a dehumanizing and false historical record of Chicana/o/x Los Angeles in the WWII era, *Zoot Suit* calls attention to the systemic anti-Mexican prejudices of American governance. The play was produced in the aftermath of the 1975 extension of Lyndon Johnson's 1965 Voting Rights Act to include "Hispanic" Americans in rural Kings and Merced Counties in California, all of Texas, and other parts of the Southwest.[34] Three years after Latinx Americans in the Southwest were afforded the same protections as their African-American neighbors in the Southern states, Valdez introduced *Zoot Suit* to a popular American audience who may not have seen the "legal" and "criminal" themes of the play as a type of counter-historical foregrounding of their contemporary civil rights issues. The farcical courtroom Scenes (Act 1, Scenes 9 and 11) reveal a deeply troubled judicial system intent on dehumanizing the protagonist, Henry Reyna, and his 38th Street Gang brothers in order to propagate a false narrative of brown-on-brown violence. In Act 1, the law and its representatives are almost entirely devoid of ethical standards related to the American legal system and the intent of the law; this is alluded to as the prosecution is led by the Euro-American "Press" and not one of the two

[34] See Ryan M. Crowley's "*The Goddamndest Toughest Voting Rights Bill*: Critical Race Theory and the Voting Rights Act of 1965" for a critical look at how teaching the 1965 Voting Rights Act in school is flawed and lacking connection to contemporary civil rights issues. See Ari Berman's "The Lost Promise of the Voting Rights Act" for more on the aftermath of the 1975 amendment.

lawyers mentioned at the beginning of the "Opening the Trial" Scene. It is the Press who argues for the defendants to be forced to wear dirty clothing and be denied haircuts before trial. He convinces the judge by proclaiming, "Their appearance is distinctive, Your Honor. Essential to the case" (Act 1, Scene 9). The Press, who seeks to criminalize the defendants by capitalizing on the prejudices the jury may have against pachucos, is the same character who later participates in the Zoot Suit Riots (Act 2, Scene 6) exclaiming, "KILL THE PACHUCO BASTARD!" The plight of Henry and the other 38th Street Gang defendants serves a clear didactic purpose. The change in the Voting Rights Act to include at-risk "Hispanic" Americans was more than a decade late in coming.

In the WWII era, Mexican-Americans had no such protections or guarantee of representation in American governance, which includes the judicial system. Americans of Mexican descent, like Henry and his generational peers, served in the American armed forces during WWII. Yet, the Chicana/o/x members of "The Greatest Generation" were not afforded the legal and sociocultural protections enjoyed by Euro-American soldiers. The legal inroads of "Hispanic" inclusion in the Voting Rights Act become clear when the legacy of criminal misuse of the justice system to target and dehumanize Mexican-Americans is presented in a multidimensional and embodied narrative. And, for audiences of the 2017 stage revival and viewers of the film during the Trump presidency, the salient threats to the civil rights gains achieved from the 1950's through the 1970's are more ominous by virtue of having a more distinct notion of how racist stereotyping and criminalizing may disenfranchise people of color who are underrepresented at the

voting booth and in all arms of governance. The Judge in *Zoot Suit*, who calls the defendants "boys" and sentences Della to juvenile detention for telling the truth, could easily be understood as a warning against a return to white supremacy at worst and against abandonment of the civil rights movement at best.

Henry Leyvas, the man, was buried under an avalanche of misused judicial power during the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial. While his wrongful conviction was eventually overturned, the negative impact of his incarceration cannot be fully known. The metaphysical and material results of oppression can outlive the individual and be transferred to their descendants through a wide array of narrative, behavioral, and economic burdens.[35] The narrative burden is complex in that a shared story from a parent may be contradicted by a record of official history, or an omitted story from a parent may be filled in by a false narrative delivered by the status quo. In "Now Let Us Shift, Conocimiento..Inner Work, Public Acts," Gloria Anzaldúa theorizes that a seven-part process of "conocimiento," or "reflective consciousness," can support the individual who questions "the doctrines claiming to be the only right way to live" (117). Official histories which marginalize, obscure, and erase oppressed peoples hold up and affirm such doctrines. Anzaldúa reasons that the seven conocimientos "challenge official and conventional ways of looking at the world, ways set up by those who benefit from such constructions" (119). The result of stepping into and out of each conocimiento stage is

[35] See Shannon Sullivan's "Inheriting Racist Disparities in Health: Epigenetics and the Transgenerational Effects of White Racism" for more on transgenerational trauma. She argues that "Epigenetics can be used to demonstrate how white racism can have durable effects on the biological constitution of human beings that are not limited to the specific person who is the target of white racism, but instead extend to that person's offspring."

the translation of trauma, violence, and "spiritual hunger" into art. Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith take a global stance on what the Latina/o/x American community calls an individual's testimonio and what they call an individual's "life narrative." Beyond autobiographical accounts of trauma, Schaffer and Smith posit that popular "venues of public culture—sporting events or rock concerts for example—may seem entirely unrelated to human rights activism but can suddenly be mobilized to call attention to human rights violations" (20). *Zoot Suit* is this type of popular, public rendering of cultural narrative. The intertextual aspects of the play weave in and out of pachuco poetics and official histories in an effort to corrupt (decolonize) and create (remember toward a new consciousness). The nature of intertext allows Valdez' play to accomplish some of the individual arts production and activist mobilization work typically attributed to the professionalized art world and non-profit organizations of white America.

In addition to having the potential to mobilize the Latinx American community and its allies, *Zoot Suit* revitalizes "a past that must be shared" and directs the audience "toward a future that must be built collectively" (Schaffer, Smith 20). *Zoot Suit* must be understood as a hybrid form of dramatic fiction which speaks to, for, and of persons who can longer narrate their own stories. Such persons were often erased, misrepresented, or dehumanized through official records which speak in place of their forced silence. It "works" to address both Schaffer and Smith's conception of narrative-inspired activism and Anzaldúa's conception of the concimientos. The latter is related to a multicultural, Western dominant conception of human rights or social justice advocacy, and the former is related to the internal landscape of healing which impacts both the Chicanada *and*

Latinidades at-large. In both veins of narrative-driven transformation, the space between the real Henry Leyvas and the character Henry Reyna is mitigated through a combination of research and imagination. The alchemy of rendering a fictional narrative which speaks to real-life trauma and human dignity is the outcome of an artist self-selecting to heal and remember through a popular and public forum often mistaken for recreational diversion. The artist's alternative to confronting collective cultural trauma is to assimilate to a status quo which negates and minimizes such experiences. Art, including poetry and prose narratives, can confront real-world inequities and imbalances of power. To advocate for collective cultural healing is to advocate for social justice. Storytelling in the layered veins of *Zoot Suit* has the power to make vital icons of suffering martyrs, and activists of some pleasure-seeking audience members.

Pachuco Poetics, Ese

The first epigraph in the film *Zoot Suit* contextualizes the musical-drama in three primary ways. It establishes the theme of loss and erasure through the aural deployment of "Perdido" (performed by Duke Ellington and written by Juan Tizol). This framing track is an archive of a Spanish-jazz driven, *other* America concealed in the plain sight and sound of big band era dance floors. The opening frames of the film feature a fade between a photo of the Carroll Theater circa 1938 and a camera shot of the Aquarius Theater circa 1981. The fade fuses past and present by transposing two images of the same architectural structure over one another; the past (1938) is partially covered over by the present (1981). When a contemporary Chicano family arrive in a 1938 Chevrolet with

a license plate reading "ZOOTER," the two eras visually converge again. Valdez uses the first epigraph in the film to connect the performance of *Zoot Suit* to a continuum of Chicana/o/x Los Angeles stretching from the WWII era Pachucada to the late twentieth century El Movimiento.

In the second epigraph, the music shifts to "Zoot Suit Boogie (A Medley)." The "medley" is composed of three primary referents: Guerrero's "Chicas Patas Boogie" (1950); Louis Prima and Milton Kabak's 1950 big band hit, "Oh Babe"; and the iconic "Two O'Clock Jump."[36] The lyrical mapping for the song is drawn from "Chicas Patas Boogie" (1950), the musical melody from "Oh Babe," and the bridge from "Two O'Clock Jump." As the flowering of "Chicas Patas Boogie" from "Oh Babe" and into "Zoot Suit Boogie" suggests, an integral aspect of the "Pachuca spirit"[37] is its ability to coopt an element of popular culture toward the construction of the decolonizing hybridity found within the Pachucada and expressed in the terrain of America at-large. The English-Caló lines for chorus one read:

> All the hepcats up in Harlem wear that drape shape
> Como los pachucones down in LA
> Where the guisas and their pompadours look real keen
> On the dance floor of the ballrooms donde bailan swing
> Ya better get hep tonight
> and put on a zoot suit.[38]

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[36] Harry James, Benny Goodman, and Count Basie share the credit for composing this instrumental piece. "Two O'Clock Jump" is itself a triplet-speed take on Basie's "One O'Clock Jump," which is one of the top 365 songs of the century ("RIAA").

[37] The soundtrack album directly credits Guerrero: "Dedicated to Lalo Guerrero, who captured the Pachuca spirit in his music."

[38] In standard English, these lines translate to: "All the hepcats up in Harlem wear that drape shape/ like the pachucos down in LA/ Where the gals and their pompadours look

The "hepcats up in Harlem" reference the African-American zoot suiters, while "los pachucones down in LA" reference the Chicana/o/x zoot suiters. Both populations occupy the Pachucada. The pachucas are as deviant as their male counterparts, as they have coopted the gendered masculine "pompadour" as part of their stylization. Unlike D. Valdez' first verse, Guerrero's lyrics for verse one of "Chicas Patas Boogie" are entirely in Spanish and Caló. The differing linguistic commitments between the two songs archive the difference between each generation's engagement with Spanish as a primary language.

Where the composer D. Valdez is from a Baby Boomer generation of Chicanos raised to primarily speak English in order to circumvent discriminatory practices which other dominant Spanish speakers, Guerrero is a product of the WWII era Mexican-American community which remained largely unassimilated in relation to the Euro American status quo. The differences between their approaches to archiving the Pachucada speak to the generational gap between not only Chicana/o/x youth fluency with Caló, but Chicana/o/x youth fluency with the initial colonial language imposed on indigenous persons in Mexico: Spanish. The "Zoot Suit Boogie" and its antecedents can be read as an archive of shifting generational linguistic commitments. And, the "Zoot Suit Medley" archive underscores the second epigraph's central contextualization: *Zoot*

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real keen/ On the dance floor of the ballrooms where they dance the swing/ Ya better get hep tonight/ and put on a zoot suit."

Suit is a narrative nepantla space wherein time and intertexts can wane in and out of focus, like a medley. The prologue, which follows the two epigraphs in the film, is the third contextualizing element.

The four headlines on the front page of *Zoot* Suit's prologue read: "Grand Jury to Act in Zoot Suit War," "Leslie Howard Lost at Sea," "Roosevelt on Air Monday," and "Death Awakens Sleepy Lagoon: L.A. Shaken by Lurid 'Kid' Murder." While these four headlines may not have ever appeared in print alongside one another, they do give historical context and archival pertinence to *Zoot Suit* as a narrative which speaks indirectly to two of the headlines and directly to two of the headlines. The actor Leslie Howard was killed on June 1, 1943 when the plane he was travelling in from Lisbon, Portugal to London, England was shot down over the sea by German soldiers. The invocation of Howard, who was known for his portrayal of Ashley Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), is symbolic of both popular culture and Hollywood tragedy. While Wilkes may not have been a pachuco or an American, his fame alludes to the American public's fascination with Hollywood cinema, and the fictional constructs of Hollywood, which include film and—in the case of the 38th Street Gang—media coverage of Sleepy Lagoon.

The two headlines addressing the Pachucada are directly in reference to the Zoot Suit Riots (June 3 to June 8, 1943) and the murder at Sleepy Lagoon (August 1, 1942). *Zoot Suit* links these two events through the protagonist, Henry Reyna, and his two families (i.e., the Reyna family unit and the 38th Street Gang brothers and sisters). Outside of the play, the Roosevelts link American hardship to the Zoot Suit Riots. From

March 1933 to June 1944, President Roosevelt addressed the nation via radio broadcast in what were called "Fireside Chats." The Roosevelt administration saw the country through both the Great Depression and WWII. The inclusion of Roosevelt's radio "appearance" alludes to the stabilizing role the 4-term president played in American history. And, it alludes to the political commitments of both Roosevelts, which extended from a Euro-American status quo toward black and brown Americans.[39] First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was critical of police response to the Zoot Suit Riots. In a public statement on June 16, 1943, she remarked: "The question goes deeper than just [zoot] suits. It is a racial protest. I have been worried for a long time about the Mexican racial situation. It is a problem with roots going a long way back, and we do not always face these problems as we should" ("Los Angeles Zoot Suit Riots"). The *Los Angeles Times* "Editorials" page responded to her criticism on June 18, 1943 with a scathing and misleading piece, "Mrs. Roosevelt Blindly Stirs Racial Discord." The Editorial Board calls Roosevelt's comments ignorant and similar to Communist propaganda. The piece goes on to state that Los Angeles had enjoyed a long and "happy tradition" of pride in its Mexican roots.

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[39] In her December 16, 1943 column, Mrs. Roosevelt writes of a letter she received from an artist who designed a war-time stamp with one black hand and one white hand clasped together. Under the image, a banner read "Minorities are Vital to Victory." She goes on to assert that the hands could have easily been either two white hands or "brown or yellow" hands clasped with the white. She also states that amongst minority American populations are "many white minority groups." Although Mrs. Roosevelt goes on to elide the difference between white and ethnic minority American experiences by arguing that if "we could forget being minorities and just be people, we would help win a real-world peace through enlightened self-interest," her focus on an America which includes black (and/or brown and yellow) Americans is indicative of the Roosevelt's acknowledgement of an "America" beyond the Euro-American status quo.

The 1929 construction of Olvera Street, which was transformed by Christine Sterling into a tourist destination catering to an Anglo audience, was funded in part by a $5,000 donation from *Los Angeles Times* owner, Harry Chandler. A July 11, 2017 piece on the "Mother of Olvera Street" aptly characterizes Sterling's role in "saving" the historic Avila Adobe and its adjacent alley: "Sterling moved into offices at the Avila Adobe and became overlord of her fairyland. She worked almost exclusively with Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, whom she held in great esteem, but some felt she was patronizing and paternalistic" (Meares). Embedded within an invocation of President Roosevelt's radio address is an archival vein reaching back to a national and a commercial gaze on Los Angeles in the 1930's and 1940's. Both perspectives recognize the brown body as the other; Mrs. Roosevelt conceptualizes the Mexican "racial situation" as a problem, and the Chandler-backed perspective[40] views Mexican California as a commercial reality to brand the geographic and patriotic landscape of the region. While Roosevelt's radio address, Mrs. Roosevelt's comments, and the *Los Angeles Times* investment in "Mexican" Los Angeles address or speak of the brown community in some way, none of them originate from within the Pachucada or Mexican Los Angeles directly.

Zoot Suit announces itself as a counter-history in the first stage direction of the Act 1, Prologue: "A switchblade plunges through the newspaper. It slowly cuts a rip to the bottom of the drop. To the sounds of "Perdido" by Duke Ellington, EL PACHUCO

[40] Chandler was the owner and publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* from 1917-1944. In their editorial response to Mrs. Roosevelt's comments, the editors argue that the riots were in retaliation for an unprovoked attack in servicemen, and that rioters targeted any individual wearing a zoot suit and not Mexicans directly.

emerges from the slit." The nascent qualities of this image are cutting the official historical narrative (the newspaper) via the weapon of deviant youth (the switchblade). *Zoot Suit* contextualizes itself as a response to false narratives propagated by official histories. The archetype of El Pachuco emerges from an unknown space behind the aforementioned headlines; he cuts through injustice and the erasure of mestizaje from the news pages of archived history. Like the switchblade which may transform from an innocuous piece of tooled wood and metal (a static object) to a knife (a tool of violence), the newspaper may transform from a series of dispensable daily reports to an historical archive. Such archives erase mestizaje and criminalize the Pachucada.

El Pachuco's drapes are not the trappings of the status quo; they are pulled from and out of the darkness of the "womb." The stage direction (Act 1, Scene 1) reads:

> HE adjusts his clothing, meticulously fussing with his collar, suspenders, cuffs. HE tends to his hair, combing back every strand into a long luxurious ducktail, with infinite loving pains. Then HE reaches into the slit and pulls out his coat and hat. HE dons them. His fantastic costume is complete. It is a zoot suit. HE is transformed into the very image of the pachuco myth, from his pork pie hat to the tip of his four-foot watch chain. Now HE turns to the audience. His three-soled shoes with metal taps click-clack as HE proudly, slovenly, defiantly makes his way downstage. HE stops and assumes a pachuco stance.

The figure of the pachuco denotes the principle characteristics of pachuco poetics: the linguistic stylizations of Chicano-speak—English fragmented with bursts of Caló—and the rebellious qualities of celebration in an era of austerity. Both characters are translated into embodied terms. The drape and the body of El Pachuco are a work of architectural dexterity designed to physically bridge the gap between being othered or being assimilated; El Pachuco and his zoot suit present *being other* as an alternative to being

outcast or being subsumed. Pachuco poetics reclaims the brown body as a creative space and resists the historical patterns of brown body commodification, death, and erasure. Pachuco poetics resists assimilation by visually building a sanctuary capable of holding complex hybridity and ancestral wisdom in spite of sociocultural marginalization. When El Pachuco gestures at his "collar," "suspenders," and "cuffs," his hands are symbolically tapping into the voice, the shoulders, and the wrists as sites of expression. The voice sends pachuco poetics into the atmosphere, the shoulders bear the weight of colonization which pachuco poetics resists, and the wrists remain flexible to support the hands which gesture in rhetorical patterns more akin to a Cicero-era orator than a WWII era poet-pachuco.

The ducktail is a peacock-worthy flourish of masculinity and virility which marks the pachuco as a juvenile delinquent from the perspective of the status quo. The length required to create a ducktail hairstyle connects El Pachuco to a pre-conquest indigeneity wherein the male's hair directly corresponds to his status in life. For example, male Aztec children had their heads shaved until the age of ten. Warriors and priests had long hair styled in top knots and tied back at the nape, respectively (Read). The ducktail, which gathers at the nape of the neck, is closest to the style of the sacred priest. The pachuco "coat and hat" pulled from the nascent "slit" are the finishing and most important elements of the pachuco drape. The zoot suit is the page on which pachuco poetics is written; it is rich, indulgent, loving, and askew in relation to the "world" which it confronts. The donning of the zoot suit is intentional, and the resulting pachuco is "fantastic" because he is myth called into being; El Pachuco is otherworldly and beyond

the imagination of those who uphold systems of systemic racism. El Pachuco, priest and sanctuary at once, performs the Pachucada's archetypal patterns and value systems in order to transform loss into being.

El Pachuco is too a direct challenge to the sensibilities of the status quo; his demeanor is melodramatic in a way which counters attempts to dull or quiet his consumption of space in the landscape of Los Angeles. For Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x persons in the audience, seeing themselves in the fantasy of El Pachuco may be a catalyst to locating the "underworld of the soul" (Anzaldua 60-61) through their own body's ability to access la facultad. For Henry, El Pachuco *is "*la facultad." He frequently warns Henry of potential danger[41] and is the space through which Henry locates a connection to his soul.[42] Valdez' conception of El Pachuco is conversant with Anzaldua's understanding of la facultad, as he describes El Pachuco as "neither good nor bad, he is both. He…is aiding Henry to achieve a higher level of consciousness. I choose to call it the internal authority….I like to use the word myth…because myth refers to an underlying structure of a truth that is just below the surface of reality" (Valdez qtd. in Orona-Cordova 98). El Pachuco is both internal and subterranean, which are qualities of la facultad; it shifts Henry's consciousness away from the conditioned thinking patterns developed in response to the forces of assimilation and toward a remembered awareness of the Pachucada as a soul-oriented sense of self and belonging. Pachuco poetics begins

[41] See Act 1, Scene 3, where El Pachuco tells Henry "they are screaming for blood" after he is taken in for questioning by police.

[42] See Act 1, Scene 3 when El Pachuco compels Henry to "Remember, Pachuco Yo!"

with the body, its myth-making zoot suit drape, and its stance which balances the "pork pie hat" and dangles the "four-foot watch chain" in deliberate defiance of their mutual lack of utility. When El Pachuco "turns to the audience," we understand that he is aware of his agency and his power to captivate.

The first sounds we hear from El Pachuco are the sound of his steps, which "click-clack" as a tap dancer's shoes might, on a wood floor. The stage is first filled with the body, then the completed zoot suit, and then the sound of movement, or progress. The adverbs Valdez uses to describe the progress of El Pachuco—"proudly, slovenly, defiantly"—mimic the gliding steps El Pachuco takes across the stage**.** When El Pachuco "stops and assumes a pachuco stance," he does so as a dancer would pause to stress a subsequent gesture. The performative, embodied, and fantastic aspects of El Pachuco foreground the linguistic aspects of pachuco poetics in order to prepare the audience for the low, lewd, provocative, askew, hybrid, and myth-making properties of pachuco-speak. Pachuco poets mar and subjugate the syntactical and grammatical norms of the "pure" American English favored by the status quo. The linguistic hybridity of the Pachucada should be understood as a decolonizing force; like the inhabitants of border towns in Texas and New Mexico, pachucos and pachucas modified the languages of two colonizing forces and transformed them into a distinct local dialect.

The Caló spoken by El Pachuco and Henry deploys low-born, gypsy veins of Spanish as a weapon to cut English-language syntax into puzzle pieces. Speakers of traditional Spanish and English are similarly ill-equipped to solve the problems presented by the pachuco tongue. Yet, when El Pachuco first speaks, it is in the tongue of Caló:

"Que le watcha a mis trapos, ese?" The English verb "to watch" is pachuco-fied with the addition of an "a" end-vowel to transform it into a Spanish-ism. "Le watcha" is also a partial homophone for the Spanish verb for "to watch": guachar. An average English or Spanish speaker may not know that "le watcha" is a linguistic farce; it's funny because it is made-up from disparate parts. In addition to immediately contextualizing the spoken elements of the drama-musical as a reflection of Chicanx experience in Los Angeles, Valdez is aligning his work with American farcical dramas at-large. El Pachuco is willing to make fun of himself, of Henry, and of the audience, in order to make a point clear. This initial spoken line—"Are you looking at my drape, man?" (roughly translated to English slang)—uses comedy to draw our attention to El Pachuco's zoot suit *and* our reaction to its drape across his body through comedy. Caló is El Pachuco's primary language, but it is not his only tongue.

In the 2-part opening monologue, El Pachuco switches quickly from pachuco-speak to "perfect" English. El Pachuco delivers the prologue lines with the angled stance and sliding motions of the zoot suit and its accessories, which visually echo the undulating curves of pachuco-speak. After 8 lines of Caló, El Pachuco code-switches to speaking in traditional English and breaks the fourth wall:

> Ladies and gentlemen
> the play you are about to see
> is a construct of fact and fantasy.
> The Pachuco Style was an act in Life
> and his language a new creation.
> His will to be was an awesome force
> eluding all documentation…
> a mythical, quizzical, frightening being
> precursor of revolution
> or a piteous, hideous heroic joke

deserving absolution?
I speak as an actor on the stage.
The Pachuco was existential
for he was an Actor in the streets
both profane and reverential.
It was the secret fantasy of every bato
in or out of the Chicanada
to put on a Zoot Suit and play the Myth
mas chucote que la chingada.
Pos orale!

The pachuco-speak connects directly to Chicana/o/x members of the audience, and the perfect English lines address the audience at-large. *Zoot Suit* straddles a space between "fact" and "fantasy" out of necessity. The official histories of the Sleepy Lagoon murder and Zoot Suit Riots are archived in records of media coverage which painted pachucos as criminals. The actual experiences of pachucos who were branded as the Sleepy Lagoon murderers and targeted during the Zoot Suit Riots are lost. Valdez' drama-musical casts "the news" and its reporters as sensationalizing and biased hubs for Euro-American prejudice. Valdez based his characterization of "the news" on the "factual" archives of newspaper articles on the riots and murder. Out of necessity, "fantasy" is the other integral part of *Zoot Suit*. Where official histories have obscured and distorted the experiences and lived realities of a marginalized population of peoples, the imagination may serve to reconnect marginalized peoples to remnants of memory and a mythic sense of belonging. Unsurprisingly, the fantasy of remembering and belonging through the imagination is unbelievable to the status quo and superlative to the Chicanada. The paradoxical construct of "fact and fantasy" is a subversive response to official narratives designed to erase individual and collective counter-histories.

"Fact and fantasy" refuses to adhere to monolithic conceptualizations of the brown experience, and it refuses to adhere to a Euro-American conceptualization of the "official" record. "Pachuco style" is defined as an "act" because the act of donning a zoot suit was deviant in comparison to the norm of the era. With WWII rationing of cloth, the luxurious and over-sized abundance of the zoot suit drape claimed a limited commodity for a brown body. This was an affront to Euro-American sensibilities, as brown bodies were already seen as being dispensable bodies of labor. By claiming and coopting fabric for style over utility, the pachuco/a announced him/her self as something more than a body of labor; a commitment to style indicated a degree of self-confidence and showmanship reserved for entertainers on the screen or stage. The offense of the pachuca/o is one seated in failure to conform to stereotypes and sociocultural expectations for brown bodies to be relegated to positions of labor force at best and criminal at worst. The language of the pachuco/a was a "new creation" because it responded to a sociocultural need to preserve the past and transform the future.

The Mexican roots of the Reyna family come up with the Reyna matriarch and patriarch in Act 1, Scene 1. The father, Enrique, says to Henry: "We are Mexican!" Henry is the literal and figurative translation of his father, as Henry is the Anglicized version of *Enri*que. However, while Henry has a more American name than his father, his body is no less brown. Pachucos like Henry created a "new language" to reflect the reality of living at the border of Mexican, popular American, and indigenous cultures. While Caló is not an indigenous language, it is also rejecting the purity of two colonizing languages: Spanish and English. Instead, it is as highly stylized and as offensive to the

Euro-American status quo as pachucos themselves—it is the linguistic iteration of mestizaje. The "awesome force" of a pachuco's "will to be" indicates the power of language as a tool for survival and consciousness raising—pachuco poetics speaks and shapes the Chicana/o/x into being through the language of the pachuco and the body armored in a zoot suit. And, while the "will" of the pachuco eluded "all documentation," *Zoot Suit* argues that the efforts of pachuco/a resistance to marginalization and erasure were successful.

Valdez makes it clear to the audience that the concept of "Chicano" and "Chicano liberation" begins with the "mythical, quizzical, frightening" pachuco. El Pachuco is both the pachuco archetype *and* the "precursor of revolution." The shifting in line 10 of the "perfect English" section of the opening monologue casts the previous assertions into doubt with the invocation of a potentially insidious "or." The casting of doubt on the stability of the claims from lines 1-9 brings the discourse back to the realm of farce. The pachuco is called into doubt as a potential object of pity, subject of a paradoxical gaff ("hideous heroic joke"), and guilty yet penitent sinner ("deserving absolution"). The doubt is cast because the significance of the pachuco is being born and rewritten with each performance of the play. Valdez is also casting doubt on the rhetorical limitations of a Western sense of right and wrong. From an Anglo-American standpoint, a Protestant sense of antinomianism necessitates a clear distinction between the saved and the damned. The unknown theological commitments of the pachuco threaten the binary clarity of being able to separate people into one or the other category. El Pachuco's shift from certainty to doubt allows for paradox and the alleviation of intensity through

comedy. Clearly, when the lines are spoken by the impeccably dressed and hypnotic figure of El Pachuco, the zoot suit is far from "hideous." However, the monologue's shift from certainty to doubt is a necessary point of connection to the instability the pachuco had to contend with in the real-world of 1940's Los Angeles. When the lyrical "I" is invoked in line 12 for the first time, it is done so in order to clarify the public and urban nature of the pachuco.

When Edward James Olmos speaks the line "I speak as an actor on the stage," his self-consciousness is the first step in consciousness raising. As the contemporary actor begins to survey the stakeholders present—the stage, the audience, the cast, the crew—we understand the controlled environment of the play. We also know that they are in urban Los Angeles, thanks to the epigraph featuring exterior shots of the theater and low-rider family. Lines 13-15 transport these stakeholders into the era of the pachuco, wherein being an "Actor" in "the streets" was necessarily as paradoxical ("profane and reverential") as the narrow turn from revolutionary to grotesque. The Pachuco was "profane" to the status-quo, and an object of "reverence" to his peers. To the actor on the stage and the audience, El Pachuco is being presented as is a saint in the round. "The Pachuco was existential" (line 13) because his outer persona reflected the interior sense of self he cultivated in order to claim his space "in the streets" of the American consciousness. The 1940's pachuco may have been an observer of urban life, like Beaudilaire's flâneur in 1930's Paris, but he was too an antidote to erasure. The 1930's flaneur could have changed their clothing and behavior in order to assimilate to the status quo. The brown body had and has no potential for escape from oppressive Euro-

American norms designed to subjugate and other ethnic deviants by way of coded social and political racism—neither "The Pachuco" nor non-passing persons within Latinidades in an American context can escape the limitations of a social system propagated on the erasure of indigenous persons and their cultures.

The Pachuco "was the secret fantasy of every bato/ in or out of the Chicanada" (lines 16-17) because he reclaimed his space in public life; he reclaimed his land by virtue of taking up space and using it for something other than labor for the benefit of the status quo. He was not surviving in hiding, or in secret. A Chicana/o/x longing to *live* in private and public spaces is realized by El Pachuco as he floats through and around the dance halls and streets, teaching the Chicanada *how* to reclaim space. El Pachuco does not promise a confrontation-free method for living within the Chicanada, nor does he assume all Mexican-Americans are contending with the sociocultural hybridity of the Pachucada. Not all "batos" (vatos) in Los Angeles are "in" the "Chicanada" (line 17) because not all v/batos are liberated from the bonds of assimilation. El Pachuco is revealing that the "secret fantasy" lives in both socially deviant *and* assimilated brown bodies, which reconnects the fantasy-manifest "Pachuco" to the role of a revolutionary. While legitimizing the deviants, he is too inviting white-washed Chicanos to connect with "the Myth" (line 18) of belonging in the streets of their own land.

The lines "It was the secret fantasy of every bato" (16) "to put on a Zoot Suit and play the Myth" (18) play with the image of actual pachucos of the era, with particular deference to Lalo Guerrero whose pachuco-swing songs are featured throughout the

production.[43] Guerrero's Big Band era songs archive the pachuco aesthetic and linguistic play between English, Spanish, and Caló. His lyrics, music, and vocalizations are necessarily the textual foundation of postmodern pachuco poetics. While low-rider, barrio, and Chicana/o/x activist cultures from the 1950's forward retained much the Pachucada, the archive of 1940's era pachuco/a life is sparse outside of personal family archives and erroneous news reports. *Zoot Suit* revives Guerrero's quintessential pachuco-swing for a new generation who may not know someone wrote about and performed the Pachucada for popular audiences. Familiar depictions of the Chicanada in 1940's popular American culture often involve tropes which essentialize or criminalize Mexicans and Indians. Guerrero's wild construction of Caló set to an amalgam of swing, boogie-woogie, and rumba marks his work as a distinctly American iteration of Latinidades wherein the pachuco is an artist who confronts, challenges, and offends the sensibilities of the status quo. Valdez' El Pachuco is "mas chucote que la chingada" (line 19) in part because he echoes Guerrero when he performs his songs in a new context. "Mas chucote" is a play on Guerrero's abbreviated take on "pachuco" in his song "Chucos Suaves."[44] Pachuco is "chuco" to someone "in" the pachucada. "Chucote" is

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[43] Luis Valdez contextualizes the music of Lalo Guerrero as Chicano jazz: "These are songs that capture not just the spirit and the dance, but also the language and also the patois, the cleverness of the language…and Lalo was a poet and an expert and a real wit to be able to take this language and twist it and use it in such a way that it really emphasized what he was all about and it was hip. This was Chicano hipness! This was Chicano jazz" (*Lalo Guerrero: The Original Chicano*).

[44] "Chucos Suaves" was originally recorded in 1949 for Imperial records, and again in 2003 for Ry Cooder's *Chavez Ravine*. See the Cooder album with three re-recorded pachuco-swing songs from Guerrero, and see Mark Guerrero's account of his father's recording the tracks as a national folk music icon.

"chuco" plus the Spanish direct object pronoun for "te". This Caló construction transforms the noun form of "pachuco" into a verb to denote the action-based nature of *being* a pachuco, or "chuco."

The context of playing "the Myth/ mas chucote" is "que la chingada," which is an incendiary term in a Mexican-Spanish context. Derived from Caló and written about by poet Octavio Paz, "chingar," "el chingado," and "la chingada" are derived from the same root. However, they are deployed toward varied meanings. Taking into account Paz' understanding of "la chingada" and the Chicana/o/x use of the term in popular culture, El Pachuco is referencing "*who* the f*ck" or "*that* f*ck" which is gendered female in order to denote passivity and the potential for victimization. The arrival of one who is "mas chucote" in "la chingada" is the arrival of a revolutionary to a static space. Native women who created the space of "la chingada" were raped by conquistadors; all mestizo peoples are potentially marginalized, in part, due to their characterization as the product of rape by a stronger, masculine force. The pachucada invigorates "la chingada" with the opposite of passive, binary dependent ways of being in the world. The pachucada transforms "la chingada" from a space of passivity or marginalization to a space of action. Being and performing the pachuco myth is an antidote to nothingness. The opening El Pachuco monologue is remembering the Pachucada of the 1940's and teaching the Chicanada of today how "to be the *most* f*cking pachuco around." The offensive nature of invoking "que la chingada" ("what the f*ck") mirrors the offensive nature of disrupting the status quo by taking action when their sociocultural norms demand that you remain passive or risk criminalization and erasure.

The final exclamation in this monologue—"Pos orale!" (line 20)—features the elision of the "e" and "u" from the Spanish "pues" ("well") into the Chicano Caló "pos." "Pos" is followed by the Chicano slang word for "right-on," "check it out," or "hell yes": "orale." The exclamation "Pos orale!" could be translated into an array of English phrases: "Well, right on!" (i.e., let's begin), "So, let's check it out!" (i.e., observe the myth), or "Well then, hell yes!" (i.e., become the pachuco). Each translation for "Pos orale!" functions as a rhetorical shift from talking about the "secret fantasy of every bato" to acting out the "secret fantast of every bato" through Henry Reyna's interaction with and connection to El Pachuco. The use of an exclamation point is indicative of the melodramatic elements deployed in the play. Through the emotional space of an exclamation—which may denote happiness, excitement, surprise, fear, or offense—the keeper of the sanctuary, El Pachuco, has consecrated the play**.** El Pachuco transmutes the space of the theater, as a priest would, to render an intersectional space for Chicana/o/x self-realization, decolonization, and a didactic repurposing of myth toward real-world equality for marginalized peoples.

In the film, Valdez includes courtroom testimony which highlights the marginalized reality of the 38th Street Gang members. The lieutenant presents Henry and his friends as Mexicans who know and feel "a desire to use a knife to kill, or at least let blood." He goes on to argue that their propensity for violence is an "inborn characteristic" which "comes down from the bloodthirsty Aztecs." The lieutenant concludes that "use of liquor or marijuana" leads to "crimes of violence." The *Zoot Suit* adaptation of Guerrero's "Marijuana Boogie" (1949) is the Pachucada's response to

being criminalized by law enforcement, and denied their basic civil rights by the court. The song testifies on Henry's behalf to show that neither marijuana nor the Pachucada is necessarily a gateway to violence. The verses of the D. Valdez adaptation differ from Guerrero's in their linguistic construction. Where Guerrero's Caló modifies a dominantly Spanish verse, Valdez' Caló modifies a dominantly English verse. When El Pachuco, who is shot from behind with his reflection gazing into the camera from a mirror on the piano case, sings "Put on your drapes/ Ese, vato [man, guy]" he is giving Henry a spiritual recipe from the other side of the mirror. The mirror being held up by the Law and Court presents Henry as a savage. The mirror being held up by El Pachuco presents Henry in terms of his nahual, his other pachuco self. "Put on your drapes/ Ese, vato [man, guy]/ Make those calcos [shoes] shine" is a spiritual directive to see himself in relation to the drape and its metaphysical accoutrements.

Guerrero's "Marijuana Boogie" features a musical bridge with spoken-word expression. Valdez repurposes this bridge toward a spoken-word exchange.

> EP: Still feeling patriotic, ese?
> Henry: What do you mean? The trial just started.
> EP: Let's cut the shit and get to the verdict, Hank. This is 1942 or is it 1492?
> Henry: You are doing this to me, bato.
>
> EP: Something inside you craves the punishment, the public humiliation, and the human sacrifice? But there's no more pyramids, carnal…only the gas chamber.
> Henry: But I didn't do it, ese. I didn't kill anybody!

The inversion of 1942 to 1492 points to the collapse of time and the overwhelming destruction of discovery, conquest, and colonization. The "verdict" has already been reached because Henry is a bloodthirsty Aztec, according to the official court record.

When Henry tells his other-self, "You are doing this to me, bato," it is clear that it is his consciousness which needs to be decolonized. In coming to understand injustice as part of the legacy of colonization, Henry will be better equipped to contend with the real-world injustices he is up against. This knowledge is delivered through the feminized, Mari-Juana.

In Act 2, Scene 6 ("Zoot Suit Riots"), the project of consciousness raising comes to fruition. El Pachuco is facing the three servicemen and the "Press" as they look for pachucos to beat, strip, and humiliate. Henry witnesses El Pachuco intentionally drop his knife at the feet of the soldiers who are standing under him. El Pachuco had warned Henry upon his arrest: "Forget the war overseas carnal. Your war is on the homefront" (Act 1, Scene 3). This references not only the 1943 Zoot Suit Riots, but a "war on the homefront" nearly 30 years later. The cost of physical violence in a domestic theater of war could not have been far from the minds of Angelenos at the Aquarius theater during the play's initial run. The events of the Chicano Moratorium on August 29,1970[45] had mobilized El Movimiento and made a martyr of Mexican-American journalist, Ruben Salazar (Escobar 1485). Salazar was a familiar and respected voice for Chicana/o/x Los Angeles through his writing for the *Los Angeles Times* and news direction at KMEX radio. He went to the march to interview its leaders, which included Corky Gonzalez,

[45] See Edward J. Escobar's research on the Chicano Moratorium and the conflict between Chicano activists and the Los Angeles Police Department from 1960 to the early 1970's. Escobar estimates 20,000-30,000 Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans in East L.A. participated in "the largest protest demonstration ever mounted" by this ethnic group. The National Chicano Moratorium protest and demonstration against the "disproportionately high numbers of Mexican-American casualties in the Vietnam War."

and cover the protest. Although the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department deputy who fired the tear gas cartridge which killed Salazar was never charged with murder, Los Angeles County did settle a wrongful-death lawsuit with the Salazar family (Tobar). The military vs. pachuco narrative of the 1943 zoot suit riots is echoed in the Chicano Moratorium's subject of protest in 1970: the excessively high number of Mexican-American soldier deaths in Vietnam. In both cases, the military is responsible for the normalization of violence directed to brown bodies.

When El Pachuco emerges from the mob of soldiers who have beat him, he is wearing only a loincloth and a gold cross and chain. He holds his two arms out and at his sides. The Christian symbology is clear; El Pachuco has been martyred. However, when the sound of a conch blows, "HE turns and looks at HENRY, with mystic intensity. HE opens his arms as an Aztec conch blows, and he slowly exits backwards with powerful calm into the shadows." The aural invocation of Aztec-derived "mystic intensity" and "powerful calm" acts as a spiritual salve to heal the injured pachuco/s. The gold properties of the cross invoke Aztec symbology; in Aztec culture, gold was associated with the sun and sky, and called "divine excrement" (Umberger 201, 203). In Tenochtitlan, material objects made of "jade, colorful feathers, turquoise, and gold were used by the Aztec state" and "endowed with supernatural powers" (Umberger 195). The gold cross may have started as a Christian symbol used by Spanish monks and priests to convert and colonize native American peoples, but Catholic faith practices were later used as tools for social justice. It is the latter iteration of the cross which *Zoot Suit* archives.

In his 1968 essay "The Mexican-American and the Church," Cesar Chavez argues:

> Finally, in a nutshell, what do we want the Church to do? We don't ask for more cathedrals. We don't ask for bigger churches of fine gifts. We ask for its presence with us, beside us, as Christ among us. We ask the Church to sacrifice with the people for social change, for justice, and for love of brother. We don't ask for words. We ask for deeds. We don't ask for paternalism. We ask for servanthood.

Although Chavez is not writing directly about the pachuco experience, he is writing *from* a pachuco experience. In "Pachuco Days," an entire chapter of *Cesar Chavez: An Autobiography of La Causa* by Jacques E. Levy, Chavez recalls that he dressed as a pachuco as an act of courage and rebellion against white-centered status quo norms and Mexican-centered minority norms (81-83). The pachuco, via iconic figures like El Pachuco and real-world activists like Chavez, demands "presence" and "sacrifice" from the Church as it is relocated to a brown-embodied and active space supporting El Movimiento. The gold cross, in this context, is a decolonizing agent.

The Pachucada and Polyphony

In the final scene of the play (Act 2, Scene 9), three different sources of official history[46] present three wildly different outcomes for the protagonist. The racist and vilifying Press refuses to recognize Henry as a victim of racial profiling and declares him a recidivist who murdered another inmate when he was sent "back to prison in 1947 for

[46] I am referring to the extant "official history" which centers authority within institutionalized archival systems at the expense of marginalized communities who are not represented; such marginalized communities have authority, memory, and history through non-institutional mechanisms.

robbery and assault with a deadly weapon." To affirm the protagonist's inherent corruption, the Press goes on to label Henry a drug addict who died "of the trauma of his life in 1972." El Pachuco calls attention to the Press' prejudice when he interjects, "That's the way *you* see it, ese." To label Henry a recidivist is an all-encompassing way to criminalize him in perpetuity and override the reality of there being a miscarriage of justice to begin with.

Visually, the scene is nearly identical to the opening epigraph dance scene of the film, but the consciousness of the Pachucada has been altered by the events in Act 1 and Act 2. El Pachuco sings:

> Carnal, póngase abusado
> Ya los tiempos han cambiado
> Usted esta muy aguitado
> Y está buti atravesado
> Antes se bailaba el swing
> Boogie woogie jitterbug
> Pero eso ya torció
> Y esto es lo que sucedió[47]

Here, *Zoot Suit* ends by returning to the beginning of pachuco poetics, verse one of a Lalo Guerrero song. El Pachuco goes on to sing the chorus: "Los chucos suaves bailan rumba/ Bailan la rumba y le zumban/ Bailan guaracha sabrosón/ El botecito y el danzón."[48] As he sings, the camera frames Henry and Della in a long shot. We cannot hear what they are saying, but we can see Henry holding a ring out to Della and then placing it on her

[47] In English, the lines translate to: "Brother get ready to be blown away/ the times now have changed/ you're too bummed out/ and you're pretty much taken aback/ Before we danced swing/ boogie woogie, jitterbug/ but that switched now/ and this is what came next."

[48] In English, the lines translate to: "Smooth pachucos dance to rumba/ they dance to rumba and you buzz/ they dance to catchy guaracha/ the little sway and the dance."

ring finger. They hug and he pulls back while saying, "I love you." Their engagement brings the promise of the lines from "Chucos Suaves"—the times have changed, get ready for what comes next—to real-world fruition. Against insurmountable odds, Henry and Della have ended up together, which "blows away" the doubts and tensions of their previously tenuous realities. The chorus repeats and the music dims to allow for new dialogue to emerge.

Rudy is framed, in his army uniform, as he gives an alternative ending: "Henry Reyna died…[he] served in the Korean War…[and] died in combat in 1952…and was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor." In this version, Henry is returned to the military service track which the Sleepy Lagoon trial had interrupted. He tragically dies, but the conferral of a posthumous Medal of Honor signifies his transformation into a hero. Henry is finally recognized by a government agency as a bona-fide American, but this approval and honor comes after he has paid for such recognition with his life. Ironically, it is Alice, the love interest he rejects, who articulates Henry's most fruitful outcome.

The dancers form two lines in front of a desk Alice is sitting it; it creates a visual tunnel with her at the center. Earlier in the final scene of the play, Henry was momentarily torn between choosing Alice or Della. Alice remarked to Henry that she was the one who did not belong in the barrio, and knowingly advised him that "Sometimes the best thing you can do for some-one you love is walk away." In Alice's account of Henry's life, he married Della in 1948, just four years after being exonerated. Henry and Della's marriage produced three children, "now going to University, speaking

Caló and calling themselves Chicanos." Alice, who began as a progressive reporter in Act 1 and developed into a romantic interest in Act 2, crossed a series of public-to-private boundaries throughout the course of Henry's turbulent court cases. While Alice does not have a "happily ever after" with Henry, she does serve to witness the unfurling of his legacy. Henry's legacy is synonymous with the legacy of the 1940's era Pachucada. They bridge the gap between his father (a Mexican) and El Pachuco (the Pachucada with a consciousness raised toward a connection to indigeneity). They bridge the gap between the 1940's pachuco and his children—Chicana/o/x youth who would come to ignite El Movimiento by taking their platform for equality to the streets in protest. Each of the three potential outcomes are possible, probable, and "real" in that actual Chicana/o/x persons were lost as victims of marginalization and criminalization, were heroically killed in military service during both WWII and the Korean War, and were early revolutionaries for El Movimiento. The lines spoken by the Press, Rudy, and Alice should be understood as lines of oral counter-history and poetry. Where the official newspapers and court proceedings failed to capture and archive the "real" plight of the 38th Street Gang, *Zoot Suit* offers a series of spoken-word testimonios[49] delivered at the play's culmination. The rhetorical significance of having these lines spoken by the Press, Rudy, and Alice is to suggest a polyphonic series of histories shaped by sociocultural and sociopolitical commitments.

[49] I am using the concept of "testimonio" as it has been defined by the Latino Feminist Collective (LFC). The collective regards testimonios as "a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure."

The music rises as El Pachuco returns with a third round of the chorus. He has moved from the palm tree level to the upper red neon rose level. He is singing a fourth round of the chorus in front of the red rose. The camera comes in for a low angle, medium shot of El Pachuco; he simultaneously occupies the heavens and watches over the dancers below as the other alternative endings emerge in time to the music. Pachuco poetics moves from a monologue-oriented space, limited to El Pachuco and Henry, to a crescendo of voices working as a collective to affirm the multiplicity inherent in a movement dedicated to counter-historical realities which expose racism and systemic oppression as primary architectural elements of whiteness in an American context. Once pachuco poetics reaches this state of polyphony, the collective elements of decolonization step in to eclipse the marginalizing histories and traditions of the colonially rooted status quo. Pachuco poetics, in a rapid cadence mirroring the pace of revolution and headline grabbing tag lines of the "news," becomes embodied and articulated.

Characteristics embodied in Henry are declared by players from the narrative of Henry's life. What these characters represent in relation to the Pachucada is more important than what they ascribe to Henry. George represents the voice of the lawyer who seeks justice. The Judge represents the voice of the arbiter for and instrument of justice. Bertha represents the voice of pachucas who have embraced sexuality, a willingness to fight, and sexual freedom to make their own way as a pachuco would. Smiley represents the voice of pachucos ready to retire from the dangerous aspects of the Pachucada and gang life in order to embrace his role as husband and father. Joey represents the voice of teenage pachucos who dream into a future wherein the pachuco

may occupy political and/or popular cultural spaces. Tommy represents the voice of barrio-raised Anglos who speak Caló and identify as pachuco and Chicano. Lupe represents the voice of pachucas who evolved into Chicana feminists. Enrique and Dolores represent the voices of Mexican revolutionaries who fathered and mothered the Pachucada. Della represents the voice of innocent Virgin-figures who are transformed by the Pachucada into protectors and warriors in their own right. El Pachuco represents the voice of the Pachucada connected to Aztec indigeneity; he is the myth embodied. The pachuco poetics of this motley collective archives each voice and places them in concert with one another.

In contrast to the opening of the play featuring the lone figure of El Pachuco and his singular pachuco poetics, the conclusion gives way to a polyphonic poem of resistance, transformation, social advocacy, self-determination, and survival. In the film, the camera frames each character-poet and then pans out to show the larger collective of pachucas, pachucos, and their allies. As a unit, the collective aligns in a single file, and all of them shift into the pachuco stance, standing as an embodied wall of physical and philosophical resistance to forces which would attempt to dehumanize and other them for being Mexicans, pachuca/os, or allies. All pachucas and pachucos on the floor lean back on their right foot and extend their left foot forward, in time to the last few notes of "Chucos Suaves." The audience bursts into applause, and all of the Pachucada simultaneously sing, "Hey." These final movements in the polyphonic conclusion are physical and coordinated. It is a performance of solidarity which is designed to elicit action.

As the characters in *Zoot Suit* have learned to rally and build alliances with allies in response to violence and injustice, so too has the audience. The practical import of pachuco poetics is that it delivers difficult histories and realities with a cadence and style reflective of the Pachucada, the "place" which gave us real-life Chicanx icon activists Anthony Quinn, Lalo Guerrero, and Cesar Chavez. *Zoot Suit* compels Latinidades to archive our oral histories, connect to our myths, and remember our lineage, in spite of our conditioning to seek colonial homogeneity. The three ellipses repeated in the final 12 lines of the play stand for the silent spaces of irrecoverable and lost histories. The film echoes the quietude of the three ellipses when it follows the final frame of the cast in a unified pachuco-stance with a still frame of El Pachuco. The figure of El Pachuco shifts from in-color celluloid to black and white photograph, separate from the rest of the cast. A new song begins once El Pachuco is fixed as a black and white image; the absence of color and of a salsa, cumbia, or swing-driven sound aurally contrasts with the visual and aural polyphony of the closing scene of the play.

The film's epilogue is a lone image of El Pachuco; it remains in time, archived within the sounds of a single-instrument ballad, "Zoot Suit Theme." The instrumental track, written by D. Valdez, sounds like a 1940's era ballad. As the film credits scroll over the screen, the slow-tempo strains of the trumpet and piano invite the audience to "settle" into what they have consumed. The pachuco poetics of the play—spoken, printed, sung, performed, embodied, and aurally delivered—are intended to settle and flower within the audience members who have consumed them. The tension in pachuco poetics—manifest via linguistic and aural hybridity, low-brow rasquachismo, la facultad

of the subterranean realm, and embodied counter-history—is the tool which decolonizes mestizaje, hastens transformation from a state of fear to a state of action, and gives way to the incomplete nature of remembering. The ellipses and pauses invite Chicanx and Latinx poets to contend with, articulate, and archive some of the salient issues and histories at the surface of El Movimento today. While *Zoot Suit* does not contend with many sociopolitical issues facing Latinidades today, its pachuco poetics does not proclaim a state of completion. The history of mestizaje as both colonized and colonizer, the problematic provisions of patriarchal Chicano nationalism, the marginalization of Afro-Latino communities, the erasure of contemporary indigeneity, and the heteronormative baseline of Latinidades which can silence and disenfranchise queer communities, are threads of memory and counter-history which have followed *Zoot Suit* and its pachuco poetics. Perhaps what Luis Valdez, Daniel Valdez, and Lalo Guerrero have modeled for Latinx poets today is a methodology for using popular culture as a library for study, a platform for advocacy, and a recruiting ground for solidarity-based partnerships via intertextual exchange.

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