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“Another Los Angeles: Chicana/o and Latina/o Counter-Mappings in Literature, Visual Art and Film, 1965-2015”

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Crystal Roxana Pérez

Committee in charge:

Professor Rosaura Sánchez, Chair
Professor Gloria Chacón
Professor Dennis R. Childs
Professor Natalia Molina
Professor Nicole Tonkovich

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"Another Los Angeles: Chicana/o and Latina/o Counter-Mappings in Literature, Visual Art and Film, 1965-2015"

by

Crystal Roxana Pérez

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California San Diego, 2018

Professor Rosaura Sánchez, Chair

This dissertation deploys an interdisciplinary framework that draws from literary studies, history, and critical human geography to critically examine counter-mapping acts in L.A. from 1965 to 2015, specifically those that shed light on the social and material conditions of Latinas/os. "Another Los Angeles" traces the counter-mapping practices of Chicana/o Latina/o communities as seen in fiction, visual art, and film. Counter-mapping as an oppositional practice reflects a non-dominant view of space and asserts subaltern histories and memories, challenging dominant discourses that render them invisible. In the first chapter, I analyze historical detective fiction by black and brown authors and argue that their novelistic return to the 1965-71 period remembers the long-standing issue of policing in the segregated ghetto and barrio and the

flourishing of social justice movements of that era that were responding to inequitable policing and other injustices. In chapter two, I examine Hector Tobar's 1998 novel, *The Tattooed Soldier* and its interwoven narrative structure to highlight the co-constitutive relationship between Central American spaces and the making of Los Angeles in the 1980s and 90s as produced by neoliberal policies in the hemispheric Americas. In the last two chapters I shift focus to the visual and sonic to explore the simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility of the raced, classed, and gendered Latina/o body in urban space. In chapter 3, I trace the tradition of Chicana/o public art from the 1960s to the 21st century as a conceptually and politically useful medium for L.A. Chicana/o artists to reflect an ethos of urban vulnerability and enact critical spatializing practices. In the last chapter, I examine the Hollywood film, *A Better Life,* as a bricolage of visual and sound parts of L.A. communities of color that portray a "third space" reflective of and created by immigrants' cultural, sonic, and spatial practices. Ultimately, "Another Los Angeles" privileges the counter-mapping practices of Los Angeles' brown, black, and immigrant populations as they ascertain their vantage points in a city that while vastly present in the national imaginary, often forgets or flattens the spaces of communities of color.

INTRODUCTION: "Critical Counter-Mappings of Los Angeles"

In 2002, a series of four memorial plaques appeared in the city of Los Angeles. Unsanctioned by the LA City Council, the official organ that approves Historic-Cultural Monuments, the plaques were instead surreptitiously installed by the Pocho Research Society of Erased and Invisible History (PRS), an art collective founded by Los Angeles based visual artist Sandra de la Loza. Having conducted research on the Mexican-American history of the chosen installation sites, the PRS proceeded to create and install their own monuments to "mark a different topography, one formed by unacknowledged, forgotten, and erased Chicana/o social and cultural events" (de la Loza 1). Collectively titled as *Operation Invisible Monument*, the four "invisible monuments" function as art actions, art objects, and insurgent historical monuments. The contestation for social space and Chicana/o collective memory is evoked by the PRS's placement of three of their four counter-monuments near City Council-approved ones.[1] In fact, the art collective encouraged viewer participation as they "sent out press releases and provided tour maps, inviting visitors to compare each site's contending versions of history" (Noriega vii). The surreptitious installations of *Operation Invisible Monument* demonstrate an artistic and political praxis that engages issues of urban space, history, and memory. As a resistive cultural practice, *Operation Invisible Monument* tackles directly the "invisibilizing" of the city's deep Chicana/o stories, at the same time that it uses the materiality of urban space to counter-signify the sites.[2] On another level, PRS's research-based art methodology of looking into forgotten stories grapples with the meaning-making processes that inform contemporary and ongoing

[1] The *Operation Invisible Monument* plaques are: *El Otro Ellis* (Invisible Monument #1), placed at 535 N. Main Street in Placita Olvera, a place of significance for immigrants from Mexico and Central America, according to the plaque; *Tropical America* (Invisible Monument #2), installed at the original site of Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros' mural *América Tropical* (1932), which was whitewashed within a year of its production; *The Displacement of the Displaced* (Invisible Monument #3) was installed in Elysian Park overlooking Dodger Stadium; and, *Triumph of the Tagger* was placed on the 1500 block of N. Spring Street to commemorate tagger-artist Chaka's unauthorized art action at the Southern Pacific Railroad in the late 1980s.

imaginations and spatializations of the city. Take for example, their Invisible Monument #3, titled *The Displacement of the Displaced* (see figure 1 and figure 2), which encourages a view of Dodger Stadium not as a neutral site, but rather as a result of spatial, political, and economic struggle that in effect resulted in the 1950s removal of Chavez Ravine's Mexican/Mexican-American working-class community.[3] While the Pocho Research Society's monuments were ultimately removed by city officials, they offer a lasting impression of the ways that cultural objects can issue inquiries into the material and discursive processes that render stories, bodies, and communities in the city, invisible, alien, deviant, or normalized.

I begin this study on the counter-mappings of Los Angeles that take place in the realm of cultural production with the case of *Operation Invisible Monument* because as a cultural, spatial, and discursive product it engages conceptually and materially with Los Angeles space and place and it raises questions of Chicana/o and Latina/o in/visibility and hyper-visibility, themes that are central to this dissertation project. When it comes to the Los Angeles' Latina/o histories and narratives in dominant media there is a dearth in the quantity and quality of their representation.[4] This gap is more ironic because Los Angeles is the capital of the U.S. film industry, one of the most filmed/photographed cities of the country, and also the metropolitan area with the largest Latina/o population in the United States.[5] Underpinning this "whitewashing" of the American metropolis is the erasure of the cultural, social, and economic significance of black, indigenous, Chicana/o and Latin American immigrants to the production of Los Angeles as a social, economic, political, and cultural site. And yet, even as these subaltern histories are often erased

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[3] For a representation of this history see Culture Clash's play, *Chavez Ravine*. For a legal, cultural, and historical analysis see David G. García's article "Remembering Chavez Ravine: Culture Clash and Critical Race Theater" (2006).

[4] See Francés Negrón-Muntaner's *The Latino Media Gap: A Report on the State of Latinos in U.S. Media*. Columbia University (2014); pp. 1.

[5] For the year 2017, The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the Latino population of L.A. County at 48.6%. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescountycalifornia,ca/PST045217

from the popular imaginary of the city, one can see how these continue to live on in the names of its streets and in the city name itself. As historical and geographical signifiers, these street names are a testament to the complex and underlying histories of the city that are inscribed in its contemporary cartography and that help me set up the thematic axes of my project's analysis.[6]

"Another Los Angeles: Chicana/o and Latina/o Counter-Mappings in Literature, Visual Art and Film, 1965-2015" offers a multi-genre study of counter-spatializations or counter-mappings of Los Angeles by centering working-class communities of color and their spatial and imaginative practices in the inner-city from 1965 to 2015, focusing largely on Latina/o and Chicana/o communities, but not exclusively. Like *Operation Invisible Monument*, cultural products that center the stories of Latina/o and communities of color often challenge these erasures through active practices of claiming urban space, which take place both in the abstract and ideological realm (e.g. literature and discourse) and also in physical sites through art installations, bodily occupation of space, public music practices, and others. Divided in two parts, my dissertation centers the construction of Los Angeles's Latina/o/Chicana/o communities in the terrain of the novel, visual arts, and film. Part I, "Black and Brown Los Angeles in Fiction" provides two studies of novels that represent historical events. In chapter 1, I examine the portrayal of police relations in the barrio and the ghetto of the 1960s and 1970s and examine the repressive conditions created by the policing of social, physical, gender and racial borders as seen in detective novels, at the same time that the novels critique these urban histories of policing. In chapter 2, I analyze *The Tattooed Soldier*, a thriller by Guatemalan American author Hector Tobar, who underscores the Guatemalan refugee and homeless bodies in the city of Los

[6] For example, a look at the names of various Los Angeles places such as Malibu, Tujunga, Topanga, Cahuenga, and others are Native American in origin, specifically from the Chumash or Tongva Native American groups that have historically inhabited Los Angeles lands, as well as the prolific Spanish names (including the city name of "Los Angeles") recalls the city's Spanish colonial and Mexican past.

Angeles as well as brings to the fore the historical conditions in Los Angeles and Central America during the 1980s and 1990s. Linking these first two chapters is the state-sponsored violence against the classed and gendered brown and black body, which mark the Los Angeles historical period between 1965 (the Watts Riots) and 1992 (the LA Uprising) and the literary practices that re-member these histories as critical spatializing practice. Part II, "Another L.A.: Visual and Sonic Constructions" offers an analysis of Los Angeles-based visual and sound texts. In chapter 3, I foreground the 20th century tradition of Chicana/o public art and the multiple ways that Latina/o/Chicana/o artists have historically used Los Angeles urban space as a canvas to reflect on their material precariousness. In chapter 4, I turn my attention to film and examine a rare Hollywood feature-film that centers the Latino undocumented laboring body and I situate an analysis of this film amidst crucial state and federal legal immigration decisions and propositions to contextualize the legal and cultural discourses around the brown undocumented immigrant body. In this last thematic chapter, I engage the tension between Hollywood's top-down portrayals of the Latin American immigrant with Latin American immigrants' own negotiations of space.

Like the PRS's *Operation Invisible Monument* engagement with historical localized narratives produced by the city's official historic-cultural monuments, most of the literary and cultural works I examine in this dissertation clearly show an epistemological concern with the way larger dominant structures, such as Hollywood cinema, the news media, the Museum, and other institutions, construct dominant imaginations of the city. This is seen from the art practices of Chicana/o artist Ramiro Gómez who "interrupts" L.A. Museum spaces with Latina/o laboring bodies (see chapter 3) to a critique of the way newspapers and television cover the Watts Uprising of 1965 seen in Walter Mosley's *Little Scarlet* (see chapter 1) to Hector Tobar's

sarcastic juxtaposition (see Chapter 2) of the commodity-filled cinematic spaces of Steven Spielberg's *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* with the Los Angeles downtown's homeless-filled streets of "skinny question-mark men with dirty bodies and unshaven faces" (Tobar 41). Even when well-meaning Hollywood portrayals of Los Angeles' communities of color attempt to bring visibility to urban issues affecting these communities of color, they can still reproduce long-standing stereotypes. This is the case of Christ Weitz's film *A Better Life*, which attempts to ennoble individual characterizations of Latinos, but reproduces tropes of the L.A. barrio and the ghetto as spaces of deviancy and criminality, thus, achieving a hyper-visibility of people of color criminality (see chapter 4). Ultimately, I argue that the authors and artists under analysis present alternative narratives of the city –to a degree, even the Hollywood film- that complicate and oftentimes outright reject dominant erasures of Los Angeles' working class communities of color, creating in the process critical subaltern cartographies of the city.

Space & Time: Organization

In centering the various material, political, and discursive processes that result in the in/visibility and hyper-visibility of black and brown bodies, spaces, and histories within the city of Los Angeles and the cultural production that resists these processes, I focus on the 1965 to 2015 period and conduct an analysis of Los Angeles spaces in literary and visual texts. Far from attempting to capture a totality of the sprawling geography of Los Angeles during this period, this dissertation is anchored in an exploration of Chicana/o and Latina/o working-class communities of the inner-city, specifically the corridor that includes the Eastside (East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights), Central Los Angeles, and the Westside, although my arguments encourage a relational reading of spaces. This means that correspondences between differentiated spaces within the inner city corridor make themselves known in the analysis, at the same time,

that new spaces (outside of the corridor) appear as central to the making and shaping of this inner-city space. For example, one can find the largest concentration of Latinos in Eastside neighborhoods, where the percentage of low-income households ($20,000 or less) is high for L.A. county, but people from these areas fuel the service-sector labor demands of the largely white wealthy neighborhoods on the Westside, such as Bel-Air and Hidden Hills, where median incomes are over $200,000 and the highest in Los Angeles.[7] Because of these labor demands, labor flows, and income disparities I insist on the relational understanding of Eastside barrios and people vis-à-vis wealthy –and largely white- neighborhoods in the Westside and on an acknowledgment of these hidden correspondences.

Similarly, in looking at themes of policing and police brutality during the Civil Rights Era in Los Angeles fiction, a comparative consideration of black and brown historical detective novels emerges as necessary in chapter 1. Counter-imaginations of Los Angeles of this era could not forgo a consideration of the Watts Uprising of 1965, a crucial moment for the histories of policing of urban communities of color in the city. In fact, *The Tattooed Soldier*, the text under analysis in chapter 2, which is partly set on the eve of the 1992 LA Uprising, the community's response to the acquittal of four white police officers who beat African American motorist Rodney King, also evokes the vestiges of the Watts Rebellion of 1965, encouraging a historical and comparative reading of the material and social processes that order the experiences of poor inner-city neighborhoods of color in the 20th century. At the same time, *The Tattooed Soldier* insists on a hemispheric reading of Los Angeles' Pico-Union and Westlake neighborhoods, which have become centers for Mexican and Central Americans due to immigration in the later decades of the 20th century. In the last chapter, I explore the visual spatializing practices of the

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[7] *Los Angeles Times*. "Mapping L.A.: rankings."
http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/ethnicity/latino/neighborhood/list/

2013 film *A Better Life* vis-à-vis a counter spatialization of the city through "immigrant" sounds. The film is shot in 69 locations across the city, from East Los Angeles to West LA and to South Central and many other places, where the social urban space relations are highly policed along race, class, and gender but also citizenship. Although the undocumented immigrant is portrayed as having a high level of self-awareness of their body and a high level of self-policing, in the end, a moment of policing results in the subsequent deportation of the main character to Mexico. In this last chapter, the system of local policing intersects with the patrolling of international border or what Mike Davis terms "a third border" within the city. The policing of immigrants who are invisible in their work places as explored in Chapter 3 are made hyper-visible through legal and social discourses of immigrant criminality on the policed streets of Los Angeles explored in Chapter 4.

Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies scholars have pointed to the importance of space as an analytic for understanding Chicana/o Latina/o communities in the United States. Raúl Homero Villa's *Barrio Logos* (2000) has examined the work of California-based Chicana/o writers, artists and activists to explore the multiple ways the Chicana/o community has resisted hegemonic spatializations or mappings. For her part, Mary Pat Brady utilizes a spatial-temporal framework in *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space* (2002) to study the Arizona-Sonora borderlands through Chicana literature. Through her careful consideration of Chicana literature she is able to examine the importance of "race, gender, and sexuality –as well as class—to the making of space" (6). Most recently, Ignacio López Calvo in *Latino Los Angeles in Film and Fiction* (2013) provides a much-needed analysis of 20th century Los Angeles in literary and filmic work by Chicanos, Latinos, and non-Latinos. López Calvo notes: "by writing the city and its Latino community, Latino intellectuals provide their own

representational space (to use Henri Lefebvre's term) and negotiate their interpretation of social space dynamics" (3). My dissertation project shares various similarities and concerns with these earlier projects in their attention to the significance of space and Latina/o cultural production, but it also does relational work in understanding how urban space structures brown and black communities through criminalization processes. Moreover, this dissertation's study of multiple genres and mediums allow for additional axes of analysis to consider the multiple fronts used by cultural producers to critically engage issues of space, place, race, gender, and citizenship.

Theoretical Tools & Methods

In this dissertation, I argue that black and brown cultural producers not only resist dominant portrayals of Los Angeles, but they offer critical counter-mappings rooted in the materialities of the urban space as produced and shaped through segregation, policing, poverty, and exploitative labor practices. These critical counter-mappings can take shape in various mediums: from the spatializing narratives produced in the pages of a novel or the shots or sounds of a film to acts or interventions of physical spaces, such as in the case of *Operation Invisible Monument* and other types of physical occupations of space that affirm bodies and stories that have been negated or demonized elsewhere. While a novel, an art piece, or film might not be considered maps in the strictest geographical sense, this dissertation centers the work of critical human geography that should be differentiated from the academic discipline of cartography dedicated to the study or production of maps. The latter has served in the colonial and imperial projects of the west, whereas, critical human geography as seen in the work of David Harvey, Doreen Massey, and Katherine McKittrick and others, offers new re-conceptualizations of space that move away from ideas of space as static, flat, apolitical, and unproductive and to considerations of space as being actively produced by material and social processes and being

constitutive of said processes.[8] Moreover, this dissertation is inspired by Mishuana Goeman's *Mark my Words* where she considers the literary mappings of Native women as a practice of (re)mapping settler spatializations. For Goeman, (Re)mapping occurs at the discursive level where the literary becomes a site to create new and decolonial spatial mappings that "provide avenues beyond a recovery of a violent history of erasure and provide imaginative modes to unsettle settler space" (Goeman 2).

Following Goeman's model, this dissertation is not primarily an analysis of dominant representations of space, but rather, it focuses on the ongoing resistances by subaltern people, who recover their spatial histories, recreate new configurations of urban space, and reject hegemonic spatializations through cultural and physical practices. My primary objects of study are novels, films, and artwork that represent the experiences of Los Angeles' Latina/o people from the 1960s to 2015, bringing together the fields of Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Human Geography, and Ethnic and Latina/o Studies. By extending my fields of analysis to include the terrains of the visual and sonic (in addition to the textual), I am able to center cultural producers' negotiations of space as well as the role of the audience whose own acts are central to an analysis of counter-mappings. For instance, by examining how Chicana/o artists contend with the histories of barrioization by using streets and other public urban spaces as building materials for their artwork, one can gauge their roles as critics and producers as well as consider the collective nature of their narratives, which are created in the public domain for community consumption and engagement.[9]

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[8] These and other scholars of critical human geography build on the groundbreaking work of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Space as an important analytic took off after Lefebvre's 1974 linchpin text, *The Production of Space*, where he proposes that space is socially constructed and not merely a physical entity.

[9] Raúl Homero Villa defines barrioization "as the complex of dominating social processes originating *outside* of the barrios" (4)

One of the primary objectives of this dissertation is to shed light on the contradictions that create the simultaneous and sometimes competing (in)visibility and hyper-visibility of bodies and communities of color through a study of primary sources like art, literature, and film. In reading these objects and acts as counter-mappings, I use a combination of literary, historical, and cultural analyses to help me ground a materialist framework that is attentive to the complex relationships between discursive representation, urban space, material processes, and the public imaginary. To provide a historical, social, and political context for this analysis, it is essential to draw from a spectrum of documents, such as legislation bills, newspaper articles, magazines ads, art exhibition catalogues, artist communiqués, YouTube videos, historical monuments, photographs, Google satellite images, and social media pages. This collection of "texts" attends to dominant and historical constructions of communities of color (as seen in the legal documents and newspapers) and "on the ground" stories and views, such as those found in the primary objects of study and in blogs, YouTube, and social media pages. Internet spaces are increasingly being used by people to navigate everyday life and to find or record stories that do not have other avenues of dissemination, such as the case of new artists and poets who use cyberspace to document and share their work when official channels of exhibition or publication are limited. Lastly, by incorporating Google satellite and street-view images, this dissertation also enters into a discussion of how recent digital technologies shape our concept of spatial scale and provides some examples of how these images might be used by scholars of place and cultural studies in doing multi-layered readings of space.

Because I investigate the material realities of urban brown and black communities as they are articulated in literary and visual texts to address questions of (in)visibility and hyper-visibility, I employ a number of historical, legal, and theoretical works. In terms of theory, I rely

on a gamma of critical theory and borrow from Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope, Michele Foucault's utopic/heterotopic spaces, Giorgio Agamben's state of exception, Karl Marx's fetishism of the commodity, Patricia Hill Collins' matrix of domination, Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality, Avery Gordon's haunting, Dave Gutierrez' third space, Mike Davis's third border, Stuart Hall's moral panic, and other analytics that help me think through the various types of structures of power and resistances that unfold in Los Angeles urban landscapes.

Part I: Black and Brown Los Angeles in Fiction

In chapter 1, "To Protect and To Serve? Policing and Criminality in Los Angeles' Detective Novel, 1965-1971," I explore the ways that historical detective fiction in the hands of authors of color underscore the long-standing contested relationships between Los Angeles' communities of color and the police. Specifically, I analyze Walter Mosley's *Little Scarlet* (2004), Lucha Corpi's *Eulogy for A Brown Angel* (1992), and Maria Nieto's *Pig Behind the Bear* (2013) to examine their representations of urban communities of color and their material and social conditions in Los Angeles. While all three novels are published in a similar contemporary moment within the 1992-2012 decade, they choose to represent a Los Angeles of several decades ago, specifically the 1965-1971 period, an era of social unrest and movements for racial justice and equality. Mosley's novel is set during the Watts Rebellion of 1965 and The Chicano Moratorium of 1970 is a key organizing moment for Lucha Corpi and Maria Nieto's respective novels. By drawing from these historical moments of resistance to police and state power –and the state's backlash against them- the novelists willfully remember histories of policing and community resistance. Linking the three novels is an interest in addressing issues of historical memory, in/justice, impunity, community-based resistances, and representations of crime and criminalization. Engaging Giorgio Agamben's theory of "the state of exception," I suggest that

this theory in a way describes the social conditions of 1965 Watts as the state of policing has enacted a sort of racialized state of exception that habitually suspends the legal rights of its black residents through their heavy policing and criminalization in the newspapers, which itself is what Stuart Hall describes as a "moral panic." Similarly, Corpi and Nieto portray the heavy criminalization of Latino/Chicano communities during the 1970s. While the criminalization of brown communities happens in relation to an assigned foreignness, these novels show the long-standing issues of policing of the barrio of East Los Angeles. Ultimately, I argue that these authors use the generic conventions of detective fiction to reflect on a collective urban reality of state-sponsored violence and capitalist gendered/racial violence, oftentimes challenging the *assigned* criminality of communities of color and instead underscoring the *historical* and rampant state and police violence in Los Angeles that render Latinos and African Americans as hyper-visible via race, class, and gender processes.

In chapter 2, "Interpolated Palimpsests: Empire in the *The Tattooed Soldier*, 1980s-1992," I examine *The Tattooed Soldier*, a 1998 suspenseful novel by Guatemalan-American author and journalist Hector Tobar. Because this novel is partly set in 1992, the city is very different from that of chapter 1's novels (set in 1960s and 1970s). Given increased Asian, Mexican and Central American immigration, Los Angeles is portrayed in Tobar's novel as more multi-ethnic but yet it is evident that the legacies of power from earlier periods permeate into the 1990s, such as the ongoing cases of police brutality, racial and class segregation in the city, the policing of social and racial boundaries, and the impunity of U.S.'s proxy wars in the hemispheric Americas. In this chapter, I contend that *The Tattooed Soldier* uses a narrative strategy of interwoven spatialities and temporalities –1990s Los Angeles and 1980s Guatemala--to reflect local relationships of power not as isolated, but rather as interconnected in a larger

hemispheric context. The novel's mapping highlights the contradictions generated by an intricate set of geopolitical conditions that underpin the history of U.S. imperial and neoliberal policies in Central and South America and that tie Guatemalan local realities and spaces with the production of a Guatemalan diaspora in 1990s Los Angeles. By using the metaphor of the city as palimpsest –a concept borrowed from Adrián Arancibia—I expand on this metaphor of the city as manuscript and think of the spatial transformation of spaces through the migration and the mobility of goods, images and people that are generated through globalization as processes of "interpolation." In doing so, I hope to underscore the novel's hemispheric understanding of Los Angeles as changed by transnational spaces, bodies, and histories from Central America, which are themselves shaped by U.S. intervention. Secondly, borrowing from Katherine McKitrrick and Avery Gordon, I also examine *The Tattooed Soldier*'s multiple spaces, such as MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, Fort Bragg in North Carolina, and San Cristóbal and other Guatemalan spaces to examine the interlaced nature of space and the hauntings of U.S. Empire as part of a web of terror that manifests in both Central American spaces and in U.S. spaces.

Part II: Another L.A.: Visual and Sonic Constructions

In arguing that Chicana/o artists have historically used Los Angeles street space to document and comment on the material vulnerability of their bodies and barrio spaces as well as to etch Latina/o-centered narratives, I examine various examples of public art works by Chicana/o authors from 1968 to the early 2000s in Chapter 3, entitled, "Urban Canvas: Chicana/o Practices of Public Art in LA, 1968 – 2015." I also suggest that this artwork counters Los Angeles dominant cartographies by commenting on the centrality of Latina/o communities to the city's cultural terrains. First, I use "Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art," a digital archive of primary and secondary sources to historicize the Chicano muralist movement

of the 1960s-70s. As one of the earliest and most productive eras of Chicano art production in the U.S., Chicano muralism –next to graffiti—is arguably the most iconic and visible form of Latino art expression in the streets of Los Angeles from the 60s to the present. I examine the gender politics of Chicana/o public art of the 1960s and 1970s and the internal gendered dynamics of the East Los Angeles Chicana/o art community. After providing the socio-historical context for the Chicano muralism movement and its dominant male-centered iconography, I then zoom in on muralist Judy Baca whose work begins in the Chicano Movement but continues to the present and directly engages issues of place and Chicana/o urban history. I also consider the public art of the Chicano art group Asco (1972-1987) and pay particular attention to performances and murals of the 1970s that comment on the social and spatial conditions of Chicanos as they intersect with the transnational context of the Vietnam War. Lastly, I analyze the 21st century art installations by Ramiro Gomez and pay particular attention to the embodiment of Latina/o labor in LA space and the classed and gender dimensions of Los Angeles' domestic work. These multiple portraits of Chicana/o public art practices, I suggest, show the importance of Los Angeles urban spaces in Chicana/o artists' critiques of their material conditions as they are organized by urban space.

In chapter 4, "Undocumented Migrant (IM)Mobility and (IN)Visibility in the film *A Better Life*, 1994 – 2015," I follow the previous visual analysis with a film analysis that explores how filmic renditions of the figure of the undocumented laborer, offer a particular perspective on the immigration debate by tapping discourses that shape this image in the early 21st century, post-1994. This period is of particular significance for understanding Latina/o Los Angeles at the city-scale level, but also for exploring the ongoing political and economic situation of authorized and unauthorized Latin American migrants at the state and national levels. I specifically analyze Chris Weitz's *A Better Life* (2011), a Hollywood feature film about an undocumented Mexican

gardener and his son as they navigate Los Angeles' physical, cultural, and social spaces. In an era of intense anti-Latino and anti-immigrant rhetoric in U.S. media and popular culture, it is crucial to understand the epistemological and political work latent in Hollywood films about unauthorized Latinos, especially when these types of representations are seldom seen. The powerful influence, far-reaching dissemination, and transnational mobility of film make it one of the most influential forms of communication informing the public consciousness and social imaginaries. Nestled in the context of the anti-immigrant state (1994's Prop 187) and federal legislation (2004's H.R. 4437) the film provides an important insight into the discursive currency of the undocumented Latino body in the 21st century. More specifically, in this chapter, I analyze the visual montages and sound elements of the film to interrogate the im/mobility and in/visibility of the undocumented Latina/o worker in Los Angeles and consider the simultaneous invisibility of Latino labor with its potential hyper-visibility as abject body in the film. As a top-down dominant portrayal, I also investigate how Chicana/o, Mexican, and immigrant sounds are an important terrain for undocumented workers to assert their space in the city, when other forms of belonging are denied.

Figure 1. The Pocho Research Society of Erased and Invisible History. *The Displacement of the Displaced*: Invisible Monument #3. Installation site. 2002.

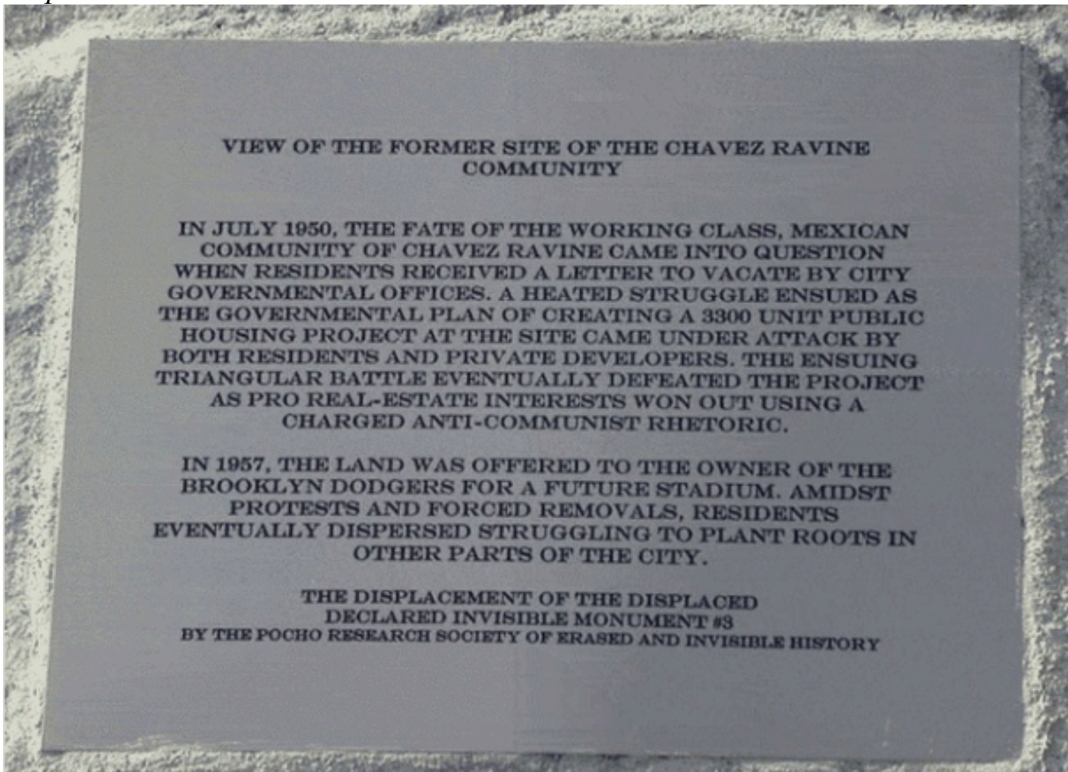

Figure 2. The Pocho Research Society. *The Displacement of the Displaced,* silkscreen on metal, 9 x 12 inches, 2002.

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Part I: Black and Brown Los Angeles in Fiction.

Chapter 1: "To Protect and To Serve? Policing Los Angeles in the Historical Detective Novel, 1965-1971"

Los Angeles figures prominently in the literary and filmic imagination. From various disaster, sci-fi, and gangster films to the 2016 musical *La La Land*, Los Angeles is a highly filmed city. In terms of detective fiction, it was Raymond Chandler who brought Los Angeles into the literary and cinematic landscape with his 1939 hardboiled novel *The Big Sleep* debuting the now well-known P.I. Philip Marlowe, played by Humphrey Bogart in the 1946 film adaptation. Since Chandler, other writers of detective fiction have set their mysteries in the city of angels, but like Chandler, offer the vantage point of a white investigator. Much less is known about how authors of color deploy this genre to comment on people of color's experience of this city. Thus, in this chapter I focus my study of this genre and of Los Angeles through an analysis of detective novels by black author Walter Mosley and Chicana authors Lucha Corpi and Maria Nieto, whose respective protagonists are also of color. I will specifically discuss three novels: *Little Scarlet*, a 2004 novel in Mosley's "Easy Rawlins" series, *Eulogy for a Brown Angel*, a 1992 mystery by Corpi, and *Pig Behind the Bear,* a 2012 novel by Nieto. Of the three, Mosley is the more prolific writer and the most commercially successful, which is evidenced in his novels making regional best-sellers lists, the popularity of his 1990 debut novel *Devil in a Blue Dress,* adapted to film in 1995, and even in his being mentioned in the 2016 widely popular (and intertextual) comic-based Netflix television program *Luke Cage*.[10] For her part, Lucha Corpi is

[10] Specifically Walter Mosley is mentioned in "Code of the Streets," episode 2 of season 1 of *Luke Cage* (2016). Earlier in 1992, Mosley also came to the public's attention when it was reported that he was a favorite author of then presidential candidate Bill Clinton (Lyall). See: Sarah Lyall's "AT DINNER WITH: Walter Mosley; Heroes in Black, Not White." *The New York Times.* June 15, 1994.

well known among Chicana/o Studies and Chicana/o Latina/o literary circles for her poetry and her Gloria Damasco mystery series, *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* being the first in the series. Maria Nieto, a Professor of Biological Sciences at CSU East Bay, is the newcomer of the three with two novels under her belt, *Pig Behind the Bear* (2012) and *The Water of Life Remains in the Dead* (2015), featuring the character Alejandra Marisol, a young Chicana journalist. Mosley, Corpi, and Nieto, to be legible and marketed as detective fiction writers, follow some of the genre's formulas and tropes and capitalize on the genre's referential matrix of significations but as noted by various scholars, they also challenge traditional iterations of the genre.

Indeed, authors of color have adopted and adapted the mystery genre in the 20th and early 21st centuries for their own social commentaries and for a representation of *place* from their particular vantage point. While most critics agree that the first modern mystery story is Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders at the Rue Morgue," published first in 1841, it is not until the mid-1980s when Chicano writers enter the genre. One factor for this late outset, Ralph E. Rodriguez suggests, is the genre's popular form as he considers that "a literary snobbery still persists that renders popular fiction, especially genre fiction, a minor accomplishment" that worked against Chicano authors of the 60s and 70s (3). On the other hand, Paula L. Woods' anthology *Spooks, Spies, and Private Eyes* (1995) captures how African-American writers have produced mystery fiction from the turn of the 20th century with Pauline Hopkins' 1900 locked-room mystery "Talma Gordon" as the earliest *known* African-American mystery short story. Like Chicanos of the 20th century, who have used detective fiction (a subgenre of mystery fiction) to "understand the shifting political, social, cultural, and identitarian terrain of the post-nationalist period" (*Brown Gumshoes* 5), black authors "were interested in using detective fiction to present African American social and political viewpoints and worldviews" (Soitos 27).

Before I delve into my analysis, I would like to explain why I discuss these three novels together for as different as they are they also share some similarities. On the one hand, the texts fall under the genre of mystery, following some of the central conventions of all murder mysteries: they present a murder or murders that need solving and a main character who will undertake the task of finding the truth. More specifically, each features an investigator of color, each text is part of a series, and the novels are primarily set in a Los Angeles of the past. While all three novels are written/published in a similar contemporary moment within the 1992-2012 decade, they all choose to represent a Los Angeles of several decades ago, specifically of the 1965-1971 period, an era of social unrest and movements for racial justice and equality, which I as well as other scholars, suggest is not a coincidental fact. For example, when reflecting on the novels by Mosley and Barbara Neely, Professor of English Daylanne K. English*,* goes as far as to suggest, "in writing crime novels, contemporary black writers are enacting a kind of literary-generic anachronism in order to comment on a distinct lack of progress regarding race within legal, penal, and judicial systems in the US" (773). In her essay, "The Modern in the Postmodern: Walter Mosley, Barbara Neely, and the Politics of Contemporary African-American Detective Fiction," English finds several superimpositions from Mosley's contemporary moment of writing in his novels' fictionalized historical settings to argue that he "chooses to return in the 1990s and early 2000s to a genre born of 1930s discontent in order to write novels set in the 1940s-60s, thereby enacting a complex process of literary anachronism that describes and inscribes present-day injustice and discontent" (777). Indeed, Mosley's return to the Watts Uprising of 1965 in *Little Scarlet* can be read as a response and reflection on past and present conditions of injustice since the police shootings of black men and boys, their mass incarceration, and the general policing of African American communities is pandemic in the 21st

century, but not new phenomena. I echo English's argument that Mosley, and in my case also Corpi and Nieto, choose the genre because it serves their "political and literary purposes" (786).

In representing the social issues of in/justice, policing, and the criminalization of communities of color these three novelists show shared but community-specific histories of urban oppression and doing so informed by the contemporary moment when racialized police brutality is still rampant. Thus, it is not surprising that Corpi chooses to portray the police-induced violence that quelled the 1970 Chicano Moratorium at the opening of *Eulogy for a Brown Angel*, which was published in 1992 at a time when the apartheid-like conditions of Los Angeles and its police's racist practices against black citizens had come to national attention through the televised images of the unbridled police beating of African-American motorist Rodney King in 1991 and the people's uprising that followed the acquittal of four white police officers who participated in the beating. Similarly, Mosley's *Little Scarlet* is published in 2004, but its murder mystery is set during the Watts Uprising of 1965, a response by the black community to the police's abuse of black motorist Marquette Frye.[11] Nieto, for her part, sets her mystery on the heels of the one-year anniversary of Rubén Salazar's death, revealing the impulse to remember Rubén Salazar as an important historical figure and to highlight the contested relationship between the police and Chicana/o communities and the social conditions of the L.A. barrio during 1970-1971. In fact, I suggest that linking the three novels is an interest in addressing issues of historical memory, in/justice, impunity, community-based resistances, and

[11] Even after the critiques and protests that resulted from the Rodney King beating, there was no apparent improvement in police brutality or police violence against Black communities. In fact, by 2004 when Mosley publishes *Little Scarlet*, there have been several notorious cases of police brutality and/or police shootings of African American men and women. In 1999 alone, there were several police shootings of black men and women, some of which garnered some media attention, including the killing of Tyisha Miller, 19, Margaret Laverne Mitchell, 55, Amadou Diallo, 23, and Demetrius DuBose, 23. Additionally, as Professors Cassandra Chaney and Ray V. Robertson argue shootings of unarmed black people are increasing in the 21st century with 78 killings during the 1999-2015 period (47).

crime and criminalization. Their portrayals are aided by the use of historical events, which ground the texts in the material and social experiences of these respective communities. The mystery genre is a productive space for these writers to question the historical and ongoing social control and policing of Los Angeles' black and brown communities, both the people and the spaces. In using conventions of detective fiction, like first person narration and the crime/murder literary machinery, in conjunction with the place-specific histories of policing, these three novels underscore issues of state violence as they intersect space, race, class, gender, and citizenship.

While the selected texts differ in plot and narrative style, they all depict Los Angeles' communities of color and their shared material reality of police surveillance, state-sponsored violence, and other apparatuses of social and spatial control. This representation allows for a critique of the material inequities caused by overlapping systems of oppression, including racism, capitalism, and institutionalized and social misogyny as they are manifested in space relations. While crime as a trope of detective and crime fiction might allow for a reinforcement of stereotypes of the urban place riddled with crime, the novel format also allows for a more textured representation of space (Los Angeles) and time (historical moment). It is literary critic Mikhail Bahktin who conceptualizes the chronotope in literature as a phenomenon where "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). Scholars have been attentive to the novel's engagement not only with place but also history, such as Professor of Latina/o Literature Rosaura Sánchez who examines the fiction of Chicano author Rolando Hinojosa and she treats Hinojosa's first five novels as a "macrotext" that "reflects the various transformations in the history of the community [of The Valley of Texas]" (76). The detective novel that portrays a place's specific histories lends itself to a study of the social space relations therein captured.

Detective novels are often place-specific and reproduce settings that the protagonist (detective-figure) navigates and in turn the reader navigates also.

In a dissertation that is mindful of Los Angeles' locales and localities, historical detective fiction is an apt literary genre to explore the social and material conditions of its populations and the urban spaces they occupy for as Professor of English Marissa K. López assesses, "detective fiction is well suited to an investigation of spatial meaning" (173). In the next section, I investigate in what ways the mystery genre spaces are productive for a study of spatial meaning and social relations.

Utopias and Heterotopias in Two Traditions of Mystery: Real vs. Unreal Spaces

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders at the Rue Morgue" established tropes and conventions that would be embraced by late 19th and early 20th century white British authors like Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, who replicated Poe's use of an eccentric detective figure, ratiocination, "murder as 'clean' puzzle" and the story's restoration of social order, but did not offer a critique of society from below, nor did their mysteries offer a substantive view into the everyday life of the working classes (Soitos 24)[12]. American author Raymond Chandler refers to this brand of mystery as the "traditional" or "classical" detective story. An exponent of hardboiled detective fiction himself, Chandler believes, "if the writers of this fiction wrote about the kind of murders that happen, they would also have to write about the authentic flavor of life as it is lived" (11). Chandler makes clear that he prefers the hardboiled style of American writer Dashiell Hammett, for according to him, this literature presents a more realistic portrayal of the world. Primarily set in large urban centers, hardboiled detective novels offer a view of cities that is more heterotopic.

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[12] Here, I am borrowing assessments made by Stephen F. Soitos in *The Blues Detective*, where he charts distinctions between classical and hardboiled detective fiction. See his full chart on page 24 in *The Blues Detective.*

Michel Foucault's concepts of utopia and heterotopia are useful for understanding the different worlds/spaces captured by classical and hardboiled stories discussed by Chandler. Foucault defines utopias as "sites with no real place" and which "present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces" (24). Heterotopias, on the other hand, are "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 24). We can glean Chandler's characterization of the hardboiled world and its social spaces as heterotopic and not utopic from his essay "The Simple Art of Murder," when he describes,

> The realist in murder writes of… a world where a judge with a cellar full of bootleg liquor can send a man to jail for having a pint in his pocket, where the mayor of your town may have condoned murder as an instrument of moneymaking, where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practising; a world where you may witness a hold-up in broad daylight and see who did it, but you will fade quickly back into the crowd rather than tell anyone, because the hold-up men may have friends with long guns, or the police may not like your testimony, and in any case the shyster for the defense will be allowed to abuse and vilify you in open court, before a jury of selected morons, without any but the most perfunctory interference from a political judge (17)

This description of the hardboiled novel world is one marked by heterotopic spaces like the brothel, city hall, and the courtroom, all mentioned in the above passage. In contrast, classical mysteries primarily represent unreal places through a horizontal (rather than heterogeneous or vertical) view of society provided by an aristocratic or privileged hero. This hero like Sherlock Holmes is often a white male working outside –but alongside– the police apparatus. Through this privileged lens, the traditional mystery offers a Manichean worldview where binaries of good and evil are clear-cut and where the investigators are represented as being on the "right" side of the law. Correspondingly, the police and legal systems are uncritically equated with justice,

which is invisibly coded as white. Classical murder mysteries are typified by an airtight solving of the murder and the return to "normative" social order, thus representing not the contradictions of real places but the "perfected form" of unreal ones. In the hardboiled world, as described by Chandler, there are heterotopias like the courtroom where the abstracted idea of justice is confronted by a contradiction. While the courtroom represents "justice" (fully achieved in the classical mystery), in the hardboiled story the courtroom is not a guarantor of justice but rather where representatives of the law (from the police to the judge) are actually part of an imperfect system. Ultimately, the hardboiled story calls attention to the contradictions underlying real places where for instance "law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practising" (Chandler 17).

The line I have drawn between utopic spaces in classical mysteries and heterotopic spaces in hardboiled fiction is not absolute nor comprehensive as there are many permutations of mystery fiction in the 20th and 21st centuries that blur the lines between these two traditions. However, I would like to suggest that while classical mysteries *with* horizontal views of society flatten the character of the city and its heterogeneous populations through utopic or "unreal" spaces, the hardboiled writing of writers like Hammett, Chandler, and Walter Mosley generally depict the city's heterotopic spaces and the contradictions produced within social systems. In so doing, the latter reveal the contradictions that undergird heterotopic or "real" spaces that make the city-space a literary mechanism apt for unveiling the complex social relations in the city. Stated differently, when attempting to portray the contradictions of a society, such as the injustice in legality, State violence against citizens, and the existence of poverty alongside extreme wealth, the heterotopic spaces in detective fiction serve as an appropriate canvas for laying out these contradictions. For example, African-American writer Walter Mosley offers

heterotopic views of Los Angeles in his Easy Rawlins series, who according to Paula Woods is a "unique revisioning of the hard-boiled detective, recast not as the loner Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe, but as a black single father, a racial outsider but cultural insider, whose knowledge of and connections to the black community are essential in the police's ability to solve crimes" (xvii). Much of Mosley's *Little Scarlett* takes place in various neighborhoods and places – institutional, private, and public- spaces that reveal the contested nature of social relations as they manifest also spatially.

Theoretical Tools: Space, Race, Gender

In addition to thinking of novelistic space as chronotopic, heterotopic, or utopic, I analyze detective fiction texts for their thematic representation, specifically when concerning the portrayal of Los Angeles' communities of color. In doing so, I rely on the work of critical race theory and critical geography scholars to approach the junctures of citizen/denizen/criminal and space/race/power/gender as unveiled in the selected novels. I give some attention to the racial and social discourses of criminalization that build and reinforce social as well as physical borders within the city. This consideration was largely catalyzed by Mike Davis' exploration of L.A. as a postmodern city where "urban design, architecture, and the police apparatus [coalesce] into a single, comprehensive security effort" (224). Since its publication in 1990, Mike Davis's *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* has influenced the way scholars understand the history, organization, and spatial significance of Los Angeles. This dissertation, and this chapter in particular, are indebted to *City of Quartz*'s critical inquiry of this city as a space shaped by economic, spatial and social processes, and not merely as a city that spontaneously combusted into the large metropolis that it is today. When first reading Davis's text as an undergraduate, I was intrigued by the idea of reading the urban landscape as a text that betrays underlying power

relations. As someone born and raised in Los Angeles, this work enabled me to see the city in a new and critical light, one that unveiled various forces and mechanisms shaping internal borders within the city. Particularly eye-opening was the chapter titled "Fortress L.A." which calls attention to Los Angeles' "obsession with physical security systems, and, collaterally, with the architectural policing of social boundaries" (223). On some level, I had experienced these borders having lived in various highly segregated neighborhoods in this city from East L.A. to Mid-City to Westwood, and seeing the ways others and I occupy space in various classed, gendered, and racialized places within the city. I was also led to question the role of the media in "foment[ing] the moral panics that reinforce and justify urban apartheid" (Davis 226).

Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts in *Policing the Crisis* (1978) first introduced this concept of moral panics and how they are used to legitimate policing apparatuses by examining the state and ideological processes that work through the rhetoric of a mugging "crisis" in the U.K. *Policing the Crisis* demonstrated the combined and constitutive roles of the media, the judiciary, and the police in producing "crime" as these agencies "are active in defining situations, in selecting targets, in initiating 'campaigns' in structuring these campaigns, in selectively signifying their actions to th e public at large, in legitimating their actions through the accounts of situations which they produce" (52). Their contribution to the theorization of policing through moral panics offers a look at the ideological justifications used for social control by paying attention to the role of the media. I employ this idea of moral panic in Chapter 4 to frame the dominant rhetoric produced around immigrant criminality and in this chapter I use it also to think about the racialization and spatialization of black and Latino criminality in Los Angeles.

The U.S. media, for example, plays an important role in the representation of black and Latino youth as criminal. A 2000 study of Los Angeles-based news stations (spanning Oct. 1995-jun. 1996) revealed that African Americans are overrepresented as law-breakers in news programs, whereas Latinos and whites were found to be underrepresented (Dixon and Linz 151). The authors provide a hypothesis for the unexpected result of the underrepresentation of Latinos as perpetrators and conjecture that "structural issues" within the media as well as "perhaps the lack of focus on Latino perpetration results from Latinos being framed as a problem people in other areas besides crime (e.g., immigration)" (Dixon and Linz 150). Their explanation separates the categories of crime and immigration, but as I will suggest later, these two categories are often difficult to separate for Chicana/o/Latina/o people, who are seen as always foreign, at the same time that racialized foreignness is increasingly penalized, policed, and demonized as dangerous.

Moreover, "The Latino Media Gap," a more recent report (2014) on the status of Latino representation in U.S. media (news, film, television, and radio) suggests that Latinos are vastly missing on the screen and behind the scenes (Negrón-Muntaner 3). A 2015 report focusing exclusively on Latinos in the evening news during the 2008-2014 period shows that "stories about Latinos and Latino issues constitute less that .78 percent [less than 1%] of the news in the studied networks" and when the coverage exists it "continues to remain significantly focused on Latinos as people with problems or who cause problems" (Subervi 2). In a nutshell, when black and brown people are represented in the media, they are unevenly portrayed in quantity and quality and even portraying them disproportionately as lawbreakers or problem makers. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the novels show the media's role in creating moral panics and how through media portrayals, legislation, executive orders, and police actions a "state of exception" is enacted, to borrow Giorgio Agamben's theorization. Through this state of

exception policing powers are widened over bodies of color and over communities of color. Because the law does not apply to all bodies equally, I also rely on the work of Black feminist and critical race theory scholars, including Kimberlé Crenshaw's interpretative framework of intersectionality, Patricia Hill Collins' concept of "matrix of domination," and Joy James's corrective of Michele Foucault's theory of discipline.

In Mosley, Corpi, and Nieto's texts there is an engagement with these issues and as I will demonstrate, the texts tackle (and in some cases call into question) dominant media portrayals of the barrio and the ghetto, respectively. The ninth installment of Mosley's Easy Rawlins mystery series, *Little Scarlet* is published nearly 40 years after the novel's 1965 Los Angeles setting. Like Maria Nieto and Lucha Corpi's novels, *Little Scarlet* is set retrospectively in a Los Angeles of the past. Corpi's *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* begins on August 29, 1970 with the body of a murdered child in the midst of the chaos of people fleeing East Los Angeles streets after police ended the Chicano Moratorium and the life of Chicano journalist Rubén Salazar. For her part, Nieto opens *Pig Behind the Bear* with a "news flash" set to that same date, August 29, 1970, with the headline "LA Times Columnist Rubén Salazar Killed" followed by a time shift to "one year later, August, 1971" (6). For the two Chicana writers it is the Chicano Moratorium and the death of Chicano *Los Angeles Times* journalist Rubén Salazar that serve as the main historical markers for their novels. In all three novels, and to different degrees, Los Angeles' histories of social protest and/or police brutality play a role in the literary and conceptual machinery. Out of the three, Mosley dedicates the most descriptions to the historical event as he narrativizes Los Angeles' 1960s socio-political and racial climate with well-developed spatial descriptions that capture the Watts Uprising's omnipresence and the social circumstances leading to this eruption. With constant references and reflections on the 6-day uprising through Rawlins' first-person

narration, the novel makes note of the Uprising as a moment of rupture in the city that transforms –even if temporarily- the daily social interactions between different racial groups, which are re-negotiated during and after the Uprising as seen through the protagonist's interactions and negotiations with white people.

A Cursory Look at the Social, Spatial, Political Conditions of the 1965 L.A. Ghetto

Walter Mosley's *Little Scarlet* opens on the sixth day of the Watts Rebellion with protagonist Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins' noting, "the morning air still smelled of smoke" (3). The Watts Rebellion was the black community's spontaneous response to the use of excessive police force against black motorist Marquette Frye stopped by the LAPD on suspicion of drunk driving on August 11, 1965. Rumors of the incident spread rapidly and hundreds and eventually thousands of Watts black residents rioted over the course of 6 days.[13] Local police forces as well as thousands of National Guardsmen were deployed to subdue the rioters who responded to the police presence with fire and vice versa. At the end of the 6-day uprising the death toll reached 34 people and hundreds were beaten and jailed. Beyond the immediate LAPD-Frye catalyst, scholars like historian Gerald Horne and sociologist George Lipsitz, have explored the complex set of social, political and economic conditions to which Watts black residents were subjected and likely fueled their discontent. Horne surmises, "uprisings like those in Watts in 1965 are akin to a toothache in that they alert the body politic that something is dangerously awry" (41). For his part, Lipsitz describes, "In Los Angeles, restrictive covenants, mortgage redlining, direct discrimination, and mob violence confined African Americans to overcrowded neighborhoods in a tiny part of the huge metropolitan area. Aggressive police practices protected these physical

[13] For a detailed historical account of this event please consult Gerald Horne's *Fire this Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Virginia Press, 1995).

boundaries, routinely exposing Black citizens to traffic stops, groundless arrests, and brutality whenever they ventured into white areas" (146).

De jure and de facto segregation in Los Angeles resulted in the consolidation of black ghettos and Mexican/Chicano barrios, which concentrated poverty and policing to these areas. In *American Apartheid*, an exploration of the black ghetto, scholars Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton argue, "The emergence of the black ghetto did not happen as a chance by-product of other socioeconomic processes. Rather, white Americans made a series of deliberate decisions to deny blacks access to urban housing markets and to reinforce their spatial segregation. Through its actions and inactions, white America built and maintained the residential structure of the ghetto" (19). In Los Angeles, black communities formed in segregated neighborhoods like Watts and Compton and indeed actions by whites at the individual level (e.g. by denying the sale of their homes to people of color) and also through an attempt to institutionalize these discriminatory practices in the law, worked to control the social and physical mobility of black residents. For example, in the 1964 election, California passed Proposition 14, a voter-initiated referendum that repealed the California Fair Housing Act ("The Rumford Act") of 1963. The latter was a law that sought to curb discriminatory housing practices used against people of color.[14] This political and spatial climate must have been fresh during the Watts Uprising of 1965. In fact, in a response and critique of the "McCone Report," a report about the "causes" of the Watts Riots commissioned by then California Governor Edward P. Brown, civil rights activist Bayard Rustin condemns the state report's trivializing of the political situation of the black community and of the state's passing of Proposition 14. Rustin observes, "the largest state in the Union, by a three-to-one majority, abolishes one of its own laws against discrimination

[14] Proposition 14 was declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court in 1966, effectively restoring the previous law.

and Negroes are described as regarding this as they might the failure of a friend to keep an engagement. What they did feel…was that while the rest of the North was passing civil-rights laws and improving opportunities for Negroes, their own state and city were rushing to reinforce the barriers against them" (31). This and other social conditions became the petri dish for the Watts Uprising of 1965, but this rebellion was met with strong local police action and even National Guardsmen. It is this context of spatial, political, and economic inequality in which the Watts Rebellion unfolds and that Mosley represents in *Little Scarlet*.

"Spaces of Exception": the Policing of Race and Place in *Little Scarlet*

Mosley intertwines the historical and social backdrop of the 1960s with the murder mystery plot line. Driving the narrative is Private Investigator Easy Rawlins' pursuit of the truth behind the murder of a black woman, Nola Payne affectionately known to friends as "Little Scarlet". Fearing that a white man might be involved in the murder of a black woman and that this might prolong and exacerbate the Watts Uprising, the LAPD via white detective Melvin Suggs, reaches out to Rawlins, a black PI who could navigate black neighborhoods when white police officers could not. Consulting for the LAPD during the Watts Rebellion, the black community's spontaneous uprising against police violence, positions Rawlins in a problematic axis between community interests and police/city government interests. Yet, this is resolved throughout the novel when Rawlins prioritizes the black community's well-being while using the tenuous and temporary protection granted by his connection to the LAPD necessary to navigate white power. In fact, Rawlins' "option" to not cooperate with the LAPD is summed up when Captain Fleck threatens, "The LAPD needs your help and if you know what's good for you you will cooperate" (25). The threat of police violence and skirmishes with the LAPD is one constant

in Easy Rawlins' journey from his introduction in *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990) set in 1940s Los Angeles.

Rawlins struggles to assert his individual agency and protect community interests in the context of white police power. When first meeting with Deputy Commissioner Jordan and learning of Nola and the white male (a person of interest), Rawlins accepts the job by replying: "I'll do this thing but not for you. I'll do it for the people I care about" (30). Rawlins' investigative process and commitments are personal and collective unlike the detached classical and hardboiled white protagonists. Indeed, as Soitos reinforces, "the blues detective recognizes his or her own blackness as well as what blackness means to the characters in the text" (31). For this reason, Rawlins' resolve to solve Nola's murder is deepened by the events of the Rebellion as he explains, "over the past few days, I came to feel a new connection between myself and the people caught up in the throes of violence. It was as if I had adopted Nola Payne as my blood sister" (34). Even though Rawlins had never met Nola nor her aunt Miss Geneva Landry, he "adopts" both of them as "blood" relatives. This connection to the murder victim and her family is at once personal, social, and political. Given the shared experience of blackness in the city and bonded through the idea of injustice, Easy Rawlins is going to solve Nola's murder because as he tells the deputy commissioner, the LAPD "don't give a damn about a black woman's death" (302). Stated differently, Rawlins' process of detection is informed by the city's historical, social and political context and his position within the city's power relations. The conditions of black communities in 1960s Los Angeles are predicated on racialized structural inequality marked by practices of anti-black racism like heavy policing, segregation, and restrictions on physical and social mobility.

Mobility is a key feature of the white hardboiled private eye who moves across racial and class strata in the city and "is immersed in events and plays a part in the contingent world of the narrative which writes him as much as, in many instances, he writes it" (Willet 10). But if the white hardboiled detective writes the world of the narrative, Rawlins is writing a world marked by strict social and spatial boundaries, and it becomes singularly important how the city writes him. As demonstrated in the text, while blackness grants Rawlins access to Watts and other black spaces, it is precisely his blackness that limits his mobility in Los Angeles' white segregated areas. Only a few chapters into the novel Rawlins finds himself in a white area being stopped by LAPD officers, an event that happens several times in the novel. By calling attention to Rawlins' curbed mobility, one only made better by the deputy commissioner's note or "hall pass", Mosley offers a racial mapping of Los Angeles and critiques the spatial restrictions on his Private Eye.[15] These spatial and special conditions affecting the black P.I. mirror and underscore the conditions giving life to the Watts Rebellion, conditions not meaningfully covered by the city's news media.

As previously mentioned, the hardboiled detective formula relies on and validates the agency of the detective, which is generally seen in the detective's active first-person narration and his/her ability to move and act to solve the murder or mystery. The white detective or private eye can generally move through the city and his/her whiteness allows him a type of mobility and invisibility. Mosley's iteration of the detective as embodied in Rawlins calls attention to how racial inequality affects the detective type and his potential for agency because given the extreme policing of racial and physical borders in Los Angeles during the 1960s his mobility is impeded.

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[15] The "hall pass" or note is a necessary plot device that allows Rawlins a degree of access to white spaces. The fact that Rawlins needs something like this to move through the city further highlights the spatial and social limitations that the black detective faces. At the same time, the commissioner's note, which functions as a metonymy of police power, is evidence of the asymmetrical power relations (Police Commissioner vs. black P.I.) and it also shows the role of police in enforcing racial segregation. The note reads: "the bearer of this letter, Mr. Ezekiel Rawlins is hereby *empowered* by the writer, Deputy Commissioner of Police Gerald Jordan, *to be given free access by the police and any other security employee* as he is conducting private consultations for the Los Angeles Police Department" (my emphasis 29).

Through the first-person narration, typical of the hardboiled narrative, readers see that Rawlins is fully aware of his race and the limits that it imposes on his mobility and access to spaces of power for as literary scholar Soitos explains, “[black detectives] are aware, and make the reader aware, of their place within the fabric of their black society” (29). Ultimately, Mosley highlights the material structures that produce a different set of considerations for the black detective in the American metropolis. While the white private eye can move through the city, Rawlins is concerned about being detained, imprisoned, beaten, and killed by the police, not because of his profession but because of his blackness. Even as PIs carry pistols (another trope of mystery and crime fiction), holding a weapon becomes a life-threatening situation for Rawlins, as is evident in the multiple police shootings of black men even in the contemporary moment.

The sense of precariousness is heightened by the Watts Rebellion as this event fed whites’ racial anxieties about black spatial, political, and social transgression. Rawlins reflects, “Everybody in L.A. was on alert. At the height of the riots angry black crowds had threatened to leave the ghetto and bring the violence into the white neighborhoods. Who knew when the Molotov cocktails would start exploding in Beverly Hills?” (36). Through Rawlins’ sarcastic question the novel alludes to the mainstream anxieties about presumed widespread black violence during the rebellion, when in reality the riots were confined to black neighborhoods because strong local and federal police presence secured the spatial/racial boundaries. In fact, the novel’s repeated allusions to the way television and newspapers document the events of the Watts Rebellion reveal its concern for the way history is recorded, misrepresented, or erased. These historical events *Little Scarlet* takes up and reconstructs over and over again through Rawlins’ subjectivity and narrative point of view. In one example, Rawlins reflects,

> I was watching images of the rioters on the late news with the volume turned off, witnessing those poor souls out in the street fighting against an enemy I

> recognized just as well as they. I had read the newspapers and heard the commentaries from the white newscasters. But my point of view was never aired. I didn't want the violence but I was tired of policemen stopping me just for walking down the street. I hated the destruction of property and life, but what good was law and order if it meant I was supposed to ignore the fact that our children were treated like little hoodlums and whores? (43)

Rawlins' vantage point speaks to his lived reality of the city as part of a collective black experience of policing and the contradiction built into a system of "law and order" that is discriminatory in nature. While Rawlins does not avow "the destruction of property or life" he also offers a critique of the legal system since this very same system criminalizes black youth as "hoodlums and whores."

Rawlins' interior monologue reveals his perspective on the Watts Rebellion, one that "was never aired." His description offers an alternative articulation of the ethos behind the Watts Rebellion, one grounded in the urban material and social experiences of inequity and injustice and not of senseless violence. Like the police department's efforts to make Nola Payne's murdered body invisible, the city newspapers also make invisible those killed during the Watts Rebellion. Aptly, in the novel's last chapter, Rawlins notes, "there was no coverage of the nearly forty funerals held in memory of those who had died [in the rebellion]" (302). With Rawlins' criticism of the media and the emphasis on memorializing the Rebellion's casualties it becomes clear that *Little Scarlet* wants to counter these erasures and memorialize not only the dead of the Watts Rebellion but this particular historical memory of the Watts community of 1965. Indeed, the novel reveals an epistemological and historical concern with the construction of history and the erasure of the beaten and murdered black body. Rawlins' awareness of how newspapers and the television portray the Watts Uprising and instead asserts his own viewpoint into the events. Rawlins provides a more nuanced and historically mindful assessment of why the rebellion happened when he explains, "If you have kids they will be beaten. And no matter how far back

you remember, there's a beatin' there waiting for you. And so when you see some man stopped by the cops and some poor mother cryin' for his release it speaks to you. You don't know that woman, you don't know if the man bein' arrested has done something wrong. But it doesn't matter. Because you been there before. And everybody around you has been there before" (48). Rawlins' emphasis on the catalyst of the rebellion does at least two things. First, it humanizes the struggle of black people under conditions of extreme surveillance and police mistreatment and secondly, it shows the continuity of these conditions in the city.

On the other hand, a look at the actual newspapers that covered the Watts Uprising portray a white dominant construction of the events. The front page of the August 14, 1965 issue of the *Los Angeles Times* features a large photograph of a street in Watts lined with Guardsmen; the caption reads, "Warlike scene: This scene reminiscent of wartime is in the 1800 block of E. 103rd St. as National Guardsmen take up posts" (Berman "Eight Men" 1). A second prominent photograph is included in this article with a caption that claims, "STREET UNDER SIEGE – Grim aura of mob rule hangs over 103rd St. near Wilmington Ave. as looters run free and smoke rises at rear" (Berman "Eight Men" 12). As evidenced in these captions, analogies of war were deployed in the media coverage of the Watts Rebellion. Through language of warfare, guerilla, loose mobs, and chaos, the city newspapers participated in the ideological justification of the government's deployment of 21,000 guardsmen to quell the rebellion while simultaneously erasing the case of police brutality that catalyzed the rebellion and the social, political, and economic conditions of the Watts residents. Instead, *Times* Staff Writer Berman writes, "The guerrilla war of south Los Angeles claimed its 25th victim Saturday night as bands of armed Negro looters took to the streets and snipers defied the efforts of 21,000 National Guardsmen and law officers to bring peace to the area" (Berman "21,000 Troops" 1). Without a context for the

riots, the violence of the Rebellion is made to seem senseless. In this description, it is the rioters that are preventing the federal and local forces from "bring[ing] peace to the area." Headlines like "Anarchy Must End" and "'Get Whitey,' Scream Blood-Hungry Mobs" (8/14/1965) in the *Los Angeles Times* render invisible the socio-political and economic conditions of black communities in LA or as Rawlins summarizes, "[the news] don't talk about why people are mad" (42). Rather, through descriptions of "Blood-Hungry Mobs" and through photographic and textual representations of Watts, the black residents are portrayed as violent, menacing, and as a threat to the city's social and spatial order, participating in the construction of a warlike crisis or "moral panic," which as I explained earlier is defined by Stuart Hall et. al as a type of collusion between the media, the judiciary, and the police in producing "crime" as these agencies "are active in defining situations, in selecting targets, in initiating 'campaigns' in structuring these campaigns, in selectively signifying their actions to the public at large, in legitimating their actions through the accounts of situations which they produce" (52).[16]

In fact, undergirding the newspapers' characterization of the Watts Rebellion as a crisis is the presumption that peace is the general state of the neighborhood. On the other hand, *Little Scarlet* speaks to the quotidian violent treatment of black residents by LAPD officers. Agamben's conceptualization of the state of exception is fruitful to understand that the Watts Rebellion did not trigger a warlike crisis that merited the use of military force against the rioters as it was perpetuated in the news media, but that in a way a state of siege pre-dated the rebellion as the civil liberties of black residents were habitually suspended through means like police harassment and violence. In effect, the same protections that apply to white citizens are not applied to black citizens or for that matter to any racialized group perceived as threatening at any

[16] See the *Los Angeles Times* coverage of the Watts Rebellion, specifically the issues from August 14 – August 16, 1965.

given time.[17] Among other things, the fourteenth amendment of 1868 established that no State should "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (Amendment 14, Section 1, US Const). However, while the amendment guarantees these protections in the abstract, in practice the protection of all citizens is not secured equally. Rather, what *Little Scarlet* reveals about 1960s Los Angeles is that representatives of the law engage in an uneven treatment of black individuals and communities. Mosley portrays a heterotopic view of the city that shows the contradictions of the illegality that undergirds the police body, an apparatus that is supposed to uphold the constitution. Instead, we witness in Mosley's portrayal of Watts that extra-legal practices, such as arbitrary and unjustified arrests, mistreatment, incarceration, and other type of aggressions on the part of police towards citizens of color enact a type of state of exception. Agamben understands the state of exception "not [as] a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept" (4). Agamben's formulation, once applied to segregated Watts of 1965, crystalizes the idea that the State's agents are already operating outside the law in the case of black communities for they enact conditions similar to that of a state of exception. However, it is important to note that Agamben's conceptualization could have benefitted from a consideration of race so that he accounts for the ways that racialized impoverished communities can live in state of exception-like conditions, while others do not. This is the case because policing and surveillance apparatuses are not applied equally onto undifferentiated bodies, but rather they are mapped differentially onto racialized, classed, and gendered bodies and spaces.

[17] While this is outside of the scope of this chapter, take for instance the racialization of Japanese Americans during World War II and the establishment of internment camps as spaces of exception that was done by presidential executive order in 1942, relocating more than 100,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps.

For this reason, while the violence of the Watts Rebellion is portrayed in the news as an event that necessitates federal intervention to "bring peace" and restore normative social relations, the latter are predicated on an already pre-existing and normalized state of exception for communities of color that is invisible to the white mainstream. Thus, the presence of fifteen thousand National Guardsmen in the city noted by Easy Rawlins is only a more hyper-visible manifestation of the already ongoing policing of black bodies and neighborhoods. In the 1960s, Los Angeles' black neighborhoods, much like in present times, are separated from white spaces, and vice versa. These separations are protected through various technologies of power to discipline movement within these spaces. One of the most visible technologies of control is police violence. Thus, the presence of Guardsmen in Watts is but one manifestation of the nation-state displaying is power so as to assert their control over the area, which is in itself justified through media representations of black deviancy and criminality.

While the language and imagery of warfare, chaos, and violence is utilized in the city newspapers to draw attention to the supposed uncivil and anti-civic behavior of black rioters, Walter Mosley uses images of war in the novel to produce a rhetorical effect that reveals the ongoing state of siege of black neighborhoods under police power and underscores the violence of the State towards its own citizens, highlighting another contradiction built into the abstracted idea of citizen/citizenship. Said differently, Mosley calls attention to the relationship between citizen and denizen to suggest that African Americans do not enjoy in practice the status of citizens protected under the law. In fact, Rawlins makes this distinction at least once when he says, "But the *denizens* of Watts were under the law with no say" (my emphasis 204). As an American veteran of WWII, Rawlins remembers, "when I went to war to fight for freedom, I found myself in a segregated army, treated with less respect than they treated German POWs"

(18). *Little Scarlet* calls attention to yet another contradiction about citizenship and freedom through allusions to WWII by pointing out the institutionalized racism in the army. During the war, the space of domestic segregation is transposed to Europe through the American segregated army and its arrangement of soldiers' bodies vis-à-vis race. Rawlins underscores the inequality and contradiction of the American black soldier fighting in Europe by contrasting his treatment with that of German soldiers who although prisoners of war, part of the Nazi state, and not part of the U.S. body politic, were treated with more respect than American black soldiers.

The spatio-temporal conflation of WWII 1940s Europe with 1965 Watts calls attention to the ongoing contradictions of a yet unfulfilled promise of freedom and citizenship to black Americans. This is highlighted again when Rawlins, after being attacked presumably by Nola's killer, experiences a moment of cognitive dissonance and confuses Los Angeles space and time with WWII battle ground in Europe. In this scene, there is a comparison being drawn of domestic war-like conditions with international warfare. After being shot, Rawlins' speech is unintelligible to the white medic who asks, "who shot you?" to which Rawlins' responds, "Must have been the Nazis" (275). The conflation of the two spaces works to connect the conditions produced in Nazi Germany to the U.S. and the violence in the urban landscape. Through this scene of cognitive dissonance, the novel highlights the contradiction of state liberal ideology that purportedly embraces notions of liberty and equality, but does not apply these ideas in the domestic territory. Local and federal apparatuses of policing (e.g. LAPD and the National Guardsmen) are shown to enforce these physical boundaries during the Watts Uprising and LAPD and individuals police the social and spatial borders of white neighborhoods, so that when Rawlins and other black characters are found in white areas, they are detained, questioned, and harassed as repeatedly shown in *Little Scarlet*.

Corpus Delicti: Femicides and Gendered, Classed, and Racialized Bodies and Spaces

While Agamben's theorization of the state of exception is useful to talk about *Little Scarlet*'s representation of Watts' racially-segregated black communities as spaces of exception given the state's habitual policing of black spaces, a police practice which is the norm rather than the "exception," it is important to note that Agamben did not include race nor gender in his theorization as has been thoroughly discussed by African American Studies scholar Alexander G. Weheliye, who asserts, "several critics have noted, the state of exception does not apply equally to all, since the exclusion of and violence perpetrated against some groups is anchored in the law" (87). The work of critical race theory and black feminist scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, and Joy James, on the other hand, focuses specifically on the multiple ways that apparatuses of social control apply unequally with respect to raced, gendered, and classed bodies.

By centering a relational and intersectional study of the characters in the novel (detective, murderer, and murdered) and considering their intersecting identities through class, race, and gender, one can begin to see the multiple ways that characters are embedded in what Patricia Hill Collins terms a "matrix of domination" or "this overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained" (228). Similarly, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw has developed the methodological or interpretative framework of intersectionality that considers how systems of oppression cannot be understood as operating separately for people who find themselves at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression, as in the case of black women whose experience is shaped by both racism and sexism. In Crenshaw's own words, "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives

in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (1244).

In the various studies of Mosley's fiction there has been considerable emphasis on genre, black masculinity and sexuality, and black culture and to what extent he conforms to or departs from the hardboiled conventions of white authors Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler or if his literary lineage is more in line with black writer Chester Himes, but little attention has been paid to his novels' female characters. Most studies –regardless of emphasis—focus on the protagonist Easy Rawlins. Of course, examining Rawlins and the ways he navigates an oppressive anti-black society as a P.I. is a central aspect of any study of the detective series since the detective figure is the fulcrum around which the literary machinery of the genre operates (as I have stated before, it is the detective's point of view and actions that are centered). However, another important piece of a detective mystery is the *corpus delicti*, the murder victim or the concrete material evidence of a crime. On this point, less scholarship is found about *Little Scarlet*, an omission that is striking since the plot reveals that a serial killer has been murdering several black women, a very obvious form of racialized and gendered violence.

Nola Payne, or "Little Scarlet," is the first murder victim introduced in the novel. It is her strangled (and subsequently shot) body that is found in her Watts apartment amidst the uprising. The police have reached out to Rawlins because a white man was seen in the area, which they suspect might be involved in her murder. They want to prevent the public from finding out because they fear this will prolong the Watts Uprising. Nola's body is being housed in the Miller Neurological Sanatorium, where the police are also holding her aunt Geneva Landry captive. As in other scenes, here too, Mosley makes use of white symbolism to reflect the pervasive and

permeating whiteness of spaces and the white power evident in those spaces. When he enters the room Rawlins observes,

> The men had white smocks. Almost everything in this room was white. The walls and floor, the counters and the ceiling. Two of the men had on white shoes. Just one pair of black dress shoes and Nola Payne brought any color into that lifeless room. And the shoes and Nola were just so much dead flesh. (18)

I agree with Chris Ruiz Velasco's reading of this scene when he says, "the hellishness of this environment stems precisely out of its hyper-whiteness, which appears as a monolithic opposition to blackness, and yet hyper-whiteness also reveals its own fissures and anxieties" (148). Indeed, there appears to be an almost all-consuming whiteness that is represented spatially in the room's walls and floors, but the presence of Rawlins and Nola disrupts that whiteness. While Velasco does not tackle the centrality of Nola's body, I would add that this scene shows not only how Rawlins maneuvers spaces of white power but also calls attention to how white power structures are always operating through misogyny and patriarchy. In actuality, the scene is a type of voyeuristic posthumous violation of Nola's body that objectifies her and attempts to make her naked body knowable as the police officers suggest "she had intercourse within six hours of her death" (23). From this angle, this scene is not only important for understanding Rawlins' positionality but also Nola's in the context of institutional structures. By this I mean that the space of the sanatorium and the co-existence of all-white-male doctors, coroners, and police officers working toward the maintenance of the status quo (they want to keep Nola's murder concealed by keeping her body hidden and her aunt Geneva Landry captive) all serve to deny Nola's rights and to further commit a type of gendered and racist violence on her body.

What is more, police and doctors work in tandem to keep Miss Geneva Landry quiet, sedated, restrained to a bed, and almost mute. Rawlins questions this treatment but does not have the power to bring an end to the situation. He asks the doctor, "Why do you have her all trussed

up in that straitjacket?" and he continues, "Isn't there some law against that?" (32). The doctor responds, "Not if we believe that she's a danger to herself or others" (32). This scene shows what Patricia Hill Collins describes as the collusion of interdependent or interlocking social institutions that "have worked together to *exclude* Black women from exercising full citizenship rights" (277). The doctors and police are in effect working together to suspend Miss Landry's civil and human rights. Their treatment of her is both cruel and unusual. Keeping her imprisoned and restrained with a jacket is not only a violation of her rights but also especially cruel given that she has just suffered the traumatic experience of seeing her murdered niece. For Miss Landry, the law is not a form of protection. Instead, by using a rationale of a "state of exception" that is applied to the locality of Miss Landry's raced, classed, and gendered body, the white men of power keep her imprisoned. The sanatorium becomes an extension of police and state power that disciplines Miss Landry's body by keeping her constrained to the bed, for as Foucault reminds us, "discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" (141).

Foucault elaborates, "discipline sometimes requires *enclosure*, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony. There was the great 'confinement' of vagabonds and paupers: there were other more discreet, but insidious and effective ones" (141). Here, Foucault is referring to the power of institutional spaces, like sanatoriums, as spaces of enclosure or confinement where bodies are arranged for discipline.[18] Indeed, Miss Landry's containment shows the sanatorium's disciplinary power, but Foucault does not account for the differentiation of bodies through race, gender, class and other markers of difference that may determine who gets placed in these

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[18] It follows that Foucault's usage of the term "enclosure" should not be confused with the Marxist understanding of enclosure (e.g. the enclosure of lands) as an instance of primitive accumulation. For an analysis of the latter type of enclosure see Massimo De Angelis "Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital's 'Enclosures'" (2001).

locales and for what purposes. As Joy James has pointed out, Foucault's theorization in *Discipline and Punish* is based on a universalized white, propertied male body as it "depicts the body with no specificity tied to racialized or sexualized punishment" (James 25). Instead, she rightly counters, "some bodies appear more docile than others because of their conformity in appearance to idealized models of class, color, and sex; their bodies are allowed greater leeway to be self-policed or policed without physical force (26). Even though Miss Landry is an older woman, the police/doctors still treat her as a criminal not because she has done anything illegal but because within racist institutions of power and racist logics, her race, gender, and class make her appear less docile and at the same time more vulnerable to their intrusions.

Moreover, anti-black gendered violence as seen in Miss Landry's imprisonment and torture conjure longer histories of anti-black sexist racism. In this situation of captivity –and perhaps also given the drugs in her system- Miss Landry has a few slippages or disorientations where she confuses Rawlins with a familiar man named Roger. This is similar to what Rawlins later experiences when he is shot and believes himself back in Germany during WWII. For Miss Landry, however, the imprisonment conditions of duress are having traumatic effects on her mind and body. These are exacerbated by the fact that she is disconnected from her family and community in a time of mourning and trauma. To unpack this scene, I employ an analysis by Professor of Literature, Dennis R. Childs who examines experiences of black imprisonment in the chain-gang cage and the Middle Passage and explains, "imprisonment expressed as indefinite solitary involves a radical disorientation of temporal experience; in other words, the articulation of racial and spatial terror in the context of the modern prison warps time insofar as the experiential present is haunted in a material fashion by *past, or southern,* modes of racial and capitalist domination" (49). I suggest that Miss Landry's experience of imprisonment in the Los

Angeles sanatorium, which becomes an ad hoc modern prison, produces her sense of warped temporality because not only does she confuse Rawlins –a man she has never met- for a man she knows, but it is in this place where she begins to talk for the first time about events that happened many decades ago in the American South. Indeed, her niece's murder and her own imprisonment have her remembering the sexual abuse she experienced as a child at the hands of a white plantation owner in Louisiana, who regularly abused her while her father was working. In a way, Miss Landry's body and mind make a connection between the modern technologies of power embodied in the institutional space of the hospital-prison with older iterations of white-on-black gendered sexual violence so that as Professor Childs suggests "the experiential present is haunted in a material fashion by a *past, or southern* modes or racial domination," and in this case also misogynistic domination.

Even in her situation of imprisonment and torture and in spite of the police/doctor's efforts to silence Miss Landry, she finds ways to resist. By speaking to detective Rawlins Miss Landry is able to tell her story and help the investigation of her niece's murder. She is also able to find relief and sustenance through a bond with another black woman, her nurse Tina Monroe. In Miss Landry's own words, "I think I might go crazy in here if it wasn't for [Tina]." Black women and other women of color have found ways to resist and survive.[19] Miss Landry by telling Tina about her childhood experiences of sexual abuse is able to bear witness to misogynist racist violence and as Patricia Hill Collins explains for the character of Celie, a survivor of child sexual abuse in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*: "Writing letters to God and

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[19] Take for instance the case of Black Liberation Army activist Assata Shakur who after being shot by the police finds herself in a near-death situation at Middlesex County hospital where the police physically and mentally torture her. In these conditions, Shakur recalls two black nurses being kind to her and even bringing her books authored by black women. Shakur remembers, "When i read the book about Black women, i felt the spirits of those sisters feeding me, making me stronger. Black women have been struggling and helping each other to survive the blows of life since the beginning of time" (16).

forming supportive relationships with other Black women help Celie find her own voice, and her voice enables her to transcend the fear and silence of her childhood" (Hill Collins 123). I would suggest that Miss Landry voicing her experience to Tina is a similar act of resistance. Given that all the white male figures of power have been working on silencing her, Miss Landry in giving her testimony to Tina is even more subversive. In fact, Miss Landry makes a strong case for the longue dureé of the legacies of white male misogynistic violence on black women. In 1965 Los Angeles, this misogynistic racist violence is seen to continue not necessarily in the figure of the white plantation owner, but it is carried out by the figures of modern technologies of power (doctor, police, and coroner) and in the modern spaces of the hospital since it is here that Miss Landry dies at the end of the novel. The hospital-turned-prison has effectively mentally, emotionally, and physically terrorized Miss Landry until she dies from an "allergic reaction" to antibiotics. Given the collusion of police with the medical staff, the sanatorium-turned-prison as a medical space is haunted with the histories of experimentation and torture of the non-normative racialized, gendered body.[20] Upon finding out about Miss Landry's death Rawlins exclaims, "If you [police] motherfuckers didn't put her in there she would have been fine. But you were so worried about yourselves you didn't even stop to find out about her" (293). While Miss Landry becomes another victim of femicidal and racist institutional violence, it is not before she is able to attest to the histories of this violence, knowledge that will live on in Nurse Tina, who ultimately declares, "What had happened to Geneva Landry could happen to any black woman" (121).

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[20] Medicine as a white racist project has used black women and black bodies for experimentation, such as the 20th century case of Henrietta Lacks, whose cervical cells were taken and used to create an immortalized cell line for purposes of decades-long experimentation to a longer history of medical sciences' use of black bodies for experimentation from the time of slavery to the present, a history covered by Harriet A. Washington in *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (2007). Take for instance, also the forced sterilization of women of color in the U.S. and in California (Los Angeles) the forced sterilization of Mexican American women in the 1960s-70s. For more on this story, see the 2015 documentary *No Mas Bébes* ("No More Babies"), directed by Renee Tajima-Peña.

Meanwhile, Rawlins learns that Nola had been seeing a white man by the name of Peter Rhone and that the pair had fallen in love. While Rawlins discovers that Rhone did not kill Nola, in a way, their interracial relationship does kill her–or more accurately the complex racial-gendered politics and legacies that make their interracial relationship a social taboo kill her. While Mosley's construction of the novel exonerates Peter Rhone as a white individual, Miss Landry's historical interpretation of Nola's murder makes for her well-founded condemnation of white male violence on black women with the conclusion that "all white men wanted to do was rape and defile black women" (121). Nola is actually the most recent case in a string of murders of black women, the work of a serial killer that has escaped the police's notice. We find out that other men have been railroaded in some of these murders and are serving time; clearly, the legal system is failing on many levels. Rawlins specifically links the failings of this legal system with racism. Following Collins' "matrix of domination," I propose that we consider all four domains of power in reading the structural and interpersonal domains that make the femicides of black women not only possible, but invisible. Rawlins reflects,

> With that stack of dead black women on my desk now, I felt differently. Nobody cared about them. I had told the police about what I suspected about Jackie Jay's death. I'm sure there had been other complaints with so many women dead. But the denizens of Watts were under the law with no say. We were no different than pieces on a game board. (204)

The racism of the legal system is an example of what Patricia Hill Collins calls "structural domain" in the matrix of domination.[21] The legal impunity that the "denizens of Watts" experience is evidenced both in the murders of Nola and the other black women and also in the imprisonment of men (likely black men) who have been erroneously charged with their murders.

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[21] Collins describes the matrix of domination as being comprised by four interrelated domains of power: the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains. She elaborates, "The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues" (276).

By the end of the murder mystery, it is Rawlins and not officials of the law who eventually finds the serial killer.

The serial murderer is a black homeless man named Harold Ostenberg, the son of Jocelyn Ostenberg, a white-passing black woman. Jocelyn is married to a white man and lives in a white neighborhood but she abandons Harold who is not white-passing. Harold's existence outs her as a black woman. Jocelyn, here, represents a hegemonic internalization of whiteness. Like Daphne Monet in *Devil in a Blue Dress*, Jocelyn is able to approximate white privilege given her white-passing skin and features. While Daphne does not cut ties with her black relatives and friends, Jocelyn abandons Harold in order to maintain her white social and material privileges. At the end of *Devil,* Daphne is abandoned by her white and wealthy fiancé since interracial marriages were not only taboo but also illegal until 1948 when that novel takes place. In 1965, while not illegal, black-white unions are taboo and the social policing of these unions continues at the interpersonal domain of power. This means that Jocelyn would likely lose the life she has built if she were to be discovered as a black woman. On the other hand, Harold, who harbors long-standing resentment and hate for his mother's actions, internalizes this hatred and strikes out against any black woman who shows interest in white men. His femicidal violence is a type of gendered violence as it manifests within the interpersonal domain of power. Ultimately, Harold commits matricide in the end and he is in turn poisoned by a black woman who thinks he might be dangerous. In sum, while *Little Scarlet* shows the structural domain of power at work through the failures of a racist legal system with regards to the Watts black residents, a consideration of the murders as the result of both racist institutional violence and intra-ethnic misogynist violence sheds light on the various levels of structural and interpersonal domains of power shaping the lives of black women. Said differently, the violent punishing and policing of black women's

bodies and sexualities embodied in Harold's serial murders paired with the failures of the criminal justice system betray the multiple and intersecting systems of oppressions at the axis of race, gender, sexuality, and class that frame the experiences of *Little Scarlet*'s murder victims.

A Cursory Look at the Social, Spatial, Political Conditions of the L.A. Barrio, 1970-71

Mexican/Chicana/o communities also have a long history of spatial, political and social repression in the Southwest, from their dispossession of a national homeland (and land rights) that unfolded from Mexico's ceding its northern territories to the U.S. with the signing of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo to 20th century urban spatial practices of dispossession that produced highly segregated Mexican and Chicana/o barrios as explored by scholar Raúl Homero Villa in *Barrio Logos*.[22] Villa also notes the early discourses and "moral panic" around Mexican youth criminality in the 1940s and specifically describes the media's demonization of the Mexican-American youth accused of the murder of José Díaz in what became known as the "Sleepy Lagoon" mass murder trial and notes the derogatory expert testimony by Ed Durán Ayers who claimed Mexican youth's desire to kill was due to their Aztec ancestry (67-68). Scholar Edward J. Escobar for his part has examined the 1951 "Bloody Christmas" police brutality controversy where dozens of LAPD officers beat -to the point of breaking bones and damaging organs- seven detained young men, five of which were Mexican American. In his article, Escobar argues, "Bloody Christmas coincided with the emergence of the modern, 'professional' LAPD and, in fact, helped institutionalize the police professionalism model in Los Angeles by developing a system by which the department insulated itself from external control" (174). In other words, this insulation allowed for the LAPD to curtail external scrutiny, investigations, and interference so that it was able to use its own discretion in handling

[22] In *Barrio Logos*, Villa provides a literary and cultural studies analysis of California's Chicana/o peoples' "community sustaining practices that constitute a tactical ethos (and aesthetic of barriology ever engaged in counterpoint to external barrioization" (6).

accusations of police brutality. What Escobar also highlights is that the Police Chief William H. Parker is able to consolidate his power in the city during this time "[bringing] into sharp relief the logical consequences of the LAPD's belief that Mexican American youth were a criminal element within the community, initiating a fifty-year period in which the department's identity emerged as protector of the white middle and working classes from the city's minority communities" (174).

By the 1960s, the process of "barrioization" in Los Angeles resulted in the production of barrios with sizeable populations of Mexican and Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles, but as scholar Rodolfo N. Acuña notes they were vastly underrepresented in the political arena. Acuña provides an example of this political disenfranchisement when he relates that in 1963 Governor Brown appointed less than 30 Chicanos to judicial positions out of 5,000 (300). During 1960s and 70s and modeling the tactics of African American Civil Rights movements, Chicanos in various places in the U.S. demanded civil rights. For Mexican/Chicana/o Angelenos, the East Los Angeles barrio was an important center for organizing around urban community issues. Using barrio streets, parks, and other public spaces for art production, social organizing, and demonstrations Chicanos of the 1960s were carving out social and political spaces. In the late 1960s, Los Angeles Chicanos were organizing around various social inequities, such as impoverished schools and education, poverty, and aggressive policing. In protest of poor education in the barrios, thousands of Chicana/o students from several East L.A high schools marched out of classrooms in 1968 in what became known as the Chicano Blowouts. By 1970, a coalition of Chicano activists was mobilizing against the Vietnam War and the high numbers of Chicanos fighting in the war.[23] Historian Francisco Arturo Rosales notes that in contradistinction

[23] In Chapter 3, I explore the case of art group ASCO and how they occupied East LA street space for a performance to protest the Vietnam War and the U.S.'s military's recruitment practices in the barrio.

to previous wars Mexican American families were not sharing a sentiment of "heroism" and instead "many felt resentful because, while twenty-three percent of the casualties of soldiers from the Southwest was Hispanic, only ten percent of the general population in the Southwest was of Hispanic origin" (198). It is in this context that Chicano activists organized an anti-Vietnam war demonstration where thousands gathered in a peaceful manner. However, under the "justification" of a reported shoplifting incident the LAPD decided to disperse the demonstrators, using force and tear gas and at one point cornering demonstrators. One of the Moratorium's main organizers Rosalio Muñoz remembers, "the cops started throwing tear gas, making it worse. And so then the people started throwing things back" (qtd. in Rosales 202). It is in this highly chaotic moment of violence where *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* begins.

Criminality or Criminalization of the Brown Body

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Republican candidate Donald Trump's embodiment of bellicose patriotism, racism and intolerance was incommensurate with multicultural and post-racial imaginations of the nation. Trump made several reprehensible comments against minority groups throughout his campaign trail, including one of his early speeches where he categorized Mexicans as "rapists" and as people who bring "crime" and "drugs" to the United States. Read as part of a residual ideology, Trump's opinions were marked by many media outlets as wild, the makings of an aberration in our post-racial society. On the other hand, I suggest that a look at Chicana historical detective fiction, *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* and *Pig Behind the Bear,* give credence to the long-standing anti-Latino and anti-immigrant discourses embodied in Trump, not as an aberration but as part of historical and ongoing racialized inequality expressed in social spatial relations. Indeed, Raul Homero Villa via Carl Gutierrez-Jones highlights "the foundational Chicano experience of being interpellated as a

criminal population by the institutional and ideological apparatuses of Anglo-American culture" (1). It follows then that Trump's comments about Mexican criminality are not a singularity but part of the mainstream ideology with deep-seated historical roots. This comes to bear when one considers the portrayal of Latinos in mass media, which functions as one major ideological machine. As noted in the 2014 "Latino Media Gap" report, there is an increasing gap between the growing U.S. Latino population and their representation in the media, and according to the report, when Latinos do appear they largely do so as criminals, cheap labor, and hypersexualized beings (Negrón-Muntaner 1). It is through mystery fiction and other literature that Latinos are able to present their own perspectives on criminality, criminalization, and in/justice in their experience of the U.S., and in doing so, they speak to their social and material conditions.

Although monographs on Chicano detective fiction are scarce, *Brown Gumshoes* (2005) by Ralph E. Rodriguez critically engages Chicana/o detective fiction as a terrain for understanding Chicana/o identity and speaks to Chicanos' experience in the U.S. He explains, "this feeling of being on the outside, being the alienated other, thematizes the hero of the detective novel and resonates especially well with Chicana/os, who though subjects of the nation are often represented as alien to it" (6). This perceived foreignness of Chicanos has material repercussions for their social and physical movement for it helps to legitimize their policing. In *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big City*, published 10 years after *City of Quartz,* Davis offers the concept of the "third border" to describe the policing of a perceived Other population within the national space. The third border is then not an actual international border that separates two nation-states, but one that operates within the American city or as Davis explains, "whereas the second border nominally reinforces the international border, the third border polices daily intercourse between two citizen communities" (71). Davis's notion of the

"third border" can be read as one expression of the state of exception as applied to racialized groups regardless of citizenship status.[24] The third border highlights the State's interpellation of citizens of color in the American metropolis as existing outside of the body politic and thus not meriting its protections. I use the concept of the "third border" to illuminate the spatial history of brown and black communities in Los Angeles as one marked by spatial restrictions, displacement, surveillance, policing, and criminalization.

Regardless of citizenship status, Chicanas/os and Latinas/os are always already suspect of not belonging and of being potentially criminal; not only is this reflected in recent political speeches, but it is also perpetuated in popular culture. For this reason, Rodriguez's insight about detective fiction's appeal for Chicana/o authors rightly suggests, "the criminality that pervades the detective novel speaks to the alienation, criminalization, and violence surrounding Mexican Americans, both in large cities and along the border" (5). Beyond Rodriguez's assertion, I suggest that the ideas of justice, impunity, and criminality, often the center of detective and crime-fiction, allow writers of these genres the ability to explore the social and political processes that criminalize brown communities in urban centers and the borderlands and reject hegemonic representations of brown criminality.

Corpi and Nieto's Chicana Detectives in The Chicano Moratorium, 1970

In addition to detective fiction's emphasis on crime, Chicana authors are able to use this genre's tropes and significations to unsettle and at times even reverse mainstream racialized imaginations of criminals/non-criminals. In light of the hyper-visible criminality of Chicana/o and Latina/o people in popular culture, Chicana authors use the popular genre of detective fiction to question representations of the juridico-political institutions embodied in the police, city hall,

[24] In chapter 4, I explore the interplay between the state-enacted "third border" and the people's acts of resistance that create a form of "third space."

the court system, etc., as impartial and just. Rather, the novels play with the categories of criminal, detective, and police and show the inbred corruption of the justice system and law enforcement with special attention to the relationship of the police to Chicana/o communities. Both Lucha Corpi's *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* and Maria Nieto's *Pig Behind the Bear* denounce particular histories of violence in Los Angeles. As in the works of Walter Mosley, a critique of the LAPD is one cornerstone of these Los Angeles' Chicana/o mystery novels. In their novels, Corpi and Nieto reveal the Chicana/o community's distrust of the LAPD. Moreover, by narrativizing real events like the Chicano Moratorium, they remember moments in LA Chicana/o history that bring to bear the city's disregard for Chicana/o life. Like *Little Scarlet*, the Chicana novels are concerned with reconstructing particular events in Los Angeles history. Rightly, literary scholar Cynthia S. Hamilton explains, "[historical detective] fiction is used to explore the politics behind the construction of history, and the exclusion of marginal groups from the historical record" (130).

Eulogy for a Brown Angel is the first novel in a detective mystery trilogy featuring Chicana private investigator Gloria Damasco. As mentioned earlier, the novel borrows from real historical events as it opens on August 29, 1970 during the Chicano Moratorium, an event that ended with the harassment, detainment, and brutalization of protesters by the city police in East Los Angeles and resulted in four related deaths including that of Chicano *LA Times* Journalist Rubén Salazar. The Chicano Moratorium is the backdrop of the novel's main mystery: the murder of four-year-old Michael David Cisneros. Twenty years after Corpi's *Eulogy*, Chicana author Maria Nieto publishes *Pig Behind a Bear* (2012), also set in Los Angeles and exactly one year after the Chicano Moratorium with the anniversary of Salazar's death as a key moment driving the narrative. Strikingly, both Chicana detective novels willfully recall the Chicano

Moratorium in the construction of their mysteries. When speaking to Corpi's choice of a historical backdrop for her novel, Ralph E. Rodriguez correctly asserts, "in the name of state control, the police perpetrated a crime that few willingly remember. Corpi's choice to frame her novel with the Chicano Moratorium evokes and preserves a historical memory that some would also like to be returned to its "normal" state, a state of victory and noble heroes, not of crimes against humanity" ("Cultural Memory" 151). The Chicano Moratorium and its unexpected interruption by city police action serve as a metaphor for the State's relationship to Chicana/o communities, one that Corpi wants to underscore. The non-violent impetus of the Moratorium that protested the violence on brown bodies contrasts sharply with the police force used to dismantle this event and draws out an irony about State power. The nation-state's sending of Chicano soldiers to the Vietnam War frontlines, as well as the police's treatment of the Chicano protesters in their own neighborhoods and spaces (epitomized in the death of Salazar) show the State's complete disregard for Chicana/o life. Corpi historically situates her narratives and concretely immerses the protagonist Gloria Damasco in a web of social relations affected by domestic and geopolitical events. One of the main traits of Damasco's social commentary is her skepticism of the LAPD as she speaks to a collective reality of policing. A similar pointed critique of the police is also preempted in Nieto's title *Pig Behind the Bear*, which alludes to a "pig," slang for cop, behind the California bear on his police shield. Both of these novels' concern with historical events and their choice of the detective novel format to foreground police violence against the Chicanas/os Latinas/os can help us understand the connections between history, memory, violence, and place.

Eulogy introduces Damasco and her friend Luisa Cortez while on the streets of East Los Angeles as they try to find refuge from the violence that erupts between the protesters and the

police force during the Chicano Moratorium. In this context, the two friends find the body of the 4-year-old David. Near the body they see Mando, a 15-year-old Chicano youth, who is a witness to David's murder and who also gets killed later in the novel. While the main mysteries to be solved are these two murders, the setting (time and space) of this novel becomes a prominent player. The novel's concern with a particular historical setting reveals a political investment in exposing and recalling the history of violence experienced by Chicana/o communities particularly in California. The novel is very strategic in highlighting the prominence of space and time by identifying specific places and dates. This can be noted immediately as the reader opens *Eulogy* to a map of California laid out before the novel's title page. The map of California identifies various cities, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, and St. Helena, among others, which are spaces that figure prominently in the novel. Part one of *Eulogy* is set in 1970 and part two in 1988. Given the displacement of time, Damasco's retrospective narrative voice allows her to distance herself from and reflect on Chicano Movement politics and events of the 70s from the vantage point of 1988.

Nevertheless, the novel complicates this history as Damasco partners up with LAPD detective Matthew Kenyon to solve the murders of the two Chicano kids. Gloria has to negotiate her political investments in the Chicano movement and her cooperation with an official of the law. Given the LAPD's hostile relationship with the community, Gloria assesses her limited options: "That was *our* legal reality: the deal, the only thing we had to show for centuries of institutionalized injustice. But it was that or nothing" (45). Like Easy Rawlins's partnership with Melvin Suggs, a white LAPD detective, Damasco uses Kenyon as a resource within institutionalized police power. The authors' choice to include a partnership of an investigator of color with an official policeman should not be confused with an acceptance of police power but

rather as a necessary condition of possibility for the narrative logic of that historical moment. In other words, the Easy Rawlins and Damasco collaboration with a white cop is necessary for a realistic portrayal of their ability to access confidential information and in the case of Rawlins it grants him state-sanctioned mobility in white neighborhoods and a degree of "safety" from further police harassment.

The novel's overt historical references are an attempt to recall a particular political moment in Chicana/o LA history, one that exposes the concerted struggle against the death of Chicano soldiers in the Vietnam War, but also makes overt references to domestic police violence through the repeated allusions to the murder of journalist Rubén Salazar. The latter was killed not in Vietnam, but in the Silver Dollar Café, an East Los Angeles establishment on Whittier Boulevard where Salazar was found dead after a sheriff deputy shot a police projectile into the enclosed space that struck Salazar's head. Corpi's strategic incorporation of this history of violence intertwined with the fictional events is an attempt to reflect on the Chicano Movement and its political stakes, while at the same time denouncing the history of police brutality represented in the murder of Salazar. Corpi wants to recall and make known a moment in history of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement for a new generation of readers, but also remember the life of Rubén Salazar. For this reason, the title *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* possesses multiple meanings. It does not only –or even principally- signal an eulogy for Michael or Mando, fictional characters, but the title is strongly memorializing Rubén Salazar, who was a victim not of individual action but of institutionalized racism in the form of police violence, one of the critiques of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. Indeed, Historian Francisco Rosales suggests that Salazar becomes the "quintessential martyr of the Chicano Movement" and goes on

to say that after the Moratorium "The LAPD and other law-enforcement agencies used *agent provocateurs*, spys, rumors and red-baiting to disrupt the *movimiento* and to discredit it" (205).

Pig Behind the Bear too is concerned with Chicano history and collective memory. Nieto's novel, like Mosley's, only spans a few days; she explores various spaces in the city, but the spatial and social dynamics are not described in a very thorough manner. However, through dialogue she does evoke the contested relationship between the law enforcement officers and Chicanas/os. It is not a coincidence that its protagonist Alejandra Marisol is a journalist for the *LA Times* whose first assignment to write a commemorative piece on Rubén Salazar leads her to learn more about him, his work, his death, the Chicano Movement, and in the process she pieces together a collective memory that she lacks at the beginning of her story. The journalist as detective figure serves as an appropriate device of mystery fiction because both the journalist and the detective investigate events, order the events, and piece together a story. Moreover, this choice allows Nieto to remember and memorialize Rubén Salazar for a newer generation of Chicanos who like Alejandra Marisol are missing that history. The stories that Corpi and Nieto pieced together around the Chicano Moratorium highlight the social conditions of Los Angeles' Chicano communities and specifically allow for an analysis of their relationship to representatives of State power, mainly represented in the form of the police.

Gloria discovers that Mando's murderer is Joel Galeano, a Chicano ex-military man, who has a vendetta against Chicano gangs (Mando is affiliated to the *Santos* gang). Nevertheless, Michael David's murderer (his own uncle Paul) is not discovered for many years, as Gloria must return to her life in Oakland and to her husband Dario and daughter Tania. There she continues searching for clues, but after a request from Dario to put this case to rest, she concedes. Part two of the novel identifies the year 1988. Eighteen years have passed since the Moratorium and since

Michael David's murder. Gloria's daughter Tania is grown up and her husband Dario has passed away, which means Gloria can return to her investigation of the unsolved murder. Little Michael's death has haunted Gloria, which seems to parallel the nostalgia for a period of social movements that sought social justice but in time were seen as having failed. Recalling this history was a main concern of the first part of the novel, whereas the second part set in Oakland is more concerned with investigating an older time when Mexicans still held land grants in California. This happens through the evasive character of Cecilia Castro-Biddle, a woman who claims Vicente Peralta as her direct ancestor and becomes a suspect in the murder of Michael Cisneros. Castro-Biddle is a mentally unstable woman who gave up her biological son Michael Sr. (Little Michael's father) for adoption and is being manipulated by Michael's brother Paul, who is Little Michael's true killer. Paul has had a contentious relationship with Michael and has been planning the ultimate revenge, the killing of Michael's son and wife Lillian. Corpi unfolds this murder mystery in a complex plot that is highly invested in Michael's family history, which is itself nestled in a wider Mexican Californio history. This is seen through the investigative process since Damasco investigates the Castro-Biddle's family history and finds out she gave up her biological son the Cisneros' family. According to the novel, Castro-Biddle's ancestor Vicente Peralta owned Rancho San Antonio. The narrator recalls, "this Rancho had spread over the entire area that was now the city of Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco" (114). By recalling an earlier history of California under Mexican rule, Corpi connects the murder in 1970 in LA to a longer history of Mexican colonialism and ownership of land.

Raúl Homero Villa in *Barrio-Logos* traces this spatial precariousness of Chicanos/as in the U.S. borderlands to the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848. The Treaty stripped Mexico of almost half of its territory but most significantly it spatially

perpetuated a new power dynamic between encroaching Anglo settlers and the *mexicanos* left on the possessed territory. American expansionism and empire, then, marks the spatial displacement of *mexicanos* of the 1800s, who had themselves displaced indigenous populations. Villa in *Barrio Logos* provides useful concepts to understand technologies of spatial control that have been used to produce Chicano/a dispossession in Los Angeles. Anglo westward expansionism, for instance, happened gradually through various strategies, including the use of bureaucratic means, laws, and through social practices such as intimidation tactics, exclusion, and vigilante justice. Villa categorizes these various strategies as the "landscape effect, the law effect, and the media effect" (Villa, 4). The landscape effect he defines as the physical regulation of space; the law effect is the regulation of space through litigation and other law practices; and, the media effect is the ideological control of space (Villa, 4-5). These three strategies reinforced the emergent dominance of the United States as the imperial power, while at the same time signaling the social and political downfall of Mexican people whose hold over the land was challenged. Villa's historical context informs his consideration of Los Angeles' spatialized social relations of the twentieth century and similarly Lucha Corpi in *Eulogy* draws on the history of dispossession of 19th Century Californios and the 1970 Chicano Moratorium to trace a history of political and spatial struggle.

For her part, Maria Nieto in *Pig Behind the Bear* offers an interesting rendering of the private investigator. Her Chicana heroine is 21 year-old Alejandra Marisol, who despite having lost her mother to her father's domestic violence has built a family in La Morena, a multi-unit Spanish-style apartment complex in Los Angeles' primarily Latino neighborhood of Lincoln Heights. Like Damasco and Rawlins, who rely on a network of family and friends to navigate the city and to solve the murders, Alejandra Marisol is aided by her friends, Rocky, Tía Carmen,

Sumire, and Sumire's cat. Like Gloria Damasco and Easy Rawlins, Alejandra Marisol has to interact with police officers to gain information about different murders that she is investigating. Yet, one thing is different about Alejandra Marisol's relationship to Ashworth, a seemingly helpful LAPD homicide detective. While Ashworth seems forthcoming and helpful to Alejandra Marisol, he is unlike Melvin Suggs and Kenyon who are genuinely helpful to Rawlins and Damasco, respectively. Instead, the mystery reveals Ashworth to be the irrefutable villain and a corrupt cop who runs a child pornography and sex trade ring. Nieto's *Pig* offers an even more irreverent portrayal of the LAPD and the critique of the corruption of LAPD officers is more bold and literal. This is perhaps aided by Nieto's caricaturesque portrayal of characters and her approach to the genre, so that she might not limit herself by "realistic" portrayals.

Unlike the more hardboiled approach by Mosley, Nieto's novel abides less by urban realism and instead offers more whimsical narrative, perhaps aimed at a younger audience.[25] In *Pig,* there are more gaps of time and less detailed explanations of characters' movements across space. Out of the three novels, *Pig Behind the Bear* is the shortest and the most experimental. She prescribes to some conventions of detective fiction but also moves outside of these. For instance, she makes a cat, a central character and gives him an interior-monologue and she also begins each chapter with a quote, statistic, recipe or passage from an outside text, making the story intertextual. While not always successful in pacing, Nieto adheres to a strict and exaggerated dichotomy of villain/hero. What is interesting is her insistence on re-casting the racialized imaginations of the hero as white and male to reveal the villain as white, male, and a member of the police force. Ashworth, a white male LAPD officer is shown to be racist and misogynist and one of the leaders of a child pornography circle that traffics with Mexican children. Ashworth's characterization as villainous is clear when he is unmasked as the man in

[25] However, it should be noted that the novel's book covers do not advertise the book as youth fiction.

an obscene photograph with a brown child. When confronting Alejandra Marisol and her friends, Ashworth points to a child sex slave and says, “This is Gloria. Isn’t she beautiful for little border trash? She’s been with us for nearly a year now. We bring others like her across the border” (182). The brown immigrant child body figures as the epitome of marginalization and abuse where not only domestic police violence but neoliberal violence coalesce. In Nieto’s case, the “police body” that “protects” the body politic is shown to deface and commercialize the immigrant gendered child body.

Nieto also disturbs mainstream imaginations of the cholo as criminals and instead portrays cholos heroically in the chapter titled “Homeboys,” where Tony and Chucho ultimately save Alejandra Marisol and her friends from being killed by Ashworth and his police friends. This move on the part of Nieto is a conscious attempt to de-criminalize the cholo figure and instead humanize cholos as an integral part of the Chicano barrio in the 1970s. Corpi makes a similar move in *Eulogy* through the murder victim Mando, who is a member of the Santos gang. When visiting Mando’s family, Damasco and her friend Luisa speak to Mando’s sister Cecilia and the dialogue in this scene calls attention to a re-consideration of barrio gangs. Cecilia remarks, “I’m not defending them just because. The Santos have done a lot of good, like for the older people. I mean, los viejitos never feared walking out on the street alone when the Santos were around” (193). Luisa joins the conversation and says, “In some way they function like an army, don’t they? I mean the way they guard their territory” and adds “Members of the same gang wear the same uniform, right?” (193). In this scene, Mando and the Santos gang are talked about as an important part of the community. Against mainstream ideas of cholos as dangerous, Cecilia in fact highlights that East LA was in some ways safer with their presence. Luisa for her part re-casts the gang as a type of army that “guard their territory,” a rhetorical strategy that aims

to legitimize gangs as organizations of community self-defense. Nieto and Corpi take up the representation of the cholo in response to this figure's hyper-visibility in East Los Angeles. Indeed, in 1983, anthropologist James Diego Vigil observes, "Although gang members typically constitute a small minority of the young in a barrio, their high visibility and the relative lack of media coverage of less dramatic barrio activities has tended both to create a negative image of barrio residents generally, and to obscure the conditions giving rise to the gangs themselves" (46). While some of Nieto's characterizations and choices border on the in-credible, it is precisely by having such cartoonish characterizations that she clearly sends a message about the corruption in the LAPD anticipated in her title *Pig Behind the Bear*.

Conclusion

This study of ethnic detective fiction and policing considers the ways that authors of color have used the detective novel to create stories that deal with issues of criminality and criminal in/justice and policing in the barrio and ghetto. This genre in the hands of authors of color has the potential to offer an alternative viewpoint of the city through protagonists of color, where it is the social conditions of these communities that are criminal and not the people. By examining Walter Mosley's *Little Scarlet* (2004), set during the Watts Riots (1965), this chapter has established the long-standing history of police brutality and lays the groundwork for the 1990s case of Rodney King that haunts Hector Tobar's 1990s novel, *The Tattooed Soldier* (examined in the following chapter). It considers Joy James's assertion that "in binary opposition, antiblack racism has played a critical, historical role in rationalizing (and inverting) hierarchies of oppressor and oppressed: crazy/sane, dangerous/harmless, and normal/deviant" (27). I have also argued that by recalling real events of police abuse, such as the manslaughter of Chicano journalist Rubén Salazar, Chicana authors Lucha Corpi and Maria Nieto reveal a long-

standing history of the criminalization of brown communities. I have selected these authors because of the centrality of Los Angeles space in their narratives, where LA space becomes a recurring device and chronotope used to recall particular events. Also significant about the texts is that they reflect various perspectives and social locations within Latino and Black mystery. The heterogeneity of the voices allows for different prisms through which to examine mysteries of color, but also the city of Los Angeles. These novels enable this chapter to approach the questions: how does prioritizing a subaltern subjectivity in the mystery novel destabilize notions of assigned criminality? In other words, when the mystery novel's protagonist is racialized, classed, and gendered as Other, does it destabilize discourses of power? I have attempted to argue that the privileging of narrative of the detective of color that reflects on the urban conditions of communities of color, conditions marked by policing, surveillance, displacement, and poverty, allows their authors the literary machinery of the mystery to produce a rhetorical effect, where significations of criminality are switched or disturbed and where the violence of the criminal justice system and other entities of State power are exposed.

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Chapter 2: "Interpolated Palimpsests: Empire in *The Tattooed Soldier*, 1980s-1992"

In the previous chapter I explore how the historical detective novel in the hands of authors of color, specifically Chicana/o and Black authors, expose the contested relationships between communities of color and the police and show how these texts orbit around particular moments in L.A history of open resistance to the unequal racialized and gendered relationships of power, specifically as seen in Mosley's novel set during the Watts Rebellion of 1965 and The Chicano Moratorium of 1970 for Lucha Corpi and Maria Nieto's respective novels. *The Tattooed Soldier*, a suspenseful novel by Guatemalan-American author and journalist Hector Tobar, is set much later, in the 1990s, and yet the policing of black bodies still haunts the novel's primarily Latino story. The city has changed since the 1960s through increased Asian, Mexican and Central American immigration, but there is a continuity that permeates into the 1990s, such as the ongoing cases of police brutality, racial and class segregation in the city, and the policing of social and racial boundaries. This chapter allows for a consideration of these ongoing issues and their new iterations through Tobar's text, which highlights the Central American diaspora. The novel zooms in on the itinerant/displaced immigrant/refugee Latino body. While Latinos comprise the largest minority population in Los Angeles in the 1990s, the novel recognizes the centrality of the black body to the city's policing apparatus as the story is set on the days leading to the 1992 LA Uprising: the black community's response to the acquittal of LAPD white policemen who a year prior had brutalized Rodney King, an African American man. These events brought the hostile relationship of the LAPD towards black communities and the injustice of the criminal justice system to national attention once again. Their long-lasting influence on the social and spatial imaginary of Los Angeles is reflected in activism, academic conversations, and visions of the city in cultural works. In Tobar's case, he weaves this LA context with entire

chapters set during Guatemala's Civil War. The interplay between these two separate spaces and time periods as they are represented in *The Tattooed Soldier* is the focus of this chapter.

The Tattooed Soldier tells the story of two Guatemalan men who are tied by a massacre. The protagonist Antonio Bernal flees to Los Angeles after escaping the Jaguar Battalion of the Guatemalan army led by its sergeant Guillermo Longoria who does succeed in murdering Antonio's wife Elena and his toddler son Carlos. Years and miles have passed since the massacre when Antonio recognizes Longoria in Los Angeles's MacArthur Park and begins to plot his vengeance. Indeed, *The Tattooed Soldier*'s narrative arc builds towards Antonio's killing of Longoria at the end of the text–a moment of symbolic, if inadequate, reckoning for Longoria's violence—but this buildup of suspense is paralleled by the growing tensions between Los Angeles's black and brown communities and the LAPD. While scholars have analyzed *The Tattooed Soldier* in terms of Guatemalan identity, trauma, and political violence, I am specifically interested in the novel's multiple geographies in the U.S. and Central America and how these various spaces are shown to be mutually constituted as they are organized by U.S.-supported violence and capital.

More specifically, I contend that *The Tattooed Soldier* uses a narrative strategy of interwoven spatialities and temporalities –1990s Los Angeles and 1980s Guatemala-- to reflect local relationships of power not as isolated, but rather as interconnected through U.S. imperial and neoliberal policies and discourses in the second half of the 20th century. Said differently, the novel's mapping highlights the contradictions generated by an intricate set of geopolitical conditions that underpin the production of a Guatemalan diaspora in 1990s Los Angeles within the history of U.S. imperial and neoliberal policies in Central and South America, effectively drawing a direct link between Guatemalan and Guatemalan-American realities and spaces and

U.S.-based power and spaces. Tobar's interweaving of these two distinct spaces and times, which are removed from each other by miles of physical space and years of time, calls attention not only to the interconnectedness of U.S. imperial power in Central America but also to the U.S.'s domestic race and class relations as these forces coalesce in 1990s Los Angeles, an increasingly global city.

Theoretical Grounding: Palimpsests and The City as Interpolated Manuscript

Latina/o Studies scholars of place identity and place making have explored the ways Latina/o immigrants have changed the urban landscapes of cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York.[26] U.S. cities are not the only places being transformed by economic, political, cultural, and human movements, but also spaces in the hemispheric Americas, such as the Guatemalan locations depicted in *The Tattooed Soldier*. Scholars of globalization and transnationalism have studied the social and economic transformations in Mexico and Central America given U.S. remittances, deportations, and the infiltration of U.S. culture.[27] However, I add an analysis of the correspondences between U.S. and Central American spaces from the lens of literature. The literary superimposition of spaces/times in *The Tattooed Soldier*, which is represented via the migrant/refugee experience of displacement, brings to light the links between various spaces across the hemispheric Americas, and in the process highlights a hemispheric and dynamic understanding of the making of Los Angeles's social spaces. I use the term *interpolated*

[26] For a consideration of Los Angeles see: Raúl Homero Villa's *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (2000), Mike Davis' *City of Quartz* (1990) and *Magical Urbanism: Latinos reinvent the US city* (2001). For a study of Puerto Rican and Mexican place identity in Chicago see Arlene M. Dávila's *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (2004). For an anthology that focuses on New York's Latina/o communities, Latina/o place-based identity, and the cultural transformations of NY landscapes see *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York* (2001) edited by Agustín Laó-Montes and Arlene M. Dávila.
[27] For example, in "Fools Banished from the Kingdom: Remapping Geographies of Gang Violence between the Americas (Los Angeles and San Salvador)," cultural anthropologist Elana Zilberg examines the deportation of Salvadoran undocumented gang youth and their impact on cultural and social spaces in both Los Angeles and El Salvador.

palimpsests to evoke these spaces' mutual correspondences and transformations across space and time.

Building on Adrian Arancibia's idea of the palimpsest as an analytic for understanding the overlaying histories of any given geographic space that cultural objects can unearth, I suggest that *The Tattooed Soldier*'s Guatemalan and U.S. geographies are represented as mutually constituted and thus transnational spaces. For Arancibia, cultural production, such as a poem or a play, can evoke or conjure a physical space's deep histories like a manuscript whose erased inscriptions of an older time reveal themselves, creating a palimpsest. In Arancibia's own words, a "search into the past is a search into an imagined past hidden in the palimpsest of spatial overlays" (6). As Arancibia analyzes Los Angeles through Culture Clash's play, *Chavez Ravine*, which presents multiple overlapping temporalities (1940s/1950s to 1980s), he concludes that the history of the Chavez Ravine communities displaced to make way for Dodger Stadium haunts the structure that now stands in the place of that displaced community. I find Arancibia's palimpsest analytic instructive for understanding how specific locales are not flat, but rather a social result of compressed –and sometimes forgotten- histories that can come alive in cultural texts. Thus, I expand on Arancibia's idea to suggest that a literary work like *The Tattooed Soldier* can highlight unexpected or hidden correspondences between two physically separate spaces, especially as they are organized by neo-liberal conditions and policies.

I re-deploy Arancibia's palimpsest in a transnational and hemispheric context to suggest that a piece of literature can narrativize a place in a palimpsestic or layered way not only by looking at a given place's local histories but also by seeing how non-local histories and places are implicated in the making of said place. For example, we can read Los Angeles in a palimpsestic way when we examine its own local history as well as how it is imbued with

memories, objects, and bodies from other locations and I employ the term *interpolation* to describe this process. In *The Tattooed Soldier*, Guatemala enters Los Angeles through bodies, cultural practices, and objects, such as photos, letters and packages, and helps shape or *interpolate* new geographies in Los Angeles. In following with the metaphor of the city as manuscript with hidden layers or palimpsests that reveal themselves, we can also think of interpolation, which is the alteration of manuscripts through the insertion of new text and images that changes the makeup and meaning of a manuscript, as a way of understanding spatial practices and processes that "interpolate" Los Angeles giving the city new contours and meanings. Because it is important to highlight that these processes are not unidirectional, I must highlight that Guatemalan households and spaces are also interpolated as Los Angeles –and by extension the U.S.—enters through television, film, remittances, and packages, also changing Guatemalan spaces, a reading that is indeed supported by Tobar's attention to representing both Los Angeles and Guatemalan spaces.[28]

However, as the novel reveals, the histories and relationships that mutually transform U.S. and Guatemalan spaces are not always benign but rather the product of power relations nestled in the legacies of colonialism and U.S. imperial intervention and neoliberalism.

U.S. Imperial Policy in the Pacific: Historical context

The United States' foreign policy in Central America has had a direct influence on hemispheric immigration with increased Central American migration to the United States in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. This immigration to Los Angeles and other U.S. cities also resulted in the

[28]As explored by Elana Zilberg (see previous footnote), immigration and forced deportation can have material and social effects on both the repatriating country and in the receiving countries. Another contemporary (2018) example is the case of undocumented Latina/o youth raised in the U.S. that have been deported to Mexico and have been creating new social spaces in Mexico City in an area that is beginning to be known as "Little L.A." For further reading on this topic see Alfredo Corchado's article, "Deported Mexicans settle down to a life of hope and dismay in Mexico City's 'Little L.A.'" *Dallas News.* 28 Jul. 2018. Web.

concomitant transformation of Los Angeles' social and physical spaces. Before entering the specifics of the demographic transformation of Los Angeles and the mutually-informing forces shaping spaces in Los Angeles and Central America exhibited in *The Tattooed Soldier* it is necessary to review the United States' relationship to Latin America and its power consolidation as a world hegemon that will contextualize *The Tattooed Soldier.*

American westward expansionism and the Monroe Doctrine -the public stance taken by the U.S. government in the early 19th century against European intervention in Latin America - both betrayed and asserted the United States' flagrant interest in Latin America's political and economic movements. One early example of the U.S.'s growing power in the hemispheric Americas was its victory over Mexico during the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848), acquiring one-third of Mexico's territory as a result. Towards the end of the 19th century, the U.S.'s dominance in the western hemisphere increased as the victor of the Spanish-American War in 1898, a decisive moment for the consolidation of U.S. empire by obtaining Spain's remaining colonial possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific: Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. The process of the U.S.'s development into world hegemon continued into the 20th century through an offensive foreign policy approach that included various overt and covert military, political, and economic actions around the world. In the Caribbean, Central- and South America, the U.S. covertly influenced the outcome of presidential elections and/or Civil Wars as part of its anti-Soviet/anti-communist program during the Cold War.[29]

In Guatemala, U.S. government intervention was long-lasting and it took various forms, including the CIA-backed 1954 coup *d'état* of democratically-elected president Jabobo Arbenz and supporting instead the instatement of right-wing Carlos Castillo Armas, the first in a series of

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[29] The anthology *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts* (2009) provides various case studies that explore the role of American military in the hemispheric Americas, Iraq, and Europe as well as the movements of resistance that have emerged in its opposition. Ed. Catherine Lutz. London: Pluto Press. 2009.

right-wing authoritarian governments, supported by the U.S. In 1960, Guatemalan leftist guerrillas responded with armed struggle against the established government, struggle that continued over the country's Civil War from 1960 to 1996. During this period, the outgunned insurgent groups were met with strong opposition from the official government, which engaged in aggressive counterinsurgent actions -some of which were supported by U.S. training- that targeted guerrillas, guerrilla sympathizers or *suspected* sympathizers as the 1981 Report on the Situation of Human Rights in the Republic of Guatemala by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) revealed, "The objectives and victims of these [paramilitary right wing] groups are not only the guerrillas and their groups and persons clearly identified as members of the political opposition, but also persons who are suspected or who show the least inclination to sympathize with any of them or to lend them cooperation or assistance" (IACHR). According to the report, the government was involved in the following: "i) Extrajudicial executions and street killings; ii) Massive deaths of campesinos and Indians; and iii) Missing persons" (IACHR). As shocking as these findings are, the IACHR 1981 report, preceded the deadliest period of the Civil War under the dictatorship of General José Efraín Ríos Montt in power from 1982 to 1983, under which extra-legal assassinations, kidnappings, torture, maiming, rape, disappearances, and the razing and bombardments of villages took place (Ollé Sesé et al. 4).[30] It is also important to note that expert and witness testimonies during the 2013 trial of Ríos Montt, who was charged with genocide and crimes against humanity, attested to Ríos Montt's leadership role in undertaking a genocidal program that targeted Maya ethnic groups and sought to eradicate the Ixil Maya population (Ollé Sesé et al. 12-14). It was not until 1996 that the peace negotiations or Peace Accords would bring an end to this 36-year Guatemalan Civil War.

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[30] For the full report on the historical context and proceedings of the Ríos Montt 2013 trial see the FIDH report, *Genocide in Guatemala: Ríos Montt Guilty* (2013). https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/rapguatemala613uk2013.pdf

Through its duration, the Guatemalan Civil War would fuel the displacement of thousands because as scholar of Central American migration Susanne Jonas explains Guatemalans fleeing the Civil War fled to Mexico and the U.S. during the war's various phases (Jonas).[31] According to Jonas, the first large-scale migration happened during the 1970s and had increased by the 1980s due to political and economic reasons (Jonas). In this migration process, Los Angeles stands out as the "most popular destination point for Guatemalans and other Central Americans" and as such "more Guatemalans migrated to Los Angeles than any other U.S. locality" (Jonas and Rodriguez 38). By 1990, approximately 267,000 Guatemalan and Guatemalan-Americans were living in the United States, a number that increased to 1.3 million in 2013 (G. López 1). In sum, Central American migration patterns, which increased after U.S. intervention in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, are a central condition of possibility for the creation of a Central American diaspora in the U.S., and the increased correspondences across the hemispheric Americas.

How Memories Constitute L.A. Urban Space

The Tattooed Soldier, published only 2 years after the Peace Accords, is partly set during the Guatemalan Civil War, evoking its history of intra-national violence. However, rather than offering an insular and uni-national representation of this history, the novel underscores the larger hemispheric political and military context under which Guatemala's history unfolded, connecting Guatemala to the larger Central American region and also to the United States. In fact, the novel effectively draws a direct link between the Guatemalan Civil War and the creation of a Guatemalan diaspora in Los Angeles. By using a narrative structure that privileges a hemispheric and transnational perspective the novel shows multiple links between Central

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[31] Susanne Jonas and Nestor Rodriguez provide a detailed transregional study of Guatemalan-U.S. migration in their book *Guatemala-U.S. Migration: Transforming Regions* (2014).

American people and spaces and the U.S. metropolis. Said differently, the novel's narrative scope is concerned with both the representation of the urban experiences of the Guatemalan diaspora –first evidenced in Tobar's dedication of the novel to his "mother and father, two travelers among thousands in the Guatemalan diaspora"— and also with its condition of possibility: the specific histories of violence in Guatemala that were themselves made possible by United States support. In relation to this last point, the novel points to the significant role of U.S. military and imperial policy in Latin America by dedicating a good portion of the story to the representation of the antagonist, Guillermo Longoria, a soldier of the Guatemalan Army trained by the U.S. and whose actions trigger the protagonist Antonio's migration to Los Angeles.

It is clear that *The Tattooed Soldier* is preoccupied not only with the present time and space (1992, Los Angeles) of the main characters, Antonio Bernal and Guillermo Longoria, but also with how these two Guatemalan nationals ended up in Los Angeles, California, nearly 3000 miles away from their home country. Using narrative shifts of time/space, the story avoids a chronological or linear order of events. Instead, it begins in a Los Angeles apartment complex, as the building manager Mr. Hwang is evicting the protagonist Antonio and his Mexican roommate José Juan. Unemployed and without money for rent, Antonio fears and laments "*Voy a ser uno de los 'homeless'*" or "I'm going to be one of the homeless" (my translation Tobar 5). As Antonio is packing his sparse belongings he finds letters from his mother in Guatemala and a "forgotten photograph of his wife and son" (7). Looking at the photograph Antonio attempts to "fight off the rush of memories that began to gather" (7). This early mention of Antonio's family and memory via the letters and photograph from Guatemala is the first allusion to a "tragedy" and "sadness" (7) that still haunt him years later in Los Angeles. It is also significant that the

novel opens *in medias res* at the moment of Antonio and José Juan's eviction, the moment they join L.A.'s homeless population. In fact, throughout the novel Antonio is often being displaced from his various homes in Guatemala and Los Angeles. In multiple ways, this opening eviction scene introduces central thematics of the novel: the amputated family, homelessness and dis-placement, the legacy of state-sanctioned violence, memory, and the haunting of impunity.

The photograph of Antonio's deceased family is a haunting reminder of the impunity of their murders. Avery Gordon's notion of haunting is helpful here. One way that I understand haunting is as the product of impunity and while it would be too literal to imagine the photograph of Antonio's diseased family as "ghosts," they are a reminder of the state-sanctioned war crimes for as Gordon explains, "haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with" (xvi). Taken in the Guatemalan city of Quetzaltenango the photograph of Antonio's family is a physical manifestation of his past and it is also the first time of many when Guatemalan spaces/histories haunt Los Angeles urban spaces and vice versa. In doing so, these moments highlight a transnational correspondence between the two spaces, for what are photographs as well as televised images but 2-D windows of compressed space and time that interrupt another "present" moment and space.

Through the non-linear narrative strategy of flashback or recall scenes that precede Antonio's life in Los Angeles, his past is gradually revealed to be intertwined with that of Guillermo Longoria -who has never really met Antonio face-to-face- but also with Guatemala's own national history. Entire chapters set in Guatemala reveal that Longoria was a sergeant of the Guatemalan Army ordered to massacre Antonio, Antonio's wife Elena, and their toddler son Carlos, succeeding in the assassination of the last two. These recall or spatio-temporal shifts to

Guatemala provide Antonio's backstory as well as Longoria's origin and development as military man. Via Longoria-centered scenes, the novel shows some of the violence that he and the Guatemalan Army inflict on civilians, especially in rural indigenous villages. The non-linear narration that allows for these violent episodes to be "remembered" rather than be presented in a linear chronology, echo the process of recovery of historical memory that many Guatemalans have been spearheading to uncover their history, a project they share with other Latin American countries and Spain, whose own dictatorships killed and disappeared thousands. One example of Guatemala's ongoing project for unearthing war crimes and human rights violations of the Civil War is the Recuperación de Memoria Histórica or Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI) Project, an initiative by the Catholic Church to investigate and document human rights violations committed during the Guatemalan Civil War. The REMHI interviewed witnesses, victims, and perpetrators of state-sanctioned violence, collected their testimonies, and published their findings in their 1998 report: "Guatemala: nunca más"/"Guatemala: Never Again." The process of memory recovery, evocatively captured in REMHI's own project title, has been undertaken by many organizations and individuals who reject the state's official story: a denial of genocide and wrongdoing. More specifically, REMHI has created an online database/archive with testimonios by victims, witnesses, and perpetrators that testify to the state-sponsored violence committed by the Guatemalan Army and affiliated paramilitary groups.[32]

Underlying the testimonio, a type of autobiographical narrative, is the "act of testifying or bearing witness," as scholar of the testimonio John Beverley has suggested, and who further expands, "The situation of narration in testimonio has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on, implicated in the act of narration itself" ("Margin at the Center" 14). The act of "bearing

[32] The searchable database can be found here: https://www.remhi.org.gt/bd/buscar_testimonio.php

witness" to a collective experience of repression becomes extremely political in the situation when these non-fictional experiences contradict the government's official story. In the case of the Guatemalan Civil War, the testimonio became an important arena for survivors to shed light on the government's human rights violations. Most notorious amongst these is the testimonio *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* by Rigoberta Menchú, Quiché indigenous activist, writer and winner of 1992 Nobel Peace Prize. This 1983 testimonio of Menchú's life details her experiences as an indigenous woman of Guatemala whose own family members were assassinated by the Guatemalan Army. Her narrative shows many instances of state-sanctioned violence against the Mayan people and according to Beverley the book had "wide impact on the American academy and the human rights movements in Latin America"[33] ("Subalternidad y Testimonio" 102). The testimonio genre has played an important role in revealing the violence of the Guatemalan Civil War. When reflecting on *Memorias rebeldes contra el olvido: Paasantzila txumb'al ti sortzeb'al k'u'l*, a collection of testimonies by Guatemalan Mayan combatant women, Professor of Latin American Literature Arturo Arias suggests that the narratives "transformed sites of atrocities into sites for the memory of the construction of their subjectivities. In this sense, their narratives portray a world that was lost and convey the magnitude of what was lost" (Arias 1875). Arias points to the testimonio's power of reconstructing a "lost world" and in the case of the Guatemalan Civil War the testimonial narratives of indigenous Mayan women like Menchú and the combatant women as well as their activism have played no small part in resisting historical amnesia and bringing official charges against perpetrators of the genocide.[34] While *The Tattooed Soldier* is a work of fiction and not a testimonio, it does shine a light on the

[33] My translation; original Beverley quote: "Tuvo amplia repercusión en la academia estadounidense y en los movimientos de derechos humanos en América Latina" ("Subalternidad y Testimonio" 102).

[34] In 1999, Menchú filed a *denuncia* or official complaint against Guatemalan army generals including Ríos Montt for crimes of genocide.

events of the Guatemalan Civil War and in its own way it also reconstitutes a "lost world" through the perspective of the three main characters, Antonio, Longoria, and Elena.

Through the non-linear narrative strategy and the multiple-character narrative that shifts focus from Antonio to Longoria, and to Elena, *The Tattooed Soldier* progressively reveals these characters' backstories as well as snapshots of their country's history. With the exception of some sporadic short passages in first-person narration, the novel is mostly in third person subjective narration, which allows for each of character's vantage point to be displayed and supports the idea that each of them can be considered a protagonist in their own right. While arguments can be made for any one of these characters' centrality to the story, especially as each of them brings a particular vantage point to the events of the Civil War, it is Elena's characterization that shows her as a political agent with a developed understanding of the country's systematized and social oppression of the indigenous people; in other words, she becomes attuned to the country's reality of race relations when Antonio and Longoria have skewed perceptions.

On the one hand, as young middle-class college students in Guatemala City, Antonio and Elena witness some of the government's systematic repression against leftist or left-leaning groups and individuals, including university students, journalists, and activists. For instance, Elena and Antonio's close university friends Teodoro, member of a student association, and Gonzalo, editor of a university-based publication, *Provocaciones,* perceived as subversive by the government, are extra-legally tortured, maimed and killed by death squads. Given their status as university students and their connections to the deceased, Antonio and Elena, are pressured to flee Guatemala City and they are able to do so with the help of Antonio's mother, who has the means to help with their move. The couple is able to move to the rural town of San Cristóbal

Acatapán where they are safe for some time, but are eventually flagged and classified as troublesome by the local authorities when Elena begins to issue critical inquiries into the living conditions of the town's indigenous peoples, whose children are dying due to contaminated waters, polluted by the town's dump. While Antonio does not want either of them to get involved in the situation, Elena writes a letter to the authorities demanding attention to the unsanitary conditions that indigenous communities are forced to live in.

It is also through Elena's vantage point that the novel points to the *ladinos*' ongoing racist and neo-colonial attitudes toward the indigenous Maya when she observes, "you could hear the Indian influence in the Spanish here [in San Cristóbal], though no *ladino* would admit such a thing" (emphasis in original 117). In contrast to Antonio's lack of analysis, Elena recognizes her class and ethnic privilege vis-a-vi the indigenous Maya. This is made more obvious during a funeral procession when an Indian father whose child has died gazes upon a pregnant Elena with "hatred" and she images him saying, "*my child has died. Yours will live"* (emphasis in original 119). Rather, than dismissing this man's eyes of recognition, Elena is described as "[seeing] herself as she must look to him: a bourgeois housewife, clean and well fed, a woman who would deliver her baby in an antiseptic hospital far from the slum dwellers and their virulent shacks" (119). This level of retrospection in terms of the country's history of racialization is not seen in Antonio, who often uses the words "peasants" and "*campesinos*" to refer to indigenous Mayan people, indeed conflating and mistaking a category of class for a racial and ethnic one. It is Antonio's privileged class and racial status that affects his interpretative lens because as scholar Axel Montepeque explains, "[given Antonio's] racialization of peasants, coupled with his withdrawal from Guatemalan politics, it is not surprising that he is unaware that the Guatemalan military recruited indigenous Guatemalans,

forcibly acculturated them, and deployed them as counterinsurgent soldiers" (206). As was mentioned earlier, Antonio and his family are of some economic means and he is also a *ladino* because Longoria describes him as "a little *chele*, light-skinned and clean-shaven, in circle glasses, suit, and tie, the classic university student" (139-140)[35]. In a nutshell, the novel's multiple perspectives show the repressive climate in Guatemala and the types of war violence conducted by the government against its own citizens, but it does so, to a large degree, mediated through the *ladino* vantage point and not fully exploring the internal racial dynamics.

Still, the novel's portrayal becomes more dynamic and nuanced by providing the backstory of antagonist Guillermo Longoria, a Ladinoized-Indian.[36] The text shows how he was made into an agent of the state willing to conduct violent acts against his own people. The text describes him as a 17-year old "peasant" youth who is illegally inducted into the Guatemalan army, the main arm of the authoritarian government. His change from scared teen to cold military sergeant is consciously denoted in the text by referring to him as "Guillermo" prior to his war acts and as "Longoria" once he is a full-fledged military man and fully participatory in war violence, including the execution of Antonio's family. The state-sponsored kidnappings, torture, disappearances, and the razing of village tactics mentioned or portrayed in the novel via Longoria-centered scenes closely echo documented events of the Guatemalan Civil War that have been exposed by various truth commissions and organizations, such as the Inter-American

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[35] The word "chele" is used in some parts of Central America to describe a blonde and light-skinned person.

[36] Here, I borrow Alex Montepeque's categorization of Longoria as a "Ladinoized-Indian," or an indigenous person who has acculturated to the dominant Ladino culture. I agree with Montepeque's corrective of Ana Patricia Rodríguez that she does not fully take into account Guatemalan race relations in her reading of *The Tattooed Soldier* (in *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures*, 2009) and I also agree with his assessment that "Longoria identifies as a Ladino and despises indigenous Guatemalans" (187). Indeed, Montepeque's reading of Longoria supports one of my later arguments in this chapter that Longoria's indoctrination by the U.S. military has turned him into a willing subject of American empire, which is in part aided by his own/pre-existing neo-colonial ideas of Guatemala (and indigenous people specifically) as backward and uncivilized.

Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI) Project, previously introduced in this chapter.

Perhaps even more recognized amongst the international community is the report by the United Nations-backed Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH), established in 1994 to investigate crimes against humanity and human rights violations of the Guatemalan Civil War. This 1999 report revealed that over 200,000 Guatemalans were killed or disappeared out of which 83% were Mayan. This statistic suggests an explicit racial element of the genocide, which follows neo-colonial legacies of anti-indigenous violence. Indeed, the CEH confirmed that state agents of Guatemala committed acts of genocide against the Mayan people, through means like massacres and the razing of villages (41). What the report also verifies is the United States government's role in these events as it supported the Guatemalan government by providing "military assistance [that] was directed towards reinforcing the national intelligence apparatus and for training the officer corps in counterinsurgency techniques, key factors which had significant bearing on human rights violations during the armed confrontation" (19). Again, this violent national history bears out in *The Tattooed Soldier* aided by the multiple storylines of Elena, Antonio, and Longoria. What is more salient about the inclusion of Longoria's memories is that the text is attendant to his U.S. military training. In other words, Longoria's story is not that of a common soldier but rather one that highlights the U.S.'s role in the war, which as determined by the CEH "had significant bearing on human rights violations."

It's a War Out There/Here? U.S. Military Spaces in Guatemala and War Images in L.A

As mentioned previously, through the devices of memory and narrative time *The Tattooed Soldier* shifts space/time from present 1990s Los Angeles to older scenes in Guatemala bringing into sharp relief various correspondences between the two places. In a similar fashion,

by including Longoria-centered chapters the novel accomplishes various narrative and thematic effects. I suggest that by attending to Longoria's U.S. training at American military sites such as Fort Bragg, The John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare, and the School of the Americas (SOA) the text brings U.S. military power and spaces into the center of the Guatemalan Civil War. Established in the Panama Canal Zone from 1963 to 1984, the SOA trained soldiers from most Latin American countries, moving its operations in 1984 to Fort Benning in the state of Georgia where it still operates to date (Gill 25-26). While the text does not show Longoria at the SOA, he boasts having received a diploma from that institution, which he keeps in an album of military mementos and photographs.[37] Secondly, by bringing in Longoria's vantage point through third-person subjective narration, the text allows for a palimpsestic and militaristic reading of Los Angeles as a contested place that brings to light the ongoing hostile relationship between the Los Angeles Police Department and black and brown urban communities. Portraying the city through Longoria's lens impregnates L.A. spaces with military similes and metaphors, effectively creating palimpsests of Los Angeles through memories of war.[38] This militaristic interpretation of the social and racial dynamics in Los Angeles as a type of "war" takes on more meaning if we consider the 1991 police beating of Rodney King, a key event haunting the novel. Lastly, by incorporating Longoria's perspective, one sees his internalization

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[37] This album in a way is a repository of violences committed by Longoria that find their way to Los Angeles and is another critical example of the way objects from another era/space interpolate Los Angeles. This physical interpolation is also a type of haunting because the album functions as a symbolic graveyard with photos of people killed by Longoria, who is not brought to justice for his crimes. His album, at the same time, is also associated with the U.S. military, as Longoria keeps his diplomas awarded by U.S. military institutions alongside photographs of the murdered bodies. In effect, Longoria has brought the ghosts of the war to Los Angeles. These ghosts are also brought to L.A. via the refugees and migrants' memories as in the case of Antonio, but also in the scene when an elderly indigenous woman recognizes Longoria as a *matón* or killer of her son Demetrio and she demands to know: "What did you do to my son? Where is he? What did you do to him? Just tell me where his body is. For the love of God, where is Demetrio's body?" (164).

[38] As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, I rely on Adrian Arancibia's contribution of the palimpsest as analytic but in this instance I suggest that it is people's memories of other places (sometimes far-removed) that construct palimpsestic readings of the city and sometimes physical palimpsests as they introduce new aesthetics, products, languages –and even their bodies- from transnational locations, transforming physical spaces in Los Angeles.

of U.S. hegemony, which also includes hegemonic spatializations that render him -as indigenous, poor, immigrant, and Third World man- in a neo-colonial subjected relationship with the U.S. both in Guatemala and Los Angeles.

Perhaps the most prominent U.S. military space appears in the Longoria-centered chapter evocatively titled "Fort Bragg" that features the military base by the same name, located in Fayetteville, North Carolina. In the present time/space of the chapter, Longoria has escaped Antonio's first ambush at MacArthur Park and is now collecting his thoughts inside his apartment, accompanied by his girlfriend Reginalda. Outside of the apartment complex in the Westlake-Pico Union neighborhood, the couple can hear an escalating situation between some young Latino men and police officers. After shots are fired, Longoria looks outside of his window and sees two patrol cars and an officer with his gun drawn and "a young man lying face down on the pavement, arms stiffly at his sides, like a soldier at attention" (214). The simile that compares the slain cholo to a soldier calls up military imagery –through Longoria's own warfare frame of reference- and gestures to a situation of warfare in Los Angeles's streets. However, Longoria attributes this "disorder" to an uncivilized population of cholos and gangs rather than to police action. The third-person subjective narrator reveals Longoria's attitudes toward the situation outside his apartment in the following way:

> *Back then*, if you had told Sergeant Longoria that he would see such things in the United States, a war of painted children on his front steps, he wouldn't have believed you. He wouldn't have believed that the gringos could tolerate such disorder. (my emphasis 214)

Longoria longs for the authoritative and unbridled show of force that he and the Guatemalan Army used to suppress discontent and subversion in Guatemala. In his opinion, the gangs of "painted children" should be handled and he is surprised that Los Angeles is not like the "antiseptic army base" (29) of Fort Bragg. Longoria compares the cholos to the guerrillas in his

home country and through this counter-insurgency lens he flattens out the historical specificities of each group but the one constant is that he justifies their elimination and sides with the U.S. power structures in both cases.

The narrative displacements or back-and-forth shifts between Longoria's inner-city apartment and Fort Bragg allow for the juxtaposition of policed barrios and military spaces. For Longoria, the "chaos" of the barrio contrasts sharply with the "order" of Fort Bragg. Because his apartment places Longoria within the material realities of the barrio, Fort Bragg becomes an imagined space where he can escape. Indeed, the text describes that Longoria's Fort Bragg dorm room becomes an important memory that he likes to revisit "when life in Los Angeles seemed complicated and messy," (214) such as when the police shooting takes place outside of his apartment. What is more, the dorm room becomes a recurring motif, a symbol that represents American exceptionalism and the bar with which Longoria measures every space. A closer look at the textual description of the dorm room reveals its hegemonic symbolic and ideological meanings:

> Longoria always came back to his spotless dorm room. One day he would have a room just like this. To have a place to call your own, without a brother or a soldier or a mother crowded in with you, a place without dirt floors, without any dirt or dust at all, scrubbed clean of germs, healthy, *sano*—it seemed civilized. He was beginning to understand and appreciate the meaning of this word. *Civilization*. What the officers back in Guatemala meant when they said they didn't live in a civilized country. Being here in the United States for the first time, he could grasp the concept. This was a country where order and cleanliness reigned supreme. (emphasis in original 216)

Civilization and civility for Longoria are epitomized by the orderly and clean arrangement of U.S. military space. Underlying this conceptualization of civilization are notions of Euro-American racial and cultural superiority. In other words, for Longoria a "civilized way of life" is not only signaled by cleanliness but it becomes synonymous with an Anglo-American way of

life; in turn, Guatemalan spaces of "dirt floors" are imagined as uncivil and backward –a reading that Longoria extends to Latino spaces in Los Angeles. This hegemonic spatial internalization by Longoria has roots in colonial and neo-colonial constructions of Europe/U.S. as civilized and clean and the Third World as uncivil and dirty. For example, in her social history of Pears soap, Anne McClintock, has explored the imperial spectacle of white superiority in the marketing materials of the British soap and how "Victorian cleaning rituals were peddled globally as the God-given sign of Britain's evolutionary superiority" (207). Similarly, for Longoria, Fort Bragg and his dorm room–"a spotless rectangle…with plaster walls that gleamed white" (Tobar 220) - become symbols of American exceptionalism and whiteness.

More generally, Fort Bragg's orderly spatial arrangement and expensive equipment reinforce Longoria's internalization of U.S. exceptionalism. He observes, "there were unending black parking lots with hundreds of new tanks arranged in neat rows, turrets and guns wrapped lovingly in tarpaulin, being saved for the next war like coins in a piggy banks" (216). In addition to producing dissonance with the description of the equipment as "wrapped lovingly" and the child-like associations of the piggy bank simile, this description also highlights Longoria's wonder at this sight/site as another moment of his internalization of U.S. Empire. Thus, he thinks, "the guerrilla snipers he had fought would lay down their arms in an instant if they came here and saw what they were up against" and "idiots! If they came here they would see the futility of fighting the will of a country with so much strength and wealth" (216). On the one hand, Longoria's perspective shows his ease of siding with the United States and his now solidified belief in the U.S. as an exceptional and superior nation; on the other hand, Longoria's thoughts, underscore the U.S.'s role as a key player in the Guatemalan Civil War as he directly says that the guerrillas are *up against* the U.S.

The military space and geometrically arranged equipment within Fort Bragg become an imperial spectacle, to borrow McClintock's use of the term. Longoria is repeatedly impressed with the economic power and infrastructure that he witnesses in Fort Bragg and even the wide streets of Fayetteville, but what he ignores is the displacement of terror to off sites in the hemispheric Americas that both engendered and continue to justify the base's existence, an apparatus of which he becomes an appendage. When recounting a retired major's uncritical views of a desirable life in Fort Benning's town of Columbus, Georgia as a place "free of the concern that somebody is going to break into our home" and where "we don't have to worry that the lights are going to go out" (qtd. in Gill 30) versus one in Latin America, Lesley Gill underscores the internal contradiction upon which the desirable safety and infrastructure of the military town is premised when she explains:

> This description [of Colombus] reflects a certain segment of suburban, middle-class existence in the United States, but it cannot be extended to poor, inner-city neighborhoods or other precincts where the white middle class does not tread. The major's emphasis on the good infrastructure is ironic, because many public services in Latin America actually declined in the 1980s under the free-market mania propelled by the United States. (31)

Both the major interviewed by Gill and Longoria fail to see the interconnection between spaces in the U.S. with the making of space in Latin America and vice versa. Longoria takes at face value the U.S. military power, prowess, and organization represented in Fort Bragg and Fayetteville, in a similar way that the major erases the conditions of possibility for the making of Columbus and the fact that Columbus is not representative of the whole United States where spatializations are uneven and heterogeneous, as Gill's observation suggests. Gill's insight reveals how U.S.'s support of neoliberal policies in the 1980s had direct and material effects in the quality of infrastructure and public services in Latin America. By calling attention to the irony in the major's remarks, Gill hints at how hegemonic ideas of space and development are

sometimes constructed as separate. Instead, a hemispheric and palimpsestic understanding of spaces will push us to examine the ways that American military spaces and actions are deeply connected to faraway sites at the same time that one can examine U.S. military towns for how their local communities are transformed by the presence of military personnel, spaces, and policies and regulations.[39]

At work in the imagining of the United States, as an exceptional place where violence does not happen, is the erasure of local histories of violence and the displacement or projection of horror as imminent and immanent of Third World places. For as Katherine McKittrick reminds us, "Geography's and geographers well-known history in the Americas, of white masculine European mappings, explorations, conquests, is interlaced with a different sense of place, those populations and their attendant geographies that are concealed by what might be called rational spatial colonization and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories, and lands" (McKittrick x). McKittrick's observation is useful as it underscores the "interlaced" nature of places of domination with the erasure of subaltern stories and spatializations. In the case of the "rational" spatialization of Fort Bragg and other U.S. military spaces described in the novel, these too, are "interlaced" with the stories of terror in Guatemala. It is telling that Longoria remembers his Fort Bragg training in Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and his Captain's instructive lecture where he is taught: "You must create a sense of disorder...if people believe death can come from anywhere, anytime, they will be paralyzed by fear" (222). This training scene obliges us to read Fort Bragg as a node in the web of American empire and as such Fort Bragg's order cannot be separated from the disorder that is caused by American military intervention in the hemispheric Americas and elsewhere.

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[39] Catherine Lutz in *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (2001) provides a study of Fort Bragg, located in Fayetteville, and examines the contested history of the place and reveals the base's deep repercussions on the town's racial, gender, and class dynamics.

Indeed, *The Tattooed Soldier*'s narrative devices insist on the comparative/relational reading of its various places. So when Longoria walks through Watts and "reads" vestiges of ongoing racial strife in the American metropolis he does so through the eyes of warfare. He interpellates Los Angeles through his military experiences and it is through this framework that he superimposes his memories onto the inner-city landscape of 1992 Los Angeles. Ironically, it is through his vantage point -the character that is in collusion with American empire- that the novel draws a connection between the broken body politic in Guatemala and that of Los Angeles, a fragmented city where, according to the novel, a war of sorts is also being waged. For example, Longoria's description of Watts emphasizes this connection:

> A few buildings seemed to have been burned out many, many years ago: scorched brick walls left standing alone, like part of a movie set, broken iron bars, twisted and rusting. Longoria looked at those buildings and thought that a war must have been fought here, though he had no idea when. A conquering army leaves this sort of mark on the landscape, the sooty signature of fire, the hand of random, celebratory destruction. The scattered ruins along Hoover Street looked familiar. Longoria wondered why this distant war had been fought. (187)

Longoria, like Antonio, is a relatively recent migrant in Los Angeles, and can provide a perspective about the city from a different frame of reference. His description of Watts as "scattered ruins" that "looked familiar" is filtered through his experience of war in Guatemala. It is through his fresh "unfamiliar" eyes of the city and his "familiar" experience as military sergeant that he is able to reframe the vestigial signs of the 1965 Watts Rebellion in a context of war. He recognizes the signs of violence in the urban landscape of L.A. and surmises: "a conquering army leaves this sort of mark on the landscape." Longoria's description of Watts through the lens of the "familiar" and "unfamiliar" works at a rhetorical level to drive the point that "a war must have been fought here [in Los Angeles]." Through these means, the text creates an interwoven narrative that connects the events in Guatemala to those in Los Angeles by

suggesting that there might be a similar (although far from the same) context of war. Longoria does not know the history of the 1965 Watts Riots, but conflates that history of protest against police brutality with the Guatemalan Civil War, which highlights both the U.S. and Guatemala's actions against their citizens and calls attention to governmental abuse of power and use of violence. Even as the social and racial conditions of 1990s Los Angeles are not comparable to the violent events and conditions of the Guatemalan Civil War, there are still conditions and histories of repression in which American hegemony plays a role that come to light through Longoria's palimpsestic reading of the urban landscape.

Cultural Hegemony: Spaces of American Fantasy and Guatemalan Nightmare

Fort Bragg appears as an important origin place/time for Longoria's conditioning as neo-colonial subject of U.S. Empire as his vision of American supremacy is consolidated in and through this military space. Having access to American resources and ideologies in key sites like Fort Bragg has been an opportunity for Latin American soldiers to partake in American empire because as Gill argues, "the SOA shaped militaries from across the Americas into proxy forces under U.S. control and bought their cooperation by providing trainees with opportunities to participate in a cosmopolitan, modern world and to bask in the refracted glow of empire" (Gill 20). In one instance, Longoria is described as mimicking the order and cleanliness of his Fort Bragg dorm room in his tiny apartment in the Westlake neighborhood, which I read as his attempt to reproduce the material conditions and values of the base. Yet, as influential as American military spaces are for the reproduction of U.S. hegemony (embodied in Longoria), they are not the only apparatus through which narratives of American exceptionalism are

perpetuated.[40] U.S. cultural products also play an important role in reproducing U.S. hegemony in the hemispheric Americas. Cultural hegemony as defined by Antonio Gramsci manufactures popular consent from the masses (Hall 15). In *The Tattooed Soldier*, cinema can be pinpointed as an important arena for the hegemonic ideational construction of the United States.

Hollywood films, as cultural exports lead interesting multidimensional lives. As commodities for exchange in the international market they increase American companies' reach and revenue potential and dominate foreign film markets. As cultural products, the films not only have an entertainment and affective value but an epistemological and political one, even as they might not consciously set out to be political. By this I mean that in reflecting an "American way of life," Hollywood films center U.S. subjectivities, experiences, and spaces and in doing so perpetuate the U.S.'s myth of exceptionalism. They can also be said to embody the spirit of U.S. capitalism and imperialism not only because as export commodities they extract foreign audiences' earnings, which return to the U.S. as revenue, but also because as cultural objects they can reflect and propagate American capitalist values and attitudes. For example, while Kerry Segrave's *American Films Abroad: Hollywood's Domination of the World's Movie Screens* does not deeply examine the role of capitalism in Hollywood's success abroad it does hint at some of the underlying implications when he quotes dissenting voices about Hollywood, including the following passage from *The Australian Weekend Magazine*, June 22, 1985:

> What's the point of saying no to America's nuclear ships when we've said yes, a thousand times yes, to the Trojan horse of American culture, dragging it throughout city gates into our very loungerooms. MGM is mightier than the CIA. Paramount more powerful than the Pentagon. Warner Bros. wields more influence

[40] See Boggs, Carl and Tom Pollard's *The Hollywood War Machine: U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture* that looks at American imperial cinema through an analysis of war-themed films. The authors explain, "Rambo-inspired films are explicitly designed to evoke audience pride in and identification with the U.S. military as a vehicle of imperial power—tales of a warrior charged with fighting evildoers in Communist-infested Asian countries" (4) and "in his "realistic," spectacular, larger-than-life images and narratives of the good war, Spielberg has probably done more than any other contemporary filmmaker—indeed more than any other media or political figure—to shape American views of the military while promoting the blessings of patriotic warfare" (116). *E-book*.

> than the White House… For it has changed the way we see the world. (qtd. in Segrave 247)

In this quote, the non-American speaker etches a portrait of Hollywood as a formidable epistemological force that shapes one's "way of seeing the world." What is also provocative is the speaker's assertion that the U.S. major studios (MGM, Paramount, and Warner Bros.) are "mightier" than symbols and centers of U.S. political and military power (CIA, Pentagon, and White House), suggesting U.S. film imports have a type of underlying social and political currency in addition to their literal economic value. Indeed, the interdependence between Hollywood's film exports and U.S. political and economic interests is not a work of hyperbole. Professor of Public Policy and Geography Allen J. Scott hints at the long-standing role of the federal government in aiding the distribution of Hollywood films around the globe and asserts, "Exports of motion-pictures from the US have long been a classic instance of this phenomenon ["strategic trade"], with federal bureaucracies continually pressing in various forums of trade negotiation for foreign governments to open their doors more widely to Hollywood films" (Scott 55).

In Latin America this history begins with the United States and Europe's introduction of filmmaking technology to Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Guatemala City and other major cities as early as the late 1800s (A. López 50). Since its introduction to Latin America this modality has been nestled in relationships of power because as scholar Ana M. López observes, "rather than developed in proto-organic synchronicity with the changes, technological inventions, and 'revolutions' that produced modernity in Western Europe and the U.S., the appearance and diffusion of the cinema ["as foreign import"] in Latin America followed the patterns of neocolonial dependency typical of the region's position in the global capitalist system" (48). For the most part, this asymmetrical power relationship continued through the 20th

century with the U.S. securing its hold over the Latin American film market after WWII (A. López 72) and continuing to dominate into the 21st century as evidenced in Hollywood films leading the box-office charts in Latin America's largest economies (Mango). In the 1980s and 90s (the approximate temporal span of *The Tattooed Soldier*) major American studios had already had much success with their main export commodity, the big-budget blockbuster film. The latter appears in *The Tattooed Soldier* through the mentioning of Steven Spielberg's 1982 science-fiction film, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* at a critical moment for Longoria. By 1983 *E.T.* was the highest-grossing film, a record only to be broken 10 years later by another Spielberg creation, the dinosaur-themed action film *Jurassic Park* (1993) (AMC Network). The making of *E.T.* utilized a $10.5 million production budget, an amount unheard of in the production of Latin American cinema in the 1980s. Nonetheless, the large investment has had many dividends earning $435,110,554 in the U.S. and $357,800,000 abroad during its lifetime (boxofficemojo.com). The U.S. blockbuster format by commanding big capital for production as well as strong distribution and exhibition networks that have been built over a century of contact with Latin American and other foreign markets is representative not only of American spectacle, Hollywood capital, but also cultural imperialism.

When 17-year-old Guillermo Longoria disobeys his mother's orders to get home right away and instead sneaks into town to watch *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, the Guatemalan Army enters the theater to recruit all the men and boys in attendance, including Longoria. This moment demands attention not only because it is a poignant scene that reveals unethical recruitment practices used by the Guatemalan Army during the Civil War, but also because as a palimpsestic scene it shows U.S. cultural hegemony symbolically and literally cohabitating with Guatemalan military action at the genesis of Longoria's military trajectory. The palimpsestic quality of this

scene operates by having on the one level the lived time/space of Guillermo at the movie theater in Huehuetenango, Guatemala, while on the second plane or overlay, there is the simultaneous presence of U.S. cultural and physical spaces as projected on the 2-D movie theater screen. On the one hand, the presence of the film helps situate the time period to the year 1982, but on another level it is a haunting reminder that markets for U.S. cultural products were made possible by anti-communist (and pro-capitalist) regimes and their devastating wars in Central America. As mentioned in this chapter's historical context section, the U.S. government supported many of these Central American conservative regimes and wars through intelligence, training, and other resources. While the Guatemalan Civil War might not be a present event in the U.S. popular imaginary its reversal–bringing up a popular cultural reference (*E.T.*) in the context of Longoria's recruitment—again insists on the hemispheric correspondences between spaces and objects since *E.T.* and its many spaces enter Guatemala through the theater screen.

Guillermo's consumption of U.S. hegemonic geographies via *E.T.'s* representations consolidates his idea of the U.S. as superior and exceptional in its safety, order, and wealth. Revolving around the relationship between a young alien being (E.T.) and Elliot, a young elementary-school American boy, the film is largely focused around Elliot's child worldview and his white middle-class family and friends in California. Longoria becomes painfully aware of the economic asymmetries between the U.S. and Guatemala and internalizes these as natural, a part of his internalization of U.S. hegemony. The spectacle of U.S. consumerism in *E.T.* is awe-inspiring and desirable for Longoria who "had never seen a movie with a house like this, room after room filled with televisions and toys, closets packed with more clothes than anyone could wear in a lifetime, a cornucopia of gadgets and appliances" (Tobar 34). Even the listing of items and diction ("cornucopia") in this description emphasizes the U.S.'s wealth and commodity-

filled domestic spaces that given the suburban neighborhood's uniform spatial arrangement implies similar wealth in all of the houses. The filmic depiction is laden with underlying consumerist and capitalist impulses that influence Longoria's opinion of Guatemala vis-à-vis the U.S. so that "it made sense that the Extra-Terrestrial would go to the United States" and "[E.T.] would never come to Guatemala to be cooped up inside a little adobe house with a cement floor like the one where Guillermo lived" (Tobar 34). In fact, in order to buy the movie ticket and have access to the cinematic spaces of the film, Guillermo has to save money for two weeks, which contrasts starkly with the realities of the children in *E.T.* Through Guillermo's lens the novel shows this economic contrast between the Elliot/U.S. and Guillermo/Guatemala but this economic power relation also has a cultural charge since Longoria believes that the U.S. is a *place* where important things happen: E.T.'s interplanetary arrival and the production of *E.T.* as an American cultural product and export.

In a way, *E.T.* is the cinematic flattening of the U.S., literally on the screen, and also figuratively, because it spatializes the U.S. as insular, orderly, clean, suburban, wealthy, and safe. Although he has never been to California or the U.S. (at this point), Guillermo observes these filmic spaces and is in awe at the wealth and spatial organization of Elliot's neighborhood, a sense of wonder at U.S. spaces and infrastructure that would be echoed later when he visits Fort Bragg but would be challenged by his experience of inner-city Los Angeles. Guillermo pays close attention to the spatial organization in the film and he interprets it in the following way:

> [Longoria] looked up at *E.T.* and marveled at the *movie's wide, clean streets* and the impossibly large houses. For two weeks he had been saving for this ticket ... The suburb on the movie screen seemed to Guillermo more like a playground than a neighborhood. He watched a boy pedal his bicycle across the perfect pavement of a cul-de-sac, across open streets where there was not a single car or bus in sight. (34)

E.T.'s suburban houses are described as large and the streets as clean and clear. The uniform organization of the neighborhood is portrayed as kid-friendly. Particularly, the text alludes to the quintessential 20th century suburban identifier, the cul-de-sac, which creates a type of self-containment and has been thought to promote safer neighborhoods, a notion disputed by Southworth and Ben-Joseph (29). The suburban space in *E.T.* appears to Guillermo "more like a playground than a neighborhood" and Elliot's engagement in child-like activities like riding a bike contrasts sharply with Guillermo's reality of military induction. This reality literally interrupts the phantasy of Hollywood mid-way through the film screening as the Guatemalan Army storms the theater, bringing about the simultaneous and premature end to both *E.T.* and Guillermo's innocence.

The cul-de-sac serves as an apt metaphor for the world presented in *E.T.,* one that is marked by self-containment and safety. Even as an interplanetary connection is being made between Elliot and the alien E.T. there is no suggestion that Elliot, his family, or friends are connected to anything beyond their domestic life or neighborhood. The scale of this spatialization and insular portrayal of the U.S. disconnects it from international events and spaces when in reality the 1980s decade was a critical time of U.S. involvement in global affairs that impacted many people's lives in the hemispheric Americas. The child-friendly space of Elliot's home displaces and denies any horror of imperial warfare that is too apparent in Guillermo's life experience. His recruitment effectively ends his innocence. Sanitized portrayals of domestic safety and childhood happiness in *E.T.,* indeed, further the myth of American exceptionalism. Through the contrasts highlighted in Longoria's theater/recruitment scene, war happens "out there" and not in the U.S. because as Lesley Gill echoes, "dealing with the dark,

seamy side of U.S. involvement in global affairs has never been easy for the citizens of the United States because of widespread amnesia about twentieth-century U.S. empire building" (4).

Contested Palimpsestic Space: MacArthur Park as Site of Contradiction

While I have explored the hegemonic spatializations of the U.S. that erase complex histories of warfare and sanitize U.S. ideas and spaces, the novel's mapping brings to bear the contradictions of U.S. Empire as they manifest in domestic spaces. Specifically, Los Angeles' MacArthur Park emerges as the site where local and transnational social, historical, and political power relations coalesce. The park is at once a space that figures the national imaginary by commemorating U.S. military feats –and its underlying imperialism-, as much as it is a gathering space where subaltern people comment on and resist power via protests and the occupation of space. Correspondingly, it is crucial that MacArthur Park is the place where Antonio sees Longoria, the soldier that killed his family, after years since the massacre. From the beginning of the story, MacArthur Park is a place where the impunity of war acts meets its face of resistance. The park is of spatial and symbolic meaning and brings up the palimpsestic nature of social spaces, where local and transnational histories and forces compress in one space/time. Put simply, MacArthur Park is public place where the contradictions of U.S. Empire manifest.

Originally named Westlake Park, this public space was "created from marsh lands in 1885 [and] developed from 1887 with Citizen Participation," as stated in a memorial plaque affixed to the park. The park has been around for more than 100 years, changing topographically with city development and also demographically with the new migrant populations over its history. What is also relevant is the park's May 1942 name change from "Westlake Park to "MacArthur Park" after American General Douglas MacArthur. During 1941 and early 1942, forces of American and Pilipino soldiers under Douglas MacArthur's command fought many

battles against the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, a key site in the Pacific during WWII. The park's renaming in 1942 (prior to the end of WWII) then is prompt in commemorating MacArthur's life and war acts and by extension it is also a celebration of U.S. military power and intervention in the Pacific. In addition to the park name, the city installed a monument in honor of General MacArthur, featuring a cast bronze statue in his likeness and a map of the Philippines in sculptural relief, unveiled in 1955 (see figure 3). As one can observe in figure 5, MacArthur stands over a fountain installation (not operational at the moment) with the Philippines Islands mapped on the ground through the relief sculptural technique. The imperial symbolism of the monument becomes apparent when considering the monument a type of microcosm (see figure 4) for the Pacific with MacArthur as a synecdoche for U.S. militarism as his presence looms over the Philippines, a colony of the United States from 1898 to 1946.

Figure 3. "Unveiling of MacArthur statue at park" [ca. 1955]. *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* Photo Collection. Courtesy: Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection.

Figure 4. Google satellite image: aerial view of the General MacArthur monument. The "A" points to the location of the MacArthur statue and the brown protrusions "B" are the artist's rendering of the Philippines.

Figure 5. This photograph shows the monument installed at MacArthur Park, 2018. The monument like the rest of the park is in deteriorated state. The statue of MacArthur can be seen overlooking the Philippines mapped through relief sculptural technique.

The symbolic significance of MacArthur Park, especially due to the name it bears, was especially not lost on Pilipino veterans who fought under General MacArthur on the U.S. side during World War II against Japanese troops. Having fought for the U.S side, the surviving Pilipino soldiers, many who suffered lasting body injuries or impairment, demanded U.S. military benefits that were repeatedly denied over the course of decades. The Pilipino veterans occupied the park to stage sit-ins and other demonstrations. For example the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* documented their demonstrations in 1997 and 1998, more than 50 years after the conclusion of WWII as the veterans continued to demand U.S. military benefits around

the Douglas MacArthur statue in the park. What the Pilipino veterans show (and which is in line with my argument of the previous chapter) is the convergence of U.S. military power and domination abroad with the domestic lines of national belonging/un-belonging that cut across racial lines and those whose racialization locates them in a "non-citizen" category. But what is also significant is that for every spatialization of domination there is the possibility of resistance and counter-articulations of belonging.

Similar to the Pilipino veterans' sit-ins, MacArthur Park is a place in the novel where the legacy of warfare in Central America re-appears in the city. MacArthur Park is a palimpsest imbued with metaphoric undertones of combat, as it is where Longoria and others play chess –a game of strategy, combat, and an enactment of two empires struggling for spatial control. The legacies of warfare appear both through Antonio's first physical confrontation of Longoria at the park and also through allusion to continued liberation struggles in Central America. For instance, at the park Longoria witnesses a demonstration by Central Americans and some members of the left-leaning Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) with signs that celebrate a type of Central American solidarity between El Salvador and Guatemala, who have a common experience of Civil Wars, repressive governments, and resistance. The novel draws attention to this alliance by block quoting one of the posters that reads:

> SOLIDARIDAD CON LA REVOLUCION SALVADOREÑA
> ALTO A LA REPRESION EN EL SALVADOR Y GUATEMALA
> APOYO TOTAL A LA LUCHA ARMADA. (67)
>
> SOLIDARITY WITH THE SALVADORAN REVOLUTION
> STOP THE REPRESSION IN EL SALVADOR AND GUATEMALA
> COMPLETE SUPPORT OF ARMED STRUGGLE. (my translation, 67)

MacArthur Park then figures as a place where Central Americans can organize and openly demand support for the left-leaning armed struggle against the right-wing factions the U.S.

government has historically supported. In this scene and elsewhere, the public space of the park is open for the contradictions of American empire to manifest so that you have the activism of left-leaning Central American groups and the presence of a former Guatemalan Army sergeant within one space that is named after an American general whose actions were integral to 20th Century American empire building. For his part, Longoria's presence represents the history of counter-insurgent repression and he feels disgust towards the protesters. He ponders, "He had come three thousand miles from his country to find these people again, these Communists, up to their old tricks" (67-68). Longoria cannot comprehend that people –especially supporters of the left—would find themselves in L.A. and supporting the armed struggle in Central America.[41] He is also perplexed by the fact that a woman is at the helm of the MacArthur Park demonstration as "it seemed strange to Longoria, incongruous, to see this small woman leading the mob, directing their energies like an evil conductor" (68). While Longoria's virulent reaction is predictable as he has dedicated much of his life to quelling the guerrillas, his shock stands out because as a perpetrator of state violence against suspected sympathizers of the guerrillas he should know or at least comprehend the conditions of violence and persecution that would lead to an exodus of Guatemalans and other Central Americans to the U.S. It should also be no surprise to him that people from Guatemala and El Salvador would be in solidarity given their shared histories of government repression.

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[41] Interestingly, this scene mirrors an encounter Antonio has with a group of indigenous Maya women from Guatemala (pp. 71). Antonio like Longoria does not understand how these women ended up in Los Angeles; he asks, "what were they doing here, in this place where not a single stalk of corn could grow?" (71). Although Antonio's reaction is of puzzlement rather than abhorrence (like Longoria's reaction to the protesters), they are similar in their bewilderment and their misreading of their country's people as diasporic. Unlike them, Elena was more attuned to the political situation of Guatemalans, *ladinos* and Indians, and while her life was cut short and she was a *ladina* of privilege, one can conjecture that Elena would have had a better understanding of the social conditions that led to the 1990s diasporas of Guatemalans and Salvadorans in the U.S., highlighting further Longoria and Antonio's inadequacies as political agents.

It is also important to note that MacArthur Park continues to be a contested space and a place for protesting the legacy of American intervention in the hemispheric Americas in the 21st century. This is palpable in the contemporary moment since a combined bi-national effort of community activism and Latino LA city officials made possible the installment of a monument for the Archbishop of San Salvador Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, a critic of human rights abuses and who was assassinated by a right-wing death squad in 1980 during the Salvadoran Civil War.[42] The bronze statue of Monsignor Romero was crafted in El Salvador by Joaquin Serrano and it was flown to the United States for installment in 2013. This gesture is important because the statue itself follows the migratory path that Salvadorans followed and it is significant that a Salvadoran-produced statue would be rooted in MacArthur Park, an important gathering place for Salvadorans in the city. The 6-foot tall statue was mounted onto a concrete pedestal to which a dedication plaque is affixed. The plaque contains a quote in Spanish by Romero and it is followed by this dedication in English:

> In recognition of Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero's legacy of love and compassion for the poor. For one day, there will be justice for those who killed him, and over 75,000 people. For one day, there will be economic justice for El Salvador and for the poor. For one day, there will be a better future for the thousands of Salvadorans who fled the country, and for the millions of immigrants in the United States. Our deepest gratitude to Council member Ed Reyes and CRA (LA) for funding this project.
> (The Salvadoran American Leadership & Education Fund, SALEF, Los Angeles-San Salvador Sister City Committee)

Like *The Tattooed Soldier*'s assertion/claim over Los Angeles space for the Guatemalan diaspora, the monument for Monsignor Romero is an important recognition of the *place* of Salvadorans in the city in the 21st century. Its dedication recognizes the interconnectedness between the Salvadoran diaspora in the United States and the violent history of the Salvadoran Civil War. The dedication also alludes to the ongoing impunity of this war because as the text

[42] Romero was beatified on May 2015 and he was canonized in October 2018.

asserts, “one day, there will be justice,” as the killers of Romero have not been brought to justice and neither has justice been meted for the Salvadoran community disparaged by the war. While Romero is a reminder of the injustices and violence of the war, he is also an important symbol of resistance to power. The Romero memorial is an act of remembrance that keeps this history alive and interpolates the palimpsest that is MacArthur Park. By adding the Romero memorial, this palimpsest gains another layer and the park is transformed and its meaning changed. This hemispheric palimpsest shows the interlaced and contradictory narratives of U.S. Empire in Central America and in the Pacific, histories that are represented in the co-existence of the 2013 monument for Monsignor Romero alongside with the earlier memorial for General MacArthur.

MacArthur Park has been an important center for Mexican and Central American activism and organization, especially in the 1990s and 2000s that addresses local realities and issues as well as engages in transnational activism as evidenced in the literary landscapes of *The Tattooed Soldier* and also in real time and space as seen in the Pilipino sit-ins and in the trans/bi-national activism that made the Romero statue possible. Main and Sandoval’s study of MacArthur Park patronage found a high-level of activity and interviewed members of the Central American Coalition of Los Angeles, comprised by a number of organizations, who “monitor the state of civil rights in Central America and these organizations are all located near the park and we use the park to put on cultural and political events” (qtd. in Main and Sandoval 81). MacArthur Park is an important center for Latin American gatherings around political interests – where regardless of citizenship status, they can enact a type of civic engagement and where collective forms of associations can be forged that can conform and transcend national affiliations.

However, these activist forms of occupation of public space can be countered by power apparatuses, some can be subtle (as Mitchell and Sateheli reveal) and others through overt police action and sometimes both working in tandem. Mitchell and Staeheli's 2005 study of Washington D.C's permit system for protests demonstrated that "political exclusion can be effected by banning political activities in particular places while allowing the same activities elsewhere…silencing dissident voices while at the same time giving the appearance that public space is politically inclusive" (798). Unsurprisingly, in 2007 the police ended a pro-immigrant amnesty May Day rally at MacArthur Park for which a protest permit had been obtained, but one whose area was limited to one small section within the park. The specifications of the permit forbad gathering in non-specified areas and according to a police report, "if people did march in Rampart Area, they would be allowed to walk on the sidewalk only, and would be arrested for any violations of the law" (LAPD 24). When the marchers could not fit on the sidewalks, they would be pressed to use non-permitted areas as admitted by the LAPD: "MacArthur Park had seen a large number of demonstrators in the past, and, no matter the size of the demonstration, participants would have to get from Central Area to MacArthur Park somehow" (24). Thus, it can be observed in this case that by limiting the number and scope of permits, the city is able to deploy police force and by declaring the event an unlawful assembly it can proceed to use force to remove demonstrators and other attendees.

Not only is this reminiscent of the police's suppression of the 1970 Chicano Moratorium explored in the previous chapter but as Main and Sandoval suggest, "the events of the 'May Day Melee'… highlighted much of the tension in the city around immigration rights" (81). This is an important observation because the policing of pro-immigration marches and actions in L.A. - often racialized as brown and Latina/o- bring to light the domestic and international dimensions

of structures of power that have conditioned the lives of Latin Americans in the 20th century in their home countries and then also in the U.S. The condition of subalternity occupied by the displaced Latin American refugee in Los Angeles is conditioned by racial and economic systems in the U.S. that cannot be separated from the U.S. imperial project. What the policed protests also reveal is that conceptions of "appropriate uses of space" are also interpreted though the axis of race, class, gender, and citizenship.

The Itinerant Body: the refugee and the homeless body

There are some instructive and recent analyses of the novel that focus a trauma studies framework, such as Dale Pattison's "Born in the USA: Breeding Political Violence in Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*" and Crystine Miller's "Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* and the Latino/a Trauma" as well as work from a disability studies framework, such as Julie Avril Minich's "Mestizaje as National Prosthesis: Corporeal Metaphors in Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*" that add to earlier scholarship on *The Tattooed Soldier*. For my part, I approach the novel's representation of refugees as connected to homelessness in the inner city to further shed light on the structures of power that condition the movement and opportunities of vulnerable populations within Los Angeles. In other words, while this chapter has significantly focused on the novel's representation of the violent production of Guatemalan refugees and spaces, this section focuses more on the urban conditions that Antonio and Longoria witness and experience once in Los Angeles, especially as seen in the haunting presence of the Rodney King police brutality case and the large homeless population. The topic of homelessness takes center-stage as Antonio and José Juan are evicted from their apartment at the opening of the novel and Antonio is tortured by the idea of "sleeping under the freeway" (12). The narrator lets us know: "Antonio had heard this phrase more than once in the weeks leading up to this humiliation, as the

money in his wallet slowly disappeared and the prospect of eviction became a certainty" (7). In 1980, Los Angeles's homeless population was an estimated 22,000 to 30,000 people, the second largest population after New York City (Wolch et al. 444). Los Angeles's homeless population continued to grow in the 1990s and in 2018 this homeless population has grown to 31,285 people in the city and 52,765 in the county (LAHSA 4).

Antonio's viewpoint as homeless and refugee highlights the discrepancy between the hegemonic portrayal of Los Angeles that he was able to consume through the television set in Guatemala and the lived reality of Los Angeles's marginalized communities. The narrator describes, "long before he set foot in this country, Antonio felt that he knew California because he'd seen it come to life over and over again on his television set" (41). Much like Longoria's consumption of U.S. spaces through the cinema, Antonio creates an imagined idea of Los Angeles through hegemonic media images. Those images suggested that Los Angeles is a place of white people, leisure, beauty, and wealth. Yet, through his in-person encounter with Los Angeles Antonio comes to terms with this representation as a farce. He is met with an almost dystopic downtown Los Angeles, a place with "skinny question-mark men with dirty bodies and unshaven faces, hanging clothes on a line strung between palm trees in a lot in the center of the city" (41). He realizes that Los Angeles is a place of contrasts and that many live in poverty and dispossession, especially as he becomes penniless and homeless.

Through his own experience as displaced refugee from Guatemala, Antonio sees Los Angeles's homeless as refugees. When Antonio sees the camps of homeless he reflects, "Refugees. That was the term for people who lived like this, in makeshift tents, on barren ground" (41). This interpretation both recalls his own experience of displacement from his home country as well as highlights the contradiction of homelessness in the U.S., for his comparison

suggests that the U.S.-born homeless inhabit a type of statelessness. Nevertheless, I heed scholar Samira Kawash's warning "against the easy substitution of homelessness as a metaphor for other modes of itinerant movement such as exile, migration, nomadism, and cosmopolitanism" (328 n12) and instead, argue that *The Tattooed Soldier*'s comparison does not suggest an exchangeability between refugee and homeless but rather it functions to show the systemic production of homelessness in Los Angeles as linked to the production of a Guatemalan diaspora through neoliberal policies that structure the lives and mobility of vulnerable populations in Central America and also in Los Angeles. Antonio and José Juan's eviction is indeed a plot device that allows the novel to introduce the issue of homelessness and to introduce two homeless characters, Frank and Larry ("the Mayor"). Through these characters, the novel does not portray homelessness as the result of individual failure, but rather it shows the economic and policy forces that keep the homeless in a state of placeless-ness.

As early as 1988, scholars of urban and regional planning and geography had explained the structural factors that produce homelessness in the American city, emphasizing systemic economic and policy phenomena such as economic restructuring, the deinstitutionalization of welfare programs, gentrification, and urban renewal (Wolch et al. 445). Nevertheless, Kawash points to the discourses that structure dominant readings of "the homeless problem," as she explains, "[homelessness] as it appears today in the dominant discourse of media and politics is not seen as a problem of the economy or the society that produces homelessness; instead, it is viewed as the problem that the homeless create for the economy and the society in which they live" (320). While this might be the dominant imagination of homelessness, the novel does not participate in dominant imaginations of this population and instead calls attention to systemic

issues so that ameliorative approaches to homelessness are not enough to correct it, which the Mayor evocatively expresses:

> What can two hundred and ninety-seven dollars a month do but keep you broke?...You go to the check-cashing place they take out their chunk. That's a whole little Mafia right there. Go to a regular bank, and they laugh at you. You get angry, you raise your voice, and they call the security guard to throw you out because you're stinking up the place and making all the legitimate customers nervous. That's how it is. A runaround for poor people. That's how I see it. (46)

The Mayor is referring to the relief check that he collects from the county and that in his words "don't relieve nothing" (46). The Mayor's "nice speech," as Frank describes, calls attention to inadequate county support (and its underlying policies) and to a system that is unfair: from the low monthly check to the mafia of the check-cashing place to the policing of the homeless body in private property. Indeed, the restructuring of the welfare system as well as the increasing rent prices in L.A. are structural issues that cannot be faced with less than three hundred dollars. The Mayor's perspective on his situation –and that of many like him- calls attention to how individual chances are shaped by macro-processes set in place. Indeed, by bringing Frank's experience and analysis of the situation, the novel counters dominant conceptions about homelessness and frames it as an "overwhelming injustice" (46).

The dominant discourse around the issue of homelessness during the Reagan-era as well as in contemporary society is also mirrored in dominant discourse around a "refugee crisis" for the individual refugee or homeless person might be granted some pity but as scholar Regina Marie Mills explains, "as a mass, the military views refugees as 'a menace' that could overrun civilized nations and the public views both groups as wild cards who could just as easily be terrorists or murderers as they could be 'deserving' immigrants or honest people down on their luck (107-108). Mills' analysis brings together an analysis of homeless and refugees through a human rights framework to argue that *The Tattooed Soldier* "illustrates the growing concern of

Latina/o literature with issues of statelessness, state violence, and questions of justice" (98). I agree with this part of Mills analysis and I suggest that the novel calls attention to the discrepancy between the idea of a rich "global city" and the sharp economic asymmetries produced by late capitalism. Basic necessities such as shelter cannot be met. The contradictions highlighted by both Antonio and Guillermo's presuppositions of a rich U.S. city are shattered with Antonio's experience of the city and his meeting of Frank and Larry, two homeless men, who are part of the thousands displaced in the city. The parallels drawn by the novel between the refugee and homeless displacement functions within a discourse of the body politic, which is often imagined as a "homeland" and "motherland," as such the body polity is imagined as a type of family, but these itinerant figures are portrayed as being in excess of this family or body politic. Indeed, the beating of African-American motorist Rodney King, also suggests the city's conditions of repression against black communities. It is the issue of social injustice that binds the experiences of King, Frank and the Mayor, and Antonio. Even the L.A. Uprising at the end of the text with the simultaneous killing of Longoria at the hands of Antonio does not bring closure to the systemic issues and haunting of impunity that marks one of the main thematic threads of the novel.

Conclusion

Like Gregory Nava's 1983 film *El Norte*, Hector Tobar's novel captures the Guatemalan immigrant/refugee experience as the characters attempt to rebuild their lives in Los Angeles, a city whose own character is more complex than the one they have been introduced to by media images and hearsay. Indeed,*The Tattooed Soldier* presents a portrait of Los Angeles as an important center for an increasing Central American diaspora as well as a place where hierarchies of race, nationality, and class structure the experiences of the city's populations. It is

not a coincidence that Antonio and Longoria's shared story begins in Guatemala but continues to unfold and has its closure in Los Angeles (as part of Antonio's revenge plot). Rather, it is the origin story of mass violence, U.S.-backed pro-neoliberal violence, and political repression in Guatemala, that has informed the patterns of Guatemalan –and other Central American- migration to Los Angeles, and the new shared spaces frequented by Guatemalans in Los Angeles, that give the story its cohesion and logic. On one level, the novel is concerned with exposing the history of state-sanctioned violence committed against Guatemalan civilians during the Civil War, but on another level it is also aware of its fueling a diaspora of displaced Central Americans in Los Angeles and the conditions of policing and material vulnerability that those populations face once in this city, especially as highlighted by the structural racism that made the Rodney King beating and freeing of his abusers possible. While the King case is not at the forefront of the plot, it does haunt the story as it connects with the thematic of impunity and state-sponsored violence, which culminates with the people's LA Uprising at the end of text. The threat of police action is felt throughout the novel especially in neighborhoods of color, from the first few pages when Mr. Hwang threatens to call the police on Antonio and José Juan to the shooting that happens outside of Longoria's apartment in the primarily Latino Westlake neighborhood.

As I complete this chapter, a caravan of hundreds of men, women, and children from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are making their way to the U.S.-Mexico border to seek asylum in the United States. President Donald Trump –who has previously made his anti-refugee and anti-immigrant stance known—asked the caravan to turn around via a message on the social media platform Twitter. While dominant anti-immigrant discourse has pivoted around Mexican migration to the U.S., this caravan has brought Central American migration to national attention

and will likely further conservatives' anxieties about refugees and "open borders." As of October 21, 2018, the caravan has reached the Mexican southern border with Guatemala, and will continue their northbound journey through Mexico; their future remains uncertain. As national opinions over immigration policy bifurcate into pro- and anti-immigrant camps, the relevance of the story told in *The Tattooed Soldier* is specially felt. Rodrigo Abeja, a coordinator of "Pueblos Sin Fronteras," an organization that provides aid to immigrants and refugees and that is supporting the caravan reflects, "It's an exodus, a crisis that wasn't born when this caravan began, it's been years [in the making]" (Forsyth). Abeja's comment echoes, in a way, the historical making of the exodus of immigrants from Central America. In the case of Asian migration, Professor of English Lisa Lowe reminds us that "despite the usual assumption that Asians immigrate from stable, continuous, 'traditional' cultures, most of the post-1965 Asian immigrants come from societies already disrupted by colonialism and distorted by the upheavals of neocolonial capitalism and war. The material legacy of the repressed history of U.S. imperialism in Asia is born out in the 'return' of Asian immigrants to the imperial center" (16). For the Guatemalan/Guatemalan-American community in Los Angeles, *The Tattooed Soldier* crafts a similar message about a disrupted Guatemala and dispossessed Guatemalans. The text privileges a hemispheric reading of space and its corresponding social and material conditions to highlight precisely these interconnections between U.S. power structures and Guatemalan contexts. The text presents a variety of spaces (Guatemala City, San Cristóbal Acatapán, Los Angeles [Pico-Union, Downtown, public parks, streets, run-down apartments], and Fort Bragg military base) through narrative shifts and ends up showing the sometimes hidden but insidious making of spaces in Los Angeles and Guatemala in and through U.S. military, economic, and cultural power.

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Part II: Another L.A.: Visual and Sonic Constructions

Chapter 3: "Urban Canvas: Chicana/o Practices of Public Art in LA, 1968 – 2015"

This chapter explores the public art practices of Chicano artists in Los Angeles from the 60s to the contemporary moment. While Chicano art has garnered the attention of art historians, cultural critics, and museums in recent decades, studies that prioritize its public and spatial aspects are more limited.[43] My main interest is to explore and historically situate Chicana/o public art practices of the last five decades, especially as it pertains to Chicana/o and Latina/o urban communities. Given the rich history of Chicano/a public art in Southern California during this period, I would like to frame the selected artwork as stemming from –and giving rise to– a multiplicity of Chicano aesthetic traditions rather than a fixed genealogy. However, one main underlying thread uniting the artwork surveyed is its fundamental public aspect.

In counter distinction to art that is created as a commodity to be exchanged in the market and to be housed in private and/or enclosed spaces like galleries or museums, public art consists in being specifically created for its exhibition in streets, parks, or other places with open access to pedestrians and the public at large. While I touch briefly on the Internet as a "public" space of exhibition, this will not be the focus of my analysis, but will be considered more in depth in a future project. Secondly, I argue that the selected Chicana/o public art shares a critical component by being in direct engagement with spatial and social issues confronting Latinas/os in the U.S. Stated differently, the public artists under analysis are using the characteristics of public art to directly engage Los Angeles urban space and comment on their spatial experiences, specifically gesturing to a history of spatial and material vulnerability. Moreover, attention to the

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[43] One of the clear exceptions is Raúl Homero Villa's *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (2000).

space, race, class, and gender aspects of these artworks is a productive departure point to examine the representation of the classed, racialized, and gendered Chicano/Latino body in urban spaces, but also to analyze the collective material conditions of brown communities in the American city.

I start by analyzing muralism of the Chicano Movement (1965-1975) in broad strokes. As one of the earliest and most productive eras of Chicano art production in the United States, Chicano muralism –next to graffiti—is arguably the most iconic and visible form of Latino art expression in the streets of Los Angeles from the 60s to the present. After providing some socio-historical context for the Chicano muralism movement, I then zoom in on muralist Judy Baca whose work begins in the Chicano Movement but continues to the present and directly engages issues of place and Chicana/o urban history. I also consider the public art of the Chicano art group Asco (1972-1987) and pay particular attention to performances and murals of the 1970s that comment on the social and spatial conditions of Chicanos as they intersect with the transnational context of the Vietnam War. Finally, I analyze the 21st century art installations by Ramiro Gomez and its spatial, political, and social context and pay particular attention to the embodiment of Latino labor in LA space. By exploring Gomez's work, I am able to examine the current social and spatial conditions of Latinos in Los Angeles. More generally, I argue that Chicano public artwork reveals the social and spatial conditions of Chicanos and also Latinos at various key moments in their history in the city. Secondly, I argue that these artistic expressions allow us to locate developments in urban aesthetics that Latino artists create in direct response to their material conditions. They deploy the art as a counter narrative that is political in nature as it comments on the inequitable conditions of the Latino barrio and its residents. The work of recognizing, articulating, and representing these conditions through art is a political gesture that

is a necessary first step for claiming urban social space. Lastly, I demonstrate that these artistic practices through their use of public space conceptually de-fetishize or make visible the material conditions that produce the disposability and invisibility of Latino communities in urban space. In this way, this art both highlights and resists the physical and material precariousness of Chicano/Latino bodies and communities in the city through aesthetics of public art. To this end, I rely primarily on the theoretical contributions of cultural theorists and scholars whose efforts to record, define, and understand Chicano/Latino art practices will help frame my contribution to the scholarship on Los Angeles public art aesthetics and politics.

In the 1980s pivotal essay, "Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility," scholar Tomas Ybarra-Frausto offered the notion of *rasquachismo,* one of the earliest recorded efforts to theorize a particularly Chicano aesthetic and sensibility. *Rasquachismo,* as defined by Ybarra-Frausto, reflects "an underdog perspective –a view from *los de abajo"* (2). He further defines it as a hybrid, bicultural sensibility that "presupposes the worldview of the have-not, but is also a quality exemplified in objects and places" (5). One of the main contributions of *rasquachismo* is its validation of working-class Chicanos as active creators who, despite having limited sources, transform spaces and objects and where "the irreverent and spontaneous are employed to make the most from the least" (Mesa-Bains 157). While *rasquachismo* shares some likeness with the Euroamerican kitsch in their lowbrow aesthetic that is in tension with hegemonic definitions of "high art," Chicana artist Amalia Mesa-Bains makes an important distinction between the two. She argues, "kitsch serves as a material or phenomenon of taste through mass-produced objects or style of personal expression in decoration, while rasquachismo contains both the material expression and, more importantly, a stance or attitudinal position" (158). *Rasquachismo*'s "attitudinal position" for Mesa-Bains is specifically "a stance that is both defiant and inventive"

(157). By pointing out *rasquachismo*'s stance of defiance that speaks from a socio-political condition, Mesa-Bains implicitly points to the materiality of cultural expression that emerges from a collective social reality that manifests in different forms. She rightly notes that a sense and practice of *rasquache* appears over and again not only in the visual arts but other forms of Chicano cultural expression like theater and music (159). *Rasquachismo*'s stance of defiance is not apolitical nor is it simply dictated by the reproduction of mass-produced objects, but instead it uses mass-produced or even makeshift materials to respond to an environment of limited resources.

While I do not claim that the public artwork I analyze is *rasquache,* I am more interested in seeing what elements of a *rasquache* sensibility, as conceived by Ybarra-Frausto and Mesa-Bains, are recurrent motifs in Chicano public art. Consequently, I focus on *rasquachismo*'s centering the "worldview of the have-not" to highlight that those on the margins are creators who actively transform space and on Mesa-Bains' insistence that *rasquachismo*, unlike Kitsch, is a sensibility stemming from within Chicanos' particular political and social stance. For example, as racial Others and working-class artists, Ramiro Gomez and Asco's public aesthetics of ephemerality emerge in part as a practical response to their lack of material resources and official cultural spaces of exhibition, conditions that speak to their marginalized social and spatial locales within the art world and also within the city. Stated differently, the materials and spaces used in the art production originate from the very material conditions that the art critiques, conceptually reinforcing its commentary. Forced to recycle materials and reinvent what would otherwise be disposable and unorthodox art materials, they transform the ordinary and in the process develop an aesthetics with a critical stance. Akin to an element of the *rasquache*, their ephemeral art speaks from and about a material reality of the working-class. The commentary reflects the

ongoing spatial precariousness of Chicano and Latino communities in Los Angeles both during the active years of Asco (1972-1987) and three decades later in Ramiro Gomez's contemporary moment.

Since Frausto's essay, Ramon García and Amalia Mesa-Bains have revisited the concept of *rasquachismo* and advanced new theorizations. Rather than emphasizing a single art tradition that supports a claim to a homogenous Chicano identity, García considers a multiplicity of Chicano art traditions and focuses on a Chicano Camp framework. He proposes that Chicano Camp, unlike *rasquachismo,* "acknowledges irony and distance from normalized representation of Chicano culture by presenting confrontational contestations of gender and sexual norms in Chicano culture" and that it "involves a much more conscious and critical representation of working class culture" (6). Chicano Camp, according to García, presents a less didactic and idealized image of the working class and instead offers a critical engagement. While García offers this contrast between two Chicano art frameworks, he also differentiates Chicano Camp from mainstream uses of Camp. He expands:

> The difference between Euroamerican Camp and Chicano Camp is historical and cultural. Camp style, evident in many parodic, ironic and satiric work produced by Chicano artists, is an ironic use of popular culture (both mass culture and folkloric); it is an outsider's position from within the culture: it is a gendered and sexualized way of dealing with the politics of exclusion and inclusion. It is a queer way of transforming urban social space using the everyday culture that is there present. (2)

Providing a working theorization of a particular Chicano strain of Camp, García notes its distinction from the "apolitical" Euroamerican Camp defined in the 1960s by American writer and filmmaker Susan Sontag.[44] Chicano Camp is a particularly useful framework to explore Asco's multifaceted and multi-scalar social commentary that simultaneously engages the internal

[44] In 1964 Susan Sontag published "Notes on 'Camp,'" an essay that listed fifty-eight theses on the various meanings of Camp.

gender and cultural politics at the local scale of the East LA Chicano barrio and the dominant political and cultural landscapes of Los Angeles and the U.S. more broadly.

Similar to García, Mesa-Bains revises *rasquachismo* and derives a new concept that articulates the particular artistic formations and aesthetics of Chicana creators. In an effort to develop a language that acknowledges women's artistic practices within the home, Mesa-Bains offers *domesticana* a neologism for a Chicana variation of *rasquache*. For Mesa-Bains *domesticana* expresses "defiance of an imposed Anglo-American cultural identity, and the defiance of restrictive gender identity within Chicano culture" (161). In this way, she expands on a rasquache aesthetics to acknowledge the daily practices of women who transform domestic spaces through ephemeral alterations to the home as with the construction of altars. Of particular relevance is *domesticana*'s challenging of the private and public sphere divide since Mesa-Bains shows how her own altar art installations are imbued with elements of the public (165). For their part, scholars Chon Noriega and Ondine Chavoya highlight *conceptualism* within Chicano/a art and pay particular attention to ephemeral artwork and its documentation. Sandoval and Latorre highlight an emergent tradition of *digital artivism*, a mode of art and activism that utilizes digital tools as "a form of political activism that seeks egalitarian alliances and connections across difference" (83). While these scholars may have varying ideas of what Chicano art is and does, what is apparent in their writings is that they all propose that critical Chicano art has been wrought at the margins of hegemonic social, cultural, and physical spaces. Their considerations will help elaborate my analysis on Chicano public art as public spaces become of increased importance in a context of the exclusion of Chicano an Latino art from the Museum. Even as Chicano and Latino art has made it into museum exhibits, the politics of public art remain relevant for Latino communities and the wider public due to this type of art's use of heterotopic

and “free” exhibition spaces that enable access to a wide range of spectators. Free and publicly displayed art literally and conceptually defies the increased commodification and marketization of the art world.

Chicano Art in Los Angeles: Historical and Political Antecedents

The decades of the 60s and 70s that saw the unfolding of the Chicano Movement or *El Movimiento* were an active political and cultural period for Chicano communities in the United States. The Movement was marked not only by a general struggle for civil rights, social justice, and education reform, but also by the politicization of youth, artists, and community leaders. For Chicanos in Los Angeles, the barrio of East Los Angeles was the major hub for social and political organizing and cultural expression, particularly around its high schools, but also around parks, streets, and other public spaces that were sites of meetings, protests, and artistic production. Among these events, there were two that marked the public consciousness of this generation of LA Chicanos: the 1968 East LA Walkouts and the 1970 Chicano Moratorium.

The East LA Walkouts were a series of student demonstrations by thousands of students from various East Los Angeles high schools who walked out from their classrooms in protest of the impoverished education and marginalized conditions of primarily Chicano schools (M. García 5). In 1970, a second significant event takes place in East Los Angeles that has a lasting effect on the Chicano Movement and Chicano communities in general. On August 29 of that year, approximately 25000 protesters attended the Chicano Moratorium to protest the Vietnam War and its disproportionate number of Chicano conscripts. A coalition of activists planned the Moratorium March trajectory along Whittier Boulevard, the main artery crisscrossing East Los Angeles, with Laguna Park as the destination point. At Laguna Park the conveners witnessed political speeches, music performances, folkloric dances, and other cultural events. In spite of the

nonviolent nature of the demonstration captured in the documentary, *Chicano! A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement,* the Moratorium ends with the police's show of force to disperse the protesters. Alurista, Chicano poet and key figure of the *Movimiento* observes, "a lot of destruction took place, on both sides" and remarks, "the police called it a people's riot; the people called it a police riot" (Cisneros). Four civilians died that day, including Chicano L.A. Times journalist Rubén Salazar, who died after a sheriff deputy launched a tear gas projectile into the Silver Dollar Café on Whittier Boulevard. To date, the details of Salazar' death remain unclear, but what has become clear is its lasting effect on the Chicano public consciousness. Accordingly, the voice-over of *Chicano!* concludes, "Chicanos mourned the loss of a friend and their only ally in the mainstream media; the death of Rubén Salazar had a profound impact on the Chicano Movement" (Cisneros).

These two events in LA Chicano history reveal the Chicano Movement's effervescence and its protest strategies against the city and nation-state forces it engaged and resisted. These hegemonic forces were expressed through policing strategies that were concurrently spatial in nature and constitutive of power dynamics in the city. This is evidenced through the police's physical overtake of Laguna Park during the Moratorium protest. The police's take of the park relied on their show of force, but their forced dispersal of the protesters was also a statement of spatial control as it was the police and city authorities that determined what were to be "acceptable" uses of public spaces. Don Mitchell has explored who has "the right to the city" and by extension its public spaces, and notes that for New York City as with most American cities a series of actions and policies shaping public space are the result of "the fear of inappropriate users: the homeless, drug dealers, loitering youth—and, not inconsequentially, political activists protesting in front of city hall, marching in the streets, or rallying in parks and squares" (2). In

terms of the Chicano Moratorium and East LA Walkouts, we can perceive that public space acquired increased political importance in Chicanos' cultural and political struggle. In this social climate and in light of the repression of brown communities, Chicano cultural production simultaneously took on a deeply political meaning as artists and activists sought to put art to work on behalf of community interests by using and re-taking their public spaces.

During the movimiento period, Chicano artists organized around colleges and universities, finding support in newly created Chicano Studies programs. In a 1971 essay titled, "Contemporary Chicano Art", Mildred Monteverde documents the increasingly organized activity of Chicano artists in Southern California, particularly in San Diego and Los Angeles. It is clear from Monteverde's description that universities and colleges like UCLA and California State University Los Angeles provided spaces that supported Chicano art activities. Yet, the barrio figured as a centrally important space within Chicano art practices as well. Monteverde notes the establishment of *Plaza de la Raza* in East Los Angeles and plans for the establishment of *El Centro Cultural de la Raza* in San Diego, both centers for community-based arts that continue to operate to date.[45] Various community-originated arts centers sprung up across the U.S. to support the Chicano arts during *El Movimiento*. Their location within Chicano neighborhoods and their public aspect not only encouraged community access but they also circumvented the museum system that did not recognize nor sponsored Chicano art during that period. Ybarra-Frausto explains, "recognizing the 'high art' system with its norms of privilege and exclusion would be intolerant to Chicano art, a non-art world centered network of support and information was established" ("Arte Chicano: Images of a Community" 56). He further explains that exhibitions would be mounted in spaces alternative to the museum or gallery space,

[45] Mechicano Art Center, Goez Gallery, and Self Help Graphics are other important hubs for Chicana/o art production in Los Angeles of that era that continue in operation, with the exception of Mechicano.

instead using community spaces like parks, storefronts, and meeting halls ("Arte Chicano" 56). During this period in LA Chicano history, Ybarra-Frausto notes the integration of art production with various other social, political and community events that encouraged viewers to engage with the art and artists ("Arte Chicano" 56). These accounts of the Chicano arts movement in 1970s Los Angeles reveal the high activity of community members in public spaces. Whether these spaces were specifically designed to foment Chicano artistic expression, like the community-arts centers, or whether they were impromptu locations like parks and streets deployed for other uses, these organized and concerted efforts to support Chicano artistic production show fundamental collective, public, and political aspects.

More than playing an auxiliary role in the Chicano Movement, art became a central aspect of knowledge production, political expression, and education through the production of poster art, muralism, political cartoons, theater, and other arts. Among the visual artists listed by Monteverde are Ruperto García, Salvador Roberto Torres, José Malaquías, Sergio Hernández, Esteban Villa, and Judith Elena Hernández. Monteverde's essay is one of the earliest attempts to document Chicano art and it is an important contribution as it records local art practices, goals, and philosophies. This chapter attests to the organized activity of Chicano artists and their activist role, as evident in the 1971 symposium by Chicano artists in Los Angeles where "representatives from the many organized groups of artists, read papers or addressed the audience," (Monteverde 56) revealing their political, activist, and educational engagement. The symposium points to a collective and organized attempt to discuss and define Chicano art, but it also allows us to analyze its political goals and visions. Monteverde explains, "judging from the art exhibited at the symposium, it appears that many artists are responding to the need for the communication of ideas on a popular level; the need to present a positive image of the Chicano

in reaction to the derogating stereotyping most apparent in movies and television" (56). This account of the symposium's preoccupations reveals several things. On the one hand, the push for "popular communication" was linked to the public and didactic aspect of *movimiento* art production, as opposed to an elitist or exclusionary type of art practice confined to private spaces and collections. Another primary concern was the challenging of stereotypical representations of Chicanos in mass media. The symposium's subject matter reveals a clear attempt to challenge dominant culture and Anglo hegemony as Chicano artists sought to create and circulate a "positive image of the Chicano." This impetus was constrained however by the essentialist and male-centered representations of *movimiento* discourse, both textually and visually. Chicano affirmation through a *macho*-oriented politics of representation became a hallmark of *El Movimiento,* resulting in the discursive erasure of Chicanas, as noted by Angie Chabram-Dernersesian (82). The discursive erasure of Chicanas happened not only in Chicano literary practices, but also in artistic representation, which can be clearly observed in 1960s and 70s muralism.

Recreating Los Angeles' Public Spaces Through the Mural

According to scholar of Chicano art, Shifra M. Goldman, "Muralism was the most important, widespread, cohesive, and publicized aspect of the Chicano art movement during the 1970s" (23). Chicano Movement muralism was inspired and influenced by Mexican muralism (1920s-70s) and the work of Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco also known as "Los Tres Grandes." In post-revolutionary Mexico, state-sponsored murals told stories of a glorious Aztec past, the Revolution, Mexican identity, and *mestizaje* and sustained a narrative of *mestizo* national cohesion and a Mesoamerican past. The use of murals in Mexico revealed the potential for this art form to pictorially narrate a story and

construct a history as well as physically lay claim to contested urban space, but at the expense of the exclusion of alternative narratives. In the United States, Chicano muralism, like Mexican muralism, remained dominated by male artists and reproduced a largely male-centered and nationalist iconography, employing public space to issue social and political commentary.[46] Chicano murals set out to tell a story, often one ingrained in Mexican history and cultural icons, such as revolutionaries Zapata and Villa, Aztec and Mayan gods, and the Virgin of Guadalupe as one of the few but most pervasive feminine portrayal. Similar images and icons appear in the Chicano murals of Chicano Park in San Diego and in many other cities with a Chicano/Latino population. Los Angeles as the city with the largest population of Mexican and Mexican-descent people in the United States became a Petri dish for emergent Chicano muralist aesthetics. Streets, freeways, underpasses, and other public spaces served as urban canvases for the creation of an estimated one thousand to fifteen hundred murals painted between 1969 and 1980 (Cockcroft and Barnet-Sánchez 10).

The murals' attempts at affirmation rested on the construction of a glorified history of male heroes, relying primarily on a patriarchal and masculine iconography that failed to recognize the roles and contributions of Chicanas, and upheld a vision of a homogeneously solidified Chicano male identity. Angie Chabram-Dernersesian has examined the ways Chicanas were written out of *movimiento* discourse as the Chican/O denomination "subsumed the Chicana into a universal ethnic subject that speaks with the masculine instead of the feminine and embodies itself in a Chicano male" (82). Guisela Latorre likewise explains, "during the late 1960s to the early 70s not only was there an absence of women creating murals, but also their presence in the iconographic programs of these public works was either omitted,

[46] Frank Romero's *Going to the Olympics,* for example, was painted on a wall of the Hollywood Freeway in downtown Los Angeles for the 1984 Olympic Games. On the other hand, Yrenia Cervantez's 1989 mural, "La Ofrenda," can be found under the Beverly Boulevard Bridge (over 2nd Street and Glendale Boulevard).

sexualized or circumscribed" (322). While Chicano muralism during this era of cultural nationalism and masculine-dominated politics was highly restrictive for female artists, female artists were constructing alternative stories and epistemologies. For instance, LA-based artists Judy Baca, Yreina Cervantez, Judith Hernandez, and others produced important murals during the period of the Chicano Movement, claiming Los Angeles public space and asserting Chicano and Chicana histories. Unlike the glorification of an Aztec past of warriors taken up by Chicano nationalists, Latorre argues that Chicana artists "not only offered an Indigenist aesthetic that allowed for an inclusion of gender, but also created a visual vocabulary that embraced many other intersecting identities (African-American, Central American, Lesbian, etc.)" (323). In many ways Chicana muralist production articulated different conceptualizations of Chicano identity, based on difference but also on a similar experience of Los Angeles' political dynamics as they manifested in space. Muralist and Professor Judy Baca explains that muralism figured as an important "artistic occupation of public space [that] forged a strong visual presence of a people who… lacked representation in public life, with neither voice in elections, nor elected representatives (Baca 109).

Baca is a particularly interesting figure for a study of Los Angeles Chicano public art, not only because she was an active muralist during Chicano Arts Movement of the 60s and 70s, but also because of her ongoing efforts to promote Los Angeles public art over the last four decades. Baca reflects on the significance of mural projects when she explains:

> The beginnings of muralism in Los Angeles are rooted in the need for public space and public expression. In a city where neighborhoods were uprooted through corporatization (as with the Chavez Ravine sports stadium) or the construction of freeways through low-income barrios or ghettos, or the destruction of rivers, the need to create sites of public memory became increasingly important. (117)

Baca underscores the urgency of claiming public space in a context of city encroachment on barrio space and dispossession and the role of muralism in asserting a Chicano presence in the streets. Raul Villa has written about the centrality of displacement to Chicano social identity since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo all the way to the construction of the freeway in 20th century Chicano barrios and how this history comes to bear in various resistive Chicano cultural forms (2). In the context of a material and representational struggle over space, Baca co-founded in 1976 the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), a community arts center based in Venice, California that has spearheaded multiple large-scale murals across the city and abroad. Baca's initiative to create a non-profit space with an emphasis on community access affirms the public aspect of muralism upheld by early Chicano/a artists, while at the same time Baca and SPARC support new generations of aspiring artists and students. In "Chicano/a Artivism: Judy Baca's Digital Work with Youth of Color," scholars Chela Sandoval and Guisela Latorre explore Baca's contributions to public art, social activism, and community engagement and particularly examine Baca's art and activist praxis to advance a type of "liberatory consciousness" among youth.

One example of Baca's public art projects is "The Great Wall of Los Angeles," a mural that depicts the untold histories of California's communities of color and one of the longest murals in existence. Measuring 2,754 feet in length, the mural is located in the Tujunga flood control channel of the San Fernando Valley. Baca began the mural in 1974 and over the course of the mural's production she has enlisted the help of 400 youth of various ethnic and class backgrounds. One section of the mural titled "Division of the Barrios & Chavez Ravine," depicts the forceful displacement of Chicano and Mexican inhabitants from their neighborhood as they

are literally torn apart by freeway structures (see Figure 6)[47]. In the mural, Dodger Stadium hovers over the primarily Mexican and Chicano neighborhoods in Chavez Ravine, whose imminent destruction is met by an upset young Chicana who is being physically restrained by a white police officer. Examining an archival photo of a real-life Chavez Ravine resident Aurora Vargas being taken from her home by sheriff deputies in 1959 reveals various similarities and differences with the 1974 mural. The photograph captures the struggle and pain of specific people, the Vargas family. Unlike the woman in the mural, Aurora Vargas carries an infant in her arms, while two girls –presumably her daughters of approximately 7 and 10 years old—look distressed by the forced evacuation scene. Judy Baca's mural, while not a rendering of this particular photo, captures the struggle of Chavez Ravine families and Los Angeles barrios more broadly. Her mural hinges on more symbolic and even surrealist depictions of Chavez Ravine with Dodger stadium portrayed as a flying saucer. While the photograph shows Aurora Vargas in her denim jeans and 50s hairstyle, Baca's mural depicts a much younger girl with clenched fist and long braids. As a critical piece of White power and hegemony in Los Angeles, Baca uses the Indigenist aesthetic to de-center the Anglo-american fashion trends used by Chicanas of the 1950s. At the same time, this Indigenist aesthetic typical of *movimiento* muralism exploits Indigenous culture to forge a romantic image of the Chicana not apparent in the archival photo. Moreover, the girl is painted with clenched fist in the air, an allusion to 1960s Black power and resistance that shows the story of the Chavez Ravine residents as a story of spatial dispossession but also resistance.

The mural underscores the enforcement role of the police in the removal of the Chavez Ravine families issuing a critique of the city's urbanization projects but also of the police. Using the concrete wall of the flood control channel to narrate a visual story about the histories of

[47] Images of these art pieces can be found at the end of this chapter.

social injustice and uneven urbanization is an example of Baca's physical and discursive reclaiming of urban space. By taking a public concrete wall that materially recalls the role of concrete structures, like freeways, Baca's muralism complicates Los Angeles' social urban space. Baca creates a physical imprint on the urban landscape but also creates a memory for Chicanos and other people of color by encouraging newer generations to participate in the unearthing of their own histories in Los Angeles. Baca explains that by doing this she hoped to engage the young people who otherwise "did not know their own history…and saw themselves as insignificant…powerless, as people that did not affect the place [where] they lived" ("SPARC: Great Wall"). Baca's reflection points to the importance of having a sense of ownership over public space, which she hoped to instill in the youth through the creation of art. Sandoval and Latorre read Baca's practice as a gesture "to empower youth of color by having them assist her in the reconstruction of these histories" (83). These scholars also note the democratic and collective quality that characterizes Baca's mural projects through the active recruitment of youth who become active participants in reconstituting collective memories and creating oppositional histories countering dominant narratives of white dominance, but also of Anglo and Chicano male dominance.

In the 1990s when Baca began to incorporate digital technology to produce digital murals she continued to foster collective muralism among the youth both outside and within the barrio and facilitated the incorporation of women. With the support of Baca, the digital lab at SPARC, UCLA students, and Boyle Heights residents, Chicana artist Alma López created six 8'x 9' digital murals on vinyl for Estrada Courts apartments in Boyle Heights in 1997 ("Maria De Los Angeles" 80). Estrada Courts is a working-class apartment compound known for its 1970s and

80s murals and also the site of "Los Cuatro Grandes,"[48] a 1993 mural by Chicano artist Ernesto de La Loza. One of Lopez's six digital murals, titled "Las Four," issues a feminist counter-narrative to the heroized male iconography of "Los Cuatro Grandes". Through a combination of classic and newer muralist practices, "Las Four" centers the images of eight women (and a stone carving of Aztec deity, Coyolxauhqui) and not four as the title suggests. In the forefront of the mural sit the four Estrada Courts residents, who are presided by almost spectral images of four historical women: the United Farm Workers co-founder Dolores Huerta, Mexican nun and poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a *soldadera* or *adelita,* a female fighter of the Mexican Revolution, and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan and Mayan peace activist (see Figure 7). Not only does the mural re-claim a physical space -the wall- of the apartment complex, where the majority of murals are male-produced and represent male icons, but the collective production of the mural is also the artists' claim of the public sphere that is often also gendered male. As a representational and social space, "Las Four" is a temporally and spatially multi-layered mural that represents various spaces and moments in the history of Chicana/Latina resistance and empowerment. Through the inclusion of historical figures Dolores Huerta, the soldadera, Menchú, and Sor Juana, the mural conjures a tradition of female labor, participation, and leadership in the farm worker struggle in California, the armed struggle in the Mexican revolution, the struggle for Mayan human rights in Guatemala, and the resistance to the monopoly of men over education, religion, and the public sphere in colonial Mexico. These periods and spaces coalesce with the present time/space of the mural (1997 Boyle Heights) to connect multiple histories of women resistance and leadership with the present conditions of the Boyle Heights residents, who are really the center focus of the piece. Like Chicanas of the

[48] Ernesto de La Loza's "Los Cuatro Grandes" or "The Big Four" shows Mexican-American UFW leader César Chávez, Mexican revolutionaries Zapata and Villa, and Mexican Golden Age film actor Mario Moreno "Cantinflas."

movimiento, who were not recognized as central figures within the Chicano Movement nor within its male-centered history and representations, Chicanas like Baca and Lopez in the 1990s continued to produce alternative feminist narratives through art. In the process, they helped carve social, public, representational and political spaces for Los Angeles' Chicanas and Latinas. Mural production as deployed by these artists allows for the collective and cooperative re-articulation of a place-memory that provides a more meaningful consideration of Latinas' roles in effecting political, social, and artistic transformations in California and beyond.

Asco (1972–1987): At the Margins of the Museum, on the Streets of East LA

Chicano art has primarily existed on the margins or borders of official cultural institutions where the arbiters of "high art" have played the role of cultural gatekeepers. Since the 1960s, critical Chicano art for the most part has been excluded from the Museum, which has resulted in artists' usage of public space in the barrio. This was the case of the East Los Angeles Chicano art group Asco, active from 1972 to 1987 and officially composed of Harry Gamboa Jr., Patssi Valdez, Gronk, and Willie Herrón. As pre-empted earlier in this chapter, this art group engaged in public art that contested white hegemonic discourses, but also tackled problems within Chicano culture. In fact, Ramón García contrasts Asco's public art to the more didactic muralism of the 60s and says that "while social realist muralism meant to instruct and educate, to mold a definitive and stable Chicano identity, Asco's performances, by using elements of daily life and the social space of East L.A., meant to question, confront and disturb the foundations of a Chicano identity that was already supposed to be complete" (10). Through the use of their bodies, any materials at their disposal, the public spaces of Los Angeles, and aesthetics of ephemerality, Asco launched a socially and politically charged commentary on the conditions of and within the barrio but also about a larger international stage. "Asco" the Spanish word for

"disgust" or "nausea" acquires a political meaning as adopted by the four artists because as Rita Gonzalez and Ondine Chavoya reflect, "The group found their shared purpose in depicting and reflecting the *revulsion* they felt about the effect of cataclysmic geopolitical events on their experience of local realities" (*my emphasis* 40).

Asco's conceptual and multi-faceted work operates simultaneously on different scales, the barrio, the city, the country, and the international stage to critique various coalescing forces affecting Chicanos locally but also by making visible the interconnections and contradictions created by U.S. imperial power. The Vietnam War is the major historical and transnational event re-appearing in Asco's early 1970s art. Asco's critique of the Vietnam War was anti-imperialist but also one that calls attention to the gendered, classed, and racial aspects of imperial policies and how they shape the local social spaces of communities of color and their bodies. While the Chicano Moratorium of 1970 was a large-scale Anti-Vietnam demonstration that used East Los Angeles public spaces to protest the war in a traditional format, Asco used the same spaces to make their critique through performance and installation art. Borrowing from a visual lexicon of Chicano and non-Chicano influences, Asco reclaimed Whittier Boulevard where one year earlier the local police had brought the Chicano Moratorium to an end. In 1971, Asco members Herrón, Gamboa Jr., and Gronk dressed as a calavera-like Christ, a zombie altar boy, and a defaced Pontius Pitate ("Internal Exiles" 192) respectively, embarked on their first public performance, *Stations of the Cross* (See Figure 8). Asco's re-imagining of the Catholic "stations of the cross"[49] focuses on the critique of the deaths produced by the Vietnam War. Chavoya describes the procession's final stop at the U.S. Marines Recruiting Center at the Goodrich Boulevard intersection where Herrón as Christ-figure installs a fifteen-foot cardboard cross ("Internal exiles" 192). While the procession itself is a performance or "walking mural", the placement of

[49] The stations of the cross typically depict Christ's journey to Mount Calvary where he would be crucified.

the cross is a physical art installation that engages the space of the street and the adjacent recruitment center. This site-specific installation conceptually works to protest the deaths of Chicanos in the Vietnam War and U.S. military violence more broadly. While Christ's crucifixion is often read in religious terms as the ultimate sacrifice where Jesus submits himself willingly to the people in power, Asco's "hit-and-run" art installation is not one of submission, but one of critique and irreverence to U.S. international imperial policy abroad and domestic policies of surveillance and policing at home. Asco's *Stations of the Cross* engages the local social space of East Los Angeles to make visible the connections of racial State-sanctioned violence against the Vietnamese with the violence committed to the East LA barrio and its populations.

Yet, by utilizing a combination of Catholic imagery and campy aesthetics, Asco works from within the religious and cultural imagery seen in macho-centered muralism and other cultural expression, such as tattoos, to create a sort of cognitive dissonance that rejects macho conceptions of bravery. This practice is an example of what Ramon García calls "Chicano Camp". García defines Chicano Camp "against *rasquache"* and proposes significant distinctions. Identifying two types of Chicano Camp, he is careful to emphasize that there is a multiplicity of traditions and not one essentialist form of Chicano art. As he suggests, Chicano Camp contested the male-centered muralism of the 1960s that emphasized cultural cohesion and identity affirmation. Chicano Camp, as described by García, is a more critical strain of aesthetics than *rasquachismo,* as it is in tension with both dominant Anglo culture and Chicano culture. Stated simply, García argues that "while a *rasquache* aesthetics aims at affirmation, a Chicano Camp aesthetic aims at criticizing and problematizing Chicano culture from within (6). *Stations of the*

Cross works to critique U.S. militarism in Vietnam, but also to problematize Chicano participation in the war through a spatially conscious art practice that utilizes Catholic imagery.

In "From Beats to Borders: an alternative history of Chicano art in California," Chon Noriega traces the history of Chicanos' alternative art practices and Asco's ephemeral artwork, like performance and instant murals, but which relied on documentation through photography. Noriega elaborates:

> [Asco's] art had neither the imprimatur of museums nor the support of the art market. If in Conceptual art the idea prevails over the object, documentation nevertheless secures that idea to the object-driven system that Conceptual art challenges. Conceptualism has been an insider's critique articulated through a well-documented exhibition history. (362)

As Noriega suggests, photography for Asco becomes an important documentation tool that solidifies the conceptual work being done by the artists. The photographs create an archive and history of Asco's art actions, as it does with Ramiro Gomez's work, which I'll explore subsequently. This practice of photography would prove valuable for the preservation of a Chicano art archive that was not being documented or historicized by the official channels of art and culture. What is more, the key role that photography would play in Asco's legacy, hints at the importance of the materiality of ephemeral public art. Even as conceptualism de-centers the object and prioritizes the idea, the public art's conceptual work cannot be understood without its connection to the art materials and spaces. Even in its ephemerality –or because of it- Asco's critique works conceptually through its use of specific LA urban spaces, which are also captured in the photographs.

At the local level, the disparities created by uneven spatial development lead not only to impoverished schools and neighborhoods, but also to uneven access to the resources of official cultural institutions. Noriega relates the well-known story about the origin of *Spray Paint*

LACMA (see Figure 9), a mural/graffiti work by Asco on the walls of LACMA that speaks to the politics of exclusion underlining museum space. After having been denied exhibition space at LACMA because "Chicanos don't make art, they're in gangs" (Gamboa Jr. in Noriega 361), Asco members, Herrón, Gronk, and Gamboa Jr., decided to create a mural on LACMA's exterior walls by spray painting their signatures. Afterward, they took a photo of their fourth member (Valdez) standing by the mural to document their art action. Noriega suggests that this piece serves as an allegory for the exclusion of Chicano art from museums, but it also demonstrates the reclamation of public space, if only through unofficial –in fact illegal- art forms, such as graffiti[50]. *Spray Paint LACMA* as mural, performance, photograph, and protest provides a precedent for public artists that are not accepted within the museum, surreptitiously using public space to ascertain the public aspect of critical art, especially one that protests the museums' exclusionary aspects. As an example of these visible spatial and cultural inequalities one could examine the location of museums, which in Los Angeles are primarily found in affluent areas on the Westside, including Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Page Museum, the Craft and Folk Art Museum, the Petersen Automotive Museum, and the Architecture and Design Museum on "museum row" in the Miracle Mile neighborhood and The Hammer Museum, The Getty, and The Getty Villa in Westwood and Malibu, respectively. This is not to suggest that there are no museums outside of these areas in LA. Indeed, MOCA is found in Bunker Hill, an extremely gentrified area in downtown Los Angeles. The Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) is located in Long Beach, outside of the Los Angeles urban center, and in some ways its peripheral location is metaphoric for its removal from the center of dominant culture. These spatial

[50] There has been a long tradition of graffiti as a subversive practice of spatial claiming in the barrio and this practice has been adopted by Chicano artists, such as Chaz Bojorquez and Asco to acknowledge the radical practices of youth graffiti artists, while refuting notions of graffiti as "low" art.

divisions and exclusions are reflected not only in the location of the museums but also in their lack of accessibility to a diverse group of artists and patrons.

Gomez's Cardboard Art: De-fetishizing Latino Labor in LA Public Space

In the United States, Latinos are overrepresented in the industries of food preparation and serving, cleaning and maintenance, construction, and agriculture, while being the most underrepresented group in the areas of management and business, science and engineering, health care, and arts and education (Brown and Patten). The discrepancy is more acute for foreign-born Latinos as compared to other ethnic groups and even to U.S.-born Latinos. This marked racial division in the U.S. labor force is reflective of economic asymmetries that for their part have social and political repercussions. Nevertheless, it is this socio-economic landscape that informs Ramiro Gómez's body of work as he interrupts Los Angeles' actual landscapes to call attention to its spaces, their production, and the Latino labor that is used for their social and physical reproduction.

Born in San Bernardino, California to Mexican immigrant parents, artist Gómez is inspired by the everyday experiences of Latino laborers in the greater Los Angeles area. His own experience as a live-in nanny in West Hollywood, Beverly Hills and the Hollywood Hills, also informs his artwork and mission of "documenting the predominantly Hispanic workforce that works tirelessly behind the scenes to maintain the beautiful imagery of these affluent areas" (Gómez). For the most part, Gómez captures the quotidian scenes of Latino domestic laborers, such as nannies, housekeepers, gardeners, and other service-sector workers such as janitors and valet attendants in streets, parks, and in other public and domestic spaces. In this section, I will examine his public art installations to make the argument that this type of art action de-fetishizes or makes visible the hidden relationships behind the places of exhibition and the actual manual

labor that goes into their maintenance. I also want to note that in terms of visibility, there is a tension between Latinos' hyper-visibility and invisibility. Latinos are hyper-visible through processes of racialization that are tied to apparatuses meant to restrict movement vis-a-vi immigration policies and policing, but also in terms of the surveillance of brown and black communities in urban spaces, which I have explored in chapter two. At the same time, Latinos as low-wage workers can be rendered not hyper-visible, but invisible. This invisibility is not only of their bodies, but also their labor: for example a clean window, a manicured lawn, a painted wall, become naturalized objects or spaces. Marx's idea of commodity fetishism describes how the "commodity reflects the social characteristics of …labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves" (Marx in Tucker 320). In other words, the value of a commodity, like a table or chair, is seen as objective and inherent to that object, rather than a product of real labor. This fetishism, I argue happens also in space. While Latino gardeners or janitors are providing a service, and not manufacturing a product for exchange in the market, their labor indeed transforms spaces. Yet, the spaces become fetishized when the labor becomes unseen or erased.

Gómez's installation series of human-sized cardboard Latino workers, which have piqued the interest of scholars, art galleries, and mainstream media like the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* in the last few years are placed in real sites of labor. For this type of work, Gómez draws inspiration from urban scenes with real-life workers, whom he later *re*presents in the form of cardboard paintings, including a self-portrait in his role as nanny. Some are displayed in the places where Gómez first saw the workers who inspired the pieces. These locations are public streets or parks in Beverly Hills, Westwood, Hollywood and other affluent areas with highly manicured lawns and luxurious facades. Gómez installs the art oftentimes without

permission and unaware of what kind of reception it will elicit from the public or the owners of the adjacent private property. The cardboard silhouettes become part of the scenery creating in the process an interactive public art scene outside of official institutional spaces. Art installation is generally site-specific and Gómez's artistic process involves several steps, including: 1) conceptual planning, 2) painting on cardboard, 3) selection of exhibition space, 4) art action (installing the piece), 4) documentation through photography, and 6) dissemination of the photograph through the Internet. Since the art installations are temporary, Gómez uses photography to document and disseminate on his website *Happy Hills* and Facebook page. This online exhibition continues the public circulation of the art and creates a more lasting carbon copy of the transient and transitory cardboard pieces. In the present, the Internet provides new "public" spaces to exhibit and promote art; these spaces were not available to Latino muralists of the 60s and 70s and to Asco in the 70s and 80s. Cyber spaces have a certain potential for public access at the state, national, and international scales. In a way, through photography, Gómez's work has the potential to reach a wider audience than they do as physical art installations. The latter are limited spatially and temporally due to their ephemeral lifespan as cardboard and because pedestrians would have to walk by their specific location at a specific time to be able to see the artwork live. Nevertheless, installation in actual physical spaces is necessary for the artwork to create a critical commentary and dialogue with those real spaces and their underlying relations of social production.

Gomez's recycling of materials available at hand to produce ephemeral art that maintains a working-class perspective is akin to the idea of *rasquachismo* and it also appears in Asco's work. The concept of *rasquachismo* is useful to think about Gómez public art as it emphasizes an

art practice that is rooted in a material and social reality. Ybarra-Frausto is useful again when he explains that:

> Pulling through and making do are not guarantors of security, so things that are *rasquache* possess an ephemeral quality, a sense of temporality and impermanence –here today and gone tomorrow. While things might be created *al troche y moche* (slapdash) using whatever is at hand, attention is always given to nuances and details. (6)

Ybarra-Frausto implies a connection between aesthetic sensibility and material reality and we can draw the connection that they have a mutually constitutive relationship. By this I mean that aesthetic ephemerality can be seen as both product and productive of a social condition rooted in material precariousness. Real-life workers, like their cardboard representations can be "here today and gone tomorrow". This "sense of temporality and impermanence" is marked by a prolonged experience of being vulnerable. While Gómez's art installations are not entirely or even primarily *rasquache,* there are subtle elements of *rasquachismo* that appear in his aesthetics of ephemerality. On the one hand, his installations feature the Latino worker and reflect a working-class perspective rarely represented in dominant forms of art. By way of asserting the dignity of the exploited, Gómez partakes in a long tradition of public and political art that espouses an oppositional stance to dominant culture. Like earlier *rasquache* art, Gomez reflects "an attitude rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability yet mindful of stance and style" (Ybarra-Frausto 2). Secondly, the worker silhouettes made of recycled cardboard and not the traditional cotton canvas feature an ephemeral quality that Ybarra-Frausto argues is key to *rasquachismo*. The use of cardboard as canvas reflects Gómez's "resourcefulness and adaptability," but it also speaks to the fungibility of the laborer that is easily replaceable in a neoliberal condition. In this condition, Gomez's work suggests, Latino labor is ephemeral both in terms of the Latino laboring body making up this work force and the labor itself.

The idea of disruption or *interruption* (as Gómez calls it) of space through the literal embodiment of the Latino worker is not self-directed. It does not posit a critique of the worker but rather suggests a strong critique of the fact that this labor is unacknowledged although it supports the luxury lifestyles of the privileged classes. In the process, Gómez's work calls attention to the gendered and racialized aspects of this workforce. The cardboard bodies are an artificial stand-in for the actual workers, but it is the obvious artificiality of the cardboard people that makes a visual and material reassertion of the unacknowledged real-life worker. Historian George Lipsitz refers to Gómez's installations in the city as a kind of repopulation of Los Angeles. Lipsitz considers Gómez's artistic act in the public space important because "it is a provocation in space but also because it insists that people have the right to work, they have the right to live, they have the right to seek decent wages" (Lipsitz). He gestures to the social critique underpinning Gómez work. By drawing attention to the worker and her or his body, Gómez de-centers the workers' finalized product that is of value to consumers—mowed lawns, clean houses, picture-perfect storefronts, well-cared-for babies, etc.—and instead the artwork spotlights the life and humanity of the worker. In so doing, Gómez's public art practice makes visible the social, economic, and environmental relations that mark unequal power relations inscribed in space. More specifically, the artist's installation of the cardboard figures underscores the workers' simultaneous familiarity and disconnection to those spaces, revealing a contradiction created by capital: the underlying estrangement of the workers from the fruits of their labor. Stated differently, by incorporating the cardboard laborers to the place of work, the artist reveals that each site of wealth and privilege is at once also a site of exploitation and exclusion.

Greetings from the Beverly Hills Hotel (see Figure 10) is a multifaceted piece: it is an public art installation, art action, photograph, but it is also done in the style of postal or mail art "sent" through the Internet. *Greetings* shows a cardboard Latino gardener standing by a sign that reads "The Beverly Hills Hotel entrance." The sign, presumably welcoming hotel guests, makes clear the location of the installation and calls attention to the social location of the gardener. The photograph shows the gardener on the sidewalk, a public space, but one should note that it is the exclusivity of the private space of the hotel that is featured prominently in the length of the photograph. The element of exclusivity is exacerbated by the foliage of the plants that function as a barrier between public and private space in the photograph. Moreover, the location of the worker at the margins of the hotel underscores his social location also on the margins, which contrasts with the hotel guest that can be barely perceived well within the hotel grounds. Thus the barrier between private and public is at once a social and economic one, separating laborer from consumer, the have from the have-not. In fact, the juxtaposition highlights the gardener's socio-economic reality confirming that the "entrance" sign is not meant for him.

Framing *Greetings from the Beverly Hills Hotel* as postal art is possible by the title that mimics language typical of postcards. This postal art framework is useful and important as it allows for a reading of the international implications of the piece. The title implies that someone is sending "greetings" from the hotel and it is through allusion of a sender who is visiting the hotel either for business or pleasure that global capital is represented. The photograph frames what would otherwise be postcard-perfect scenery: blue skies, lush tropical vegetation, and a famous hotel known for its A-list guests in a popular tourist destination in Los Angeles. The neighborhood of Beverly Hills, well known due to films and television, is a symbol for global capital, real estate value, celebrities, and luxury consumerism (i.e. Rodeo Drive). Indeed, this

affluent neighborhood is a romanticized hollywoodesque setting that features beautiful mansions and hotels, but the images that are not tied to these places in the popular imaginary are those of the racialized and gendered labor that make such romantic ideals of place possible within domestic national spaces and in the imaginary of the U.S. abroad. In “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin exposes the commodification and fetishization produced by the film industry and concludes that “the cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the ‘spell of the personality,’ the phony spell of a commodity” (231). However, the central feature of Gómez’s “postcard” is the everyday anonymous worker and not the idealized, individualized, and hyper-visible movie star. Rather, the characterization of the cardboard gardener with backpack leaf blower and dust mask covering his face makes him anonymous and de-individualizes him. This de-individualization comments on the collective experience of Latino workers and their occluded manual labor that maintains the beauty of tourist places like as Hollywood and Beverly Hills.

Through the postcard motif of *Greetings*, Gómez underscores the collusion of global capital in the production of inequalities within the United States and abroad. The postcard connects local Los Angeles spaces with the international traveler of privilege. Luxury hotels around the world cater to international travelers whose mobility is made possible by free market polices. For its part, the tourist industry relies on the commodification of places for the comfort and access not of local populations but travelers with access to capital. In the case of Beverly Hills, as represented by Gomez, this local space is haunted by unmentioned cities around the world where the service and hospitality economies are made possible by the exploitation of service workers. Similarly, George Lipsitz reminds us how Gómez’s cardboard art connects the

local with the global landscape when he notes that this art "also puts in L.A. a ghostly reminder of the fact that it was the North American Free Trade Agreement, it was U.S. capital penetration of Mexico and other parts of Central and South America, that has created the asset-stripping, the centralization, the confiscation of land, the forced migration of people to low-wage jobs in the U.S." (Lipsitz).

Gómez's Magazine Ad-work: Closing the Public-Private Divide via Domestic Labor

Examining the artwork of Gómez, which takes many forms and sizes, allows us to explore issues of space and place, but it also facilitates a discussion about the gendered and racialized nature of labor that creates the condition of possibility for the privileged, propertied, middle-class home in the U.S. While Gomez works with different media and has displayed his artwork in diverse spaces, I will primarily focus on work that is exhibited in non-gallery spaces (streets, parks, the Internet). However, due to the intricate connection between spaces of labor, spaces of art, and private spaces, in this section I will examine work from *Domestic Scenes,* a 2014 solo exhibition at the Charlie James Gallery in Los Angeles. In the previous section, this chapter focused on Gómez's work as engaging the public space by "interrupting" it through the representation and re-embodiment of Latino laborers often overlooked in the urban landscape by enacting a type of oppositional or resistive art practice that calls attention to the lived work experience of the racialized laborer in a neoliberal state. This section, however, will explore the ways Gómez's work not only interrupts public spaces, but critiques the liberal state's logic of separate private and public spheres. Grace Hong's *Ruptures of American Capital* and Amalia Mesa-Bains' "*Domesticana*: The Sensibility of Chicana *Rasquache,"* are texts that help to complicate the notion of domestic/public labor and allow us to consider how Gómez's work is

productive in exploring the contemporary role of Latino labor in the domestic sphere and the continuities of racialized inequalities.

The fact that domestic wage labor as nannies, caregivers, maids, and housekeepers is a combination of both wage labor and domestic work speaks to the condition of possibility for exploitative relations of power both in the home and in public spaces and in the process erases distinctions between public and domestic space. Specifically, this section will focus on Gómez's exhibition *Domestic Scenes,* which as the title suggests has the domestic space as its primary object, one that underscores the hyper-racialization of domestic labor. The exhibition is composed of three different series or bodies of work. The first is a set of paintings on canvas that reinterpret, reappropriate, and redeploy Southern California domestic scenes originally rendered by British artist David Hockney in the 1960s. The second group is a magazine series that entails Gómez's interruption of advertisements from interior design magazines, such as Architectural Digest, by painting into the ads the missing Latino labor.[51] Also comprising the exhibition is a set of paintings in trompe- l'œil, depicting notes from employers to their housekeepers, nannies, and gardeners on yellow legal paper; the messages show to-do lists, grocery lists, and instructions. *Domestic Scenes* makes apparent the centrality of Latino labor not only to the *functioning* of the middle and upper class home, but to its actual production as a hegemonic idealization of normative domesticity.

Gómez's *Domestic Scenes* makes visible the very direct ways in which racialized and gendered labor is used to maintain and protect white domesticity and its domestic spaces in present United States. For instance, *No Splash* (see Figure 11), Gómez's riff on *A Bigger Splash* (see Figure 12), a 1967 painting by David Hockney, reimagines the portrayed neat and cared-for exterior of a Southern California home. While the Hockney piece centers on "a bigger splash" of

[51] Artist Statement. *Domestic Scenes*. http://www.cjamesgallery.com/artist-detail/ramiro-Gómez

water in a pool, the version by Gómez features two people: a Latina housekeeper and a Latino pool cleaner engaged in cleaning. What the original painting elides and Gómez's rendition makes visible is the domestic labor literally at work in the painting. Hockney underscores the finalized and idealized domestic space whereas Gómez makes the laboring bodies the centerpiece of his version; the latter consciously offers a counter narrative to the original piece. "No Splash" (2013) issues a critical commentary about the pervasiveness of class, gender, and race inequalities by making a material link of its rendition to the 1960s, a decade marked by social, political, and cultural movements and supposed civil rights gains. "No Splash" shows the fallacy of the American Dream, American progress, and neoliberal multiculturalist narratives of ethnic inclusion. While it would be incorrect to collapse the social and economic landscape of the 1960s with the 21st century, what "No Splash" reveals is the continuities of structural inequalities and the ongoing exploitation of the racialized and gendered body in the production of surplus value and the bourgeois home. U.S. multiculturalist narratives would suggest open access to private property and a life of leisure, but as Hong argues, "The U.S. state reproduces itself through the differential racializations of people of color through the lack of access to private property" (34).

The white bourgeois home and its reliance on the wage labor of people of color is the object of critique in Gómez's magazine interruptions. As mentioned earlier, this type of work consists of the "interrupting" or subverting magazine product advertisements with the image of Latino laborers that make the advertised pristine spaces possible. There is a tradition of changing the intended message of advertisements by altering the ad through surreptitious actions, what corporate owners may think of as vandalism, but is known as "subvertising" or subverting advertising. It is worth citing at length Gómez's impetus behind this subvertising art in his own words:

> I realize luxury home magazines, printed and marketed for the ultra-affluent are not intended for me. I am a nanny, a transient worker in a wealthy community… I read these magazines on my breaks. As I turn the pages, I recognize that the polished images selectively leave out those whose job it is to maintain what is displayed. I wanted to interrupt that. I began painting images of workers into the magazine pages that otherwise make us invisible. In that small artistic act I became empowered. (*Luxury, Interrupted)*

Gómez's personal experience as a nanny clearly informs his artwork and his political project of uncovering and highlighting the hidden Latino labor in the affluent American home. The racialized and gendered labor that allows for the cleanliness, running, and ideological creation of a white space of domesticity comes to the fore in Gómez's pieces, and creates a dialogue with the advertised products and spaces. When the advertisements of high-end furniture in upscale magazines advertise empty spaces or spaces with white families, they erase the labor that is used in the upkeep of those romanticized spaces.

This can be observed in *Guadalupe and the kids, afterschool*, a subvertised ad that originally only depicted a scene in the family room of an affluent home, where two white children can be found on bean bags relaxing after a day of school (see Figure 13). Yet, Gómez paints in the figure of "Guadalupe," a Latina woman who can be seen picking up after the children's toys in the background. This particular "domestic scene" works at various conceptual levels as notions of leisure and work, racialization and whiteness, affluence and dispossession provide a complex imagery that allows us to consider notions of domestic labor and motherhood. Female immigrants from Central American and Mexico have filled the demand for nannies and housekeepers in American urban centers in recent decades. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila utilize research on domestic work in the Los Angeles and Riverside Counties to explore emerging family configurations as a result of this demand of domestic laborers. More specifically, they explore the idea of "Latina transnational motherhood," noting that a number of

Latin American women who perform these jobs may have children of their own in their countries of origin. They explain that "historically and in the contemporary period, paid domestic workers have had to limit or forfeit primary care of their families and homes to earn income by providing primary care to the families and homes of employers, who are privileged by race and class" (395). *Guadalupe and the kids, afterschool* puts into visual representation what sociologists Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila investigate through scholarship. Gómez's domestic scenes not only underline the immigrant women's domestic wage labor, but also the affective costs of caring for the wealthier families, while presumably not being able to provide the same affective labor and mothering for their own children. Domestic labor in the private sphere then takes different meanings vis-à-vis gender, race, and class, blurring the line between the public sphere as the realm of waged-work and the domestic space as the realm of affect. This destabilizes notions of strictly separate public and private spheres, an ideology of liberalism that emphasizes ideas of private space.

Amalia Mesa-Bains's concept of *domesticana,* a reworking of Ybarra-Frausto's *rasquachismo,* describes the aesthetic practices of Chicana women in the domestic sphere, such as weaving, knitting, and altar making. *Domesticana* offers a term that acknowledges the aesthetic contributions of Chicanas within the private sphere and encourages their dissemination in the public sphere as forms of art, providing a framework for Chicana artistic production that is in tension with mainstream notions of art and with machista regulations of Chicanas' access to public spaces. I want to consider Gómez's art practice of subvertising as having an element of *domesticana.* Stated differently, Gómez takes a mundane object (magazine ad) in the home and through creative expression deploys the object for circulation in the public sphere, willfully

bringing the private into the public and showing how the private is also already a site of social relations expressed in the public sphere.

At the Margins of The Museum: From Asco to Ramiro Gómez

In his installations, Gómez displays one-dimensional figures of workers in places where they normally figure as invisible workers. By contrasting images of workers with real workers in places of work, Gómez makes visible the contesting narratives in tension and challenges the mainstream public imaginary tied to these places of privilege. Gómez produces work that engages the function of hegemonic cultural institutions as the arbiters of "higher" cultural art forms. Museums are instrumental in sustaining a cultural hegemony and in weaving national or master narratives. In the oft-cited 1940 essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin makes evident the dynamics of power and violence undergirding the Museum as an institution and states, "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Benjamin 256). Benjamin maintains that the museum is testament to wars and power struggles as the national "treasures" held are indeed the spoils of war, violence, and death, and it is this barbarism that fundamentally gives origin to these cultural repositories. Museums are clear examples of institutional spaces that are wielded to write master cultural narratives and dominant histories, and as such, they are sites of political struggles.

In spite of Gómez's claim that his art is not intended to be "political," his art installations reveal a "political unconscious" that can be observed not only in the end cultural product but in the deliberate and well-thought-out process that characterizes Gómez's commentary about the service worker's place in American society, showcasing a feature of Chicano Camp that "involves a much more conscious and critical representation of working class culture" (García 6). What is different about Gómez's work is the location of his art pieces. As opposed to artwork

more clearly identified as Camp by Ramon García, such as Asco's work from the 70s and 80s, Gómez does not install his art in the *barrio*. Rather, he engages sites of wealth in Los Angeles's Westside and makes them visible as sites of dispossession. Choosing to engage these particular spaces of privilege suggests a particular kind of conceptual, theoretical, and political work because rather than placing the image of the Latino body in the *barrio* –a place where the Latino body would be expected- Gómez chooses to highlight the presence of Latino laborers in places of privilege, underscoring their underprivileged position as manual workers. Through this installation work he calls attention to the ongoing spatial divisions across racial and class lines in Los Angeles. Implicitly the work criticizes gentrification and the fact that while de jure segregation laws have been outlawed, there is a more complex matrix of economic and social apparatuses that continue to maintain economic and social inequalities and segregation, social practices that are perpetuated and made visible in space if only one looks closely at spaces of privilege that underpin the dispossession of others.

Through his work on postcards and cardboard Ramiro Gómez calls attention to the Museum as a site of power and exclusion. Like Asco's *Spray Paint LACMA,* forty years later, Ramiro Gómez issues a critique of LACMA in *Custodians near Urban Light*, *LACMA* (see Figure 14). In this piece, Gómez has "interrupted" or changed the space of a LACMA postcard featuring a photograph of *Urban Light*, an art installation at the museum's Wilshire Boulevard entrance by Chris Burden consisting of 202 antique cast iron street lamps, that is popular among tourists and museum visitors for selfies and other photographs and thus has become an icon associated with the museum structure itself. Gómez's postcard shifts the attention from the famous Burden lamp installation to two custodians at work, creating a counter narrative to the original piece. Focusing on the custodial staff, Gómez shows the irony of a place that is

repository for artifacts and art whose primary objective is to be visually consumed: the objects are to be actively engaged, carefully observed, and appreciated. Through careful consideration of space, location, and other curatorial aspects, the museum promotes the hypervisibility of the art pieces as they are maximized for aesthetic display. On the other hand, Gómez's willful inclusion of the often unseen custodial workers, calls on the viewer to provide that same attention to the less glamorized and hidden aspects of the museum: racialized service workers, who access the museum as workers. Gómez's piece introduces the presence of Latino janitors to the museum not as privileged patrons but as part of a racialized labor force that is used all over the city and it proposes that we look at the invisible as part of the complex network of social and power relations that make the museum function, both in the practical sense (the running of the building), as well as in the abstract and ideological (the creation of a hierarchical discriminatory system of valorization of art that separates "high art" and upper classes from "low art"/ "not art" and the working classes).

While Gómez has exhibited his work in galleries and museums as well as public spaces,[52] there is an element of ephemerality in his postcard and cardboard work that is difficult to detect in a cast-iron installation, such as Burden's *Urban Light.* The latter is on public display at LACMA, whose exhibition reach through its institutional power promotes the dissemination of featured work on postcards, pamphlets, website, on site, etcetera. On the other hand, *Custodians near Urban Light* -a critique of this very institution- is unlikely to be acquired by the museum and thus it will have to exist outside of the museum, limiting its public dissemination. The exhibition reach of Gómez's painting on postcard is further restricted due to its small 4" X 6"

[52] Gómez has exhibited his work in colleges and universities, including UCSD and UCLA. At the latter, the artist had a solo exhibition in 2013 titled *Luxury, Interrupted.* That same year he completed his first mural titled "The Caretakers (Los Cuidadores)" at the City of West Hollywood Park, which depicts three nannies and one gardener at work. The mural is based on real-life people that the artist met while working as a nanny.

size as it cannot be displayed in the public sphere like Gómez's human-sized cardboard installations. Yet, the artist has found ways of disseminating his work more widely, namely through his blog website and social media outlets. While the benefits and detriments of cyberspace continue to be conjectured and debated by scholars from various fields, what we see in the case of Chicano art is the liberating possibilities of using cyberspace to exhibit artwork without the censorship of the museum or of interest groups, such as in the case of Alma López's *Our Lady*[53]. Chicano *artivists* use digital media and the World Wide Web to explore themes relevant to their own experiences.

Likewise, the Internet has afforded a space for Gómez's artwork, promoted his work, and resulted in greater exposure, garnering attention from media and academic circles. Another important aspect about using the Internet to circulate photographs of paintings or more ephemeral art such as performance or installation work is the documentation process that takes place. To disseminate online, the artist must make a digital copy, whether by taking a photo or scanning. This encourages a practice of documentation for the archive for site-specific installations and smaller pieces and as noted by Chon Noriega "documentation nevertheless secures that idea to the object-driven system that Conceptual art challenges" (362). In addition, online exhibition allows the artist to reach a wider public than the foot traffic in the original places of installation, especially if these places are affluent neighborhoods with limited access to people of diverse social classes and ethnicities. Still, it is also important to note a distinction

[53] Artist Alma López was part of the 2001 *Cyber Arte: Tradition Meets Technology* exhibition at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Among the artwork was López's print *Our Lady,* which represented the Virgin of Guadalupe in an unconventional manner (clad in roses and exposing legs and stomach, hands on hips, and assertive gaze). The print was subject to a strong backlash from the local religious community, sparking a heated debate and drawing the attention of the press. Those who opposed the print's display were community activist Jose Villegas, Deacon Anthony Trujillo, and New Mexico Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, among others. Vigils and protests were organized to protest the exhibition of *Our Lady,* demanding that the museum remove the image from the exhibition. The museum decided to keep the print on display but this case reveals how interests groups and museums can censure the work of critical or political artists.

between the cyber-dissemination of *Custodians* from the more radical and on-site graffiti statement that Asco made in 1972. While conceptually the two pieces share a similar critique of the museum's exclusionary character, *Spray Paint LACMA* was a direct engagement with the physical museum structure and a sign of protest, whereas Gómez's interruption of the museum "space" occurs on a more abstract and indirect level since he interrupts a representation of the museum, rather than the museum itself. Nevertheless, Gómez has expressed interest in making a full-size version of *Custodians near Urban Light* at the museum "with or without permission."[54]

Chicano artists have responded to the Museum's restrictive aspects both in its historical exclusion of "lower" art forms (Asco) and also in its limited access for working-class people except by virtue of their working there (Gómez). The politics of exclusion have changed over time and LACMA, as well as other museums, have more recently featured exhibitions by Latino/Chicano artists, but the inclusion is limited and suspect[55]. As Arlene Dávila argues in *Barrio Dreams*, there is a consumption and marketing of *Latinidad* for profit. In examining the move of the Museum for African Art from the Soho neighborhood to East Harlem, Dávila reminds us that various cultural projects have entrepreneurial aspects that "favor marketable ethnicity, not as a medium of inclusion or assertion but of cooptation or economic development" (24). Multiculturalist projects do not translate as meaningful or comprehensive inclusion of various cultures. In the case of art institutions in Los Angeles, this is made apparent when one considers that Latinos make up 48.3% of the Los Angeles County population and 38.4% of California's population and yet there is no Chicano/Latino museum in the city center.[56] The Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), on the other hand, is a space dedicated to Latin

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[54] Gómez commented on social media page (Facebook) on June 5, 2014.

[55] One example is LACMA's 2008 exhibition, *Phantom Sightings*: *Art after the Chicano Movement,* featuring approximately 125 works by dozens of artists, and the largest exhibition of Chicano art at that museum to date.

[56] Report by the Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project: Mapping the Latino Population, By State, County and City by Anna Brown and Mark Hugo Lopez. August 29, 2013.

American art in the nearby city of Long Beach and joins the California African-American Museum and Japanese-American National Museum in featuring alternative histories to European-American cultures. MOLAA features art from Latin America and some art from U.S.-born Latinos, although Chicano artists have expressed frustration in accessing the exhibition space, such as Alma López, who feeling marginalized in the museum world in general, also feels excluded from MOLAA which in her opinion "seems only to exhibit the art of non-U.S.-born Latinos" ("Silencing" 256). Moreover, MOLAA's location in the periphery makes it to an extent inaccessible to the large concentration of working-class Latino people that live in the inner-city and suburban areas of San Bernardino, Riverside, Pico Rivera, and other more remote areas.

While MOLAA's emphasis on Latin American art limits a substantial presentation of US-based work, it does support emerging artists through The Collaborative, a public art project located in Long Beach just one mile away from the museum. The Collaborative was spearheaded by the Arts Council for Long Beach in conjunction with MOLAA to "raise awareness of both emerging artists and innovative approaches to art" (Arts Council). In contrast to MOLAA's more conventional approach, The Collaborative supports less established artists whose reflections on society speak to a more contemporaneous urban experience. In 2014, Gómez was among five Latina/o and Latin-American artists whose work explored themes of diaspora and "the Latin American condition in Los Angeles" in the exhibition "Distant Parallels," at The Collaborative. In this show, Gómez featured "Ephemeral labor," a site-specific installation depicting a male janitor cleaning The Collaborative's windows (see Figure 15). The installation, as Gómez designed it, engages the exhibition space so that they complement each other to create a dialogue or narrative. In other words, the surrounding space completes the piece and through this mechanism it inseparably connects the critique produced by the installation with the locale of

exhibition. "Ephemeral labor" explores the condition of the laborer and his body in a capitalist system and the ephemerality and precariousness of low-wage labor by a worker that can be easily replaced. This sense of ephemerality is echoed by the cardboard material on which the painting is created. One can also read the allusion in the title "ephemeral labor" to mean the short-term product that is a clean window, as it will need to be cleaned again and again, requiring new labor power. The piece's underlying critique cannot be separated from the exhibition space and it is this political and critical aspect of the work that makes it less likely to be acquired by a conventional museum, as it would call attention to the relations of power undergirding the museum itself and its fetishization as a place for art, culture, beauty, and aesthetics, by revealing the reality of the "unrefined" labor therein imbricated.

Conclusion

I have considered in this chapter the work of various California Chicano/a artists, particularly with regard to the 1968 – 2014 period. In examining the recent art production of L.A.-based artist Ramiro Gómez, I have explored more recent currents of Chicano/a art and the continued use of art for social protest and political commentary. Drawing attention to spaces and places of exhibition, reveal a history of Chicano/a art existing at the margins of both the museum and mainstream culture (something that has been changing in recent years). Because of the limited access to the museum and other official spaces of exhibition, Chicano/a artists have used a variety of spaces and strategies for exhibition. This art can be found especially in community-based arts centers in the *barrio* and in outdoor spaces, such as freeways and bridges, parks, and storefronts. In Los Angeles, this public art takes many forms, including murals, posters, subverted advertisements, temporary installations, stencils, and graffiti. Most importantly, the public aspect of the artwork and the inventive methods for exhibition and dissemination show the

artists' attention to the materialities of Chicana/o communities in Los Angeles. These materialities are marked by an urban experience of labor exploitation and spatial vulnerability so that an ephemeral art politics embodied in a "make do" attitude typical of a rasquache aesthetics make cogent these realities through an engagement of various physical spaces.

Moreover, these types of works in the streets possess a democratic quality as they can be appreciated by the local communities and the passersby. Street venues liberate the image, and other forms of representation, from the confines of the museum or gallery, often the terrains of the middle and upper classes. In this manner, street art can become the domain of the working-class neighborhood, the unacknowledged artist, and the youth subcultures that seek expression in alternative spaces. The public nature of street art allows for a wider participation of the general public, both in the creation of the art (for example, Judy Baca's collective murals) and in its consumption. Unsanctioned works of art do not need to conform to museum-established notions of "high" art, and can more freely issue critiques of the museum structure itself, such as Asco's *Spray Paint LACMA* and Gómez's *Custodians near Urban Light*, *LACMA,* respectively. Through subversive art practices, artists can lay temporary claim to otherwise exclusive places, like museums, or re-claim places where their presence has been erased, such as the case of Sandra de la Loza's *Operation Invisible Monument,* through which she uncovers and calls attention to the spatially-specific history of L.A. Chicanos/as. Cyberspace also provides artists and *artivists* with a new space of opportunity to reach a larger public and to document the work. As explored by Sandoval and Latorre, the use of digital media has also opened a new medium for Chicano/a cultural expression with liberatory potential.

At the same time, the late 20th and early 21st centuries are witnessing the increased inclusion of Chicano/a art into the museum. The push for multiculturalist inclusion in

educational programs and museums has yielded a number of Chicano/a exhibitions in Los Angeles, the Southwest, and New York. For example, while LACMA flatly rejected the participation of Asco in 1972, in 2011 it organized the exhibition, *Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972–1987*. This history, in a way, gives the appearance of progress towards an egalitarian Museum structure that supports diversity. Yet, museums' recent inclusiveness is the result of a calculated act, as they incorporate a level of self-critique within a controlled and limited environment. The museum, like the system of capitalism that fuels it, is able to selectively include alternative histories and narratives, redeploying them in the service of cultural hegemony and in the process watering down the original political impetus of artwork. Herein lies the danger of inclusion into official spaces and raises the question, should Chicana/o artists aim for inclusion? Can these artists work within the institution without becoming commodified and modified to become more politically palatable to mainstream sensibilities?

Some of the political potential of art is tied to its public and/or communal aspect. Once it has been appropriated and sold it becomes privatized and more exclusive, losing its political potency by becoming an exchangeable commodity with re-sale value subject to the whims of art collectors and curators. On the other hand, through the use of Los Angeles urban space, artists like Ramiro Gómez have been able to exhibit their art to unearth the hidden stories of working-class Chicanos/as and make them visible and available not only for museum audiences, but to the very people whom the stories involve. By putting their artwork in conversation with socially-contested space, Gómez and the other artists examined in this chapter offer necessary counter narratives.

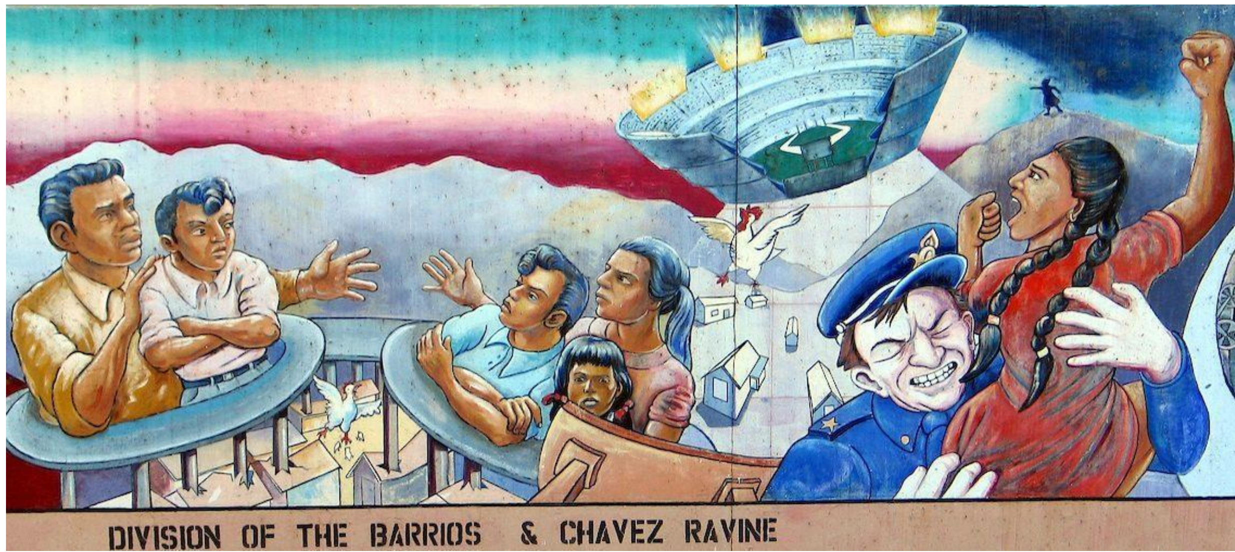

Figure 6. Baca, Judith. “Division of the Barrios.” Segment from *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* (mural). 1974.

Figure 7. López, Alma. *Las Four* (digital mural). 1997.

Figure 8. Asco. *Stations of the Cross*. Performance. 1972.

Figure 9. Asco. *Spray Paint LACMA*. 1972.

Figure 10. Gómez, Ramiro. *Greetings from Beverly Hills.* 2012. Photograph.

Figure 11. Gómez, Ramiro, *No Splash*. 2013. Acrylic on panel, 58 x 41 inches.

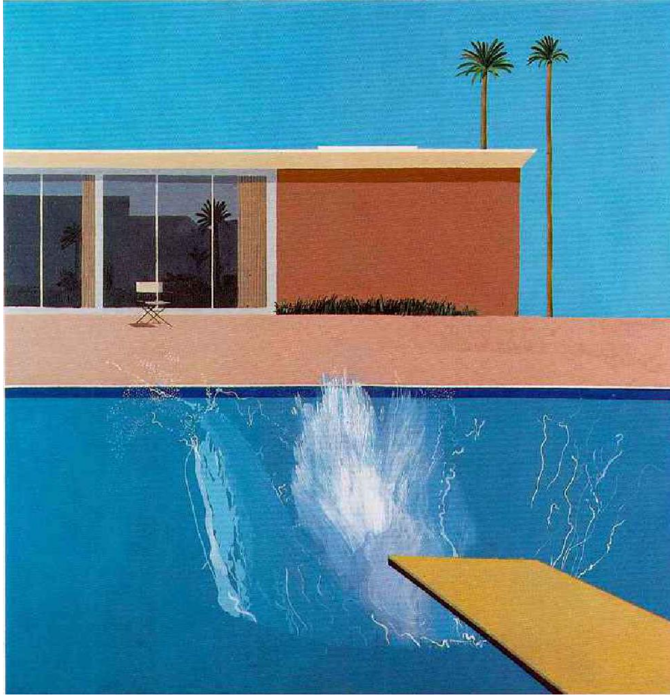

Figure 12. Hockey, David, *A Bigger Splash.* 1967. Acrylic on canvas.

Figure 13. Gómez, Ramiro. *Guadalupe and the kids, afterschool*. 2013? Acrylic on magazine, 11 x 81⁄2 inches.

Figure 14. Gómez, Ramiro. *Custodians near Urban Light, LACMA*. Acrylic on postcard, 4 x 6 inches.

Figure 15. Gómez, Ramiro. *Ephemeral labor*. 2014. Acrylic on cardboard.

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Chapter 4: "A Better Life? Undocumented Migrant (Im)Mobility and (In)Visibility in Film"

In this chapter, I follow up with an examination of post-1994 Los Angeles with a particular focus on the immigration debate, the figure of the undocumented laborer, and the discourses that shape this image in the early 21st century. This period is of particular significance for understanding Latino Los Angeles at the city-scale, but also for exploring the ongoing political and economic situation of Latin American authorized and unauthorized migrants at the state and national levels. In this chapter, I will specifically analyze Chris Weitz's *A Better Life* (2011), a Hollywood feature film about an undocumented Mexican gardener and his son as they navigate Los Angeles' physical, cultural, and social spaces. In an era of intense anti-Latino and anti-immigrant rhetoric in U.S. media and popular culture, it is crucial to understand the epistemological and political work latent in film about unauthorized Latinos, especially when these type of representations are seldom seen. Yet, it is precisely the social and public discourses and the political and representative value of the undocumented body that made the Weitz film possible. As a feature-length film, *A Better Life* provides a substantial and telling portrayal of undocumented migrant life in Los Angeles at the time when Arizona's S.B. 1070 was being legislated and passed. While I will be using visual and film studies tools to analyze the film, I will also attend to the legal and political context and by extent the state and federal bills being debated in the early 2000's that inform the Weitz production.

In 2011, I watched *A Better Life* at the Landmark Theater at the intersection of Westwood and Pico in Los Angeles's westside. Ticket prices were $20 and the theater patrons were largely white middle-age couples and most likely from the higher-income brackets of Los Angeles' Westside neighborhoods. I was familiar with the earlier work of Mexican actor Demián Bichir,

the film's protagonist, and his performance as portrayed in trailers had piqued my interest. What originally intrigued me about the film was the premise: an insight into an undocumented Mexican gardener and his son. Having spent 7 years at UCLA as a student and staff, I would see the beautiful homes, sidewalks, and green spaces of Westwood and the gardeners tending these spaces stood in stark contrast to the lifestyle, privilege, and wealth embodied in those Westwood homes. Even as I virtually revisit its streets (Sunset Blvd, S. Beverly Glen, Charing Cross Rd, Woodruff Ave, and many others) through Google Maps' street-view feature, I readily encounter the familiar sights I remember (see figure 16). And yet, *A Better Life* promised to provide a glimpse into the experiences of Los Angeles' Latino workers, which have not been a focus of Hollywood or Chicano cinema.

What was also striking about the film at the time was its earnest effort to represent and center a Latino as a complex being: worker, father, undocumented immigrant, and dreamer. This seemed a much more nuanced characterization than the prolific non-speaking Latino gardeners, housekeepers, and nannies often seen in the periphery or background of Hollywood films and television programs. The rare but romanticized feature-film depictions of these workers on the other extreme were pastiches of actual workers, such as in *Maid in Manhattan* (2002), starring Jennifer Lopez, and in *Spanglish* (2004), starring Penelope Cruz. Years after the release of *A Better Life* as I planned dissertation work on Latino Los Angeles, I analyze this film not only because it has not received much attention in academe but also because it needs to be positioned within the intense immigration debate of the 21st century as it focuses on undocumented labor in Los Angeles and family separation due to deportation.[57] While I touch upon the invisibility of

[57] Other films that feature the migrant narrative, mostly or partly set in Los Angeles, include *Bread and Roses* (2000), *Under the Same Moon* (2007), a story of a mother-son duo. The mother is an undocumented Mexican housekeeper working for wealthy white Los Angeles households and her underage son decides to undertake the transnational journey from Mexico to find her in L.A. *El Norte* (1983), an older film, shows Guatemalan indigenous

Latino labor in Los Angeles spaces in chapter 1 through an examination of Ramiro Gomez's installation artwork, here an analysis of film, a bricolage of visual and sound parts, allows me to explore the dialectical extremes of invisibility and hyper-visibility that coalesces in the racialized, gendered, classed, and immigrant body.[58]

Figure 16. Google image of Woodruff Ave in Westwood, Los Angeles, CA. The lush landscape and neatly trimmed hedges and trees can be observed as Latino workers eat their breakfast or lunch on the sidewalk. Image retrieved August 30, 2018.

Social and Legal Landscapes: The Discursive Construction of Illegality

If the televised police beating of Rodney King, the acquittal of the police officers involved, and the subsequent 1992 LA Uprising brought national attention to Los Angeles as a hotbed of ongoing deep racial inequality for black communities, Proposition 187 crystallized the

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siblings make the journey to Los Angeles, where they try to piece together a new life. The immigrant trip is a key aspect of these three films as well as many other immigrant stories such as *Sin Nombre* and *De Nadie*. *A Better Life* is unique to an extent in the sense that it strongly focuses on the undocumented migrant and how he negotiates his economic, social, and legal status once in the American city and making a home in a new place.

importance of Los Angeles and California as spaces of the nation-state where the dominant attitudes towards Latino immigration would be forged and contested.

Proposition 187[59] in many ways materialized the state's dominant sentiments against Latino unauthorized immigration and the settling of Latino families in the state when a majority of voters (59% to 41%) passed the proposition on November 8, 1994 (Martin 255), securing a majority vote in 50 of California's 58 counties (Martin 259). The Proposition began as the "Save Our State" (SOS) initiative with the title gesturing to a perceived threat of unauthorized immigration. Some of Proposition 187's most notorious provisions called for the establishment of a system that would require state and local governmental agencies to report suspected unauthorized immigrants to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), make the creation or distribution of false citizenship or resident alien documents as well as the use of said documents a felony, exclude unauthorized children from public K-12 and postsecondary schools, and deny social services and publicly-funded non-emergency healthcare to all unauthorized people.[60]

Denying unauthorized adults and children publicly funded education, social services, and non-emergency healthcare points to proposition 187's multipronged effort to target not only unauthorized individuals but also the settling of their families. This initiative can be said to target Latin-American migrants since they comprised the largest migrant group in 199X California, with the largest percentage being from Mexico. Tamar Diana Wilson argues that phenomena like Proposition 187 "are related to the desire to re-separate the processes of production and reproduction among the now more permanent Mexican labor force working in the US" (191).

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[59] Prop 187 also affected Asians and other non-white immigrants, but my focus on Latina/o immigration is rooted in the particular anti-Latino immigrant sentiment and as Prop 187 as marker of modern legal California-anti-Latino immigration.

[60] For a full text of Proposition 187 see Appendix (pages 149-154) in Ruben J. Garcia's "Critical Race Theory and Proposition 187: The Racial Politics of Immigration Law."

Following Hondagneu-Sotelo's assertion that "there has been a transformation from a predominantly sojourner or temporary pattern of Mexican unauthorized migration to a pattern that is reflected in the widespread establishment of Mexican immigrant families and permanent settler communities [in California]" (qtd. in Wilson 200), Wilson argues that Prop 187 and subsequent iterations such as the Immigration Reform and the Welfare Acts of 1996, which limit welfare assistance to undocumented people, show the simultaneous situation of avoiding the costs of reproduction while gaining the labor force's productive activity (192). Stated differently, Wilson highlights the capitalist drive to exploit immigrant labor for the accumulation of surplus value, while California's voting citizens reject the reproduction costs of unauthorized families.

Even as Prop 187 was blocked and prevented from being implemented through legal suits (on grounds of its unconstitutionality), looking at the bill's provisions allows one to glean the dominant social attitudes and political climate at the closing of the 20th century regarding Latino settlement and unauthorized migration in California; therefore, it is worth citing the findings and declaration sections of Proposition 187 to examine the kinds of representations of unauthorized migrants it wielded in order to justify punitive measures against unauthorized migrants. The proposition reads:

> The People of California find and declare as follows:
> That they have suffered and are suffering economic hardship caused by the presence of illegal aliens in this state.
> That they have suffered and are suffering personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens in this state.
> That they have a right to the protection of their government from any person or persons entering this country unlawfully (qtd. in Garcia 149)

These findings and declaration section can be said to be representative views of the 51% of citizens who voted for this law and subscribe to the ideas laid out in the findings and declaration. While the third point is a general statement about the citizen being protected over the

unauthorized immigrant, the first two rationales reflect specific assumptions about unauthorized migrants. The first point relies on an economic rationale for the economic protection of California's American citizenry.[61] The economic rationale is also imbricated with racial overtones and webbed in a long history of anti-immigrant rhetoric, specifically deploying "they're stealing our jobs" or "they're draining our social services" public discourses. Rubén J. Garcia makes note of the social and political currency of this type of discourse and argues, "politicians have used anti-immigrant rhetoric to mobilize white voters who feel that immigrants are 'taking jobs' from them" (120). Additionally, Garcia sees the racial underpinnings of Proposition 187 as part of a longer California history and notes the striking similarities between descriptions of nineteenth-century anti-Chinese immigrant sentiments and the social attitudes in California during the 1990s (124).

At the same time, the second point in the findings and declaration gestures not to the alleged economic threat of unauthorized immigrants, but to their threat as criminals. The bill's text emphasizes the "damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens." This representation of the unauthorized immigrant simultaneously appeals to voters' fears of the Other and of crime. As a widely circulated text both on the ballot and in its coverage in the media, Prop 187 partakes in the construction of the immigrant as dangerous and even criminal in the public imagination and as such Proposition 187 can be said to participate in and foment what Stuart Hall calls a "moral panic." For understanding the legal, social, and media processes that demonize unauthorized immigration as criminal and dangerous it is worthwhile to revisit Hall's concept of moral panic, which he describes as follows:

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[61] This anxiety about the immigrant taking economic resources from the citizen in the form of jobs or other resources is a long-standing discourse rooted in nativist and xenophobic sentiments and also racism seen through the expression of exclusionary legislation, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1883 and the Immigration Act of 1924 ("Asian Exclusion Act").

> When the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is *out of all proportion* to the actual threat offered, when 'experts', in the form of police chiefs, the judiciary, politicians and editors *perceive* the threat in all but identical terms, and appear to talk 'with one voice' of rates, diagnoses, prognoses and solutions, when the media representations universally stress ‘sudden and dramatic’ increases (in numbers involved or events) and 'novelty', above and beyond that which is sober, realistic appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to speak of the beginnings of a *moral panic.* (16)

The success of Prop 187 is a litmus test about the attitudes around the undocumented immigrant and the increased anti-Latino immigrant sentiment of the 1990s that suggest a moral panic around the threat of immigrants. It is not insignificant that Prop 187 was a voter-initiated proposition that garnered the required signatures for it to be introduced in the ballot and that during the election the proposition was approved by a majority of voters. The voter-led initiative process grants voters (and not just the state legislature) the power to include voter-supported initiatives and in this way it becomes a litmus test of the dominant social attitudes and concerns circulating in media and popular discourses.

While concern for the “criminal conduct” of unauthorized migrants was cited in the bill, ironically, it was Proposition 187 itself that would effectuate and further the criminalization of unauthorized people not only in the realm of discourse, but also at the juridical level. Concretely, when implemented the Proposition would make it a felony to produce, distribute, or *use* false citizenship or resident alien documents. In this form, the proposition sought to impose harsher penalties on unauthorized migrants for using false documents to work or identify themselves. The law would in effect make felons of these individuals, which would include more prison time and potentially foreclose a path to legalization since felony charges can disqualify applicants from legalization. In this way, proposition 187 can be said to both *draw from* and *engender* its premise of undocumented immigrant criminality and bring about concrete material and legal consequences for this population.

Social and Legal Landscapes: From Prop 187 to SB 1070

Proposition 187 as a harbinger of other anti-immigrant legislation has had multiple resonances. Legislative action to widen the policing power of state and local authorities in matters of immigration, as in the case of passed Prop 187 would have a re-iteration in 2010 through Arizona's Senate Bill 1070, which echoed sentiments and stances from the earlier California law as a new effort to penalize, police, and criminalize unauthorized immigrants and brown bodies more generally. To recapitulate, Proposition 187 would have required "every law enforcement agency in California… [to] fully cooperate with the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service regarding any person who is arrested if he or she is *suspected* of being present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws" (qtd. in Garcia 150). This language foreshadows SB 1070, which required local law enforcement agencies to determine the immigration status of people *suspected* to be unauthorized. More specifically, SB 1070 expanded the powers of Arizona's state and local authorities to enforce federal immigration law in order to "discourage and deter the unlawful entry and presence of aliens and economic activity by persons unlawfully present in the United States" (SB 1070, section 1, lines 8-10). Yet, SB 1070 not only sought to punish unauthorized migrants but also their employers or any person who would "transport," "conceal," "harbor," or "shield" unauthorized migrants (see SB 1070, section 5). This last provision would encourage a type of social or civilian policing of unauthorized migration and foment fear around supporting any potential unauthorized person[62]. Together these provisions underscore SB 1070's concerted and multi-layered strategy to limit the *physical and social mobility* of unauthorized immigrants.

[62] For example, this type of legislation could have an effect on housing as landlords would have felt pressure to require legal documentation for rent applications or worse use this law as an excuse to discriminate. Ruben J. Garcia notes in the case of the passing of Prop 187 "state-sponsored discrimination cases occurred." Garcia describes the case of a mother who was asked about her immigration status at a pharmacy when trying to get her daughter's prescription.

The criminalization of race and foreignness can be observed in one controversial aspect of SB 1070 in its call for law enforcement officials to "determine the immigration status of the person" "where reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States" (SB 1070 article 8). The assumption that an official of the law could read one's body for "reasonable suspicion" of unlawful presence calls attention to the overlapping processes of criminalization, racialization, and foreignness as inscribed racially onto bodies and read by figures of State authority. The social implications and repercussions of this law had it not been blocked by the federal courts on the basis of its unconstitutionality, would nevertheless continue to affect certain groups disproportionately. Garcia's observation in a historical context is again helpful when he remarks,

> Measures such as Proposition 187 stigmatize Latinos regardless of their immigration status. This stigma results from the ways that Latino immigrant history has been criminalized, through the prevalent "illegal alien" rhetoric. (Garcia 121)

In this way, Garcia calls attention to the social costs or implications of legislation like Proposition 187, which is also applicable to SB 1070. Moreover, SB 1070 also calls attention to the way immigration status is mapped onto bodies and as such unauthorized immigrants (as well as those perceived to be) are made hyper-visible through complex and intersecting processes, such as the racialization of immigration and the criminalization of foreignness. These processes are also mediated at the various axes of race, gender, color, and class markers.

Criminalization is instrumental in casting Latinos as tainting the body politic. This perceived tainting of the body politic is not only due to their assigned foreignness but also to issues of race. The assigned script of criminalization to the brown immigrant body is one instance where one can observe the state's juxtaposition of race and foreignness together, which is particularly relevant in the present moment when discourses of Latino criminality and

foreignness are conflated to actualize anti-Latino and anti-immigrant policies and actions, such as ICE raids. Moreover, by positioning domestic safety vis-à-vis foreign threat, SB 1070 both criminalizes foreignness and racializes criminality and justifies the increased policing of brown bodies, whether legally present or not. Underlying dichotomies of safety-citizen-legal and dangerous-non-citizen-illegal can be seen at work in SB 1070's popular title, "The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act." Similar to Prop 187's popular title "Save Our State," or "SOS," which gestures to a heightened sense of immigrants as dangerous to the "State," SB 1070 justifies a need for increased policing (and the expansion of local police powers) to manage unauthorized migrants in order to achieve "safe neighborhoods." The bills' popular titles are highly suggestive and rely on and perpetuate the criminalization of unauthorized immigrants who are discursively and judicially written as already criminal. On the one hand, by highlighting the "illegality" or "unlawfulness" of the action of unauthorized border crossing in its language, SB 1070 casts the unauthorized immigrant as already criminal.

Even outside of the language used by SB 1070, the popular terms to refer to unauthorized immigrants imagine this population as criminal. For example, the popular use of "criminal alien" or "illegal alien" to refer to an unauthorized immigrant collapses the latter with criminality.[63] On the inaccurate use of these terms, The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) clarifies:

> The act of being present in the United States in violation of the immigration laws is not, standing alone, a crime. While federal immigration law does criminalize some actions that may be related to undocumented presence in the United States, undocumented presence alone is not a violation of federal criminal law. Thus, many believe that the term "illegal alien," which may suggest a criminal violation, is inaccurate or misleading. (ACLU 1)

[63] Precisely because of the various meanings that these terms evoke, I use "undocumented" or "unauthorized" to refer to immigrants who are in the U.S. without U.S.-issued documentation.

What ACLU's explanation demonstrates is that while undocumented or unauthorized presence in the U.S. is not a crime in and of itself, the term "illegal alien" is suggestive of criminal wrongdoing. Thus, the usage of these non-neutral terms contributes to the ideational creation of undocumented immigrants as law-breakers or criminals that is part of the ongoing social and legal discourses around immigration.

In the 21st century, these discourses attributing an economic and criminal danger to unauthorized immigrant populations are perpetuated in the dominant public imaginary through various means and are also waged in the political terrain. One salient example of these public discourses being wielded for political objectives is Donald J. Trump's rhetoric during his 2016 Presidential Campaign where he undertook an anti-immigrant and especially anti-Mexican immigration public stance. Thus, not coincidentally, during his presidential announcement speech Trump declared that Mexican immigrants were bringing drugs and crime and were rapists (Washington Post 2015). The rhetoric of the dangerous criminal immigrant continues to be deployed by current president Trump, who talks about upholding American safety when speaking on immigration policy. This is clear in one of his speeches, when Trump asserts, "countless innocent American lives have been stolen because our politicians have failed in their duty to secure our borders and enforce our laws like they have to be enforced" and he continues, "I have met with many of the great parents who lost their children to sanctuary cities and open borders" (LA Times transcript). The racialization of crime and foreignness work together to render the brown body as deviant and polluted for an imagined (read, racially) pure American body politic.

Social and Legal Landscapes: At the Federal Level, H.R. 4437

The resurgence of racially motivated immigration bills in the 21st century –at the federal level- suggests an ongoing and even deepening of anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment. A comprehensive, public, and legislative effort to impose stricter rules on immigration took the form of house bill H.R. 4437 or the "Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005," which was introduced by Republican Congressman Sensenbrenner. The bill if approved into public law would have provided the largest modification to U.S. immigration law in the 21st century. Amongst other things, H.R. 4437 would have increased the militarization of the border by increasing the Department of Defense (DOD) use of surveillance equipment, such as the use of drones, considerably increase the penalties for both unauthorized people and those aiding them, and increase prison penalties for unauthorized immigrants for a number of crimes" (Congressional Research Service). Additionally, H.R. 4437 would have made the status of being unauthorized in the U.S. a punishable crime (Congressional Research Service). If passed, this set of provisions would perpetuate and intensify the process of criminalization of unauthorized migration and of the unauthorized migrant living in the U.S. at a national scale.

Even as the polarization of the immigration debate intensified, the 2005-2007 period saw the political mobilization for the rights of immigrants and against H.R. 4437. Like Proposition 187 that sparked protests, school walkouts, and other forms of opposition in California, H.R. 4437 was challenged at the grassroots level through organization, mobilization, and protests across the nation. Although protests took place in cities and towns of various sizes, the U.S. metropolis became a critical site for these manifestations. In 2006 at the height of the protests, Los Angeles would become visible as a critical geographic site from which to mobilize for immigrant rights. As part of these 2006-2007 marches, the city and the nation witnessed the

largest pro-immigrant march in Los Angeles with an estimated 500,000 protesters (Watanabe and Becerra, "500,000 Pack Streets"). Also known as "La Gran Marcha" or "The Great March," this demonstration in Los Angeles became specifically visible as an important center for pro-immigrant mobilization, calling attention to the spatialization of Los Angeles as both Latina/o and immigrant. The act of marching down the street and taking over the space follows in the American history of civil disobedience, but given the subject of immigrant rights, the march takes on another layer of significance. The marching and taking over of street space resists H.R. 4437's impulse to control the immigrant's mobility.

A Better Life **and Migrant Mobility in Los Angeles Space**

The legal landscapes of late 20th century and early 21st century that I have outlined in the previous section are a necessary context to understanding the social and material conditions of Los Angeles's unauthorized Latinos in the 21st century and to explore the relationship between representation and the nationalistic, economic, and cultural debates that collide in the figure of the unauthorized immigrant constructed in the popular imaginary as laborer, brown, criminal, and outsider. In the mass media, one of the main organs of information, unauthorized Latino immigrants are often not talked about as humans, family members, community members, or political agents, which is why the feature-film format provides interesting narrative possibilities for the portrayal of this group on the U.S.-side of the US-Mexico border.

Released in the summer of 2011, *A Better Life* is a 94-minute feature-film directed by Chris Weitz and distributed by Summit Entertainment. While the film had a limited release in the United States, that is to say the film was screened only in select theaters and was not distributed across the nation, the film did get some attention from various film critics, including the *New*

York Times,[64] and it earned an Academy Award nomination in the category of Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role for Demián Bichir's performance. The film was shot in 69 different Los Angeles locations, ranging from Malibu in the westside to East Los Angeles and Pico Rivera on the eastside (Weitz director's commentary). During production, a *New York Times* article noted the film's feat of shooting in Los Angeles since "tax credits lure production to states like Michigan and Louisiana" (Cieply). Weitz and the production team's deliberate choice to shoot the film in the Los Angeles betrays the importance of its specific spaces in realizing the story of Carlos Galindo (Demián Bichir), a gardener, father, and unauthorized immigrant from Mexico, and his fourteen-year-old son Luis (José Julián).

The film takes place over a few days as it follows the quotidian experiences of Carlos and Luis with a scene at the end of the film that fast-forwards four months. While Carlos's routine is temporally framed by the workday and physically by the places of work in the larger Los Angeles metropolitan area, his son's routine revolves around the school day, school spaces, classmates, and is primarily confined to barrio spaces. This sense of pacing and spacing in Carlos and Luis' lives is disturbed and accelerated by a plot device (Carlos' truck and gardening tools are stolen) that sends the father and son on a quest through various Los Angeles neighborhoods. In this matter, *ABL* is a quest film similar to Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1949) in that each film forces its protagonist to go in search of something that was stolen and that is essential to their family's economic survival[65]. As Carlos and Luis embark on their search for their truck they have to navigate the city on foot and bus, and through this quest narrative device *ABL*

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[64] See film review by Manohla Dargis "Drifting Apart, Struggling Together." June 23, 2011. NY Times.

[65] For an analysis of *Bicycle Thieves* in relation to the cultural and political conditions of New Latin American Cinema of the 1960s see John Hess's "Neo-Realism and New Latin American Cinema" in *Mediating Two Worlds: Cinematic Encounters in the Americas* where Hess argues that Latin American filmmakers were inspired by European neo-realism in the Italian tradition of de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. Comparing the latter to Jorge Sanjinés's *Blood of the Condor* (1969), Hess explores how both films "expanded the dialectical possibilities of realism" (105).

presents an array of locations and locales in Los Angeles and the city itself becomes not just background but a multidimensional character in its own right.

This attention to Los Angeles space is of significance not only because of the number and variety of spaces portrayed in the film but also because space and movement across space are two generative analytics for examining scenes and montages in film analysis as well as for understanding the political and economic situation of unauthorized migrants. For productive and reproductive activities to take place in a city as expansive as Los Angeles, movement is essential. For the large number of Latina/o domestic workers (gardeners, housekeepers, nannies, etc.) who provide their services to people and places on the affluent areas of the westside, such as Beverly Hills, Westwood, Bel-Air, Brentwood, Santa Monica, Malibu, etc., to traverse the city is a daily occurrence and necessity. *A Better Life* shows what this daily journey looks like for Carlos through the film's opening sequence, which begins with a shot of Carlos asleep in his living room sofa, his regular sleeping place. Faint morning daylight coming through the window above the sofa signals the start of the workday for Carlos as he wakes up to look at his watch. The sequence continues by following Carlos through his commute to work with his boss Blasco (Joaquín Cosio), who owns the gardening route, truck, and gardening tools. To show Carlos' daily commute, tracking shots from a moving vehicle portray his westbound trip, cutting through the city on the moving truck. The film shows glimpses of street life and some recognizable landmarks as Carlos travels away from his home in the primarily Latino and working-class area of Boyle Heights towards the affluent neighborhoods on the westside. Once on the westside, where house owners largely rely on Latino gardeners for upkeep of gardens and sidewalk cleaning, the film shows shots or glimpses of Carlos and Blasco's workday.

Blasco's pick-up truck is pivotal for Carlos to be able to access his places of work and this is highlighted further in the opening sequence because shots of Carlos gardening at various houses are punctuated with shots of him and Blasco inside the moving truck. The moving shots in the truck signal their change from house to house or worksite to worksite. At the different houses, Carlos is shown cleaning and watering gardens, trimming plants and tall palms, and planting hedges, but moving shots on the truck further highlight Carlos' transitory presence in these houses as temporary labor as well as the importance of the vehicle to transport the necessary gardening equipment and to access remote places of work in the hills. This opening film sequence ends with Carlos in the "backyard" of an oceanfront Malibu home where he is planting a tree. A medium shot of Carlos is followed by a long shot or extreme wide shot that shows Carlos in the context of the house's manicured lawn and pristine pool that echo the blue and green colors of the natural backdrop of ocean and mountains. For an instance, Carlos looks pensive in the middle of the lawn and is framed by the domestic space he helped transform. The final shot makes Carlos look small in the vastness evoked through the use of the long shot and the wealth captured in the oceanfront real state as a final image before cutting to the introductory film title page that reads, "A Better Life."

While much of the film shots pivot around physical and horizontal movement across Los Angeles in an east to west, west to east, and north to south directions, it is upward mobility that provides the thematic gravitas for the film, especially around a liberal discourse of immigration that recognizes that *everyone* regardless of immigration status wants a better life for her/his children, as suggested by the film's poster (see Figure 17). Upward social mobility underlies much of the myth of the American dream readily echoed in the film title, *A Better Life.* During production, the film's working title was "The Gardener," but the title changes to "A Better Life"

by the release of marketing materials and before the film's theatrical release. This change is likely a marketing consideration but more importantly the change reframes the film's presentation from a story about an individual ("the gardener") to a story about an idea ("A Better Life") as the final title is loaded with associations to the American migrant narrative and social progress.[66] Furthermore, the final title shifts the significance from the individual to the collective experience as the film title no longer emphasizes Carlos' individual story as gardener but rather as representative of the whole of undocumented Latino immigrants.

Film posters as an advertising tool set up expectations for potential movie watchers and at the same time they capture in one still image a larger narrative of the film. Like the film title "A Better Life," the poster also resists individualization of the story and instead deploys various composition elements to both highlight a symbolic meaning and suggest a particular politically liberal stance on immigration. Hollywood posters, according to Mary Beth Haralovich,[67] are characterized by: "the tile of the film, its stars, character traits, and the narrative enigmas in which the characters function" (52). *A Better Life*'s poster (see figure 17) exemplifies many of these elements but unlike big blockbuster films, it does not identify the film actors through close-ups or with their names in big type. Rather, it shows the backs of actor Demián Bichir as Carlos and José Julián as Luis in the center of a long shot as the two men are in mid-stride facing away from the camera lens and towards the Los Angeles downtown skyline. The image's chiaroscuro composition also helps hide the identities of the actors, emphasizing only the men's shadowy silhouettes and casting a halo of golden light around the Los Angeles skyline.

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[66] The 2006 film *The Pursuit of Happyness* featuring a single father (played by Will Smith) who is evicted from his home along with his young son comes to mind as another film where the title frames/informs the audience's expectations as it provides an ideological interpretative framework for reading the events in the film as well as the intentionality of the characters.

[67] In "Advertising Heterosexuality" Haralovich analyzes 1930s and 1940s film posters and how these "setup expectations for the centrality of heterosexual courtship" (Haralovich 50).

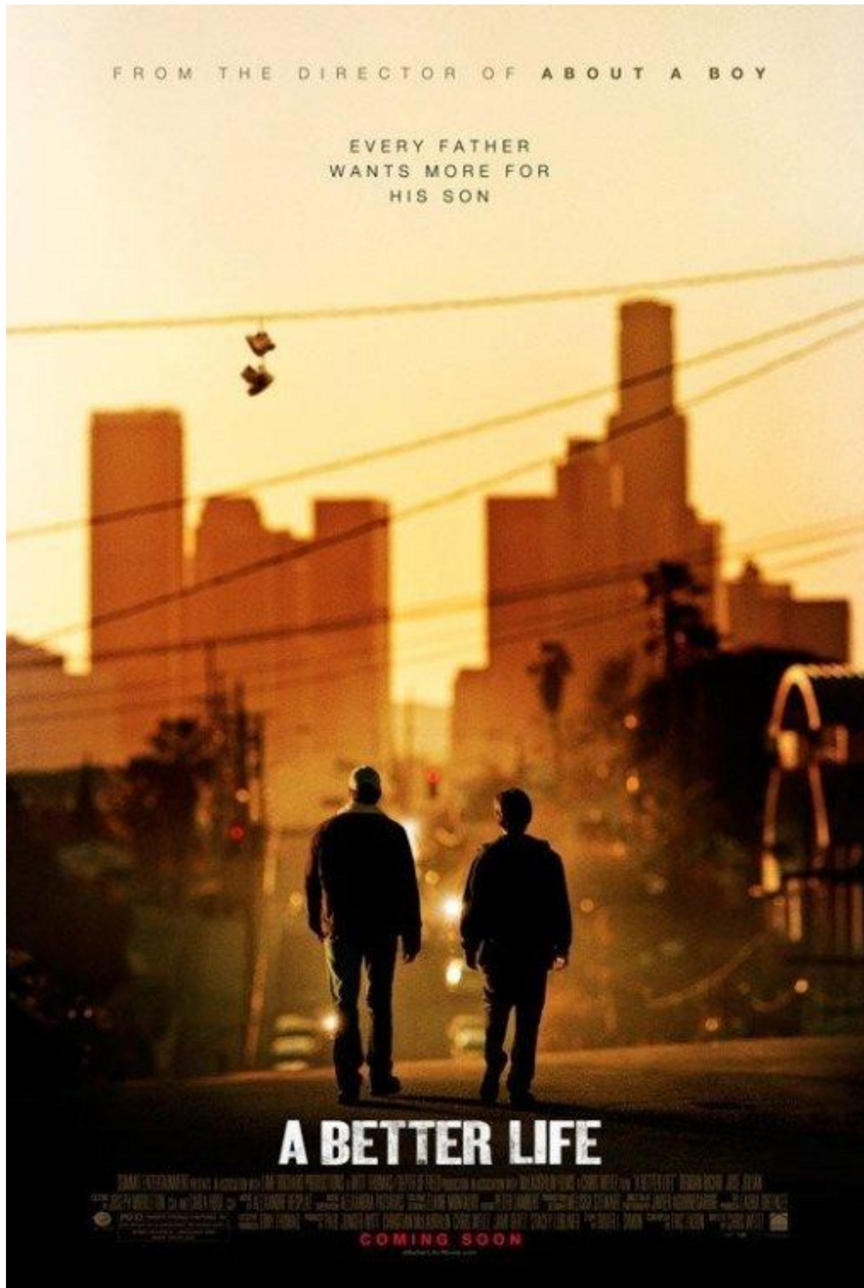

Figure 17. *A Better Life.* Poster. 2013.

The men's physical movement and lighting carry narrative and symbolic value as the father and son's search for their stolen truck –a main plot device that drives the action- symbolizes the promise of economic security. The truck would allow Carlos literal mobility but also socio-economic movement as the truck and tools are the building blocks for his own

gardening business. While the poster does not capture all of these details, downtown LA in its looming golden presence stands in for the promise of economic mobility as the two men walk in its direction and the film suggests towards "A Better Life." The text on the poster combined with the abovementioned images betrays the film's political unconscious. By foregrounding the father-son relationship, the centrality of the Los Angeles cityscape, and the large-font film title in conjunction with the film's tagline, "Every Father Wants More for his Son," the poster sets up a sympathetic narrative of the immigrant family struggle and given the film's release in 2011, movie goers would be attuned to the controversial immigration debate during the 2010-2011 period.

While the stolen truck is vastly missing from the poster, its symbolic as well as material value should be noted. After all, Blasco convinces Carlos to buy his truck and gardening business (equipment, and gardening route) with the promise of the American Dream. While Carlos originally refuses the offer because he just wants to keep his head down and stay out of trouble, Blasco emphasizes, "You ain't just buyin' a truck or a business. What you are buyin' is the American dream" (7:05). Blasco paints a picture of "a better life" not for Carlos, but for Luis and it is this dream that the truck symbolizes as well as the monetary value of $11,000. Indeed, the truck that Carlos ends up buying with a loan from his sister Anita becomes a symbol of the elusive American Dream when Carlos loses the truck a second time after being stopped by a police officer. What is more, the state-level legislative limitations on undocumented mobility are the condition of possibility for the repatriation of Carlos at the end of the film, showing that his hard work is not recognized by the system. Instead, Carlos' attempts to have a small business venture, a cornerstone of the purported American entrepreneurial spirit and rags-to-riches immigrant myth, is penalized. Specifically, the lack of legislation that would permit

undocumented immigrants driving privileges in 2010 meant that if stopped by a police officer while driving without a license undocumented motorists would receive a fine, have their car confiscated and towed, and the threat of deportation would be extremely high. When the film was being made in 2010 and even at the time of its release in 2011, a bill that would have allowed undocumented migrants in California to drive legally had not yet passed.

To contextualize, in 2003, Republican film actor Arnold Schwarzenegger became the Governor of California, following the recall of Democrat Gray Davis, who served as Governor from 1999 to 2003. During his two terms in office (2003-2011), Schwarzenegger would repeatedly veto bills that would have benefitted unauthorized migrants, including his rejection of the California DREAM Act that would have permitted unauthorized students to apply for some types of financial aid and also the veto of SB 60, a law that would have allowed unauthorized drivers to apply for drivers' licenses. And yet, between 1993 and 2015, twelve U.S. states and the District of Columbia would pass legislation that permitted unauthorized immigrants to apply for drivers' licenses[68]. Previous to the passing of these laws, these states would have required a Social Security number as a way for applicants to establish legal/authorized residence in the state/country for a driver's license. In 1993, Washington became the first U.S. state to successfully pass a law (H 1444) that allowed people to apply for a driver's license without a Social Security number, effectively allowing unauthorized migrants to apply for drivers' licenses with identity documents from their home countries. However, California lagged twenty years behind the state of Washington, encountering staunch opposition against a similar law that would grant legal driving privileges to unauthorized inhabitants of the state. As newspapers reported, Schwarzenegger repealed a Gray Davis-passed 2003 law that would have granted unauthorized

[68] The granting states are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Vermont and Washington (Mendoza).

immigrants access to driver licenses citing security issues "at a time of heightened fears of terrorism fears" (Edds). In his official veto message of a 2004 iteration of this previous law, Schwarzenegger states, "This bill [SB 60] is premature and could undermine national security efforts to identify individuals who pose enormous risk to the safety of Californians" (Schwarzenegger). Evoking a rationale of domestic safety also prevalent in Proposition 187 and later in S.B. 1070, Schwarzenegger refers to the potential threat of unauthorized people to the "safety of Californians", at the same time that the mention to "national security" conflates immigrants with potential terrorism, an association often made in post 9/11 discourses. The struggle over movement, specifically, to control the movement of the unauthorized immigrant body, is at the center of the inter/national debate surrounding unauthorized migration and this also takes various forms at the state and city policy level. *A Better Life* captures the story of a man who is penalized for driving without authorization and is subsequently deported to Mexico, leaving his son behind in Los Angeles.

At What Cost? Creating a Palatable Undocumented Migrant

The liberal theme of the novel encapsulated in the title, "A Better Life," and the unfulfilled promise of the American dream, can only elicit empathy from the audience if the protagonist is portrayed as deserving. While the portrayal in *ABL* centers the story of an undocumented Latino gardener in a feature format in ways that are rare in Hollywood or Chicano cinema, it also uses narrative devices to make the story of Carlos more poignant that rely on (as a counter to?) the demonization of the undocumented immigrant, the cholo, and the Los Angeles inner-city, all which are made to be dangerous vis-à-vis the main characters. The film humanizes Carlos and Luis at the cost of "Othering" other characters and character tropes. With the discursive creation of undocumented immigrants as already criminal, discussed earlier in this

chapter, it is dangerous for *ABL*'s quest device to make use of Santiago, an undocumented man from El Salvador, as the thief of Carlos' truck and equipment. As a mainstream portrayal it then participates in the discursive creation of undocumented people as criminals. One way of avoiding the further criminalization of undocumented immigrants, for example, could have been to avoid identifying the thief. When Carlos and Santiago first meet as *jornaleros* or day laborers, Santiago as an act of kindness gives him a piece of bread, so when Carlos returns to the site as employer he "repays" the kindness by hiring Santiago when many others covet that spot. Once at work, while Carlos is high up on a palm tree Santiago takes advantage of this moment to steal his pick up and equipment. The dramatic aspects of this scene are created spatially –by making Carlos, completely helpless/immobile- and through his visible emotional distress. While the incident in and of itself is not necessarily farfetched, the characterization of Carlos as a "decent" man with positive qualities is foiled by Santiago's transgression, a betrayal. Later when Luis and Carlos locate Santiago at his workplace and find that he has sold the truck to send money to his family in El Salvador, Carlos shows Santiago compassion by stopping Luis from beating him any further. Luis does not understand his father's attitude but it shows Carlos' character as honorable and understanding. However, this is highlighted at the expense of Santiago's criminal act.

Carlos is also humanized against the backdrop of gangs or cholos, who serve as a foil not only to Carlos, but also to Luis. The cholo has become a type or trope in Hollywood films and television programs, specifically in urban-set dramas, crime-dramas, and police procedurals. As one of the more prevalent roles available to Latinos, cholos have become a stereotypical depiction. One can see some attempt on the part of director Weitz to give some nuance and humanity to the cholos by showing them in quotidian family settings (in the Pico Rivera scene as well as in a home scene). However, this impulse is countered by the prevalent images of

nameless cholos in public spaces, whose embodiments are staged as defiant and dangerous. The cholos are shown occupying streets in a lurking fashion and their defiant gaze towards Carlos as he crosses the barrio also suggests a threat. This threat is echoed in one of the film's late scenes when Carlos is at the detention center waiting to be deported and a gang member bullies him. Again, the depiction of cholos as dangerous and criminal highlight Carlos's plight and decency against these more aberrant iterations of Latino-ness. The embodiment of these cholo men is important because it frames them not only as potentially criminal but also at the margins of capitalism so that they are not shown using their time in a way that is productive (labor) for capitalism in the way that Carlos is almost always portrayed as an eager worker and thus a "productive" member of society. Resultantly, not only is doing back breaking work implied to be a positive quality, but desirable in contrast to what is constructed as the cholos' non-laboring bodies.

The film's dominant logics about the cholos' embodiment as unproductive and uncivil makes them unassimilable, regardless of their citizenship. Their life path according to the film will land them in jail, dead, or in trouble, which is the antithesis of having a good future or "a better life." Thus, the cholos become the most visible obstacle or conflict for Luis to overcome. Gang member 'Celo (short for Marcelo) and the cousin to Luis' girlfriend Ruthie is portrayed as the most menacing presence for Luis because he wants to recruit him. 'Celo is played by Richard Cabral, a former gang member who Weitz found at Homeboy Industries, a non-profit organization that provides employment opportunities and various free services, such as legal assistance and tattoo removal, for former gang members who want to find new life opportunities. It is ironic that 'Celo represents the severing of Luis's life opportunities, when the real-life actor Mr. Cabral is an example of former gang members' attempts to find better alternatives to gang

life and in taking those opportunities when available. For his part, Weitz assesses that casting Cabral and other former gang members from Homeboy Industries helps with the realistic portrayal of cholos since they can "straighten out the dialogue for you, so that you're not just resorting to stereotype" (00:23:24). Indeed, Weitz strives to provide a more nuanced portrayal of cholos in "gang-related scenes" by consulting Father Gregory Boyle who is nestled deep in the Boyle Heights community as founder of Homebody Industries. And yet, in spite of these attempts director Weitz himself concedes that he takes some liberties in 'Celo's characterization for Father Boyle took him to task upon seeing the film. According to Weitz, Father Boyle did not find credible that a gang member ('Celo) would recruit his daughter's boyfriend (Luis) if he was "a kid who appears to be on the straight and arrow" (Weitz). In order to "correct" this incongruous depiction, Weitz's solution was to make 'Celo, Ruthie's cousin. This crude fix does not address the larger systemic issues of the barrio and instead feeds into dominant ideas about cholo life and cholo criminality. It is in the director's commentary, and not on the on-screen depiction, that Weitz offers a more nuanced understanding when he says, "One should not make the mistake that there are these predatory gang members recruiting kids… its more that kids become more and more depressed about the prospects of their life and start hanging around with these guys." His observation hints at a more structural issue of poverty where gangs are symptomatic of the socio-economic conditions of the barrio.

Instead, by having Facundo, Luis' best friend ultimately join 'Celo's gang, the film shows an almost inexorable future of gang life for Latino youth if staying in the barrio. This increases the stakes for Carlos's gardening business to succeed, for according to the film, he needs to find a way out of the barrio through social mobility. In the process, the gang members are demonized and also the barrio space. Similarly, the film also offers a quick glimpse into

spaces in South Central, a primarily African American neighborhood for a large part of the 20th century, and a place demonized in the public imaginary of Los Angeles as crime-ridden, poor, and dangerous. In the 21st century, South Central has become populated by more Mexican and Central American migration. In a montage set in South Central as Carlos and Luis are searching for Santiago and being guided by Jesús the three men look visibly uncomfortable by the presence of some black young men on the street. Much like the cholos of other scenes, these young men's embodiment is presented as defiant, unproductive in terms of labor, and dangerous as they briefly taunt Luis and Carlos with the comments: "what's up with y'all" and "Long way from Boyle Heights." The scene serves to highlight hostile brown and black relations that is further evoked through a shot of graffiti that reads, "Too many Mexicans, not enough bullets" (00:45:07-00:45:43). This representation of black and brown conflict and people of color spaces as hostile and dangerous flatten out the histories of race-based segregation and the imaginative resistance on the part of people of color, which George Lipsitz summarizes, "relegated to neighborhoods where zoning, policing, and investment practices make it impossible for them to control the exchange value of their property, ghetto residents have learned how to turn segregation into congregation" (56). On the whole, *ABL* represents the barrio and the ghetto as places that need to be escaped from while not acknowledging that these places are people's homes and where interesting multi-ethnic coalitions can form in spite of the intra and inter-ethnic conflicts that take place. For example, Gaye Theresa Johnson's scope in her study of Los Angeles' people of color neighborhoods, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* encompasses both inter-ethnic divisions and the potential for "anti-racist multi-ethnic alliances," which brings to the fore a consideration of white supremacist logics that have historically informed the spatialization of the city.

Immigrant & Latino Soundscapes in *A Better Life* (*ABL*)

In this next section, I will be paying attention to sound in *A Better Life* and specifically examine the ways that Latino immigrants navigate Los Angeles spaces through radio and music listening practices. By analyzing sound in the film, I will be able to layer my analysis on Latina/o immigrant visibility and invisibility. My goal is to highlight the subversive and empowering potential of the field of sound for Los Angeles' authorized and unauthorized immigrants as an "invisible" terrain but one through which formations of community are consolidated and through which immigrant political opinions and concerns are manifested. While white dominant society in Los Angeles, and the U.S., is visible in all mainstream media, it is in the realm of the sonic that immigrants imagine a community through narratives that center their perspectives and lived realities. Renegotiation of the U.S. national space is possible through their own actions and creating what David Gutierrez's terms a "third space." Through the radio, for instance, Latina/o immigrants actively express their voices while having the protection of anonymity that sound affords. This is especially true in the use of Spanish as these narratives would not be legible to non-Spanish speaking groups and can open up a space for communication. Moreover, Latina/o migrants, unauthorized and authorized, create their own social spaces in the large U.S. metropolis through sound. From my own experience growing up listening to LA's Spanish radio stations, I am struck by their enduring social, cultural, and political currency among Latino families. The radio is an important forum for Latina/o entertainment but can also reflect social issues pertinent to Latina/o communities; thus, it is not surprising that 94% of Latinos listen to radio every week (Negrón-Muntaner 7).

Even as *ABL* is a rare Hollywood film production in that it features a marginalized immigrant storyline in a feature-length format with a substantive production budget (i.e.

Hollywood capital), it is a mainstream top-down portrayal rather than a format that centers immigrant-produced narratives. As a finished or complete product, the film is not able to produce a space for dialogue or interaction for the subjects that it represents as it is largely a "fixed" portrayal. Nevertheless, I argue that there is an underlying sonic counter-impulse in *ABL* that asserts an immigrant collective agency over and against the role of the director as sole creator and agent. In "Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture," W.T.C. Mitchell urges scholars of Visual Studies to not simply think of the visual as the hegemonic medium of modernity and to think beyond "scopic regimes," (172) yet when it comes to film production in the U.S., it is clear that the Hollywood film industry holds a monopoly over film production and that the visual is an important component of this system. At the same time, W.T.C. Mitchell's contention that film is a type of mixed media as it is comprised of visual and sound production and should be conceptualized not solely as a visual medium (170) is helpful in understanding the simultaneous and potentially contradictory narratives within one film product. I would suggest that in *A Better Life* the interplay between image and sound brings to light a tension between the two as representing different narrative impulses. It is in this interplay that the image becomes the primary mode for the director's dominant representation and the sonic stands in or signifies an insurgent immigrant narrative. On the one hand, I suggest that immigrant listening practices subvert the preeminence of the visual as the primary field of recognition and representation but rather they understand the politics of visibility and invisibility, being "invisible" to authorities is a strategy of survival; immigrants are very aware of the politics of being seen; being heard. More specifically, the images or shots (especially the close-up) are associated with a Hollywood formula. In this case the close-up in conjunction with non-diegetic sound (the orchestra score by Alexandre Desplat) work to portray immigrant suffering in order to elicit sympathy from the

white audience for the immigrant struggle, while the Mexican and Latina/o sounds signify the immigrant communities' own cultural daily practices and agency.

In *ABL* we see many types of diegetic sound, including dialogue, music from live bands, and the radio. The film is bilingual, but the prominence of English is notable through Carlos and Luis's conversations in English. As a native Spanish speaker and in the personal space of the father-son relationship, it stands out that Carlos holds conversations with Luis largely in the English language when they could be entirely or mostly in Spanish. Moreover, even the various Spanish language scenes, such as the dialogue between Blasco and Carlos, are subtitled in English, but the English portions do not have Spanish subtitles. This is an important director's decision as it betrays the film's imagined or targeted audience. In other words, it imagines an English-speaking audience that would need English subtitles but not a Spanish-speaking and immigrant audience that would need Spanish subtitles[69]. This makes Carlos more emotionally and linguistically legible to an outsider (non-Latina/o non-immigrant) audience. Nonetheless, there are moments and sounds in the film that would only be culturally and linguistically legible to an immigrant Spanish-speaking audience and while these might be overlooked by the targeted primary audience as background or ambient noise, these small moments participate in and conjure a history of immigrants' subversive use of sound. Most notable is Spanish radio and music in the film, which create a form of "visibility" for immigrant sounds. Through these sounds, *ABL* points to Los Angeles' various Latina/o immigrant soundscapes, which are created through immigrants' music and radio participatory listening practices but also at physical locales in the city where Latin American music is played as shown in the film.

[69] It is important to note that like many films when released in DVD format there are more language options than at the theatrical release. The *ABL* DVD provides both an option for Spanish subtitles and a Spanish dubbed version.

As cultural terrains, these soundscapes create a diasporic experience for Carlos, and by extension other Latina/o immigrant characters in the film. Carlos can participate in Latin-American culture by listening to music and radio that effectively and affectively connects him to his heritage and immigrant condition while physically at work in the high-end residences where he has no claim to physical space. To exemplify this phenomenon, I return to the second commute scene where Carlos and Blasco are traveling back to East Los Angeles at the end of their workday. A wide shot shows the two men leaving their last workplace in a beachfront neighborhood while the ranchera[70] song "Carta Perdida" ("Lost Letter") by Mexican singer Antonio Aguilar begins to play. This song continues to play through the sequence of the commute (from 00:14:58 to minute 00:16:26) and helps create continuity between the various shots. Through the commute there is no dialogue only Aguilar's song and two main actions that occur are the truck's movement across the city and Carlos' act of seeing. On the one hand, the sequence juxtaposes two distinct spaces: 1) the space inside the truck with Carlos and Blasco identified by the ranchera music, and 2) the public spaces outside the truck. Sound waves are porous and thus music can be said to spill out of the truck but the film sequence does not portray this and instead contrasts the space inside the truck (one that pertains to Carlos's material reality) versus the spaces outside (the beach, the affluent neighborhood, and eventually barrio spaces).

This commute sequence, which moves Carlos and Blasco through the city from Westside to Eastside, not only serves to show the disparities and segregated spaces of the city (what film director Weitz calls "microclimates" in the audio commentary), but it also highlights the politics of being heard while not being seen. In the Westside, Carlos passes by white surfers, a white female jogger and her dog, a Jewish family and one can see the interplay between close-ups of

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[70] Ranchera is a traditional Mexican music genre that has its roots in pre-revolutionary Mexico and it has strong roots in the rural or countryside as evidenced in its name "Ranchera" which is related to the word "rancho," which in Mexico is used to refer to a country house, a farm, or a rural village.

Carlos's face and shots of the street life outside but it is the pedestrians who demonstrate belonging and ownership of those spaces since they are engaging in activities of leisure while Carlos accesses those spaces as a worker. His social invisibility is echoed in this sequence because even as Carlos is actively gazing, his gaze is not returned. Rather, the act of seeing those of privilege is framed as passive in the context of Carlos's social and economic invisibility. Stated differently, he sees a lifestyle and a dominant community that he cannot fully participate in, socially, economically, or politically so in this case the gaze is not a form of assertion of masculine power (as has been discussed by Laura Mulvey, nor is it bell hooks' oppositional gaze). When Carlos nears his home in East LA, he sees a group of "cholos" on a corner who *do* return his gaze and have a moment of recognition but a close-up of Carlos' face shows him averting their gaze, which suggests not a mutual recognition of solidarity, but one of tension. Thus, even in the barrio space, Carlos's gaze and him being seen is not an act of empowerment or an act of ownership of the public space. In light of this visual and social invisibility, it is the Aguilar ranchera song that safely asserts Carlos' presence, which has an element of resistance because it shows Carlos' immigrant culture as shaping 21st century Los Angeles soundscapes and landscapes but doing so in an "invisible" sonic way that is not threatening for Carlos who desires to go unseen or unnoticed by the police and others.

Specifically, in *ABL*, we can hear Eduardo "Piolín" Sotelo, a Mexican radio *locutor* or deejay that hosted a morning Spanish radio program and one of the most popular shows in Los Angeles and in the wider United States during the 2006-2007 immigrant protests[71]. While we cannot see Piolín in the film his sonic presence is asserted at various moments and is also noted through a film credit for his participation. Interestingly, when Piolín's Spanish-language radio

[71] "El Show de Piolín" was still on-air during the film's making in 2010 as it was not until 2013 that his show would be cancelled.

program can be heard in the film it is not subtitled to English. This is perhaps because the targeted audience's basic understanding of the film plot does not necessitate an understanding of the radio commentary, which functions as background noise. In other words, for the mainstream audience inclusion of the Spanish radio may add to an "authentic" portrayal of immigrant laborers at work who listen to music, without seeming transgressive. However, these radio utterances are in reality charged with political and cultural meaning that is in tension with what would be "visible" to the larger English-speaking audience. The latter are in effect "blind" to the radio comments as they are not part of the show's actual listenership and find themselves outside of the conversation. In a way, the Spanish radio in the film, as well as in real life, creates soundscapes that are tailored for Los Angeles' Spanish speaking communities. As a result, these Spanish radio waves create an alternative spatialization of Los Angeles that is immigrant and Spanish speaking, one that runs counter to most mainstream portrayals of the city.

Through the use of the radio sound waves, deejay personalities and their programming help create diasporic "imagined communities", to use Benedict Anderson's term, but in Piolín's show and similar radio programs this collectivity is further imagined as largely working-class, Latina/o, immigrant, and undocumented. In light of the demonization, alienation, and criminalization of immigrants both reflected in the media and in legislative efforts (H.R. 4437) during the 2005-2007 period, Los Angeles' Spanish radio deejays, most prominently Piolín and Renan Armendariz "El Cucuy de la mañana," emphasize the dignity of undocumented people and the importance of their lived experiences. For instance, one scene in the film captures a typical greeting by Piolín when he says:

> Saludos pa' todos los compitas que ya están preparándose para chambear; los trabajadores de construcción, para las mamacitas que están limpiando los cuartos de los hoteles. Para los jardineros. ¿A que vinimos? A triunfar! [72] (Weitz).

In this quote, Piolín greets his listeners as workers and mentions specifically construction workers, hotel maids, and gardeners, and finishes his greeting with his show's popular tagline: "¿A qué venimos a este país? A triunfar!" which translates to "Why did we come to this country? To succeed!" This tagline is both a statement of encouragement and empowerment that acknowledges the immigrant presence and experiences in the city when these are not the focus of mainstream narratives. It also partakes in the imagining of the radio show's listenership as an immigrant community and which also includes Piolín, who is an immigrant from Mexico himself and entered the country without authorization in the 1980s. Moreover, a Mexican working-class vernacular signaled by vocabulary such as "compitas" (a version of "compadres") and "chambear" (which is a colloquial term that means "to work") shows the class elements of the radio broadcaster but also of the imagined working and working-class listenership. Lastly, Piolín's tagline –well-known amongst Los Angeles's Latin-American immigrants—is a rebuttal to dominant discourses that suggest that Mexican and other Latin American immigrants come to the United States to be criminals by instead re-affirming their dreams as people and their dignity as workers.

Spanish radio creates imagined communities out of dispersed immigrants through affective networks of belonging that are negotiated and consolidated not only through a charismatic and relatable deejay but also through the interactive format of radio programming. The latter is highly accessible and has a particular immediacy for people that the feature-film cannot reproduce. The radio can stay current with entertainment, sports, and social topics and

[72] This quote can be translated to "Greetings to all the *compitas* who are already getting ready to work: the construction workers, the "mamacitas" who are cleaning the hotel rooms, the gardeners. Why did we come to this country? To succeed!" (my translation).

incorporate listener participation, which is a key component of Spanish radio programs. This participatory aspect of live radio allows listeners to interact with the Deejay and the larger community of listeners. Often listeners call to share their stories of struggle in the U.S., to ask for legal advice, to win money, concert tickets, or other featured prizes, and also to send "shout-outs" to family in the city, in the state, nation and even abroad. The multipronged exchanges created through the radio allow listeners to engage in the narratives constructed through the radio in ways that a mainstream film cannot replicate. For instance, in *A Better Life* it is the director Chris Weitz who has the ultimate authority on how the story is told. Thus, the film director is more a Wizard of Oz figure and not an on-screen or sonic presence that could potentially connect him with the viewers. [73] This type of format and top-down relationship curtails Weitz's relationship with the audience and the subjects being represented, in this instance being LA's Latino undocumented immigrants. This is not the case with the radio show personalities like Piolín or El Cucuy who are *locutores* or broadcasters (locutor has a Latin etymology that means "speaker") but who are also in their own right interpreters and listeners who entertain and inform their listenership. For their success *locutores* must foment an affective relationship with their listeners on a routine basis and in doing so stay attune to their communities' experiences and needs. These affective relationships are not only significant in terms of their role in the creation of diasporic immigrant communities and publics, but they can also have a transformative political potential even as their shows are not political talk shows.

This political potential materialized in 2006 when in response to H.R. 4437 "the Sensenbrenner Bill", Piolín approached other Spanish radio broadcasters to unite efforts in publicizing the pro-immigrant rights demonstration of 2006. According to the *LA Times*, Piolín

[73] The exception might be in the director's DVD audio commentary where Weitz and actor Demian Bichir provide commentary on production choices and details, film thematics, and behind-the-scenes anecdotes.

decided to publicize the demonstration after he learned about the repercussions of H.R. 4437 from rally organizers (Watanabe and Becerra, “How DJs Put”). Spanish radio deejays Humberto Luna (KHJ), Ricardo “El Mandril” Sanchez, and “El Cucuy” joined Piolín in promoting the event and also marched the day of the demonstration (Watanabe and Becerra, “How DJs Put”). An estimated 500,000 demonstrators rallied at “La Gran Marcha” as mentioned earlier in this chapter and scholars Adrian Felix, Carmen Gonzalez, Ricardo Ramirez have suggested that “the unprecedented turnout at the protests suggests that this may be attributed to Spanish radio DJs, or *locutores*, who ‘used the power of their airwaves to invite a flock of immigrants to attend these public demonstrations’” (622). Moreover, they characterize “the relationship between Spanish-language radio DJs and their publics as one of mutual trust, reciprocity, and solidarity” (622) which I link with the production of affective networks through daily listening practices to content that resonates with the undocumented immigrant experience.

The use of Spanish radio for Mexican/Latina/o political and social mobilization has deep roots in Los Angeles. In his study of Mexican insurgent forms of representation or what he calls “subaltern soundtracks” Curtis Marez shows the long history of insurgency associated with Spanish-language radio in Los Angeles through the cases of Pedro J. González and Josefina Fierro who “drawing upon their own revolutionary histories . . . used their Spanish-language radio broadcasts to criticize the arbitrary use of police power against Mexican immigrants” (Marez 59) in the 1930s. Marez describes the multiple ways that Mexicans of the 1930s used sound in subversive ways and even changing the way that they watched Hollywood films in the theater as they incorporated live music performances in a variety-type of format that countered and de-centered the hegemony of Hollywood’s representations. As he notes, “the Los Angeles mass media have historically been a highly politicized arena of contestation, particularly with

regard to the use of police power to manage Mexican bodies and populations" (Marez 64). In the 21st century, radio and Spanish media have been important advocates for the undocumented community and offer a different vantage point not available in mainstream media; more specifically they engage the immigration debate from a Latino perspective.

Diasporic Acts/Spaces: Creating a "Third Space" & "Walking in the City"

Through daily radio and music listening practices Carlos is able to plug in to a sense of belonging in the alienating places of work and in his alienating position as undocumented laborer. Ranchera music allows him to create a sense of place because as Alicia Schmidt Camacho's reminds us, "As migrants narrate a condition of alterity to, or exclusion from, the nation, they also enunciate a collective desire for a different order of space and belonging across the boundary" (5). However this desire for belonging can happen not only in the realm of the imaginary or the invisible (such as through music or radio listening practices) but it also manifests materially in physical locales and through the bodily occupation of space. This last action is especially transgressive in the case of undocumented people whose occupation of U.S. space is already read by state policy and officials as an act of transgression.

For unauthorized immigrants, who do not have the country's legal sponsorship and cannot participate in voting and other rituals of the nation-state, finding spaces that speak to their cultural specificities, such as in the realm of music, language, and food, is an affirming practice of "translocal placemaking."[74] At the same time, in their participation of these spaces of leisure and through their performance of non-Anglo American culture, they counter assimilationist impulses or pressures by the dominant culture and create places that resist the limits of dominant U.S. space and create what Dave Gutierrez has called a "third space." For Gutierrez, this "third

[74] Scholars of public space and identity, Kelly Main and Gerardo Francisco Sandoval define translocal placemaking as "a process of immigrants' exerting agency on their locality (via conflict, difference, negotiation) and the production of power, meaning, and new identities" (73).

space" is "a social space that was located in the interstices between the dominant national and cultural systems of both the United States and Mexico" ("Migration, Emergent" 488). The production of a third space that exceeds the bounds of dominant national systems is a provocative idea for conceptualizing a terrain of immigrant-produced spaces. Helga Leitner & Christopher Strunk have echoed a similar idea and explain, "Just as insurgent citizenship exceeds formal citizenship, so do its spatialities exceed the bounded and policed national space of liberal democratic citizenship to encompass the transnational and the local" (352).

I largely argue that the construction of this "third space" exists in opposition to the state's technology of power. The specific technology of power used in opposition to the "third space" is consistent with what Mike Davis calls a "third border" or a type of policing of brown bodies that occurs in Los Angeles even as this city is more than 100 miles away from the U.S./Mexico international border. In the third border, Latinos experience heightened surveillance from police and even federal law enforcement entities such as ICE whether undocumented or documented. This apparatus of power uses the arrangement of space (de facto segregation), policing, and legislation to control bodies across space.[75] The third space and the third border as two spatializing forces allow for a double reading of the city as a place where immigrants challenge traditional ideas of national space and borders and create new place-bound identities as well as a hostile space where ongoing threats of deportation are real.

In examining the films *El Norte* (1983) and *Star Maps* (1997) Camilla Fojas has explored a similar double imagining of the city. In her analysis Los Angeles is both imagined as a place of opportunity (where people can re-make themselves) and an oppressive exploitative space. She elaborates, "Border films engage this split imaginary--the dream of economic success

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[75] One example of the legislative aspect is the 100-mile border zone, which expands the powers of federal officials to conduct searches of automobiles or luggage without warrants (ACLU https://www.aclu.org/other/constitution-100-mile-border-zone).

against the nightmare of economic exploitation and social injustice; the "American dream" against its hidden reality" (Fojas 8). Similarly, in *A Better Life,* Carlos embodies this dream of achieving economic success but at the same time we see his day limited to working, sleeping, and eating. His work and biorhythms dictate his routine and the film intimates that he and his son Luis have a distant relationship and not very much father/son quality time. Carlos is very disciplined by his work routine and labor exploitation conditions. However, *ABL* shows that while Carlos does not fully participate in leisure activities that there are spaces within the city where Latin American immigrants congregate.

Physical venues are also important for the production of these affective connections and for appropriating social space in Los Angeles. When looking for Santiago (Carlos Linares), a Salvadoran day laborer that steals Carlos's truck and gardening tools he first looks for Santiago at the street corner where they met as day laborers but Santiago is not to be found at this location. With Jesús -Santiago's compatriot and acquaintance- as guide, Carlos and Luis find Santiago's last known residence, a shared apartment in South Central. At this location, Carlos and Luis learn that Santiago can be located at a restaurant/night club where he works a second shift as a dishwasher. This restaurant/nightclub is represented in the film as a highly Latina/o and Mexican space. Santiago and many other Latinas/os work at this establishment and the restaurant's clientele is also highly Latina/o. Indeed, immigration from Mexico and Latin America in the latter part of the 20th century transformed the composition of Los Angeles' labor force, particularly in the low-wage service-sector, such as food preparation, housekeeping, childcare, and leisure and hospitality related occupations. However, this Latina/o population has been transforming not only the economic landscapes of Los Angeles, but also its physical and cultural ones, a phenomenon Mike Davis explores in *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big*

City. In *ABL* we see how this Latina/o labor force not only sustains Los Angeles' predominantly white spaces, but has also sparked the burgeoning of businesses that cater to Latino tastes and needs, such as the two entertainment spaces featured in the film: the Pico Rivera Sports Arena and the Latino-serving nightclub where Santiago works. In juxtaposition to the film's images of the westside where we see primarily white Angelenos at leisure, these later sequences in Latino spaces counter the images of Los Angeles bourgeois white leisure, providing insight into working-class a/venues where Latinos gather around music listening and dancing practices.

For instance, Voz de Mando, a regional Mexican music group, is playing live as Carlos moves through the crowded space of the nightclub, providing a glimpse at the large number of Latina/o couples dancing, eating, and drinking. The creation of Latino entertainment spaces is part of the ongoing process of Latinization of Los Angeles that is itself a product of a longer history of Mexican and Latin American immigration. When speaking on immigrants' place-making practices in the U.S., historian David Gutierrez notes, "Poverty and deeply rooted patterns of discrimination against Mexicans in the United States at first compelled Mexican immigrants to occupy marginal spaces of the communities into which they settled, but, like their more recent counterparts, they nevertheless gradually established social networks, economic niches, and an overarching ethnic infrastructure that helped them to adapt to life in the north" ("Ethnic Mexicans" 311). Part of this ethnic infrastructure and social networks are comprised by music spaces that have strong ties to Latin American cultural forms and spaces. This is the case of *charreada* in Los Angeles' Greater Eastside where the Pico Rivera Sports Arena remains a stronghold for *charreada* (a type of Mexican rodeo) events since the 1970s.

In the film, the charreada montage shows the rodeo venue with charros and charras on horseback and dressed in traditional Mexican charro attire, showing the way that these cultural

practices partake in the transnational spatialization of Los Angeles that in a way stands in for Mexico. As Carlos and Luis enter the rodeo space the song "Hay Ojitos " by Tejano/norteño music group Intocable is playing (00:52:56) over the speakers as part of the diegetic sound. At the beginning of this montage Luis appears to be completely alien or ignorant of this culture even as Carlos reminds him: "[I] took you there with your Aunt Anita when you were 5" (min. 00:52:00). Luis, a young Chicano who has not been to a charreada since he was 5 has no memory of this space or these cultural practices and upon entering the space and observing the charro culture, he asks his father sneeringly, "Where do they think these people are at? Some Halloween Party or something" (00:53:09) to which Carlos responds, "This is where I'm coming from" (00:53:14). Carlos conflates the rodeo arena and the charros (located in Los Angeles) with his home country of Mexico and in the process collapses Mexican with U.S. space. In other words, by saying "This is where I'm coming from" Carlos is linking himself to the charro Mexican culture being performed at the rodeo at the same time that the slippage ("This is *where*") suggests a spatial claiming of the rodeo venue as a space of Mexican national identification.

Carlos simultaneously asserts his Mexican heritage and claims the rodeo space as a place of belonging, subverting his undocumented status. In fact, Carlos goes as far to suggest that one can claim this sense of Mexican belonging anywhere if one participates in the performance/embodiment of this culture and thus going beyond place of birth. For this reason, he suggests to his U.S.-born son Luis, "These is your people too… charros; they are you" and Luis negates, "They ain't me" (00:53:23). Carlos jokingly counters, "Oh really, I'll get you a hat and some boots, and we'll see." Luis has no response to this claim and he simply smiles. Cultural space becomes a transnational space and a space that is read as Mexican even as it is geographically located north of the U.S. –Mexico border. In fact, scholars of public space

suggest, “specific places can be seen as constituting ‘an important aspect of an immigrant’s place identity enabling him/her to simultaneously remain connected to the places left behind and yet appropriating and forging significant new place ties’” (Mazumdar qtd. in Main and Sandoval 75).

While Carlos and Luis are waiting for the nightclub to open so they can find Santiago they stumble upon the rodeo venue, which happens to be next to the nightclub. This coincidental location is a fictional filmic spatialization since the rodeo ring at the Pico Rivera Sports Arena is self-contained within a park and located in a more suburban area in Los Angeles’ eastside. In actuality, there is no nightclub next to the venue. Nevertheless, the film’s adjacent spatialization of the locales highlights the diverse types of Latino and Mexican translocal cultural spaces in Los Angeles while it also imagines a readily available cluster of Latino/Mexican entertainment spaces, for the most part, Latino-themed nightclubs and venues are “sprinkled around” in various locations where car transportation might be needed. In order to access the Pico Rivera Sports Arena car transportation is necessary but the venue boasts a 6,000-seat rodeo ring and performance space, where a variety of Latino-themed events take place regularly (City of Pico Rivera). In the 1970s the charro group *La Alteña* began performing charreadas at the space and according to scholar Laura R. Barraclough “the Charros la Alteña received tremendous fiscal, legal, and symbolic support from both Anglo and Mexican American municipal officials, who envisioned Pico Rivera, and the Greater Eastside more generally, as a transnational Latino, and more specifically Mexican, space” (97). To echo, Barraclough the Pico Rivera Sports Arena has been a type of translocal space for the Mexican diaspora in the larger Los Angeles area. And yet, *A Better Life* director in his audio commentary suggests, “most Angelenos don’t know about places like Pico Rivera Sports Arena existing in the city.”

Ten years before Weitz comment, journalist Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez wrote a cover story in the *Los Angeles Times* where she also notes this invisibility of the Pico Rivera Sports Arena and of Mexican cultural and musical traditions and spaces but she also brings sharp relief to the transnational aspect when she describes,

> In Mexico, particularly northern Mexico, the arena is well-known, say radio personalities and promoters in the music business. And among Los Angeles fans of ranchera, banda and norteño, the arena--called the Pico for short--is probably the most famous concert venue in town. To everyone else, the Pico is virtually unknown, a bland blip in your peripheral vision as you zip past on your way somewhere more exciting (Valdes-Rodriguez)

Valdes-Rodriguez's description of "The Pico" calls attention to an irony, even as the space is in Los Angeles, most of the city's population is unaware of this ethnic space and miles south in an entirely different country, the arena is "well-known." The sports arena, instead, is a node for Mexican rodeo acts and musicians of nortena, banda, and ranchera music that cater to Los Angeles' Latino and Mexican populations. Ralph Hauser Jr., a promoter of Mexican music groups and manager of the Pico Rivera Sports Arena since 1985, underscores the arena's highly diasporic nature. He suggests, "If I could, I'd annex this place and I'd give it to Mexico…I'll probably get hate mail for that. But that's really what it's like to come here. It's like a little piece of Mexico in the middle of L.A." (qtd. in Valdes-Rodriguez). Hauser's comment is indeed provocative as it suggests not only that the space is frequented by Mexican patrons but he dislocates this space as a "little piece of Mexico." While director Chris Weitz, a Los Angeles resident, did not know about the Pico Sports Arena, he features this space prominently in the film to highlight how Mexican and Chicano people are making space in the Eastside. At the Pico Rivera Sports Arena, Carlos and Luis's generational and cultural divide is shown but it is also bridged, according to the film.

Before the scene at "The Pico," the film shows several scenes where the father-son duo do not spend a lot of time together due to Carlos' heavy work schedule but the quest for the truck allows them to spend more time and it is the charro venue where Carlos attempts to connect his son (and himself) to their Mexican roots: music, horsemanship, and language. The charreada's emcee/narrator can be heard over the speakerphone, narrating the charreada sport events in Spanish but Luis says he does not understand what the man is saying; he cannot understand but then Carlos says, "tu entiendes español. Inténtalo. Try" (Weitz). Luis then begins to actively listen to the sports commentator and translates some of it to English to which Carlos responds "You see. Of course you understand" (my translation, Weitz) and a smile comes across Luis's face as he acknowledges that the charreada events are "dope." Images of charreada tricks and events are shown as well as a charro procession where both American and Mexican flags are featured, an attempt from the director to show the binationality of the space. Pico Rivera becomes both a moment of bonding for the two men but also a cultural connection to Mexican culture for Luis, who is nestled in East Los Angeles Chicano culture.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Michel de Certeau theorizes the subversive potential of ordinary people's daily practices and in his essay "Walking in the City" he explains how ordinary people navigate city spaces –and its spatial apparatuses—with everyday tactics. I extend de Certeau's theorization to understand Luis's movement through the barrio (and non-barrio spaces) as well as the use of sound to subvert police power and alienation. While I previously analyzed Carlos' commute montages –as he cuts through the city and where we are able to see various neighborhoods and peoples of LA—Luis travels on foot and within the barrio as his mobility is circumscribed by his underage routine: friends' homes, school, his own home, and barrio streets.

In one film sequence, Luis is leaving his girlfriend Ruthie's family home, after having spent the evening with 'Celo's family. In the walking trajectory from Ruthie's home to his own house, Luis puts on his headphones and he is listening to "California," a 2010 song by Mexican-born Chicano rap duo, Akwid. This walking trajectory mirrors Carlos' driven commute montage, but while Carlos's commute is punctuated by ranchera, a largely Mexican country genre, Luis's trajectory home is marked by rap music, and a particularly new iteration of 21st century Chicano rap. We can see a contrast between father and son music tastes, in part intersected by their generational difference. The music listening practice functions as a strategy of navigating space: as a tactic of "walking the city." For Luis, listening to this music helps him navigate the space (by playing the music he might be able to "block" the outside space). Moreover, the music itself speaks to his own reality in California, specifically in the barrio and the brown youth experience of policing, alienation, but also how community can be created in Los Angeles. While Luis does not have many lines in the film and has a lot of tensions with his father and even seems to look down upon his father and immigrants in general for their social location and economic status, in listening to Awkid, he is in fact connecting/asserting California space as both immigrant and Chicano. As explored earlier, we rarely see Luis speak Spanish, but Awkid's rap song is mostly in the Spanish language, which undercuts his earlier assertions that he does not understand Spanish.[76]

Luis's listening to Awkid, a directorial choice, resists the idea presented by the earlier dialogue and scenes that want to suggest that Luis has lived an insular barrio-confined life and that he has been disconnected from a type of ethnic and transnational identity. Instead, in

[76] This detail could be read as a slippage. If the director did not foresee the incongruity of having Luis sustain that he does not speak/understand Spanish and then showing him listening to Spanish-language rap, then the "California" song can be read as a moment of excess to the director's intensions that affirms a counter-cultural moment happening at the register of the sonic.

listening to Spanish-Los Angeles-Mexican-Chicano-American-Rap based Awkid, he is already participating in a social form of belonging that is layered and kaledoiscopic. Unlike his father's ranchera songs, Luis's music is a U.S.-born genre that speaks to an urban experience of Los Angeles. The song's lyrics coincide with Luis's experiences in the barrio for as he is walking-listening through the barrio the film presents a crime scene in the background with the presence of police because as I suggest earlier in this chapter, the film presents barrio spaces as crime-ridden and menacing. Luis does not gaze deeply upon the crime-police scene, and instead keeps walking straight ahead with the Awkid song in his earphones. A closer look at the song's lyrics proves revealing:

Bienvenidos a California,
tierra del mojado hechicero,
Natal de México que no conoce el miedo.
Los crímenes me tienen preso en mi castillo;
La vida de glamour y lujo viene conmigo.
Tengo la reputación de mil amores,
Mujeres varios sabores, varios dolores.
Tuve la desilusión y caí en la pinta.
Golpes de la vida, golpes sin medida
En este mundo creo que todo se vale;
Las calles de Los Ángeles, me hicieron buen jale
Hago mis chingaderas y ahora nunca me rajo
Como gallito fino nunca se queda abajo.
este es tu homenaje con todo respeto
mujeres, cerveza, y mota son tu reflejo.
Continuamos con este crimen

The song "California" begins by welcoming you to California, which is described as a land of the fearless undocumented migrant from Mexico (lines 1-3). The speaker also alludes to a lifestyle of luxury, which is typical of some rap. More concretely, the song presents a back-and-forth between bitter and sweet experiences, from life's hard knocks ("golpes de la vida") and the experience of landing in jail ("la pinta") to never "staying down" ("nunca se queda abajo") in

spite of the difficulties of navigating the streets of LA. For cultural studies critic Josh Kun, Akwid represents an interesting musical formation and a "translocal space" because "their rapping owes as much to the vocal styles of veteran L.A. African American MCs like Snoop Dogg, DJ Quik, and Ice Cube, as it does to the Spanish and Spanglish wordplay of the nineties' Chicano hip-hop scene (groups like Delinquent Habits, Proper Dos, Frost)" (Kun 748). Moreover, Kun has also analyzed how Akwid transposes a combination of U.S. black rap with Mexican regional music in his analysis of Akwid's 2003 song, "No Hay Manera," which Kun suggests is a pivotal marker of the cultural, demographic, and changing character of Los Angeles. Similarly, in *A Better* Life's use of the song "California" evokes this imagination of California's Latinoness and Mexicanness, at the same time that the song is a syncretism of many traditions.

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EPILOGUE

Cultural production emerges not only as a site of struggle but as a tool for people to carve out representational, physical, and social spaces and challenge the erasures or misconstructions of brown and black communities in the public imaginary of Los Angeles. In this multi-genre study, I have traced how cultural production that centers the material realities of Los Angeles' Chicana/o Latina/o and black peoples defies the spatial homogeneity of dominant constructions seen in cinema, news media, dominant artwork, and television. I have shown that through art actions, novels, and music practices (as seen in film) people of color can counter dominant spatializations that render their communities non-existent (invisible) or demonized (hyper-visible). Indeed, the studied works participate in a process of counter-mapping or counter-spatialization that layer representations of Los Angeles as a heterogeneous and heterotopic place in response to a dominant flattening of the city's spaces.

As a way of introduction and to exemplify the process of counter-mapping as seen specifically in installation art, I presented the case of The Pocho Research Society art collective's *Operation Invisible Monument*, a series of art installations that are in the form of historical monuments (see introduction). On the one hand, these unofficial monuments underscore the dominant narratives inscribed in the city's official plaques and monuments that memorialize one story about a specific location. On the other hand, the unsanctioned monuments represent a resistive force that provides alternative histories about those places, challenging the single stories of the city-approved official monuments. Taken together, the two monuments demonstrate how site-specific places are constructed through struggle, discursive and spatial. Additionally, *Operation Invisible Monument* brings into sharp relief the constructed nature of place and the

importance for ongoing resistances to recover the unacknowledged stories that have been constitutive of the economic, cultural, physical, and imaginary making of Los Angeles.

For Chicanas/os, the struggle for space in the 20th century has taken many forms and locations in the Southwest. In this dissertation, I focused exclusively on the city of Los Angeles, an important urban center for Chicanas/os with a long history of Mexican and Chicana/o settlement. Los Angeles is also an important case study for issues of Latina/o place in more recent times because the last decades of the 20th century as well as the early 21st century have witnessed the growth of the Latina/o population from Central America and Mexico and yet this has not translated to meaningful narratives that reflect the diversity of this population, its histories, or futures in mainstream imaginations of city (although I do analyze one rare Hollywood portrayal of Latino undocumented labor in chapter 4).[77] For this reason, I have traced some of the discursive and material processes that produce these erasures –discursive, social and physical—relying on the work of Stuart Hall and media reports to substantiate the ways the discourses construct narratives and moral panics about non-white people that have real material consequences. While hegemonic narratives and forces are an important consideration in this study, I have focused more on the artistic, literary, and music practices that assert L.A.'s communities of color and their experiences as acts of resistance and survival.

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[77] Two recent instances in 21st century Hollywood film that show the erasure of Latinx and African American peoples and histories in Los Angeles-based narratives are the musical film *La La Land* (2016) and *Blade Runner 2049*, the 2017 sequel to *Blade Runner* (1982). For a Los Angeles-based film, the presence of any Latino characters is starkly missing in *La La Land*. This film also received criticism for centering the story of a white jazz pianist who is on a mission to reviving jazz, when this genre is a black cultural form and it was an important cultural practice in Los Angeles' segregated black neighborhoods in the 1940s but these histories are not part of the film. For a take on these criticisms, see *The Guardian* article, "The La La Land backlash: why have critics turned on the Oscar favorite?" by Noah Gittell. *Blade Runner 2049*, for its part, is a speculative fiction film that is set in 2049 and yet Latinx characters and communities are vastly missing with the exception of Gaff who is played by Mexican-American actor Edward James Olmos but has little screen time. The film, overall, erases any Latinx themes and presences that would be crucial in an imagination of the not-so-distant future of Los Angeles. *La La Land* represents the erasure of Los Angeles's people of color histories while *Blade Runner 2049* forecloses their meaningful presence in its future. While the 1982 *Blade Runner* imagined a Los Angeles that has a strong Asian-American presence this is not without its racial anxieties; for a critical discussion of *Blade Runner*'s largely Asian configuration of Los Angeles see Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts* (chapter four).

For this reason, the dissertation is divided in two parts. The first part, a study of fiction, begins during the Chicano Movimiento of the late 1960s and early 1970s when Chicanas/os took to the streets to demand social justice and it is in this time of political and social effervescence that I begin my analysis of Los Angeles. Informed by the African American Civil Rights Movement, Chicanas/os organized several types of resistances in Los Angeles that are still remembered through remaining murals and artwork from that era to contemporary Chicana detective fiction novels that willfully return to this period of resistance to reconstruct a collective memory of unequal policing in the barrio. Because the state's technologies of control were responding to the African American Civil Rights Movement and to changing legal, social and spatial boundaries I also examine a historical detective novel by black author Walter Mosley, who depicts 1965 Los Angeles and the police apparatuses that worked to control black communities during a time of social resistance. Taken together, I have traced how these historical detective novels recall the fight for racial and social justice of the 1960s-70s period, the conditions that gave rise to this mobilization, the City's backlash, and the authors' deliberate choice to remember this history in the 1990s and early 2000s.

After exploring depictions of a highly segregated Los Angeles during the late 60s and early 70s, I analyze *The Tattooed Soldier*, a novel that is set almost 30 years later where the material and social conditions of the city's poorest communities have not significantly improved. Instead, the analysis of this thriller suggests that there is continuity from chapter 1's historical period to more recent events in the 1980s and 1990s. The LAPD's police brutality against black motorist Rodney King in 1991 haunts *The Tattooed Soldier* (and much of LA scholarship of that time). Mr. King's beating brought to light once again that Los Angeles, despite its large numbers of people of color, was not the multi-ethnic post-racial city that some believed existed. Instead,

the ongoing social and institutional practices of control were further revealed with the acquittal of four of the LAPD officers whose actions against Mr. King were caught in a home video. With the acquittal an old wound in Los Angeles's landscape was opened as black and brown community members reacted to the verdict in what became known as the LA Uprising of 1992. LA residents took to the streets to manifest their discontent in the form of burning buildings, rioting, and other forms of expression. Scholar of Critical Race Theory David T. Goldberg in *Racist Culture* observes, "the torching of buildings and businesses, not quite randomly, also seemed to reflect a rage against a class-defined collaboration in perpetuating the subjugation of the racially marginalized" (202). Here, Goldberg gestures to the economic marginalization of Los Angeles' communities of color and in the *Tattooed Soldier* this is best reflected in the homeless characters, who are the most critical of policing and of the city power and economic structures that keep their mobility in what Samira Kawash describes as a paradox where "the homeless are forced into constant motion not because they are going somewhere, but because they have nowhere to go. Going nowhere is simultaneously being nowhere; homelessness is not only being without home, but more generally without place" (327).

In 1990's cultural production and scholarship Los Angeles stands out in the national and international imaginary as a pseudo-apartheid space as Goldberg observes, "South Central Los Angeles, it seems, is but a metaphorical stone's throw away from suburban South Africa" (197). In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I investigate these apartheid-like conditions in the Chicano barrio and the black ghetto as represented in historical detective fiction and the thriller. In addition to the dominant constructions of moral panics with the demonization of communities of color, I show that authors of color have used historical events in their fiction to recall a collective experience of Los Angeles racist policing practices, but also of community resistance.

Perhaps, more revealing is that by borrowing from place-based histories these novels deny forgetting and re-construct the city from their own vantage points. For instance, I claimed that the detective novel's chronotopic and heterotopic possibilities allow these authors to bring to light the embedded contradictions of the city, such as the illegality in legality. Tobar in *The Tattooed Soldier* plays with interwoven temporalities and spatialities to portray a hemispheric (and thus transnational) making of local spaces, so that in a highly globalized era, one cannot read Los Angeles spaces and its growing Central American neighborhoods in isolation but rather in relationship to the hemispheric geopolitics that prompted these movements. Like chapter 1, in this second chapter, memory plays a key role because it is through memories of non-LA places and times that understandings of the city gain new layers of meaning for the characters in the text. Lastly, the novels of part I, as cultural objects participate in a recovery project of historical memory.

In the second part of the dissertation, I focus on visual and sound culture because by analyzing the materiality of space as it is represented in visual media I was able to explore the subversive potential in the occupation of actual urban spaces for raced, gendered, and classed bodies. Said differently, in exploring actions as they take place in space (even if its in the terrain of representation, such as in the spaces represented in film), this second half of the dissertation highlights the various connections between cultural producer and community acts. Artists have creatively used urban space to comment on relevant social and spatial issues and in chapter 3 I bring to the fore the ongoing Chicana/o traditions of public art that have persisted from the Chicano Movimiento into the 21st century. In looking at public art over the decades, I suggest that there are two features of this art: 1) the deliberate consideration of using public space to echo the materiality of the barrio; and 2) a tradition of art collectivity seen in art collaborations

and the participation of community members in creating community-derived narratives. In this chapter, I applied Marx's concept of commodity fetishism to consider space and argue that the selected Chicana/o artistic interventions of space de-fetishize space, calling attention to the Chicanx/Latinx labor that goes into the making of Los Angeles' cultural, economic, and physical landscapes. In using Los Angeles urban space as building material for their art pieces, Chicanx/Latinx artists reflect not only a working-class based aesthetic of rasquachismo and a practice of "making due" but in effect the art pieces work in conjunction with the urban space to evoke a dialectical relationship of spatial vulnerability and spatial affirmation. While the artwork recalls Chicanas/os' urban experience of spatial precariousness that has been historically shaped by the city's dominant spatializing practices, it also shows an oppositional spatializing (and constructive) practice stemming by and for the community.

I move on to an analysis of LA immigrant mobility and the politics of in/visibility in film. While apparently contradictory, this last chapter shows how a Hollywood-produced film's use of visual montages to depict a largely sympathetic Latino-themed story can result in the erasure of the city's brown and black communities. On the other hand, by examining the Latinx sounds of the film and the socio-cultural spaces created through music listening practices, I was able to demonstrate that the included immigrant sounds in the film provide a counter-impulse to the main visual montages. The former assert a type of third space or transnational spatialization of Los Angeles through music listening practices that counter (especially for undocumented laborers) a "third border" in the city. Together, chapter 3 and 4 helped me highlight the city's reliance on the brown laboring body (documented and undocumented)–which at times becomes invisible and merely part of the background in the city space with the simultaneous and contradictory impulse to make the brown body hyper-visible through discourses of criminality

and foreignness, especially as seen in the figure of the undocumented worker. Here, Stuart Hall's concept of moral panic again help me anchor the ongoing processes that demonize populations in the city and in this case occurring around the fear of immigrant criminality and serving as a thematic connection between the two parts of the dissertation.

Los Angeles is a city where state and city forces as well as corporate interests have served to spatialize the city in important and often exclusionary ways in the 20th century. In 1990, Mike Davis famously described the City's multiple anti-poor practices in public space, such as the installation of "bumproof" benches, the installation of automatic sprinklers in public parks (to dissuade sleeping), and the bulldozing of public toilets in Downtown Los Angeles (233-235). These tactics were used to manage and discipline the bodies of the homeless and poor occupying street space. At the same time, and perhaps because of its aggressive policies of policing bodies and enacting different types of borders, this city has given rise to subversive cultural production that tackles issues of space like *Operation Invisible Monument.* Writers and artists continue to respond to these dominant spatializations into the present. A recent issue of The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, features a cover story by journalist Carolina A. Miranda about an anonymous artist who constructs and installs bus benches around L.A.'s Eastside neighborhoods (see figure 18). As I discussed in the introduction, the LA Eastside is comprised of primarily Latinx neighborhoods where incomes are some of the lowest in the county and its streets are often neglected by the city for as Miranda observes there is no landscaping, seating, nor shade at the bus stops where the anonymous artists installs the benches (Miranda). As reported in the article, the anonymous artist had the idea to create bus benches after having to wait for the bus with an injured knee at a bench-less bus stop. After recovering, he created and installed bus benches in his community and one near the house of a friend, a cancer patient.

The anonymous artist's wooden bus bench stands in opposition to the City's emblematic bumproof bench described by Mike Davis. While the bumproof bench aims to make tired people –and specifically the homeless- uncomfortable, disallowing them to *take place* at the bench for any prolonged period of time, the artist's bench provides a respite for bus-riding people who would not have a place to sit while waiting for the bus.[78] The two benches show how a small space can be a localized site where city and community interests clash. The artist's bench is an object produced by hand by a community-member for community use and as a direct response to the material conditions of Los Angeles Eastside neighborhoods that are exacerbated by city policies.[79] While the artist is not remunerated for his work, the city's official and industrially-produced benches, on the other hand, are currently supplied by Martin Outdoor Media (MOM), a company that sees bus riders not as patrons or community members but as potential customers for its benches provide the company with advertisement revenue.[80] Indeed, MOM boasts in its company website of their "micro target" advertising techniques and also state: "Outdoor advertising is the bridge between your business and your consumers: the more they see, the more they buy" (MOM). In the space of the MOM bench, one can see the crystallization of dominant City interests with business interests meanwhile poor communities have to wait for eight City entities to approve MOM-supplied bench installations, including the approval by the LAPD (Miranda). I end this dissertation with a discussion of these two benches because they represent the dominant and oppositional uses of space and they highlight the agency of the community-based artist whose intervention of space is a resistive act, a community-based art practice and shows how a cultural object can have aesthetic, political, and utilitarian value. The artist's bench

[78] According to the Moovit Public Transit Index, Los Angeles bus users wait 20 minutes on average with 59% of those bus riders waiting longer (Moovit).
[79] The lack of bus benches in communities of color is also a class attack because bus users are "disproportionately poorer than other commuters" in most U.S. cities (Maciag).
[80] MOM has a running 10-year contract with the City of Los Angeles that began in 2011 (LA City).

while stemming from the need for people to have a place to sit is indeed a subversive act and object that comments on the city's ongoing neglect of poor and working-class communities of color at the same time that it exemplifies the community-based transformations of the city.

Figure 18. This photograph shows the anonymous artist sitting on one of his pieces. A city-installed bench can be spotted in the background, showing the advertisement space typical of official city benches. Photo courtesy of Carolina A. Miranda and the *Los Angeles Times* (2018).

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