

RACE OF ANGELS: XICANISMA, POSTCOLONIAL PASSIONS,
AND RHETORICS OF REACTION AND REVOLUTION

By

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To The Faculty of Washington State University:

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Chair

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Abstract

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“Race of Angels: Xicanisma, Postcolonial Passions, and Rhetorics of Reaction and Revolution,” is an interdisciplinary examination of the sociocultural space and material place of Chicanas and Chicanos in the US contextualized within the political economy of globalization and race. As the title suggests, I take up the topics of literacy and language as sites of contestation, the contemporary contours of English and Cultural Studies, the problematic of postcolonial thinking in a neocolonial context, and the dialectically related rhetorical and ideological dimensions of these issues. In short, I am moving toward the articulation of a Xicanista theory of rhetoric.

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Dedication

Para mis abuelos, Juan Carrasco Davila and Petra Cardona Davila, los que me bendijeron con el corazón que hizo este trabajo un trabajo de amor.

CHAPTER ONE
EL PASEO DORMIDO: DREAMING THE AMERICAN DREAM

In the squares of the city - In the shadow of the steeple
Near the relief office - I see my people
And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'
If this land's still made for you and me.

Woodie Guthrie, "This Land is Your Land"

I am a poet
who yearns to dance on rooftops,
to whisper delicate lines about joy
and the blessings of human understanding.
I try. I go to my land, my tower of words and
bolt the door, but the typewriter doesn't fade out
the sound of blasting and muffled outrage.
My own days bring me slaps on the face.
Everyday I am deluged with reminders
that this is not
my land
and this is my land.

I do not believe in the war between the races

but in this country
there is war.

Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Poem for the Young
White Man Who Asked Me How I, an
Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could
Believe in the War Between the Races"

A Place to Start

Freezing wind makes my eyes tear as I clomp up the steps of Wilson Hall, one of the more historically notable buildings on WSU's campus and home to the Women's Studies program, the Sociology and Comparative Ethnic Studies departments, as well as to the Chicana/o Latina/o Student Center. I unfurl myself from a heavy woolen scarf as I

step into the Center. No one is at the small desk that sits at an oblique angle from the door, supporting a tiny magenta-colored Mac with what must be a 13-inch screen. Actually, there's no one in this part of the Center at all—it's the first day of finals week and close to 8:00 p.m., closing time. I take a few minutes to look around.

In the corner on my right is a magazine rack that holds, among other things, campus maps and pamphlets on National Student Exchange, the Congressional Hispanic Career Institute, and the WSU Department of Agriculture and Home Economics. Across from the desk with the baby-Mac is a small, square table holding an equally bitty fax machine and copier.

Hanging above the desk is a poster of César Chávez, and a print entitled “Día de los Muertos.” The print depicts a brown-skinned woman wearing a white peasant blouse and flower-bordered blue skirt. She has one long, dark braid hanging over her left shoulder. A mestizo-looking man in white peasant pants, a straw hat, and huaraches sits opposite her. Between them is a skeleton, his arm draped affectionately over the shoulder of the man, and they're all sharing a seemingly delightful picnic meal, with fruit and bread and wine, in the middle of a graveyard.

To my left are a few teal couches and chairs with office-furniture wood trim set in a nicely Western quadrangle, though a gray-blue loveseat that looks as if it didn't make the cut in someone's move closes the square. In the middle is the requisite coffee table. A phone sits in the center of the table surrounded by stacks of paper, including “Survey(s) of Academic Enrichment Workshops” for the fall semester, purple flyers for a spring course offering—CES380: Immigration and Citizenship in a Global Economy—pamphlets describing Job Shadowing at Washington State University, sign-up sheets for

the upcoming Multicultural Holiday Feast, and a couple of issues of *Minority Engineer*. Next to one of the teal chairs is a small end table that supports a stereo system. On one of the speakers there is a stack of CDs: a spoken-word mix including poems by Sandra C. Muñoz, Tammy Gomez, and robertkarimi, and music by Ricardo Arjona, Elida y Avante, and the Blues Travelers. The CD collection is watched over genially by photos of past Latina/o graduates in black cap and gown draped with vibrant indigenous mantles. Above the gray-blue loveseat are another print of César Chávez and a signed photo of Ellen Ochoa, the first Latina in space.

The facing wall boasts a mural intense with color. In its center is an *indigena*, a brown woman with broad, angular features, again in a white peasant blouse, with a single dark braid hanging down her back. Suspended in the air near her face are four ears of corn—red, yellow, white, and blue—pointing in four directions. To one side of *la indigena*, Spanish conquistadores ride horses between sometimes writhing, sometimes stoically posed indigenous bodies. Near them there is an exploding volcano that spills lava the color of freshly drawn blood down its sides. On the other side of *la indigena* there is a plump orange sun setting on crimson-red mountains. The sun is literally spewing thick smoke that emerges in the shape of a flame, or a blade, then gradually rises and unfolds into a black ribbon of cosmos exploding with bright stars and planets. Strung across the top of the mural is *papel picado*, green, red, and white rectangles of tissue paper cut out in intricate designs commemorating *el Día de los Muertos*. On the wall facing the stereo and CD collection are photos of Francisco Tamayo, lead counselor and head of the Center, and the nine mentors who are working with him this semester. In the

next room, two or three Latina/o students are studying for finals, a couple of them working quietly on two of the six or seven computer terminals provided for their use.

The phone lights up, letting out a loud, clerical ring. A slim young man comes in from the next room and grabs up the receiver from the coffee table. “Hey. No, it’s just me and Paty. Yeah, he left a while ago. No, come on down. We’re gonna be here a while.” He hangs up and plods back through the adjoining doorway. I suspect closing time will be when their eyelids become as heavy as the books they’re poring over.

Even at its busiest the Chicana/o Latina/o Center could rarely be described as bustling. It is occasionally the meeting place for a few affiliated organizations like Mujeres Unidas and MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán). There are also two sororities and one fraternity at Washington State University that were founded by Latinas/os, and they use the Center from time to time, for both individual and group purposes. Primarily the Center focuses on academic advising, student mentoring, delivering financial aid information, and coordinating cultural programming and events. It doesn’t seem like a huge amount of activity. But you also have to understand that, according to WSU’s Multicultural Student Services, Latinas/os only comprise about 3-4% of the student population, and that includes undergraduate as well as graduate students (“Ethnic Enrollment”)¹. So why the fuss? Why an entire Chicana/o Latina/o Student Center, for a mere 3-4% of the student population? What is the “Center” the center of, and in what ways is it central?

¹ Throughout this chapter I have used the most recent data clusters available from the university, which is generally from the years 2004 and 2005, sometimes in addition to data from recent prior years. I compare those numbers with Census projections regarding populations by state for the year 2005.

“You Gotta Go to School”

In order to address these questions, it is important to begin by taking a look at some facts about the changing face of the national population in the U.S.: As has long been predicted, Latinas/os in the U.S. surpassed African Americans in number at the dawn of the 21st century to become the country’s “largest minority group” (Miller). According to the 1990 Census, approximately 64% of those designated as Hispanic in the U.S. were of Mexican origin (Romo and Falbo 7); according to the 2000 Census, that percentage had increased slightly to 66.1% (Therrien and Ramirez 7)². It is also important, of course, to keep in mind the large number of undocumented immigrants who go uncounted in the Census efforts.

And we must also consider *why* the numbers of Latin American immigrants and consequently Latina/o citizens has been on the rise throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. Juan Gonzalez puts it compellingly in his *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*:

If Latin America had not been raped and pillaged by U.S. capital since its independence, millions of desperate workers would not now be coming here in such numbers to reclaim a share of that wealth; and if the United States is today the world’s richest nation, it is in part because of the sweat and blood of the copper workers of Chile, the tin miners of Bolivia, the fruit pickers of Guatemala and Honduras, the cane cutters of Cuba, the oil workers of Venezuela and Mexico, the pharmaceutical workers of Puerto Rico, the ranch hands of Costa

² A 2005 Census Bureau press release shows that percentage to have subsequently decreased slightly to 64%, perhaps due to the overall decrease in immigration from Latin America post-9/11 (“Hispanic Heritage”). For detailed numbers on current immigration trends see the Center for Immigration Studies’ report “Immigration at Mid-Decade: A Snapshot of America’s Foreign-Born Population in 2005” (Camarota).

Rica and Argentina, the West Indians who died building the Panama Canal, and the Panamanians who maintained it.

In this country just how white and black America cope with the mushrooming Latin American population will determine whether our nation enjoys interethnic tranquility in the twenty-first century or is convulsed by conflicts such as those tearing apart the multiethnic states of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere. (xviii)

Hence, the economic misadventures of US corporations such as Dupont, General Motors, and the now infamous United Fruit Company (infamous, at least, in Latin America where historical memory is intimately connected to continued exploitation and oppression) have ensured American prosperity by exploiting the labor and natural resources of Latin America, a point I'll take up at some length in subsequent chapters. In fact, economic conditions in both Mexico and the United States go a long way toward explaining why Mexicanas/os and Chicanas/os vastly outnumber their counterparts from other Latina/o subgroups. Henry T. Trueba elaborates in his "Castification in Multicultural America":

The deterioration of the Mexican economy, the demand for cheap labor, and even the strong support of many California employers who wanted Mexican workers, coupled with the inability of the government agencies to stop the entry of undocumented workers, has resulted in a continuous increase of the Hispanic population in the entire country. If the Hispanic population grew by 61 per cent between 1970 and 1980, the Mexican population grew by 93 per cent in the same period, while the remaining of the US population grew 11 percent. (46)

Many Latina/o immigrants know only too well why the human tide continues to surge toward El Norte. They live as my own grandparents did: toiling in fields and in factories, the American Dream glistening in the bloody blisters on their hands and the sweat of their brows.

Yet they refuse to abandon the dream. This is the way it is supposed to happen, after all. Isn't it? The Individual works very hard, desperately hard, makes a good life for herself and her family, through the sweat of her own brow. The fruits of her labor: fleshy red cherry clusters drooping from a high tree branch, chopped onion tops littering a dusty farm field, and *the promise of a better future for her children*.

The powerful allure of that particular chapter in the American Dream cannot be underestimated. "You gotta go to school. Get a good education": my grandfather told me this so many times, countless times. "Get a good education." But see, my grandparents were not immigrants. They were first generation American citizens . . . or so the hazy, at times vaguely shifting, story goes. Yet their extreme poverty made education a dream they could only dream for their children. So their children enter the U.S. educational system, having been dreamed into a dream for which their parents paid so dearly. Unfortunately, as Victor Villanueva, Jr. observes in his *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*, "The minority lives in a netherworld. Not quite American. No home to return to" (28).

Let me elaborate on that point a bit. In his autobiographical *Hunger of Memory*, Richard Rodriguez, a second-generation American of Mexican descent³, claims that

³ Throughout this text I have chosen to use the more politicized term "Chicana/o" when referring to U.S.-born people of Mexican descent. It is an uneasy compromise as many people, such as Rodriguez, and my own grandparents for that matter, reject the term. Often people reject the term specifically because it politicizes a lived reality of race and racism that they would like to deny. Or, as Ana Castillo points out in

losing his ties to his home-language and Mexican American culture was the price he had to pay to become a “middle-class American man. Assimilated” (3). “Yet,” Villanueva notes, “for all his [Rodriguez’s] fame as an American writing English about assimilation, his attempts at assimilation failed. He is called upon to explain the Latino; he has not melted into the American pot” (xvi). Villanueva expounds on Rodriguez’s position and the possibility of the cultural “assimilation” of Latinas/os:

Like many a Latino, I was upset by Richard Rodriguez’s autobiography, *Hunger of Memory*, but I did understand, because he brought back so many of the memories of Mom’s push for assimilation and the loneliness of the “other” in a foreign place, of California, of how we are not meant to be alone, and the lengths we will go to not to be alone. It wasn’t the story that upset me. There were too many parallels to my own. It was the melancholy, the ideological resignation, the way he seemed not to see that biculturalism is as imposed as assimilation. Richard Rodriguez had been through the cauldron and had emerged American he said. And, being American, he could no longer be Mexican. Yet there is the tension, the hunger, that runs through his writing, throughout his story. It is the tension that has others seek him out to discuss his ideas. If Richard Rodriguez were Richard Wilson he’d have no story to tell; if Richard Wilson were describing someone named Rodriguez he

her *Massacre of the Dreamers*, “many women of Mexican descent in the nineties do not apply the term Chicana to themselves seeing it as an outdated expression weighed down by the particular radicalism of the seventies” [19]. I use the term as an assertion of the need for further politicization, collaboration, and what Gayatri Spivak calls “strategic essentialism” [qtd. in Sandoval, “Mestizaje” 359] in order to intervene in dominant power structures on behalf of Chicanas/os as well as all oppressed peoples. In acknowledgement of people’s right to self-identify, I only use Chicana/o to refer to the population with such political *potential*. I use “Mexican American” to quote and paraphrase those writers who’ve chosen that terminology, or where an individual has explicitly self-identified as such. Here, at least, Richard Rodriguez identifies himself simply as “American.” I will attend to the question of “Xicanisma” in Chapter Five.

wouldn't have the same fame. He remains the other while espousing the same. (39)

Unlike Rodriguez might have us believe, the feeling of being “other” does not go away when Latina/o students become fluent in the English language. Villanueva's *Bootstraps* is a testament to that fact, as are my story, the stories of my mother and her siblings, along with the stories of countless Latinas and Latinos. Villanueva notes, “Two generations of learning the language and the ways of America, and all will be better, we hear. But two generations come and go and all that happens is that the minority's native tongue is gone” (19).

And the U.S. educational system employs several mechanisms which ensure that state of affairs. Take, for instance, the fact that Latina/o students are more often than not immersed in English education even when Spanish is their dominant—and sometimes only—language, where they immediately begin to lag behind their Anglo peers in mathematics, English language skills, and English reading (González, Huerta-Macías, and Tinajero 206). It is one of the most lamentable examples of racial bias in the U.S. school system today. Elspeth Stuckey states the matter unambiguously in her response to June Jordan's question “What to do?” about the “Problems of Language in a Democratic State.” In *The Violence of Literacy* Stuckey asserts,

To answer that question [What to do?], we must understand the connections between literacy and economy, literacy and work, literacy and race, gender and class, literacy and English teachers. We must understand the extraordinary power of the educational process and of literacy standards not merely to exclude citizens from participating in the country's economic and political life but to brand them

and their children with indelible prejudice, the prejudice of language . . . We must take responsibility for the racism throughout schooling, the racism leveled most brutally and effectively in children's earliest years by literacy whose achievements can be seen in the loss of a third or more poor students by schooling's end. (122)

You won't be shocked, then, to learn that most of the extant research on Latina/o students chronicles the failure of the U.S. educational system when it comes to addressing the needs of this growing segment of the student population (which the Census Bureau still generally refers to as "nonwhite Hispanic"; hereafter the misnomer will be used only when data or statistics compiled on "Hispanics" are cited).

In grades K-12, the deficiencies in the system result in lower scores on standardized achievement tests, high grade-retention rates, and epidemic dropout rates among Latina/o students. Moreover, while dropout rates have consistently improved for Anglos and African Americans for over three decades, they have consistently worsened for Latinas/os. In fact, it has been estimated that of all Latina/o students enrolled in kindergarten in any given year, not even 30% will graduate from high school (Plata). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 1999 28.6% of all Latinas/os between the ages of 16-24 years old had dropped out of high school without returning or obtaining a GED; in 2002—the most recent year for which data has been compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics—the status drop-out rate for Latinos was 25.7% (NCES).

Experts agree that prejudicial policies and practices in elementary and secondary schools hinder Latina/o students' prospects for graduating and advancing to college. In

their *Chicanos in Higher Education: Issues and Dilemmas for the 21st Century*, Adalberto Aguirre, Jr. and Ruben O. Martinez attest,

tracking Chicano middle and high school students into low-ability academic subjects promotes their educational inequality by not providing them with enough exposure to an academic subject to acquire the background necessary for doing well on standardized tests like the SAT, by focusing on rote or memorizing rather than critical thinking skills, especially writing ability, and by not providing them with skills in math that would enable them to proceed into higher-order mathematics beyond the basics. (9)

Furthermore, as Kay M. Losey reports in her *Listen to the Silences: Mexican American Interaction in the Composition Classroom and the Community*, teachers praise and encourage their Chicana/o students significantly less often than they do Anglo students; they acknowledge and use the ideas of Chicana/o students less often; and they ask questions of Chicana/o students less frequently than they do Anglo students. When teachers *do* acknowledge their Chicana/o students, they are far more likely to interrupt them or to call upon other students to “help” than when acknowledging Anglo students. Perhaps most disturbing, however, studies have found that teachers “avoid eye contact, physical closeness, and other types of interaction with their Mexican American students,” as well as often “forgetting” them when a class takes turns reading aloud or is divided into groups for various classroom activities (14). Teachers’ explain that they fear embarrassing their Chicana/o students, or themselves, due to the students’ English speaking skills (16). Yet this is a poor excuse for the damage that results from such

prejudicial behavior, which includes “lowered interest, decreased participation, poor academic performance and lowered self-esteem”—in effect, alienation from the entire educational system and experience—in Chicana/o students (qtd. in Losey 16).

Though Aguirre and Martinez’s report as well as Losey’s research focuses on Chicana/o students, all Latina/o students in the U.S. are affected by a prejudicial system in which the Latina/o population is plagued by high dropout rates, low levels of academic achievement, and underfunded academic programs and schools that serve primarily Latina/o and other minority populations (González, Huerta-Macías, and Tinajero 359; Grossman 31-34). Aguirre and Martinez assert, “[T]he isolation of Chicano students in the educational system has fostered a context of neglect that serves to segregate Chicano students from educational opportunity” (7). The reality is that many Latina/o students know a lot about invisibility in the classroom. Their isolation takes on many forms. Numerous studies conducted over the past three decades have shown that Latina/o students receive disparate, and inferior, treatment in the United States educational system when compared to their Anglo counterparts.

As Kenneth J. Meier and Joseph Stewart, Jr. point out in their *The Politics of Hispanic Education: Un Paso Pa'lante y Dos Pa'tras*, academic grouping in elementary schools and tracking in secondary schools often steer Latina/o students into agricultural, vocational, or technical programs, rather than into academic programs where they will have access to the knowledge and skills they need to pursue further education (80). Meier and Stewart also found that Latina/o students are disciplined more often than their Anglo peers, even for offenses that are overlooked when committed by other students, and frequently Latina/o students are punished more severely for their transgressions. Perhaps

most alarming are documented incidents wherein Latina/o students have been punished for speaking Spanish or engaging in political action on school grounds (80-81).

When Latina/o students reach high school the effects of their substandard, prejudicial educational experiences take a devastating toll. In a study conducted in the early 1980s, a representative sampling of Latina/o students who dropped out of high school cited poor grades, dislike of school, and problems with teachers as the most common reasons for withdrawing. Additional reasons for withdrawal cited by Latina/o women were marriage and pregnancy, and Latina/o men cited economic constraints and opportunities (McKenna and Ortiz 110-117). In an earlier, more detailed study, Latina/o high school seniors cited the following factors as obstructions to school work at least 10% more frequently than did their Anglo counterparts: “Worry over money problems (repayment of loan, support of dependants, family income, etc.)”; ‘Family obligations (other than money problems)’; ‘Lack of good place to study at home’; [and] ‘Parents aren’t interested in my education’” (Durán 43). According to a 2003 report by Richard Fry entitled “Hispanic Youth Dropping Out of U.S. Schools: Measuring the Challenge,” economic realities continue to be key factors in the present-day Latina/o dropout rate (iii-iv). In 1980 and 1990, Latina/o students dropped out of high school at higher rates than did any other ethnic group (excluding Native Americans), and Chicana/o students dropped out at rates higher than any other Latino sub-group (Aguirre and Martinez 6). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, that reality endured into 1999 and the end of the twentieth century (NCES).

Perhaps most tragically, a sense of hope dashed and possibility extinguished persists in the minds of Latinas/os who drop out of high school. Sociologist and

ethnographer Harriett D. Romo, along with social psychologist Toni Falbo, conducted extensive research on “at risk” Latina/o high school students in Texas in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Reflecting on the findings of their research, Romo remarked,

I was unprepared for the sense of failure that lingered long after an individual dropped out of school. Parents who had dropped out as adolescents themselves still felt a deep anger, remorse, and defeat associated with school. Their sense of failure was intensified as they tried to help their own children stay in school. The same sense of failure was evident in the interviews of the youths, some of whom told us as we tried to schedule the last interviews, “You don’t want to talk to me, I dropped out.” (xiii)

This legacy of despair is probably the most insidious aspect of Latinas/os’ current distressing situation in the US educational system.

Given the current state of affairs for Latina/o youth in elementary and secondary schools, it should come as no surprise to discover that for the small percentage of those students who do graduate from high school and actually go on to college, their chances of completing a four year degree are depressingly poor when compared to their Anglo counterparts (Aguirre and Martinez 4-6). Researchers have noted that for Chicana/o students the idea of entering college can be very traumatic, and concerns about English composition skills can make them especially anxious (Losey 92); those Latinos/as who are ESL/EFL students compare their writing to that of native speakers of English and often “feel inept or uncomfortable . . . they see themselves as objects of ridicule,” even after years of immersion in English literacy education (Harris 228-229). Finally, while

many Latina/o students have very high educational aspirations, their expectations to actually attend college are often much lower (Vasquez 335).

So, even those Latina/o students who do stay in high school are far less likely to enroll in an institution of higher education than their Anglo counterparts, and of those Latinas/os who go on to college far fewer actually complete the requirements necessary to earn a four-year degree. Once again, among the Latinas/os enrolled in institutions of higher learning, Chicana/o students withdraw before graduation at far higher rates than do their Latina/o peers. In 1990 only 5.4% of Chicanas/os had completed four or more years of college compared to 22.2% of Anglos, 12% of African Americans, 20.2% of Cubans, and 9.7% of Puerto Ricans (Aguirre and Martinez 4-5).

Researchers agree that understanding Latina/o students' level of academic achievement requires knowledge of the familial and cultural milieu from which the students come (Aguirre and Martinez 14). As early as 1938, John Dewey argued that teachers must know the backgrounds from which their students come—the abilities, the needs, the past experiences of the people in their classrooms—in order to provide experiences that build upon their present knowledge (85). This presents a serious challenge to the US educational system in which “Hispanics approach representational equity on school boards, but fall far short in terms of school administrators and teachers” (Meier and Stewart 117). Moreover, at institutions of higher education, “minority faculty are underrepresented at all levels of the tenure track” (Aguirre and Martinez 64), despite the fact that at the same time the 2000 Census revealed that the Latina/o population has grown to constitute the largest minority group in the US (Scully). Despite the burgeoning Latina/o population, few adults working in the educational system have personal ties to

the Latina/o community and, sadly, educators and administrators remain largely ignorant about the attitudes, perceptions, and day-to-day lives of their Latina/o students.

Celebrating Diversity to Death

That is why all the fuss. That is the state of affairs which institutions of higher education in the U.S. are attempting to address in efforts to continue the democratization of the educational system. Departments like Multicultural Student Services and offices like the Chicana/o and Latina/o Student Center at Washington State University are popping up around the country. Mission statements and plans that address increasingly “multicultural” student bodies and promote “diversity” as institutional policy have been drafted, revised, and published. Though Affirmative Action in hiring and college admission practices has come under fire in various quarters over the past decade, the courts have generally (though often by a narrow margin) ruled in favor of policies that support attempts to achieve proportional representation of people of color in higher education (Affirmative Action).

At WSU, the Chicana/o and Latina/o Center exists explicitly to counter the cumulative effects of the systemic racism that has historically burdened and often thwarted Latinas/os at every level of the educational process. The Center’s web page opens: “*Bienvenidos*. We are committed to helping the University to create an environment that acknowledges, respects, and enhances diversity. Our goal is to create a home away from home that will support you in all of your endeavors at WSU” (“*Bienvenidos*”). Clearly there is an attempt to address what Melba J. T. Vasquez, in her “Confronting the Barriers to the Participation of Mexican American Women in Higher

Education,” calls “The ‘culture shock’ phenomena [which] may account in part for the difficulty many Chicana students encounter, especially at large all-white universities. Students report alienation and isolation as a result of being the only minority student in a class of 300 students or a large resident hall” (333).

The Center’s Mission Statement elaborates on the project and, since it is the centeredness of the “Center” that is under consideration here, it is worth quoting at some length (the following is reproduced precisely and includes the typographical errors and some shorthand that are common to web page publication). It states:

The Chicana/o Latina/o Student Center is committed to promoting college student success for Chicana/o Latina/o students and is committed to assisting Washington State University in its efforts to increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of these students. In its efforts to promote and embrace diversity, the center provides opportunities in both academic and extra-curricular activities. The Center seeks to help students to empower themselves, so they will rise to their highest educational potential and meet the challenges of a multi-ethnic society.

The center acknowledges the following challenges faced by multicultural students specifically Ch/L students: 1) the need to adjust to a new environment; 2) the need to receive adequate financial assistance; 3) the need to create a social and academic climate that is inclusive and affirming; 4) the need to establish long term goals, short term objectives, and a commitment to both; 5) students’ personal needs affecting their retention at WSU and graduation from WSU.

(“Bienvenidos”)

So, the statement opens with a tacit acknowledgement of the high school dropout and college attrition rates for Latina/o students by prioritizing recruitment, retention, and graduation. It emphasizes the democratic values of “promot[ing] and embrac[ing] diversity,” and “empower[ing]” individuals so that they may “rise to . . . meet the challenges of a multi-ethnic society.” The list of “challenges” faced by “multicultural” students again tacitly recognizes Latinas/os’ precarious position in U.S. institutions of higher education while championing the democratic values of pluralism and inclusiveness. In fact, the Mission Statement makes it clear that the Center’s *raison d’etre* is to *include* Latina/o students in the conventions and culture of the university—to bring them into the center through the Center. And how is that mission supported?

Well, it’s not at all clear that it *is* being supported. In fact, in the 2000-2001 academic year, WSU President V. Lane Rawlins appointed a Strategic Plan Design Team to work exclusively on the issue of diversity. The team (known as “Design Team #3”) defined several problems to be addressed by the institution in the following years, including the following: “Diversity is currently not part of WSU’s culture”; the numbers of WSU staff and administrators who are people of color are small and they remain clustered in a few units; WSU faculty does not represent the diversity of the student body; the WSU student body does not reflect the diversity of the state of Washington; the climate on campus is not always safe for and respectful toward people of color, including faculty, staff, and students; and the administration, though supportive, has been largely ineffective in addressing diversity issues on campus (“Strategic Issues”).

The last problem listed above nicely encapsulates a large part of the dilemma at hand. This is a document commissioned and published by the university; it is an official

document of a democratic institution: the public, Land-grant University. As such, it must necessarily employ the cultural rhetoric of democracy, as do most of the documents produced by the university as an ostensibly democratic institution. According to postcolonial theorist Arjun Appadurai, political rhetoric in the U.S. is firmly rooted in Enlightenment era thinking, which consists of “a concatenation of ideas, terms, and images, including ‘freedom,’ ‘welfare,’ ‘rights,’ ‘sovereignty,’ ‘representation,’ and the master-term ‘democracy’” (qtd. in Slane 6). Furthermore, as Andrea Slane notes in *A Not So Foreign Affair: Fascism, Sexuality, and the Cultural Rhetoric of American Democracy*, “[T]he definition of American nationhood has been spoken through the concepts of democracy” (15). Hence we see how the institutional rhetoric of the university is articulated through the concepts of democracy as well. But in this case, what does it actually mean?

Design Team #3 compiled its report in late 2000 and early 2001. As documented above, at that time it was lamented that at WSU the number of students of color was not representative of its constituency. For Latina/o students that meant that in the fall of 2000, they comprised 3.3% of the student population while Latinas/os accounted for 6.5% of the state’s population (the 2000 Census reports 7.5% [“State and County”]), and 14.9% of eastern Washington’s (the regional) population (“Strategic Issues”). However, what isn’t mentioned is that when the report was assembled the Latina/o student population had hovered around 3-4% for over a decade. Moreover, while the Latina/o population booms nationwide relative to the white population, including in the state of Washington, Latinas/os have generally measured their increased numbers at WSU in tenths of percentage points (as in one-tenth of one percent) per annum. In fact, the

Latina/o student population at WSU in 2002 was approximately 3.4%, up from 3.3% in 2000, while the Latina/o population in Washington state increased by over 10% in the same two years (from 2000-2002) (Cook). Despite the institutional commissioning of the Strategic Issues Report on diversity, despite the university's "support" for diversity, the issue of disproportionate representation for Latina/o students at WSU has actually gotten worse.

But still, there is the existence of the Chicana/o Latina/o Student Center itself. This is a kind of administrative support that *is* working, isn't it? Well, yes and no. The Center has been in existence since 1971, and over the years the university has funded additional student-mentor positions (originally the student-mentor program did not exist, but today nine returning undergrads mentor incoming Latina/o students in the Center). There is also a half-time clerical position currently filled by an undergrad as well. However, currently only one paid, full-time position exists in the Center, that of the lead counselor himself. In addition, for two of the last four years the entire Center has been running on a budget of approximately \$7,500 per academic year (Tamayo). Moreover, though the Center used to have a dedicated recruiter, that position was relocated to the Office of Admissions during academic year 2002-2003 in the interest of centralizing the issue of diversity. As the Final Report on Diversity put it, "All recruiters should be responsible for recruitment of students of color with some having a specialized focus" ("Final Report"). It remains to be seen how this move away from the Center, and toward the center of university administration, will affect the already small number of Latina/o student enrollees at WSU.

Then there is the rhetoric of the Center to contend with, which sounds quite familiar to those who've read the University's reports on diversity. They purport to "promote and embrace diversity," and "empower individuals" with an eye to "meet[ing] the challenges of a multi-ethnic society" ("Bienvenidos"). Is this different from the cultural rhetoric of democracy deployed by the University administration? In an effort to answer this question, I seek out the lead counselor of the Center himself.

"Do We Reify Hegemony in the Center? Yes!"

"Gee, baby, ain't I goood to you," croons a breathy female voice from somewhere overhead. I can hear the faint ping of piano notes beneath her voice, though the jazz diva and her accompanist are often drowned out completely by boisterous conversation and intermittent eruptions of loud laughter. It's 9:00 p.m. on a Saturday night in December, and the end of the last full week of classes, in Pullman, Washington's own Rico's, the local jazz club. The crowd, which is just starting to pick up, is appropriately jolly. Their mood seems to be reflected in the variously red and white Christmas lights that border the windows and the chalkboard list of beers available on tap and wines by the glass. A lone multicolored strand of lights drapes the mirror behind the wide mahogany bar. I've chosen a table by the foyer, which turns out to be mildly inconvenient considering I'm tape-recording this interview and the wooden door, inlaid with surprisingly heavy glass panels, lets loose a high-pitched squeal every time someone enters the bar.

Francisco Tamayo, lead counselor and head of the Chicana/o Latina/o Student Center—formerly the Hispanic Counseling Center—takes a sip of the beer I just poured for him.

“You like it?” I ask.

He puckers his lips and looks up at the high ceiling for a moment. “It’s interesting,” he says, nodding his head ambiguously.

It’s a Mongoose IPA. Kind of hoppy, but it has a salutary effect on my sinuses, which are irritatingly pressurized tonight. I decide I’ll let him order the next pitcher.

It sounds like a laid-back setting for an interview, but I have my notebook out in front of me, pen at the ready, and that tape recorder lies impudently on the table between us like a tiny plastic version of Big Brother running on alkaline AAs. We chat somewhat awkwardly for a few minutes—we’re both aware that we have to get down to it pretty quickly here, after all—and then I start to get to the issues I’d like to have addressed from the perspective of the Center.

I ask how many Latina/o students come into the university being considered “at-risk” students. Tamayo explains that part of the university’s new strategic plan (2002-2007) has set the goal of enrolling larger numbers of academically exemplary students. He begins, his words intent, measured. As he speaks he leans across the table and seems to be almost reaching for me with his thickset arms, his round hands making tiny pumping motions in tempo with the rise and fall of his voice.

“We’re now using the words ‘high-achieving’ students.”

“So,” I ask, “that’s not an issue for these students?”

“But that changes,” he counters. He makes an upward sweeping motion with one arm. “People that come here with a 4.0 high school GPA, they do poorly the first semester. Some of them, they fall below 2.0,” Tamayo says, and suddenly his raised arm slumps heavily back down to the tabletop.

Clearly the existence of the Chicana/o Latina/o student center signals a recognition of this reality, which their rhetoric addresses in the Center’s Mission Statement. Tamayo acknowledges the multiple factors at play here: the “culture shock phenomena,” being away from home for the first time, the difficulty of connecting with other people in a strange place, even involvement in extracurricular activities and taking on too much responsibility too soon can undermine a student’s academic success. The Center’s emphasis on academics points up their awareness of the problems.

“From the get-go we’re talking about how to get good grades,” Tamayo stresses. “Academics are a priority for us in the Center.”

“Would you say they’re the number one priority?” I ask.

“I believe that it should be the number one priority as a student in general,” he affirms. He explains that this is where the mentor program comes into play for many first-year Latina/o students; the mentors often help students negotiate the vagaries of the college student’s schedule, making sure there is enough study time, enough social contact, and enough rest on the new student’s calendar. The ratio of mentors to students in the Center is 1 to 23.

He shrugs his rounded shoulders and looks at the crowd that seems to be milling aimlessly around us. “Last [academic] year, we were able to retain 85-86% of the [Latino/Latina] students.” He looks down at his hands and starts nodding, the salt-and-

peppered top of his head pointing directly at me. “So something’s happening. Something’s working. You know, maybe because of the low numbers still [of Latina/o students in total] . . . because we’re so small, there’s plenty of opportunities for people to, you know, reach out.”

I point out how some of the rhetoric of the Center seems to mimic, or at least underscore, the University’s stance on diversity, showing him copies of Design Team #3’s reports. I ask whether he thinks there’s a difference in the ways the institution and the Center understand and deploy the language and concepts of democracy. He takes a deep breath and holds it for a few long seconds.

“It’s not an easy job, Siskanna. Do we reify hegemony in the Center? Yes. Do I make change? Yes. I’m not a part of this,” he says, tapping his finger heavily on the document I’ve laid on the table between us. “They’re talking about what *I do*. Do they ask me to be a part of this? No. I don’t think they know—have the slightest idea—of the Chicana/o students on campus, of the sacrifices they make to graduate . . . [If people of color contributed to these reports, then] these documents are written by people who have forgotten where they come from.”

Our server stops by the table, clinking heavily with empty glasses and ashtrays. “Another pitcher?” she asks.

“Sí!”

“What’ll it be this time?”

I look at Tamayo with one eyebrow raised, praying he won’t order anything “light.”

“Fat Tire,” he says.

I exhale appreciatively, close my notebook, and turn off the tape recorder.

The Rhetoric of Democracy and the Ghettoization of Latina and Latino Students

A few days later I check my email and find that there is some congratulations in the President's Quarterly Update: "We continue to make progress on our strategic goals, whether enrolling more high ability students, attracting more funding for important faculty research and scholarship, or launching efforts like the Office of Undergraduate Education and the President's Teaching Academy to make sure a WSU undergraduate education is the best offered in a research university" (Rawlins). Notice there is no mention of "progress" on issues of diversity. What are these documents on diversity for then? Does the university *really* aspire to have more Latina/o students within the walls of the ivory tower? Xicana writer and intellectual Ana Castillo would qualify such an assertion. She declares:

The United States, being a relatively young, therefore resilient country, can and eventually will allow for the representation of people of color in the institutions that influence and mandate people's lives—government, private industry, and universities, for example. It will gradually relent with its blatant refusal to fulfill its professed democratic ideals and include the descendants of its slave trade, the Native Americans, mestizos/as, and Asians . . . *It will do so because the world economy will not permit anything short of it.* (30; emphasis added)

The university's attempts to include more Latina/o students in the "center" boils down to the same issue that has set the Latina/o population booming in the U.S.: economics. The burgeoning Latina/o population means a greater demand for access to higher education

on the part of its constituents, and it also means a greater demand for more skill in this huge labor pool in order to satisfy U.S. economic interests—interests that are necessarily conflated with the modern understanding of democracy in the United States. Chicana poet, dramatist, and social commentator Cherríe L. Moraga puts it this way:

With the collapse of the World Trade Center, our “selected” President assures his citizenry in speech after identical speech, that he, his lawmakers, and military will continue to preserve “our way of life.” I imagine this means the level of comfort and convenience and anesthetization from world events that middle class Amerika enjoys and has come to equate with democracy. (xxii)

As an institution that inculcates and perpetuates the larger mission of the government, i.e., to preserve and perpetuate “our way of life,” the university deploys the cultural rhetoric of democracy; yet that rhetoric serves to further ghettoize Latina/o students. Students are not brought into the “center” simply because they are given a “Center,” and diversity is not “part of WSU’s culture” merely because documents are published to “promote” such change. The rhetoric of democracy itself is part of the anesthetic to which Moraga refers. It’s a bitter pill. One that has rendered many of us numb to the reality of enduring social injustice. One that has made many of us weary, so tired. And yet the hope, the promise of the American dream keeps us moving, virtually walking while we sleep. *Nos hemos paseado dormidos.*

Have you ever been awakened while you were sleepwalking? I know, the old folktale goes that you can kill someone, or drive her insane, if you wake her while she walks in her sleep. But that’s not what happens at all. What happens is you look around and wonder, sometimes out loud, “How the *hell* did I get here?”

CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATING THE EMPIRE: FROM DOMINATION TO HEGEMONY

The thought comes to Stella that afternoon that perhaps she dislikes the child. "Nonsense," she tells herself, "I am a teacher. I like children. I am a teacher because I like children." On their own, though, her steps slow down as she approaches the classroom where he waits for her. She looks at him through the window, sitting in a miniature chair. He is too big for the kindergarten furniture and yet too small for his age. No child should look like that, she thinks, noticing the resigned angle of the shoulders, the hopelessness of the hands in his lap.

They go through the hour long drill, as they have done for the last month, almost every afternoon of the school week. "This is a pencil," holding up a pencil. "This is a pen. Pencil—lapiz. Book—libro. I open a window," as she walks to the window and tugs with it. "La ventana—the window." She uses the flash cards; she acts out verbs. "What is your name? ¿Como te llamas? My name is Paul. Me llamo Pablo. I am Paul. Yo soy Pablo."

She repeats the phrases, usually first in English, then in her slow, careful Spanish. The child sits silently, an apologetic expression on his face, as if he were sorry to be troubling her this way. He regrets that she has to stay late after school just for him. He is even a little embarrassed for her as she exaggerates the actions that she is illustrating: "I open the door. I sit down. I stand up." Throughout it all he remains in his island of silence. He wants no part of this activity on his behalf. . . .

The hour lesson is over, and she tells him it is time to go. This, being Friday, she also wishes him a good weekend. She speaks to him in English, hoping to trick him into revealing that he has understood her, but he does not move. His body stiffens in the ignominiously small chair, but he remains still, like an animal that has been trapped before and now he does not trust his instincts. She repeats the dismissal in Spanish, and this time he gets up and walks out of the room with that odd gait of his that is almost a shuffle.

Beatriz de la Garza, From "Pillars of Gold and Silver"

Figuring the Savage Other

In de la Garza's short story about Pablo and his teacher, you can read—no, you can almost *feel* the teacher's dismay when she must be near the boy. A little brown boy. I can see him. His eyes are lovely, like deep saucers of liquid obsidian. His course black

hair is straight but falls in an unruly swatch on his forehead, a forehead dotted with tiny *lunares*. Little moons. It is a dismay bordering on disgust. You can read the wildness, the “animal,” the savagery that is projected through the teacher’s gaze when she looks at Pablo, when she looks but does not see. There you can see the figure of the Other. And Pablo can see it as well, reflected back at him in the teacher’s own ghostly gray eyes . . . eyes that he fears, perhaps, have come to steal his soul. According to Eric Cheyfitz, a theory of metaphor that posits the “foreign” or “figurative” as the defining antithesis to the definitive “domestic” or “proper” was “first put into practice in 1492 with the European desire to dominate Native America, which was, for Europe, the very figure of the figurative, the very heart of speech itself, with all its danger and possibility in need of cultivation” (xii). And in the “New World” the figuration and manifestation of that need to dominate would not proceed in an orderly nor bloodless fashion.

Contra the prevailing rhetoric of the early colonial period, if the natives encountered in the Americas upon Columbus’s “discovery,” which we now know to have been in reality a fateful blunder propelled by European greed and cultural arrogance, if those natives were generally considered to be “ignorant” or unintelligent—“in need of cultivation—the misperception did not endure for long. Roy Harvey Pearce, in *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, defies the comforting and culturally affirming stereotype—comforting and culturally affirming for white Americans of European descent—when he recalls the words of Edward Waterhouse, “The Indian became for seventeenth century Virginians a symbol not of a man in the grip of devilish ignorance, but a man standing fiercely and grimly in the path of civilization” (qtd. in Iverson 154). In *A People’s History of the United States*, historian Howard Zinn

succinctly conveys the applicability of this apprehension to colonizers across the eastern seaboard of North America along with the consequences for Native inhabitants, “Not able to enslave the Indians, and not able to live with them, the English decided to exterminate them” (13).

In an article entitled “Civilization and Assimilation in the Colonized Schooling of Native Americans,” Katherine Iverson discusses the underlying reasons for the policy of complete extermination and its attempted implementation on the part of the English, reasons that were primarily “political and economic” (156). In fact, it was the imperative of what Iverson calls “colonial demographic and political expansion” that led to the gruesome atrocities of the Indian Wars, which spanned over the course of three centuries, from roughly 1622 when a battle that would turn into a decade-long war between the Powhatan tribe and Virginia colonists broke out until the massacre at Wounded Knee toward the end of the nineteenth century. Zinn explains, “Indian removal was necessary for the opening of the vast American lands to agriculture, to commerce, to markets, to money, to the development of the modern capitalist economy” (126).

The same imperative stirred revolt against the English crown in the influential leaders of the colonies, colonies that were in actuality predominantly populated by a divided heterogeneity that included the small remaining groups of besieged Indians, white indentured servants, a burgeoning white middle class, and Black slaves. Indeed, those leaders had discovered that “by creating a nation, a symbol, a legal unity called the United States, they could take over land, profits, and political power from favorites of the British Empire. In the process, they could hold back a number of potential rebellions and

create a consensus of popular support for the rule of a new, privileged leadership” (Zinn 59).

In reality, the English colonists followed a pattern of devastation and plunder in the Americas that was started by Columbus in the Caribbean and replicated by Pizarro in Peru, where the once-massive and highly complex Inca society ruled, and in modern-day Mexico where Hernan Cortés and his *conquistadores* laid waste to the sprawling Azteca civilization. Eduardo Galeano, in *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, provides a concise and simultaneously compelling account of the motor of Spanish colonialism in Latin America. He writes: “In the Middle Ages a small bag of pepper was worth more than a man’s life, but gold and silver were the keys used by the Renaissance to open the doors of paradise in heaven and of capitalist mercantilism on earth. The epic of the Spaniards and Portuguese in America combined propagation of the Christian faith with usurpation and plunder of native wealth.” Galeano continues,

The virgin lands, bristling with jungles and dangers, fanned the flames of avarice among the captains, the hidalgos on horseback, and the ragged soldiers who went out after the spectacular booty of war: they believed in glory, in “the sun of the dead,” and in the key to achieving it, which Cortés defined thus: “Fortune favors the daring.” Cortés himself had mortgaged everything he owned to equip his Mexican expedition. With a few exceptions—Columbus, Pedrarias Dávila, Magellan—the expeditions of conquest were not financed by the state but by the conquistadores themselves, or by businessmen who put up the money for their ventures. (24)

It was in this way that the Americas in the early colonial period constituted a vast store of wealth, and European financiers, including the colonists and conquistadores themselves, were dead set upon profiting from their investments. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon puts it in plain words, “Capitalism, in its early days, saw in the colonies a source of raw materials which, once turned into manufactured goods, could be distributed on the European market” (65). The very purpose of those initial exploratory expeditions undertaken by the likes of Columbus, Pizarro, and Magellan was to shore up European coffers and individual pockets alike with the riches of previously untapped resources—untapped by the burgeoning European market economy, that is. Moreover, the race was on to do so before rival kingdoms could beat them to it. The situation is quite clearly described as “primitive accumulation” by Karl Marx in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Volume I). He compares the role of primitive accumulation in political economy to the role of original sin in Christian theology, characterizing primitive accumulation as follows: “Long, long ago, there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal élite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living” (873). The “other” is the “free worker,” free “in the double sense that they neither form part of the means of production themselves, as would be the case with slaves, serfs, etc., nor do they own the means of production” (874). Marx summarizes, “So-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as ‘primitive’ because it forms the pre-history of capital, and of the mode of production corresponding to capital” (874-875). Zinn elucidates the connection between

the development of capitalism and the colonization of the Americas in *A People's History*. He argues:

In Peru, that other Spanish conquistador Pizarro, used the same tactics, and for the same reasons—the frenzy in the early capitalist states of Europe for gold, for slaves, for products of the soil, to pay the bondholders and stockholders of the expeditions, to finance the monarchical bureaucracies rising in Western Europe, to spur the growth of the new money economy rising out of feudalism, to participate in what Karl Marx would later call “the primitive accumulation of capital.” These were the violent beginnings of an intricate system of technology, business, politics, and culture that would dominate the world for the next five centuries. (12)

And hence, “primitive accumulation” and mercantile capitalism were wedded with a developing finance capitalism, borne ahead by their groomsmen, the soldiers of fortune, to violently usher the “New World” and its peoples into the colonial era, and “European power stretched out to embrace the world” (Galeano 24).

The racialization of the colonies’ native inhabitants was a crucial factor in ensuring the success of the Europeans’ various campaigns for conquest. Constructions of race and racism have a long history that both predates and parallels that of the formation of “America” as a nation-state. In *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, Ronald Takaki takes William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as a seminal example of the English racialization of natives on various geographical fronts. The play is, of course, set in the New World, and Caliban, one of the central characters in the play, is the quintessential “savage.” Takaki initially points out the characteristics that Caliban shared

with popular contemporaneous beliefs about and representations of the Irish; but Takaki also promptly notes that John Smith's recent arrival in what would become the colony of Virginia is an important part of the historical context surrounding Shakespeare's figuration of the character Caliban. Caliban, in fact, Takaki points out, "was a New World inhabitant. 'Carib,' the name of an Indian tribe, came to mean a savage of America, and the term *cannibal* was a derivative" (30).

And the natives encountered in the New World, like Caliban, were constructed as profoundly "other." Takaki explains, "European culture was delineating the border, the hierarchical division between civilization and wildness" (31). The familiar stereotypes enter in here: the native as bloodthirsty, devious; the native as sexually depraved and wanton; the native as unclean, soiled even unto the soul; the native as minion of Satan; the native as uneducable, obtuse; the native as animalistic, less than human, and fit only for the life of a slave. The Spanish—sharing in the continental "philosophy" of the day—were in agreement with their English counterparts to the north with regard to the Indians. Their "natural wickedness" was marshaled by the viceroy of Mexico as justification for the enslavement of Indians and their condemnation to the bowels of mines that they were forced to dig across the kingdom of *Nueva España*; a French naturalist, Count de Buffon, bemoaned the fact that in the Indians of Latin America he could observe "no activity of the soul" (qtd. in Galeano 52). In *Open Veins*, Eduardo Galeano sums up the matter thus:

Voltaire's Latin America was inhabited by Indians who were lazy and stupid, pigs with navels on their backs, and bald and cowardly lions. Bacon, De Maistre, Montesquieu, Hume, and Bodin declined to recognize the "degraded men" of the New World as fellow humans. Hegel spoke of Latin America's physical and

spiritual impotence and said the Indians died when Europe merely breathed on them. (53)

The twisted vision of the European invaders not only cemented their identities as the enlightened superiors to the rest of the world's inhabitants, it also served their economic interests exceedingly well. It made the enslavement and torture of indigenous Americans less disagreeable, and, according to Howard Winant in *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since World War II*, "what slavery chiefly offered to developing capitalism was massive inputs of coercible labor, where, in the Americas, other sources were largely unavailable" (27).

In fact, the recalcitrance of the Indians in the colonies to the north led the English to seek other sources of easily exploitable labor in order to cultivate the land and extract the natural resources it had to offer. As early as 1519 the first black African slaves had already been sold in Jamestown (Zinn 26). Howard Zinn argues that there were two particularly distinctive features that characterized American slavery: 1) "the frenzy for limitless profit that comes from capitalistic agriculture," and; 2) "the reduction of the slave to less than human status by the use of racial hatred" (28). Indeed, the Spaniards literally worked their slaves to the bone, that is, until they perished from exhaustion and undernourishment, as a matter of course.

Juan Gonzalez, in his *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*, delineates other major differences between Spanish and English practices in the Americas during the colonial period. For example, he reveals the role of the Roman Catholic Church, which saw conversion of the "heathen" masses as part and parcel of the colonizing mission in the conquest of Latin America (13). In contrast, the colonization of

Anglo America by the English colonists reveals that they had no interest in converting the indigenous peoples for many years after first contact, and, in fact, the English generally avoided the native populations at all cost (14). The Spanish also financed its colonies differently than the English, which resulted in massive investment by the Spanish crown in Latin America (government-sponsored mode) and wild speculation by private investors in England (capitalist ventures through joint stock companies) in Anglo America (21). In addition, at least half of the English settlers were indentured servants or children who had been kidnapped and sold into servitude; and these “settlers” of the Anglo New World were free to pursue their own ventures once they worked off their debt (22). Spanish settlers, on the other hand, were considered nobility, were granted lands for their service to the crown, and those lands—called the *mayorazgos*—were indivisible and passed down in the family through the eldest son (23). The difference resulted in the tiny minority of white European nobles taking and maintaining ownership of the vast majority of the land in Latin America while massive land speculation took off in Anglo America (Gonzalez, *Harvest* 22 and 24), a fact that would delay the fight for Mexican independence till 1821, some 45 years after the end of the American Revolution.

So, due to brutal land grabs, predatory labor policies, and the rapacious proliferation of European disease among the Natives, it was only a matter of a few short decades before the indigenous population of the Americas was so decimated that the English could relax their genocidal campaign enough to once again consider the possibilities for exploitation harbored in the brown bodies of the surviving indigenes. The matter of time was indeed shorter in “New Spain” since the Spaniards had all along practiced a policy of intermarriage with the *Indios*, those they were not “forced” to kill on

account of their rebelliousness or who had not perished from European-bred disease and starvation; it made subjugation of the native peoples a much less complicated affair since the survivors would, by virtue of familial ties, have an immediate stake in the continued success of their very conquerors. Moreover, intermarriage was an effective means of quickly repopulating the devastated native communities, all the better to continue exploiting them. The English, in contrast, would not deign to muddy their (imagined) racial purity through miscegenation with the Indians. Instead, the compliance of the surviving Natives in the English colonies would demand a more methodical and regimented form of assimilation. Enter the formal European educational system into the Americas, with the explicit purpose of subduing its native-born peoples in order to more efficiently exploit them.

You Gotta Go to School (Variation on a Theme)

The scene is set for what Eric Cheyfitz has called “the primal schoolroom,” itself the site of “primal colonization.” In his *Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan*, Cheyfitz narrates the intersections of colonialism, imperialism, education, and language, which, while Cheyfitz’s emphasis at this particular juncture is on the European Renaissance, date far back into the history of white, “Western” supremacy:

We have before us one of the West’s most familiar scenes. And, certainly, it is a scene that was familiar to Renaissance schoolboys and to the men they became. This scene of primal colonization is a scene of instruction: first, because it is the narrative that explicitly and implicitly framed the central teaching of rhetoric in

Renaissance schools, reminding the pupils that their education would confer on them the very originary power of civilization; and, second, because the scene itself narrates what it posits as *the* original act of instruction, the act whereby savages are converted through the power of eloquence to civility. (114-115)

In other words, now that the colonization of the land and annihilation of the vast majority of the indigenes had been achieved, what remained was what Kenyan anti-colonial writer and activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has theorized as the colonizing of the mind.

It is crucial that we understand the ways in which educational practices have persistently played an integral part in that process. In their co-edited collection entitled *Gender, Colonialism, and Education: The Politics of Experience*, education scholars Joyce Goodman and Jane Martin put it this way: “education has served historically to regulate and police boundaries on the basis of class, gender, sexuality, age, dis/ability, ‘race,’ and ethnicity” (2). Racialization, racism, and education, in point of fact, share a tripartite trajectory in the history of the United States. Cheyfitz goes on to elaborate on the racializing texture, and racist impulse underlying, those formalized European educational practices in the colonies, as well as broaching the subject of the differences between what are often discussed as “internal” versus exogenous colonization. He writes,

We can, then, consider this scene of the primal power of eloquence as one of both intracultural and intercultural colonization, remembering the two are inseparably related, while not identical in their political impact; for to “colonize” the self, or those of one’s own race, gender, or class, is not the same act that colonizing the other is. The schoolboy reading this narrative or listening to his master recite it is taught to identify himself with the wild men in the scene and thus to recognize

himself as a kind of foreigner in relation to the orator, as a member of another species, who through the experience of being overpowered by oratory will gain access to oratory's power, the power of speech, and thus become a native of the civil world. (114)

In the primal schoolroom, language is in effect the very engine of racialization and colonization. Or perhaps organ, or even *organism* of colonization is a more apt characterization, for this description captures the living quality of language and the way that it functions in the lifeworld, in the Husserlian sense⁴, and how language works in and upon the body. The term “organism” may imply a kind of naturalness and inevitability that appears to be unwarranted or even unjust in this context, though I could also argue that the bubonic plague was the result of a pernicious natural organism, *Yersinia pestis* to be precise; the Black Death was a result which was, however, not at all inevitable, had it not been for the poverty, lack of sanitation, and increased population and cramped living conditions in medieval European slums⁵.

But I digress; the point is that language, and its use as a tool or instrument to produce relationships and collaboration among human beings, is a natural human phenomenon; the colonization of human beings by other human beings is not necessarily so. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o puts it like this, “Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community

⁴ “Husserl's notion of lifeworld is a difficult (and at the same time important) one. It can roughly be thought of in two different (but arguably compatible) ways: (1) in terms of belief and (2) in terms of something like socially, culturally or evolutionarily established (but nevertheless abstract) sense or meaning” (Beyer).

⁵ All of this is debatable if you're a scientist. The evidence is still not in on precisely what caused the Black Death to sweep across Europe and Asia throughout the mid-fourteenth century (and beyond, though not in quite so virulent a strain thereafter). The *Yersinia pestis* theory remains the most commonly accepted, or at any rate the least unconventional, explanation for the plague.

of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world,” a point he elucidates shortly thereafter when he writes, “The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people’s definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe” (4). Frantz Fanon articulated the matter earlier in *Black Skin, White Masks*, a treatise on the psychological state of Black Antilleans living under colonial control, in which he also “broaden[s] the field of this description and through the Negro of the Antilles include[s] every colonized man” (18). There he writes, “To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization” (17-18). One of the immediate aims of education in the New World, then, was to orient the indigenous peoples away from their own cultural relationships to their natural and social environments and toward the universe of their white European oppressors, and linguistic imperialism is one of the primary means by which that aim was accomplished in the colonies that were established in the Americas.

In the unequivocally titled study *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson defines English linguistic imperialism as “*the dominance of English [which] is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages.*” Phillipson elaborates on the operative definitions:

Here *structural* refers broadly to material properties (for example, institutions, financial allocations) and *cultural* to immaterial or ideological properties (for

example, attitudes, pedagogic principles). English linguistic imperialism is one example of *linguicism*, which is defined as ‘ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language.’ (47)

In the colonial period, languages other than those of the conquering empire become colored or raced along with their racialized indigenous speakers, which opportunely provided the subjugators with justification for the eradication of those languages from the Americas; and hence the merciless initiation of the modern-day English-speaking Anglo America and Spanish-speaking Latin America. Hence, while the nation that came to christen itself superciliously as “America” gained independence from England relatively quickly, following the dictates of Manifest Destiny and the newly minted US dollar, its white European settlers continued to march westward, appropriating Indian lands and burying native cultures that stood in their path.

The Indian boarding schools, variations of which were established across the United States throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, offer a distinctive, and distressing, example of some of the first explicit, systematic endeavors to employ and deploy linguistic imperialism via educational policy and practice. The largest school was established at Carlisle, Pennsylvania toward the end of the nineteenth century. In 1879 the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was founded by Richard Henry Pratt, whose express purpose was to assimilate the Indians thoroughly to white, European ways. In 1883, addressing a convention of Baptist ministers, Pratt stated unequivocally, "In Indian civilization I am a Baptist, because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization

and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked." On another occasion Pratt infamously wrote, "Carlisle's mission is to kill THIS Indian, as we build up the better man" (Landis). Upon arriving at the Carlisle school the children were promptly shorn of their hair (a sign of mourning among some of the tribes), issued military-style uniforms in the case of the boys and Victorian-style dresses in the case of the girls, their moccasins were taken and replaced by shoes, and, according to Luther Standing Bear, they were each compelled to take "a white man's name." In *My People the Sioux*, Standing Bear writes, "Soon we all had names of white men sewed on our backs" (qtd. in Lyons 448). The children were educated in English, and they were forbidden to speak their native languages. In an article entitled "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" Scott Richard Lyons, a contemporary Native scholar of Indian writing and rhetorics, asserts that "the boarding school stands out as the ultimate symbol of white domination, even genocide, through assimilation in the American Indian experience" (449). The experiment was considered successful enough that by the turn of the century Indian boarding schools had sprung up across the country.

While a number of native children perished, some of them brutally, in the Indian schools, the genocide that Lyon speaks of has more to do with native peoples' experience of their own *Indian-ness*—a concept that was foreign to them before "Indian Removal" and the rise of the boarding school. The efforts to extinguish any and all traces of "THIS Indian" must inevitably have left native children, and the adults they would become, in a state of what Frantz Fanon—who was a doctor of psychology in addition to his anticolonial work—identifies as dual consciousness. Fanon does not mince words when

he describes the genesis of such a psychological state: The “[f]eeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior” (*BSWM* 93). The sensation of duality of consciousness is exacerbated when the vestiges of native language and culture are removed from one’s experience—when the force of “assimilation” has begun to be “successful” to the point of reorienting perception toward white, western society—only to find that, still, it is not enough. Indeed, for the colonizer there is no such thing as enough. Referring to a Black man who has been having troubles in his workplace and who recounts for Fanon a troubling dream that he has recently had, a dream in which he turns white, Fanon declares, “If he is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, *in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex*, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race” (emphasis added). Fanon concludes, “[T]o the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation” (*BSWM* 100). Fanon writes explicitly with regard to the influence of western education on the colonized Antillean, “the educated Negro suddenly discovers that he is rejected by a civilization which he has none the less assimilated” (*BSWM* 93).

The exponential violence that colonization and then education for assimilation—so often forced and in so many different ways—enacts upon the consciousness of people of color simply cannot be overstated. Because Fanon deals with the issue of the consciousness of colonized peoples in so much depth and detail in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, I return to it here. He describes the reorientation of the consciousness of the

colonized toward the colonizer: “When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person. The goal of his behavior will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth” (154). The situation applies equally to the racialized Indians who were colonized in North America. In actuality, in the Indian schools the *goal* was to effectuate the collapse of the students’ egos, as Captain Richard Henry Pratt made so abundantly clear in his many speeches and letters on the “education” of the Native. Elsewhere Fanon elucidates the effects of the colonial context, and there is particular salience here for the colonial educational project: “Overnight,” he relates, “the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him” (*BSWM* 110). And thus, education for “assimilation” propels “students”—often the wards and even prisoners of their would-be benefactors—inexorably toward a dual consciousness.

What is more, the effects of this imposition toward a duality of mind, or, more accurately, duality of self-conception, do not stay contained within the mind, for the mind, much less the body, is in no way actually “split.” But colonization and linguistic imperialism do affect the *material*, corporeal experience. The body itself is felt, it is lived . . . not as if being two so much as if it is in danger of splitting apart at any terrible moment. Fanon explains, “In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating

activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty” (*BSWM* 110-111). Later he goes on to describe his own experience entering a dining car on a train that is transporting predominantly white passengers. “I existed triply,” he recounts:

I occupied space. I moved toward the other . . . and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared . . . I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism [sic], and above all else, above all: “Sho’ good eatin’.” (Fanon 112)

The duality of consciousness wrought by the racism of colonial education has the effect of jarring the consciousness of the colonized, when confronted by the white gaze and subjected to white scrutiny, jarring the consciousness into a kind of *third* space from which the brown body can be objectified and experienced as “Black,” as “Indian,” as “colored” . . . as if, in short, from the white man’s perspective.

W.E.B. DuBois, pan-African theorist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, articulated a concept similar to that of Fanon. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, one of DuBois’s most celebrated and oft-quoted works, he defines his by now well known theory of what he calls “double-consciousness”: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro.” DuBois also confirms my own assertion that the “double-ness”

of consciousness is experienced, is felt as bodily violence, when he writes that in the Black body there are “two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” DuBois’s ideas are particularly salient as he was writing in the context of the United States post- *de jure* abolition, when slavery had been outlawed and the “freedom” of people of color had been codified in the nation’s legal statutes. He makes it clear that the history of Blacks in the US, the history of slavery and racism, continue to affect the consciousness of Black citizens in the US. He contends, “The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self” (102). DuBois’s notion of double consciousness nicely condenses and at the same time reinforces Fanon’s theory of the dual consciousness of the colonized.

Fanon’s concept of dual consciousness and DuBois’s notion of double-consciousness can also instructively be linked to Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci’s theory of contradictory consciousness. Gramsci posits that workers—the working-poor consigned to the very bottom ranks of a social and economic hierarchy, or what Gramsci calls the “low level of the masses”—possess one consciousness, or part of a consciousness, that is oriented toward one’s fellow workers through their collective action upon and transformation of the world via their labor. This first part of one’s consciousness is practical and operates implicitly. The second part of one’s consciousness is more explicit and “verbal,” but it is also inherited from the past, adopted and deployed uncritically and even unconsciously. This second part of one’s consciousness is most often understood and accepted as the “common sense” of a people. It relies on largely

untried beliefs and predominantly unchallenged assumptions as ideological fortification and foundation.

Dual, double, or contradictory states of consciousness can leave individuals in a moral quandary and as well as leading to political passivity, as Gramsci makes clear. In dual consciousness, what Fanon terms a “massive psychoexistential complex” (*BSWM* 14), in DuBois’s double consciousness, and in Gramsci’s contradictory consciousness there is an intellectual distortion of the self-conception or identity-construct of people of color in the face of white, western supremacy, or of the exploited laboring masses in the face of their oppressors. It is a constant struggle to mitigate the feeling of an always-present bodily violence such as the potential splitting or tearing asunder of the self in a society dominated by white supremacist ideologies, and this is where Gramsci’s theory of hegemony can offer some elucidation for people of color in the US context during and subsequent to the colonial period. In a discussion of the contradictory consciousness of the oppressed and exploited, Gramsci explains,

Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political ‘hegemonies’, from opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one’s own conception of reality. Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say, political consciousness) is the first stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one.

(Gramsci 334)

In the early days of the history of the United States, education for people of color—when it was provided—was education for assimilation, and as such it was an instrument of

hegemony: the hegemony of a white, European, English-speaking mind-set. It is important to keep in mind here, as with Gramsci's theory of the contradictory consciousness of the worker, that there is always an economic context to account for. Fanon perhaps says it best when he writes, "If there is an inferiority complex [in the Black personality], it is the outcome of a double process: --primarily, economic; -- subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority" (*BSWM* 13).

In fact, first the slave labor and then the slave-wage labor of black Africans and American Indians had allowed industry in the Americas to take hold, and after the American Revolution industry would begin to increase exponentially in the United States. The rapid growth of the US economy led to expansionist policies that would soon see the US embroiled in capitalist and military ventures that reached into Central and South America. Charles Arthur Conant⁶, an American economist whose work spanned the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, rationalized that "the root of [US] expansionism [was] the very success of industrial capitalism itself in causing rising levels of surplus capital without a domestic outlet—or, as [Conant himself] put it, 'the great mass of capital seeking employment, and unable to find it at home'" (González, *Culture of Empire* 19). Conant likened US policies of economic expansion to European colonization and posited that such policies could be a solution to the problem of the "overproduction of capital" in the United States (19). According to Chicano education scholar Gilbert G. González, Conant's work was also enlightening on the topic of empire. Conant maintained that

⁶ Gilbert G. González, whose *Culture of Empire* was my principal reference for this source, refers to Conant as "James Arthur Conant" in the body of his text, though the correct name is referenced in the endnotes and bibliography.

empire can take on various forms, including protectorates, coaling stations, military outposts, outright territorial control, and economic domination. Which course of action was eventually selected was not important, for what was important . . . was whether the domestic problem of overproduction and the consequent risk of permanent economic stagnation could be resolved. Whichever choice leaders decided upon, either territorial annexation or economic conquest, was relevant only to the extent that it met the problem of surplus at home. (20)

A careful examination of Conant's line of reasoning reveals the underlying logic and imperative of finance capitalism. Once natural resources and the unruly internal populations of people of color, namely Mexican and American Indian populations, had been brought under control, then the imperialist imperative kicks in. González goes on to clarify, "Conant chose to define imperial expansion as one driven by 'economic necessity,' rather than by a policy freely chosen by corporate executives and their partners in foreign policy offices. Imperialism, then, is not one of many policies; it is the only policy available to capitalist nations once they have reached a particular level of economic development" (20).

Juan Gonzalez, in *Harvest of Empire*, also discusses the expansion of U.S. territory and power through the conquest of Latin American peoples and lands in the nineteenth century, the obvious origin of the immense Latino/a presence in the U.S. to this day (27). It was the century that saw the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which surrendered half of Mexico's territory to the United States in 1848. With the treaty, the present-day US-Mexico border was constructed and the identity category "Mexican American" was born. What had once

been the “Indian problem” now became the “Mexican problem” in some parts of the country, but the new “problem” demonstrated clearly that industry coupled with expansionist political and economic policies had been good to the budding US empire indeed.

In a critical examination of the connections between empire and education entitled *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican immigrants, 1880-1930*, Gilbert G. González argues that “U.S. economic empire and the culture inspired by that empire are cent[ral], and . . . this imperial expression explains the formation of public policy—in particular of educational policies and practices, applied to the ethnic Mexican community” (11). Specifically, he examines the ways in which the success of US political and economic strategies demanded dramatic changes in the US educational system. González explains,

Education took on new functions; in the early nineteenth century the apprentice system served to train lawyers, merchants, artisans, and other independent professionals for the agricultural and commercial capitalist order. However, with the growth of capitalism from a regionally dispersed agrarian economic order to a large-scale national industrial system based on monopolistic and oligopolistic enterprises, the older schooling system simply was not adequate to handle the needs of the rapidly changing corporate-centered society. The newer system could handle the training of just about every professional and nonprofessional occupation. In this movement toward a professional and nonprofessional system, the public school occupied a central position. (159)

By the turn of the century corporate centralization and expansion had been so successful that radical adjustments in “American” socialization, achieved most systematically through the schools, and public policy demanded major reforms in the educational practices. Hence, while in the early nineteenth century schools were based in and focused upon small, rural communities, the educational system in the United States transformed into “a program of compulsory schools educating large masses of students” by the dawn of the twentieth century (González, *Culture of Empire* 159).

While the Indian boarding schools were flourishing, the public educational system was taking shape in the United States. The policies and practices that were developed specifically for educating “Mexican”⁷ children shared much in common with those carried out at the Indian schools. While the Indian boarding school was designed to “kill the Indian and save the man,” in the case of Mexican children González reveals “an educational program that was designed exclusively for the Mexican community and aimed, for the most part, at forcing de-Mexicanization (or Americanization) within a segregated setting by emphasizing industrial or vocational training for Mexican children” (154-155). As in the Indian schools, the emphasis was on vocational and technical training (the Carlisle school was in fact named the “Indian Industrial School,” if you recall), a fact that would eventually evolve into the educational tracking that Latina and Latino children still have to contend with today. González expresses the consequences for the Mexican community quite plainly: “the class position of the immigrant community was . . . maintained through the school, a state institution designed to reproduce,

⁷ Such identity categories were very slippery at the time—and still are. With the recent annexation of so much Mexican territory, the term “Mexican” was used to identify Mexican citizens’ status while it was used simultaneously to indicate a racialized identity that often bore no relationship whatsoever to legal citizenship.

politically and economically, the working class for American corporate capital.” And it was not just Mexican children who were targeted for assimilation into the dominant culture, but “adults and especially women were also singled out for Americanization, with the expectation that women would become agents of a larger community Americanization” (155). It is evident here how within patriarchal societies women bear special responsibility for the reproduction and maintenance of the dominant national character.

In order to gain a critical understanding of the contemporary landscape of Latina/o education, it is imperative that we recognize that education was never intended to improve the socioeconomic circumstances of the Mexican population in the United States. Instead, education was to be the means of ensuring the integration of the Mexican population into the mainstream through its trained segregation from white society in the United States. González explains the seeming paradox of the integration of a population via its very segregation:

Segregation provided one method for the integration of the Mexican community into the public educational systems. As Mexicans were segregated, their integration into the political and economic institutions of the United States moved forward and grew deeper. The segregation of the Mexican immigrants, whether economic, residential, or educational, ensured that they would circulate actively within the very core of the nation’s economic, social, and political institutions. An emphasis on marginality—that is, reading the history of the Mexican community as if it were a social or economic existence on the margins of society, outside the mainstream—fails to explain, much less describe, the experience of the Mexican

community. *Segregation was nothing less than the form that integration assumed.*
(155; emphasis added)

This is the form that “Americanization” of the Mexican population took in the US educational system, a form that required precious little modification of the standard educational curriculum given the larger purposes of that schooling within the political economy of a burgeoning capitalist nation-state and as an increasingly expansionist imperial power. A very significant parallel development must be accounted for at this juncture, however, and that is the construction and performance of a particularly US theory and rhetoric of democracy.

Rhetoric and Democracy in the US: Enlightening the Foundations

Framers of the United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence were heavily influenced by continental philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*, first published in 1690, was written largely in response to Robert Filmer’s *Patriarchia*, and one of Locke’s primary aims was to refute Filmer’s defense of the divine right of kings. Locke also seems to have been refuting the Hobbesian notion of the “state of nature” as the “war of each against all,” where humans live “nasty, brutish, and short” lives (qtd. in Ess). In his *Treatise*, Locke put forth the notion that human nature is in essence a reasoning nature, which he posits as attributable to humanity’s descent from the “first man.” “*Adam* was created a perfect man,” Locke writes, “his body and mind in full possession of their strength and reason, and so was capable from the first instant of his being to provide for his own

support and preservation, and govern his actions according to the dictates of the law of reason which God implanted in him” (qtd. in Ess; para. 56 & 57).

That is, in contrast to Hobbes, Locke’s conception of human nature posited beings that were both self-interested *and* altruistic or socially oriented, because the rule of law demands that human beings are able to determine their own rules, which can only be achieved in concert with other human beings who are also ultimately inspired by the rule of law via their descent from Adam. To put it another way, in Locke’s philosophy human beings best meet their most self-interested needs by following rules that govern all because in his conception “individuals can be (largely) trusted to manage their own affairs in ways that are (more or less) consistent with the interests and well-being of others” (Ess). As reasoning beings, in Locke’s philosophy, humans are especially suited to democratic rule, and monarchic rule becomes illegitimate since it obstructs the human impulse toward self-rule. Due to his close association with Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury, Locke’s thinking contributed directly to the establishment of the constitution of Carolina as an “American” colony, and his work heavily influenced Thomas Jefferson’s contribution to the U.S. Declaration of Independence (Ess).

The work of Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau also helped to shape theories of democracy in the United States. Among his many political writings, perhaps Rousseau’s most influential contribution to the field of democratic theory is *On the Social Contract*, first published in 1762, in which he developed further ideas about the appropriate relationship of the individual to society. As with Locke, one of Rousseau’s primary concerns was the problem of human beings’ self-interest and explaining why the individual would or should subordinate her or his needs for the general benefit or the

“common good.” In Chapter 6 of Book I, “The Social Compact,” Rousseau avers, “[A]s each gives himself to all, he gives himself to no one; and since there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right one grants him over oneself, he gains an equivalent of everything he loses, and more force to preserve what he has.” Or, in other words, “*Each of us puts his person and all his power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole . . . [which] creates a moral and collective body*”—a “common identity,” a “public person” (272).

Part of Rousseau’s perseverance in the literature on democratic theory comes down to the questions of who decides what the “general will” that determines this “common identity” is, and how. Ian Shapiro, in *The State of Democratic Theory*, explains of Rousseau’s idea of the “common good,” “Attempts to make sense of this formulation have spawned two literatures, an aggregative literature, which has been geared to finding out just how we are supposed to do the relevant math, and a deliberative literature, which . . . [is] concerned with getting more people to converge on the common good where this is understood more robustly than as a totting up of exogenously fixed preferences” (10).

Perhaps the now infamous indeterminacy of Rousseau’s formulation of the common good inspired him to also warn that the general will or common good might be decided at the expense of the minority (73), and hence his emphasis on consensus and a “common identity.” The Enlightenment project can be read in Locke and Rousseau’s attempts to delineate and thereby promulgate the spread of democracy, albeit quite selectively, and in their emphasis on the individual as a being imbued *a priori* with reason, certain “natural” laws, and therefore possessing inherent rights. The influence of

the Enlightenment project on the composition of the foundational documents of the U.S. cannot be overstated. The individual and “his” rights infuse the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the U.S. Constitution.

Nevertheless, in *Democracy in America*, which was written following his tour of the US and first published in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville would take up the problem of the “tyranny of the majority,” hearkening back over the centuries to Plato’s *Republic*. Deeply and permanently affected by the gruesome bloodshed of the French Revolution, de Tocqueville worried that “if ever freedom is lost in America, that will be due to the omnipotence of the majority driving the minorities to desperation and forcing them to appeal to physical force” (260). Locke and Rousseau’s concerns—which were elaborated by de Tocqueville—influenced political thinkers in the newly established United States as well. Indeed, the Federalist Papers, the founders’ most complete and explicit defense of the U.S. Constitution, reflect America and Western Europe’s revolutionary hangover. In Federalist No. 10 James Madison warned of “majority factions” (qtd. in Shapiro 11), and alarmingly in Federalist No. 51, “in a society under the forms of which the stronger faction can readily unite and oppress the weaker, anarchy may be truly said to reign” (qtd. in Shapiro 16). This problem of individual rights versus societal norms and goods is taken up again by John Stuart Mill in his *On Liberty*, first published in 1859. Mill’s basic premise is that the only reason individual liberty may be breached is to prevent harm from coming to others (68). In contemporaneous Western constructs of democracy, the notions of liberty and equality, put forth as far back as 335 B.C.E. in Aristotle’s *Politics*, were now fully articulated with the concepts of the individual and “natural” rights developed by Enlightenment thinkers.

With the advent of compulsory, universal education in the United States, these basic tenets of democracy began to be promulgated by educational theorists such as John Dewey. His *Democracy and Education*, published in 1916, began a century of theorizing the articulation of democracy, citizenship, and education. Of course, the Enlightenment themes of individuality, liberty, equality, and the social nature of human beings run through his work, but Dewey was also influenced by the philosophy of classical pragmatism, Hegelian Idealism, and the experimentalism that rose out of Enlightenment positivism.

At the heart of Dewey's *Democracy and Education* lies his criticism of what he saw as the dualistic mindset of contemporaneous philosophical inquiry, which split mind and body, society and the individual, and the human mind and nature. Democratic societies, and especially democratic education, were, for Dewey, the answer to reconciling those dualisms by reconstructing philosophy through experimentalism. This endeavor is developed in detail in Dewey's later *Education and Experience*. In their totality, Dewey's contributions continue the ongoing project of defining freedom or liberty in a democratic society. He explains, "[Freedom} means the intellectual initiative, independence in observation, judicious intervention, foresight of consequences, and ingenuity of adaptation to them" (352), all of which embeds the Enlightenment era individual fully in society. In fact, for Dewey, real education can only occur within group or social settings, and he believed that a truly democratic education, one which offered the freedoms delineated above, would eventually eliminate social divisions such as race, class, and gender differences because it would encourage exchange of ideas and shared experiences across such socially constructed boundaries (100-101). What would

eventually become known as American political liberalism is evident throughout Dewey's body of work.

In fact, liberalism was crystallizing as a political and philosophical position throughout the twentieth century, John Rawls, is arguably the granddaddy of American liberalism. In his 1971 *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls attempts to posit a political system that people would choose freely from behind a "veil of ignorance," which would remove the problem of self-interest (things such as race, class, gender, and sexuality and the allegiances that accompany such identifications) (136). Echoing some of the features of democracy outlined in Aristotle's *Politics*⁸, Rawls also calls for a "principle of redress" to ensure "The Tendency to Equality" in a democracy. This principle would demand downward redistribution of opportunity and resources in order to ensure equality in a democratic society (100). Rawls later turned away from questions of redistribution (for which he has been heavily criticized), and in *Political Liberalism* he took up the problem of how to ensure that basic freedoms are protected in a pluralistic society—a debate that rages on in the US political arena today. Ultimately Rawls advocates the value of public

⁸ Though he follows his mentor, Plato, in his general opposition to democratic rule, Aristotle was one of the first to delineate the basic principles of a democracy. In *Politics* he writes:

A basic principle of the democratic constitution is liberty. People constantly make this statement, implying that only in this constitution do men share in liberty; for every democracy, they say, has liberty for its aim. 'Ruling and being ruled in turn' is one element in liberty, and the democratic idea of justice is in fact numerical equality, not equality based on merit; and when this idea of what is just prevails, the multitude must be sovereign, and whatever the majority decides is final and constitutes justice. (362)

With his infinite gift for the taxonomy, Aristotle goes on to enumerate the basic features of a democracy. Some of the most resonant in a reading of modern democratic theory are listed here:

(a) Elections to office by all from among all. (b) Rule of all over each and of each by turns over all . . . (e) The same man not to hold the same office twice, or only rarely . . . (f) Short terms for all offices or for as many as possible. (g) All to sit on juries, chosen from all and adjudicating on all or most matters, i.e. the most important and supreme, such as those affecting the constitution, scrutinies, and contracts between individuals . . . Again (j), as birth, wealth, and education are the defining marks of oligarchy, so their opposites, low birth, low incomes, and mechanical occupations, are regarded as typical of democracy. (363-364)

Aristotle's enduring influence is clear if you look at electoral, judicial, and social welfare systems in modern democracies.

deliberation in achieving “overlapping consensus,” which he posits as the best protector of liberties in a democracy (134).

Coinciding with Rawls’s major publications, Jürgen Habermas, a German sociologist and philosopher, begins to clarify his own deliberative theory of democracy. In *Theory of Communicative Action*, published in two volumes in 1984 and 1987 respectively, Habermas develops his theory of discourse ethics through his conception of the “ideal speech situation,” which “appeals to a model of uncoerced speech . . . [in order to] establish what political institutions, arrangements, and policies would be agreed upon in ideal deliberative conditions” (Shapiro 33-34). In his 1996 *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Habermas refines his theory even further:

Discourse theory takes elements from both [liberal and republican] sides and integrates these in the concept of an ideal procedure for deliberation and decision making. Democratic procedure, which establishes a network of pragmatic considerations, compromises, and discourses of self-understanding and of justice, grounds the presumption that reasonable or fair results are obtained insofar as the flow of relevant information and its proper handling have not been obstructed. (296)

Here we see evidence of both Habermas’s pragmatist influences as well as the theoretical underpinning that marks him, like Rawls, as a proceduralist. Both Rawls and Habermas also offer a glimpse into the developing complexity of theorists’ articulations of rhetoric, or discourse, and democracy.

The most complex examination of the articulations between rhetoric and democracy, however, come from the theorists of radical democracy. A very compelling discussion, which sparked an ongoing debate with Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek, can be found in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Writing through a poststructuralist-Gramscian lens, Laclau and Mouffe argue that politics cannot exist without antagonism (or agonistic relations, as Mouffe would later frame the issue [Mouffe 80]) and hegemony. Hence, in the "radical democratic imaginary," the (radical) Left is the constructed antagonist of the neo-conservative Right, and both are discursively battling for hegemony. Laclau and Mouffe offer an example: "The construction of a chain of democratic equivalences in the face of the neo-conservative offensive . . . is one of the conditions of the struggle of the Left for hegemony" (186). The bottom line for Laclau and Mouffe is that the "problem of the political is the problem . . . of the definition and articulation of social relations in a field criss-crossed with antagonisms" (153). In other words, the problem of the political is rhetorical.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Laclau entered into a critical discussion with cultural theorist Judith Butler and Slovenian psychoanalyst and theorist Slavoj Žižek in their collaborative *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. Using the theoretical lenses provided by Gramsci, Derrida, and Lacan, the three debate the failure of the Left in contemporary politics and, if there has indeed been a failure, its causes. The major contribution of this work to the field of democratic theory is the ways the authors problematize current watchwords deployed in the cultural rhetoric of US democracy such as "multicultural," "pluralistic," and "politically correct." Ultimately, however, the theorists of so-called radical democracy tend to become bogged down in

discussions of the discursivity of democracy; what they neglect here is the material, economic realities of poor people of color in the US and around the globe.

Kalyan K. Sanyal elaborates on this critique in his “Postmarxism and the Third World: A Critical Response to the Radical Democratic Agenda.” “By emphasizing the discourse of the right,” he argues,

the radical democrats link their multiple struggles to the state because it is the state that endows every citizen with right, and the process of realization of the right must refer to the state rather than to any other form of collectivity . . . [but] what are the implications of the radical democratic agenda for the global order, economic and political? (128)

In the end Sanyal finds that the implications are devastating. The most salient is that the “Third World” “has to bear a large part of the cost of accommodating rights in the [First World]. To the extent that these rights impinge on the logic of profit and accumulation, capital has a tendency to move to greener pastures in the Third World where such rights hardly exist” (128). In fact, the rhetoric of democracy in the US has grown out of a Eurocentric obsession with “Western” foundations which inspire and perpetuate an obsessive possessive individualism through constant appeals to Enlightenment era thinking and ideals. The deployment of such rhetoric has long obscured the problems of racism, poverty, patriarchal oppression, and heterosexism within the US, and now, given the global expansion of US domination under the logic of late capitalism, that same rhetoric of democracy obfuscates the historical and material realities of US colonialism and imperialism around the world. Debates about individual “rights” and appropriate “procedures” rage on in the US while suffering rages on in poor neighborhoods populated

disproportionately by people of color in the US and *enrages* the devastated Two-Thirds World. It is a travesty that demands a sustained intervention, one that historicizes the political and economic dimensions of the rhetoric of democracy in the US.

To Be an American: The Rhetoric of Democracy and Education

The same rhetoric of democracy that helped shape the educational system in the US, the same rhetoric of democracy that continues to obscure the inequities endured by people of color in disproportionate numbers within that system today, is spoken and taught in our schools: the language of equality; the language of “opportunity”; the language of sameness in difference; the language of assimilation; the language codified in the official discourse and documents of US democracy (read mushrooming corporate capitalism). It was the rhetoric of democracy, inculcated in the US educational system, that cemented in Othered populations the internalization of their Otherness—their perceived inferiority in a white, western, English-speaking system—via the figuration of their American-ness, a hegemonic concept that works to “reconcile incompatible interests, class and gender differences, within the idea of a ‘national culture’ or a synthesizing ‘American identity’” (San Juan, *Racial Formations* 140).

In Chapter One I discussed the general contours of education in the United States and Latinas’ and Latinos’ current position within that system. It is important that we do not forget how the history of colonialism and imperialism have shaped educational policy in the United States, and that history cannot be fully understood apart from the development of American corporate capitalism. I hope that this chapter has shown how profoundly the political economy of race and racism, US colonialism and imperialism,

and the rhetoric of democracy have shaped the existing educational system and its function in structuring and maintaining “American” hegemony; not only that, but I hope that I have revealed some of the ways in which all of these are intricately interrelated, as well as pointing to the fact that the implications for the possibility of an actual democracy are sobering. As E. San Juan, Jr. attests in his *Racial Formations/Critical Transformations: Articulations of Power in Ethnic and Racial Studies in the United States*:

Race cannot be conflated with the abstract ideological spheres, much less with the economic. Given the extended or integral state of late capitalism, racialization as part of bourgeois hegemonic strategy informs not only state policies but also institutions and activities of civil society, and in so doing suppresses the potential for expansive democracy by reinforcing racist hierarchy and authoritarian statism founded on national chauvinism. (48)

And yet, there are increasingly more and more people of color, Chicanas and Chicanos, more Latinas and Latinos in general, breaching the walls of the ivory tower—though those numbers increase at a painfully slow rate. Some are even successful. So successful, in fact, that some of them, once they get there, stay in academia, choose it as a profession, and become the professors themselves. Like me. I teach English—English, for chrissake! You’d think that once we get here, we have it made, no? But then it turns out that there are other considerations.

CHAPTER THREE

THAT GOD GONE ASTRAY IN THE FLESH?: CONSIDERATIONS

ON ENGLISH, RHETORIC, AND AMERICAN EMPIRE

Because I, a *mestiza*,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultáneamente.

Gloria Anzaldúa, “*La conciencia de la*
mestiza / Toward a New Consciousness,”
Borderlands/La Frontera

The British Empire has given way to the empire of English.

Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*

Memories

Franklin Elementary. Kindergarten. Miss Linda’s class. Danny’s a chubby little kid who hates me for some reason I don’t get, can’t get. He brings a toy for share-day, Mickey Mouse in a bright red plastic box with a see-through cover. It has these little buttons on the front and when you push them really fast, right left right left right, Mickey dances a frenetic little jig. It’s so shiny, that Dancing-Mickey-in-the-Box, so cool. So stupid and useless that I really *want* it, want to play with it, just to touch it even would be enough. Mickey gets passed around, all the kids get a few excited moments. Except Danny says: “No, not *you*.” In a quick, violent flash, I snatch the toy out of Danny’s hands. A scuffle ensues. Danny gets the worst of it. He cries. That makes me angriest of

all. The teacher intervenes and I tell her the truth: Danny started it, he hurt me too. When my mom shows up to get me, Teacher feels compelled to prove that I'm a liar. (I was forever confused about all this talk of "lying" as a kid. I *told* her what happened. To me, the point wasn't that I'd pummeled Danny after the fact, the point was that he wouldn't share with me—*only me*.) She holds out my ruddy, brown arm next to Danny's, which is almost translucent except for the four bloody gouges that run from his elbow to his wrist. "Look what she did to him!" Teacher practically wails. I don't have the words to explain to Mom that I am all alone in that place, that not one person there cares about—even seems to understand—my aloneness, that I have the *only brown arm in that entire school*.

First Grade. Mrs. Johnson asks the class a question. I know the answer and shout it out. "Who forgot to raise her hand, young lady? Move your desk six inches back, away from the circle." Many times, by the end of the day, I sit nestled among the coats and galoshes at the back of the room. It feels like the rest of the class is a world away from me, sitting there in that terribly charmed circle. I quit saying things out loud, even though I know the answers. I begin to learn that they have certain, very particular ways of doing things in school. And I'd better figure them out if I don't want to be sitting here every day, with my back against the wall.

Fourth Grade. Mrs. Savage (yes, really). She's a nice enough woman, despite her name. *Finally*, more Mexicans show up at Franklin Elementary. (We don't know the word "Chicano" yet, just call ourselves Mexican 'cause that's what our parents, and everyone else, says we are.) The girl's in my class. Her name is Xóchitl, after the Azteca

goddess of love and beauty. Her brother's a grade ahead of us, named Emiliano after the great Mexican revolutionary. Their mom's from Chiapas, Mexico. Zapata's birthplace. She knows about indigenism. She knows about racism. She knows about the struggle for justice. But more important, she *talks* about these things. I listen. In fact, I gorge myself on her stories, can't get enough of them. It's like those stories are glittering stars, radiant planets, pulsing galaxies, and I am the dark vastness of the cosmos, with enough breadth and depth to hold them all. Xóchitl and I are best friends immediately. For a time, things are better in a way. I do better in school. But weird contradictions creep in. Now I get noticed for knowing the rules too well. I'm better at this game than many of the white kids, especially when it comes to language, reading, writing. It's mostly because I love words, the way they sound, the way they roll trippingly off the tongue. (Learned that phrase early, not from the Bard but from Daffy Duck, 'cause even when I watched cartoons I paid attention to words and how they were said and how they were put together, like a magic puzzle that fits together in infinite, intricate ways.) The teachers begin to suspect I'm cheating. I just keep on keeping on, trying my best to understand and imitate their curious ways, which even at the time seemed to me to be rather cold and graceless.

Seventh grade. West Junior High. I'm in Ms. Petrie's English class. She hands me back a paper. Red writing scrawls across the top of page one: "Are these *your* words?" And then, though I'd had no chance to answer the question, a big letter "C." I ask her why I got a C. Tell her I thought it came out pretty good. In fact, it came out too good. She tells me straight-up: she doesn't believe *I* wrote it. I quit writing papers for that class.

I quit writing papers, or doing much of anything, for any class. Then I quit showing up for class all together. I just don't see the point. Aside from my family, nobody is surprised by my failure. I'm sixteen years old.

The next few years aren't hazy. (Maybe they should be, but in fact they have always remained almost unbearably clear in my mind.) I trust the wrong people. I fall in love for the first time. I work as a maid at several different hotels. I slice meat at a deli where I also come close to losing my index finger in a grizzly cleaning mishap. I'm the "hostess" at the local JB's, meaning I show you to your table, bring you water, clear away your egg-yoke-stained dishes after you leave. I work two, sometimes three jobs at a time, though I can never quite seem to make ends meet. I move "up" in the world and work as a night clerk at the front desk of a hotel by the airport for \$5.25 an hour. Alone. One night a big, bearded white guy comes in and tries to rape the young woman who works the graveyard shift after me. A lot of horrifying things happen in the places where I get hired. I just keep working hard. I party harder. Alone in the back seat of a '76 Plymouth Duster flying about 120 mph down a dark stretch of Oregon highway, somewhere between The Dalles and Portland. Blurry dots of light refract and reflect on the black snake of the Columbia River that mirrors the freeway. In the front seat they don't notice me losing consciousness—perhaps for good—in the back. Not long after, I start to think about going back to school.

Open admissions university. BSU (yes, really). I still love language, reading, writing, listening to words. I've stayed devoted to my books since high school, reading

obsessively, for the sheer, unadulterated pleasure of it all. Sappy romance novels á la Harlequin; lurid horror of the Stephen King variety; self-help psych stuff like the Myers-Briggs book (I read the whole book); psych crossing over into spiritualism like Carl Jung; straight-up spiritualism like Carlos Castaneda; biographies of John Dillinger, Siddhartha Gautama, Zapata (*que valeroso!*) and Villa (*el bandido auténtico*); feminist writers like Mary Wallstonecraft, Sojourner Truth, Virginia Woolf, Emma Goldman; try my hand at the “classics” by taking up Faulkner and Hemingway. I write poetry. It all helps, apparently, because I place into a standard English comp class at the university. And I quit going after a few weeks. The years since I dropped out of high school have made me wary, even hard in some ways, but I don’t get how things work here. I’m afraid I’ll never know, can’t know, wasn’t made to know. Easier just to disappear.

My second time on the English 101 block I make it through the first essay assignment. I write about what it feels like to be dying in the back seat of a car that’s flying down a dark highway. It feels like you’ll be driving forever. Like midnight on an eternal summer road trip. The instructor tells me my metaphors are too “hyperbolic” and therefore unbelievable. Elsewhere on campus my sociology professor tells me he doesn’t want to read my philosophical musings, I need to “get to the point.” My philosophy professor tells me to “cut the artsy-fartsy crap” and “get to the point.” On my third go ‘round in English 101 I am at pains to “get to the point,” which by now I’ve figured out means trying to get *myself* the hell out of the way. I perform an excruciating self-ectomy on my first essay. The instructor returns it with red writing scrawled across the top of page one: “Did *you* write this?” But there’s no grade. I think back to Ms. Petrie’s seventh-grade class and my stomach churns. I approach the instructor anyway. She asks

about documentation. I tell her what I read about “common knowledge” in my MLA handbook. She believes me, and I decide to major in English. There are different rules here, but I learn them quickly enough. Eventually I graduate with honors.

Then comes graduate school. I’m a teacher now, excited that I can share the subtle allures of language with my own students. There is one Chicana woman, Clara, in my first English comp class. (Yes, I finally learned that there’s a word for people like me.) Most days she sits at the back of the room with her arms folded across her stomach, pulling on her long black hair and staring coolly at her desk or her feet. I give regular writing assignments; Clara turns in zero. When I approach her about it she looks at me indifferently, maybe even with some disdain. She turns, and I watch myself walk out of the classroom. I never see Clara again. I think back to Ms. Petrie’s class once more, and my stomach churns.

The Uncertainty Principle

The Pueblo people and the indigenous people of the Americas see time as round, not as a long linear string. If time is round, if time is an ocean, then something that happened 500 years ago may be quite immediate and real, whereas something inconsequential that happened an hour ago could be far away. Think of time as an ocean always moving. What is interesting to me about Einstein and post-Einsteinian physics and some of the discoveries in particle physics is what they have discovered about the nature of time. The curvature of time in space.

Leslie Marmon Silko, “Interview”

It’s a long way, perhaps, of making a beginning here. But I needed to find an opening, a way into this text, and what preceded is a story that is immediate and real to me as I think about composition theory and what it is, exactly, that I want to say about it.

It's a beginning that has been a long time coming. A drop of saltwater, or a clownfish maybe—brightly banded, fragile, but so hardy given just the right conditions—in the ocean of what I have come to know about English comp. It's a beginning that's still unfolding before me as I write. These pages represent several struggles—the “negotiation” that so many composition theorists write about these days—on my part. I'm struggling to unravel then weave back together memories and words and ideas and questions even as I struggle to find my purpose, as a writer, as a scholar, as a teacher of English in the US, and as a woman of color—a Chicana—in academia. And I feel an impulse like the one that noted rhetoric and composition theorist Victor Villanueva writes about in his essay “Rhetoric is Politics.” He explains, “Even as I contemplated this essay, I fought the compulsion to bypass autobiography and narrative, to bypass the underscoring of difference, from difference in background to difference in convention” (329).

Here, in these pages, I'm winning the battle against that compulsion so far, I guess. Though who's to say it doesn't mean that ultimately I'll lose the larger conflict: the struggle for meaning, to be listened to, to be heard, to be seen in a place where Other(ed)s are “unseen” as a matter of course (Powell, “Down” 44). Malea Powell, a self-identified “mixed-blood” scholar who “does American Indian rhetorics” (“Blood” 2), points up an important issue here. In “Blood and Scholarship: One Mixed-Blood's Story,” Powell notes that the “‘Un-seeing’ [of] Indians [along with other Other(ed)s] gave (and still give [sic]) Euro-Americans a critical distance from materiality and responsibility, a displacement that is culturally valued and marked as ‘objectivity’” (3). Patricia Bizzell, in her extensive writings on academic discourse, has been complicating

conventional disciplinary notions of “objectivity” for a few decades. In a relatively recent piece, “Basic Writing and the Issue of Correctness, or What to Do with ‘Mixed’ Forms of Academic Discourse,” Bizzell asserts that the development of basic writing instruction as a specialized field within composition studies has seen three fairly distinctive stages: 1) the cognitive defect stage, which assumed “deficiency” in students who had yet to master the objective stance of traditional academic discourse upon entering college; 2) the stage that attacked stage one (of course) and instead focused on “initiat[ing] students into traditional academic discourse in a way that remained respectful of their home languages and cognitive abilities,” and finally; 3) the stage that arguably describes the current state of the discipline, wherein composition theorists problematize assumptions about the unified nature of “traditional academic discourse” and its use as the “target” of writing instruction (4-5).

Both Powell and Bizzell indicate that the apotheosis of the objective stance within the American university is deeply rooted in cultural assumptions that are so readily accepted as “commonsense” that they remain impervious to critical inquiry. In *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, James Berlin explains that “every rhetorical system is based on epistemological assumptions about the nature of reality, the nature of the knower, and the rules governing the discovery and communication of the known” (4). The “cognitive defect” stage and the subsequent “initiation” phase described above have their foundations in what Berlin describes as “objective” and “subjective” epistemological categories.

According to Berlin, objective theories of rhetoric are based on Scottish Common Sense Realism and derive largely from George Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric*

(1776), Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), and Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* (1828) (*Rhetoric and Reality* 2 and 8)⁹. In principal, objective theories: are "based on positivistic epistemology"; "locate reality in the external world, in the material objects of experience"; view language as a sign system, "a simple transcribing device for recording that which exists apart from the verbal"; posit the existence of truth as *a priori* to language; view language as "at best . . . a transparent device" and at worst as a medium that distorts "reality"; conceive of "truth in written discourse . . . in empirical and rational terms, with emotion and persuasion relegated to oral discourse"; and; emphasize technical and mechanical correctness in writing instruction (*Rhetoric and Reality* 7-9). In the university, whose function for most of the twentieth century was to prepare a burgeoning middle class for entry into an increasingly industrialized, then technologized, workplace, objective epistemologies were manifest in current-traditional rhetoric, of which behaviorist, semanticist, and linguistic rhetorics are variants (*Rhetoric and Reality* 9-10).

Subjective theories of rhetoric are a later historical development and find their historical precedents in the likes of Plato, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau. They bear the marks of the heavy influence of Freud as well as post-Freudian theorists like Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and, as Berlin points out, "English department interpretations of romanticism as found, for example, in M.H. Abrams" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 12). As such, subjective theories: locate truth within the individual "subject," only "to be discovered through an act of internal apprehension" (6), since truth in this epistemological category "transcends the material realm, is attainable through a

⁹ See also Robert J. Connors, "The Rhetoric of Explanation: Explanatory Rhetoric from Aristotle to 1850" (32-39).

solitary vision, and resists expression”; view ordinary language as insufficient to represent truth, though “it is possible through the use of original metaphor to suggest the supersensory”; hold that “the student can learn to write, but writing cannot be taught”; introduced peer group editing in writing instruction, but only to help students uncover the “inauthentic” in each other’s writing, and finally; espoused an aristocratic rhetoric of liberal culture (*Rhetoric and Reality* 12-14). Subjective theories of rhetoric espoused the cause of elite, and elitist, culture and aimed to “cultivate” the mob of “Philistines” entering the American university throughout the twentieth century, particularly with regard to their “language habits” (qtd. in Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 43). It is important to note that while subjective theories enjoyed for a time—and still enjoy, in not unimportant ways—a certain currency, they by no means supplanted objective theories of rhetoric in academia generally and the field of composition studies in particular, a fact pointed up by the ongoing disciplinary debate surrounding academic discourse.

Berlin continues his analysis in “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class,” which appeared shortly after the publication of *Rhetoric and Reality* (hereafter referred to simply as *Reality*). In “Rhetoric and Ideology” (hereafter “Ideology”), Berlin focuses his discussion on “cognitive” and “expressionistic” rhetorics of writing instruction, with their bases in objective and subjective epistemologies, which roughly correspond to Bizzell’s “cognitive deficiency” and “initiation” phases in composition studies’ budding disciplinarity. Cognitive rhetoric gave rise to basic writing, inaugurated by the publication of Mina Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations* in 1977, as an entirely new sub-discipline within the field of writing instruction. In “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University,” Mike Rose, who has written extensively on the

cognitive model as it has evolved in comp theory, describes cognitive rhetoric as an attempt to “locate” students’ “disabilities” so that they can “more promptly . . . be removed” (qtd. in Rose 530). Rose goes on to explain that the propensity for erroneously labeling students as deficient “seems to reemerge with most potency in times of crisis: when budgets crunch and accountability looms, or particularly, when ‘nontraditional’ students flood our institutions” (530). And Victor Villanueva saliently points out in “Considerations for American Freireistas,” “Cognitive explanations rendered basic writers, *most often members of minority groups*, cognitively dysfunctional” (630; emphasis added). The halcyon days of the cognitive model were unsettled when some compositionists began to criticize the ethnocentric bias of the oral-literate binary upon which the cognitive model was largely founded (Villanueva, “Rhetoric is Politics” 330), while others questioned its claims to empirical authority (see Bizzell, “Cognition, Convention, and Certainty”).

Expressionistic rhetoric was propounded by its advocates as the democratic answer to elitist romantic notions of writing as “genius,” a necessary response now that the university had opened its doors to what was quickly becoming the new managerial class (Berlin, “Ideology” 687). Suddenly, everyone—who was a white, middle class, native speaker of English—could trust that he, too, in his soul, harbored some nascent poetic promise. Expressionistic rhetoric gave rise to a new pedagogical and methodological model in writing instruction: the process movement. Steeped as it is in nineteenth-century American romanticism and twentieth-century psychologism, expressionistic rhetoric emphasizes the primacy of the individual psyche. In this view, as Berlin argues, “Writing can be seen as a paradigmatic instance of this activity [of locating

the individual's authentic nature]. It is an art, a creative act in which the process—the discovery of the true self—is as important as the product—the self discovered and expressed” (“Ideology” 688). Its emphasis is on originality, self-discovery, and “voice.” While expressionistic rhetoric in one form or another is still operational in many high school and even some college and university writing classrooms, in general the expressionistic luster began to dull when compositionists—particularly those caught in the po-mo theoretical wake—raised objections to its supposition of “a codifiable or *generalizable* writing process” or “Big Theory,” as Thomas Kent put it in his Introduction to *Post-Process Theory* (1).

The initiation model in composition theory followed quickly on the heels of the expressionist movement's heyday, at the dawn of the social constructionist movement, with Bizzell's “College Composition: Initiation Into the Academic Discourse Community” (1982) serving as the vanguard publication. (And I'll have more to say about the social constructionist movement and the current state of the field later.) Rather than waxing scientific about the cognitive deficiency of some students in academia, proponents of the initiation model regarded *all* students as educable, at least in theory. Drawing on Stanley Fish's notion of interpretive communities, composition scholars such as Bizzell, David Bartholomae, Mike Rose, and Joseph Harris, sought to reach and teach basic writers through immersing them in the discourse conventions of the academic community. As Bizzell would note about a decade later in a critical reflection on her own work, this model not only assumed that academic discourse somehow spontaneously produced critical insight, it also included the “more negative or ironic connotation invoked by initiation, images of physically and emotionally punishing rituals imposed on

newcomers by powerful people abusing their power” (Introduction 19). Moreover, there is a paternalistic posture—or more accurately “maternalistic” given the historical gendered division of labor in composition instruction (see Eileen E. Schell, “The Costs of Caring: ‘Feminism’ and Contingent Women Workers in Composition Studies” and *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*)—assumed in attempts to foster in students the supposed sophistication of academic discourse, a posture that infantilizes students and their home literacies. In other words, there is still a deficiency model in operation here. It has simply been diffused so that the pallid gloom of defect is cast not only upon individual students and their families but spreads to obscure entire communities of people.

Still, the loudest objections to the dominant rhetorics and corollary movements within the discipline of composition studies failed by and large to take into account a couple of critical factors. Throughout most of the twentieth century the comp community, in its isolation of academic discourse as *the* primary criterion upon which to (e)valuate the intellectual and literal labors of students, has actually reproduced the unseeing, the dehumanization—“the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed,” as Paulo Freire puts it (44)—of students who are not white, middle- to upper-class, native English speakers. In short, student writers who adhere to, and inhere in, different rhetorical conventions are *devalued* and marked as Other in the predominant, dominating, academic discourse revolving around academic discourse (and I hope the masturbatory connotation is clear). The racial(izing) texture of this marking becomes particularly apparent when you consider a common epithet used to label some of the students whose language backgrounds and rhetorical conventions differ

appreciably from institutionally sanctioned ones: “white trash.” Suddenly even the historically racially unmarked acquire a little bit of linguistic color, pale though it may be, and a certain *uncertainty* creeps in along with the contradictions.

Blood Quantum Entanglement

At this point you might be asking yourselves where *I* have gone to? (I hope you’re asking.) The history, which is neither finished nor fixed by a long shot, is important because both within it and around it simultaneously unfolds the story that has its beginning right here, in *this* moment. This *history* is real and immediate, because it speaks of and to the myriad ways in which I, as a woman of color, have had to disappear myself from my own texts in order to be “seen” in a Western-world academic model that claims *a priori* neutrality. Like *deus ex machina*, my textual absence imparts the “critical distance” from material reality that is necessary for the university and the discipline of composition studies to maintain their institutional *objectivity*. Villanueva articulates the matter quite eloquently in his tellingly titled article, “Maybe a Colony: And Still Another Critique of the Comp Community.” He writes,

When we demand a certain language, a certain dialect, and a certain rhetorical manner in using that dialect and language, we seem to be working counter to the cultural multiplicity we seek. And I think that means that we will have to rethink the whole thing. The demand for linguistic and rhetorical compliance still smacks of colonialism, practices which reproduce, in effect, the colonial histories of America’s people of color. (183-184)

What the comp community has yet to come to terms with, then, is its complicity with the systemic racism inherent in the university as an institution grounded in the history, rhetoric, and ideology of American imperialism. For racism, as Villanueva remarks in “On the Rhetoric and Precedents of Racism,” “seems to have the greatest depth of trouble, cuts across most other bigotries, is imbricated with most other bigotries, and also stands alone, has the greatest number of layers” (832).

Malea Powell expands on the problem lucidly, in particular with reference to the relation of American Indians to the academy. In “Blood and Scholarship” she observes that “the narratives of *Indian* and *Academy* are always part of an even larger story—the narrative that constructs America and American-ness.” She continues, “After all, it is because of how America—the ideological state and collective national culture—came into being that there is an ‘American’ scholarly experience and a specific scholarly discourse about Native Americans at all. The stories that write this ‘American’ narrative are familiar ones—‘Christopher Columbus and the Discovery,’ ‘Pioneers and Manifest Destiny.’” In other words, the myth of the frontier, the vast, empty wilderness that’s just waiting to be “civilized” by Euro-American settlers is writ large in the archetypal “American tale.” However, Powell goes on to point out, “What is not so obvious is the correspondence of this frontier story to the stories that construct the Academy and its scholarly practices” (3).

That is, it is not simply the paternalistic pose of academic professionals in relation to their Othered students that reproduces the history of American empire, but the intellectual labors of academics reify the rhetoric and ideology of imperialism as well. The result is what Powell calls “second-wave genocide,” whereby

[n]ot only does the imperial power commit material acts meant to crush an unruly indigenous population, but also its institutions of intellectual and cultural exchange (i.e., universities) make the rules by which the first-wave genocide will be studied, and these same rules apply to the study of genocide survivors. Indians can be studied only within the terms of the oppressor; the Academy becomes just another powerful agent of imperialism. (“Blood” 4)

The demand for objectivity that is so valued by the academy commits a kind of exponential linguistic violence as it unsees, eliminates the colonized body of the Other in its dominant discourse while it simultaneously colonizes the textual productions of Othered intellectuals. And hence “nice people abide by and maintain not nice things, like a system in which certain groups are consistently relegated to the bottom of the structure in disproportionate numbers” (Villanueva, “Rhetoric is Politics” 332).

Undeniably, and thankfully, there are scholars, people of color, “mixed-bloods,” *mestiza* border-dwellers, who share experiences that are similar to those described by Powell, and who, like Powell, Villanueva, and Keith Gilyard, for example, write against the imperial tale. And they are called upon again and again to “do” Indian, Latino, African American rhetorics. Even those who would espouse assimilation, sometimes especially those who espouse assimilation, are called upon to “do” the people and places they come from. Take Richard Rodriguez’s now (in)famous case. In his autobiographical *Hunger for Memory*, he claims that losing his ties to his home-language and Mexican or Chicano culture was the price he had to pay to become a “middle-class American man. Assimilated” (3). “Yet,” as Villanueva notes, “for all [Rodriguez’s] fame as an American writing in English about assimilation, his attempts at assimilation failed. *He is called*

upon to explain the Latino; he has not melted into the American pot” (*Bootstraps* xvi; emphasis added). In effect, you can’t write the color out of the academic of color, even if you *want* to, if your story will be a part of this American tale. The blood, the color, the academic are wholly entangled. But, if you know anything about quantum theory, you know that inextricably entangled quanta (the little stuff) can demonstrate remarkable and counter-intuitive properties.

Wormholes

Let me return to the *history* that began before and came after *my* story. I mentioned that there was a third stage in the evolution of comp studies, and I as much as promised that I’d get back to it. So here we are, though I can afford to be somewhat brief since this story is still trying to build momentum, and the winds of change are blowing decidedly against it, for the moment.

In Berlin’s catalog of dominant epistemological categories he also discussed the transactional. Transactional theories of rhetoric, which include the classical, cognitive, and epistemic rhetorics, “locate reality at the point of interaction of subject and object, with audience and language as mediating agencies” (*Reality* 6), and; “see truth as arising out of the interaction of the elements of the rhetorical situation: an interaction of subject and object or of subject and audience or even of all the elements—subject, object, audience, and language—operating simultaneously” (*Reality* 15). In epistemic rhetoric “there is never a distinction between experience and language” . . . “All experiences, even the scientific and logical, are grounded in language, and language determines their content and structure” . . . “Rhetoric thus becomes implicated in all human behavior”

(16), and; “All truths arise out of dialectic, out of the interaction of individuals within discourse communities” (*Reality* 16-17).

Berlin favored, and located himself as a teacher-scholar within, the social epistemic camp because to his mind it was the only rhetoric that understood “ideology . . . is always present by imbrication” (6). As Donald Stewart wrote in his foreword to *Rhetoric and Reality*, Berlin always kept in mind whose/which ideology is served by the dominant rhetoric of any given period (ix). It is a project that is clear throughout most of Berlin’s work, not least those that I draw upon so heavily in this essay. And yet, as Keith Gilyard pronounces in “Higher Learning: Composition’s Racialized Reflection,” exposing dominant rhetorics and their underlying ideology is not enough if race is erased—or *(d)e-raced*—from the analysis. Gilyard attests that “if a rhetorician as critically sensitive and astute as Berlin, who was obsessed with how cultural codes implicitly operate, failed to crack the race code for us, it is strong testimony to how potently invisible, or invisibly potent, that particular code signifies.” Given this limitation to Berlin’s critical insight, Gilyard asks: “From the subject position of a white teacher, a label he did not reject, how could he teach students to ‘resist’ and ‘negotiate’ the controlling discourse that ‘whiteness’ is?” (48). These are important questions, to which I will return momentarily.

First I’d like to make some connections to Bizzell’s third stage in comp theory, wherein composition theorists problematize assumptions about the unified nature of “traditional academic discourse” and its use as the “target” of writing instruction (“What to Do” 4-5), which roughly corresponds to the rise of transactional theories of epistemology and social epistemic rhetoric. The outlook for this, the current state of composition theory, is promising on the surface of things. In a recent essay, “The

Intellectual Work of ‘Mixed’ Forms of Academic Discourse,” Bizzell herself calls for “new discourses [that] enable scholarship to take account of new variables, to explore new methods, and to communicate findings in new venues, including broader readings than the academic” (3)—the “intellectual work” of “mixed forms.” Much of this piece is a revision of an her earlier “Hybrid Academic Discourse,” but Bizzell does a good job of critiquing her own use of metaphor; “hybrid discourse,” for example, is an unfortunate biological metaphor (5), one that essentializes language use in certain ways and thereby poses the danger of limiting access—to the academy, to economic opportunity, and to political power—for so-called “basic writers.”

Unfortunately, Bizzell then takes a long and inadvisable detour that paints a prematurely rosy picture of the openness of the field of English studies in general and rhetoric and composition studies in particular to alternative (i.e., not necessarily conventionally academic) discourses. While this may be the case for some established writer/scholars in the field, like Villanueva, Mike Rose, and Keith Gilyard, ask any graduate student who’s trying to write a scholarly article for possible publication if autobiographical digression can be considered a “sure thing” with regard to what’s “acceptable” by the academy’s standards. Even Villanueva has written of his own struggles to be published as a practitioner of a rhetoric that is at present enjoying some currency as “alt dis.” Bizzell then goes on to explain why the rhet/comp/English studies community should look to the work of “powerful white male scholars” for examples of alternative discourse as new intellectual work because, in the example of one white male historian, the “willingness to dig deep within himself and reveal the emotional underpinnings of his work is most valuable for other white male historians” (9). While

this may be true (with emphasis on the word “may”), as a feminist woman of color in rhetoric and composition studies, well, I feel a little bit like someone just asked me to take their garbage out since I’m headed in that direction anyway. So, I have to ask, what does Patricia Bizzell, who has written about her “left-liberal” politics and pedagogy (Introduction 4), have to teach students about resisting or negotiating the dominant and dominating discourse that whiteness is?

The value of this piece lies in Bizzell's insistence that rhetoric and composition teacher/scholars think of writing, "academic discourse," and "basic writers" in new and different terms, which would require new and different ways of teaching composition. It also clearly demonstrates that rhetoric and composition studies still have a long way to go before they realize an active, anti-racist pedagogy. Perhaps interrogating the ways in which the field of rhetoric and composition studies intersects with the discipline of cultural studies—and specifically Chicana and Chicano studies, for the purposes of this inquiry—can provide us with those critical terms, or at least, as cultural critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has put it, perhaps such an exploration can stimulate “a kind of productive ‘unease’” or tension across the “divided terrain” that constitutes contemporary English studies (Sipiora and Atwill 296).

CHAPTER FOUR

QUE(E)RYING CAPITAL: RECUPERATING THE POLITICAL ECONOMIC

CRITIQUE OF THE FOREMOTHERS

Claiming Aztlán: Rhetorics of *La Raza*

Aztlán is the mythical homeland of the Azteca people. According to legend, The Aztecas were birthed from the belly of the earth and dwelled in seven caves in the land of herons (the denotative meaning if the word Aztlán [Alarcón 53]). Eventually they would emerge from the seven caves, and in 1168 they began a southward migration in search of a promised land. The gods told the Azteca leaders to look for a sign: an eagle, perched atop a cactus devouring a serpent (the symbol that is today emblazoned on the Mexican flag). They finally beheld the sign in what is modern-day Mexico City and established what would become the bustling Mesoamerican metropolis of Tenochtitlán in 1325 (Arrizón 23).

Flash-forward to the mid-1960s. The civil rights movement was burgeoning and many Mexicano communities began to organize and agitate for social justice. It was at this juncture that many US citizens of Mexican descent began to refer to themselves as Chicanos, derived from the Azteca pronunciation of *Mexicano* — “Meshicano”—with the *me-* sound dropped (Vázquez 6). Chicana/o nationalists consciously adapted the terminology to denote those people of Mexican descent who lived north of the Rio Bravo (most often referred to as the Rio Grand[e] in the US). It was a largely successful move intended to inculcate cultural-ethnic pride and a rallying point for Chicana/o activists who

wanted to combat the social injustices suffered by people of Mexican descent in the United States.

This same rationale inspired a few charismatic and vocal Chicano activists—in what turned out to be a brilliant rhetorical move—to call up Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos’s concept of *La Raza Cósmica* to represent the Chicana/o population, as well as to resurrect the ancient mythic home of the Aztecas, Aztlán, as the symbolic homeland of US citizens of Mexican descent. It is generally agreed that the catalytic moment for the symbol of Aztlán was when “*El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*” was put forth by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez at the Chicano National Liberation Youth Conference in Colorado in 1969. Among other things, *El Plan* declares: “Chicanos staked their claim to the ‘northern land of Aztlán’ by ancestral birthright and as inhabitants and ‘civilizers’ of a territory that had been stolen from them by a ‘brutal “gringo” invasion.’ They refused to recognize the ‘capricious frontiers’ established by European invaders”; in addition, “Aztlán was proclaimed as a nation, a union of free pueblos, and the Plan called for the establishment of an independent [Chicano] political party at the local, regional and national levels” (qtd. in Alarcón 51).

The symbol proved to be very powerful and enduring, probably for two reasons: the legend of Aztlán does place the mythic birthplace of the Aztecas north of Mexico City, though how far and in what direction—east or west—is widely debated among historians and anthropologists; secondly, more than half of Mexico’s territory was ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo after the Mexican American war, constituting the current states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado. Moreover, the Mexicano and Chicana/o population in this part of the US

has remained proportionally large ever since. In the 1960s these two facts imbued the symbol of Aztlán with both a mythic and historic legitimacy as the birthright of Chicanas/os, and if contemporary Chicana/o art and scholarship is any indication Aztlán has lost little of its symbolic power or allure since. Chicanas/os had claimed Aztlán as homeland and birthright.

Aztlán: Border Closed

Thus arises the problematic of rhetorics of La Raza and the symbol of Aztlán. As Daniel Cooper Alarcón notes in his “The Aztec Palimpsest: Toward a New Understanding of Aztlán, Cultural Identity and History,” “Important issues related to Chicano cultural identity that have been neglected include the disturbing tendency to focus on the Southwest in discussions about Chicanos, minimizing the attention paid to Chicanos who live in other geographic regions” (37). This particular problem is glaringly evident within Chicana/o communities who reside beyond the borders of the geographical Southwestern United States. In such outlying locations, Aztlán becomes either a concern of and for *Mexicanos* and Chicanos who live “down there,” in the Southwest, or the borders of Aztlán must be conceptually stretched—which requires no small measure of linguistic and epistemic violence—to include those of us who reside in the Northwest, Northeast, and Southeastern US. Otherwise, it is difficult, at best, to understand where we fit into all of this, how it *applies*. I mean, even if, as Mario Barrera argued for in *Beyond Aztlán: Ethnic Autonomy in Comparative Perspective*, the Southwest was transformed into a system of politically autonomous regions within the United States (172-176), the

benefits or consequences for those living outside of this imagined Aztlán are hard to envisage.

Alarcón outlined other problems as well. For one, *El Plan* constructed Aztlán as a unified space that is homeland to a monolithic Chicano community (53). Such a monolithic narrative effectively erases the diversity of Chicana/o communities, which includes: differences in appearance; variation in cultural background (some Chicanas/os are heavily steeped in *Mexicano* culture while others have come of age in strictly Chicana/o communities within the US, and yet others have had little exposure to *Mexicanos* or other Chicanas/os); and linguistic diversity (some Chicanas/os speak Spanish as their dominant language, some are fully bilingual—though they are often criticized on both sides of the border for speaking “corrupt” versions of each language—and some are monolingual in English).

Perhaps even more disturbing is the “claim to the ‘northern land of Aztlán’ by ancestral birthright and as inhabitants and ‘civilizers’ of a territory” (qtd. in Alarcón 51). As Alarcón affirms, this imagining of Aztlán denies the rights of American Indians, Asian Americans, and African Americans who reside, and in many cases have done so for generations, in the same geographic locations (58-59). How is it that the (neo)colonial oppression of Chicanos can be combated using a symbol that completely disregards the plight of other oppressed and colonized or enslaved peoples, including peoples who share similar mythic and historic claims to the same lands as in the case of American Indians of the Southwest? In fact, the use of the phrase “civilizers of a territory” in *El Plan* smacks eerily of the racist imperialism that drove the Spanish missionaries and *conquistadores* to convert by force or slaughter millions of *Indios* over the course of the sixteenth century.

The framers of *El Plan* were no doubt giving expression to what Emma Pérez describes as “the ontological wish to become that which would allow a liberatory future promised by the postcolonial, postmodern, and postnational.” Yet, as Pérez goes on to point out,

The historical inheritance, discursive and non-discursive, of the colonial imaginary in the United States has not permitted that ontological wish to come true. It is almost as if we are doomed to repeat the past, to move, not ahead, and certainly not dialectically, but in circles, over and over, as our communities “become” [in the Hegelian sense of “becoming”¹⁰] another kind of colonizer / colonized with the colonial imaginary overshadowing [liberatory] movements.

(20)

The rhetoric of *La Raza* as deployed in *El Plan* purposefully adopts a colonialist and imperialist posture¹¹, without doubt in an effort to challenge and even attempt to invert the unmitigated Anglo domination of Chicanas/os in the US. Yet such an inversion inescapably leaves the larger structures of domination and oppression thoroughly intact.

¹⁰ In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel posits the notion of “becoming” as the thought category between “being” and “nothing”; “becoming” occurs when something passes *between* nothingness and being, and as such it encompasses aspects of *both* being and nothingness (Redding). Pérez’s invocation of Hegelian logic is intended to signal Chicano/a social history’s bemused entanglement in-between, between “the colonial and the postcolonial, the modern and the postmodern, the national and the postnational,” which leaves Chicano/a (Pérez’s construction for this particular moment in “Chicano/a” historiography) historiographers hopelessly arguing for “‘equality,’ [and] hence sameness with white ethnic groups” (20). In Pérez’s model, rather than moving dialectically from one oppositional term to the other, back and forth, Chicano/a historiographers using social history methodology simply move in unproductive, even potentially destructive, circles somewhere in the stagnant middle. It is from this position that arguments for greater access to the middle class and all of its attendant privileges arise, an argument that ignores the structural nature of existing social injustice. That is, the middle class cannot enjoy the privileges of petit bourgeois existence if there is not a vulnerable working class to exploit.

¹¹ Literary and cultural critic Edward Said has stated that colonialism is an *effect* of imperialism, or “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” (9). Other effects of white, western imperialism reproduced here include “a cultural discourse relegating and confining the non-European to a secondary racial, cultural, and ontological status. Yet this secondariness is, paradoxically, essential to the primariness of the European” (59).

Finally, as many Chicana scholars and artists have asserted or represented in their works, it is difficult to reconcile the place of women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendereds within the conceptual boundaries of Aztlán as outlined in *El Plan*. In fact, in *El Plan* “brotherhood” is invoked as a “unifying force” and the “necessary engine of group deliverance” (Arrizón 25). Alicia Arrizón articulates the issue forcefully in her “Mythical Performativity: Relocating Aztlán in Chicana Feminist Cultural Productions.” She states,

In *El Plan*, the idea of the collective self is implicit in *carnalismo*, in the unity of brotherhood. The idea of sisterhood is dismissed by the dialectics of patriarchy and a heterosexist hierarchy. This sociopolitical ordering is not limited to Chicanas and Chicanos; it is characteristic of the overall social system that affects both men and women, Chicanos and non-Chicanos, equally. (45)

In fact, it is precisely the dialectics of racism that render the affects of patriarchy and a heterosexist hierarchy *unequal* in their consequences for Chicanos and non-Chicanos. La Chicana is in reality gendered and raced, a fact illustrated clearly in a 1973 proclamation issued in the Chicana feminist journal *Regeneración*, in which it is stated, “Although feminists, we are also members of a racial minority, we are Chicanas. Our struggle is racial as well as sexual. We acknowledge and dedicate ourselves to La Causa, our people’s struggle for self-determination. As Chicanas, we could in no way fight for feminism without it being an effort on behalf of our people as well” (qtd. In Dicochea 79). But this is a problem to which I will return shortly. The noteworthy point at this juncture is that Arrizón effectively broaches the topics of feminist and queer Chicana/o

identities, another reality of Chicana/o experience elided in the construct of Aztlán as it was articulated in *El Plan*.

When I invoke “queer” Chicana/o identities, I refer to those Chicanas/os who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered. I use the term “feminist” as delineated by Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano in her “Chicana Literature from a Chicana Feminist Perspective”: It is a feminism that grows out of material realities in Chicana/o communities. It is a political movement that differs from white feminism in that it “is inseparable from the historical experience of Chicanos in this country since 1848, an experience marked by economic exploitation as a class and systematic racial, social, and linguistic discrimination designed to keep Chicanos at the bottom as a reserve pool of cheap labor.” In fact, a motivating force behind and defining feature of Chicana feminism has always been the necessity of “demarcating [its] difference” from white women’s feminism. Dicochea concurs: “Efforts to clarify distinctions between the two were an important part of the development of Chicana feminist identity” (83). As such, a consistent, integral component of Chicana feminism shares Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s ongoing scholarly project of staging a “strategic intervention against Anglo-European bourgeois feminism both past and present” (Chrisman 54).

So Chicana feminism is not strictly feminism nor is it only just Chicanismo¹², since the Chicana feminist is concerned with race, culture, and class in an immediate and material sense—in her own home and racial(ized) cultural community—and the Chicano movement by and large has historically avoided, even scorned, issues of gender and sexuality.

¹² “Chicanismo” is a kind of holistic Chicano consciousness, which includes, among other things, both a sense of self-respect as a Chicano and a sense of responsibility toward the Chicano community. See Ysidro Ramón Macías’s “The Evolution of the Mind” (1969) for a more detailed explication.

Women's relationships with each other also take on a special significance, as Yarbrow-Bejarano explains: "Above all, Chicana feminism as a political movement depends on the love of Chicanas for themselves and each other as Chicanas" (139). It is telling that though Chicana lesbians have been vocal over the past three decades¹³, attempting to carve out or redefine the conceptual space of Aztlán in order to create a place for themselves, Chicanos have been silent where they have not been openly hostile on the issues of feminist and queer identities. Moreover, in the early days of the *Movimiento*, Chicana feminists themselves "did not question hyperheterosexual social norms and subsequently silenced Chicana lesbians" (Dicochea 88-89). Clearly the "dialectics of patriarchy and a heterosexist hierarchy" embodied in Aztlán create a critical dilemma for those who do not fit within its original conceptual boundaries.

The situation is seriously compounded when you take into account the small enclaves that generally constitute Chicana/o communities outside of the Southwestern US, communities that are often tightly knit and at times rigidly constraining all at once. In a discussion of Cecilia Suarez's 1973 article published in the Chicana feminist journal *Regeneración*, Perlita R. Dicochea explains that, according to Suarez, "traditional child-rearing practices ascribed to Chicana mothers and the cultural characteristic of machismo¹⁴ have had a negative impact upon Chicana educational and career development as well as family growth." Dicochea continues, "This early critique of

¹³ Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* are two now axiological examples of Chicana lesbian-feminist discourse and theory. I will discuss both in some detail below.

¹⁴ Machismo is itself a vestige of colonial relations of domination and oppression, rather than the manifestation of a "Latin" sexism and misogyny that is usually assumed to be a "fact" of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o cultures. Dicochea elaborates: "Spanish colonization led to the transformation of the image of Tonantzin, the precolonial goddess of life and death, into La Virgen de Guadalupe. Early Chicana writers argued that this new manifestation of Tonantzin has had a lasting impact on all women of Mexican heritage who are expected to be pure, passive, and self-sacrificing" (81).

Chicana/o cultural norms designating females to maternal roles within rigid social constructions of femininity and womanhood provides a glimpse of the problematic ramifications of compulsory heterosexuality within Chicana/o cultures” (86). Later Dicochea goes on to make clear that “Chicana feminists formed their own organizations [and founded Chicana feminist journals such as *Regeneración*] in order to successfully pursue women’s issues, revealing the continued resistance Chicana feminists faced within Chicana/o communities” (88). Thus, both geographically and ideologically, it has too often seemed that the border to Aztlán, for some of us, is permanently closed.

Chicana Lesbian Feministas: Foremothers, Fronteristas

This is my home
this thin edge of
barbwire.

Gloria Anzaldúa, “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El otro México*,” *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Hopefully it is apparent by now that Chicana feminists have struggled continuously since the 1960s to articulate a space for themselves—historical, material, and intellectual—beyond that prescribed for them alternately by the white feminist movement and Chicano cultural nationalism in the US. While the rhetoric and activism of the white feminist movement of the 1960s-70s revolved around issues of sex and gender inequality, the Chicano movement foregrounded the problematic of race and ethnicity within the context of white supremacist American ideology¹⁵. Cherríe Moraga offers a

¹⁵ Cherríe Moraga uses the adapted spelling *Amerika* “to distinguish the United States’ version of the nation-state of ‘America’ and ‘American,’ from the more expanded definition of América and americano, which includes North, South, and Central America” (“From Inside” xxxii).

memorable, and distressing, characterization of the plight of early *feministas* in “La Güera,” probably the most well-recognized essay from her collection of poetry and prose,

Loving in the War Years:

Time and time again, I have observed that the usual response among white women’s groups when the ‘racism issue’ comes up is to deny the difference. I have heard comments like, ‘Well, we’re open to *all* women; why don’t they (women of color) come? You can only do so much...’ But there is seldom any analysis of how the very nature and structure of the group itself may be founded on racist or classist assumptions. (57)

Conversely, as Denise A. Segura and Beatriz M. Pesquera explain in “Beyond Indifference and Antipathy: The Chicana Feminist Movement and Feminist Discourse,” within the Chicano movement, “Chicanas who deviated from a nationalist political stance were subjected to many negative sanctions including being labeled *vendidas* (sell-outs), or *agabachadas* (white-identified)” (392-393). In essence, according to Segura and Pesquera, “Neither [the white feminist movement nor the Chicano movement] addresses the unique situation of Chicanas whose life chances mirror the intersections of class, race/ethnicity, and gender. Chicana feminism reverberates with the dialectical tension between their lives and the ideological configurations that dichotomize their experiences and exploit their political loyalties” (390).

At the heart of this reverberation sound the voices of Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga. Over the decades, Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Moraga’s *Loving in the War Years*, and their collaborative tour de force *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* have become foundational texts in the ongoing (re)evolution of

Chicanisma: they are the foremothers of Chicana/Latina studies in all of its multifarious contemporary incarnations.

The power of Anzaldúa and Moraga's work is rooted in their enactment of the dialectics of race, class, gender, and sexuality, both materially and discursively, through the transgressive embodiment of Chicana lesbian feminist texts. Anzaldúa elaborates:

Writing is my whole life, it is my obsession. This vampire which is my talent does not suffer other suitors. Daily I court it, offer my neck to its teeth. This is the sacrifice that the act of creation requires, a blood sacrifice. For *only through the body*, though the pulling of flesh, can the human soul be transformed. And for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, *they must arise from the human body—flesh and bone—and from the Earth's body—stone, sky, liquid, soil*. This work, these images, piercing tongue or ear lobes with cactus needle, are my offerings, are my Aztec blood sacrifices. (*Borderlands* 97; emphasis added)

The body materialized in and through these Chicana lesbian feminist texts is transgressive in that it crosses the ideological borders delineating conventional race, class, and gender relations along with constructions of sexuality inscribed in the white feminist and Chicano movements of the civil rights era. It is an unapologetically "queer" body in a society that impresses compulsory heterosexuality, patriarchal structures of power, institutionalized racism, and economic stratification as normative constructions within a "democracy." Hence, it is simultaneously a queer body in the sense that Chicana lesbian feminist texts que(e)r-y those very same normative constructions by historicizing the presence of Chicanas/os in the United States while explicitly connecting that history to the logic of late capitalism. It is in this sense, perhaps, that Anzaldúa and Moraga

become *fronteristas* par excellence as transnational corporate expansion takes on global proportions and the “border” of US capital crisscrosses the displaced bodies of Third World peoples everywhere.

However, this final fact is one that is disappointingly omitted in most of the contemporary critical conversation revolving around the work of Anzaldúa and Moraga. In fact, many of the contemporary literary and cultural critics who marshal the works of these Chicana foremothers confine themselves to atomistic discussions of feminism (isolated from its intersections with race, class, and even sexuality), autobiography/ autoethnography/ *autohistoria* (the last being Anzaldúa’s own descriptive label for her preferred mixed-genre approach), and “borderlands” as the instantiation of “hybrid” identities. A quick survey of the citations that pop up in a search of the keyword “Anzaldúa” in the MLA International Bibliography reveals articles with titles that include the following: “Language and Identity Politics: The Linguistic Autobiographies of Latinos in the United States,” an article that avoids any discussion of Anzaldúa’s lesbianism; “Autobiographical Narratives in Latino America: A Hemispheric Context,” an article that discusses race, class, and sexuality, but only in the context of describing the “mestiza” identities being forged in Latino autobiographies¹⁶; and “The Homecoming Queen: The Reconstruction of Home in Queer Life-Narratives,” a very interesting article that will give the uncritical reader the impression that American society indeed constitutes a virtually raceless, classless social order.

¹⁶ The author writes: “With the category of gender no longer subsuming all others as in classic Western feminism, the race, [the] class, and gender markers contained in the term *mestiza* situate us in a shifting terrain where individuals can be simultaneously outsiders and insiders with regard to various communities. As a Chicana lesbian, Anzaldúa is both an outsider and insider to Chicano culture, with its patriarchal traditions that emasculate women and homosexuals. As Chicana, her affiliation with other categories besides woman makes her an outsider and insider with respect to the feminist movement. And so on” (López). I find the “and so on” in this assertion, a potentially endless spiraling out of the ways in which we are all both insiders and outsiders, particularly troubling.

Even more interesting than the rather myopic, navel-gazing hermeneutics being rehearsed vis-à-vis Anzaldúa and Moraga—and more disturbing at the same time—is the interpretive twist proffered by postmodernist writers and theorists, whose influence can be unquestionably traced in the works cited directly above. Paula M. L. Moya, in her incisive article entitled “Postmodernism, ‘Realism,’ and the Politics of Identity,” states the matter straightforwardly:

Within the field of U.S. literary and cultural studies, the institutionalization of a discourse of postmodernism has spawned an approach to difference that ironically erases the distinctiveness and relationality of difference itself. Typically, postmodernist theorists either *internalize* difference so that the individual is herself seen as “fragmented” and “contradictory” (thus disregarding the distinctions that exist between different kinds of people), or they attempt to “subvert” difference by showing that “difference” is merely a discursive illusion (thus leaving no way to contend with the fact that people experience themselves as different from each other). In either case, postmodernists reinscribe, albeit unintentionally, a kind of universalizing sameness (we are all marginal now!) that their celebration of “difference” had tried so hard to avoid. (126)

In other words, the forestalling of any “universalizing sameness” is in fact a kind of postmodernist prime directive, which, like its Trekkie counterpart, leads inexorably to the violation of the prime directive itself, and this translation—of difference to sameness—can only be accomplished via what Moya unequivocally identifies as “the theoretical misappropriation of women of color” (128).

Moya discusses specific examples of such misappropriation at some length, with particular reference to the work of Cherríe Moraga, in Donna Haraway's totemic "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980's" and Judith Butler's influential *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In Haraway's "Manifesto" she posits the existence of the cyborg, "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 7), "a creature who transcends, confuses, or destroys boundaries" (Moya 128). Chicanas, Moya observes, are granted a privileged position within the world of the cyborg as the products of the Spaniard *conquistadores*' policy of intermarriage with the natives they subjugated (Indian and African), the result of which is "[t]heir neither/nor racial status, their unclear genealogical relationship to the history of oppression (as descendents of both the colonizer and colonized), and their ambiguous national identity (as neither Mexican nor fully 'American')" (128). Moya goes on to provide a fascinating juxtaposition of passages from the "Manifesto" in which Haraway alternately describes the characteristics of the cyborg and of Chicanas/women of color in order to show that women of color embody a cyborg identity, "a potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of outsider identities"¹⁷ (qtd. in Moya 129).

In fact, Haraway is only able to support this claim through a willful misreading of the figure of Malintzin Tenepal, *la Malinche*, Indian translator to and enslaved concubine of Hernán Cortés—leader of the Spanish *conquistadores*—the Mexicano/Chicano originary mother, "*la chingada*," the fucked one. Moya cites an especially troublesome passage as evidence of Haraway's theoretical misappropriation of this critical figure in Chicana theory and consciousness: "Stripped of identity, the bastard race teaches about

¹⁷ Note how the López article mentioned above echoes Haraway's ideas and language here.

the power of the margins and the importance of a mother like Malinche. Women of color have transformed her into the originally literate mother who teaches survival” (qtd. in Moya 131). Moya goes on to convincingly explicate the ways in which Haraway’s reading “uncritically affirms a positionality (the margins) and a mode of existence (survival) that real live Chicanas have found to be rather less (instead of more) affirming” . . . [and yet] neither marginality nor survival are sufficient goals for a feminist project” (131).

The salient point or “key theoretical problem,” as Moya puts it, is Haraway’s “understanding of identity as an entirely willful construction, as wholly independent of the limiting effects of social location” (131). In Haraway’s own terms,

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. In the traditions of “Western” science and politics—the tradition of racist, male-dominated capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as a resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other—the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination. (8)

Haraway’s use of the term “chimera” is a brilliant linguistic amalgamation of the various symbols and significations she marshals throughout her manifesto: the fire-breathing she-

monster; the hybrid organism—genetically spliced, mutated—cut off scientifically, decisively from ordinary claims and the “myth” of wholeness; and a wild figment of the imagination. All of which evades the reality of the specificities of our differences; the ways in which we experience ourselves as different from each other, as Moya rightly points out via Moraga’s conception of difference as “relational”; that is, difference is contingent upon and experienced only within human relationships. Moreover, while many women of color may experience a tension or cleavage in the ways that we are perceived by others, this does not change the fact that many of us also feel “whole” as women and as human beings rather than “fragmented,” “splintered,” or insert-your-own-violent-metaphor-here. The degree to which various factions within our home communities and the dominant society dichotomize our experiences and exploit our political loyalties, as Segura and Pesquera express it, is the precise degree to which we feel “torn” and “divided.” In short, women of color could not feel as if they were being torn apart if they did not first experience themselves as whole and complete human beings. This experiential and relational aspect of identity seems to be lost on Haraway, who insists that “we are all chimeras,” hence universalizing human beings’ sameness in difference, which is then made manifest in the fabricated figure of the cyborg. Moya puts forward a lucid amplification of the effects of Haraway’s misreading of Moraga:

Lacking an analysis of how the social facts which make up our social locations are causally relevant for the experiences we have, as well as how those experiences inform our cultural identities, Haraway cannot conceive of a way to ground identities without essentializing them. Although she correctly ascertains that people are not uniformly determined by any one social fact, she wrongly

concludes that social facts (such as gender or race) can be irrelevant to the identities we choose. (132)

Butler's treatment of Moraga is far more cursory, as Moya clearly spells out. The main issue in *Gender Trouble* is Butler's misreading of Moraga's famous assertion: "the danger lies in ranking the oppressions." Butler interprets this Chicana feminist aphorism to mean that "we have no way of adjudicating among different kinds of oppressions—that any attempt to causally relate or hierarchize the varieties of oppressions people suffer constitutes an imperializing, colonizing, or totalizing gesture that renders the effort invalid" (Moya 133). However, when Moraga's statement is put into context it becomes clear that she is making no such claim. Instead, this Chicana poet and activist is calling for readers to interrogate the specificities of our differences, to look at the ways in which they overlap and interconnect with each other. Moya argues that Moraga is in fact "warning against the reductive theoretical tendency (whether it be Marxist, feminist, or cultural nationalist) to posit one kind of oppression as primary for all time and in all places. She is not advocating an admission of defeat in the project of trying to figure out *how the varieties of oppressions suffered by the woman of color intersect with, or are determined by, each other*" (134; emphasis added).

While Haraway and Butler, along with myriad other theorists, often invoke the concepts of capitalism and imperialism in what often appears to be the generalized eruption of postmodernism in literary and cultural studies, precisely what is missing from their discussion—or more properly, use—of the works of Anzaldúa and Moraga is a critical engagement with political economy. It is exactly Butler's notion of radical performativity and the signification of identities that allows her to radically misinterpret

Moraga's maxim; in so doing, Butler "deploy[s] a rhetoric of unity that domesticates and subordinates movements that formed in opposition to oppressive efforts to erase their priorities," while concomitantly collapsing "culture" and economic modes of production reified as the category of "class" qua *cultural* assemblages. Rosemary Hennessy, feminist, cultural critic, and author of *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse*, states the matter concisely in her meticulous analysis of the political economy of sexuality, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*. "[Y]es, class does have a certain priority in capitalism. But it is important to remember," she writes, "that class in this sense is a social relationship, not a reified cultural category." Furthermore, "What Butler refuses to acknowledge or perhaps even to see is that insisting on the vital role of the extraction of surplus labor in capitalism *does not preclude developing analyses of how this process involves highly differential and inter-imbricated cultural processes*" (58; emphasis added). In the final analysis, as Hennessy goes on to clarify a bit later, "Butler does not explain how sexuality mediates relations of labor or has anything at all to do with exploitation" (58-59).

Ultimately, as E. San Juan Jr. indicates in his lucid critique of contemporary cultural studies, *Racism and Cultural Studies: Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Difference*, "Post-al thinking, as in post-marxism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism, remains, after all, "unable to offer frames of intelligibility that can analyze and critique the internal contradictions embedded in the reality and ideology of the 'free market,'" (266). If the work of these *fronteristas*, Anzaldúa and Moraga, is to have salience for those of us staring out from *la boca del lobo*—the gaping maw of the globalized kleptocracy of twenty-first-century US imperialism—it is imperative that we

recuperate the political economic critique that undergirds the theoretical and creative writings of Chicana lesbian feminists Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga.

Diagnostics: Historicizing Chicana Lesbian Feminism in the Context of US

Capitalism

The U.S.-Mexican Border *es un herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds.

Gloria Anzaldúa, from “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El otro México*,” *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Anzaldúa opens *Borderlands/La Frontera* with the above observation, scathing as the violence of the metaphor is, and she does not retreat from the razor-sharp point of her critique throughout the text. In Chapter 1, “The Homeland, Aztlán,” Anzaldúa sheds light on Mexico’s longtime dependence on US economic policies and global machinations. Her examination ranges back to the first conquest, and subsequent wholesale massacre, of Mexico’s indigenous population by Spanish invaders, a history that Moraga reiterates toward the end of *Loving in the War Years*. The *conquistadores*’ policy of intermarriage with those natives who were hearty enough to survive the onslaught left their descendants, “*una nueva raza, el mestizo, el mexicano*” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 27), subject to the “white imperialist takeover” that began in Texas in the 1800s, the legitimization of which is symbolized to this day (for Anglos, as Anzaldúa rightly points out) by the Battle of the Alamo (*Borderlands* 28).

By the early twentieth century US capitalism had the newly constructed US-Mexican border in a stranglehold. Anzaldúa attests,

In the 1930s, after Anglo agribusiness corporations cheated the small Chicano landowners of their land, the corporations hired gangs of *Mexicanos* to pull out the brush, chaparral and cactus to irrigate the desert. The land they toiled over had once belonged to many of them, or had been used communally by them. Later the Anglos brought in huge machines and root plows and had the Mexicans scrape the land clean of natural vegetation. In my childhood I saw the end of dryland farming. I witnessed the land cleared; saw the huge pipes connected to underwater sources sticking up in the air . . . More big . . . corporations came in and bought up the remaining land. (31)

She tells of her family's indentured servitude to Farms Incorporated through "loans" that cost more to repay each year than the family could produce on their sharecropped parcel of earth (31). Moreover, Anzaldúa notes that

Currently, Mexico and her eighty million citizens are almost completely dependent on the U.S. market. The Mexican government and wealthy growers are in partnership with such American conglomerates as American Motors, IT&T and DuPont which own factories called *maquiladoras*. One-fourth of all Mexicans work at *maquiladoras*; most are young women. (32)

The dependence of the Mexican economy on the US market is a reality that holds true today. Through the ever-intensifying speculation of transnational corporations, US capital has kept its boot firmly on the neck of the *Mexicana/o* and the *Chicana/o*, a fact that Anzaldúa does not avoid nor obfuscate in *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

In his *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*, Juan Gonzalez describes how US economic policy has by turns imported labor from Mexico and forcibly

“repatriated” Mexicans, along with documented US citizens of Mexican descent (103), a fact which has engendered deep ambivalence in the minds of *Mexicanas/os* and *Chicanas/os*, as well as deep rifts between *Mexicanas/os* *Chicanas/os* and Anglo Americans. Anzaldúa observes, “Immigration continued . . . in [the twentieth] century . . . with the *braceros* who helped to build our railroads and who picked our fruit. Today thousands of Mexicans are crossing the border legally and illegally; ten million people without documents have returned to the Southwest” (*Borderlands* 33). Shortly thereafter she elaborates on the capitalist context: “It is illegal for Mexicans to work without green cards. But big farming combines, farm bosses and smugglers who bring them in make money off the ‘wetbacks’ labor—they don’t have to pay federal minimum wages, or ensure adequate housing or sanitary conditions” (*Borderlands* 34). *El retorno* continues unabated precisely because the demand of US capitalism for cheap, exploitable labor remains, as yet, insatiable.

Anzaldúa goes on to describe how that insatiability translates into “linguistic terrorism” and “cultural tyranny.” “Chicanas who grew up speaking Chicano Spanish have internalized the belief that we speak poor Spanish,” she explains. “It is illegitimate, a bastard language. And because we internalize how our language has been used against us by the dominant culture, we use our language differences against each other” (*Borderlands* 80). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Caribbean anticolonial theorist Frantz Fanon examines such linguistic hierarchization as symptomatic of the “epidermalization” of imposed economic inferiority (13). Fanon clarifies,

Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an

inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (18)

In the case of Chicanas/os, there are two “mother tongues” to contend with: the formal Castilian of Spanish literature, along with its north Mexican dialects, and English as “on the other side we hear the Anglos’ incessant clamoring so that we forget our language” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 84).

In an attempt to avert such imposed economic inferiority, Moraga, like many a second- and third-generation Chicana, was never taught to speak Spanish. She recounts, “It was through my mother’s desire to protect her children from poverty and illiteracy that we became ‘anglocized’; the more effectively we could pass in the white world, the better guaranteed our future” (*Loving* 51).

Cultural tyranny—if we separate it as a symptom of the epidermalization of imposed economic inferiority from the linguistic terrorism waged against Chicanas/os—manifests as the “Ethnocentrism . . . of Western aesthetics.” “Let’s stop importing Greek myths and the Western Cartesian split point of view and root ourselves in the mythological soil and soul of this continent,” Anzaldúa opines. “White America has only attended to the body of the earth in order to exploit it, never to succor it or to be nurtured in it. Instead of surreptitiously ripping off the vital energy of people of color and putting it to commercial use, whites could allow themselves to share and exchange and learn from us in a respectful way” (*Borderlands* 90). In “La Güera,” Moraga asserts that the

complicity of oppressed peoples in such insidious projects the likes of linguistic terrorism and cultural tyranny is “capitalist unconsciousness,” “Because to remember [how we have been hurt ourselves] may mean giving up whatever privileges we have managed to squeeze out of this society by virtue of our gender, race, class, or sexuality” (*Loving* 53). Here Moraga strikes a note also sounded by Anzaldúa in “La Prieta,” an essay published as part of the collection *This Bridge Called My Back*, “I was terrified because in writing this I must be hard on people of color who are the oppressed victims. I am still afraid because I will have to call us on a lot of shit like our own racism, our fear of women and sexuality” (221). By identifying the ways in which capitalist unconsciousness and the rhetoric of democracy is deployed in the institutional rhetoric of the academy, and contrasting that rhetoric with the material realities of the lives of students of color and people of color who labor beyond the walls of the ivory tower, we can intervene. We may be able to construct an oppositional rhetoric that contests, resists, and challenges the anesthetizing affects of the rhetoric of democracy.

Good Morning, Aztlán: Rhetorics of Contestation and Resistance

Here, I use the term “contestatory” as defined by Ralph E. Rodriguez in addition to the term “resistance” as Barbara Harlow defined it in her seminal *Resistance Literature*. According to Harlow, resistance literature “calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a politicized activity . . . [and] sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production” (28-29). Harlow asserts that the resistance writer “like the guerrilla of the armed liberation struggle, is actively engaged in an urgent

historical confrontation. The questions raised by the resistance leaders are the questions faced by the writers as well” (100). In *Resistance Literature* Harlow is primarily discussing writers who are in fact located at sites of armed struggles for liberation as are the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. To apply the same terminology to the contemporary political work of Chicanas/os could potentially trivialize the efforts of resistance writers as well as exaggerate the struggle in which such Chicana writers are engaged¹⁸. An armed revolution is not underway—yet. Instead, we could synthesize Harlow’s notion of resistance with the theory of Ralph E. Rodriguez as articulated in his “Chicana/o Fiction from Resistance to Contestation: The Role of Creation in Ana Castillo’s *So Far From God*.” According to Rodriguez, “A contestatory literature employs varying narrative strategies to *critique, resist, and oppose* racism, sexism, homophobia, and/or classism” (4; emphasis added). In relation to rhetorics of La Raza, I would suggest that the Chicana/o community, scattered far and wide as it is, could employ the strategies of contestation and resistance in order to problematize Aztlán as a monolithic symbol of Chicana/o experience.

Alarcón notes that (Western) historians have often been lead by a misguided attempt to separate “‘historical truth’ from the ‘distortion’ of myth and legend.” Such attempts disregard the fact that both are meaningful symbolic narrative constructions (46). As Juan Bruce-Novoa explains in his “History as Content, History as Act: The Chicano Novel,” “[A]ll the literary [and I would add other rhetorical] genres practiced by Chicanos display to some extent this obsession with history” (30). It is a necessary obsession if one takes into account the sorry state of history education in the United

¹⁸ This argument is owed largely to Ralph E. Rodriguez’s delineation of the terms “contestatory” and “resistance” in his “Chicana/o Fiction from Resistance to Contestation: The Role of Creation in Ana Castillo’s *So Far From God*” (2000)

States, which continues to ignore the role of Mexico, indeed all of Latin America, in the formation of the US as a nation-state, American culture, and American identity. Bruce-Novoa also notes the persistent “reference to family origins and substantial section[s?] of a semi-historical nature” in Chicana/o literature (30). As Bruce-Novoa suggests, it is in this way that history becomes a performance, an act consciously undertaken by the Chicana/o author (36). Such rhetorical acts can contest the boundaries of Aztlán by reinforcing the ways that Chicana/o history has heretofore been intricately linked with Mexican history, and continues to be so today. Hence, rather than reinforcing the closed borders of Aztlán, strategies of contestation and resistance that are firmly grounded in a project of historicization can reaffirm the fact that Chicana/o realities in the US are imbricated in transnational realities that takes place on *both sides* of the border, and *beyond* the borders of Aztlán as originally conceived in *El Plan*.

And yet, we need our myths and legends as well. I wish that I had the metaphor; but I fear that that is my ego whispering ever so softly in my ear. Instead, the challenge for Chicana/o communities today, I believe, is to rethink the rhetorics of La Raza and the metaphor of Aztlán in ways that create a place for the heterogeneous realities of a people endlessly eddied about by the ebb and flow of transnational capitalism, fleet and fugitive as it is, and the cultural imperialism of a dominant, dominating American ideology.

The Serpent Sleeps: And Yet, She May Awaken

This land was Mexican once
was Indian always
and is.

And will be again.

Gloria Anzaldúa, from “*La conciencia de la*

Despite the terror of American imperialism—and it must be pointed out that these are terroristic threats posed from *within* US geographical and ideological borders—Moraga continues the project of calling us on our own “shit” in her Foreword to the most recent edition of *This Bridge*. If readers have been unimpressed heretofore, they should mark Moraga’s words “From Inside the First World”: “The continually changing demographic of people of color in the US are the product of the United States’ cultural and economic invasion around the globe” (xvii). This assertion might still be a bit lukewarm for those readers who consider themselves to be diehard radicals, but Moraga elaborates: “terrorism [of the ‘bad (foreign-looking) guys’ variety] will never be defeated by big guns, only by big minds and hearts and a mass collective reckoning with the United States’ own history of global economic terrorism. As a South East Asian sister has called it, ‘the fundamentalism of free enterprise’” (xviii).

To think that such fundamentalism is rooted in anything less sinister than “the obsessive individualism of Western thought” and “Corporate Amerika’s cultural arrogance” (Moraga, “From Inside” xx and xviii) would be a naïve, and therefore dangerous, miscalculation. Democracy as Americans understand it boasts “Enlightenment” era individualism and cultural arrogance as its authenticating provenance. I noted early on how postcolonial critic Arjun Appadurai locates the roots of American political rhetoric and “the master-term ‘democracy’” (qtd. in Slane 6)—the term through which the very idea of Americanness has been officially articulated and resolved—in Enlightenment era theory and philosophy. So, what do platitudes like

“American principles” and “our way of life” mean in this context? Moraga reflects, elaborating on the “comfort and convenience and anesthetization from world events” that middle class Americans conflate with democracy: “And, indeed [the president, his lawmakers, and his military] *have* preserved “our way of life” at the expense of the majority colored and non-Christian population of the world. They have made us, as dutiful consumer citizens, accomplices in the destruction of once self-sustaining cultures around the world. (“From Inside” xxii). It is a startling indictment, though it shouldn’t be. Within the context of US capitalism, the rhetoric of democracy itself is a crucial ingredient in the anesthetic elixir Moraga describes.

If we can recuperate the full force of Anzaldúa and Moraga’s political economic critique, then we may indeed open up a new historical, material, and intellectual space—an ideologically decolonized space—for the contemporary Xicana; we may, in Anzaldúa’s words, “[see] the Chicana anew in light of her history“ (*Borderlands* 109). By identifying the ways in which the rhetoric of democracy is deployed in the US and conflated with the rationale of the “free-market” system, and contrasting that rhetoric with the transgressive body inscribed in Anzaldúa and Moraga’s foundational Chicana feminist texts, we can intervene. We can reclaim an oppositional rhetoric that challenges and resists the anesthetizing affects of the rhetoric of democracy. It is an instrument of American hegemony and, as with any hegemonic instrument, the rhetoric of democracy will continue to shift and adjust to accommodate oppositional interventions. Which is why Chicanas, people of color, anti-racists, deconstructors of the practices of neocolonization, and those who would take up *love* as a tool for social transformation

(Sandoval, *Methodology 2*)¹⁹ must continuously deploy a rhetoric of contestation *and* resistance, what I will term a Xicanaista rhetoric that fully articulates the political economic implications of US capitalist hegemony.

We have been walking in our sleep, dreaming the grassy-green American dream, but the time has come to awaken, to seize upon and grapple with what Anzaldúa calls *conocimiento*: “the Spanish word for knowledge, for ways of knowing. Those ideas come to me in Spanish and in visuals,” she recounts. “So when I think ‘conocimiento,’ I see a little serpent for counterknowledge” (qtd. in Lunsford 53). If we are capable of such a task, and it will be no mean feat, then the transgressive body that Anzaldúa and Moraga inscribed in their foundational Chicana feminist texts²⁰ may still move, may yet rise up, to queer and query the rule and regime of capital, to cross borders, the lines drawn upon our bodies by the colonizers, by the imperialist oppressors of the Two-Thirds World, and by the logic of US democracy in the era of late capitalism.

¹⁹ Chela Sandoval explains in her *Methodology of the Oppressed*: “Friends have suggested that the label for the process that I call ‘the methodology of the oppressed’ is a misnomer, that this process is described as a postmodern decolonizing activity, a methodology of renewal, of social reconstruction, of emancipation—or perhaps better—a methodology of love in the postmodern world” (10).

²⁰ Of course, Anzaldúa and Moraga were not the first Chicana feminists, as Dicochea illustrates so well in her “Chicana Critical Rhetoric.” Yet, as Dicochea also point out, early Chicana feminists who contested sexism within the *Movimiento* also explicitly renounced Chicana lesbians and silenced their challenges to homophobia within the movement (89). Anzaldúa and Moraga were the first to explicitly and publicly queer the *Movimiento* while simultaneously querying the ways in which patriarchy, heterosexism, and racism are imbricated in a capitalist gestalt. It is in this sense that Anzaldúa and Moraga’s texts are foundational in the Chicana feminist tradition.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARD A THEORY AND PRAXIS OF XICANISTA RHETORICS

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways;
the point is to *change* it.

Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”

I look out over the Oakland skyline and I am in full realization that what has changed so dramatically since 9/11 is intensification of the national deception buried in the rhetoric of democracy and freedom. I dream a full-scale effort to expose the lies. I look behind me for sister-warriors.

Cherrie L. Moraga, “From Inside the First
World: Foreword, 2001”

A Xicana Assay

The time has finally come for me to assay a theory and praxis of Xicanista rhetoric. I use the terms “Xicana” and “Xicanista” following Ana Castillo. In *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* she declares, “In recent years the idea of Chicana feminism has been taken up by the academic community where . . . it has fallen prey to theoretical abstractions. Eventually I hope that we can rescue Xicanisma from the suffocating atmosphere of conference rooms, the acrobatics of academic terms and concepts and carry it out to our workplace, social gatherings, kitchens, bedrooms, and society in general” (11). Admittedly, I am at this very moment engaged in some of the same academic acrobatics eschewed by Castillo, trying to articulate a *theory* and praxis of Xicanista rhetoric. But I don’t believe that Castillo is calling for some kind of wholesale rejection of theory or the work of academics, a backward-looking anti-intellectualism, here. In point of fact, the conference rooms Castillo refers to *are* my workplace;

and I hold out sincere hope—maybe even an unwarranted confidence—that this work will make its way to social gatherings, into kitchens and, yes, even bedrooms, to society in general.

Castillo also holds that it is the work of the Xicanista to “not only reclaim our indigenismo—but also to reinsert the forsaken feminine into our consciousness” (12). Rather than being a kind of Luddic cry for the return to some imagined “old ways” and ancient days, I read Castillo’s definition as an appeal for an expansiveness of consciousness, of our intellects, of our *conocimiento*; Castillo, following Freire, discusses this expansion as the “conscientización” of la Chicana (9). She calls for alternative ways of knowing, for a counterknowledge that reinserts spirituality—as against organized religion—into our understandings of and discourses on *la Xicana* and her people. Moreover, inherent in Castillo’s formulation is the reassertion of our history as a colonized people and a reaffirmation of Xicanas/os as the *mestizas* and *mestizos* that we are. The denial, trivialization, or forgetting of this historical reality and its material effects thoroughly robs us not only of our cultural heritage, it also devastatingly constricts our ability to fight the continuing racist oppression of Xicanas and Xicanos, Latinas and Latinos, along with all of our sisters and brothers, people of color around the globe.

A theory of rhetoric grounded in Xicanisma must attend to Castillo’s formulation as well as to the political economic critique that Anzaldúa and Moraga, Xicana foremothers and *fronteristas*, have taken up and engaged so uncompromisingly in their work. While Anzaldúa and Moraga have explored racism, sexism, and heterosexism’s intersectionality with capitalism globalized under US hegemony, they have also consistently theorized the materiality of rhetoric and ideology as “theory in the flesh,” the ways in which language lives in and works upon the body, though they have not necessarily discussed it in the specific terms of rhetorical theory. As a Xicana working within the discipline of rhetorical theory, under the larger rubric of English

studies, that is the task that I set before myself in the pages that follow. In effect, a more holistic, sophisticated conception of rhetoric, versus a rigidly Aristotelian understanding of rhetoric, including a dialectical materialist methodology, is necessary if Xicanista rhetors and rhetoricians are to be able to interpret the wor(l)d sufficiently in order to change it. Such an understanding demands that we return to Marxist theory as it relates to the study of rhetoric and contemporary theories of discourse.

Rhetoric and Marxism

In point of fact, Kenneth Burke, one of the twentieth century's most well known and lauded rhetoricians, makes it clear that rhetoric and ideology stand in a dialectical relationship to one another. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* he goes so far as to assert that "'ideology' is obviously but a kind of rhetoric (since the ideas are so related that they have in them, either explicitly or implicitly, inducements to some social and political choices rather than others)" (88). In other words, there is clearly an epistemological dimension to ideology as well as an ideological dimension to rhetoric. I will take up the question of the nature of ideology at some length below. Right now I want to add that there is also a *material* dimension to the dialectic of rhetoric and ideology, which is precisely the dimension that a Xicanista rhetoric must attend to meticulously if it is to avoid solipsistic tautologies and totalizing ontologizations. But I will return to this point shortly.

First, in order to begin to articulate a Xicanista theory of rhetoric that thoroughly engages political economy and employs dialectical materialism as a methodology, I want to explore the work of a few rhetorical theorists who have written on the subject of the intersections of Marxism and rhetoric: James Berlin, John Trimbur, and James Arnt Aune. Berlin and Trimbur

co-authored the introduction to a special issue of *Pre/Text* on Marxism and rhetoric, in which they assess the contemporary critical landscape of rhetorical studies as a discipline. They affirm that any claims to a Marxist rhetoric are “in many respects historically unfounded or at best premature. The connections between Marxism and rhetoric by and large remain to be made” (7). Aune intensifies the argument in his “Cultures of Discourse: Marxism and Rhetorical Theory” when he states, “The term ‘ideology’ has attained quasi-canonical status in rhetorical criticism, but Marx’s central focus on class struggle has been thoroughly ignored by rhetorical scholars” (540).

That given, Berlin and Trimbur attempt to open the field to such an articulation. The basic condition they lay out for the production of a Marxist rhetoric is that teacher-scholars in this tradition must be of the Gramscian new-organic-intellectual persuasion, which entails a lot. The new intellectual is unlike traditional intellectuals who entertain an “idealist ideology” and thus, “believing themselves autonomous, unwittingly become ‘the dominant group’s “deputies”’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (Villanueva 25). Nor is the new intellectual like the organic intellectual, who remains tied to her home community while working within state/industry institutions (Villanueva 24) but still “den[ies] any ideological agenda” (Berlin and Trimbur 10). According to Victor Villanueva, the new intellectual “becomes a ‘permanent persuader,’ involved ‘in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer’ . . . She acts as a liaison between the groups seeking revolutionary change and the rest of civil society” (24). As a rhetorician, she must therefore recognize that rhetoric “is always political, a product of the ideological conflicts regarding the disposition of economic, political, and cultural power” (Berlin and Trimbur 11). This is precisely the space that I would like to theorize and articulate here, what some have characterized variously as the

“third” “interstitial,” “decolonial” space of the Xicanista rhetor and rhetorician, all of which are arguably reassertions of Gloria Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness and *Nepantla*, “*el lugar en medio*, the space in between” (qtd. in Lunsford 54), “the site of [Chicanas’] cultural production” (qtd. in Lunsford 39).

I must stress the interconnectedness of the last two points: the Xicanista rhetorician not only acknowledges the deeply political and ideological nature of rhetoric, she must *act* on that knowledge, making rhetoric work for, and in solidarity with, Chicana/o communities as well as all peoples who currently live in subjugation to US capitalist hegemony. She will produce what Berlin and Trimbur call “alternative rhetoric” (12); she will be “actively engaged in the rhetorical enterprise of a counter hegemony,” as Villanueva puts it (27). A counter-hegemonic rhetoric must go beyond rehearsing “radical” but ultimately vacuous elitist jargon of the “carnavalesque” nature, or “post-al” theory taken to nihilistic extremes. And it cannot be satisfied with merely enabling the oppressed masses to gain access to the comfortable anesthetization of middle class America (Villanueva 29). The clarion call for “rights” and “equality” for the oppressed and exploited, couched as they are in the rhetoric of democracy, ignores the larger political and economic systems that demand ever-increasing oppression and exploitation in order to sustain them, i.e., the capitalist the world economy.

A Xicanista rhetoric will not only “enable openings for race, gender, age, ethnic as well as class factions that have been systematically denied a voice” in the academy, as Berlin and Trimbur call for (12); it will put into practice anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-ableist, anti-ageist, and anti-heterosexist rhetorics—in short, *anti-imperialist* rhetorics, and hence it will methodically, rigorously interrogate the ways in which the silencing of all of those voices is imbricated in capitalist ideology and modes of production. And so, following the lead of Anzaldúa and

Moraga, the Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician must recognize her local position relative to the global context of late capitalism: she must be capable of formulating a lucid critique of Western-European and particularly US imperialism, even, perhaps especially, from within *la boca del lobo*. For as a teacher-scholar she herself is implicated in the machinery of oppression that has caused—and continues to cause—untold suffering around the globe. In short, a Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician must be actively engaged in counter-hegemonic praxis—“reflection and action upon the world in order to change it” (Freire 51).

James Arnt Aune is far more methodical than are Berlin and Trimbur in his definition of a Marxist rhetorical theory. He delineates four primary “theses.” A Marxist theory of rhetoric will accomplish the following: 1) the “foregrounding of the role of labor in constructing our world”; 2) the “foregrounding [of] class struggle . . . to explain broad historical shifts in rhetorical practice and pedagogy”; 3) the “privileging [of] common sense as a starting point for the construction of enthymemes . . . [in order to provide] a needed corrective to Marxism’s tendency to view the common sense of a culture as a rationalization of that culture’s relations of domination,” and; 4) it will bring together “Marxism’s concern for economic democracy” with the discipline of rhetoric’s call for “political democracy” in order to “provide a narrative structure for a new politics, one that views revolution as a struggle against racial, sexual, and economic oppression and against the specialized languages of expertise” (549).

As for Aune’s fourth point, bridging Marxism’s focus on the abolition of class hierarchy—so often dismissed out-of-hand as “economic determinism” or “vulgar Marxism” by post-al critics—this concern is fundamentally entailed in Berlin and Trimbur’s call for the new organic intellectual, with my emphasis on praxis or theory in action, “theory in the flesh” as Anzaldúa has described it, included.

Aune's third point, privileging or revaluing "common sense," would effectively refute the pretentious conception of ideology as "false consciousness": that is, as the false consciousness of the dullard masses—a pejorative understanding of ideology as the mental abstraction of material-life conditions that reproduces capitalist modes of production and reifies commodity exchange as a naturally classed social hierarchy. In this sense, ideology is regarded as an inverted, "upside down version of reality" (Williams 127), most often condensed into the highly problematic "false consciousness." This woefully simplistic view of ideology poses serious problems for the Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician, particularly in light of the theory of rhetoric that I take up below.

Fortunately, V.I. Lenin extended the formulations of Marx and Engels by attaching the concept of ideology to the ruling class and ascribing the *critique* of ideology to the dominated, who must necessarily operate from a different ideological perspective. Hence, "for Lenin, ideology becomes the political consciousness linked to the interests of various classes and, in particular, he focuses on the opposition between bourgeois and socialist ideology" (Larrain 222). George Lukács (in *History of Class Consciousness*), Antonio Gramsci (in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*), and Louis Althusser (in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*) each in his turn extended Lenin's formulation, so that ideology begins to be understood as pervasive, rather than being the distinctive domain of a dominated class, while gradually shedding its negative connotations.

Gramsci's notion of ideology is important to the Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician, but his concept of hegemony is indispensable. In fact, Gramsci simply defers the pejorative sense to frame ideology as the very "terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, [and] struggle" (qtd. in Larrain 222); what is more distinctive, Gramsci goes on to link ideology with hegemony, the means by which dominating classes gain consent from the oppressed for

their rule of the masses, effectively reassimilating one of Marx's original formulations into his own derivation in the process. Louis Althusser, for his part, distinguishes between an overdetermined ideology, whose function is to "secure cohesion in society" (Larrain 223), and particular ideologies "by the subject and for subjects" that "interpellate" individuals *as* individual subjects (Althusser 244). As Raymond Williams notes in *Keywords A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, even in some of Marx's own writings "there is another, apparently more neutral sense of **ideology** . . . notably in the well-known passage in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Philosophy* (1859)." He goes on to quote Marx: "The distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production . . . and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological – forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out" (Williams 128). Marx's articulation here is a definition that quite clearly influenced Antonio Gramsci's theory of ideology along with his development of the concept of hegemony, which, Gramsci emphasizes, "though [it] is ethico-political, [hegemony] must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity" (211-212).

For the Xicanista rhetor and rhetorician, Aune's third thesis quite clearly reinforces the need for a critical, historically informed understanding of the concept of ideology and its correlation to hegemony in order that "the study of rhetoric becomes crucial to enabling ideological critique" (Berlin and Trimbur 11). Point one and two in Aune's theses, foregrounding the role of labor and class struggle, are addressed in basic ways in my (re)formulation of Trimbur and Berlin's new organic rhetor/rhetorician, yet they also present a new opening into my developing articulation of a Xicanista theory of rhetoric.

Materiality and Ideology

To be sure, V.N. Vološinov²¹ provides the most in-depth, methodical study extant on the relationship between rhetoric and Marxism. He is well known as a post-formalist linguist, and here I am primarily interested in his work *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. At the same time, I am also interested in Bakhtinian literary theory, the well established oeuvre in which Mikhail Bakhtin engages a Marxist approach in his analysis of language and literature. Kay Halasek expounds on the issue at hand in *A Pedagogy of Possibility: Bakhtinian Perspectives on Composition Studies*, where she explains one of the fundamental principles underlying Bakhtin's philosophy of language. According to Halasek, "Meaning, knowledge, and reality are constructed through language and between ideologically bound individuals within historically situated language spheres. Bakhtin maintains that the individual exists in and relates to the world only insofar as language and his way of seeing and constructing the world allow" (4).

For Vološinov, in fact, language is the *materiality* of both ideology and individual consciousness. Only an idealist, in Vološinov's conception, could actually locate ideology in the individual consciousness, for "*consciousness itself can arise and become a viable fact only in the material embodiment of signs*"²² (11), and signs, or speech utterances, "also are particular, material things" (10), which must necessarily include inner speech, "*the semiotic material of inner life—of consciousness*" (14). As Vološinov goes on to note, "Word is present in each and every act of understanding and in each and every act of interpretation" (15). The word is material in that language originates in every respect from the world rather than from inner consciousness, individual psychology, or the soul or spirit; it arises from "actual existence (the basis) [which]

²¹ While there is still a barely-simmering controversy with regard to the authorship of the various works attributed to V.N. Vološinov and Mikhail Bakhtin, here I assume that there are indeed two theorists and the works of two different writers to contend with.

²² Vološinov is a fan of italics, and I reproduce them faithfully here.

determines sign and how sign reflects and refracts existence in its process of generation.”

Language is in fact “wholly on the outside [of the individual], wholly brought out in exchanges, wholly taken up in material, above all in the material world” (19). Vološinov expressly addresses Aune’s first and second theses here, in that he begins from the premise that all verbal communication is “determined by production relations and the sociopolitical order” (21), while the human experience of those relations is refracted in language “[b]y an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community, i.e., *by the class struggle*” (23). In other words, the conditions under which human beings labor determines their means of verbal communication, the kinds of linguistic signs they have access to and are sanctioned to use, while those same signs are refracted by the contradictions of social stratification (raced, gendered, and sex[ualiz]ed), which are always already imbricated in class inequality.

For his part, Bakhtin’s line of thought becomes more lucid when you take into account his theory of dialogism. Halasek’s description of Bakhtinian dialogue as “a constructive activity that leads to new and heightened understanding” and the social construction of “a body of knowledge . . . that could not have been possible had we not engaged one another’s ideas” (4, 5) does not adequately account for Bakhtin’s historical materialist approach, an approach that he shares with V.N. Vološinov. As Vološinov himself notes, “The only possible way of bringing Marxist sociological method to bear on all the profundities and subtleties of ‘immanent’ ideological structures is to operate from the basis of the philosophy of language as the philosophy of the ideological sign. And that basis must be devised and elaborated by Marxism itself” (15). All language enacted by living human beings is dialogic in that it is formed only in social relations with other human beings. Even inner speech takes place between an

(interpellated) individual and another person. Volosinov makes it clear, there can be no “abstract addressee” in such inner dialogue; “an addressee is presupposed in the person, so to speak, of the normal representative of the social group to which the speaker belongs” (85). Otherwise, there would be no language with which to carry on such inner dialogues.

The dialogic extends, of course, to the written word. “A book,” Volosinov explains, “is calculated for active perception, involving attentive reading and inner responsiveness, and for organized, *printed* reaction in the various forms devised by the particular sphere of verbal communication in question (book reviews, critical surveys . . . and so on)” (95). Bakhtinian notions of heteroglossia, or the “diversity of socioideological languages” that human beings encounter on a day to day basis (Halasek 10), can also help broaden our understanding of a dialectical materialist rhetorical theory. Halasek describes this aspect of Bakhtin’s thought constructively when she writes, “The rich diversity of ideological opinions represented within the strata of a given society’s languages reflects a shifting dynamism, a liveliness that opposes the strict ethnocentrism and linguistic monologism of a dominant culture” (10). The concept of heteroglossia helps to contextualize the notion of dialogism within a given society, even globally under the conditions of late capitalism, while simultaneously providing an oppositional tactic for the Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician to resist the potentially totalizing ontologies of dominant rhetorics, including the rhetoric of democracy in an ahistorical society such as the US.

Indeed, Vološinov also insists that a Marxist philosophy of language must adapt a historical materialist perspective. Such a position would allow the Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician to account for the effects of the history of colonialism and imperialism as well as the “dictatorial and culture-creating role” of colonialism in its attitude toward “foreign” languages (75).

Vološinov elaborates:

This grandiose organizing role of the alien word, which always either entered upon the scene with alien force of arms and organization or was found on the scene by the young conqueror-nation of an old and once mighty culture and captivated, from its grave, so to speak, the ideological consciousness of the newcomer-nation—this role of the alien word led to its coalescence in the depths of the historical consciousness of nations with the idea of authority, the idea of power, the idea of holiness, the idea of truth, and dictated that notions about the word be preeminently oriented toward the alien word. (75)

Historical materialism, which would take into account the still-generative history of human activity and relations of production that necessarily accrue in the single linguistic utterance of any language, could surely not be so quick to dismiss the kind of linguistic imperialism described above as simply the “natural inevitability” of “language crossing.”

Vološinovian and Bakhtinian theory in effect enhance Berlin and Trimbur’s new-intellectual-Marxist rhetorician as well as Aune’s Marxist rhetorical theorist, while the new-intellectual-Marxist rhetorician and the Marxist rhetorical theorist complement each other in turn. Their synthesis provides a critical starting point for the development of an oppositional Xicanista theory of rhetoric and contestatory pedagogical practices.

The Immaterial Middle Term: Chicana Critical Rhetoric?

Some contemporary communication scholars, such as Dana Cloud in “The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric,” as well as cultural studies scholars argue against a “materialist” conception of discourse or rhetoric, as Perlita Dicochea rightly points out (78). Communication theorists like Cloud are utilizing Raymie E. McKerrow’s definition of “material reality,” or the “materiality of discourse” as Cloud renders it, which is

described in his influential article of the late 1980s, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis.” Cloud is in actuality arguing against the conflation of the material *effects* of rhetoric with its material *existence*. While most rhetoric results in some kind of actual, material consequence or outcome in the world—something even as simple as your voice causing my eardrum to vibrate, or speaking into a tape recorder, which would result in the existence of a physical audio archive of your speech—those consequences of the practice of rhetoric are not coeval with the material *beingness* of rhetoric. In other words, the materiality of rhetoric is different from the critical *deployment* of rhetoric or the critical *study* of rhetoric. Rhetoric, language purposefully engaged, is the materiality of *ideology*, as Vološinov illuminates so incisively. The materiality of rhetoric certainly does not in and of itself make it revolutionary or even “critical,” regardless of its focus on “vernacular discourse” as McKerrow argued for in “Critical Rhetoric.” In fact, conservative rhetorics—those which seek to ensure the continuing preservation of the status quo—tend to flourish even in times of relative comfort and security such as those experienced in the US between World Wars I and II; reactionary rhetorics—those which seek to silence and even to eradicate voices that contest and resist the status quo—tend to become even more prolific in times of political and economic uncertainty. Indeed, it is the kind of historical moment that we are experiencing in the world at this very moment, post 9-11, as markets convulsively shrink and expand in panicked attempts to adjust to the “market” instability caused by the most powerful nation on earth waging a war against the Two-Thirds World.

Dicochea approvingly takes up the dilemma of communication and cultural studies scholars’ “adaman[t] distrust[t] of the materiality of language” in her article (88), utilizing Cloud’s assertion that activism is a necessary ancillary to rhetoric if a rhetor is to effect material change (Dicochea 78). Particularly in the context of Dicochea’s argument for a critical Chicana

rhetoric, Cloud's contention would be much more compelling if it weren't for the fact that Chicanas like Anzaldúa and Moraga, prefigured by Chicana feminists such as Bernice Rincón, Marta Cotera, and Anna Nieto-Gómez in the early 1970s, women whose feminist legacy Dicochea discusses expressly in her article, if these Chicanas hadn't already been adamant in their insistence upon feminists taking an activist stance within Chicana/o communities as well as within society in general. In an interview with Andrea Lunsford, published in a collection co-edited with Lahoucine Ouzgane called *Crossing Borderlands: Composition and Postcolonial Studies*, Gloria Anzaldúa verifies that her work, along with the work of Xicana feminists in general, is an "emancipatory project" (51) with particular concern for women of color who continue to be oppressed by white, Western, English (linguistic) domination. It is a project that Xicanas can engage in through rhetoric, in writing, but, as Anzaldúa emphasizes, "it has to be honest writing and *it has to be writing the struggle*" (60; italics mine). Writing alone, however, is also not sufficient. In the same interview Anzaldúa goes on to assert,

I started grappling with those issues [of raced, gendered, and sexualized oppression], and writing became a way of activism, a way of trying to make changes. But it wasn't enough just to sit and write and work on my computer. I had to connect the real-life, bodily experiences of people who were suffering because of some kind of oppression, or some kind of wound in their real lives, with what I was writing. It wasn't a disembodied kind of writing. (qtd. in Lunsford 64)

With regard to the early Chicana feminist movement, Dicochea herself concludes, "An activist's rhetorical strategies cannot be fully understood apart from her activism and everyday existence in the world" (88).

I fear that, at bottom, what the supposed distrust of the materiality of language amounts to is a lingering—and not completely unjustified—post-McCarthy era anxiety. To speak of “materialism” or of the “materialist” dimensions of anything *does* refer us to marxist theory. Nevertheless, that anxiety cannot become an excuse for the Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician to ignore nor to elide the connections between the functioning of the global capitalist economy and the oppression of Chicanas and Chicanos, of women, of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities, and of people of color everywhere. In *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*, Rosemary Hennessy’s perceptive examination of how sexuality and self-conceptions are mediated by politics and economics, Hennessy explains the contemporary critical landscape as follows:

Recently the “materialist” in materialist feminism has come to be synonymous with a cultural materialism that staunchly repudiates historical materialism’s class analysis. Marxist feminist critique has not relinquished attention to the specific cultural articulations of social totalities, even though it is continually misread as refusing nuanced cultural analysis or reducing social production to the economy. At the same time that the marxist feminist tradition I am alluding to has vociferously critiqued the equation of social life with culture, it also acknowledges that densely accumulated cultural practices are part of a complex ensemble of social relations that includes divisions of labor, law, and state. (28)

And, it is precisely this complex ensemble of social relations that the Xicanista rhetor/rhetorician must take up and deal with critically if she would be an agent of societal transformation and the expansion of social justice in the world.

Praxis

Me han pedido que (me) explique aquí. I mean, que ehplique mi lengua, my use of language. My odd oral, transcultural ortografía. My idioma, 'tis of thee. Bueno, mi lengua . . . is a hybrid? Nah! Demasiado PoMo, trendy, too Latino Studies (even if it's true). Been there, done that. A verrrr, mi lengua . . . es un palimpsesto? Sí, eso está major.

Susana Chávez-Silverman, *Killer Crónicas: Bilingual Memories*

Right now, as my gaze wanders intermittently from the computer screen to the keyboard to the scattered heap of books and papers in front of me, I think about the contradictions of the in-between place where I live. In between the demands of a still dominant academic discourse and my need to honor *my* story and the people who wrote it, on my body and in my blood, through their words and deeds. In between my desire to succeed and my need to hold on to some fine filament of human dignity. *La dignidad*. In between the Mexican and the “American,” that universe of existence in the rejected hyphen of Xicanisma. In-between the *I* that was and the *I* that is endlessly becoming. In-between the institution of academia and students who would tell stories in solidarity with the story I’m trying to tell you right now. I take heart when I read Malea Powell’s affirmation that “there are some stories that can be told and heard, like this story that I am telling, revelatory stories that open space for counter-stories and resistance, mixed-blood stories told from the borders of Indian-ness, American-ness, Scholarly-ness” (“Blood” 8).

Following Gerald Vizenor’s assertion of American Indians’ simultaneous marginality and centrality to the dominant understanding of American-ness, Powell’s claim is that the in-between space, a “trickster” space, is libratory as well as “central to imagining a ‘mixed-blood’ rhetoric” (“Blood” 9). As with many of the American Indian intellectuals that Powell has written about, such as Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, Charles Alexander Eastman, and Susan La Flesche Picotte, both Powell and Vizenor would have Native and mixed-blood scholars “play trickster, to use our

knowledge of the language and structure that compose the narratives that bind us as instruments to cut away those same oppressive stories” (“Blood” 9), “what Henry Louis Gates calls ‘semantic appropriation,’ a typical trickster rhetorical move” (Ouyang 208). In her essay “Down by the River, or How Susan La Flesche Picotte Can Teach Us about Alliance as a Practice of Survivance,” Powell defines American Indian rhetorics, deployed in the trickster stance, as grounded in an epistemology that holds respect, reciprocity, and alliance at its center for the ultimate purpose of promoting the survival and resistance (of a dominant, and dominating, rhetoric and ideology), or survivance in Vizenor’s formulation, of its practitioners. Furthermore, Powell holds that such a trickster stance has particular relevance for both writing instruction and rhetoric/composition studies in the academy (41).

In her “Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians *Use Writing*,” Powell likens the tricksterism in the discourses of American Indian intellectual Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins to the role of a “traditional healer” who mediates between her people and the spirit world (400). I am reminded of the *curandera* in traditional (as opposed to conventional) Mexicana/o and Chicana/o households. I also think of Anzaldúa’s manifesto on *mestiza* consciousness, which Powell references directly in “Blood and Scholarship” as she develops her discussion of the trickster stance (8). Powell’s larger argument, which interconnects all of her work in rhetoric and composition studies to date, is that rather than positioning themselves as the tragic victims of a hegemonic discourse, academics of color can and should engage in counter-hegemonic rhetorics that simultaneously work within and resist the genocidal imperatives of America’s imperialistic ideology.

Gloria Anzaldúa has written of a similar practice. In *Making Face, Making Soul* she professes that she is trying to teach Chicanas and Chicanos as well as whites to read and write in

“nonwhite narrative traditions” (xxvii). Throughout all of Anzaldúa’s work she challenges the dominant white, Western, European tradition that polices other and othered rhetorical traditions. She also reads theory as narrative: “And some are master narratives and some are outsider narratives. There’s that whole struggle in my writing,” she says, “between the dominant culture’s traditional, conventional narratives about reality and about literature and about science and about life and about politics; and my other counternarratives as a *mestiza* growing up in this country, as an internal exile, as an inner exile, as a postcolonial person, because the Mexican race in the United States is a colonized people” (qtd. in Lunsford 38). Shortly thereafter she explains her belief that knowledge of the dominant tradition’s conventions makes it easier to subvert them (Lunsford 40); change is going to come, and it *can* come from within, she argues. “What I am trying to present to you is another way of ordering, another way of composing, another rhetoric; but it is only partly new.” Anzaldúa continues: “Most of it is cast in the Western tradition, because that’s all that I was immersed in. The symbol is to see the university as this walled city, and somebody brings the Trojan Horse, the Trojan *Burra*, into the city gates. At night the belly of the burra opens, and out comes the ‘other’ trying to make changes from the inside” (qtd. in Lunsford 48). Moreover, Anzaldúa is clear that she sees her own writing, her proclivity for fiction, for poetry, for mixed-genre, and for code-switching among English, Spanish, and Nahuatl as not only subversive but as part of the “other” way of reading and writing that she is trying to teach, a way that allows the Xicana rhetor/rhetorician to “come in through the back door with the feeling, the emotion, the experience. But if you start reflecting on that experience, you can come back to the theory” (qtd. in Lunsford 50). The appropriation and subversion of dominant rhetorical traditions; the outsider-in stance; the counterstories: Anzaldúa provides a

perfect articulation of the trickster stance so powerfully described by critical scholars of color like Powell and Villanueva.

In the well known article "Conflict or Struggle: The Enemies or Preconditions of Basic Writing?" Min-Zhan Lu argues that conflict and struggle are in fact the preconditions necessary not only for basic writing, but "for all discursive acts" (890). Lu clarifies, "Reading and writing take place at sites of political as well as linguistic conflict" (888). She challenges the old models of education as accommodation (of home cultures and literacies) or acculturation, and argues for a view of education as "repositioning"—as students must reposition themselves in relation to academia, the dominant culture, and their home cultures and languages. Lu also offers a thoughtful exploration of the ways in which home or alternative discourses mediate ideas about and understanding of subject matter; or, to put it more concisely, she suggests that language is epistemic in nature. While Lu's reformulation of Mary Louise Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone" is compelling in many ways, what it lacks is the subversive edge of Powell's trickster figure, which, as Homi Bhabha make clear, "turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention" (qtd. in Ouyang 206), as well as the forceful call to action for academics of color in the US.

Powell wrote "Down by the River" in response to a call for contributions to a special issue of *College English* on "rhetorics from/of color," a call put out by Victor Villanueva. Her response, as well as much in her body of work, has critically engaged Villanueva's work on multiple levels. While his essay "Hegemony: From and Organically Grown Intellectual" is not one that Powell cites in her published work, it seems to me that her thinking owes a great deal to Villanueva's exploration of Antonio Gramsci's life and ideas. He opens that piece with this assertion: "This essay is about Antonio Gramsci . . . And this is about possibilities: rhetorical

practices that can help to bring about substantive social change, a counter hegemony” (18), like the rhetorical trickster in Powell’s “counter-stories” (“Blood” 4). Villanueva also links this counter-hegemonic work specifically to the field of rhetoric and composition studies when he calls for “professionals at discourse” to “take part in countering the current hegemony” (20), which inheres in academic discourse (32). I find Anzaldúa and Powell’s tricksters figured in Villanueva’s formulation of Gramsci’s new intellectual: “a ‘permanent persuader’ . . . actively seeking substantive social change” (24); “the ideal, a fusion of organic and traditional [intellectual] actively engaged in the rhetorical enterprise of a counter hegemony” (27).

Villanueva has also engaged Powell’s work. In “Reading Rhetoric: Outside and In: Theory, Pedagogy, and Politics in *Race, Rhetoric and Composition*,” his review of a collection of essays edited by Keith Gilyard (in which Powell’s “Blood and Scholarship” appears), Villanueva draws connections between American Indian trickster rhetorics and “a long-time Puerto Rican strategy of *jaibería*, a practice of ‘subversive complicity’ within the dominant discourse” (199). A bit later he expounds, “In terms of rhetoric, the basic pedagogical tool of ancient rhetorics, *imitatio* (so completely described by Quintilian, the Spanish teacher of Latin in Rome), becomes, in an anti-racist pedagogical enterprise, mimicry, masking, unmasking, narrative trickery, *jaibería*” (200). Powell opens most of her writings with the declaration “This is a story,” and Villanueva closes “Hegemony” with a call for the autobiographical, harkening back to Gramsci, pointing up the “political potential” in “self-stories” (33).

A Xicanista rhetorical praxis will integrate a *mestiza* pedagogy and practice, a trickster stance and a *jaibería* dance, in order to transform dominant and dominating structures of power from within. And I feel the trickster’s *jaibería* dance thrumming in the *mestiza* blood that pulses in my fingertips as I type.

Xicana Love

Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality.

Che Guevara, *Venceremos*

There is not, nor will there ever be, one monolithic Xicanista rhetoric. But our Chicana and Xicanista foremothers have left us with a powerful legacy from which we can carry on the hard work of reflecting upon, rearticulating, and critically engaging Xicanista rhetorics: rhetorics that are grounded in the Xicana's love for herself as a Xicana, in Xicanas' love for other Xicanas, and Xicanas' love for the people and the communities from which they come, their deeply-felt and ongoing commitment to *la Raza* and *la Causa*. Xicana LOVE will keep them raising their voices and their fists in contestation and resistance against all forms of oppression and assaults upon human beings and the human spirit.

The Xicanista is a "permanent persuader" . . . actively seeking substantive social change. A fusion of organic and traditional intellectual actively engaged in the rhetorical enterprise of a counterhegemony.

Alt dis. Alternative discourse.

tricksterism

El coyote que viva en counterstories.

Mixed-blood,

mestiza rhetorics.

This Xicanista is trying to make the leap.

That's Xicana LOVE . . .

Let the revolution begin.

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