MISIDENTIFICATION. THE TROUBLE WITH ASSIMILATION POLITICS IN LATINX LITERATURE

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted to the Graduate and Professional School of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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December 2021

Major Subject: Hispanic Studies

ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the hegemonic and counterhegemonic movements that have entangled the Latinx community from a historical, literary, and artistic perspective and how the processes of exclusion and assimilation inscribed in both of these concepts aided to further marginalize non-normative masculinities.

This interpretation follows the problematization of humanities and interdisciplinarity posed by Gender Studies. This interdisciplinarity combines history, literature, politics, and art. By tackling this issue from these points of view, this dissertation aims to dismantle the creation of nationalistic, gendered, and sexualized identities through these lenses.

At first, we will define how the hegemonic state was created in the United States and the fallacies it built in order to do so. Going through the historiography of the frontier, this first chapter will conceptualize how space and history were deployed to marginalized Hispanic and Native populations through the movement East to West.

In the second chapter I analyze the evolution of counterhegemonic discourses and the making of a new national mythos for the Chicano population through the defense of Aztlán and how this new paradigm nevertheless becomes problematic through the examination of gender roles in it.

In the third chapter we will shift to focus on the escape from this dichotomy through the extrication of the individual from the community. How the gender constructs pushed non-normative men outside of the community. Following three models of

masculinity – the intellectual, the sick, and finally the homosexual – this chapter will deconstruct the expulsion of these individuals and the potential ways this exit disrupted their personality.

Finally, we will center our analysis in the movement beyond identity politics and community. How the disengagement from them through what we will call misidentification as a posthegemonic practice to disengage from any assimilationist or normative identity proves to be fundamental for new understandings of the individual.

The conclusion of this dissertation can be summarized in the rejection of the modern concept of the identity, and in the transformation of humanities. Likewise, I conclude in favor of moving beyond monolithical understandings of identity through the withdrawal from the hegemony/counterhegemony power structure.

DEDICATION

To my brothers, my father, and the memory of my mother

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is a saying in Spanish that goes “Es de bien nacidos el ser agradecidos.” I don’t know how my birth went; however, I know I would not have been able to complete this dissertation without the people listed in this acknowledgement.

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Aberto Moreiras, for being a constant source of support and guidance, a guidance that aided to deconstruct my views in a myriad of ways and that have made me a better scholar, academic, teacher, and human. I am honored and lucky to count him as my mentor and friend. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Teresa Vilarós, for questioning me and exposing me to new and challenging ideas; Dr. María Esther Quintana, for her humanity, sometimes forgotten in a field like academia; Dr. José Villalobos, for engaging in the most productive conversations, both on and off campus; and lastly Dr. Daniel Humphrey, for being a constant source of inspiration and friendship.

This dissertation is dedicated to my brothers, who taught me how to be the person I am today. Having lost my mother at a very young age, they had to step up and sacrifice their twenties to raise me and my brother Borja, along with my father, and for that I am eternally grateful. I consider myself the product of their thoughts and desires. I am their ongoing conversation. I am a product of their intelligence, humor, sense of responsibility, and love. This is also dedicated to my brother Borja, for always pushing the boundaries of my knowledge and my love. To my father, who taught me that the most important thing in life is to be a good and sensitive person, not afraid of showing

emotion. To my sisters-in-law and my aunt, for their patience and support of all of us. And to my nieces and nephews, for being role models of strength – and making me smile every time I think of them.

Special thanks to Dr. Johanna Liander, Dr. María Luisa Parra, Dr. Carmen Mendez, and Dr. Richard Curry, for giving me strength and peace of mind when I talk to them, for always providing a safe haven in times of distress. For giving me role models of what an academic and academia should be. To Ana Yañez, Dr. Carlos Varón, Dr. Marco Aresu, Dr. Antonio Arraiza, Dr. Celeste Moreno Palmero, Dr. Adam Muri-Rosenthal, Dr. Guillermo García-Ureña, Dr. Belén Castañón, Dr. María Gil, Dr. José Valero, Dr. Yoandy Cabrera, and Dr. Maddalena Cerrato for pushing me forward even when I did not know I could keep on going. For supporting through love and humor my many anxieties and insecurities. To my cohort, Alessandra Ribota, Dr. Leanee Sardiñas, Zaida Aguilar, and Paloma Serrano, for being ideal companions in this treacherous academic journey, I would not have made it to shore without you. And to the Collectiva Academica, to Denise Meda Calderón and Manny Grajales, for the many laughs about serious topics.

This dissertation was mainly completed throughout the pandemic year, a year that put us all through the test, and that meant for people such as me not being able to see our families for a very long period of time. I know that, in my case, I would not have been able to mentally survive without Dr. Justin Moscarello, for indulging in gastronomic and filmic weekly pleasures that kept my brain always engaged, without Ian Vigue and Jimmy Tran, because game night was never about the games and teaching me

I can lose, without family dinners with Michael Rangel, Edwin Aguilar, and Michael Woolley, because in a lonely place you guys gave me a family.

And last but not least, as always, thank you to my friends, in Madrid, in Boston, in College Station, and anywhere in between. For being the glue that keeps me together. For being in a constant and on-going conversation with me. For making me the godfather to your children. For wanting me to bear witness to important days in your life. For believing.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by a dissertation committee consisting of Professor Alberto Moreiras [advisor], Professor Teresa Vilarós, Professor María Esther Quintana, and Professor José Pablo Villalobos of the Department of Hispanic Studies at Texas A&M University and Professor Daniel Humphrey, Department of Performance Studies at Texas University.

All work conducted for the dissertation was completed by the student independently.

Funding Sources

Graduate study was supported by the Texas A&M Dissertation Fellowship 2021, and by a Graduate Teaching Assistantship at the Department of Hispanic Studies (Fall 2016 – Fall 2020).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Los atravesados live here […]
those who cross over, pass over,
or go through the confines of the "normal"
Borderlands / La Frontera
Gloria Anzaldúa

The 2016 elections made evident what was previously only whispered in the American discourse: the Latinx population was not part of the hegemony. The descent of the incumbent candidate through the golden escalators, much like other descents in literature, signaled the change of status quo and the blatant criminalization of a sector of the population through demagogy and fearmongering. The threat to the American way of life and the perpetuation of the national ideals of truth, justice, and the American way – with a few dashes of racism, social inequality, and sexism thrown in the mix – made the 2016 presidential campaign racially charged. A nationalistic technique by establishing a clear enemy to fight against as a citizen of the United States – one that has been used in politics lately much too often – it neglected the fact that these *bad hombres* had populated this land before the colonizing population even knew of the existence of the continent. Moreover, Spain's settler colonialist endeavors in the United States started before the English population even made it to Plymouth rock.

The historical rivalries between old empires and the refusal to integrate this population in America's national ethos, and in the meantime sweeping under the proverbial rug the violence committed against them, has been a common trope of American culture. Nevertheless, this election only brought up to the surface what historians have been bringing forth in the later years, the history of violence toward the Latinx population throughout the American past. Historians such as Monica Muñoz-Martínez, Sonia Hernández, or Carrie Gibson, among others, have dedicated their efforts to unearth the hate crimes, lynchings, and plundering that was perpetuated against the Hispanic population since the inclusion of the previously Mexican territories into the United States. In a single movement, the Hispanic population was not only suspect of violence but also envied due to their properties, what worked well for the Anglo population as they were able to subjugate, violate, and take from them without fearing any legal repercussions. Crimes such as the death of Florencio García, Jesús Bazán, or Josefa Segovia, among others, were not only left unpunished but, at times, somehow condoned by the political powers. The criminalization of minorities, according to Lisa-Marie Cacho, fall onto the category of someone who is "ineligible for personhood" (Cacho, 6) and therefore with no access to rights while the criminal, in accordance to her analysis, is someone whose rights could be restituted. This categorization is made in accordance with the adequacy of such groups to the hegemonic society, that is, whether these individuals follow the heteronormative pillars in which the Western society is built, mixing this way economic and moral values. Moreover, through their ability to

adapt to such standards, minorities are made to compete against one another, attacking each other instead of trying to take down an oppressive system.

Alongside the prosecution of Latinx peoples in general, there were direct gender allegations. Much like the historical accusations towards African American men due to their threatening virility, Latino men were deemed violent, sexually and in other forms, threatening not only the futurity of the nation as set by the Anglo-Saxon population but also the life of the individuals themselves due to their passionate nature. In fact, according to Gloria Anzaldúa's analysis, it will be the Anglo population that created the current iteration of what is understood as *machismo,* a set of performative characteristics that a man should fulfill to demonstrate his worth within the community and which is "an adaptation to oppression and poverty" (Anzaldúa, 105). However, this false iteration of *machismo* imposed by the dominant culture is established on the basis of misplaced shame. As she would affirm "[t]he loss of a sense of dignity and respect in the macho breeds a false machismo which leads him to put down women and even to brutalize them" (Anzaldúa, 105). It was a virility that needed to be tamed and domesticated and, if not, criminalized and prosecuted.

While the history of the Latinx population in the United States from a hegemonic point of view brings forth a problematic violent past, the creation of a counterhegemonic movement did not solve the oppression for the community. The spread during the second half of the twentieth century of countermovements that fought for the rights of the Chicana and Chicano people and the creation of their new nation separate from previous nationalistic endeavors in the United States nevertheless left behind underrepresented

individuals that did not conform. Discourses defending family, community, and proud nationalistic identity left behind those that did not want or could not perform these roles within the family unit that the Chicano nation was built upon. Therefore, the question should be proposed, how did the movements between hegemony and the supposed counterhegemony entrap the Latinx individual? And more specifically, how were non-normative individuals able to escape the fixed performative categories set forth by such discourses? Is there a way to move beyond the dichotomy that set forth in identity and community politics by these hegemonies and towards a free individualism?

This dissertation will aim to deconstruct the long history of oppression of the Latinx peoples with a focus on how it affected Latinx men. Through the analysis of historical, literary, and cultural works, this dissertation will unravel the complicated engagements between the community and the hegemony, how the establishment of a set of performative characteristics for men helped to alienate those that did not fit them, and the potential escapes of such categories by a process of what we want to call misidentification. This escape from the community through the process of misidentification is not a process to repair a broken masculinity, nor a way back to the primordial community for these individuals or a survival tool – much like José Esteban Muñoz framed his disidentification - rather it is a way to fully disengage from the hegemonic/counterhegemonic dynamics, looking for the posthegemonic and the non-normative/queer as the modes of living. Therefore, misidentification will be the posthegemonic disengagement from any assimilationist or normative identity within the axis of nation or culture, gender, or sexuality.

In order to fully grasp the dialogical, adversarial, and complementary relationship between hegemony and counterhegemony and their relationship towards the individual and the community, this dissertation will take an interdisciplinary approach in its methodology to get a more complete picture of the argument at hand. Taking as a starting point historiographic approaches to the topic, this dissertation will take from feminist, queer theory, queer of color critique, as well as posthegemonic approaches to literature and culture in its analysis. The analysis that this dissertation will aim towards the dismantling of the mythology around the creation of the nationalistic, gendered, and sexualized identity through these lenses, aiming to understand the evolution on the construction and deconstruction of what gender and sexuality entail within a community and the tools deployed by this last to control the individual.

Firstly, this dissertation will deal with the creation of a hegemonic discourse and mythos in the United States and how such concepts were built upon the original fallacy of the empty land, the frontier as an unoccupied space. Through the analysis of historical theories by Frederick Jackson Turner on the frontier and the evolution of the term through the work of Herbert Eugene Bolton and John Francis Bannon to border and borderlands, this chapter will deal with the lack of acknowledgement of the Hispanic and Native populations in such concepts. How old quarrels from the other side of the Atlantic between England and Spain were further perpetuated in the United States and have to be taken into account in the first historiography of the land and how the deployment of geographic axis, highlighting the movement from East to West and

disregarding the efforts made from North to South, must be taken into account for this master narrative cloaked as historical facts.

Secondly, it will tackle the creation of a counterhegemony through the Chicana and Chicano movement and how this pendular movement of the hegemony nevertheless was deployed to further entrap the non-normative population. Through the analysis of foundational myths of the Chicana and Chicano movement – in particular, Aztlán, – this chapter will explore early examples of how the supposedly counterhegemonic movement perpetuated gender and sexual roles, targeting those that could not fit the promise of futurity implied within their nationalist ideals. Through the analysis of canonical texts for the Chicana and Chicano movement such Alurista's *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (1969), or Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales' *Arizona State University Speech* (1970) or *Message to Aztlán* (1975), this chapter will examine the gendered nature of how identity was built upon for this movement. It will also find examples of how the reliance on the *familismo* that these discourses enforce informed the literary texts at the time, taking Americo Paredes' *George Washington Gomez* (1990) and José Villarreal's *Pocho* (1959) as paradigms of the movement towards and against hegemonic understandings of gender performativity, respectively.

Thirdly, focus will be paid to the menace that gender non-conformity poses to the nationalist endeavors set forth by the Chicano movement and its ramifications, the fallacy of the counterhegemony and the need to escape. How the dichotomic codification of gender and sexuality along heteropatriarchal lines engrained in the idea of identity ostracized gender non-conforming and sexual deviancy. In the era in which movements

against and forth assimilation were set upon by the hegemony, it nevertheless posed an issue within the Chicano community due to its lack of inclusivity towards those that did not fit in their national ideals. Attributes such as scholarly interests, lack of strength, or illness, all against the understandings of masculinity of *feo, fuerte, formal*, will play a capital role in the alienation of individuals that cannot perform gender in such a way and how this escape was framed within literature, an escape from a community as a broken individual and unable to go back to it. To examine such masculinities, we will analyze the works of Richard Rodriguez, Junot Díaz, Oscar Zeta Acosta, and Arturo Islas, giving us a broad spectrum of the masculine experience and the ways it was deployed to exclude some individuals.

Finally, the last chapter of this dissertation will examine the disengagement from the dichotomy and the embrace of the posthegemonic queer space as well as the ways to display misidentification and its potential towards this new Latinx community. The dissociation of the individual from identitarian agendas engrained in the hegemony in a movement beyond them through the deployment of misidentificatory elements will be analyzed through the exploration of the works of art by the Asco collective. To fully understand such disengagement, this chapter will deal with the theoretical approaches made by Gloria Anzaldúa, Afropessimist critics, and posthegemony to provide a more complete picture of what this liberation would entail. How to move beyond the dichotomy in which identitarian politics is trapped in and towards the potentiality.

CHAPTER II

CONSTRUCTING A NATION, ORIENTING HEGEMONY

To draw a map is to tell a story, in many ways, and vice versa.

Spatiality

Robert Tally

The fall of the American Dream has been long prophesized, but the cracks have not been as evident as they have been with the turn to the 21st century. A dystopian nightmare for some that were never able to achieve it due to the color of their skin and a *jaula de oro* for those that arrived to the United States with the hopes of achieving a better life through hard work, this fantasy built on the ruins of the puritanical City Upon a Hill and the Manifest Destiny never took into account the plurality of individuals that did and would populate this land. The nation building force behind this chimera did not acknowledge that the creation of this hegemonic ideal would not contain the multitude. As Toni Morrison said "American means white, and Africanist people struggle to make the term applicable to themselves with ethnicity and hyphen after hyphen after hyphen" (Morrison, 47). While her quote refers to the African American population, the creation of the predominant Whiteness of America still applies to other racial minorities. This same feeling was behind the criminalization of Latinx individuals on the inaugural speech of – at the time - Republican party hopeful in 2016. The constant rejection of minorities from the American ideal and the limitations that identity would impose onto

some of them that did not fit exactly the expectations of their dominant ideal – be that because of their rebellion against imposed categories of gender, sexuality, or class – have also proven that the identity politics of the end of the previous century do not account for the oppressed members they were supposed to protect.

These notions of American identity and the exploration of the land by the Anglo population have marked the identities of those that have come after. The directionality of the conquests and the understandings of the concept of frontier have marked the ideology behind the American identity and dream. Furthermore, the problematization of the frontier by the inclusion of border and borderlands in the 20th centuries as categories of analysis for historians and cultural scholars has challenged previously established discourses of national geographical foundation and intercultural relations. The exploration of the new land set in motion monolithic ideals of race, gender, sex, and class that permeated throughout the culture of the new nation. Not only that but the cultures that entered in contact with it sustained such elements in their struggle to be recognized as part of the new nation – even when they were in the geographical locus of it before the new citizens arrived.

The exclusion of minorities within the American imaginary is evident when we consider the geographical conceptualization of the country. While explorers pushed the frontier further into the West, thinking of the land as previously unknown and unpopulated land, they never considered the individuals that had previously been there centuries before and had left their traces behind. Likewise, this expansion to the West never acknowledged in some cases the Southern border. As recovered documents like

the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No.2 prove, the population that would later on found the capital of the Mexican country had their mythical roots North of the current borders of Mexico, the land that for some is the United States. In this portrayal of the myth of Chicomoztoc, the "Place of the Seven Caves" – the native land of the Chichimec people often conflated with Aztlan, (Carrasco and Sessions, 1) their mythical homeland – one can appreciate the journey from the seven caves that composed their original territory to the foundation of the city of Cholula in the case of the Chichimec peoples. Therefore, while the construction of the current United States was built with the movement from East to West, the portrayal given by these codices offer us a movement from North to South of peoples that populated this land way before the arrival of the colonizers.

This chapter will first discuss the importance of geographical orientation within the creation of a nation, how space and the narratives around it conform and inform an important proportion of what we understand as a nation. Next, we will discuss the spatial tropes that have built the American Dream, that of the *frontier*, and how it has been challenged by the notion of *borderlands*. While on the one hand the concept of frontier created a fixed yet movable line between the civilization and the barbarism, the shift to borderlands acknowledged not only the fluidity between the peoples that populated both sides of the political statal border but also shifted the axis of the study as it recognized the North-South axis of the nation and problematized the controlling narrative of the previous East-West directionality. Moreover, while the frontier only recognized the Anglo-Saxon culture as the dominant colonial force of the territory that is currently the United States, the change to borderlands opened the dialogue to the Spanish empire. This

recognized the continuation of old quarrels between imperial forces but continued to dismiss the native populations of the land. And finally, we will step outside of the traditional United States understanding of its geographical borders to examine the challenges from within and outside of the population that inhabited such borderlands, how the mythical and factual construction of what we now understand as the Latinx population of the Southern border was perceived, pointing towards an understanding of what we will defend as misidentification. If misidentification is understood as the posthegemonic performative disengagement from any assimilationist or normative identity within the axis of nation, culture, gender or sexuality, this chapter will explore how the construction of the category of nation and the concepts that accompany it were first constructed in order to understand later how the Latinx community challenged them, and how this detachment from the dominant dichotomies that conform these identitarian concepts can be fully articulated within what the term Latinx is deploying along these lines. While not advocating from a disengagement from the community of origin, it works in between and among the divisions set by it as a way to detach from dominant discourses that would position them in an either/or binary, opting to move beyond this separation and towards an understanding of culture separate from such monolithical and suffocating concepts.

1.1 Creation of the notion of nation

The structure and classification of the site where the human experience takes place and how it impacts our conception of the self has been tackled by literary and

cultural studies in the last few decades. The ideological and geographical coordinates of the nation/state as it has evolved since its inception as such in the past century both inform and complicate the systems and structures at place that give the citizen their rights and duties. Given the unifying power of the idea of nation/state for individuals that share cultural, linguistic, racial, and other components, it also creates the idea of the Other within its very nature, an outsider to the hegemonic insider of the nation/state.

A point of departure to understand such links between people could be found on the conception of the nation as an organizing organism for a community. For Benedict Anderson, nation and nationalism are understood as "cultural artifacts of a particular kind" that, in order to be fully comprehended, must be tackled from a transhistorical and emotional point of view (Anderson, 4). These cultural artifacts, as he affirms, are firmly entrenched in the modern era but for the nationalist eye they have a "subjective antiquity" (Anderson, 5) putting into question dogmatic understandings of the nation. After all, the invocation of a glorious past and the promise of an eternal return to the values and ideas of our forefathers have proven to be a fallacy with the passing of time, given that nations did not exist as are understood currently before the 19th century and that never stopped the progress of the human race. While it might be contradictory to bring it at this point, it is important to consider how, according to David T. Abalos, pre-Colombian cultures considered the ever-changing nature of the individual and the community, not appealing to a glorious past but rather celebrating the continuous process of creation and transformation (Abalos, 60). It was instilled within the culture that one must progress instead of retrogress for the community to grow, to flourish, and

to be established, looking to the potentiality in the future instead of looking back for guiding principles.

While these formulations of nation and nationalism point to opposite temporal directions for their ratification, both of them delineate a clear separation between who belongs in the nation or community and who does not. In the nationalistic efforts as understood by Anderson and Abalos, there is a community of reference to which to look back, even if the intentionality behind this recollection has different objectives. While for some looking back gave them the blueprint for a glorious future, to make it great again, to make the future a mirror image of the past, for the other this movement granted them the validation to transform and progress in their nation building endeavors. Yet, neither of them acknowledged the imperfect recollection of what and who these glorious past and ancestors are. These images conjured up by nationalistic aspirations often do not correspond in their totality to the events and how people actually were, having to complete them by fabricating them partly and fill in the gaps with their own preconceptions and agendas of said past and people to fully grasp the idea of nation and/or community. The invocation of the past based on memories, narratives, or cultural products proves to be fragmented, incomplete, and, at its worst, fantastical. While it can provide us with a glimpse of how a culture responded as a whole towards a phenomenon, imposing a complete hegemonic ideal on it proves to be devastating for everyone. Therefore, it is important that we take into consideration Anderson's definition of nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 6).

In his definition of nation, Anderson was providing the definition of a hegemonic nation. While these two, nation and hegemony, can be understood as redundant, it is important that we stop here to see how they are articulated within Anderson's model. After all, as he continued, this community of individuals had to imagine the characteristics of each other that would give them a sense of belonging to said nation, create an *us* that would be separate from *them*. Said peoples could not encompass the totality of the human race and it would be impossible for them to know every single individual of the community, no matter how small it was. It is within this exercise of the imagination that Anderson sees the necessity to dictate the limits of the nation-building effort of the community, given that the sovereignty of a people has to have limits for nationalism to work, has to have a clear *other* in which to place all the negative traits that do not align with the community. It is within the dichotomy that the nation is constructed, a nation with a guiding set of characteristics that would make the citizen belong or not, a collection of norms along the lines of morals, ethics, and political alignments but also gender, sexuality, race, and class. A hegemonic nation with clear borders that divide the community from those who are not part of it.

Therefore, within the articulation of the nation, there is a need of imagination and of narrative as a subsequent cultural product of the same. Literature and other cultural products, as depictions and elaborations of the imagination, are put at the forefront of dominant ideologies that conform the nation. It is thanks to them, as we saw in the case of the glorious past and the ancestor, that nationalist ideals are formed, searching in this past for a figure or an account that would validate their lines of thought and, with it,

establish a dominant image of the ideal citizen and behavior. The imaginary borders of the nation – that is, the lines that divide what belongs to it and what does not – cannot contain the multitude of human experiences that conform it but rather they need to be regulated along the lines of the status quo through the creation of these literary hegemonic ideals and ideas. These borders, while imaginary and constructed by narratives, sometimes find their reflection in the physical space that outlines and delimits geographically the nation. After all, as we have said, if within the definition of an imagined community there is a clear demarcation between us/them, there has to be a spatial echo of it in the locus of the same. While at first not evident within Anderson's definition of the nation as imagined community within the boundaries of dominant thought, it is necessary to tackle the question of the topography of the nation. given that the community in his model occupies a space and said space, while real, is also built upon ideological views that dominate the thought of the citizens. After all, as Robert Tally would affirm

> literature […] functions as a form of mapping, offering its readers descriptions of places, situating them in a kind of imaginary space, and providing points of reference by which they can orient themselves and understand the world in which they live. Or maybe literature helps readers get a sense of the worlds in which others have lived, currently live, or will live in times to come. From a writer's perspective, maybe literature provides a way of mapping the spaces encountered or imagined in the author's experience. (Tally, 2)

There is double intention behind how geography is reflected in narratives as well as how these narratives build the understanding of geography of the nation. After all, the spaces that form the coordinates of a nation are informed by both the physical and narratological aspect of them, how we as citizens understand them, how they are included in the story of the nation as it is built, as well as their geological formations. As Tally mentions, this new focus of scholars on the space of the cultural and literary experience could be considered a "spatial turn" (Tally, 3) after the previous linguistic and cultural turns of the second half of the twentieth century. For him, this turn focused mainly on the experience of the reader and the author and the literary geography created in the work itself and therefore the reader "engage[s] into a sort of map-reading when they approach certain works" (Tally, 81). The literary geography informs and influences the reader, setting up in them a series of structures on how the narrative world is built.

While Tally's focus on the creation of literary maps was concerned with how such spaces are created, Michel Foucault reminds us that those spaces are nevertheless codified by the people that inhabit them. As he proposes "[w]e do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (Foucault and Miskowiec, 23). Therefore, Foucault and Miskowiec do not only delineate the spaces in which we, as humans, live and produce literary and cultural works but rather understand that such spaces are constructed through the interaction of the individuals and the relations that are created from them. It is, therefore, not only the geographical places we inhabit but also the human

conceptualization of the same and the community formations we construct in them. It is both the geographical and the ideological that conform the nation, not only one or the other. It is in the interaction of the physical space and the literary or cultural products that the codification of the nation as a political idea and a geographical reality are produced, creating in their intermingling a hegemonic image of what the citizens and the space should be.

In both understandings of the geographical and the ideological there is a necessity to establish boundaries to the nation, create dichotomies by which to identify and separate the us from the them, determining an Other from which to define the hegemonic citizenship. As Anderson said the imagined community that conforms the nation is both "limited and sovereign." Because of this the imaginary limits of what type of individual would conform the ideal citizen are also repeated on the geographical realm as where the limits are to the sovereignty of the nation, the ideological line that separates the hegemon and the Other. It is in this same necessity of creating boundaries that the hegemonic nation finds its limitations, acknowledging the failure of them and the erosion of the understanding of nation/state. As Wendy Brown would affirm

> nation-state sovereignty has […] been eroded by the steady growth and importance of international economic and governance institutions […]. And nation-state sovereignty has been challenged by a quarter century of postnational and international assertions of law, rights, and authority that sometimes openly aim to subvert or supersede the sovereignty of states. (Brown, 34)

It is within the establishment of these postnational organizations, as Brown would put them, or supranational institutions that we could see the end of the nation. This nation, however, being defended by the creation of walls point towards the weakness of such ideology and the clinging of some to antiquated modes of understanding it, refusing to let go of these false narratives. The establishment of physical boundaries aids in the recognizance and/or invisibilization of the other and in the criminalization of those who belong to some other nation, creating negative images of the other either as heralds of evil or infantilizing them, both point towards the impossibility of the hegemonic to adapt and evolve.

The building of walls can be found in the United States, where in the last few years there has been a reappearance of the defense of the Southwestern border by the establishment of a wall to separate and defend stale comprehensions of the nation. This incomplete and unsuccessful wall that would separate the United States from Mexico has been years in the making, with fragments of it scattered throughout the limits between the two states and, nevertheless, proving to be ineffectual and a monument to racism. However, while the raising of the physical wall between these states has only been a few decades in the making with the most significant initial fragment being built by the Bush administration in the 90s, the configuration of these borders as well as the imagined community that conforms the United States was founded long ago and defended through the concepts of *frontier* and *borderlands* in the previous century through the scholarship of historians such as Turner, Bolton, and Weber.

1.2 Go West! The final frontier

The elements that conform a nation, according to the spatial and communal parameters we have dealt with until now could equal those of a theater play. After all, as Niccolò Machiavelli would say as paraphrased by Wendy Brown "politics […] is always heavily theatrical, a staging of danger or resolve, power or possibility, that involves deliberate manipulations of space and time, cause and effect" (Brown, 9). Moreover, she continues, "theatricality is the frame for political action and its interpretation and for political affect, allegiance, and identity" (Brown, 9). Hence, the political encompasses the need for characters at play, a narrative to display, an audience to suspend its disbelief on the face of what is presented on the stage, and a setting where the stories of the characters take place. Through the actors at a play the audience can observe a narrative, set up by the playwright, that depicts among many other topics and themes the fictitious or fictionalized story of a past event or historical character, a slice of life play where characters go through daily and current tribulations, or a highly aesthetic artistic expression that questions the meaning of life. These actors have portrayed typically clear moral designations – ones were the heroes, the others, the villains – and through their narrative the audience bear witness to the artistic expression of these characters' tribulations, many times feeling how their own personal experiences or thoughts are mirrored in the stage and, therefore, interiorizing what is being portrayed as true or plausible. Finally, the stage/setting needs to have designated borders, so the audience will know where the limits of the play end and the world outside of it begins.

Within this metaphoric understanding of the nation, with actors, audience, and stage, there is also the need of the playwright who puts together the narrative. After all, while all the world is a stage, there is always a demiurge that manages the stories that are on the stage. It is within the role of the writer to create a narrative that echoes the life experiences of those in the audience, an artistic expression of what their lives have been, are, or could be. And this is of particular importance when staging a new nation, where the narrative is at its most important given that it will mark a set of moral, ethical, and political parameters that will guide the community. Moreover, the stories and setting need to be familiar or resonate with the audience, so while the play may take part in an unknown setting for the audience, there will be a sense of familiarity. An example of this would be the frontier and the historian Frederick Jackson Turner as its playwright and builder of the hegemonic space of the American nation. As Richard White framed it in contraposing the figures of Turner and Buffalo Bill as narrators of the frontier, when Turner analyzed it in his speech *The Significance of the Frontier* (1893) "Turner did not have to tell Americans about the frontier, he could mobilize images they already knew. […] All Turner had to do was to tell Americans about the SIGNIFICANCE of this familiar frontier" (White, 16). Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill with his travelling show is building upon the mythology of the frontier not by defending any academic enterprise but rather by creating a national narrative of heroes and villains, of the brave frontiersman and the evil Native American. In its contraposition with Buffalo Bill as storyteller, both Turner and Buffalo Bill nevertheless built upon the mythology of the frontier to validate and confirm through their colorful narratives the mythology

surrounding the colonization of the American territory, Buffalo Bill confirming it through his supposed life-story while Turner validating it through his scholarly narration of the Westward movement of colonizers.

First read at the American Historical Association in Chicago, 1893, *The Significance of the Frontier* inaugurated a school of American historiography, with a concept that was widely accepted through the American historical scholarship until 1930s and 1940s (Weber, 66): the frontier. Through the creation of the notion of frontier, Turner confirmed and re-enforced the preconceived narratives of the westward movement of the American people and their destiny to spread their civilization from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Imagined in his theory as a moving line between civilization and the wilderness, the westward movement of the frontier became equivalent with American identity and the hegemonic ideals of the country and its citizens. The pioneer became a heroic figure in his effort to bring civilization to an otherwise uncivilized and empty space. The frontier became the horizon of possibility for the American citizen and the glorious past to which we should go back in their nationalistic efforts, a past where the spread of civilization, freedom, and capitalism were initially forged.

When the geographical end of the frontier came in 1890 as the Superintendent of the Census declared that "the settlements of the West lie so scattered over the region that there can no longer be said to be a frontier line" (Turner, 8), the conception of the frontier within the American imaginary continued through its historical conceptualization. After all, it was in this frontier where the American character was built and where much of its peculiarity and exceptionality were constructed. Much like

the exploration of the concepts of civilization and barbarism by scholars in Latin America, the attitude of the citizens of the United States was forged in the frontier as "in advancing the frontier, a diverse people of European origins had remade themselves into Americans" (White, 16). It was in advancing and conquering the savage and "empty" land that the European became American, as Turner framed it in this speech, as through the necessary re-invention of their own personas what were at first European individuals or individuals of European ancestry became American.

> Thus American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West. (Turner, 2-3)

In this first iteration of the concept of the West as fundamental historical nation building endeavor for the United States, Turner set in motion much more than the imperative cardinal directionality of this movement but also planted the seeds of some of the key elements that would mark his career and that of his followers – and, to some degree, the national ideology of the United States. In this relationship between the individual and the space they are conquering we can differentiate three of the foundational components of the self-image of the United States at the turn of the

century: the pioneer in his struggle with nature; the civilizing power of commerce in the relationship with the natives; and finally, the growth of the national community through the conquest of the West.

The westward progress of the frontier for Turner's imaginary was a movement towards the conquest of the savage land. This land, in his conception, was ripe for the taking, with farmers, ranchers, and traders ready to settle once the land had been claimed and domesticated. The movement towards these terrains also meant the return to a primitive state for the new population that arrived from Europe, leaving their civilized pre-conceptions behind and having to go back to a virgin state, one where, according to Turner, through the domestication of the land "[t]he wilderness disappears, the 'West' proper passes on to a new frontier, and in the former area, a new society has emerged from its contact with the backwoods" (Turner, *The Frontier in American History,* 205). Vast, unexploited, and unpopulated lands gave the pioneers a new terrain where the new nation could develop, one of virgin soils where to domesticate beasts and cultivate their crops. Through his exploration of the different soils and terrains that conform the frontier, Turner drew a picture of how the waves of immigrants that arrived at the frontier pushed for it to move in search of a better land, and in doing so, left their old nationality and alliances behind to become part of the American tapestry.

This ecological reading of the frontier is much in line with the quintessential mythos of the United States – that is, the puritanical City Upon a Hill and the Manifest Destiny. Much like Adam, Turner's Americans were made by conquering, dominating, and domesticating the Garden of Eden that were the vast extensions of land towards the

Pacific Ocean, lands that, according to him, were void of any civilized peoples. It is through the interaction of the European man with this land, by shedding and leaving behind their prejudices and constraints, that they can go back to being pure. This idealization of the frontier as a movement towards the primordial innocence of the human being reminded critics of the "nineteenth-century pastoral myth of the garden" (White, 15). However, the danger laid with the authority that Turner had as a scholar and a member of the American Historical Association. In Turner's reflection of the Arcadia in America we do not find the innocent pastoral and amorous efforts of Jacopo Sannazaro, Ludovico Ariosto, or even William Shakespeare, but the theoretical permission and excuse of the large-scale colonization of the frontier by the European pioneers that, through the conquest of the land, became American. Within the movement towards the savage, the citizens of the future United States were not only moving towards richer pastures – which was one of Turner's justifications to do so (Turner, 17) – but also were leaving behind their previous conception of European nationalism in order to become fully American through the struggles and conquest of this new empty horizon.

In this idyllic yet scholarly canonical view of the conquest of the American territory through the Westward movement of the frontier by European immigrants, there is little to no mention of the previous civilizations that were on the continent before the arrival of the pilgrims. For Turner, while the Native Americans – in his narratives referred to as "Indians" – were "a common danger, demanding united action" (Turner, 14), they nevertheless did not pose a threat to the American colonizing agenda.

Furthermore, Native Americans served as a "consolidating agent," as they signified the Other to the newly arrived Europeans and in the defense of their newly conquered land they united against them. Within the relationship between the Europeans and the Native Americans, Turner sees the power of evolution and transformation, as it is in their defense against them that they can evolve into the new nation.

Nevertheless, Turner sees in the trade relationships with the Native Americans the only way to civilize these peoples, therefore setting up another fundamental notion of the United States: the power of capitalism. It is through the trade between Native Americans and Europeans that the latter civilized the former, using the exchange of European guns for the Native American's goods that the civilizer power of Europe was taking place. In their interactions with the Native Americans, Turner sees their growing dependence from the Europeans: what started as an exchange between them became a dependency of the Native Americans on the Europeans for weapons and other goods. As he would point out, while the dominion over the natural resources and lands was primordial for the pioneer, it was the strength of capitalism that ultimately civilized the land and those that populated it.

> Thus civilization in America had followed the arteries made by geology, pouring an ever richer tide through them, until at last the slender paths of aboriginal intercourse have been broadened and interwoven into the complex mazes of modern commercial lines; the wilderness has been interpenetrated by lines of civilization growing ever more numerous. *(*Turner*, The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 13)

While the initial push to take over the new Arcadia was according to Turner the original intent and destiny of the American people, it is in the crucible of the trading relationship with the Native Americans and the identification of the Other in them that the colonizers from Europe began to become one people. Belonging to different countries around Europe, it is the frontier that he sees these peoples amalgamate under a same nationalist agenda, as he says that it here that "the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics" *(*Turner*, The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 22). English, German, Dutch, or Irish, to name some of the nationalities the historian points out, were mixed in their races – according to Turner, – founding with them the composite nature of the American nation and starting a new nationalistic agenda through said mixture. This new race they brought civilization to the frontier, starting with their efforts new institutions and governmental structures.

The intent behind the migration of these peoples from the Old World to the New, according to Turner, followed a selfless and communitarian effort to spread democracy, giving this colonization a moral value. The movement to the outer limits of civilization in order to deconstruct the principles that guided the Old world and reform from their ashes a new nation was deemed as both an individualistic and communitarian effort. In what could be deemed as the most conflicting part of his speech, Turner identified in the "anti-social" nature of the pioneer *(*Turner*, The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 30) the essence of democracy in the federalist nation. In the balance between individualism and the organization of a government that takes as a model the nuclear

family, the frontier individual values are at the core of American democracy "born of free land, strong in selfishness and individualism" *(*Turner*, The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 32).

Not only was the frontier the melting pot of America in accordance with Turner, but it also served as a way to fundamentally codify gender and sexuality. While the frontier served as a way to assimilate the European populations that were coming to the New World and unite them under one nation, there was a gendered component to it as "[t]he frontier was masculine; machines and cities were its antithesis. They emasculated men, robbed them of their true manhood. Thus cities and machines were defined as feminine" (White, 39). On the one hand, the forging of the new nation at the edges of it was deemed masculine, with the domination and domestication of the wild under a set of rules as the ideal towards which the new nation should aspire. On the other hand, cities were understood as the old European centers of power, where there was no challenges to prove one's prowess and where the possibility to change and impose a new status quo was more difficult, given the rigidity of the conventions. Therefore, with the end of the frontier at the turn of the century, the menace of emasculation – or, at least, of the traditional role of the man as provider of the nuclear family – was one of the main concerns of the frontier theory.

This relation between the individual and the space they inhabit is key when examining the exploration and colonization of the territory that is currently the United States. It is in the relationship between the individual and the frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner would say, that the American identity would distinguish itself from the European.

As a historian at the turn of the 20th century, Turner focused his research on the expansion of the American territory throughout the continent, moving that line of unexplored territory over as more territory was attached to the new country from East to West. Moreover, Turner suggested that this conquest of the new territory by the frontiersman "quickened assimilation of immigrants, had a 'consolidating' and 'nationalizing' effect on young America, and promoted democracy" (Weber, 66).

> It is important to bear this idealism of the West in mind. The very materialism that has been urged against the West was accompanied by ideals of equality, of exaltation of the common man, of national expansion, that makes it a profound mistake to write of the West as though it were engrossed in mere material ends. It has been, and is, preeminently a region of ideals, mistaken or not. (Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 214)

Assimilation, consolidation, and nation formation were, therefore, the justifications behind the early imperial efforts of the new country. No matter who inhabited the territory, the expansion of the new ideals by the conquering of the frontier line was the main objective of such frontiersmen in their nation building efforts. What is more, this expansion of the territory did not take into account the racial and ethnic inhabitants that populated the West, "Hispanics and the Hispanic frontier not excepted" (Weber, 67).

Through the theorization of the frontier from a scholarly standpoint, by deploying his notion of frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner confirmed the hegemonic agenda of the United States. The Westward movement of the line that separated

civilization from the wilderness, the us from the it, and the gendered values that were assigned to each only served to consolidate preconceived nationalistic ideals and values. It also gave at the turn of the century a mythos of how the nation and its citizens were born, how their differences from their previous nationalities were forged, and the status quo they should defend.

1.3 Moving on Down: From Frontier to Spanish Borderlands

The first conceptualization of the United States as a nation formed hegemonically in the frontier by Frederick Jackson Turner lacks any sort of problematization or expansion beyond what the West meant for the historian. The political and historical movements to conquer and claim territories that were part of the Spanish empire and later Mexico were not being examined by historians at this point and the notion of frontier excluded such enterprises and there is not an acknowledgement of Hispanic population within the United States borders, rather focusing on other European colonizers that aided in the Western conquest as we have seen already. While by that time the territories of the old Spanish empire and Mexico had already been annexed to the United States through the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 or the Gadsden purchase of 1853, among others, historical scholars at the turn of the 20th century resolved not to include the human history of these lands in their analysis of the expansion of the territories of the new country. The Southern border of the nation was, therefore, not integrated at that time in their studies as another space where their ideals of nation, democracy, and assimilation were spread amongst the population. Though

later on these territories would be researched by the inclusion of the notion of *Spanish borderlands* into historical research, this initial denial of recognition of these territories and individuals as part of the expansionist program of the nation is nevertheless key in understanding the development of the interaction between the United States and Mexico – and, by proxy, anyone of Hispanic or Latino descent.

Along with the insistence on the unidirectionality of the building of the nation on the conquest of the West, major problematic elements arose through the analysis of the main aspects that composed the frontier; mainly along the three axes that we have described so far on the emphasis of the lack of civilization at the other side of the frontier line, the idealization of the melting pot that the frontier signified for the colonizers, and lastly the novelty of the principles that the frontier brought with it through the deconstruction of old values.

Firstly, even though, as we have said, the frontier delimited a "not clearly defined" border, it was nevertheless a division between a hegemonic Anglo-Saxon White power and the native peoples of the Americas. Within this division, it was the imposition of the former's power through colonization onto the latter who were subjugated by them. While the notion of frontier was built on the conquest of territories deemed "uninhabited" by the Anglo-Saxon, it disregarded the populations that inhabited such lands before their arrival. The wilderness that Turner defended was a new Arcadia had nevertheless previous inhabitants that the colonizers deemed uncivilized as they did not conform to their European standards. While Turner defended through his texts the trading nature of the relationship between the Native Americans and the colonizers,

Native Americans posed a threat to the newly arrived population. Non-White cultures, communities, and peoples, were phagocytized by the colonizers, erasing their previous identity in order to assimilate them within their expansionist agenda through settler colonialism. In other cases, they were decimated. In their endeavor, the frontiersmen were to take over the lands of the previous inhabitants to establish themselves there. As Patrick Wolfe would indicate,

> settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base. As I put it, settler-colonizers come to stay – invasion is a structure not an event. (Wolfe, 103)

Therefore, the colonizing effots of the frontiersmen translated into structures of power and systems of discrimination that were set in motion to dominate, segregate, and, ultimately, decimate, the native population of the United States. Within the trading posts that Turner defended the lack of equality between colonizer and colonized set in motion a series of culturally devastating power dynamics.

Secondly, the defense of Turner of the creation of a separate American identity in the frontier that left behind previous nationalisms proved to be a fallacy in as much as it had those previous nationalisms in mind. If we take into account the racial components that he provided as components in this mixture in the conquest of the frontier other than the English, only Irish and Germans are mentioned in his initial account. While it is true that these three nations – Germany, Ireland, and England – are culturally diverse, they were nevertheless united by language and colonization – in the case of Ireland – and

religion – in the case of Germany if we understand their religious traditions as against the Catholic tradition of Italy or Spain. Furthermore, this racial mixture that Turner was promoting left behind any race that was not White, making this inclusive myth of his under the flag of America even more suspect.

Lastly, the conception and exclusion of the Southern border answered to the imperialistic and colonizing desires of the new nation as well as rivalries inherited from the Old World. While the conquest of the West by the American forces was deemed as a way to create an empire, the Southern border between Mexico and the United States "highlighted the friction between two Old World powers in the New: Spain and England" (Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, 815). Turner's frontier theory, a frontier where geographical limits, cultures, and nations were "not clearly defined" (Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, 815) assumed the superiority of the Anglo population while invisibilizing or disdaining the original peoples of the new lands that were being "discovered" in favor of the expansionist project of the nation. Through this expansionist project it also tended to reflect the dismissal between nations that was born at the other side of the world. As Bolton would account

> [i]t used to be the fashion to teach our children that Spain failed; that the Spaniards did not colonize but merely explored; that they killed off all the Indians; that the Spaniards were mere gold seekers, whereas the English came to America to found homes and build commonwealths, forgetting that gold seekers have been known to establish homes and build commonwealths. A grammar school text recently published by two very distinguished university professors

> contains the statement, inserted without visible sign of humor, that Spain did not colonize America, but merely tried to hold it to keep other nations out. (Bolton, 33)

The exclusion of the Southern border is further explained if we take into account the reproduction of political identities as understood as the efforts in state formation and "the political legacy of colonialism, of the colonial state as a legal/institutional complex that reproduced particular political identities" (Mamdani, 652). While exploring the New World, the colonizing enterprise of the frontier nevertheless inherited the quarrels of the Old. Moreover, not taking these questions of the historical relationship between the countries in Europe and how they were translated in the colonizing territories proves to be an incomplete historical account and, as we have seen, provides just a nationalistic tale. As Herbert Eugene Bolton would put it "[i]n my own country the study of thirteen English colonies and the United States in isolation has obscured many of the larger factors in their development, and helped to raise up a nation of chauvinists" (Bolton, 302). Therefore, it is only through the interaction between countries that we can understand the history of the Americas.

The turn from frontier to borderlands within the historical discussion and its shift in axis from East/West to North/South had to wait until the first half of the 20th century. It is Herbert Eugene Bolton with his 1921 book *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*, as his disciple John Francis Bannon reminds us, that inaugurates the borderlands tradition within historical scholarship. His theory of borderlands starts conceptualizing and acknowledging the southern border of the United

States as a zone of contact between Anglo-Saxon and Hispanic peoples, though efforts were made by historians to implement Turner's theory of the frontier onto the southern border with historians such as David J. Weber later on in the 1980s. For Bolton, the older conflict between the English and Spanish empires was being reproduced in the contact zones of the Southern border and, therefore, the frontier concept of Turner was insufficient to analyze such geographic and cultural locus.

While the frontier seemed a fixed line between two cultures, with one conceptualized as superior to the other, a place where invasion of new territory and subjugation of individuals that were deemed to have no culture took place, Bolton challenged the rigidity of this frontier line and shifted it into his conceptualization of the Spanish borderland. By shifting the imperialistic point of view, Bolton contested the frontier, expanding the history of the United States to include other narratives, therefore no longer the history of America but rather the history of the diverse Americas and their colonizers, as well as the interaction between them – even though, as we shall see afterwards, little importance was given also in this counter-hegemonic account to the colonized peoples. Through this challenge, the Spanish borderlands created at the time a counter-hegemonic account that defied the pre-conceived Anglo-Saxon view of the American territory.

This contact between the Spanish empire and the new land as framed under the umbrella of Spanish borderlands did not have a clear beginning or end in the American geography, some contesting its

> [inclusitivity] of all the territories within the limits of the United States which Spain once held, from Florida to California. Others make it apply in a more restricted sense to the Spanish provinces from Texas to California – in a word to the Greater Southwest or the Spanish Southwest. At times Spanish Louisiana has been included, and very particularly so-called Upper Louisiana, or the Spanish Illinois. Louisiana and Florida are less secure as to their inclusion, since both Spanish provinces, administratively, depended on the Islands and have their histories more intimately bound to the Caribbean than to the northern frontier of New Spain (Mexico) (Bannon, 2)

Not only the extent of land and the directionality made the Spanish and the Anglo-Saxon missions different but also, according to Bolton and Bannon, the way in which the colonizers behaved and their (supposed) objectives. For Bannon, and in line with what Turner had previously established, the Anglo frontiersman was driven by his own personal gain, in search of a new land where he could prosper. However, and in this strives the difference between both theories in this particular aspect, Bannon affirmed that the frontiersman had little to no regard of the laws of his own country while Turner saw in this expansion the beginning of a democratic effort. Furthermore, for Bannon, the Anglo frontiersman deemed the frontier as the land where he could be free from any regulation from any central government. On the other hand, "[t]he Spanish frontiersman was regimented, closely governed, and restricted" (Bannon, 6), being the emissary of the Spanish government and the Catholic church and having the orders and powers of both behind him.

Another fundamental difference in the Spanish borderlands was in the interaction with the natives. While Turner affirmed that the relationship between natives and pioneers in the Western frontier was of an economic nature in the trading of goods in between them, Bolton would see in the relationship between the Spaniards and the natives an effort to civilize and convert. Already a discussion in the Catholic church in the 16th century, the acknowledgement of the souls of the natives gave them a human status and, therefore, posited that they should be saved by the Catholic faith. Missions were established throughout the Americas by religious orders to convert the natives. As Bolton would say

> [t]he missionary was an agent not only of the Church, but of the State as well. His primary business was to save souls and spread Spanish civilization among the heathen. The heathen were to be found on the frontier, beyond the established settlements. Here was the missionary's proper field of endeavor. As soon as his pioneer work among the Indians on one frontier was done, he was expected to turn his flock over to the parish clergy and move on to a new field, farther in the wilderness. (Bolton, 49)

Therefore, for Bolton and Bannon the Spanish pioneer had the enterprise of converting and regulating the natives in the new colonies in the Americas. However, they both centered their efforts in the description of the Spanish cultural heritage within the United States without giving any agency to the natives that populated the land. Their main focus was on the critique of the previously established narrative and incorporating another empire at play in the conquest of the current United States territory. The

inauguration of the Spanish borderlands, while it served to problematize the previously established mythology of the creation of the United States as a nation, perpetuated the search of a glorious past from a preceding historical tradition in their construction of a hegemony.

In their efforts to shift the narrative from one cultural empire to another, they also altered the main intention behind the colonization. While the trading relationship between the frontiersman and the native was highlighted by Turner's narrative, in Bolton and Banon's Spanish borderland the role of the missionary as we have seen and the rise of the figure of the mestizo in the racial relationships between colonizer and colonized was downplayed, focusing mainly in how the "Christianized Indians" were fundamental in the spread of the Spanish empire (Bannon, 6), without further problematizing the hegemonic power of religion in said relationship. Furthermore, the harmonic relationship between Native Americans and Spaniards was not such, given the segregation in the villages, as Weber affirms

> De facto segregation along socioracial categories also manifested itself in frontier communities. Indians, blacks, and mixed bloods lived on the edge of town or in certain neighborhoods, whereas españoles lived near the plaza. In some parishes, priests kept two sets of bookstores for whites and one for non-whites. Some institutions, too, were segregated. St. Augustine had two separate militia companies in the mid-nineteenth century, one for mestizos and free mulattos and another for españoles. (Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 326)

The imperial efforts of the frontier and the Spanish borderlands started to get criticized amongst North American historians, deeming Bolton's efforts to create a counterhegemonic narrative from the point of view of the Spanish borderlands "overly romantic, a simplistic Pan-Americanism that was ill-suited and poorly informed of Latin American realities" (Gutiérrez and Young, 30). That is when David J. Weber introduced the notion of the Mexican – and later Spanish – frontier in the 1980s. By shifting the historical point of view from the American side to the Mexican, Weber tried to question how the border between these two countries was established, trying not to focus on bigger nation building narratives but rather on how the frontier and the Mexican nation was formed. While going back to the term *frontier*, Weber understood it in a divergent way to how Turner formulated it almost a hundred years before him. For Weber

> [T]he notion of frontier as a line representing the inexorable "advance of civilization into the wilderness" may still hold sway in the popular imagination, but serious students no longer see frontiers in such ethnocentric terms. Frontiers have at least two sides, so that an expanding frontier invariably edges onto someone else's frontier. Rather than see them as lines, frontiers seem best understood as zones of interaction between two different cultures, as places where the cultures of the invader and the invaded contend with one another and with their physical environment to produce a dynamic that is unique to time and place. […] As such, frontiers represent both place and process. (Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America,* 11)

This distinction in the notion of frontier as the interplay between social and spatial spheres separated Weber from the narrative that Turner had presented of the Western advance of the colonizers in the United States. In shifting his focus from the West to the South, Weber was not only pointing out the ethnocentrism in Turner's claims but also the hegemonic aspirations that it entailed. While he acknowledged that Turner's narrative was still widely accepted at the time, his shift in what frontier signified aimed to give the term a new life, this time from the Mexican point of view. With this turn he also aimed to deconstruct the mythos of the frontier in the creation of the nation, this time the Mexican nation. For him, while the border between the current United States and Mexico was part of the larger history of both nations, it did not inform the Mexican character like the frontier did to their American counterpart, it was not part of the ethos of the nation as a whole but rather just a chapter of it.

However, while there is in Weber a step beyond what Turner and Bolton and Banon were describing, he fell into the same narrative of equal exchange between two cultures. Through his analysis of the Mexican and Spanish frontier there are two cultures – the Spanish and the Mexican – who are at play in the conquest of the land's colonizer and colonized respectively. In this exchange Weber introduces the ecological impact of the colonization, with the introduction of new cattle and crops in the Americas, and the ways in which the Spaniards had to adapt their own traditions and culture to survive and thrive in the new environment. Nevertheless, through his narrative there is an equal exchange amongst them while, in reality, the power structures at play and the dominion of one of over the other were an important component of this relationship. Furthermore,

though he aimed to include a variety of voices and seeing the history of the border between empires at first and nations second, Weber tended to repeat the idealization of one and the vilification of the other. While his objective was to remain objective and with an scholarly mind, the nationalization of the border first as Spanish frontier and later as Mexican frontier did not mean a disengagement with decaying conceptions of the separation between countries but rather a reification of the hegemonic power of the nation.

1.4 The Borderlands: A Posthegemonic View of the Concept

The theoretical efforts to create national narratives upon the historiography of imperial aspirations in the Americas proves to be incomplete. Both frontier and Spanish borderlands, as well as the efforts to create a Mexican or Spanish frontier, answered either to the historical moments they were born into – the turn of the 19th century and the end of the frontier – or to the effort to construct hegemonic accounts of what the nation was, could, and should be in the future, searching for their roots in the Anglo-Saxon or their Spanish ancestors. Even if these theories were written by scholars, they nevertheless were aimed to force a myth that nevertheless has only started to be fully deconstructed in the 21st century. Moreover, in these accounts they used the point of view of the colonizer instead of problematizing it, invoking the past of these nations to build their own – albeit of this past having been developed at another land. Weber detached the history of the border from the history of Mexico, in an effort to separate himself from other frontier analysis that continued the dominating efforts of the past, not

looking into the border for a grand narrative of the Mexican character. As he said "Mexican American history, then, should not be viewed as a simple extension of Mexican history" (Weber, *Foreigners in Their Native Land : Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*, 4). However, while Weber tried to bring forth the Mexican history, he did so by infantilizing or criminalizing at times the individuals that populated it, both the natives of the Americas and later on the citizens of Mexico.

It is because of these totalizing narratives that the border between the United States and Mexico has been demonized by both sides of the equation. While the idea of the frontiersman still looms in the American imaginary, the scars of past interactions between both nations are still open for the Mexican side, the border inheriting the struggles of the 19th century national formation and the wars fought against the United States to keep this strip of land, often detaching this fringe of land from their national mythology.

> On the one hand, many U.S. residents associate the border with uncontrolled illegal migration, racial battles, and various kinds of criminal behaviors from underage drinking to corruption and prostitution. On the other hand, Mexicans also feel apprehension toward the United States, a country that they often perceive as imperialist and arrogant. (Cervantes-Soon, 99)

Though these approaches aimed to create a globalizing theory to explain the hegemonic quality of a nation, it is from first Bolton's, Bannon's, and Weber's tentative problematization and a disengagement from them that borderlands theory as a transnational and posthegemonic concept may arise. Even though both the facts and the

theories they were developing proved to be insufficient and inaccurate beyond describing the process of colonization of the Americas from a national perspective, the concept of borderlands as a transnational cultural notion proves to be situated outside of the hegemony/counter-hegemony dichotomy that the previous formulations answered. Furthermore, it disengages from totalizing ideas of identitarian nationalism. While the previous narratives wanted to create clear narratives around the glorious past of the nation and the formidable character of the individuals at the inception of them, the objective of borderlands as a transnational concept is to problematize and deconstruct. No longer describing from the point of view of the dominant empires, borderland studies aims to describe the cultural, political and social structures of those that had to suffer under them, questioning the interactions as well as describing the strategies they had to pursue to live under such regimes. We are no longer talking about the narratives of the hegemon but rather the history of the subaltern in American soil, at the periphery of the nations. As Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett would describe "[i]f frontiers are spaces of narrative closure, then borderlands are places where stories take unpredictable turns and rarely end as expected" (Hämäläinen and Truett, 338).

The resistance to the constraints of closure and definition aligns the concepts of borderlands with posthegemony. Posthegemony addresses an other than hegemony, one that cannot be contained by it and that resists being enclosed by the dichotomies that hegemony seems to create, and deals with the passage to such a place. Much like the concept of borderlands as presented by Hämäläinen and Truett, it questions the constrictions offered by the notions of sovereignty and exclusion that the dominant

discourses are built upon, exceeding them, as well as the myths surrounding them. As Alberto Moreiras would frame it

> [a]s an institutional machine, Posthegemony is neither against the state nor against community: it is only, and primarily, the place of a possible encounter able to generate new thought along the lines of the republican motto "Everybody counts or no one counts" – something the other two tendencies, doomed for the infinite loop of their own conditions of enunciation, could never offer. (Moreiras, 104)

No longer a moving line that separated the us from the them, the national from the alien, posthegemony and the borderlands create a zone of contact between cultures, recognizing the culture formed in the exchange between them rather than creating a historiography of a nation. Whereas frontier depended on the rigidity of the hegemonic power and the conquest of the new population and Bolton and Banon's conceptualization of Spanish borderland contested through a counter-hegemonic point of view Turner's frontier, the notion of borderland is built on the fluidity of individuals that culturally develop in between cultures. Through the notion of frontier, we are acknowledging a power hierarchy and the potential of assimilation of one culture over the other. However, through the development and understanding of the borderlands, such elements of group belonging and established identity order were blurred. No longer the site of struggle of contact zones between established empires, these porous areas of exchange far from the metropolis and capitals of the nations they belong to constitute a hybrid character not built in opposition to the established notions but rather despite of

them. The distance from the areas of influence from both nations made it theoretically possible to escape the hegemonic structures when creating a border culture. Not a counterculture but a culture outside of both areas of influence.

> As in earlier America, these contact zones were also zones of mobility, spaces where individuals might elude domination, cross between cultures, or shift between categories. If borderlands subverted centrist power, they often did so by fostering relationships that slipped under the radar. They functioned at scales that were often too small for centralizing institutions to control, contain, or comprehend. (Hämäläinen and Truett, 348)

While initially developed by historians of the United States, both frontier and borderland were used to explain the phenomena that take place around these contact zones by other scholars outside of the discipline of history. At first the theses around these concepts were aimed to create a historiography of these spaces, borderlands as a concept can only be understood as an interdisciplinary effort to try to encapsulate the sometimes elusive nature of the posthegemonic potentiality of the subaltern in the border of the United States and Mexico. As Robert Tally mentioned with his spatial turn, these topographical notions aid in our understanding of the development of other social and cultural constructs. The rigid monolithical divisiveness of the frontier and the fluid permeable contact zone of the borderlands aid in our understanding of how the relation between cultures and the interaction and inclusion of them within the American ideals has been conceptualized. The borderlands have become, as Guillermo Gomez-Peña would define, contradictory and in the cross-roads of multiple identities (Alvarez, Jr.,

448). However, it is in the escape of this definition that we can position the posthegemonic nature of the borderlands as codified by Gomez-Peña or Gloria Anzaldúa, as borderlands are not only the contested spaces between colonial empires but rather "are zones defined by any consequential social, political, or cultural divide" (Hernández, 327).

It must be said at this time that, even though in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, we will be using borderlands as a metaphoric and abstract concept that points towards the potential posthegemonic nature of it, it does nevertheless answer to a concrete reality, a reality of state-violence, migration, and struggle: the struggle of many who have tried to cross the space that the borderlands constitutes and have suffered at the hand of individuals or government agents who have criminalized, violently punished, or executed them. Not only that, as we will see in the following chapters, but the state violence that takes place in the borderlands towards its inhabitants is at times directed against those that are established there in an effort to take away their property and give it to those the state deems worthy – that is, White settlers.

While the study of borders and borderlands from a transnational point of view of politics, sociology, or anthropology has spread around the world to describe and explain the interrelations between nations and the creation of cultures in between them, the Mexico-U.S. borderlands plays a paradigmatic and central position in these studies. While for the hegemonic thought of the 21st century the borderlands are just passing lands for the immigrant trying to arrive to the United States, the historical, political, and geographical complexities of the lands that compound the Mexico – U.S. borderlands

make it not only unique but paradigmatic of what borderlands studies center around; a paradigm that frames the crossings between both nations or the "history of conquest and domination" and it is "the best example of how nation-states negotiate, marginalize, and influence people's ever shifting local behavior" (Alvarez, Jr., 451). Far from the capitals of the two contending nations of these borderlands, Washington D.C. and Mexico City, it is through the understanding of posthegemony that the borderlands can be fully articulated.

Taking a step forward in history and assessing what the borderlands mean for the individuals that form part of it currently rather than aiming to look for larger national myth, it is Gloria Anzaldúa who formulated what the borderlands are for those who have been raised and lived in it. While other cultural products who pre-date Anzaldúa's canonical *Borderlands / La Frontera* (1987) had dealt with the culture that developed and how the individuals in this culture deal with the counter-positions that hegemonic institutions try to impose onto them, Anzaldúa's book fully articulated what the borderlands means for the peoples that inhabit them:

> The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country - a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from *them*. A border is a dividing the, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and

> forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal". (Anzaldúa, 25)

Located in the periphery of the culture, *los atravesados*, as Anzaldúa names them, live in the interstice of two cultures, having to negotiate in the friction between them their own. While there have been attempts to forcedly cauterize the never-ending bleeding that this friction produces, the history between them has produced a hybrid culture that does not adhere to one particular country nor does it repudiate either one. Much like Wendy Brown presented when talking about the theatricality of the border wall and the separation that it aims to create – as well as the weaknesses of the nation-state as an entity it points towards, – Anzaldúa's understanding of the border and its objective to divide the us from the them – the *nos/otras* as she would put it later on – fails to create such division on the borderlands. The borderlands as a location and the *atravesados* as its inhabitants point towards the efforts to create a culture that cannot be contained fully by hegemony nor does it want to, even though there have been efforts to do so by the creation of monolithic counter-hegemonic identities.

These border zones as Anzaldúa understands them should be put into use when defining categories such as gender, sexual orientation, or class and the disruptions that problematization of them by gender studies, queer studies, or Marxism, among others, have brought into the discussion of them. The separation from the hegemonic ideal, as represented by the capital, aids in the reconfiguration in an effort to break away from

them, including these reformulations into border zones where disturbing and rebelling against the hegemon is possible. The position of understanding culture and gender at the edges of a nation, at the limits between two nations, opens up a multitude of expressions of genders and sexuality, performed in a variety of ways. It is no longer the unitary and predominant ways of performing gender – a gender that tries to encapsulate the individuals into men and women and disregards gender non-conforming individuals – but allows the re-interpretation of these roles as something other than their reproductive exploits. It is therefore necessary not to talk about these categories in the singular but rather in the plural, as the cultural expressions of these are no longer one but many, no longer within a hierarchy but rather un-scaled. As Peter Jackson would put it

> [i]n opposition to a unitary view of culture as the intellectual and artistic product of an elite, cultural politics insists on the plurality of cultures – subordinate as well as dominant, popular as well as elite, black and white, gay and straight. Consistent with this view, I will refer to a plurality of masculinities, with their attendant instabilities and contradictions, rather than assuming a uniform and unitary pattern of masculinity. (Jackson, 200)

It is in the disruption of gender, sexual orientation, and class the borderlands provides that the concept of misidentification is placed, as a process of disengaging from a normative and unified performance of the self, accepting the multitude of performances within them. It does not follow the normative performative visions of the individual as dictated by the dominant culture but rather it thrives in the periphery of dominant cultures.

In conclusion, while the efforts to describe and frame the nation from a mythological point of view in order to create a hegemony of nation, a dominant idea that looked for its validation in the past, have been made, they have all proven invalid due to their lack of problematization. While the objective of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier and the frontiersman was to find in the movement towards the West of the Anglo-Saxon colonizer an image of what the United States should be, it proved ineffective as a narrative due to the lack of accuracy. Herbert Eugene Bolton and John Francis Bannon's effort to problematize said account through the inclusion of the Spanish borderlands also were short as, even though the change of orientation of the national movement and inclusion of Spain complicated Turner's epic, it nevertheless relied on the point of view of the colonizer to justify the historical development of the nation. Much like them, David J. Weber's Mexican and Spanish frontier relied on the account of the colonizer, thought it aimed to detach the history of the land from the nationalist agenda of his predecessors. The turn to the borderlands offers a step beyond the hegemony/counter-hegemony pendular movement that these versions offer towards a posthegemonic practice and culture in Gloria Anzaldúa's understandings of the fluidity of the land, culture, and community that has endured said movements and how misidentification plays and will play a decisive role in the full disengagement of these monolithic enterprises that aim to dominate.

CHAPTER III

(COUNTER)HEGEMONIC VISIONS: NARRATIVES OF THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

> In this universe of ours, with its wealth of errors and legends, historical data and false information, one absolute truth is the fact that Superman is Clark Kent. All the rest is always open for debate
>
> *The Book of Legendary Lands*
>
> Umberto Eco

In his 2013 book, Italian critic Umberto Eco explored how imaginary lands had been created, described, and mythologized across the world, history, and media. While skipping locations that were at their core purely literary, such as Gulliver's Laputa, Sherlock Holmes' 221B Barker Street, or the cell where the Count of Montecristo was imprisoned, Eco focused his efforts on places that had a legendary nature, such as Atlantis, Eden, or the Island of Utopia. These lands, through their diverse media and literary portrayals, fanned the imagination of the Western world and, at times, pushed towards the Orientalizing of exotic lands and peoples, as Edward Said would frame it. In other cases, the descriptions of these fantastical lands inspired expeditions, crusades, and wars over places, objects, and people that were at times not based in reality. When expeditioners, colonizers, or soldiers arrived to the destination, there was a disconnect between what they imagined these loci would be and the reality of them. While some of

these journeys had as their purpose the exploration and conquering of a new land, that is, the colonization of lands that promised new riches, others had as a mission the recovery of a land of origin, the cradle of civilization for a community.

Eco's transcultural and multimedia analysis of imaginary lands serves to examine the power of such dwellings in society's psyche and how these places are sometimes fundamental to unify a community under a common goal. As he says in his introduction "legendary lands and places […] have only one characteristic in common: whether they depend on ancient legends whose origins are lost in the mist of time or whether they are an effect of modern invention, they have created flows of belief" (Eco, 9). In the multidirectional geopolitical and temporal flow of the imaginary of the community, there is a unifying enterprise under one or a set of tenets that pushes the group forward. While more often than not used as a subterfuge for a larger political or economic enterprise, the fictionalization of these lands served as a powerful tool for leaders to organize the masses under a common objective, whether it answered to an expansionist agenda or to enlarge the glory of a particular individual or nation.

Much like the colonization of the new land in the United States and the expansion of the nation served as a unifier for the new Anglo-American population as we have explored in the previous chapter, the geotemporal axis of these legendary lands and goals can also be reverted. Through the idea of the frontier, historians validated and excused the imperialist efforts of the newly founded country in a land that was never originally theirs, neither in fiction nor in reality. Therefore, the movement from East to West was not only a geographical movement but also a temporal one, one that pointed

towards the future of an incumbent nation in a previously by them unexplored land. These two coordinates, time and space, can be shifted when talking about other communities, as is the case of the birth of the Chicana/o community. In their adoption of Aztlán as their geographical and ideological goal and origin they pointed towards the glory of a lost past, one that they needed to go back in order to establish a coalition amongst individuals from a myriad of places to fight hegemonic and racist constructs of the dominant American discourse at the time of the Civil Rights era in the United States. While symbolic and metaphorical in nature, as Luis Leal would point out, the organizing idea of Aztlán as the land of origin of the Chicana/o nation shifts the geographical and temporal coordinates on the nation-building endeavors of the United States. From the East-West movement explored with the idea of the frontier of the Anglo-American, the Chicano/a movement shifted to South-North; from a movement towards an unknown future under the promise of a Manifest Destiny, to the recovery of a glorious ancient past through the organizing idea of the native land of the Chicano population.

However, through the efforts of creating a counterhegemonic coalition, they created a dominant set of binomial precepts that perpetuated the controlling and oppressive ideologies they claimed to escape. In their efforts to break away and establish their own unions and coalitions to fight against the despotic and racist constructs of the hegemon, they themselves created a dominant confining discourse where heteropatriarchal rules of behavior were to be followed. The roles of men and women as provider and nurturer, respectively, were firmly set and no deviation from them was accepted. This division of power and the defense of the nuclear family as core value for

the Chicano movement not only imprisoned genders and oppressed sexualities but it also created an assimilationist dichotomy that repudiated anything that was outside of them. Either you were part of the community and behaved as the set guidelines proposed or you were against them and therefore assumed assimilated to the mainstream American way of living, a traitor, a *vendido*, a *desarraigado*.

This chapter will explore the Chicano movement through the organizing principle of Aztlán. How the unifying ideas behind the supposedly counterhegemonic movement perpetuated the racial, gendered, and sexual misgivings that the mainstream American values was pursuing, creating themselves a hegemonic movement. First, we will tackle the narrative on the myth of Aztlán through its graphic and narrative sources to later understand the history of violence at the Southwestern border of the United States against the Hispanic population. We will then focus our attention at the birth of the Chicano movement and the articulation of the values that they promoted through the re-imagining of Aztlán as a future nation for the Chicano as established by the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (1969). Finally, we will examine the expansion and opposition of such assimilationist community values through the comparison of two novels of the time: *George Washington Gómez* (1990) by Américo Paredes and *Pocho* (1959) by José Villarreal. We will also look at how the ideas of assimilation and dissimilation play a central role in the development of the main male characters in their narrative.

2.1 The myth of Aztlán, the search of a national ethos

In the beginning there was one land, as with many myths of origin. However, in the mythical land of Aztlán, this space was composed by seven caves where different groups inhabited – in fact, this place was also called Chicomoztoc in Nahuatl, the land of the seven caves, the cradle of the majority of the groups that populated Mexico's central area before the Spanish colonization (Wake, 206). It was in the call for action by the Aztec god Huitzilopochtli in most accounts that the unification of the peoples of the seven caves came about by the creation of a common goal: the establishment of a new city that would be in time Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec empire.

This mythical land of origin for the Aztec, Chichimec, and other peoples was already important for the national imaginary of the pre-colonial Aztec empire. According to Michael Pina, Moctezuma Ilhuicamina in the 15th century dispatched a group of religious emissaries to look for this original land (Pina, 14-15). While the journey had as its goal finding the land of origin of the empire, Pina points out how it also answered to a political agenda that aimed to amalgamate the citizens of the empire by establishing a common point of birth, a cradle from where all the peoples that formed the empire originated. This expedition was followed by many others, with its earliest iteration after the institution of the Spanish empire in the Americas during the 16th century (Levin Rojo, 61) and the later iteration during the Chicana and Chicano Movement of the 1960s (Pina, 15). All throughout, the common denominator in these journeys was the same: the creation of a national identity forged from the idea of a common genesis.

This obsession to return to their land of origin nevertheless goes against the initial nature of the Aztec society given their previously nomadic culture, which pushes us to question the reasons behind such restoration. While the journeys to recover Aztlán, as we have pointed out, have been many, they did not follow the original ethos of their people. Nomad in nature according to archeological and linguistic evidence, pre-Hispanic peoples of this area understood "migration [as] integral to the sociopolitical dynamics of Mesoamerica in the Post-Classic Horizon" (Levin Rojo, 108). Therefore, both Moctezuma Ilhuicamina's and the following quests to discover and re-claim Aztlán, as well as the documents that chronicle and narrate them, followed political agendas beyond the purely scientific.

The Map of Cuauhtinchán No. 2, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is one of these documents where myth, history, and legal and political schemes are entangled. Much like Robert Tally defended on the bidirectional narratological power of a map, how drawing a map is telling a story, this codex unveils a visual narrative where mythical and historical elements intertwine. This foundational narrative does not prescribe the character of the citizens or the nation, unlike the Frontier and the Manifest Destiny did for the Anglo-American people. The codex designed in the early years of the colonial era was not only a pictorial depiction of a myth but rather was to be used as a legal document in land disputes upon the arrival of the Spaniards. While myths of origin in other traditions have been illustrated with an educational or aesthetic purpose in mind, the pilgrimage of the Chichimec peoples from Aztlán/Chicomoztoc to the establishment

of a new city goes beyond them to provide legal evidence of their right over land. As Eleanor Wake describes

> As with other native pictorial texts of its era, the [Mapa de Cuauhtinchán no. 2] appears to have been "recycled" to serve purposes other than that originally intended – from being, perhaps, a "charter" for the reenactment of its history as a hunting adventure […], or a restatement of the authority of colonial native rulers at a time when this might have been in doubt […], to, ultimately, a document produced in a colonial court to fight the land disputes in which Cuauhtinchán was involved in the mid-sixteenth century. (Wake, 207)

In an effort to re-claim a myth of origin in the case of the Chichimec peoples in this map, there is an overlay of intentions beyond religious or educational purposes that such iconographic mediums usually contain. Narrative, illustration, and geography are mixed in this document with historical – and fictional – accounts of their claim for a land that was originally theirs. This graphic document does not seek a future ethos to guide a budding society in their future endeavors but rather looks back to an origin in order to defend the right to a land that could be expropriated by an alien power now imposing its might. Therefore, this document acted as a deed of ownership of a long-forgotten land that was, nevertheless, theirs.

Along the lines of looking back to justify one's historical claim or power, we must also analyze the importance of the mythical on this map, the defense of the heroic and epic nature of the ancestors and how it is portrayed graphically. Trying to measure up to noblemen in Europe, *indigenistas criollos* – that is, descendants of Spaniards in the

Americas – aimed to prove their noble heritage not only through their Western heritage but also by claiming a legendary and dignified past for the land they were born in. Considered as of lower social rank than individuals born in the Peninsula, *criollos* aimed to glorify the past of the conquered lands "[portraying] pre-Columbian Aztec culture as an equivalent classical antiquity of Mexican history, regularly comparing the Aztec empire to those of the Greeks and Romans – often quite favorably" (Lint Sagarena, 15). While these comparisons amongst classical empires still hold true, due to the sociopolitical, scientific, and cultural advancements of all of them, the effort to correlate such civilizations did not lie in the greatness of all of them but rather on elevating and justifying the power of the *criollo* population, making them as pure as those born and raised in the metropolis. Moreover, this effort in seeking their indigenous roots by *criollos* was not an effort to glorify the native peoples and cultures per se and help to restore them to past status but rather to create "a past for themselves in the Americas that was altogether separate from their Iberian heritage" (Lint Sagarena, 15) and through which they could claim a status closer to nobility that was being taken away by those born in the metropolis.

Such parallels between the classical Greek and Roman tradition and the Aztec one exceeded the social and genealogical, bleeding into the artistic. While following the literary and aesthetic trends established in the Iberian Peninsula at this time, the embrace of classical tropes and forms in a new land by *criollo* authors as well as Spanish authors long established in the Americas ascertained the value of their own experiences and heritage. Writers and artists were not only describing in their works the greatness of the

Arcadia as a pastoral paradise where shepherds were articulate in their speech as could be seen in the poems and plays at the time in Spain but rather compared these classical environments to the ones in the New World. Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana* (1569), Bernardo de Balbuena's *Grandeza Mexicana* (1604), or Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá's *Historia de la Nueva México* (1610), among others, had as their objective not only the comparison between traditions but also to elevate their American homeland – and themselves as inhabitants of it – to an equal status to the Iberians. By using in their works classical tropes and forms and by comparing the feats of the ancient Aztecs and new *conquistadores* to those of classic heroes, these authors intended to convince their readers of the sublimeness of their lands, their ancestors, and the value of their stories to an audience rooted firmly in a set of established Western artistic values and worldviews.

The description of land, cities, and epic feats of the conquistadores also provided an opportunity to spur the conquest. Through their poems and by specifically directing their narratives to noblemen and women in Spain, authors aimed to convince that the enterprises the empire was taking part in – and sometimes the money that these noblemen and women were pouring into them – answered to a heroic and necessary enterprise. While masquerading sometimes under the premise of religion or under the guise of an epic poem, these authors convinced the readers of the necessity of the Spanish empire and the creation of a hegemony under it. The mission of these explorations was not the conquest for spreading the faith but rather continuing the assimilation of the native peoples and advancing the grandeur of the Spanish empire. As López-Chavez points out, the narratives and

> [their] manner of observing and describing changed with the centuries, although [they] never abandoned that colonialist position. For the second half of the eighteenth century, the European attitude was more open to the idea of exploring in order to learn, but exploration was always linked to empire-building. (López-Chávez, 124)

Therefore, the stories that came from the Americas served a double purpose. On the one hand the authors aimed to grant a noble past linked to their homeland and experiences in the Americas, separate from that of the metropolis. On the other hand, they provided for those who read these narratives further motive to continue with the conquest no matter the cost. While to some degree opposite, both operations established the power of the Spanish hegemon in the new land.

Literary works that came from the other side of the Atlantic were nevertheless met with friction in the metropolis by critics. While there has been a recovery of these authors – with Villagrá, "El Inca" Garcilaso de la Vega, or Juan de Oñate being introduced as an early Latinx writers in the latest edition of *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature* (2011) – traditional literary criticism deemed them minor writers until recently. The resistance to these authors – and more specifically to the work by Villagrá – by critics continued all the way to the 20th century where Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, one of the most influential philologist and literary critics of the beginning of the 20th century, saw in the epic poem *Historia de la Nueva México* "the epitome of bad taste and prosaism" (Martín-Rodríguez, 672) due to the mixture of epic poem and secretarial documents that the author put forth. Moreover, in the case of Villagrá's work, the

publication of *Historia de la Nueva México* was only five years after the publication of Miguel de Cervantes *Don Quixote* (1605), which proved to be an unsurmountable obstacle due to the latter proclaiming the end of the epic tradition that the former belonged to. As Martín-Rodríguez affirms

> [i]f *Don Quixote* is generally credited with putting an end to chivalric romances while heralding the modern novel, […] Villagrá's *Historia* can be read precisely as the poem that thematizes the impossibility of extending the life of the epic beyond the sixteenth century, heralding instead a hybrid discourse in which the legal constantly interrupts the poetic, and vice versa. (Martín-Rodríguez, 671)

Historia de la Nueva México narrates the epic journey of Don Juan de Oñate and their exploration and attempt to conquer what is currently New Mexico in the United States where the author, Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá, partook as Oñate's secretary. Both *conquistador* and secretary born in Nueva España, Villagrá's epic poem, while interrupted by secretarial documents, grants the reader a first-person account of the adventures such enterprise carried by the Spaniards while reaching these new lands.

The beginning or the narrative provides the Spanish reader of the time with one of the first accounts of Aztlán and the foundation of current Mexico City, equating the creation of the capital to that of the foundation of Rome by Romulus and Remus. The epic, directed towards Phillip II, begins by locating geographically Mexico City, locating it in the same parallel as Jerusalem. Therefore, Villagrá's connections to both Rome and Jerusalem point out to two separate entities that were crucial for the Spanish empire: state and church. Not only was Villagrá linking Aztlán to the capital of an ancient and

respected empire such as the Roman empire – an empire that all throughout the Western tradition has been established as a paradigm of power – but it was also linking it to the origin of the Christian faith, one for which crusades had been fought and were still fresh in the Spanish national imaginary.

The equation of both as sisterly cities validates the evangelization and conquest enterprises that the Spanish empire was carrying out simultaneously and through which it was establishing its dominion. Villagrá continues his geographic description by giving the coordinates of Aztlán and linking it to the classical tradition. As he says "That section where the North doth hide / The hollow cavern, craggy,/ Of vigorous and hasty Boreas,/ There came two most courageous brethren,/ Of high and noble Kings descended" (Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá et al., verses 120-124). Through this narration of the exit of Aztlán and the foundation of Mexico City, Villagrá is creating a hybrid text between the classical and the indigenous as well as providing geographic coordinates of where this cavern – that, as we saw with the Mapa de Cuauhtinchán no. 2, were seven in other accounts. It also equates the exit of these founders to that of noblemen of the classical tradition, providing not only a heroic and epic past to the establishment of the city but also giving it to himself as a descendant of them.

Aztlán, as a myth, works for Villagrá in this way as a noble place, both by its equivalence to Jerusalem as well as its heroic past. It also works as a unifying place from where the peoples that populated North and Central America came from, serving as an Eden or Arcadia to which one would like to return, either symbollically or actually. This image carried on to the 20th century were the Chicano movement took Aztlán as its

guiding point, trying to re-claim this nation as something that was taken away by the colonial and imperial violence of the Spaniards and Americans alike.

> Aztlán […] is as much a symbol as it is a myth. As a symbol, it conveys the image of the cave […] representative of the origin of man; and as a myth, it symbolized the existence of a paradisiacal region where injustice, evil, sickness, old age, poverty and misery do not exist. […] Aztlán symbolized the spiritual union of the Chicanos, something that is carried within the heart, no matter where they may live or where they may find themselves. (Leal, 8)

At a time when what was later known as the Chicana and Chicano Movement had suffered under the yoke of the Anglos, Aztlán worked as an ideal place where to go back as one people.

2.2 A history of violence. Hispanic experiences of the Southwest Borderlands

The return, whether metaphorical or real, to the mythical land of Aztlán as a goal in a nation building endeavor for the Chicana and Chicano Movement of the Civil Rights era in the United States must be understood as a counterhegemonic act in response to the violence towards them. While there was a continuous erasure or lack of recognition of the Southwestern borderlands by Anglo historians, there was as well an effort to symbolically eradicate the population of these lands. A historical movement opposite to the invisibilization of these historians, it aimed to take over these lands by criminalizing, victimizing, and murdering the local Hispanic population, a campaign that can still be felt today through the portrayal of Latinx individuals in some media. Therefore, there

was a double movement, one trying to theoretically brush aside the Borderlands – though when dealing with them, they would present it as a clash between Old empires as we have previously analyzed – and another one trying to take advantage of this vacuum to take over control of the properties in and around it.

In order to understand the historic complexities of this campaign for the victimization of the Hispanic population of the borderlands, it is important to establish the difference between being stereotyped as a criminal versus being criminalized, along with the racism attached to both categories. While both of them often overlap, as the current cases of racial profiling in the United States in 2020 have proven, they can be understood as separate categories in accordance with Lisa Marie Cacho's analysis. While being stereotyped as a criminal can be a momentaneous misrecognition, being criminalized amounts to being prevented from being a law-abiding citizen, barring the individual from any access to the legal system (Cacho, 5). Thus, while in the first one there is a brief moment of confusion between the individual being mistaken and charged with a crime and the perpetrator of said crime, the second prevents this initial mistake to be corrected. Furthermore, this exclusion from the legal system is often accompanied by a refusal of the individual's humanity. As Cacho continues "[p]rocesses of criminalization regulate and regularize targeted populations, not only disciplining and dehumanizing those ineligible for personhood, but also presenting them as ineligible for sympathy and compassion" (Cacho, 37).

This process and difference between being stereotyped as a criminal and criminalizing an entire group has been part of the dominant structure of the United

States. The racialized criminalization of groups, however, has had a multitude of causes depending on the historical moment. While this process of criminalization has negated the capacity to access humanness to African American individuals within American society – as Zakiyyah Iman Jackson would affirm when talking about Sylvia Wynter "the Negro is not so much excluded from the category Man and its overrepresentation of humanity but foundational to it as its antipodal figure, as the nadir of Man" (Jackson, 30) – it has had a divergent process and result for other racial, sexual, and gender minorities. While as Jackson puts it there is a separation between criminalization and the Black individual – given their lack of access to the category of human by the hegemon, given the history of Anti-Blackness in the United States and beyond - the establishment of difference and criminalization with the Hispanic community had at its roots much of what was discussed in the previous chapter: their presence in the borderlands before the Anglo population arrived as well as the prejudices against the Spaniards spread by the Black Legend.

While the processes of criminalization and human categorization follow different paths for minorities in the United States, some of the abhorrent consequences are still the same. In the case of the Hispanic population of the borderlands during the 19th and 20th century we have a twofold process. First, given the colonizing history of these lands, the native settlers of the border had to endure the stereotyping of the Anglo population, who deemed them as lazy. As Carrie Gibson gathered in her history of the borderlands the "founders" of the state of Texas thought along those lines, given that "Sam Houston [proclaimed] in January 1836 that the 'vigor of the descendants of the north [will never]

mix with the phlegm of the indolent Mexicans" (Gibson, 196). The reluctance to mix with the locals and the characterization of the Mexican population as passive or lazy gave the Anglo newcomers an excuse to justify the use of slave work in their plantation – something that, under the Mexican constitution that ruled the land before its separation, was not possible.

Secondly, there was a campaign to criminalize said population, preventing them from any access to the law and, hence, denying them the possibility of a fair trial, which made it possible for lynchings to occur and for the perpetrators of said violence to go free. Those that had before the separation from Mexico owned the properties along the borderlands were now envied by the new Anglo population, who at times used violence as a way to secure new property and remove – that is, murder – the previous owner. Described "as a retributive act of murder for which those responsible claim to be serving the interests of justice, tradition, or community good" (Carrigan and Webb, 413), lynchings of individuals are part of the history of violence of the South of the United States, becoming one of the ways White population used to establish their power, to establish their dominance over other races. As James W. Clarke frames it "[l]ynching became a public spectacle, symbolizing the enforcement component of white supremacy and the Southern wing of the Democratic party. Since lynching enhanced the objectives of social control, and was not a punishable crime in the South, it flourished virtually unchecked by the law or community pressure" (Clarke, 277).

All through the South, violence was used – and pardoned by the state – as a way to establish the new model of society, the Anglo status quo instead of the Hispanic one.

While the numbers in comparison to the African American community greatly differ – according to the NAACP the number of African Americans lynched between 1882 and 1968 was approximately 3,446 ("History of Lynchings") – there were however 597 lynchings of individuals of Mexican descent in the South between 1848 and 1928. And out of all of these the majority was concentrated between Texas and California – 282 and 188 individuals, respectively. As Carrigan and Webb describe

> [t]he story of Mexican lynching is not a footnote in history but rather a critical chapter in the history of Anglo western expansion and conquest. If the story of lynching is essential to understanding the African American experience, then lynching is equally important to the story of the Mexican American experience. (Carrigan and Webb, 414)

The links between Anti-Mexican vigilantism and state violence are connections that in the last few decades historians have been able to uncover. Like the episodes of police brutality that were denounced throughout the 2010s and all the way to the assassination by the police of Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner or George Floyd, incidences of state racial terror and their tactics in the borderlands were commonly used against the Mexican population. As historians Monica Muñoz-Martínez, Sonia Hernández, or Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, among others, have denounced in the last few years in their historiographies, Anti-Mexican violence was tightly linked to the state creation of the borderlands as well as the imposition of Whiteness, though this process of demythologizing is slow given how ingrained the image of the Texas Rangers is in the education system of the borderlands as well as in the popular culture of the West.

Popular institutions of the borderlands have their birth in the racism and violence of this era, such as the Texas Rangers. Popularized in the 90s by television and rebooted in 2021, the history of the Texas Rangers in Texas is one of racist assaults against Mexicans, being compared to what the Ku Klux Klan represented to the African American community but "legal" (Martínez, 106). Created by Stephen F. Austin in 1823 in order to protect the properties of the new coming Anglos to the previously Mexican territories, they took their role beyond defense and towards offense. With massacres like the one in Porvenir in 1918 that killed 15 Mexicans and with countless other lynchings behind them, the offensives launched by the Rangers during the Republic of Texas against individuals of Mexican descent or the role of the US military in controlling Rangers during the US – Mexico War, this group of state sanctioned vigilantes aimed to impose a racial and class superiority over the Mexican population. Nevertheless, due to the Anglo population establishing themselves as the political power in the Southwest, these stories of violence were not explored by academics until the second half of the 20th century, as it will be discussed later on.

The traumatic events suffered under the dominance and violence of the hegemonic regime established in the Southwest were met with a counterhegemonic movement in the Chicana and Chicano Movement during the Civil Rights era. A shift against White dominant discourse, this shift conceptualized Aztlán again as the land of origin of the Chicana and Chicano nation, one to go back to in order to fight the racial system that was aimed to subjugating and exploding them. And it is in this shift that a trend towards a return to the mythical land of Aztlán was born as a symbolic nation-

building endeavor, one that would separate the Chicana/o from the Anglo in their self-determination. However, in this determination towards a counterhegemonic narrative, a new hegemon was born that fixed categories such as gender and sexuality and caged those who dare deviate from them.

2.3 The Chicana and Chicano movement as (counter)hegemonic

Throughout the Americas, essays have served as foundational texts on which to base national identity. Either by separating civilization from barbarity in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845) or by advocating for their separation from the colony with the United States Declaration of Independence (1776), the Americas have made of the essay a steppingstone by which to assert their uniqueness from the Old World and to testify to a necessity to unite under a common culture. Moreover, essays like Martí's *Nuestra America* (1891) or Simón Bolivar's texts aspire to the union of the Americas, trying to link the commonalities amongst them, making the population aware of their own cultural heritage. As Rodolfo Corky Gonzales claimed in his 1970's speech at Arizona State University, the recognition of one's own traditions and cultural background can push the individual to affirm their own individuality from the hegemonic group as

> […] when you have that layer and that step into liberation, when you can understand that you can love yourself for the contributions of your people, for the nobility of your heroes, for everything that we have done for this economy and

this country, you can then look into the mirror and say, I am a man, I am a woman. (Gonzales, *Arizona State University Speech, 38*)

The fight for the creation of the Chicano nation started within the fight for Civil Rights of the 1960s and 1970s. While it is true that examples of associations of Mexican-Americans and Chicanos did exist before such dates, as Rodolfo F. Acuña points out when talking about professors such as George I. Sánchez or Herschel T. Manuel and their efforts to start a new discipline dedicated to the study of Chicanos in academia at the beginning of the 20th century (Acuña, 8), it was not until the sixties that the community galvanized to defend itself from the misrepresentation and lack of opportunities that the Chicanos had at that time. While the Chicano and the African American community were very present in the Vietnam war, they came back to a segregated country where their rights and their efforts were not recognized but rather ignored and bashed. In fact, while the civil rights legislation mostly focused on the African American population at first, the large population of Latina/os in states such as California or Texas made the expansion to other minorities necessary – a number that would exponentially grow in the urban areas of these states in the decade of the 60s (Acuña, 15). However, while the African American community was able to win certain legal battles, the fight for the rights of the Chicana/o community was not as successful, as Randy Ontiveros affirms when he says that "[u]nlike the African American civil rights movement, the Chicano movement won no direct legislative victories in the postwar decades" (Ontiveros, 2).

Moreover as Acuña points out "social segregation still existed, and in places like Texas and eastern Oregon 'No Mexicans Allowed' signs were common" (Acuña, 14). Different conflicts during the sixties in California and Texas made it necessary to contemplate a solution to the racist and discriminatory practices of the government in respect to the Mexican American community. Not only that, but the rejection also came from the higher spheres of Mexican intellectuals, who saw the Chicano community as second class. In his analysis of the Mexican American community during the fifties and the figure of the *pachuco*, Octavio Paz in *Laberinto de la soledad* (1950) sees a constant contradiction and tension between two different nations, Mexico and the United States, and states that in their efforts to distinguish themselves, they end up being "un *clown* impasible y siniestro" (Paz, 12).

Along with the struggle to gain civil rights, the Chicano community struggled with the lack of political representation and media misrepresentation. At a time when young Chicanos were dying in Vietnam and coming back to their families in corpse bags, there was, as Ontiveros would put it, a general "brownout" in mass media (Ontiveros 45). While the struggle of the African American community was not depicted in newspapers or in television until the trials of Emmett Till, an African American teenager that was lynched due to the accusations of a white woman who said he flirted with her, in 1955, the Chicano community did not have a substantial media coverage. While examples of Latinos do exist in the media of that time – such as the coverage of farmworkers between 1965 and 1975 or of the "peaceful invasion of Catalina Island" in 1972 (Ontiveros 45) – the depiction of the movement portrayed the Mexican American

individuals more as objects than subjects of history, giving a condescending view of the Chicano movement. While the African American civil rights movement showed a complex tapestry of narratives – both in favor and against – the Mexican American struggle was treated mostly in unidirectional and paternalistic ways, leaving out "the rich complexity of Mexican American history and politics" (Ontiveros 45).

In order to overcome the invisibilization that the Chicano community was suffering both at the hands of the government and of the media, they had to unite and create a unified identity. However, as Acuña points out "[b]ecoming involves developing a sense of community, which is not an easy task" more so when it "involved forming a common identity and considering separate and distinct cultures, as well as the formation of a community of scholars" (Acuña, 13). Though other communities initiated their efforts within a common cultural background, the Chicano community encompassed diverse identities – as some would claim that Chicano was only one that was born within the United States, others accepted Chicano as born in Mexico but moved here, and others even had the audacity of claiming that Chicano were only those that were born in the Rio Grande Valley.

While it is true that the Chicano community did not come to victory in any particular legal matter at this time, as previously stated, the artistic efforts towards a unified community – or nation – made it so that they created a rather monolithical view of the movement. Though other manifestations were largely ignored by the media, Chicano art gave global visibility to the community. The efforts of César Chavez, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, Dolores Huerta, or Reies López Tejerina came to be known

through the artistic visions and literary products of community-based murals, Victor Ochoa's or Salvador Torres' paintings, or the literary works of Oscar Zeta Acosta, Tomás Rivera, or Luis Valdez. And no other artistic product was more important for the creation of the Chicano identity than the essay.

The national essay in the case of the Chicano community took the form of speeches that were delivered at the different meetings and rallies that these associations held. In these gatherings writings from poets such as Alurista or Corky Gonzales were read in front of the audience to create a common cultural identity. Much in line with the national essays that established or re-enforced the national identity of the states throughout the Americas, texts such as the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* or the *Arizona State University Speech* created a unified and homogenous identity of the Chicano, one with which they could feel pride in their own traditions and values and fight against the hegemonic state – or states, if Mexico is taken into account – that were rejecting and misrepresenting them.

El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, embraced by the community at the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado, in 1969, calls upon the unity of the Chicano community and for attention to the discrimination that they were suffering. Behind this manifesto were the Chicano poet Alurista and one of the organizers of the conference, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, and it came to signify the enunciation of the economic, social, and political goals that the Chicano movement had. Moreover, it called upon the creation of a separate political party in the United States from the traditional Republican and Democrat, that they identified as "the same animal

with two heads"(Alurista, 3), with Raza nationalism as their main objective. As they described it "[n]ationalism [was] the key to organization transcends all religious, political, class, and economic factions or boundaries. Nationalism is the common denominator that all members of La Raza can agree upon" (Alturista, 2). The goals that the plan proposes focus on seven organizational goals (unity, economy, education, institutions, self-defense, cultural, and political liberation) with particular actions to carry out in order to achieve what the plan concludes: "a nation autonomous and free – culturally, socially, economically, and politically – will make its own decisions on the usage of our lands, the taxation of our goods, the utilization of our bodies for war, the determination of justice (reward and punishment), and the profit of our sweat" (Alturista, 4).

While the African American community rallied mostly around the figures of Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcom X, the Chicano community found their leaders on César Chávez, Reies López Tejerina, and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. Though the first focused on labor rights, founding the National Farm Workers Association, and civil rights who relied mainly in non-violent practices, "Corky" Gonzales was a former boxer, poet, and political activist, who was behind the first National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado, where he was from. After a short career as a boxer, he spent a period working for the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, joining his efforts to their War on Poverty. However, in 1967 he resigned from the Democratic party and conventional politics, aiming to push the Chicano agenda further along.

For Gonzales, the Chicano movement and nation were the same thing. His efforts, reflected in his speeches, pursued the rejection of conventional politics towards a more revolutionary and exclusionary effort. For him, both political parties in power represented the same ideals, since none of them were interested in minority issues, as "many of our politicians in the past that we have supported have not done anything" (Gonzales, 41). However, some of his statements were misunderstood, as people claimed that some of what he affirmed called for exclusionary practices, as he wanted the Chicano community to be able to sustain itself, with stores and businesses within their *barrios* to be run by themselves, and not by *anglos*. To these statements, he answered that he wanted to create a nation in which both the concepts of nation and *familia* ran parallel:

> That's "La Familia." First we must take care of our family. Nationalism is a tool. Now a lot of the young heavies that get started late get angry and use this as hate. Now we say nationalism is a tool for organization, not a weapon for hatred. Nationalism is a state of being a nation, not a state of creating an outside group that hates another group. (Gonzales, 40)

According to Gonzales, much of the work had to be done by the educators and the politicians, as it was them who would educate the future generations and fight for their rights. With this, he wanted to break with the system that perpetuated the memorization of Euro-American heroes while the advancements made by the minorities and indigenous peoples of the Americas were ignored. As he remembered, the Aztecs had a sophisticated medical system, doing what could be considered brain surgery during

the time of the European Middle Ages, facts that were otherwise ignored by the textbooks that focused mainly on the advancements of Europe. With the educators laid the responsibility of giving power to new generations who were conscious of their own community and who were not ashamed of their own heritage, but proud of their past accomplishments, giving them an ancestry on which they could exult.

> The schools are tools of the power structure that blind and sentence our youth to a life of confusion and hypocrisy, one that preaches assimilation and practices institutional racism. You, the educators, have to rise above this to be the urban missionary, to be the believer in the advancement of our youth to a new and progressive society, and to be totally dedicated to mold minds and learn to know their future role as builders, teachers, and leaders. (Gonzales, *Message to Aztlán,* 78)

With these texts, both *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* and the essays by Gonzales could be understood as foundational national essays as they call upon the unity of a common people under a same origin and struggle. These texts unite the Chicano nation as descendants of the inhabitants of Aztlán who have suffered under the *Anglos* in the United States and who were discriminated under the rule of the Euro-American regime. It is because of this situation that they call to rebel against them and unite to fight for their rights. These texts were able to do so, re-appropriating the term Chicano as was previously explained and re-using it as a term of endearment. As Rafael Pérez-Torres would point out

> Although politically and ideologically vague, "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" does help establish the discursive habits by which Chicano culture asserts its autonomy. Aztlán thus forms not a national but a critical region for El Movimiento. At its most efficacious moments, it comes to represent a cultural site by which to express pride in origins and heritages. The investigation of the past, the reclamation of history, the pride of place embodied in Aztlán manifests itself in the idea of Chicanismo. (Pérez-Torres, 29)

However, even if they help galvanize an otherwise heterogeneous community, a hegemonic, or mainstream discourse had to be created for the foundation of the nation in accordance to the plan. In so doing people that did not fit the mold of the new discourse – that is, those that whose gender, sexuality, race, or class did not fit the heteronormativity imposed – were excluded. While situated at the origin of Chicanismo and the Latinx movements, these texts are currently deemed too radical as they call upon the rejection of any notion that comes from the Anglo-American, more in line with the indigenous movements of the time in which it was conceived, establishing a clear us/them division that stimulated an assimilationist/non-assimilationist division sometimes hard to negotiate for those that did not fit the norm. Moreover, it ignored some of the struggles women were fighting for or other minorities within the community.

Through the ideas of Gonzales and Alurista, among others, these national essays called, at its most radical, for the separation of the Chicano nation from the United States and, at least, for a cultural nationalism. The values and traditions that these

texts pointed towards, exemplified by the list of goals that the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* enunciated around unity, economy, education, institutions, self-defense, cultural, and political liberation, hinted towards a larger epistemological and legal separation between the Chicano community and the United States. In an effort to point towards the past looking for what David Carrasco would call "the enigma of anteriority" (Carrasco, 61), they searched for a common – yet mythical – origin that could have a somehow gravitational pull to unite the community under those values. Randy Ontiveros would point out that

> [t]raditionalist rejected the promise of integration into U.S. society, sometimes even calling for the creation of an independent nation of Aztlán in the region that had been ceded to the United States after the Mexican-American War. (Comparisons were occasionally drawn to the contemporaneous disputes in Quebec and Palestine) (Ontiveros 175)

While the premise of separating from the main United States was only an extreme one, it could be interpreted as one of the main motors behind the claims that these texts were making. Through their call for individuals to separate socially, economically, and politically from mainstream United States some could understand that their claims aligned with pro-independent movements such as those in Ireland, Scotland, Palestine, or the Basque Countries. By claiming their own political and economic power, the Chicano movement in these texts separated from the African American civil rights movement in its effort to create a new nation instead of fighting for their rights within

the present one. Nevertheless, the claims that most of the Chicano pointed towards were aimed at a cultural nationalism rather than an independent nation.

Cultural nationalism, even if potentially less worrisome than its political counterpart, does pose some questions. Cultural nationalism, as Ontiveros affirms, "was a powerful organizing tool during the 1960s and 1970s" (Ontiveros 30). Instead of inciting towards a breakage, the cultural nationalism Ontiveros talks about tried to unite the individuals within the movement against the oppressor, trying to create links among them and drawing from the similarities rather than from their differences to create a homogenous group in a community marked by their original and ideological diversity. The idea of cultural nationalism as promoted by the aforementioned texts was nevertheless reductionist, as it did not allow space to those outside of the patriarchal frame in which it was created. While Ontiveros talks how the Chicano movement came towards a more inclusive policy towards sexual minorities and women when he affirms that "the ideology of *chicanismo* gave way to a pan-Latino/a politics, or *latinidad*" (Ontiveros 30) and with this *latinidad* a sexual and national inclusivity that approached Latinos from other countries outside of a Mexican ancestry, at this point it is necessary to tackle the complex reaction that the movement had towards them.

Along with the creation of a cultural nationalism, the Chicano movement called attention to the lack of academic work done for, by, and about their community in higher education. With the invisibilization that existed when the Chicanos came back from the Vietnam war, there was a lack of representation in the universities throughout the United States that tackled Chicano studies as a discipline. These soldiers from underrepresented

communities came back to a United States where they could and did apply for college thanks to the G. I. Bill, making the university student body more diverse, but where their history, traditions, and culture was not reflected, analyzed, or studied academically. Together with the African American community, the Chicano movement fought to change this and create the discipline of Chicano studies.

However, this change did not come from the higher structures of universities but rather from student activism. The different walkouts throughout the border states – such as the 1968 Texas students' walkouts along with their parallels in California, Arizona, and New Mexico at the same time – were supported by student associations such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), the Mexican American Student Association (MASA) or the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztán (MEChA) all helped to galvanize the Chicano movement as a discipline, and as a department, in universities throughout the United States and outside. The advent of the Plan de Santa Barbara in 1969 or the creation of *El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought* in 1967, the discipline of Chicano Studies was finally established in higher education. On the one hand, the Plan de Santa Barbara, drafted at the University of California Santa Barbara, gave guidelines to follow in order to incorporate Chicano Studies within higher education institutions to tackle the shortcomings that these institutions had not only for representing students within the Mexican American community but also in the study of their culture, from that point onwards. As Acuña points out "[t]oday El Plan de Santa Barbara is one of the most posted documents of the era, and legend is that a small group of faculty members,

students, and Brown Berets founded Chicano Studies" (Acuña 59), making reference to the authors that coined the Plan. On the other hand, there was the foundation of *El Grito* by Berkeley professor Octavio Romano. This journal tried to propagate the cultural nationalism of the movement by establishing, as Acuña quotes, that the Mexican-American population – contrary to other minorities – had been able to keep their own identity and resist The Great American Melting Pot (Acuña 42).

The creation of a hegemonic identity for the Chicano community within their foundational texts and throughout their academic endeavors left out those outside of the heteronormative patriarchy it promoted. Notions such as familia either subjugated or exiled women and sexual minorities, already outside of the patriarchal social frame. By embracing the model of familia and paralleling it with that of nationalism, Corky Gonzales was promoting the idea that women should stay at home taking care of the children instead of working towards a common egalitarian goal and making it impossible to disentangle the promotion of a Chicano community and that of feminism. Moreover, within the paradigm of familia, individuals in the LGBTQ spectrum could not be included, given that according to the traditional standards, they could not form a traditional family unit – that is, a father, a mother, and, most importantly, the promise of a progeny. As Blackwell would state "Chicano nationalism was not just a discourse of cultural pride; it was also a discourse that produced gendered ideologies that shaped movement ideas about political leadership, the roles of men and women, and the sexual division of political labor" (Blackwell, 100).

To understand the position that women were put in due to this adoption of family values, countermovements of Chicana feminism must be taken into account. While looking for the creation of a unified identity in Aztlán, Alurista and Corky Gonzales left out the feminist movements that were part of the Mexican tradition from the beginning of the 20th century. The feminist organization Club de Hijas de Cuauhtémoc established in Chihuahua in 1906 or Primer Congreso Feminista de Yucatán that took place in 1916, for example, were left forgotten by the forefathers of Chicanismo in their efforts to establish a communal past. In order to understand the roles and the invisibilization of women within the Chicano movement and their efforts towards a more egalitarian role, Blackwell uses what she coins as retrofitted memory, that is "[b]y drawing from both discarded and suppressed forms of knowledge, retrofitted memory creates new forms of consciousness customized to embodied material realities, political visions, and creative desires for societal transformation" (Blackwell 2). That is, by researching those that were overlooked in the historical narrative, Blackwell attempts to put in and occupy the holes that were left unanswered. In order to do so, Blackwell in her book uses oral and archival data, interviewing feminist Chicana activists – Anna Nieto-Gómez and the Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, who are heiress to the original organizations in Mexico – that acted at the time of the formation of the movement to understand what was missing from the women's role in Chicanismo, and why.

With the adoption of family values by the Chicano movement, they also embraced a distorted portrayal of women in their cultural nationalism. While depicting

indigenous figures and class struggles in their collective murals, much of this inherited from the Mexican muralist tradition, they were not able to deal with the current roles of women in the workplace nor accept the roles that they had in the past, mythifying them to either objectify or suppress them – such as is the example of the Soldaderas or la Malinche. In the case of the Soldaderas, the women soldiers that fought during the Mexican Revolution alongside their male counterparts, being Adelita the paradigmatic figure of such movement, there were not only disregarded but also sexualized. According to Blackwell the women of the Chicano movement were indeed seen as Soldaderas in as much as soldiers in a war for the civil rights of the Chicano. As soldiers, they were expected just to fight with their male counterparts without questioning the orders as "[l]a Soldadera was seen as a loyal camp follower or a as a woman who 'stands by her man' to provide comfort to the revolutionary hero" (Blackwell 114). Moreover, the iconography of the Soldadera was subverted. What was once the image of proud women displaying their weapons and usually with two cartridge belts in form of a cross in their chest was sexualized, depicting highly sexualized women ready to please the patriarch. In her analysis of the Soldaderas, Blackwell tries to take this negative image of the Soldadera to bring it back to its origins as an equal partner of their male soldiers, fighting alongside with equal rights, taking for her analysis photographic accounts that were once used against women and subverting them.

Secondly, both Anna Nieto-Gómez and the Hijas de Cuauhtémoc fought to the suppress the negative connotations of women as either virgins or whores – and within the context of the Chicano movement, as either Guadalupe or Malinche. Along with the

Western tradition of heteronormativity, that forced women into the paradigms of either the angel of the house or the prostitute in the street, women in the Mexican and Chicano traditions had the Virgin of Guadalupe to look up to as a model of maternity and protection of the patriarchal structure or la Malinche, *la vendida,* the traitor to the national imaginary who was the mistress and translator of Hernán Cortés during the conquest of Tenochtitlan. With these two paradigms, women were suppressed as they could not step outside of their role as mother and housewife as the threat of being called Malinche was always upon them. As Blackwell states "[t]he act of taking on the name Hijas de Cuauhtémoc had the effect of subverting the silencing mechanism or Malinche complex deployed by Chicano nationalists who felt that a women's agenda in the movement was divisive" (Blackwell 102).

Instead of hearing the voices of women and minorities that were claiming that the structures that were being set in place did not recognize them, the Chicano movement continued, trying to silence what was impossible to silence in the long run. Feminist Chicana organizations like the ones that were just described along with feminist thinkers such as Cherríe Moraga or Gloria Anzaldúa, who were able to fight not only against the misogyny of the original movement but also to establish themselves as proud lesbians among them, as well as artistic interventions on the Chicano cultural identity as the ASCO collective or Guillermo Gómez-Peña, among others, de-stabilized the gendered and sexual roles that were equal to the Chicano identity.

While problematic for some minorities, the foundational texts of the Chicano movement helped unite the Mexican-American community against a society that did not

recognize them as equal members. Thanks to the texts by Alurista and Corky Gonzales, among others, the cultural identity of the Chicano community was recognized in their fight for the creation of structures that protected their rights, starting with education, cultural representation, and civil rights. Although their nationalistic efforts left out women and sexual minorities – and their nationalistic efforts could be misunderstood as pro-independent movements, - the addition of thinkers and artists later on helped to re-orient and open the field of study into what it is today.

2.4 Depictions of hegemonic and posthegemonic Latinx expressions

Along with these nationalistic endeavors behind the Chicana and Chicano Movement and the essays that accompanied it were narratives that echoed these binomial distributions of gender and nation. Gender roles were established around the nuclear family, with men providing while women were nurturing children, and anything outside of these norms was considered an affront to the movement and a declaration towards an assimilationist agenda of the United States and against the Chicana and Chicano community. Bildungsromans such as *George Washington Gomez* (1990) by Américo Paredes or …*And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971) by Tomás Rivera reference the importance of the community against assimilation and towards a community building enterprise as well as the gender divide. It is in this context that the question towards a misidentificatory practice is raised, given the community's pressure on the individual to adhere to dichotomic standards of gender and nation. If, as we are aiming towards, misidentification is the disengagement with any assimilationist agenda

of nation, gender, or sexuality beyond the hegemonic impositions, these narratives that are presented as counterhegemonic fictions aiming to glorify the Chicana and Chicano movement nevertheless fail to do so.

The assimilationist struggles between national models arise clearly in Americo Paredes' novel *George Washington Gomez*. Written in the 1930s but not published until 1990, this bildungsroman narrates the life of Guálinto Gomez being brought up in the border city of Jonesville on the River – the fictitious name that Paredes gives to the real border city of Brownsville – were the racial tensions between the Anglo and the Mexican American population continue to segregate the later due to the former's establishment as the dominant political, social, and economic power. As stated in the first pages of the novel, Guálinto, the youngest and only son of Gumersindo and María, was "[b]orn a foreigner in his native land, he was fated to a life controlled by others" (Paredes, 15). This control will not only be enforced by society but also within his own family, due to the heteropatriarchal role that will fall onto him when he grows up. Throughout the novel the topics of formal education, family, tradition, and nation are developed in the context of segregation and the push and pull of hegemonic and counterhegemonic efforts in establishing a sense of nation that is either enforced by the Anglo settlers or taken away from them in the case of the Mexican American community.

The tensions between both communities are clearly outlined in the first few chapters where the skirmishes between bandidos and rangers – also known as *rinches*. Due to the political instability of the area as well as, as was outlined before, the racist

and violent essence of the Texas Rangers against the Mexican American community of the border, the conflict between these two factions at the beginning of the 20th century was particularly poignant. Guálinto's father, Gumersindo, and his brothers-in-law, Feliciano and Lupe, are part of this resistance against the authority of the Rangers in the border. Though at first Gumersindo is identified to the Rangers as a "good Mexican" (Paredes, 12) by a local White doctor not much later he is killed by them when they are trying to locate Lupe. In his last words to Feliciano, who will become the patriarch of the family, Gumersindo urges him to never tell his son who killed him (Paredes, 21) in an effort to stop the hate that such knowledge would engender in his son. While being able to retain and celebrate their own culture within the norms established by the hegemon, Feliciano and Gumersindo's family are able to economically survive as a medium lower-class family in the city of Jonesville thanks to the intervention of the Mexican American community, who help them procure a job when they arrive.

While throughout the novel Paredes provides the reader with examples of the complicated nature of the relationship between Anglos and Mexican Americans in the city, it is only when he finally finds out what happened to his father that Guálinto decides what his fate must be: join the army and completely assimilate to the hegemon. Strains between the Anglo status quo and the segregated Mexican American community in multiple spheres of life – education, family, finance, etc. – had been a constant during the whole of the novel. This is even more poignant as situations of racism arose during the Great Depression where part of the novel takes place and where the few economic opportunities that the citizens of Jonesville had were given to the Anglo population.

However, it is when Guálinto finds out the truth about his father's murder that he decides to move away from his hometown, change his name to George and not only abandon his community but actually aid the government in its efforts to locate potential threats within the Mexican American society of Jonesville. It is in the discovery of who is the hegemon that he decides to fully assimilate, not only to Anglo society but rather join the military forces that controlled the community he belonged to. He becomes a "*vendido sanavabiche!"* (Paredes, 294) as one of the characters calls him when he finds out Guálinto/George is working as a spy for the American government.

Guálinto/George serves as a cautionary tale for the Chicano community at the time of what assimilation to the hegemon would cause for the individual. A vendido, driven only by his own pursuits of climbing in a social ladder no matter who he steps on, the fate of Guálinto as a communal pariah acts as counterhegemonic narrative, one that, nevertheless, does not give agency to the individual in forming their own path due to the dichotomy that it embodies. The choices that Americo Paredes proposes are clear: either join the Anglo society and become a traitor to the community or accept the rules of the community as they are, without questioning or going astray. Through the vilification of Guálinto/George at the end of the novel, Paredes creates a paradigm of communal betrayal, one that reacts against its own people and family due to a primordial trauma while not elaborating on the reasons behind said betrayal.

A work that complicates and questions these notions of a unified Chicano community as promulgated by El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán is José Antonio Villarreal's 1959 novel *Pocho*. Taking as its title a derogatory term that designated Americans of

Mexican origin or an Americanized Mexican who tried to perpetuate the habits of the homeland, Villarreal narrates in his novel the life of Richard Rubio in California. Given the oppositional nature to any sort of assimilation that disidentification aims to point towards, it is in the nature of *Pocho* that we find an early example of such in Latinx literature due to the uncompromising nature of the protagonist, not willing to comply with sexual and gender roles or community and family expectations. The only son of former Pancho Villa colonel Juan Rubio and Consuelo, this novel is a bildungsroman that depicts the education of Richard in the multicultural setting of Santa Clara, where the values of his parents seem to shift, questioning the validity of the core values that they brought with them from Mexico. Religion, family, patriarchy, or the defense of a sealed community are but some of the issues that Villarreal presents in this depiction of the first half of the twentieth century in California.

While Villarreal's novel inaugurated for some the modern Chicano novel, with topics that are still dealt with in current works about the community, for others the problems that it created to the nascent movement made it too problematic to be canonical. As Roberto Cantú affirmed in his introduction for the 1994 translation to Spanish

> Villarreal propone como agente civilizador a un protagonista cuya fisionomía es indígena […] por lo tanto, adquiere desde el principio de la narración perfiles de un ideal nacional: el mestizo. La ironía del apellido [Rubio] aumenta al descubrir que Villarreal se aparta de cualquier forma de nacionalismo. (Villarreal, 6)

That is, while in his novel Villarreal could be aligned to the Chicano movement due to his protagonist being the American born son of Mexican immigrants, the nationalistic views of the protagonist differ from those of the community. Two main aspects stand out in the disruption of the Chicano agenda and Villarreal's work: the critique of nationalism and community and the questioning of a patriarchal society inherited from a supposedly Mexican culture.

The dichotomy between nationalism and assimilation into the larger society is one of the key arguments when discussing *Pocho* for critics. As it was previously seen, the cultural goal of the *Plan Espiritual* reflected on the need of role models in the cultural products of the community in order to create a nationalistic sentiment in the community. Moreover, the struggle to create such nation should also be portrayed into a cohesive community, one that unites to fight against a larger society that discriminates against them. The community as presented by Villarreal is not a homogenous one but rather a multicultural and non-heteronormative community that interacts with Anglos, Asian Americans, Italo Americans, Pachucos, homosexuals,… All of them interact with Richard, who does not see himself as part of just the Chicano community but rather is able to navigate these different scenes, valuing more his own independent thought rather than advocating for a hegemonic nationalistic one. As Bruce-Novoa points out, the criticism towards the lack of nationalistic views that this novel had at its time leaves out "the truly fundamental themes: individuality, the struggle for personal fulfillment in a world of mediocrity and compromise, or the difficult moral and social independence involved in the making of the writer"(Bruce-Novoa, 66).

The criticism towards the novel not only relied on its anti-nationalistic efforts but also considered its ending as an assimilationist effort of Richard towards the Anglo community. At the end of the novel, Richard bumps into his friends from the neighborhood and they talk about their different goals now that the involvement of the United States in the Second World War is starting. Some are joining the efforts as officers, others are being sent to the Japanese concentration camps – even though he affirms "soy tan americano como ustedes" (Villarreal 259) – and Richard decides to join the army to fight in this war. This has been read as an assimilationist movement of the author, pointing towards a cultural inclusion into the Anglo society after the war ends. However, this reading of the last vignette of the novel would contradict the rest of the novel, that narrates how the Anglo institutions and the racism between different groups act to disrupt the multicultural microcosmos of the protagonist, instead of reading it as an escape by the protagonist who was condemned to be the patriarch of his family rather than getting an education. As Cooper Alarcón affirms "[o]nce we begin to look carefully at these people and events and destinies, we must conclude that *Pocho* is not only a novel aware of the coercive powers of American institutions, but also one that forces that awareness upon the reader" (Cooper Alarcón, 218).

The themes of nation and the patriarchal society are reflected in Richard's upbringing and family. The concept of nation and nationality for his characters could be understood as fluid at best, given the Mexican nationality of the parents yet the Americanization of their children – and more particularly Richard. Throughout the novel, Richard mentions how his parents, Juan and Consuelo, would press on his sisters

and him the idea that one day they would go back to Mexico, back home, making the question of nationality and nation something temporary due to their impending movement back to their homeland. However, as the novel advances, Juan and Consuelo's idea of nationality shifts, being ever so invaded by the new Americanized ideas and ways of being – Consuelo no longer tends the house, Juan becomes a faithful husband instead of being a womanizer, … This new way of understanding their own household will ultimately lead to the disbandment of the family and the separation of the parents, falling onto Richard the responsibility to take care of his mother and sisters while his father leaves the family to re-marry a recently migrated Mexican woman, someone that has not been polluted with American ways.

Taking as a starting point some of the masculine examples of the novel, the notion of masculinity is also put into question. Taking as a starting point the beginning of the novel – where Juan, Richard's father, kills a man in order to have sex with a woman, which is the reason why he must emigrate to the United States – the concept of masculinity evolves not only through the main characters but also through their interaction with the women. In fact, as it was previously stated, Juan will give up being unfaithful to his wife once they set into their new house in California as well as eventually give up being the patriarch of the family once he leaves, leaving said duty to his son Richard who will join the war in an effort to escape this fate. Moreover, Richard's passion for reading and getting an education has also been considered against the traditional masculine roles – an idea that would be continued later by authors such as Richard Rodriguez or Junot Díaz, whose characters suffer the same fate of being

considered less manly due to their reading habits. Therefore, *pocho* in the novel could point out to a non-heteronormative view of masculinity, a queer masculinity as Hidalgo describes it, one in between the traditional Mexican views of what being a heterosexual male entail, and the Anglo position on the same topic.

While answering to a discourse of violence and oppression, the Chicana and Chicano Movement through their embrace of Aztlán as their national ethos was nevertheless perpetuating hegemonic modes of oppression. The acceptance of nationalistic discourses, though aimed to empower a community that had suffered under the yoke of diverse colonialist endeavors, it failed to protect the multitude of gender, sexual, and race experiences that were represented under their movement through the perpetuation of hegemonic patterns. Novels such as *Pocho*, however, created a paradigm in which to misidentify from these norms by not accepting dichotomic modes of understanding the community and the nation and their heterormative premises but rather aimed to escape them. While it does not advocate for a total disengagement of the communal, it does however point to the rigidity of these norms, opting for a misidentificatory strategy aimed to thrive both inside and outside of the communal spaces, accepting the multitude offered in the original caves of Aztlán.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND GENDER ASSIMILATION

> One loves the nation, then, out of hope and with nostalgia for how it could have been. One keeps loving rather than recognizing that the love that one has given has not and will not be returned
>
> *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*
>
> Sara Ahmed

Historically, the hegemonic nation has been defended from outside forces by its citizens and their emotional connection to their homeland. This conceptualization of the motherland relied heavily on the projection in the individual's mind of the nation as a larger family, one that must be protected through the undying love of its citizens. If, as Benedict Anderson proposed, the nation is an "imagined community," the members of this large community are considered an extended family and must be defended and loved as one would do with a parent or a sibling. The outsider, the Other, those who do not adhere to the identity marks of such extended familial bond, are thus understood as enemies, as those from which one must fight. In fact, Julia Kristeva when analyzing nationalism would claim that the foreigner is a motherless individual (Kristeva, 5), an individual who has been rejected by the nuclear family model and, therefore, must be met with disdain by the host nation. Only through the recognition of their own difference do the natives recognize the foreigner as a potential ally. In the interim, in which the

national does not admit the difference in themselves, the foreigner is met with hatred as "[h]atred makes [the foreigner] real, authentic so to speak, solid, or simply existing" (Kristeva, 13).

Hatred towards the Other and love towards the country are both emotional responses that aim to move the community against the potential rupture of itself. These emotions, as Sara Ahmed would examine them, are "not only about movement [but] also about attachments or about what connects us to this or that" (Ahmed, 11). Therefore, not only do emotions generate in the individual a willingness to move towards or against that which might threaten them or their ideals, but also creates links amongst the members of the community, creating those familial bonds necessary for the defense of the fatherland. Political institutions, to promote the status quo, aim to move the citizens towards this defense through their interconnective ideals of what a nation was, is, and could be. Anyone or anything that threatens the futurity of the nation must be codified as a threat to it and those who defend it as patriots.

This linguistic and emotional motion, from hate to love, is intimately related to the response that the citizens give to the Other. This is of particular interest when we consider the numerous cases of nationalism and racism that have been happening in recent years. No longer classified as "hate groups," Ahmed identifies how codifying love in this manner not only "[identifies] white subjects as already at risk from the presence of others" but also love "becomes a property of a particular kind of subject" (Ahmed, 123). Indeed, it is through the production and reproduction of national ideals by the perfect citizen that the spread of love can continue in accordance with this paradigm,

something that, as Ahmed points out, has been manifested through the increase of feminist groups in which women's role as mothers is highlighted as the way to protect the nation. As Ahmed would point out in her analysis of these ideals of femininity "[m]aking the nation is tied to making love in the choice of an ideal other (different sex/same race), who can allow the reproduction of the nation as ideal in the form of the future generation (the white Aryan child)" (Ahmed, 12). And not only is love tied to the idea of an ongoing national project but also how that love is understood and regulated, that is, comprehended as heterosexual unions regulated by marriage, perpetuating the nuclear family model.

Through the analysis provided by Ahmed we can see how the national hegemonic ideals are closely related to heteronormative, racial, and biopolitical constructs through the emotional connection the individual has with the nation. The performativity of gender roles in accordance with these coordinates aid in the perpetuation of a national ideal through reproduction and the recreation and endurance of cultural ideas imbued to the next generations. Such potential relies heavily in the promise of heteronormativity, in the dichotomy of gender, and the performance of sexual roles. Much like the foreigner, those who do not adhere to such norms are to be considered a threat to the nation, given their contrast to the traditional performativity of gender. This is so much so that in his book *No Future* (2004), Lee Edelman proposes that the queer element proposes a menace to the heteronormative regime, a promise of non-futurity in the lack of human reproduction understood as the continuation of the hegemonic patriarchal society.

> If […] there is *no baby* and, in consequence, *no future*, then the blame must fall on the fatal lure of sterile, narcissistic enjoyments understood as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore as responsible for the undoing of social organization, collective reality, and, inevitably, life itself. (Edelman, 13)

The Motherland's womb must not be barren if the nation wants to be perpetuated. And, therefore, models of gender and sexual non-conformity had to be culturally codified as undesirable if the nation was to be defended. Strategies to codify and defame non-normative gender or sexual deviants have long been studied and deconstructed through feminist scholars. Women that threatened biopolitical hegemony – either by their sexuality or by their decision not to have children – were a menace to the promise of futurity that the nation came with and were, therefore, deemed as dangerous or mad. This same deconstruction carried out by feminism can be also applied when talking about non-normative masculinities. If for Michel Foucault sex was a political issue that was regulated through the sexualization of children and the control of women through their medicalization – more specifically, through their hysterization, - non-normative men were also controlled through the depiction of them as unable or not ideal to perpetuate the community due to their scholarly endeavors or due to their portrayal as sick individuals.

This same pattern of familism and repudiation of non-normative/queer gender identification has been perpetuated by the Latina/o community. As Richard T. Rodriguez would say that in order for the Chicana/o nation to take place "the archetypical Chicana would necessarily provide a feminine spirit of maternal consolation (in spite her

suffering) while ensuring the procreation, hence survival, of Chicano culture" (Rodríguez, 2). Not only that, but the role that women had to perform within the household had also its counter position in the role that men had as providers and protectors of the family as an expression of what the community at large represented. As we have seen so far, the defense of the community had to supersede that of the individual in such performance of gender norms. Those who did not conform to such norms were considered outsiders, pariahs, foreigners to their own community.

This chapter will focus on the threat of gender non-conformity and sexual deviancy as explained by feminism through the understanding of gender performativity. Taking feminism as a starting point, we will tackle how masculinity has been understood through the lens of critical masculinity studies, comprehending the hegemonic strategies to entrap and culturally codify both genders according to heteropatriarchal roles. Then, we will analyze the codification of non-normative masculinities, more specifically through pathologization and academic achievement of male characters in *Hunger of Memory* (1982) by Richard Rodriguez, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) by Junot Díaz, *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972) by Oscar Zeta Acosta, and *The Rain God* (1984) and *Migrant Souls* (1990) by Arturo Islas. Finally, this examination will end in how the x in Latinx opens up the spaces towards what we are describing as misidentification as a disengagement from normative tactics of assimilation.

3.1 Borderlands and the performativity of gender

The interaction and identification between the hegemonic metropolis and its periphery play a central part in the way gender, culture, and the assimilation of both are understood within the borderlands of the United States. While, as we have seen, the geographic coordinates of the nation building processes of the American and Chicana/o communities vary, their position as either dominant or subordinate have nevertheless mirrored one another when dealing with deviant individuals, those who refused to be constricted by gender and sexuality norms. The interpretation and performance of these categories, sex and gender, far from the dominant ideal, has the potential of disrupting the unifying agenda of the hegemonic and assimilationist power of society and the community, opening a variety of interpretations of both. Moreover, these culturally specific elements answer to a set of characteristics that vary, even though they bear similitudes in their outcomes. One of these outcomes, and probably the most prominent one, is the continuity of the nation through heterosexual reproduction.

In these struggles of disruption, it is also important to underline the assimilationist factions on the cultures that form the borderlands, the spheres of power that are at struggle at the limits of the authority. Every side wants to operate their power within the community through their cultural interpretation of their roles while the individuals at the borderlands feel obligated to choose among the communities at play – in the case of the American borderlands, the U.S. and the Mexican peoples. In fact, as José Saldivar would underline in his interpretation, the borderlands are

> [a] near-intercultural world unto itself, the U.S.-Mexico border is dominated by two foreign powers, in Washington, D.C., and Mexico City. The U.S.-Mexico

> border changes pesos into dollars, humans into undocumented workers, cholos/as (Chicano youth culture) into punks, people between cultures into people without a culture. (Saldívar, 8)

For Saldívar, the borderlands do not only function as the geographic space where the contact between one culture and the other transform the citizens of one country into something else, but it also works on a metaphoric level when it comes to gender. Saldívar's conceptualization of gender, class, or race as border zones, following Michelle Rosaldo's ethnography of the border, open up the articulation of the geographical towards a symbolic interpretation of these categories. These border zones become spaces of "creative cultural production" (Saldívar, 24), able to generate new understandings once the dichotomy established by the centers of power is undermined, something that, according to Saldívar's examination, is only possible in the periphery due to the distance from the rigid paradigms of the metropolis.

Saldívar's optimism in his interpretation of the border as the locus of interchangeable and creative modes of understanding culture is nevertheless negated by Gloria Anzaldúa in her early analysis of the border, specifically the U.S./Mexican border. While the borderlands as we have analyzed them so far have the potentiality of being the place where identities enter in contact and may be exchanged among the cultures, Anzaldúa scrutinized how categories of identity in both the U.S. and the Mexican communities living in the borderlands are still firmly entrenched in each culture's understanding of them. As she affirms, gender, sexual, cultural, and linguistic

expectations of the population of the borderlands follow the ideals imposed by the central ideal that one and the other metropolis perpetuate and were echoed in the border.

For Anzaldúa, gender and sexuality roles in the culture of the U.S./Mexican border are firmly entrenched in the religious and the biopolitical, being particularly true, according to her analysis, in the case of women. As she acknowledges, women in the borderlands are expected to either fulfill the roles of mother or nun (Anzaldúa, 39), either be biopolitically productive or dedicate your life to the veneration of a higher power, escaping the reproductive ethos of their gender. Only through deviancy can the women escape, as Anzaldúa says, only through prostitution – which, nevertheless, fulfills a role within the heteropatriarchy, both as antagonist of the mother and the nun as well as provider of a non-reproductive sexual avenue for men and their desire. Entrapped in this dichotomy created by the cultural understanding of gender in the border, we argue that Anzaldúa's decision to escape her community and the rigidity of its gender roles serves as a misidentificatory experience, trying to extricate herself from any assimilationist practice and opting for affirming her own gender and sexuality outside of the community of birth – even if, as she would say, "in leaving home I did not lose touch with my origins because *Io mexicano* is in my system. I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back" (Anzaldúa, 43, italics in the original). In affirming her own gender and sexual experience and leaving behind her home, she is not leaving behind her culture but rather affirming her own individuality within and outside of it, something that will be further explored in the next chapter.

Gender as a social and cultural construct has been on the line of thought of first feminism and later on gender studies at large since Simone de Beauvoir affirmed that "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir, 283). This articulation of gender moved in two different ways. Firstly, it launched the research around gender from a historical point of view, breaking away from the essentialist biology of it and understanding the elements that had been used to define the individual, trapping them within the genitalia they were assigned at birth. The transhistorical endeavor that de Beauvoir took over proves that it is in this becoming that the cultural indoctrination and separation of gender in accordance with their role within the perpetuity of it that we could argue that the cultural specificity of each gender is encapsulated. Secondly, with her affirmation the realization came that one was no longer what their gender *was* but rather what their gender *did*. What was understood as an essentialist noun transformed into a performative verb. It is not only the transhistorical elements that had trapped, as she would explore in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) but also initiated the questioning of established, dogmatic, and monolithical categories that caged the individual within a set of norms. This break from the entrapment of biology and into the realm of the presentational elements of a gender falls into what later Judith Butler would coin as performativity of gender.

> In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in

the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.

(Butler, xv)

For Butler, the performativity of gender revolves around the assumption of certain traits that a dominant culture has assigned to each gender and, through the process of metalepsis – that is, through the process of replacing an idea or notion already used figuratively, –transposed them unto the self. This identification usually falls onto the singling out of an element and the transposition of such a notion to other spheres of life, repeating a behavior that would perpetuate not only the way that the others see us but also convincing the individual that such traits appertain to themselves. Therefore, the deployment of performativity is conditioned not only by the tacit social agreement of such traits as pertaining into one category of gender or the other, but also by the individual's unconscious agreement that such attributes are, indeed, the ones that portray their gender identity. Moreover, such performance needs of the dichotomy to be effective, as either you represent one category of gender or the other.

However, in the transition of gender from name to verb that de Beauvoir advocates for, we must nevertheless acknowledge the social and sexual codification of gendered bodies. While the performativity of gender along cultural lines as Butler expressed creates an encompassing paradigm of all genders, we must nevertheless take notice of what it does to those who deviate from the sexual norm – and more specifically, homosexuals. In the homosexual individual, the heteronormative reading of the body/sign of said individual is broken given that the signifier does not align with the

signified, if we followed the semiotic line of thought. The gendered body does not align with the heteronormative signification nor with the cultural values that it must follow and there is no outside element that differentiates the deviant from the supposed norm. As Edelman would put it "while the cultural enterprise of reading homosexuality must affirm that the homosexual is distinctively and legibly marked, it must also recognize that those markings have been, can be, or can pass as, unremarked and unremarkable" (Edelman, *Homographesis,* 7). The threat of the homosexual is that, unlike racialized individuals, they can pass as straight. While in the case of African American individuals we find in society not the invisibilization of the person, as Ralph Waldo Ellison says, but rather the hypervibility, there is no such sign for the homosexual, there is no outside indicator of the sexuality of the individual – even if there have been different attempts at codifying physically the sexual variant. Even within the same culture, visible external traits cannot identify the queer elements.

Given Anzaldúa's approach to gender and sexuality in the border, we must take a moment to understand the rhetorical figures that have been deployed to understand gender performativity and how it affects the understanding of the border. While Butler would defend that "gender revolves around the metalepsis," Lee Edelman in his analysis of gender and sexuality would use another rhetorical figure, the metonymy, when talking about the collapse of gender and sexual categories into the heteronormative mold. Both metalepsis and metonymy establish a connection with the original reference, however the distance between the reference and the reproduction varies – while metonymy acknowledges a closer relationship to the referent, metalepsis creates a distance between

the original and the simulacrum. Taking into account Saldívar's and Anzaldúa's understanding of the border and its potential, the distance from the referent of the metropolis brings forth another layer of understanding and how this constant reproduction of performative acts is ultimately a corrupted copy of an ideal model that cannot be fulfilled completely due to the fictitious nature of it.

Performativity understood as Butler differs with the idea of biologically ascribed gender identification assigned at birth with heterosexuality as the default mode by which to portray such gender and, furthermore, following structures of power as outlined by Edelman. The identification of a specific understanding of gender and sexuality with success and dominance confines the individual into a traumatic repetition of certain behaviors that might not answer to their true self, just perpetuating them due to communal or societal pressure. It is not only that the individual identifies a set of behaviors that they deem appropriate given the gender they were assigned at birth and the sexuality that is accepted with it, but they also aspire to the power and status that these traits and behavior would grant. Much like it was proposed before, this identification of living a gender in a precise and certain way, without the possibility of expressing oneself in another way – that is, the identification of a gender performance as unified instead of a plurality of manners – further ossifies gender roles.

The combination of gender with a particular sexuality in the creation of a dominant model discourse – that is, in the Western canon, cisgender heterosexual – further perpetuated dichotomies of both gender and sex that hindered the development of the individual and the society at large. As Foucault, Butler, and Lee Edelman, among

others, have affirmed, the association of gender with sexuality by the controlling rhetoric to perpetuate a reproductive agenda is framed by the biopolitical control of the state on the individual's body in an effort to dictate who gets to die and the rules that govern one's own life only due to the promise of a futurity through heterosexual reproduction. It is the disturbance of such categories by breaking away from the hegemonic roles of heterosexual male and female that becomes unacceptable and therefore must be punished by the state.

Not only that, but when this model of heterosexual masculinity and femininity becomes disrupted, it must be done only according to a certain behavior that is palatable to heteronormative hegemony. While members of the LGBTQ+ have seen the rise of acceptance of their sexuality within the Western world, the recognition of their basic human rights has only been accomplished by the creation of a homonormativity that mirrors the heteronormativity that entrapped them before. The basic rights of not being imprisoned or sentenced to death due to the fact of being gender non-conforming or non-heterosexual, the recognition of same sex marriage, or the right to adopt a child, among others, have been basic yet impactful rights that the LGBTQ+ community has been able to conquest during the last fifty years. This way, a variety of ways to express one's gender identity and sexuality have been accepted, promising to break away from the grip of heteronormative rules. Yet, through the conquest of these freedoms there has nevertheless been a rejection of gender and sexual behaviors that were less readily acceptable for society, perpetuating with this a community that, while inclusive of those

that are closest to the heteropatriarchal model, does not accept all the spectrum of sexualities, gender identities, races, or classes.

The understanding of gender and sexuality within morally accepted behaviors that perpetuate or resemble heteronormative dichotomies answers to a narrative that, while it serves to decriminalize and provide fundamental rights, falls short on other accounts that do not easily conform to them. Therefore, while counter-hegemonic in nature due to its opposition to the reproductive agenda of the hegemon at first sight, the understanding of LGBTQ+ created nevertheless a new monolithic ideal individual that mirrors the same toxic rejection of minorities of the heteropatriarchy, a homonormativity. While trying to separate themselves from the oppression of gender and sexual norms that for centuries had locked themselves away in the closet, the coming out process left many still in it due to their non-conformity to the normative performativity.

Though these efforts towards and against hegemonic ideals have been framed in this chapter so far just considering the performativity of gender and sexuality, we must bear in mind another component to take into consideration: race. While we have been affirming in these last pages how the hegemonic ideal of identity answered to the coordinates of cisgender and heterosexual – and, furthermore, male, - we must add into that equation the codifier White in the context of Western ideology. As Butler put it

> [m]any of these debates have centered on the status of "construction," whether race is constructed in the same way as gender. My view is that no single account of construction will do, and that these categories always work as background for

> one another, and they often find their most powerful articulation through one another. Thus, the sexualization of racial gender norms calls to be read through multiple lenses at once, and the analysis surely illuminates the limits of gender as an exclusive category of analysis. (xvii)

As Butler describes, not only the elements surrounding the performativity of gender and sexuality are prescribed by the dominant discourse but also the behavior of race. It is therefore crucial that we consider at this point the interlocking and construction of racialized gender and sexuality in accordance to the dominant Western canon. This hegemonic ideal individual therefore answers to three different coordinates in its foundation of otherness: cisgender, heterosexual, and White. Its opposites – that is, transgender or gender non-conforming, homosexual or any other type of sexuality, and racialized – not only were deemed less but were sometimes punished by the law and generally considered transgressive. Furthermore, in the creation of such dichotomies we must bear in mind the power structures and hierarchies that come with it.

3.2 What a mighty good man. Hegemonic masculinities

As outlined before, the pinnacle of hegemonic gender intersection is situated in the cisgender heterosexual White male. A male that, in its role as apex individual, subjugated anyone below them to spread the power of hegemony. No behavior or performativity of gender other than the normative is to be allowed. However, to understand how hegemony is deployed within the axis of gender, it is important that we consider what gender hegemony means in accordance with Critical Studies of Men and

Masculinities (CSMM). This line of thought, born as a complementary position to feminism, aims to deconstruct the elements that compose monolithic understandings of masculinity across cultures, breaking away from unifying theories of gender expression. They acknowledge the variety of masculinities and, in addressing this multitude of masculinities, their goal is to "give rise to a possible plurality of *resistances*" (Jackson, 210). Not one but many, CSMM provided men with what feminism gave to women, a way out of any sort of corsets and constraints that decimated their own potential outside of their biopolitical roles. Furthermore, the deconstruction of both gender performativities points towards the dismantling of the gender dyad and opens up the dialogue to other interpretations of gender outside of them.

Following Gramsci's theorization around power structures, hegemonic masculinity is not imposed but rather accepted through agreement. As Joe Buttigieg theorized in his critique of the London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society – and later quoted by Richard Howson and Jeff Hearn – it is not through imposition that the dominant classes achieve power but rather through leadership, persuasion, and the consensus of the subaltern (Howson and Hearn, 44). It is not through the violent enforcement of certain values, characteristics, and elements but rather through the multitude of rhetorical techniques used to convince the dispossessed that what the powerful are expressing is, indeed, the norm. From the position of leadership, the spread of certain ideologies is possible given the authority and veracity that it is assigned to said positions, which, therefore, achieve the subaltern's consensus. Said consensus, turned into complicity in the case of gender expression (Howson and Hearn, 44), later on can

become unstable due to the rigidity of these categories, leading in some cases to the repudiation of these norms and the culture they came from or, in others, to the collapse of the individual and the potential traumatic repercussions for the same.

While hegemonic masculinity as a way to control the subaltern through the understanding of gender is arranged as a controlling narrative, what it stands for becomes, with time, an empty signifier due to the lack of referents. Removed from reality due to the complexities of what gender aim to encompass, the complicity around monolithic ideas on masculinity – and gender as a whole – become an instrument of control of a community not only from a position of power but also from within the community itself. Therefore, the enforcement of such gender assumptions comes not only vertically – that is, from a leader towards their subalterns – but also horizontally – amongst individuals in the same strata of power. As Richard Howson and Jeff Hearn would conclude when exploring this issue

> [f]or a group to become and operate hegemonically, it must be able to operate effectively within the nexus: the political/power and the social/subaltern. This means articulating and dispersing a legitimacy that enables the engagement and the building of consensus and complicity rather than simply imposing power as domination that ensures a crude form of subordination. (Howson and Hearn, 46)

The acceptance of a hegemonic power as well as the creation of a subjugated individual must be done through the deployment of a delegitimating social machinery. In the case of gender, this apparatus serves to disenfranchise those who are not accepted as performing their role to further society's biopolitical ends or futurity to perpetuate order.

A plurality of performativities is therefore not accepted and individuals who do not adhere to such modes are disenfranchised. As we have seen, this not only applies to hegemonic ideals but also to counter-hegemonic ones, as they both perpetuate dichotomies that ostracize those individuals that perform their identities outside the standard.

In the case of the LGBTQ+ community, the identification of inclusion within larger society most of the times entails the oppression of individuals that do not adhere to this new normal. In the journey to cultural acknowledgement, approval, success, and, ultimately, assimilation there is the peril of recreating within counter-hegemony a new hegemony, one that does not contain the multitude of performances of gender and sexuality that the movement was aiming to defend. While socially repudiated, ostracized, and punished for the last two millennia, the current movement towards the acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals has nevertheless encountered the creation of a homonormative paradigm. A palatable model of LGBTQ+ person whose behavior and goals mirrors the ones established by the heteronormative, the creation of the homonormative as a model that "[has] succumbed to the hail of reproductive futurity" (Rodriguez, 35) and therefore it is recreating in the homosexual relationship a traditional nuclear family. Though such steps towards a more inclusive society and the respect of basic human rights are vital, and the inclusion and consideration of such life styles should be recognized, the dangers lie in the creation of a new aberration, one that, due to their sexual or gender practices, cannot be easily adapted to these norms and is therefore

repudiated. A new deviant from within a community of previous deviants. As Gloria Anzaldúa affirmed when talking about deviants in the Borderlands culture

> [t]he Chicano, *mexicano*, and some Indian cultures have no tolerance for deviance. Deviance is whatever is condemned by the community. Most societies try to get rid of their deviants. Most cultures have burned and beaten their homosexuals and others who deviate from the sexual common. The queer are the mirror reflecting the heterosexual tribe's fear: being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore sub-human, in-human, non-human. (Anzaldúa, 40)

The gender and sexual deviant, the queer, as Anzaldúa frames it, acts as a vessel of negative values, those which society must discard either by ostracizing, by incarcerating, or by eliminating. Furthermore, repudiating those who do not adapt to the norm even within communities that have been subjugated themselves – as in the case of the Chicano community in the previous quote – answers to the creation of new hegemonic structures even when aiming to separate themselves through the foundation of a counterhegemonic society. Such danger is articulated when trying to re-frame and conceptualize those who were once left behind in the making of a nation/state, as can be the case of the Latino population in the United States.

As we have examined before, the Latino community was at first marginalized even in the outline of the composition of a nation that did not recognize the cultural contact zones of its Southern border in favor of a Western direction that only acknowledged the land as uninhabited and prime for its domination through the colonizing power of the Anglo-Saxon and other White peoples. In the process of

creating a counterhegemonic identity, the danger that one can encounter is the creation of a new hegemony through a process of assimilation and, in so doing, becomes complicit in the structures that bar certain individuals from acceptance. In an effort to get a place in a larger society, the peril that one can encounter is the unification of plurality in the fusion of hegemony. As David T. Abalos would frame it "[t]he tragedy of the melting pot continues to be that immigrants, at least by the second generation, ignore or are forced to ignore their national and cultural past in their rush to be assimilated Americans" (Abalos, 70). Through this process of social unification what was once useful due to the coalitions formed by individuals that shared a common goal and past turns into a new homogenous community that does not recognize the history, culture, or struggle of each individual.

The creation of an Other, one that does not align with the new national values, not only serves as a powerful assimilationist tool for the hegemon but also serves as a de-humanization strategy to separate the community from the Other. As Anzaldúa exposed in her quote, the rejection of the deviant and the composition of a national identity built on the de-humanization of the queer. Not only does this approach rely on such rejection but it also connects with its racial component to further determine group belonging and humanity, as Afropessimist thought frames it. In his analysis of the rhetorical tools used by politicians to create distance between the target audience and the one they want to set up as the new Other, Sergio A. Macías affirms that the de-humanization of the Other functions as a powerful tool to separate the community from the deviant, something that he sees was particularly powerful in the 2016 American

elections and beyond. Through conceptualizing Latino men who were coming from the other side of the Southwestern border as criminals, the then presidential candidate started a distancing and dehumanizing practice by which his target audience could be differentiated, creating a distance from *us* – law abiding citizens – and *them* – those who do not conform racially, nationally, or sexually to the norm. The rhetoric of vilification of Latino men by the candidate followed other historical tactics to de-humanize minorities in the United States, such as the myth of the Angry Black men, the Shifty Asian, or the *bandido* Latino men, not to mention how these same tactics were also deployed by other authoritarian regimes across the world to demonize populations. All manufactured and established on the supposed uncontainable sexual depravity and/or violent outbursts of the male population of these minorities, the ex-president built upon these baseless fictions that have been in the national psyche of the nation to take away the humanity of those that were coming to the country in search of a new life. This becomes even more problematic when such establishments between us and them are created within the community, when the hateful rhetoric tactics – what Macías coins as "poetics of caca"(Macías, 40) – serve as intracommunal separation.

Gender and sexual performance normativity and the social complicity on what these should be to belong to a community entrap most of the individuals no matter what their sexual orientation or gender is. Ideals around these two categories are fully unachievable, creating in the individual a constant interrogation and sense of not belonging. In the case of Latino masculinity, two main characteristics arise: familism and machismo. Both being sides of the same coin, a coin that aims to perpetuate the

future of the community through the institution of a heteronormative family and the potentiality of violence and control over women, as M. Cristina Alcalde would affirm. Monolithic understandings around gender among the Latino population framed the perpetuity of a nationalist agenda through futurism in the establishment of the traditional family as the basis of the community, sidelining gender non-conforming women and men. This coin, however, has changed with time as Alcalde continues such affirmation saying that

> [o]n the one hand, hegemonic masculinity may result in increased loneliness, depression, fear of emotions, engagement in risky health behaviors, and maladaptive coping styles […] On the other hand, not only is it the case that increasingly Latinos of all ages reject violence as a central aspect of masculinity […], but nurturance, protectiveness, and loyalty are also central to what it means to be a man for many Latinos. (Alcalde, 539)

While the rejection of obsolete understandings of gender might be coming in the years to come – and more so with the understanding of Latinx pointing towards a disruption on the construction of gender, sexuality, or race, among others, as we will see later on – literature has nevertheless perpetuated or problematized these considerations of gender performance within the Latina/Latino canon. Non-normative masculinity – or, as we argued before, queer masculinity – has long been depicted through two different strategies in the Latino literary imaginary: nerds and sicks. The association between books and non-normative masculinities, as someone who through academic achievement proposes a model that might not be ideal or that has a doomed destiny, has a multitude of

examples. José Villarreal's *Pocho*, Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory*, Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* or Justin Torres *We the Animals* all propose models of bildungsroman in which the main character has intellectual goals but that, nevertheless, proposes modes of non-adequate masculinity for the community. At the same time, Arturo Isla's *Migrant Souls* or *The Rain God,* Oscar Zeta Acosta's *Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* or Dagoberto Gilb's *The Last Known Residence of Mickey Acuña* focus their attention on individuals whose mental or physical illnesses stop them from performing their masculinity as established by the community. Be it due to their rejection of the community's pressure to carry on traditional models of family, rejection of any sort of ethnic and sexual community, rejection of traditional modes of performative masculinity, or rejection of any sort of heteronormative constraints, all these books propose ways of escaping their gender and sexual ethos as established by the community and have had to leave behind their own ties to it in order to fully embrace their identity.

3.3 Where the nerd and sick collide. Codifying non-normative masculinities

Paradigms of maleness within the Latino community and its cultural production vary but are all connected to either the caring and protective father – what Alcalde views as familism – or to machismo – which is closely related to gender violence and father absenteeism. Boys who do not fit in these parameters seek comfort sometimes in their education in order to expand their horizons in search of identity paradigms that better fit their impulses as "[t]he library may be the best ally a barrio boy can have" (Carrillo, 81).

For them – scholarship boys in the case that Carrillo analyzes – books expose them to different ways to understand masculinity and not a monolithic notion engraved in their own traditions and culture and where the push and pull of the assimilation in a master gender and sexual narrative can be avoided.

Books and reading are, therefore, acts of gender rebellion in the cases of Richard Rodriguez and Junot Díaz in their narratives. One from a Mexican background in California while the other from a Dominican context in New Jersey, one gay and the other one straight, both authors describe their struggles to fit into the molds of masculinity that are set for them. For both controversial figures, the separation from stereotypical viewings of masculinity in their communities had nevertheless a common outlet in literature as a tool to express their own individuality separate from the community and that holds the key to their success or failure to assimilate into it. In the case of Rodriguez "[h]e feels his love of literature violates the ideals of Mexican male identity stressed by his family, the most important quality being that of the *formal* male" (Fine, 123). For Díaz, his sociopolitical inclinations made him feel out of place, a stranger within his own community, seeking comfort first in the mutant characters of the *X-Men* (1963) created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby to later move on to the comic books of *Love and Rockets* (1982) by the Brothers Hernandez, closer to his Latino heritage (VolBrooklyn).

For Rodriguez, his gender formation will be perpetually haunted by his own sexuality. *Hunger of Memory*, the first of four volumes of autobiographical accounts, deals with his feelings of being a Mexican-American in the Affirmative Action era and

his own gender as a homosexual male – something that is never disclosed in this volume. As Newtown says "[e]qually important in the history of his relation to his own secrets is the tension between his growing need for authenticity and his fear that he might be reduced to caricature if he reveals too much, so he supplies bits and pieces" (Newtown, 299). These "bits and pieces" that Rodriguez poses in his narration are of vital importance when trying to understand the place masculinity poses for him, something that is present throughout his narration, at times in the gaps that his memoir leaves behind. For him, his tendency to enclose himself in novels to escape his own reality acted as escape ways to express his homosexuality in an environment he feared would not accept it.

Richard Rodriguez's paradigm of masculinity is deeply rooted in the description his mother and her friends give. As he notes "[w]omen at home […] would repeat the old Mexican dictum that man should be *feo*, *fuerte*, *y formal*. 'The three *F*'s' my mother called them, smiling slyly" (R. Rodriguez, 137). These three parameters of the ideal man – ruggedly handsome and physically strong, with a strong character, and responsible, respectively, as Rodriguez explains later (R. Rodriguez, 137-138) – clearly mark what he thinks of himself, not fitting into any of them *per se* and seeing himself as something other within his own cultural matrix. Rodriguez's gender is born in opposition to what his own culture attributes to being a man, outside of the traditional gender binary as he does not perform the role of man as clearly established by this statement. Moreover, it is particularly important that said gender normativity is perpetuated through the complicity of women, given the subjugation that they

themselves suffered under the hegemonic visions of it, what further proves Howson and Hearn's theorization of complicity in the perpetuation of gender performances.

Rodriguez's understanding of gender is later complicated by his own personal views on ethnicity and his racial component. Even though some of Rodriguez's family members had Caucasian features, his younger sister and him are clearly dark skinned (R. Rodriguez, 123), something that will be constantly brought up by his mother when she would scorn him for being too much in the sun during the summer or not taking care of himself (R. Rodriguez, 123). In fact, as he points out "[d]ark skin was for my mother the most important symbol of a life of oppressive labor and poverty. But both my parents recognized other symbols as well" (R. Rodriguez, 123). Being darker signified belonging to a lower class, mixing the racial component with an economical one, it signified being *mestizo*, further complicating his own gender identity given the intersection in his own person of complicated and denigrated racial stereotypes. Not only does Rodriguez personify a gender deviancy through his literary inclinations but he is further codified as such through his dark skin, something that does not fit within the standards of beauty of the community.

In order to fully embrace both his body and mind, Rodriguez has an awakening while working as a construction worker. While at first he wants to work during the summer both to win some money and also to have an experience until then barred to him, he will later discover the pleasures of working bare chested and reconnecting with his own physical dimension. No longer a scholar – his intellectual abilities were of no use in the construction site – he had to rely on his own body to do the job, reconnecting

with his basic instincts. Through this act of gender exorcism, Rodriguez is able to embrace his masculinity fully as "[t]he curse of physical shame was broken by the sun; I was no longer ashamed of my body. No longer would I deny myself the pleasing sensations of my *maleness*" (R. Rodriguez, 156) . As Nieto García says "Rodriguez wants ethnic subjects to be free to negotiate the complicated interaction between ascribed and self-identifying aspects of their identity" (Nieto Garcia, 104). It is in this act of disassociation from any sort of gender or racial stereotype as established by the community that we can see Rodriguez's misidentificatory tactic, by acknowledging his own individuality detached from his cultural ties. Nevertheless, such misidentificatory movement in the case of Rodriguez is further complicated due to his initial movement towards the assimilation of the White hegemon due to his own opinions against the Mexican American struggle and counter-hegemonic movement.

In the case of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Junot Díaz's main character Oscar does not fit the models of masculinity proposed by the Dominican community. These modes of masculinity are further complicated by the diaspora, as Horn explores, as "the Dominican diaspora has contributed to amplifying existing gender repertoires in the Dominican Republic" (Horn, 124). Therefore, the already hypermasculine gender roles that are expressed throughout Díaz's work in his short stories are further complicated by the diasporic transformation they had undergone in the context of this novel. For a character such as Oscar, whose refuge lied in the books he read, not conforming to the gender roles of his own culture would ultimately mean his own death. For decades, the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo created around himself

an image of a womanizer that persisted within popular culture as a sign of masculinity, creating the figure of the *tíguere,* a man who , according to Dixa Ramírez, paid "attention to immaculately pressed and tailored garments, displays of military medals, and sustained self-promotion as the nation's *paterfamilias*" (Ramírez, 394). The connection between dominating women and masculinity was passed on amongst the inhabitants of the Dominican Republic, perpetuating roles of control over women – no matter if such dominance was through violence or the promise of such – and preservation of the family unit that persisted well after Trujillo's death.

Within Diaz's work, Oscar problematizes the conceptualization of masculinity according to the Dominican standard, being a failed attempt to such concept. Unfit to link himself to the Dominican hyper-masculine ideal, due mainly to his obesity, he is always entrapped within the four walls of his house. This locus, historically linked to women and further explored by literary archetypes from the 19th century, complicates his manhood and makes him unable to walk free in the public sphere. Incapable of securing a girl due to his physical appearance and committed to the romantic paradigms present in popular culture, he is enclosed in his room, either reading or writing. This challenges his sense of belonging both to the United States and to the Dominican Republic as "not only is Oscar a diaspora Dominican […] but also he is a diaspora Dominican who does not fit the strict, gendered parameters of Dominicanness" (Ramírez, 395). Owing to this rejection from his homeland and his current country, he will constantly feel displaced, unable to connect fully to either culture, what would prompt his intention to commit suicide – although he will not succeed in his endeavor.

Due to his inability to conform to Dominican gender standards, the other characters will put in question his sexuality. As he does not fit monolithical gender norms and performances, he cannot be a Dominican "macho" and therefore the community presumes his sexuality must be other, a "maricón." In fact, when he is a child, he is able to secure two girlfriends as companions, something that is understood as a great promise on his *Dominicanness.* However, this stage does not last too long, making Oscar long for this previous stage of masculinity and to fit this role once more as an adult. As Gonzalez points out "Oscar is a queer sort of character because of his initial failure to follow the heterosexual script, and, […] Yunior as narrator exposes the ways in which class, size, and ethnicity configure sexual expectations and desires" (Gonzalez, 285). As he is rejected time and again by the women he romantically woos, he searches comfort in books and television, creating for himself a persona obsessed with *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Battlestar Galactica, Akira* or Marvel comics, something that is observed by his mother as "[e]ven his own mother found his preoccupations nutty. Go outside and play! She commanded at least once a day. Pórtate como un muchacho *normal*" (Díaz, 22, *emphasis mine*). The emphasis on the comic books and science fiction that Díaz portrays in the character of Oscar, while answering to his own biography as was previously stated, also supports the preconceptions according to which such publications perverted the youth in the United States. Linked to the postulations put forth by German American psychologists Frederic Wertham's *The Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), comic books resulted in the perversion of the child and linked such publications to homosexuality. The theories of such publication lead to the creation of the Comics Code

Authority in 1954 that censored and kept in check the topics that would be put forth in such narratives, a code of conduct that was only rejected in the 2000s by the biggest comic publishers in the United States, Marvel and DC comics. Furthermore, following this same line of thought, role playing games and anime have been popularly linked to satanism and violence, which further complicated Oscar's masculinity according to the United States standards as well.

Both Rodríguez and Díaz explored through their portrayals of masculinity a complicated relationship between culture and the paradigms put forth by different Latino communities in the United States. These portrayals relied on the intellectual endeavors of the protagonists to question how non-normative masculinities were seen as pathologies that must be eradicated from the community. In the same way, non-normative masculinities have also been portrayed in Latino literature through illnesses, both mental and physical. Understood in biopolitical terms as a way of not being able to perform and perpetuate a national identity in the potentiality of an offspring, illness, both physical and mental, has codified undesirable ways of understanding masculinity. If for Michel Foucault sex was a political issue that was regulated through the sexualization of children and the control of women through their medicalization – more specifically, through their hysterization, - non-normative men were also controlled through the depiction of them as unable or not ideal to perpetuate the community due to their illnesses or idiosyncrasies. The depiction of sick masculinities aid to control and establish paradigms of hegemonic masculinity through the representation of their antithesis.

A representation of such non-normative masculinity is present in the main character of Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*. Set in San Francisco in 1967, it describes Acosta's drug-filled journey from being a lawyer in San Francisco to joining the Chicano movement in Los Angeles via El Paso, Texas. Obese, impotent, and with mental issues, Acosta's journey of self-exploration and description of his life until that moment proposes a counternarrative to the *familismo* and machismo that was proclaimed by the Chicano movement at the time. His impossibility to adhere to gender and sexual norms produces his escape, it is the catalyst to the autobiographical narrative that he presents.

While, according to Lao Tzu, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, Zeta Acosta's journey begins with a visit to the toilet. Looking at his reflection on the mirror, he analyzes how his body – fat, with visible breasts, and a huge belly – and how he should stop eating so much only to then rush to the bathroom to purge though being unable to do so. The constant reminder of the physical illnesses that corrode him – above this, he remembers in this initial scene how different physicians had showed him pictures of his stomach filled with holes – are only reinforced by the imaginary conversation he has with his psychiatrist while he tries to evacuate. In this initial portrayal of himself, Acosta depicts himself as completely opposite to any sort of heteronormative male, someone who the roles of family man and macho, capable of any sort of violence to defend the honor of his family, his own honor, or his nation, and therefore someone through which the promise of futurity cannot be fulfilled. Moreover, as the narrative carries on, readers and Maria, a patron of the bar Zeta Acosta visits

before he leaves San Francisco, discover he is impotent due to an "accident" (Acosta, 45) and thus such futurity not only is less than ideal but rather impossible. It is within the impossibility to reproduce that the previously established model completely fails, given that the nationalistic ideal rely on the potentiality.

Acosta's portrayal of himself challenges any sort of masculine normativity that was previously established within the Latino imaginary, something that pushes him towards his journey of self-discovery and to the acceptance, after the depiction of several breakdowns and drug journeys, of himself as "Chicano by ancestry and a Brown Buffalo by choice"(Acosta, 199). While it is true that his journey will lead him to join the Chicano Movement, it is in his embrace of his own masculinity, detached from any sort of communal approval that define his queerness. Heternormativity, therefore, medically breaks down on the locus of Acosta given the frailty of the individual and the impossibility to complete his biopolitical function as a man.

This cannot be said of the characters portrayed by Arturo Islas in *The Rain God* and *Migrant Souls*, more specifically his character Miguel Chico. Following the story of the Angel family, these two books aim to complicate family narratives through the exploration of four generations of the family, where gender roles, sexuality, and assimilation are played out and discussed by the members of the same. While *The Rain God* focused mainly on the Christmas Eve the entire family is celebrating, intermingling the accounts of the night of each individual character with their own personal narratives, *Migrant Souls* focuses mainly on the childhood and upbringing of Josie, the youngest daughter of Eduviges Angel and Sancho Salazar. While there are other gay characters in

Islas' narrative – Felix, Josie's uncle, who will die at the hands of his male "lover" and Serena, Josie's sister, who has a long time "roommate" – it is Miguel Chico, Josie's cousin, who challenges the masculine role that he, as the oldest son of his own family, is called to accomplish. While Felix, his uncle, portrays a problematic depiction of homosexuality due to his predatory behavior that will ultimately get him killed, it is Miguel Chico's double depiction of queer masculinity as both an academic and sick, that truly separate him from hegemonic masculinity.

A professor in San Francisco, Miguel Chico must escape his natal Del Sapo, Texas, when he realizes his queerness. In opposition to Acosta's journey of masculinity, where he leaves illnesses behind to fully embrace himself at the end of the account, Miguel Chico's journey of self-discovery will lead him to alcoholism and, later on, to a surgery that will leave him with a colostomy bag attach to himself for life. While the details of the illness that will ultimately put him in surgery are not discussed in the book, it is his awakening at the hospital after the operation that opens *The Rain God*. As he realizes the tubes going up and down his body, detached from his body and unable to control it fully, he finally escapes any sort of social norm.

"Without this pain, he would have possessed for the first time in his life that consciousness his grandmother and the Catholic church he had renounced had taught him was the highest form of existence: pure, bodiless intellect. No shit, no piss, no blood – a perfect astronaut. 'I'm an angel' he said inside his mouth […]" (Islas, 9)

This surgery will remind Miguel Chico of the accounts of gender indoctrination in his household. Unable to fully express himself as a gay man living in a Catholic

Latino household, with the difference being pointed out due to his academic interests, he will leave behind Texas to fully explore his own personality in San Francisco, making few visits to Del Sapo due to the judgement that his family passes on his lifestyle even though his queerness is not discussed. It is in deciding to disengage from any notion of family or traditional community that Miguel Chico establishes his queerness, with illness as its marker in Arturo Islas' narrative.

3.4 What's in an x. Disengaging from the hegemon

Given the models of normative masculinity that are presented in Latino fiction, these narratives both deconstruct and criticize monolithical understandings of gender within the community. Much like the debates at the foundation of the creation of the Chicano movement during the Civil Rights era on the contrast between assimilation or aculturation, the questioning around the concept of gender de-stabilized what the community should stand for and, moreover, if such community is even possible currently under such rigid dogmas. One of the interventions on the dismantling of gender, sexuality, and nation building efforts of the Latino community has been the introduction of the concept of Latinx. In her article "What's in an "X"?: An Exchange about the Politics of 'Latinx'" scholar Catalina M. de Onís enters such dialogue with scholars aiming to fully understand the pros and cons of such novel concept. In such exchange questions around assimilation, acculturation, and gender are fleshed out, aiming to de-articulate power structures. While some pointed out how such conceptualization came from a place of power and outside of a larger Latin American

context, given that the initial formulation of this paradigm was born in the United States, most of the scholars in such dialogue pointed out how the inclusivity of the x went beyond the hegemonic/counterhegemonic dichotomy that previously entrapped them.

Through the introduction in the discussion of the term Latinx as a way to question gender and sexuality, among other traits, Latinx as a uniform people has become what we could describe as a posthegemonic group. Much like the historical conception of the geography of the United States, the construction of a concept that encompasses the complex cultural identity of the Spanish speaking world in the Americas and their descendants within the current borders of the United States has been problematic in the creation of such coalition. Debates around the terms Latina/Latino, Hispanic, Chicana/o, and, as of late, Latinx have divided community and academia in which one better fits the reality of the community. Moreover, the divide that the *x* introduced has brought back to the forefront the identity and geographical coordinates that such turn is supposed to bring. As Nicole Guidotti-Hernández would say "the x is a framework that highlights the anomaly of where Latinos are geographically in the United States and how they negotiate space" (Guidotti-Hernández, 155). And while these considerations of space and identity must be considered, we must underline that the project of the x brings into discussion the resistance towards the colonization past and the gender dichotomy of the West.

While, as we have seen, the presence of individuals and territories that were once colonized by Spain predates in some cases that of Anglo-Saxon population, the creation of the term Latina/Latino and its constitution as a community goes back to the Civil

Rights movement and answers to a heterogenous reality. Be it from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador, or any other Latin American country, this term creates what Flores, borrowing from Benedict Anderson, would define as an "imagined community" (Flores, 193). By imagined community what Flores would interpret is the alliance of a group of peoples that are united by a national origin, a certain ethnicity, or race. In the case of the Latino population such link fell onto their forced past as Spanish territories in the Americas and their new situation as a minority within the United States struggling for their rights to be recognized.

Moreover, in the conception of such imagined community Flores asks that we consider the directionality of the construction of the community. In his analysis of the imagined community, he points out that such social unions can be defined either from within the community or from outside of it. That is, if the delineation of such group is coming from the community itself or from the dominant group, what would in each case mark certain aspirations and behaviors. In fact, in his analysis of it he differentiates between Latino and Hispanic, as either term "means different things to different people" and as such meaning "refer to different dimensions of collective social experience" (Flores, 194). Though the difference at first would be between pointing towards being descendant of someone of Latin American origin – Latino – and the other one indicating the language your ancestors spoke – Hispanic, – the difference and influence of such terms varies. While the term Hispanic has been linked in its inception to the Nixon government and its introduction in the 1970s census as a category, one that would be viewed for some as underlining the colonial past under the Spanish rule and that left

behind Brazilians, indigenous peoples, and Afro-Latinos, the term Latino was deployed in an effort to fight for the rights of the people of Latin American descent that lived in the United States. As Abalos would put it

> [t]he terms "Latina/Latino" also represent a development in political consciousness and liberation that has its roots in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The use of the terms "Latina/Latino" is analogous to the growth in the political consciousness in the Black community who went from being Colored to Negro to Afro American to African American. Each name change signified a development in the community's maturation to fully acceptance of who they are. (Abalos, 73).

However, in making the difference between Latina/Latino – much like in the case of the Chicana/Chicano identity – the gender difference that the Spanish language uses was understood as further division for those that did not fit the gender conformity. The rise of the x in the last twenty years and its spread through social media has made it particularly poignant in the study of identity. It is in the x that some see the possibility of breaking away from the gender constraints of western society – some arguing that normalizing the x actually goes against the critical reflection it tries to point towards (Peláez López) – as well as from an adherence to a nation state of origin (Guidotti-Hernández, 146) while at the same time pointing towards the x as a chosen identity, not one imposed by outside forces but rather one that the individual adopts to destabilize the hegemonic patriarchy that both Anglo and Latino communities have enforced into the individual (Trujillo-Pagan).

Yet, this adoption of the x has been met with some resistance due to the understanding that such conversation was born from academia and not organically from the community itself. In a group that has gone through different terminology changes, as was defined before, due to the political struggles and situations it has gone through, some look upon this as another academic trend that was introduced without taking into account the individuals in it. In fact, the debate between the uses of Hispanic and Latina/Latino is still on-going in the community, as statistics show. The use of one or another term to refer to themselves answers to a variety of issues such as where were they born, their primary language, and where they reside. Therefore, the introduction of the x throws in another variable – that is, gender, sexuality, and colonization, among others. As Richard T. Rodriguez would say

> [s]ome maintain that using the X signals a queer and/or feminist politics that contests normative gender formations, while others believe that it promotes an elitist identity politics that quickly elides the continued significance of gender – even for queer constituencies – and has little currency beyond English-speaking, academic, and class-ascendant communities. (Rodríguez, 203)

As Rodríguez points out, this turn towards the x has been looked upon by some as something that has not been essentially produced by the community itself but rather it has come from the academic elite, imposing a change that they never agreed upon. However, as it was mentioned before, Latinx should be understood in a practice that disrupts the essentialist, sexist, and nationalist goals of an assimilationist group and in its goal towards a dynamic conception of identity and Latinidad in its totality as a

community that is alive and is in constant change. A community that, in looking back acknowledges their past and is able to move forward.

Through the analysis of how gender performativity acts as a way to highlight the complicated and multifaceted influence of the hegemon in the community and its enforcement on subaltern individuals only reinforce the fallacy of the Latino community as counterhegemon as a way to escape the Anglo society. The establishment of a counterhegemonic position re-instated and emphasized old gender and sexuality dynamics and reinforce them through different yet similar stereotypes that only served to their biopolitical functions in the continuity and potentiality of the community towards a future. Through the analysis of the narratives written by men through the lens of Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities and gender performativity, among others, these non-normative masculinities become deconstructed and problematized given the corseted norms that the community had set in order to be fully acknowledged as part of it. These were further emphasized by the portrayal of such gender and sexuality non-conformity in literature, where these characters were depicted as either academic overachievers that due to these goals could never fit the mold of desirable Latino or mentally and/or physically sick. Only in the later years through the introduction of the term Latinx can we see a disconnection from the hegemony/counterhegemony dichotomy and a misidentificatory movement towards posthegemony.

CHAPTER V

POSTHEGEMONICAL INTERESTS IN LATINX QUEER STUDIES

I'm talking as a gender renegade, as a gender migrant,
as a fugitive from sexuality, as a dissident […] with regard to
the regime of sexual difference.

Letter From a Trans Man to The Old Sexual Regime

Paul B. Preciado

Disgust as a physical emotion has historically been linked to negative sensations. Sentences such as "That's disgusting!" or "Gross!" are common within the English-speaking countries among men and women from all ages as a reaction towards something – or even someone – who does not fit the rules of taste and decorum of society's dominant discourse. Such norms around what is or not disgusting are, at the same time, considered bad, negative, or even harmful for the person who is uttering the sentence. As Sarah Ahmed would frame it, disgust can be defined as "an intense bodily feeling of being sickened […] always directed towards an object" (Ahmed, 85). Therefore, the feeling of disgust is always dependent on something other, be that an object or, in some cases, an individual. When such process of aversion is directed towards another human being, this operation is accompanied by the detachment of the individual from the community the other belongs to – a process of *othering*, as, among others, Simone de Beauvoir would say of the women or as Gayatri Spivak would coin it

within postcolonial and, subsequently, subalternity studies. For de Beauvoir this othering made reference to how the heteropatriarchy operated in opposition to women who are Other, as she says "[n]o group ever defines itself as One without immediately setting up the Other opposite itself" (de Beauvoir, 6). For Spivak, this othering described the processes of creation of a parallel imperialist history by the colonizer (Spivak, 257). Both of these movements aim to go beyond monolithic categories and act in the interstices of them. Through this process of disgust, then, the individual or group that causes such irk may be considered morally negative for the community as a whole and, therefore, separated from any possibility of attaining approval from the rest or success.

These feelings of revulsion towards those that the individual and/or the community consider other seem to have been common throughout all societies. As we have seen throughout this volume, there have been multiple processes of invisibilization, displacement, or erasure throughout American history. The oppression that multiple minorities historically suffered ended up at the core of the Civil Rights movements of the last 20th century – and beyond, given the many examples of subjugation that currently plague society. After all, those who did not conform to hegemonic Whiteness were considered not only Other but at times gross, hence the separation of different water fountains, bathrooms, bus seating, or even marriages. The pureness of the White population needed to be preserved and, therefore, it could not be contaminated by the Other(s). Following de Beauvoir's and Spivak's affirmations on the processes of othering, Paul B. Preciado would affirm "[w]hat hallmarks the position of men in our techno-patriarchal and heterocentric societies is the fact that male sovereignty is defined

by the lawful use of techniques of violence (against women, against children, against non-white men, against animals, and against the planet as a whole)" (Preciado). That is, for Preciado Whiteness and heterosexual maleness work in tandem in order to subjugate those who are Other. This same model has been reproduced as a way of imposing power over those who do not accept traditional heterocentric norms in other communities, using the same tools of oppression towards those that do not biopolitically reproduce through their dichotomic gender functions and traditional values.

As we have seen throughout this volume, movements and countermovements towards the rejection of the other only conceive new others, new ways by which hegemonic institutions aim to ostracize, make immoral, or delegitimize those that do not adhere to the communal values. Therefore, the question still remains, what is left for those who cannot be due to their race, sexuality, or gender become either part of the hegemon or the (counter)hegemonic society? What is left for those anomalous elements that do not want or cannot fit in the establishment? Is the only answer to reproduce a flawed system of power that, as we have seen, will only generate new forms of institutional discrimination?

This chapter will try to elucidate these questions through the development of what we have been calling misidentification as a posthegemonic disengagement from any assimilationist or normative identity within the axis of nation/culture, gender, or sexuality. Building upon Gloria Anzaldúa's disentanglement from monolithic identitarian notions in her last posthumous book *Light in The Dark/Luz en lo oscuro* (2015) and the notion of infrapolitics and posthegemony as developed by Alberto

Moreiras, this chapter will aim to move the discussion of Queer of Color critique beyond the survival techniques established by José Esteban Muñoz and towards a detachment from immovable conceptions of identity. Understood as a minority within a minority, the queer collective within the Chicano community was disregarded, with individuals feeling disgust towards the rebellion against heteronormative practices that were being embraced by the still socially conservative Chicanismo at the time. And it is within this disgust that the Asco collective (1972-1987), among other cultural movements, was born. Through their production in the 70s and 80s, the Asco collective tried to bring attention to individuals who not only were trapped between identities in the Chicano community, but also were at the limits of both as queer individuals. And, through their works, they asked the audience whether it was possible to materially reproduce the struggle of their community, or whether they were doomed to produce ephemeral works of art, performances rather than photographs, paintings or sculptures.

4.1 What's queer got to do with it? From intersection to identity breakage

So far in this volume we have analyzed the movements and countermovements for and against the idea of the community and identity and how they have been applied in order to ostracize those who did not fit in the community standards. In the last chapter, this model was applied to non-normative men and how, in order to survive, they had to leave their own community. Throughout our examination, we have taken individual traits that form the identity of a person and analyzed them according to the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic performative behavior. This analysis has,

nevertheless, played within the dichotomy, with a hierarchy of traits, understanding how the conception of identity in these terms has entrapped the individual – more specifically, in the case of our analysis, non-normative men. As we have seen not only are these hierarchies of individual components informative for the individual in how their formation and behavior should be but also in how the dominant culture will behave towards them. However, the problem remains on how to break away from essentialist identitarian formulations that are adhered to assimilationist agendas. How to, as Preciado illustrated in his case, be a "gender renegade" and separate themselves from any and all fixed understandings of identity, going beyond them and towards what we would argue is a queer understanding of identity, breaking away from dichotomic power structures and moving towards a post-hegemonic positionality.

This effort of moving beyond the difference was tackled by intersectionality as a way to break away from the homogeneity that identity formations prescribed within gender theory until that time. Through the creation of an identity, as we explained before, there is an attempt to merge individuals under common ideals in an effort to create a community. This tends to overlook and diminish differences within the same group in an effort to homogenize. The previous notions of identity dealt with monolithic and totalizing paradigms that aimed to describe individuals under clear and structured categories – that is, either you were a man or a woman, White or Non-White, heterosexual or gay – and did not take into account the nuisances of the human experience –how these categories interact and converge with one another. In her

formulation of intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw tried to illuminate the ways in which power structures coerce minorities. As she would affirm, intersectionality

> attempts to unveil the processes of subordination and the various ways those processes are experienced by people who are subordinated and people who are privileged. It is, then, a project that presumes that categories have meaning and consequences. This project's most pressing problem, in many if not most cases, is not the existence of the categories, but rather the particular values attached to them, and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies. (Crenshaw, 1297)

Crenshaw's thesis on the ways that dominant culture subordinates minorities through the hierarchization of the individual according to its different coordinates – gender, sexuality, race, class, etc. – follows the break from gender studies that did not assume in their ranks feminists of color. In fact, as Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga, or Gloria Anzaldúa, among many other queer feminists of color would point out, feminism in the second half of the twentieth century did not take into account questions of race or questions of sexuality, creating spaces in which a plurality of voices was not admitted. In an effort to fight for the rights of women, they overlooked the multiplicity of fights that each woman had to fight in the different countries, races, genders, sexualities, or classes, creating a paradigmatic woman that only responded to the characteristics of some. This was at the core of Lorde's canonical text "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1979) in which she commented on the lack of representation of feminine experiences – "poor women, black and third world women, and lesbians"

(Lorde, 110) – and how the discourse at the time exclusively centered on an abstract construction of femininity. This discussion of exclusion of other feminine experiences within the feminist discourse at the time not only did a disservice to feminism as a whole but also perpetuated power structures, traumatic experiences, and shame for those individuals that could not fit within the mold of prescriptive womanhood that was being portrayed – mostly White, Western, heterosexual, assigned female at birth, women. As Cherríe Moraga would say

> [t]o assess the damage is a dangerous act. I think of how, even as a feminist lesbian, I have so wanted to ignore my own homophobia, my own hatred of myself for being queer. […] I have been afraid to criticize lesbian writers who chose to "skip over" these issues in the name of feminism. In 1979, we talk of "old gay" and "butch and femme" roles as if they were ancient history. We toss them aside as merely patriarchal notions. And yet, the truth of the matter is that I have sometimes taken society's fear and hatred of lesbians to bed with me. (Moraga, 49)

The withdrawal of feminism at the time to tackle the multiple experiences of the feminine perpetuated monolithic ideals of womanhood that benefited Western, White, heterosexual, assigned female at birth women, and kept all others in the dark, with their experiences minimized or, worse yet, tokenized, as feminists of color where only given a platform in larger conferences as exotic takes on the matter. This was evident for critics, as Anzaldúa affirmed that "[t]he refusal to think about race (itself a form of racism) is a 'white' privilege" (Anzaldúa, 564). Through the interventions of women of color, many

of them collected in Anzaldúa and Moraga's canonical volume *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), the involvement and subversion of the traditional way of thinking about gender was deconstructed to include the multiple realities that encompass how hegemonic power tramples the individual. It is important that we point out that the practices this volume is advocating for and its disengagement with the essentialist notion of identity does not mean a disentanglement from anti-racist, anti-feminist, or homophobic practices but rather looking beyond identity politics and humanism for tools to combat them, going deeper into the different practices that oppress racial, gender, and sexual minorities and how they are deployed outside and within the community.

In the formulation of intersectionality, the endeavors of Crenshaw to disentangle from traditional visions of feminism and also detached themselves from feminism as a whole and into gender and queer theory. At a time when the traits that conformed one's identity seemed to be treated separate yet, supposedly, equal, with different forums to deal with each one of them, intersectionality created an all-encompassing theory where they could be discussed together. Intersectionality aimed to acknowledge the complexities of the human experience and identity through the understanding that a person is not just an identity trait but rather the sum of many. That is, one might not only be Latinx but rather, as Anzaldúa would ask herself earlier on "[w]hat am I? A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and mystic leanings. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label […] Only *your* labels split me" (Anzaldúa, "La Prieta", 205, *emphasis mine*). Anzaldúa, *avant-la-lettre,* already recognized the multiple elements a person is made of, much like Crenshaw would do

years later– even if, at the same time, she recognized that those labels were imposed onto her by society.

No longer connected to one gender and a privileged sexuality, as its aim was to study how power and normativity subjugated every individual, intersectionality was able to cross over to other fields such as sociology or anthropology and applied in how these sciences understood individuals in their research. Moreover, these new theories of gender opened up the studies to other forms of oppression and how they applied to men – be them cisgender, transgender, non-normative, homosexual, heterosexual, et al. This new wave of feminism opened the door to critical studies of men and masculinities, as we have previously analyzed, as well as new venues of queer and gender studies. Scholars such as José Esteban Muñoz, Lee Edelman, Roderick Ferguson, or Calvin Warren among others, framed their theories within these goals, as they recognized how the field of Queer of Color Critique at the time of their research lacked the inclusion of race, ethnicity, and class in their formulations. In Muñoz's theory of disidentification, he rejected essentialist views on identity and aimed towards the performative acts addressed the survival of the queer and racialized individual.

Muñoz's disidentification signified a major step in Latinx Queer theory onto the ways queer individuals had had to navigate their own sexual and gender identity within a community that traditionally has rejected any sort of deviancy in these fields. Much like we have analyzed throughout this volume, Muñoz saw in his theory of disidentification a practice of resistance that is "dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a

strategy that works on and against dominant ideology." (Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and The Performance of Politics,* 11). That is, misidentification as a survival strategy for the gender and sexual non-conforming individual aims to work within the community, as he explains as a way "to transform a cultural logic from within" (Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and The Performance of Politics,* 11). Therefore, while it does not agree with the hegemonic practices that the community might have in place, it does work within the parameters of the hegemony to dismantle or force its evolution. Nevertheless, he insists that

> It is also important to note at the beginning of this book that disidentification is *not always* an adequate strategy of resistance or survival for all minority subjects. At times, resistance needs to be pronounced and direct; on other occasions, queers of color and other minority subjects need to follow a conformist path if they hope to survive a hostile public sphere. But for some, disidentification is a survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously. (Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and The Performance of Politics,* 5, emphasis in the original)

While this pronouncement at the beginning of his book is true for individuals who are in precarious situations and were their own lives might be a stake, and acknowledging that his theories might not apply to the population at large, the emphasis on the survival of the individual as the only possibility – given the refusal to abandon the community of reference – is nevertheless problematic. Muñoz's theories on the queer and racialized individual, while revolutionary at the end of the 20th century, seem to fall short at the

refusal to break away the parameters of community and identity, to constraint the individual to "work on and against" hegemonic structures nevertheless does not disentangle from the constraints of stale understandings of it.

Much like Muñoz's disidentifiation, while Crenshaw's intersectionality addressed the multitude of ways in which the hegemony oppressed the minorities it never aimed to unravel the hierarchies that created them and move beyond them. The disentanglement of unified and exclusive categories in the case of Crenshaw nevertheless played within the same dichotomies that it tried to deconstruct, creating what some called a "laundry list approach to women's issues" (Bastia, 240), much like Anzaldúa affirming that those categories that conformed her identity were labels that were imposed onto her and that dissected her understanding of herself, instead of taking her as a whole. While making important and necessary approaches to understand how the individual is perceived and the ways it must perform within society in order to survive or even thrive, the interventions that these scholars never aimed to dismantle the internal structures that perpetuated them, just called into attention the ways in which they were applied so the minoritarian individual could endure and understand the system that was subjugating them and, hopefully, survive. The inclusion and examination of the multiple burdens that the individual has to withstand still perpetuates the homogeneity that it tried to break given that it equates every individual from a particular group and the way that it has endured its suffering through the creation of other master categories and, therefore, other dichotomies.

Both accounts, intersectionality and disidentification, part from the same flawed essentialist identitarian principle within the context of the United States: the assumption of agency within the structures of power of the deviant – that is, racialized, sexualized, gender non-conforming, etc. – individual. If, as Audre Lorde said, we aim to destroy the master's house, we must create tools that are not established by that same hierarchy, break the old molds of community, and go beyond them. As Stephano Harney and Fred Moten affirm, any sort of institution, such as community would be in this case, aims to be correctional, a place where the individual must be showed what kind of behavior they must portray in order to fit in. This aim to fit within a larger institution part from the assumption that there is something wrong with the individual, something that they might be able to solve or, in many cases, they may not, which would only drive them to even more frustration. That is why Harney and Moten decide to take another way, a current that lies apart to the hegemony and counterhegemony dialogue, one that disrupts the institutions by refusing to play their game. As they say

> We don't want to be correct and we won't be corrected. Politics proposes to make us better, but we were good already in the mutual debt that can never be made good. We owe it to each other to falsify the institution, to make politics incorrect, to give the lie to our own determination. We ow each other the indeterminate. We owe each other everything. (Harney and Moten, 20)

Harney and Moten, in their negation to play the hegemonic game, draw from the opposition to any sort of hierarchy and essentialist identity within the racialized individual as it has been extensively approached by Afropessimism in an effort to

understand the position of the Black individual within the United States and beyond. Afropessimist critique aims to analyze the violence that the Black individual has had to endure as the ontological Other to the human, how Eurocentric notions of humanity not only assumed Whiteness as synonym to human-ness but also denied access through the application of violence to Black individuals. For thinkers such as Saidiya Hartman, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, or Frank B. Wilderson III the problem of identity for the Black individual relies on that the fact that "[t]he Black is needed to mark the border of Human subjectivity" (Wilderson, 164). It is from the violence to them that the political institution is formed and, therefore, if one is to move away from such essentialist notions, one must disengage from the dialogue with the it. As Calvin Warren affirms

> [f]or Afro-pessimists, the space of difference is the site of extreme violence that is subtended by an interdiction on difference or humanity, which characterizes the condition of blackness in modernity. Whereas the space of human difference allows for the proliferation of identities and subjectivities, fungibility homogenizes blackness such that identities and subjectivities are absent.(Warren, 399)

Therefore, not only does the notion of identity and difference fall short when trying to dismantle the hegemonic structures at play but, in some cases, aiming to assimilate within the identity notions can prove impossible for the racialized individual. In an effort to be included within the dialogue of identity, the racialized individual – in the case of Afropessimism, the Black individual – is not given access due to its opposition to humanity, given that humanity is born out of the opposition to them. This is why

approaches to identity only serve to perpetuate a violence towards all members of the community. It is this indetermination that we will describe as posthegemonic queerness.

Moreover, the disengagement from identity politics becomes necessary when it comes to queer of color critique due to the links between identity and institutionalized Whiteness. Much like the disengagement from the institution that Afropessimism desires, Queer of Color critique aims to further disengage with established paradigms that only perpetuate heteronormativity, within the same frame of community. The perpetuation of violence that was behind the opposition to the racialized individual lies behind the heteronormative axiom of the community in its biopolitical core and, therefore, its profound rejection to the queer individual. In the words of Roderick Ferguson

> [n]onheteronormative racial formations represent the historic accumulation of contradictions around race, gender, sexuality, and class. The variety of such racial formations (Asian, Asian American, Mexican, Chicano, Native American, African American, and so forth) articulates different racialized, gendered, and eroticized contradictions to the citizen-ideal of the state and the liberatory promise of capital.. (Ferguson, 17)

It is in the acknowledgment of this historical, political, and social contradictions within Queer of Color critique that the misidentificatory practice as has been explored in this volume. Taking off from Muñoz's point of view to analyze the ways non-normative men have and should disentangle themselves from these notions of identity in order to survive. Whereas feminist studies have long ago started and paved the path for a

necessary emancipation of women from the heteropatriarchal norm that for centuries had oppressed them, this same path to break away from the norm should and must be applied to racialized men.

The disengagement from the dichotomy and the hegemonies that it creates must also break from identity politics as we understand them, as the performativity of a certain normative role. While previous models of conforming identity had already pointed towards the multitude of ways in which the individual's performative role according to each and every one of the coordinates that their identity should be in accordance with a certain ideal, as Crenshaw would hypothesize, it nevertheless entrapped them in the same obsolete ideals of the hegemon. The movements towards said withdrawal from identity politics already hinted by queer and queer of color scholars in their efforts to call attention, as we have seen with the case of Muñoz, to the performative acts such community in their effort towards the acceptance of non-normative ways of expressing one's identity. However, we believe that scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Alberto Moreiras, one from within Chicana criticism and the other from political thought, further point towards the breakage of these hegemonic categories with their notions on the mestiza consciousness and posthegemony, respectively.

4.2 Towards A Nepantla Identity: Anzaldúa in Posthegemonic Terms

The rupture from notions of identity as a way to disengage from the perpetuation of a hegemonic dynamic, moving past the dichotomy and towards a posthegemonic state has become a necessity to break away from antiquated gender, sexual, and racial

dynamics. As we have seen, previous articulations of community and survival left behind or compromised those who could not adhere to the false ideals established by them. Gloria Anzaldúa's break from identity politics and towards a deconstruction of identity in these terms was already present in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) through the introduction of the *mestiza consciousness* and *nepantla* but we must wait until her posthumously published book *Light in The Dark* (2017) to see the full elaboration of what she meant by both. Both of these hypothesis aim to leave behind essentialists and imposed understandings of identity, moving beyond the community and into what we have been calling a queer space. It is this space that does not interact with the hegemony/counterhegemoy articulation, a space where the posthegemonic dwells, beyond the discourse of assimilation and exclusion. It is in the spaces created by these notions that the misidentification aims to point towards, a space beyond essentialist, imposing, and unifying in their dichotomy notions of identity.

In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa examined the multitude of identifiers that composed her and the *amasamiento*, as well as the negotiation between the contradictions in between them generated for her. It is in the mixture of the elements that compose herself, the *masa,* that she sees the potential for her own self. Taking *nepantla* as a starting point, an Aztec word that defined a space in between two different cultures, straddling both sides of a cultural river, she sees this negotiation between the shores and her positionality in between as the *mestiza consciousness,* the acceptance of both while being beyond both of them. However, much like we have quoted before, these identifiers that were posed onto them and that comprised her own self corseted her to a series of

expectations and norms. It is in this spirit, aiming to go beyond the list of identifiers that intend on defining her that she formulates the *mestiza consciousness.* Remnant of what Homi Bhabha would define as hybridity, it is in the acceptance of her *mestiza consciousness* as a place of mediation between the different elements that conformed her identity that she could survive. As she would say

> [t]he new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode - nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera,* 101)

However, this articulation of identity, the individual situated in a tension amongst different communities of belonging, was still codified by the contradictions between the dichotomies that composed her being. This constant negotiation between them, learning to perform in each culture once belongs to in order to survive in accordance to the context in which she was nevertheless played for the perpetuity of the hegemony, sacrificing her own self for the survival of a mode of thinking that was no longer applicable fully to herself.

Anzaldúa's positionality between communities of belonging, in between shores in the tumultuous waters of the identity river, left her stranded still. For her this explaination of the mestiza consciousness and the identities were situated in the partition

that separates the self and the other, between *nos* and *otras*, "[f]orced to negotiate the cracks between realities, we learn to navigate the switchback roads between assimilation/acquiescence to the dominant culture and isolation/preservation of our ethnic cultural integrity" (Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality,* 79). Therefore the position of the *mestiza*, according to Anzaldúa's proposal is situated as a bridge in between identities that the individual must negotiate and connect the divide amid contradictory, exclusionary, and essentialist views of oneself that are included within the *mestiza* and the Latino community in an act of communal schizophrenia for those that do not adhere to monolithical conceptions of the individual.

Anzaldúa's position in-between cultures, languages, gender performances, etc. nevertheless points to the potentiality of the Latinx community and the erasure of the slash between *nos/otras – la rajadura*, as she would call it – in what she conceives as the *nepantla consciousness*. No longer supporting a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic positionality of the individual, the nepantla consciousness is located in the cracks of a unified culture. It is "in between and among one's group" (Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality,* 72) as she would put it in one of the illustrations that accompany her volume. That is, Anzaldúa's conception of the potentiality of identity is located no longer in the disruption or assumption of essentialist categories about the individual but rather on the possibility of creation of new categories in which the individual no longer needs to negotiate their own performativity of self – much like the queer and Latinx positioning points towards.

Anzaldúa would affirm that "[w]e must unchain identity from meanings that can no longer contain it; we must move beyond externalized forms of social identity and location such as family, race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, nationality" (Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality,* 73). This new understanding of the self beyond archaic compositions of identity does not ask nor rejects one's culture but rather does not accept the constraints that the community established on it. As she would later say

> [i]t's vital that we maintain our heritages' useful, nurturing aspects but realease the unproductive and harmful components. When an individual realizes that she doesn't fit into a particular collective-conditioned identity and when the tribe cannot contain all that she is, she must jettison the restrictive cultural components and forge new identities. (Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, 75)

This understanding of identity and culture beyond the essentialist positionings of hegemony or in reaction to them as counterhegemonic is the position of the posthegemony. In fact, much like Anzaldúa affirms that the nepantla consciousness lives in the *rajadura*, between and among the community, infrapolitics and posthegemony are situated in these same cracks. Neither in one nor the other and abstaining from any sort of tension between them, posthegemony points towards the possibility beyond these categories, refusing to enter into dialogues of assimilation, belonging, or regulation, refusing the non-productivity of these terms for those that do not fit into archaic categories.

These positioning of Anzaldúa beyond the categories of identity, this flight from the tensions that they create, align with the understanding of infrapolitics and posthegemony. Understood as tools to question the political and knowledge systems respectively, infrapolitics and posthegemony aim to dissect and deconstruct the forms of community which purpose are to create systems of exclusion. As Anzaldúa was positioning her nepantla consciousness in a potentiality "neither infrapolitics nor posthegemony is a goal to be achieved, but rather they are conditions of life, or of practice, and of thought and one must reach them […] through a certain labor of destruction" (Moreiras, 190). Therefore, both infrapolitics and posthegemony must be understood as deconstructive practice, practices set in place to dismantle previous systems of control in order to be achieved. Understood within these concepts, misidentification becomes the way in which the individual refuses to interact with totalizing understandings of identity and breaks into the posthegemonic.

Both infrapolitics and posthegemony are situated in the potentiality of the fissures in between systems of power in place to oppress the individual, in the potential that the escape from them pose. The position of posthegemony is, therefore, not only in its potential to break away from the dichotomy but also the tools to break free from them, rejecting the dichotomy in pose of something other, something that we could call queer. It is putting forward the conditions by which a new futurity can be. As Maddalena Cerrato would frame it

> [i]nfrapolitics dwells in the passage. The motor of infrapolitical thought is still the very same "unlocatable, undatable, and unthinkable" juncture between

> metaphysics and its other. But, nevertheless, it aims to introduce a radical turn in the philosophical gaze, a shift in the thinking of the end. This shift consists of the fact that it seeks access to an affirmative and emancipatory thinking, through the thinking of another historicity, a radical historicity as event-ness, not as onto-theological or teleo-eschatological program or design, but not as a messianic promise either, rather in the perspective of an "always-already-there."(Cerrato,98)

The potentiality that infrapolitics and posthegemony advocate for is not set in the future and in a locus far away. The tools and systems it aims to use and deconstruct exist and have taken place already, with individuals that have used said knowledge before and that have tried to disengage and dismantle said institutions.

Therefore, it is in the articulation of nepantla, infrapolitics, and posthegemony that misidentification and queer is placed. Misidentification is the locus of the non-normative as well as the performativity of such disengagement. It is through the conscious performance of separation from the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic that the individual can escape the imposing dichotomies of both sides in a move beyond the notions of community and society that in many cases reject them. It is the place and performance of non-normativity, where the engagement with the performance of the promise of the Latinx as a move beyond social and communal norms can be finally true. No longer a survival tool as Muñoz conceptualized it at the end of the twentieth century, misidentificatory individual practices point towards the end of the *rajadura* and the dichotomy.

4.3 Publics of disgust or moving away from hegemony

According to Brian Massumi, for Spinoza "*[a]ffect* […] is an ability to affect and be affected" (Gilbert). That is, affect defines the humans' experience through the contact between them, in an effort to change and/or be changed in the relationships between them. At the same time, emotion becomes the sublimation of such encounters, as Sarah Ahmed affirms. In accordance with this line of thought, emotions are not on the subject nor on the object but rather in the encounter between them, in the relation between them. Therefore, emotions are not produced in a void but rather in the interaction between a subject and another or between an object and a subject. An emotion is a verb – the act of affecting someone or being affected by – rather than a noun – an affect. And it is within this interaction between a subject and either another subject or an object that disgust is framed, as in a vacuum such feelings could not flourish for the individual. As Ahmed continues in her analysis "[w]e can certainly reflect upon the way in which disgust, as an intense bodily feeling of being sickened, is always directed towards an object. One does not feel disgust in the abstract; one feels disgusted by something in which the thing itself seems to repel us" (Ahmed, 85). Following her analysis, this section will define what disgust means so it can be later related to the queer posthegemonical subject, Asco, and their performative art.

In the interplay between the person who suffers the disgust and the object that is the inductor of such bodily reaction there are two elements which must be tackled: the proximity between subject and object and the performance of such an affect. Firstly, the

subject must be in sensorial proximity to the disgusting element in order to be affected by it. There is a first movement, Ahmed continues, towards the element that produces the disgust and then, once such interaction has taken place, the individual hustles to later escape from it, which would designate a movement "towards, away" (Ahmed 85). The individual, however, forgets that there was initially a movement towards the object that ultimately caused him or her a strong emotion of disgust. In fact, "[t]he object must have got close enough to make us feel disgusted. As a result, while disgust *overtakes* the body, it also *takes over* the object that apparently gives rise to it" (Ahmed, 85). There is initially a movement forward as the individual feels either curious or recognizes in the object something familiar and moves away as that initial sense of recognition of the object turns into one of unfamiliarity – much like the feeling of uncanniness as defined by Sigmund Freud in his article "The Uncanny" (1919). Therefore, the emotion of disgust is related to the uncanny in that aspect, in the failure to recognize in the object something that at first seemed familiar and that, as a result, causes the whole body of the subject to have a complete rejection of such object.

Secondly, in the disgust-producing interaction between subject and object there is also a sense of performance. For Ahmed, following Judith Butler, performativity is the way by which discourse can produce effects through repetition and reiteration (Butler, 20). Ahmed continues:

> [t]he temporal dimension of performativity is crucial. On the one hand, the performativity is futural; it generates effects in the constitution or materialization of that which is 'not yet.' But, on the other hand, performativity depends upon the

> sedimentation of the past; it reiterates what has already been said, and its power and authority depend upon how it recalls that which has been brought into existence. (Ahmed, 92-93)

For the feelings of disgust to take place, there must be not only a movement of approach and rejection but also a movement towards the past and another towards the future of an interaction that, at first, happens in the present. Much like it was pointed out by Freud's concept of the uncanny, the subject reacts towards that which causes him or her disgust as that which could have been initially resembling an element that was in his or her past but does not fit their expectations. This is also due to the feature of performativity already introduced by Butler, as the reiteration of a discourse creates a component, gives it a familiarity that sometimes is not fulfilled, which causes the rejection and disgust of the individual. This will cause the individual to feel disgusted toward this object in the future – or toward anything that has some of the elements of this object – even though his or her experience is based on just an initial contact.

This duality of attraction and rejection of the disgust-producing object has been explored by the arts. From the works by Francisco de Goya such as *Saturno devorando a su hijo* at the beginning of the 19th century to contemporary paintings by Francis Bacon like *Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953) or Pedro Almodóvar with his movies such as *Pepi, Lucy y Boom y otras chicas del montón* (1980), among many other examples, the experience of disgust has been explored by artists to break from the classical paradigms of art as a way to portray aesthetically pleasing scenarios and to denounce the lack of representation of other points of view that are not recognized

within this paradigm and that are, nevertheless, part of society. These disgust-inducing works of art point towards the queer and are positioned within it, understanding queer as a space in which the collapse between and beyond different regimes of power, always in a constant present though pointing out towards the past and what is to come.

Situated between and among power systems – much like we will later tackle with Gloria Anzaldúa's positioning of nepantla – as well as beyond them – as the notion of posthegemony will explain, – the notion of queer aims to move beyond the dichotomic tensions of identity and political structures. In the case of the Asco collective, the unsettling feeling does not necessarily come from their art but also in the way that they embody and rebel against previously accepted modes of being a Chicano. Laurent Berlant and Michael Warner described queer social practices as they "try to unsettle the garbled but powerful norms supporting [heterosexual] privilege" (Berlant and Warner, 548). For Berlant and Warner, queer acts move beyond identity towards a form of rebellion against the hegemonic heteronormativity that has been imposed onto society. Much like Paul B. Preciado recognizing himself as a gender renegade, Berlant and Warner point towards the same destination on the way they frame queer. It is within this revolution that queer artistic practice – and the rejection that it might produce on heteronormative society – that the feeling of disgust and estrangement that the artistic practices analyzed until now intersect. The queer announces a rupture from hegemonic society, social practices, and artistic views to embrace those who are not represented within this normativity, breaking away from the norms without trying to be molded by

or be accepted by them. It is not a movement of inclusion or exclusion but a movement to bother and deconstruct the social, aesthetic, or political establishment.

When talking about the performance of disgust as an artistic medium, how the elements of disgust play within the performance should be considered, as there is a necessary turn to understand disgust in the artistic world. Up to this point three different elements could be recognized in the act of disgust. First, the public of such performance, as those who feel the bodily power of the emotion and are affected by it. Second, the space where this performance takes place, as the context in which the action occurs will also impact the uncanniness / disgust of the performance – e.g. the public display of affection can be, for some, disgusting, given that it is outside of the normative spaces for such actions to take place within a conservative society (and more so if these acts are perpetrated by someone outside of heteronormativity). Lastly, there is the author of the disgust – what up until now was the object – as the initiator of the action, who with their presence and performance will generate the emotion.

The public of such artistic works should be understood as generating, as Michael Warner points out, a "relation among strangers" (Warner, 74). The individuals who look at a work of art or performance are united through the experience of viewing the piece of art. Warner continues "[a] public […] unites strangers through participation alone, at least in theory. Strangers come into relationship by its means, though the resulting social relationship might be peculiarly indirect and unspecifiable" (Warner, 75) . Even though they might not know each other nor know the work of art they are experiencing at first, they are united through the experimentation of what they are

sensing. Through this experience they are amalgamated, though their encounter with the work could produce different reactions in them. For some, the work of art can be pleasing even though – considering the kind of artistic experience this paper is exploring – a feeling of estrangement may arise. For others, the work of art can be displeasing and totally be rejected even though it was felt to be attractive at first.

The experience of the work of art – or, in the case of this chapter, of disgust in relation to the work of art – is always framed within a temporal and spatial context. As it was outlined before, as queer works of art, these oeuvres are always situated in the present though referring to the past and hinting a potential future. However, in the promise of the queer lies the fallibility of the future, as the queer rejects in its rebellion to the heteronormative any potential futurity in the form of a progeny – something precious for the heteronormative society. Therefore, at the core of queer art lies performance as the truest form of queerness, given the impossibility to reproduce exactly what takes place in it. These performances will point out to both the future and the past as "[a]t performance's end, if it is situated historically and materially, it is never just the duration of the event. Reading for potentiality is scouting for a 'not here' or 'not now' in the performance that suggests futurity" (Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia : The Then and There of Queer Futurity,* 99). Even though the performance might hint at a futurity – and even if the performance is perpetuated through photography, – it will never be repeated exactly once it has been done. Moreover, such performances usually take place in public places, where queer acts are not necessarily welcome, making their presence disgusting

for the potential public who does not recognize such behaviors within the spaces it is taking place.

It is in this place and for this public that the queer artist is positioned. Moving away from the dichotomies of the heteronormative world and outside of its norms, the queer artist expresses a disturbance to hegemonic society in performances that produce disgust to those who are attuned to the standards of society. And, it is in this place that the artistic collective Asco frames their works:

> Moving away from binaries and negative critique […], Asco's 1970s work, in particular, posed a resistant and ambivalent (overidentificatory, mimicking, and parodying) rather than simply oppositional relation to preexisting cultural forms. This work implied a relation of both affirmative (creative and productive) and critical (negative and potentially destructive) attitudes toward mainstream cultural forms and ideologies. (Jones, 110)

Queer art is not interested in being against the normative but rather prefers being a disturbance, deconstruction, and refusal to adhere to the norm. In Asco there is ambivalence as well coming from the group it belongs to, the Chicano community, given the nationalistic impulses of a people that was, at this time, trapped between two nationalities that equally rejected them. However, it is through participating in and moving beyond their own cultural practices that they could perform their own queer art.

4.4 Gross performances of queer Chicanismo

The Chicano community during the Civil Rights era was trying to claim its own identity within the minority spectrum. After fighting for the United States in the Vietnam war, Chicano veterans came back looking for jobs outside of the benefits given to them through the G.I. Bill to a society where segregation still existed. Individuals of Mexican descent came back to the United States where they were considered second class citizens, as members of one of the largest minorities in the United States together with the African American and Asian communities. As Acuña points out, "social segregation still existed, and in places like Texas and eastern Oregon 'No Mexicans Allowed' signs were common" (Acuña 14). A number of conflicts during the sixties in California and Texas made it necessary to contemplate a solution to the racist and discriminatory practices of the government in respect to the Mexican American community. Not only that, but rejection also came from the higher spheres of Mexican intellectuals, who saw the Chicano community as second class. Octavio Paz in *Laberinto de la soledad* (1950) would see when referring to the *pachuco* the constant contradiction and tension between two different communities:

> Incapaces de asimilar una civilización que, por lo demás, los rechaza, los pachucos no han encontrado más respuesta a la hostilidad ambiente que esta exasperada afirmación de su personalidad. Otras comunidades reaccionan de modo distinto; los negros, por ejemplo, perseguidos por la intolerancia racial, se esfuerzan por "pasar la línea" e ingresar a la sociedad. Quieren ser como los otros ciudadanos. Los mexicanos han sufrido una repulsa menos violenta, pero lejos de intentar una problemática adaptación a los modelos ambientes, afirman sus diferencias, las subrayan, procuran hacerlas notables. A través de un dandismo grotesco y de una conducta anárquica, señalan no

> tanto la injusticia o la incapacidad de una sociedad que no ha logrado asimilarlos, como su voluntad personal de seguir siendo distintos. (Paz 16-17)

Therefore the Chicano movement comes out not only from the rejection of the mainstream American population but also of the Mexican one, who saw them as "un *clown* impasible y siniestro, que no intenta hacer reír y que procura aterrorizar" (Paz 18) and with preoccupations that only relied on the performative side of their nationality. Much like the queer movement, the Chicano community re-appropriated this term as a term of endearment, embracing *mestizaje* and rejecting negative stereotypes associated with it, making it their name for their nation as "[w]e need to study George Washington and know that he was an exploiter […] There are no gringo heroes in the Southwest […] We still have Chicanos basing themselves on the white success image" (Gonzales 47).

In their efforts to identify with their Mexican ancestors while still in the United States, the Chicano community adopted part of their cultural – and social – movements from the other side of the border. As they tried to embrace their Mexicanidad, the Chicanos followed the artistic movements that had made Mexico great at the time, like muralismo. Started at the beginning of the 20th century, muralismo was famous for its portrayal of ethnic pride, class warfare, and social criticism. With painters such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, María Izquierdo, or Aurora Reyes, murals were celebrated all over the world and adopted by the Chicanos, that took this tradition but did so collectively, as Uriel Vides Bautista affirms (126). Much like the religious painters in the Renaissance and before, the objective of the muralist movement was to inform and educate the analphabet masses, teaching them through their art of the

historical and mythical past as well as initiating them in the struggle of the worker. As a group, they incorporated the struggles of the working class, taking pride in their indigenous origins and in their family, incorporating in their depictions at the same time the machismo and heteronormativity of conservative Mexican values. With this, they left out women and queer individuals who felt unprotected by the Chicano community, as Cherríe Moraga or Gloria Anzaldúa would denounce in their essays as we have seen already.

Artistically speaking, the queer Chicano group turned to performance and photography as a way to rebut the hostilities of heteronormativity. With their works of art, they played with the popular mentality of truthfulness that photography has in order to depict the exclusionary practices that the embrace of the family had on women and queer individuals.

> By producing performative photography or self-portraiture, their creative (re)invention of the self-suggested discrepancies, gaps, or incompatibility between individual identities and unified, monolithic constructions of community […] Through performance, manipulation, or juxtaposition, these artists pointed toward the margins and exclusions implicit in the formulation of the Chicano/a national family while interrogating the relationship between community and self, along with the foundations of both. (Gunckel 399-400)

Past collectives such as Asco as well as current ones like Maricón Collective or individual artists as Guillermo Gómez Peña fall into this category, showing with their performances, photographies, and murals the individuals who are left out of the Chicano

ideology. It is in the misidentificatory practices that they explore through their art that they can disengage from hegemonic dialogues of identitarian community and into a posthegemonic possibility, through the refusal to perform gender and sexual roles both in their art and in their day-to-day life.

Out of this lack of representation both by their own community and the media, the Asco collective was born. At a time in which Chicanos were fighting for recognition for their efforts in the Vietnam war, with many of them coming back dead and in bags without the United States recognizing their work overseas, Harry Gamboa, Jr., Gronk, Willie F. Herrón III, and Patssi Valdez initiated the Asco collective in 1972. This collective fluctuated in size from 1975 , when the original core of artists disbanded to pursue their own individual projects and new "Ascotas" started to enter the collective, until its end in 1987 (Alvarado 64). As Chavoya and González affirm "[t]he disparity between the overrepresentation of Chicanos in the war in Southeast Asia and their underrepresentation in the arenas of politics and media culture further directed Asco's attention and scrutiny to the role of the mass media" (Chavoya and González 40). Moreover, with the Chicano movement perpetuating values such as traditional nuclear family and machismo through their murals, the queer underrepresentation was double, being invisible both for the media and for their own community.

With this exclusion from the mainstream in mind, the members of the Asco collective started their artistic endeavors not so much in opposition to the on-going efforts of the other Chicano artists but rather using some of the familiar topics and methods used by them and disrupting them, hence questioning the status-quo of the

community and their culture yet not directly attacking it. Mainly through performances that were later photographed in order to perpetuate them, Asco created timely works of art using themselves – or their signatures – as protagonists of their work. These works were queer takes on the media used by society such as murals such as *Instant Mural* (1974) or *Walking Mural* (1972), performances such as *First Supper* (1974), or their No movies such as *The Gores* (1974), were all modes to disturb accepted mediums such as Chicano muralism or Hollywood misrepresentation of Chicano characters. And it was through the use of performative art, both as a not stable and not traditional medium, that they could denounce them.

> Ephemerality was one means for Asco to bypass the rigidity of muralism's status as the proscribed and generative vehicle for artistic training, expression, and experience within the Chicano movement. They cannibalized the mediums of graffiti, muralism, and later film to stage movement in exchange for static, iconic, and mythical representations. (Chavoya and González 52)

While exploding the current mediums of expression used by hegemonic society, Asco's position was not one of identitarian politics but rather a way to disrupt a mistakenly accepted identity. Through their art, they traded the images of *indigenismo* and traditional nuclear families that were being portrayed in the collective murals throughout Los Angeles for ephemeral works of art that were used to agitate the masses and make them question their own values, using the double movement towards and away that Sarah Ahmed described when talking about disgust. The subtle changes to commonly accepted ways of art created in the public as a disruption in their take on the artistic

medium; expecting fixed themes that perpetuated common topics and ideas, the public was confronted with a distorted reality that they recognized as familiar but in a twisted way. Their artistic vision invaded spaces that were outside of the usual venues for art, forcing the public to acknowledge and view these other queer identities that were not accepted in the values of either nationality. While at the same time collecting photographic evidence of their performances and distributing them through mail, Asco questioned the value of more respected art forms and the ideas that such works were perpetuating through their performances that were never to be repeated or reproduced, revealing their queer and punk aesthetic in these short-lived works.

With their performative murals, the Asco collective tried to imprint both the lack of representation of real individuals in the community as well as the stale artistic values of the commonly accepted murals. Paradigmatically portraying indigenous, workers, and historical figures of Mexico in many occasions either suffering or in static poses of pain, the performative murals of Asco wanted to disengage sort of dialogue with both the medium and the topics, aiming to portray the current figures that were left on the sidelines of the ideal community that the Chicano movement aimed to create. This is more than evident in works such as *Instant Mural* or *Walking Mural*. In the first one, the public could see member Patsi Valdez with pale make up and red lips in a punk outfit taped to a wall while passersby took photographs of her or even just walked by while she tried to look away. While Mexican and Chicano muralism were trying to portray mythical figures of ancient indigenous people, brave workers, and suffering mothers, this mural reflected the (literal) real individuals that were left out of this mythical view

of the nation's identity: women and queer individuals. Though people stopped, stared, and took pictures, there was a feeling of estrangement between the public and the work of art, given the materiality and ephemerality of the same as Valdes herself can be seen in the photograph taped herself temporarily to a wall in East Los Angeles, producing the initial approach of the individual and the later repulsion. Moreover, Valdes' refusal to look directly towards the audience further confirms the refusal to engage in any sort of dialogue, even through their glance.

The stagnant quality of this work is countered by the dynamism of *Walking Mural*. With different members of the collective dressed as topical characters of Mexican murals such as Virgin-like figures or suffering indigenous peoples, the collective walked down the streets of Los Angeles, making the usually fixed and sometimes hidden murals approachable to the public carrying on with their daily routines. By forcing the public to confront these mythical figures through the caricature of their performance, Asco was, through the reproduction of accepted modes of art, making the community accept the limitations of their nationalistic efforts and the fallacy of their myths. They carried out their project but were not in opposition but rather at the limits of Chicano and American identity, on the limits of what was accepted.

Though both of these works were performances, they aimed to question the muralist movement and its aftermath in the Chicano community. Through their static and dynamic portrayals of mythical and ordinary individuals, they examined the validity of the medium and the portrayal of society in them. While acknowledging the format, they challenged their static character as well as the depiction of ideals and values that

alienated the individual and which goal was to assimilate into a community that did not recognize their gender and sexuality beyond the norms that they had established.

The referential character of these murals did not continue in other photographic examples of the group. For example, in their photographic work *The First Supper* such dialogue with the Mexican muralist medium but rather with the Christian Last Supper depicted by Leonardo da Vinci in his fresco, that is, in his mural. Placed between two busy roads in Los Angeles – with the name of the street, Whittier Bl., behind them – Valdez, Gamboa, Gronk, and Herrón are depicted dressed like characters of the Mexican imaginary and sitting around a table while the traffic goes around them. While Valdez is dressed in a typical masculine attire, two of the other members have skull-like masks on their faces, whilst the fourth looks at them, all of them drinking, in what could be described as high tea. In their surroundings, the public can see a painting of a naked ripped-apart man that follows the aesthetics of José Clemente Orozco's murals – even though this man is wearing fishnet stockings, – a female mannequin painted as a skeleton sits right behind them, a mirror directly in view of the spectator, and finally a naked doll of a boy lies down in front of them with its eyes closed, as if dead.

Through their performance, symbols are bastardized and re-imagined into a queer performance within the fissure, within the *rajadura*. While the actors of said performance are literally in the center of two roads, in the middle of it, they embody queerness themselves, as they are outside the limits of what is accepted by society and point towards a non-reproductive futurity with their queer vision of identity. It is by distorting the established roles and characters of the Christian Last Supper and the

substitution of them by queer artists in the middle of a busy road that the collective wants to generate a sense of discomfort in the viewer. The portrayal of non-normative gender roles and performativities as well as the disengagement with the nationalistic biopolitical futurity through the depiction of the dead and ignored child by them further questions the productivity of the construction of identity as it was and still is. Through their (mis)use of accepted and commonly used elements of muralismo, the artists of the collective were with their performance opening up discourse around gender, social constructs, and misrepresentations of Chicanos.

The Asco collective was not only interested in portraying those who were made invisible by Chicano nationalism but also those ignored by Hollywood. In their movies, Hollywood often portrays Chicanos as stereotypes for criminals, drug addicts, prostitutes, or domestic servants, leaving them out of any positive imagery or characterization. Asco rebutted this mischaracterization through their "No Movies." Thought as still images of movies that would never be made, without a script or argumentation, these photographies used common tropes of Hollywood to queer them – much like they had done with their murals and performances. In "No Movies" such as *The Gores* we can see how the different members of the collective, dressed as science-fiction characters, attack a photographer in a shoe store. Not only are they gender-bending with their attires, in items of clothing commonly accepted for either men or women, but also attacking the status quo in the shape of the photographer, who looks at them in terror as Valdez swings her axe towards him. Though these "No Movies" lack any kind of script or argumentation, it is remarkable how they, with just one still image,

depict a whole situation. Other "No Movies" such as *À La Mode* (1976) or *Strangers in the Night* (1978) follow these same ideas of recreating what was familiar to the public in a queer way, not conforming to the roles that either community, the Anglo or the Mexican-American, gave them and breaking with the status quo, be that Chicano nationalism or Hollywood misrepresentation. Much like the previous photograph, in which the Asco collective wanted to create a sense of discomfort in the viewer of their *First Supper* through the representation of queer individuals in what could be deemed as a heteronormative scene – that is, the Last Supper, – the "No Movies" wanted to break away from misrepresentation of Chicanos in the same way, through the creation of tableaux that upset the hegemonic ideals and roles of mainstream media.

Through the analysis of disgust in art and Asco, this chapter has tried to outline the different ways in which the Chicano community and American mainstream media, in their efforts to create an identity, had estranged those that do not fit the mold of the heteronormative. Through their use of the familiar in a way to approach the public and create an emotion in them – that is, by the interaction between subject and object or public and art – the Asco collective through their performances engages in the fallacies of the hegemonic, pointing out the different identities that were being left out of the in-between society that was already the Chicano community and visually portrays the misidentificatory practices that Anzaldúa, infrapolitics, and posthegemony advocate. Through their work in murals, performances, and No movies, Asco claimed an ephemeral artistic medium in which to express how identity constraint and rejects non-

normative individuals and how they were left out by enclosed definitions of identity, inaugurating in this way an artistic view of the Chicano queer.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Identity becomes a cage you reinforce and double-lock yourself into.
The life you thought inevitable, unalterable, and fixed in some
foundational reality is smoke, a mental construction, fabrication.
So, you reason, if it's all made up,
you can compose it anew and differently.

Now Let Us Shift

Gloria Anzaldúa

Throughout her many writings, Gloria Anzaldúa focused much of her thinking on the question of belonging. Being a queer Chicana from the Borderlands posed incongruences for the community, embodying the fallacies behind what being a woman signified within Chicano and feminist movements at the time. She exposed the tensions between the communities she belonged to and her own sense of self. This strain persisted throughout her life, aiming to sever from them even in her posthumous work. It is from this resistance to adequate to or fulfill the expectations of the gender she was assigned at birth – or, moreover, the impossibility to do so – that she worked against, against the monolithic understandings of belonging to a community that does not accept who you are. Through her work she aimed to destruct archaic senses of identity to go beyond them, to move past the expectations of the elements that compose an identity to free the

individual, against the hegemonic impositions of what was supposed to be a counterhegemonic movement. It was in the destruction of the old self and the potentiality of what one can become that she posed the identity of the individual. As she would affirm "[y]ou begin to define yourself in terms of who you are becoming, not who you have been" (Anzaldúa, 556). It is in the potentiality that the sense of belonging of an individual must be, not in obsolete, antiquated, and prescriptive identities.

The movement towards the potentiality, as was framed at the beginning of this dissertation, is at the historical core of what we know today as Latinx. In a continual pilgrimage towards what can be instead of tightly grasping what was, the sense of perpetual evolution that was part of the Aztec mythos seems to have been discarded once the Chicano movement came about. Too focused on the ways to resist the oppressive power structures set in place by the Anglo population, they recreated monolithic and controlling principles that aimed to perpetuate the community by sacrificing the individual. Through the gender and sexual control of the person, the Chicano movement entrapped those that did not fit the archaic constructions of these elements. They sacrificed the potentiality that accompanied the pilgrimage of the previous generations in the fight for recognition from a hegemony that nevertheless continued to reject them. It is in this new embodiment of the Latinx that the promise of potentiality as Anzaldúa framed it that the cracks of this elements are starting to show. Going back to the perpetual and ever-changing elements of what the individual should embody, the evolution of the breakage of the hegemony/counterhegemony dialectic can be shown through the introduction of the *x*. It is this posthegemonic principle that the community

should aspire to, far from the obsolete notions where dichotomic discussions trapped us before.

Through this dissertation we have analyzed the historical, social, literary, and artistic ways by which questions of belonging have been framed within the Latinx cultural corpus. The experiences of the characters, artists, communities, and authors represented in this dissertation posed the question of belonging from a male perspective. Not able or not wanting to adapt to the many rules that both the hegemony and the counterhegemony proposed for their shattered selves, they had to either escape or create tools by which to move beyond this dichotomy that the communal identity was based on. Not a list of characteristics as intersectionality pointed towards but rather a complete and complex individual, the process of misidentification that has been explored through this dissertation has focused on how the notions of national, gender, and sexual identification have failed the non-normative males to finally expose a model of posthegemonic queer masculinity that, through what we have proposed was misidentification, aimed to move beyond the tensions of hegemony and counterhegemony in a posthegemonic space. Only through a misidentificatory practice, moving away from the all-encompassing and claustrophobic understandings of nation, race, gender, or sexuality, can the individual truly access this posthegemonic space.

In order to provide further evidence of how these axes have worked to entrap the individual, this dissertation has provided aimed to analyze the settings in which identity has been founded, paying special attention to the historical, literary, and artistic circumstances in which it was set. The historical and mythological context in which the

United States was founded framed the way in which hegemony was created, having deep roots in old historical rivalries that left the native peoples of the Americas on the margins of the hegemony. Through the creation of fictions such as the frontiers and the frontiersman, the Anglo-Saxon colonizer created a narrative that, while efficient in its nation-building enterprise and the creation of the identity of the nation, did not include in it the Spanish-speaking nor the native populations that were already settled in the Southwest of what is now the United States. While the efforts of historians widened these views later on in the 20th century, it nevertheless excluded what was then the Hispanic population from its ideal hegemonic identity. This first historical movement towards a White, Anglo-Saxon, and heterosexual identity that answered to the creation of the United States problematizes the construction of identity from that point on.

The continuation of this national ideal within the Chicano movement provides further evidence of the exclusionary practices that identity is formed. The response of the Chicano movement to the hegemonic agenda of the United States, rather than providing a freedom from any sort of nationalistic enterprise, reinforced its exclusionary methods by the creation of a counterhegemony. Through this dichotomy between hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses – that is, the Anglo-Saxon ideals versus the Chicano movement – we were able to provide further historical and social evidence on how these two gestures, while intending to combat one another, they nevertheless create the same power structures. The nationality goals of the Chicano movement perpetuated the same modes of oppression that it tried to combat through the perpetuation and defense of family within its core values as a way to perpetuate and

ensure the future of the community, among others. The same way these values were disseminated through the cultural products in the Anglo-Saxon model, novels such as *George Washington Gomez* by Américo Paredes provide further evidence of the enterprise that the Chicano community was embarking upon.

Much like this national identity was used in order to perpetuate communal identity, this dissertation has also analyzed the ways in which gender and sexuality were controlled with a similar agenda. Both through the control of sexuality for biopolitical means as well as the performativity of gender itself, the members of the Latino community through the recreation of a hegemony bound the individuals to a set of characteristics that they might not be able to fulfill due to their sexuality or gender expression. The establishment of fixed gender and sexual roles as part of the ways in which the hegemon aims to control the individual further affirms that, whether they are established as hegemony or counterhegemony, both of these systems establish the same power structures that alienate the individual. Through the analysis of non-normative masculinities within the Latinx community, the fixed determination of gender and sexual roles only left the non-normative men the option of escaping and alienating themselves from the community in order to survive.

It would be only through the inclusion of Borderlands as a breakage from this colonizing dialogue that the pendular movement between old empires would shatter. This is a first historical misidentificatory movement towards a disengagement of identity due to the fallacy that it is built upon, the fallacy of a set of common values and ideals that also entails the exclusion of individuals that, while already set in the land, cannot

adhere to them due to their race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, or sexuality. And it is in works such as *Pocho* by José Villarreal that we were able to have a glimpse to this misidentificatory practice that, while not advocating for a total disengagement from the community, it proposed a way to break from the dichotomy that the hegemony and counterhegemony propose by finding a way to move beyond these modes as a man. By breaking away from the expectations set upon by the community on what it meant to be a heterosexual man within a patriarchal regime, *Pocho* served as an early example of disengagement from the hegemony through a misidentificatory practice of renouncing any notions of nationalistic community.

And it is within this disentanglement from a monolithical understanding of the self that the final misidentificatory practice was executed in the creation of a queer posthegemony. By embracing the elements that alienated them from their community of origin and going beyond the boundaries of it, queer posthegemonic individuals have been able to deconstruct, emphasize, and denounce the ways in which fixed establishments of identity have aided to ostracize minorities. By creating spaces beyond the dialogical hegemony and counterhegemony, queer individuals from the Latinx community have been able to take with them elements from their community and distort them, breaking away from antagonistic and dichotomic power relationships, beyond the boundaries that fixed categories of identity entrapped them in.

It is within the space of queer posthegemony, free from the notions of the nation/state, gender, and sexuality that the individual can start to be truly free. Through misidentification as a practice to disentangle oneself from archaic notions of identity, it

is here where the individual can be “among and in between” as Anzaldúa would pose, beyond the community and free to participate and deconstruct their mythos. It is here where the Latinx potentiality lies, beyond fixed categories of identity, in the continual flux of nepantla.

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