

Transculturalism in Chicano Literature, Visual Art, and Film

Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Department of Global Studies
Jerónimo Arellano, Advisor

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts
in
Global Studies

by
Sarah Mabry

August 2018

Transculturalism in Chicano Literature, Visual Art, and Film

Copyright by
Sarah Mabry

© 2018

Dedication

Here I acknowledge those individuals by name and those remaining anonymous that have encouraged and inspired me on this journey. First, I would like to dedicate this to my great grandfather, Jerome Head, a surgeon, published author, and painter. Although we never had the opportunity to meet on this earth, you passed along your works of literature and art. Gleaned from your manuscript entitled *A Search for Solomon*, "As is so often the way with quests, whether they be for fish or buried cities or mountain peaks or even for money or any other goal that one sets himself in life, the rewards are usually incidental to the journeying rather than in the end itself...I have come to enjoy the journeying." I consider this project as a quest of discovery, rediscovery, and delightful unexpected turns.

I would like mention one of Jerome's six sons, my grandfather, Charles Rollin Head, a farmer by trade and an intellectual at heart. I remember your Chevy pickup truck filled with farm supplies rattling under the backseat and a tape cassette playing Mozart's piano sonata No. 16. This old vehicle metaphorically carried a hard work ethic together with an artistic sensibility. You taught me how religion and science, masculinity and sensitivity, leadership and learning, can coexist harmoniously without one dominating the other. You passed along a passion for history, with roots reaching back to Amherst College when it was first established as a men's college and Northwestern University Law School. Your profound appreciation for music, art, literature, and film and especially reading, taught me -- by keeping the mind active -- memory is safeguarded and mental agility persists regardless of the number of birthdays celebrated. Although you physically left this world on "trailing clouds of glory", I see your sincere love for my grandmother, Joan, and my family when I glimpse clouds tinged by silver linings.

I dedicate this work to my grandmother, Joan, for demonstrating the traits I so admire. You embody the powerful truth of “a woman who rocks the cradle, rocks the world.” To my mother, Jennifer, thank you for teaching me strength and beauty through the discovery of life’s hidden gems by patiently cultivating gratitude. I dedicate this to my sisters Laurel, Heather, Moriah, my brothers Solomon and Hunter, for your endless sense of humor and for being close to my heart although we remain geographically far apart.

A heartfelt gratitude to Timothy Gaster and Claudia Fernandez. Thank you for your kind words of support and guidance throughout my academic career, providing the opportunity to study at the University of Barcelona and for mentorship as I continue my graduate studies. I dedicate this to Heather Brady for providing the opportunity to practically apply my interest in migration, language, and the arts. A special thank you to Celia Campos and Jaime Godina -- thank you for your true friendship and encouragement to continue learning *el español*. Thank you Digna Lagos for sharing your Honduran artwork and stories of Latin America. A special thanks to Irvin Ibarguen for reading multiple drafts of my work and offering your thoughtful suggestions.

Finally, I dedicate this to my thesis advisors. Professor Arellano, your attentiveness, reflective insights, and sincere investment in my work has made my academic life richer. And thank you Professor Lucken for your support and encouragement. Last, but not least, thank you to those that believe in the power of an education for it is because of you that rather than a fixation on the end result of this paper, which is so often the case of major undertakings such as writing a thesis paper, I can wholeheartedly say that “I have come to enjoy the journeying.”

ABSTRACT

Transculturalism in Chicano Literature, Visual Art, and Film

A thesis presented to the Global Studies Program

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

By Sarah Mabry

This thesis will look at Chicano culture through selected works of literature, film, and visual art. All three cultural artifacts share a common geographic space in southern California and were inspired by and created during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and exhibit facets of Chicano cultural identity, forging a new condition to inspire future societal change. Historian Deborah Cohen explains that the prefix “trans-” preceding “nationalism” signifies three distinct understandings: “trans-” as going beyond, which denaturalizes the nation-state as the definitive form of human organization; “trans-” as relational, formed in the in-between spaces; and “trans-” as change, as in the subject position formed and in play between nations and through crossing borders. Deborah Cohen’s unpacking of transnationalism is useful when analyzing interlocking vignettes of each Chicano work of art, namely a novel *Their Dogs Came with Them* by Helena Maria Viramontes, a documentary film *Chicano Park* and a mural painting *Quetzalcoatl*, as each can be interpreted as one of three ways of experiencing a transcultural Chicano identity. We embark on a journey through Chicano film, literature, and art to illuminate the Chicano experience in the United States through a multi-artistic approach.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Chapter One: Introduction | |
| Key Terminology | |
| Code Switching..... | 11 |
| Hybrid Identities..... | 12 |
| Theory of Transculturalism..... | 13 |
| Chapter Two: Code Switching in Chicano Literature..... | 18 |
| About the Author: Helena Maria Viramontes..... | 21 |
| Social Functions of Code Switches to Proficiency..... | 25 |
| Reinforcement of Motif or to Emphasize a Setting..... | 28 |
| Migrant Journeys..... | 29 |
| Multilingual Spaces..... | 30 |
| Chapter Three: Life Between and Beyond Borders in Chicano Film..... | 36 |
| Imaginary Spaces: The Myth of Atzlán..... | 42 |
| Hollywood Stereotypes and the Bronze Cinema..... | 47 |
| Real Spaces: The U.S.-Mexico Border in <i>Chicano Park</i> | 50 |
| Chapter Four: Fusion of the New and Old in Chicano Visual Art..... | 54 |
| Pylons as Canvases..... | 59 |
| Chapter Five: Transcultural Chicano Identity | 61 |
| Bibliography..... | 64 |

Introduction

What does it mean to self-identify as Chicano? Chicanos live in a dynamic sphere in which they share a dual frame of reference defined by a lived reality shared among numerous national spaces. This lived reality exists across borders, giving it a transnational nature. It represents a synergy of cultures as Chicanos do not identify fully with Anglo or Mexican values. Chicano identity is formed through a collection of memories and symbols connecting the ancient past with contemporary political realities; ancient myths with European aesthetics and modern culture. Silvia Spitta explains how Chicano literature and art as a transcultural movement “mediates between the fields of tension between different worlds (Spitta 9).” Rather than accepting a "master narrative" imposed from outside the movement, Chicano literature, cinema, and visual arts mediate between two identities and incorporate symbols gleaned from both the ancient past and contemporary realities. Rather than labels such as Mexican-American or Hispanic, Chicano is distinct. Unlike “Hispanic,” “Spanish-American,” and “Mexican-American”, labels imposed by the dominant Anglo culture, the term “Chicano” was selected by activists of *la Causa* during the Chicano Movement. (C9).”

The Chicano Movement was considered a key vehicle for raising the profile of Chicano art and cultural studies. This political movement, revived as *La Causa*, marked the empowerment and self-identification of Chicanos in the second half of the 20th Century when a new Chicano identity took shape, (Olalquiaga, 42) expressing and producing art for social change. Dissimilar from other Mexican-origin groups in the United States, Chicano political identity emerged in unison with the civil rights era and reflected a political consciousness consolidating around a political Chicano identity. Similar movements of identity politics

emerged in conjunction with the Chicano Movement, for example in Canada, Spain, and other location in Europe.

The term “Chicano” became widely used during the Chicano Movement to express pride in cultural, ethnic and community identity. The Chicano Movement represented a new type of American collective consciousness. Adoption of a Chicano identity has political implications, vindicated by the group’s resistance to the loss of its historic homeland in what is considered today to be the U.S. Southwest (López-Flores 1). Many commonly grouped under the collective label of “Mexican-Americans” do not identify with either label of being solely Mexican or American, rejecting alignment with the either value system.

The act of defining oneself as “Chicano” has significant repercussions within the dominant Americanization practices and concept of an assimilationist America as a homogenous “melting pot” in which tangible differences would blend and soften, bringing newcomers into the American mainstream society. Chicano political identity and political presence pushed against the concept of assimilation as they sought resources and to give voice to their collective grievances.

Rodolfo Acuña in his book *Occupied America*, makes the following distinction: the changing situation in the 20th century in the U.S., the term ‘Chicano’ is used to distinguish Mexicans living north of the U.S.-Mexico border from those residing in Mexico. He elaborates by saying “some U.S. citizens of Mexican extraction might object to the identification of ‘Chicano’ for many call themselves Mexican or Mexicanos.” Labels such as Mexican-American that include a hyphen are no longer widely accepted because they are promoted by Anglo-Americans, not Mexicans. Acuña goes on to say that the term “American” is the identification of self-identification provided by European immigrants. When the name was later appropriated by

the thirteen colonies, the term “American” shifted to define a new nation of U.S. citizens who considered themselves “Americans.” Chicanos, refute the exclusivity of “Americans” as determined by U.S. citizens, expanding its definition to include all inhabitants on both north and south continents as Americans (Noriega, 318). Therefore, Mexican-American is a name given by an outsider group rather than a name of self-identification coined by community itself.

During an interview for the Chicano Studies Program Humanities Lecture Series Juan Bruce-Novoa was asked to define the term Chicano. He replied that Chicano embodied an American of Mexican descent, regardless of generation. Expanding the definition of Chicano multiple generations and to include the shaping of the Mexican national consciousness, this definition breaks away from a colonial legacy of marginalization by placing its origin in an “Aztec thought” and through its connection with an indigenous past. According to Bruce-Novoa the Chicano Movement expanded the definition of the term to shift the focus of politics surrounding the Black Civil Rights Movement to include “Brown questions.”

Self-identification by Chicanos was formed to liberate Mexican-origin Americans from *de facto* internal colonization (Sánchez-Tranquilino, 88). Rafael Pérez-Torres explains the ways in which Chicanos, having suffered and survived the consequences of master narratives, become empowered through the act of developing survival strategies in, at times, hostile environments.

He says,

Chicanos, *a los de abajo*, know all too intimately the reality of decentered subjectivity and violence that results from the pursuit of master narratives - progress, expansion, Manifest Destiny. This is not to say Chicanos have formed a postmodern culture *avant la lettre*. It is to say that Chicanos have lived and survived (which is a form of triumph over) the disparities made plain by the critical light of postmodernism. (Torres 10)

Fragmenting subjectivities and discarding master narratives, Chicanos triumphed and fought for cultural survival. While the term “Chicano” can be understood as a separatist identity,

it also unifies around a common ethnicity. It has been interpreted simultaneously as a synthesis of two cultures and an expression of an identity necessary for cultural survival and continuity during the meshing of two cultures.

The term 'Chicano' was derived from the Nahuatl pronunciation of Mexicano (me-shi-cano), signifying a person of Aztec or Mexica (me-shica) affiliation. This label emphasizes the indigenous heritage of Mexican-origin Americans (Alba, 43). Rudolfo Anaya's interpretation of the term Chicano as "the bold new image born of Hispanic and Indian synthesis" is relevant for understanding the linkage between the ancient past and contemporary reality. This linkage was further developed by indigenous literature cultivated in the 1970s by authors such as Alurista (*Floriscanto en Aztlán* [Poetry in Aztlán], 1971) and Luis Valdez (*Pensamiento serpentino* [Serpentine thought], 1973). By the first decade of the 21st century, Chicano authors such as Cherríe Moraga had begun to spell Chicano in a way more reflective on the Nahuatl indigenous tribe's pronunciation of the sounds "ch." By replacing the "Ch" to an "X" the Chicano movement indicates a reemerging *política*, grounded in an Indigenous American identity. Akin to Malcolm X's use of the letter in lieu of his slave name, "X" within the Chicano movement reflects an indigenous Indian identity (Moraga, xxi). The literature, cinema, and film are each situated in the Chicano Period and each deal with issues of Chicana/o political self-definition and self-determination.

The thesis will be organized in the following way. In chapter one, key terms are defined. In chapter two, a critical reading of Helena Maria Viramontes' book will illustrate how Cohen's notion of "trans" is revealed through "code switching" language. In chapter three, life between and beyond borders is revealed. *Chicano Park*, a documentary border film, expresses the Chicano lifestyle and showcases Chicana/o artists and activists that both engage with and retell a

borderlands history. Chapter four explores the melding of the new and old in Chicano Visual Art, more specifically, through the study of *Quetzalcoatl* mural located on ramp IB in San Diego's Chicano Park created by a team of mural painters and barrio residents that included Guillermo Aranda, Mario Acevedo, Victor Ochoa, Salvador Torres, José Cervantes, Tomás Castañeda, Guillermo Rosete, and others. Chapter five concludes with Chicano culture through a transcultural lens.

Chapter I: Definition of Key Terms: Transculturalism, Code-Switching, and Hybrid Identities

Code-switching

Code-switching may be a subversive act that visually enacts conflict between two main audiences of Spanish versus English speaking audiences while representing a hybrid Chicano identity (Madsen 22). Code-switching may be defined as “moving from one language to another while preserving the grammatical integrity of the expression (Madsen 69).” It reveals cultural hybridity within the Chicano speech community and the issue of translating cultures. Code-switching has been a linguistic concern for both Spanish speakers as for English speakers, altering traditional structure of Spanish and English. It is an example of the inevitable evolution that takes place when two languages come into contact occurring when two or more cultures converge (López-Flores 11). It is a technique used in Chicana/o writing to express this dual linguistic inheritance and double linguistic consciousness.¹ It is important to note that this term is distinct from bilingualism which describes the work of a writer who uses both Spanish and

¹ Cecilia, Montes-Alcalá, . "Written code-switching: Powerful bilingual images." *TRENDS IN LINGUISTICS STUDIES AND MONOGRAPHS* 126 (2001): 193-222.

English but in different literary works, not the same work. As Marta Sánchez explains the difference in literary works, more specifically in poetry:

The difference lies in how the movement takes place. In a bilingual experience the reader must mentally juxtapose poems in English with poems in Spanish; in an interlingual experience, the tensions of syntax, the connotations, the ironies, and the reverberations of words and images interlock, pulling in two directions at once. Poems written inter-lingually engage rival sets of reader expectations and desires. They graphically enact on the surface of the page the conflicts and tensions between two main audiences of Chicana-Chicano poetry, the English-speaking audience and the Spanish-speaking audience.²

The intentional choice to incorporate both languages is a subversive gesture. She violates traditional literary decorum while representing the Chicano experience of life in the Californian barrio (Madsen 24).

Cultural Transformation

Cultural transformation occurs when two cultures share a point of contact. Points of cultural contact are not new phenomena. Indeed, one of history's great cultural confrontations was set into motion in the late fifteenth century when Spanish explorers set sail off the coast of Spain to discover and settle the New World. By 1519 the encounter between Spain and the Americas extended to Mexico and the first stable contacts were initiated between Spanish and indigenous colonies, resulting in violent conflicts and cultural convergences. This issue is historical as much as a contemporary issue and experience.

The experience of translating across cultures is therefore not new as cultural clashes resulted in variations and adjustments to both languages amongst indigenous groups and the Spaniards (Parodi 289). Known by historians of postcolonial Mexico as the 'Great Transformation' it was indeed consequential for the indigenous group living in southern Mexico

² Marta Ester, Sánchez. *Contemporary Chicana poetry: A critical approach to an emerging literature*. University of California Press, 1985, 21.

named the Mixtecs. Unlike other indigenous groups, their empire and capital were not destroyed in violent conquest. Their culture survived and thrived in the mainstream of the Colonial culture of New Spain proven by the discovery of cultural artifacts by archeologists (Spores, 141).

Gradually, indigenous groups adopted the alphabetic written language of Spanish, blending it with their traditional system of pictographic symbols painted on what modern literature refers to as ‘codices’. These sacred manuscripts were painted on deerskin or agave-fiber paper using a combination of pictograms, ideograms, and phonetic symbols. Later colonial codices influenced by the Spanish depict chronicles of native Mexicans with Latin script either in Náhuatl or in Spanish. To the Mixtecs, codices were known as *naandeye* or “remembrances of the past.” Most interestingly, these pictorial texts depict actual events, objects, myth and ritual, together with supernatural elements (Spores 100). A transnational identity emerged from this landscape to acknowledge the complex issues of cultural mixing that are played out against the historical backdrop of ancient worlds, colonial societies, and civilizations (Gilbert Muller, 61). If we disassociate the clash of cultures in New Spain between the Spanish and Mixteca, and open it to encompass a broad set of transcultural processes ground in the experience of domination (cultural or otherwise) and translating between cultures or wherever Spanish colonization resulted in unequal cultural encounters, then Latin American experiences, as well as North American minorities experiences, I posit these qualify as transcultural.

Transculturalism

Historian Deborah Cohen's understanding of the prefix “trans” is useful to analyze each Chicano work of art in literature, film, and visual art. She explains that the prefix “trans-” signifies three critical understandings: “trans-” as going beyond the borders of the nation, which denaturalizes it; “trans-” as relational, made in the in-between as in the conflation of identities;

and “trans-” as change, as in the subject position formed and in play between nations and through crossing borders and further provides new ways of forming identity (Cohen, 7). Each cultural artifact can be interpreted through these three ways of seeing transcultural identity.

In Latin American and other colonial contexts, transculturalism is defined by dynamic ways of life "split between two or more worlds, cultures, and languages" (Spitta 8). Silvia Spitta provides a compelling account of Jose Maria Arguedas novel *Todas las sangres and El Zorro de arriba y el Zorro de abajo*. Here, she explores how the protagonists in his novel are split between two languages (Spanish and Quechua) and incorporate two cultural codes folding them into the narratives of each book. This is one early example of code-switching in literature and space of cultural contact. The term *transculturation* has constituted a central concept of cultural discussions and contemporary literature. This illustrates a formative step in which scholars began to explore multiple disciplines and challenged the rigid concept of national borders just as other intellectuals in Europe and America felt compelled by the possibility of mediation between science and popular religion (Díaz-Quñones).

Transculturalism became part of the vernacular language in the middle of the 20th century to refer to cross-cultural conditions that stretched across borders and between cultures. Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969), a Cuban anthropologist, is known mainly for coining the term *transculturation* (Spitta 3), through the generalized distribution of his book *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940; 1963). He described the phenomenon of "two or more cultures meeting sometimes by force "in a fusion of cultures by drawing parallels between sugar and tobacco as two Cuban commodities and their economic and cultural impact on Cuban society. Ethnographers, for example, use the term ‘transculturalism’ to describe how subordinated or

marginal groups invent materials handed to them by dominant cultural groups.³ Transculturalism is a phenomenon of what Mary Louise Pratt terms the “contact zone” between distinct cultural groups.

Following this logic, Peruvian literary critic, Antonio Cornejo Polar, demonstrates the difficult exercise of writing, the strength of orality and the multiple tensions embodied in Peruvian society. In his essay about socio-cultural heterogeneity *Escribir en el aire* Polar makes it clear that a singular Latin American subject cannot be outlined without effectively speaking of the unequal equilibrium, inevitable conflict, and violent contradictions embedded within it. The author is suspicious of the existence of an ideal state of a coherent and uniform identity in Andean culture. He claims the ideology of *mestizaje*, racial and cultural mixing, implies “la abisal heterogeneidad y los radicales conflictos de una América múltiplemente contradictoria” (Rama 131) or “the abyssal heterogeneity and radical conflicts of an America multiply contradictory.” Other literary critics contributed their own terms to describe this cross-cultural phenomena. For instance, Angel Rama’s theory of transcultural literature expands Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz’s term “transculturation.” He explains:

Entendemos que el vocablo transculturación expresa mejor las diferentes partes del proceso transitivo de una cultura a otra, porque éste no consiste solamente en adquirir una cultura, que es lo que en rigor indica la voz anglo-americana aculturación, sino que el proceso implica también necesariamente la pérdida o desarraigo de una cultura precedente, lo que pudiera decirse una parcial deculturación, y, además, significa la consiguiente creación de nuevos fenómenos culturales que pudieran denominarse neoculturación (Rama, 32-33, original emphasis)

We understand that the term transculturation better expresses the different parts of the transitive process from one culture to another, because it is not only about acquiring a culture, which is what the Anglo-American acculturation voice indicates, but the process necessarily implies the loss or uprooting of a preceding culture, what could be said a partial deculturation, and, in addition, means the

³ Imperial eyes: travel writing and transcultural (7)

consequent creation of new cultural phenomena that could be called neoculturation. (Author's translation)

Rama is best known for his work on *modernismo* and for his theorization of the concept of transculturation. As Rama explains in his work, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, transculturalism is a process. His essay explores distinguishing traits in literature in addition to its authors, worldviews, and artistic forms. He reinforces the bedrock concepts in Latin American literature of independence, originality, and self-representation.

Rama's employment of the concept of transculturation explores the multicultural reality of Latin America, stemming from a colonization process establishing "contact zones." Literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt incorporates Rama's theory as a point of departure defining "contact zones" that do not result in acculturation, or the loss of one's native culture in exchange for the new culture, but rather in a process known as transculturation. Transculturation is not a pure adoption of another culture or a forgetting of the old cultural customs, as the term "acculturation" implies. Instead, it is both a memory of the past and an adoption of new practices in new and creative ways. While the term acculturation signifies the loss of one's cultural traditions and practice, transculturation describes the difference apart from the original cultures (Spitta 4) and becomes a distinct creation apart from the original two cultures.

Transcultural identity formation is a "process of becoming" so that dual or multiple cultures merge, transforming into a new way of being. The term, "transculturation" will be used in this paper to signify phenomena that stand at the intersection of dissimilar oscillating, and heterogenous identities. Octavio Paz, in his memoir entitled *Labyrinth of Solitude*, suggests a new concept that he terms "Latinidad". He describes the expanding population of people of Latin American descent in the US as "floating" proposes a concept of an ethnic identity that is not always tangible, however, it is sustained and frequently felt. The city of Los Angeles is the

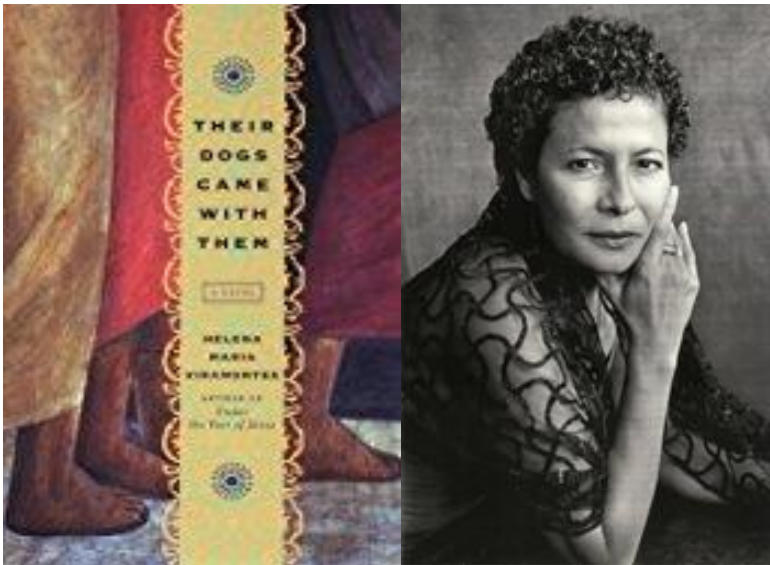
"crucible where a new national culture is being molded (Tobar 9)." The transcultural practices of Chicanos in California are exporting their cultural practices across the states. Currently, California has been immersed increasingly in this collective and cross-border narrative.

Engaging in this work, this thesis acknowledges the complexity and multifaceted nature of transculturalism as a process that is useful in understanding Chicano cultural and political identity. Furthermore, I posit a very active, transnational dynamic to Chicano identity, extending the conversation of transculturalism in Chicano art. The mode of cultural analysis is concerned with transnational spaces and the cultural transformations these embody.

Chapter Two: Transculturation and Code-Switching in Chicano Literature: Positioned Between Two Cultural Worlds, *Code-Switching in the Novel, Their Dogs Came with Them* by Helena Maria Viramontes

This chapter engages in a critical reading of Helena Maria Viramontes fictional work *Their Dogs Came with Them*. This chapter aims to analyze transculturalism as the in-between space in which Spanish and English are fused together in Chicano fictional writing. This novel is selected in this thesis because as Chicana feminist, Viramontes deals with issues of cultural hybridity in her novel that are beneficial in understanding the nature of transculturalism in Chicano literature. Chicano literature is concerned with issues of transculturalism, or the mixing

and borrowing between two cultural worlds. I have posited toward evidence of creation and recreation, reclamation and redefinition, of a Chicano identity that further embodies the Chicana/o experience in the United States. This chapter analyzes five main functions of linguistic code-switching to reveal the linguistic identity of individuals and groups, reinforcement of a motif and setting, aspects of the migratory experience, generational distinctions related to language fluency, and fragmented subjectivities marking a hybrid experience. I attend to the hybrid dynamic of her writing to illustrate how code-switching is a transcultural feature of Viramontes novel, engendering powerful knowledge by offering new possibilities of knowing and seeing.



Photos (left to right): Book Cover Their Dogs Came With Them; Helena Maria Viramontes, Author

Chicana authors, such as Viramontes, reveal hybrid spaces; a culture that splinters and fragments into multiple perspectives, identities, and discourses. Applying transculturalism to the study of code-switching in Viramontes' novel is to analyze the combination Spanish and English

as two linguistic codes constituting a political act to see under what conditions it alters, adds, and discards our notions of language use in fictional Chicano literature. Her novel represents a factor of “deterritorialization” vis-a-vis mainstream American literature (Rocard, 39).

Helena María Viramontes was born in East Los Angeles, California in 1954. Viramontes’ own childhood experience growing up in the community of East Los Angeles and her involvement in the Chicano Movement inform her perspective with concern for recapturing the lives of the city’s inhabitants. By using the work of an author who has personal experience living in California is important to the study of code-switching because it reveals a particular community’s form of expression in both Spanish and English. The study of transcultural features in the novel lends to understanding sociolinguistic elements present in a particular linguistic community at a specific place and time, namely, the Chicano community in California during the 1960s and 1970s.

A fourth generation Chicana and graduate of Immaculate Heart College, Viramontes earned a B.A. in English literature. Upon completion, she began her career as a political activist and literary editor by working for the Chicano magazine *ChismeArte*. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of California-Irvine. Currently, Viramontes is a professor of English at Cornell University. In her poetry, short stories, and novels, Helena Maria Viramontes chronicles the lives of “the despised and the reviled” as Sandra Cisneros notes. Viramontes considers writing as “the only way I know how to pray” and this prayer includes the hopes and dreams of her community. The narrative of her first novel, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995), is a book that reveals the living and working conditions of migrant workers and voices their struggles through the voice of a young girl, Estella, who questions the constraints placed upon her as a female. The *Bloomsbury Review* said that, “Her lush, precise prose lends beauty to

this world and shows us that the struggle for dignity is as vital as the struggle to survive.”

Viramontes’ characters are split between two cultural worlds, finding themselves in an America that at once promises and betrays a utopian future.

In her novel, *Their Dogs Came with Them* (2007), Viramontes deals with the issue of cultural survival in what literary critics say is a “dystopian story of transit gone awry” in reference of her use of the freeways as a prominent metaphor. She reveals the results of colonization that manifested in a colonized perspective and her linguistic choices to engage with her historical moment to give voice to those disappeared voices that involved the construction of a freeway and her decision to leave the city. Viramontes says,

I could certainly write honestly about my memory of East Los Angeles. I started doing that and it started opening up all these worlds to me to the point that I don’t think that there’s a main character in the novel; they all had stories to tell...I had to tell all these stories and, like the freeways, have them all intersect” and “I have over twenty characters; I have all these storylines, I have cross sections, I have this time frame.⁴

Viramontes further speaks to her indignation over the fact that she has been robbed of her languages, both Spanish and indigenous languages as well.⁵ Her reaction to linguistic suppression a psychological impact at a young age. She further reveals her use of Spanish in her novels. “I have to (write in Spanish). These people speak it. I hear them...when I use more Spanish, I am going to have to refocus my English because I have to contextualize the two languages so that they work out together.”⁶ The cross sectionality of her characters produce a split subjectivity and include a genuine sense of empathy for the forgotten poor. The voices of

⁴ Elisabeth, Mermann-Jozwiak and Nancy Sullivan. *Conversations with Mexican American writers: languages and literatures in the borderlands*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2009.

⁵ Ibid, 87.

⁶ Ibid., 88

the poor, the lonely, and the forgotten take center stage in her story of characters living in the barrio of East Los Angeles. *Their Dogs Came with Them* amplifies the marginalized voice.

Viramontes incorporates Mexican cultural and historical elements in her work to demonstrate her writing is dialogic, characterized by its dialogue with other Chicano authors, historical figures of her time, and between her fictional characters. She does not merely answer, correct, silence, or expand upon previous works of literature, but informs and is continually informed by the previous work. While the metaphoric and historical prose is predominantly written in English, the dialogue between her characters in the novel reveal transcultural elements of code-switching. Chicano writers insist that the reader make conscious efforts to understand the specialized racial or ethnic references in the text, such as references to Mexican mythology, culture, and language (Madsen, 5). I posit that code-switching in the novel insists the reader make efforts to comprehend the Chicano experience and culture.

As mentioned in the introduction, code-switching is the mixing and borrowing of words and phrases between languages while maintaining the grammatical integrity of the phrase itself.⁷ As a Chicana author, Viramontes does not choose to be simply Mexican (Spanish language only) or North American (English language only). Instead, she closes linguistic ties between both cultures, weaving Spanish and English together. Beside English or Spanish, Tino Villanueva would propose “hay otra voz” through which the Mexican minority can express its difference and specificity apart from Anglo culture.

The following characteristics of code-switching in Viramontes novel are discussed in the first chapter that include: use of hybrid literary forms that reveal a dual cultural identity, linguistic identity of individuals and groups, reinforcement of a motif and setting, aspects of the

⁷ See introduction for definition of code switching

migratory experience, generational distinctions related to language fluency, and fragmented subjectivities marking a hybrid experience.

I identify the linguistic function of alternating between Spanish and English in Viramontes novel. To Ricardo Sanchez the merging of two languages, thoughts, feelings, and observations is the natural expression of people experiencing dual perspectives. This double consciousness is revealed as a literary technique through the incorporation of two languages. I argue that Viramontes' novel amplifies a hybrid consciousness through the linguistic choice of code-switching as it reflects hybridity, fragmented subjectivities, and broadly speaking, a more expansive transcultural perspective.

The fictional world in the novel explores the real-world phenomena of code-switching. Contemporary Latino writers in the US, such as Viramontes, are presented with several language choices in literary works: English, Spanish, and code-switching. The linguistic choice to incorporate both English and Spanish defines her work as a Chicana feminist writer and characterizes her linguistic community. Indeed, Chicano literature is unique in that it places side-by-side, within the same scene, the same stanza, the same verse, the same phrase, English and Spanish words. This translates the dialectical reality of Chicanos (Rocard, 31) and this linguistic choice reveals cultural hybridity.

As Sanchez affirms, there are certain phrases that he cannot “traducir ciertas cosas en el idioma gringo” (“translate certain things in the gringo language”, Authors translation), (Rocard, 39). The novel *Their Dogs Came with Them* embodies Deborah Cohen's definition of transculturalism as lived in-between two cultural worlds. This chapter considers the sociolinguistic functions of code-switching, alternations that take place between two languages, namely Spanish and English. This chapter further aims to analyze common attitudes and

perceptions of the use of code-switching in vernacular speech and language. In doing so, I aim to show it as the use of a hybrid literary form that is reflective of the ways Chicanas use language.

As Chicano poet Sergio Elizondo says,

*I have two words, Spanish and English,
Good at times
At times not,
But two, for better or for worse.*

This statement speaks to the tension between two languages that presents itself both as blessing and curse to those with a multilingual and a multicultural background. Negotiations between Spanish and English reveal for better or for worse two languages are united just as two individuals in holy matrimony.

Social Functions of Code-Switching: Identity Markers Revealing Linguistic and Cultural Characteristics

The first chapter of the *Their Dogs Came with Them* introduces the urban setting of the situated in East Los Angeles. It begins with a look at the forced displacement of families living on 1st Street. Chavela, described as the old woman in the novel is packing up her household belongings and tagging them with notes to help her remember what is packed away in cardboard boxes. She writes,

Cobijas, one note said; Cosa del baño, said another. No good dresses. Josie's typewriter. Fotos....the old woman had taped scribbled instructions all over the wall of the house. Leve massage for Josie. Basura on Wetsday. J work # AN 54389. I need to remember, Chavela had told the child when the child pointed to a matchbox at the torn pieces of paper clinging to the walls . . . It's important to remember my name, my address, where I put my cigarillo down . . .or how the earthquake cracked mi tierra firme, mi país, now as far away as my youth. (7)

Chavela reveals that both Spanish and English language are incorporated in her internal dialogue, revealing a hybrid consciousness. Her ability to manage both languages further

demonstrates in areas of cultural contact, language use changes and adapts becoming expedient for practical purposes. Frequent misspellings of English words such as “tipewriter”, “Wetsday”, and “leve” raises the question of the extent of Chavela’s literacy in English. Chavela’s use of both languages indicate a more solid command of Spanish, rather than English. As Lipski (1982: 191) remarks, “language switching in literature is not the result of confusion or inability to separate the languages, but rather stems from a conscious desire to juxtapose two codes to achieve some particular literary effect.”

As Chavela’s social context changed, so too did her use of language. She uses both Spanish and English in complementary ways so that the two forms of communication share common space and shared purpose. Blending two languages for the purpose of remembering and organizing physical objects, her use of Spanish indicates she has not packed away her linguistic roots as she acknowledges the importance of not erasing the memory of her language. The crossing of one culture to another, of one language to the other, is possible when the dominant use of one language is left in question, paving a path forward to new possibilities of literary expression incorporating two languages and linguistic codes in the same literary work.

Relationship of Code Switches to Proficiency in Spanish

The incorporation of various types of switching seems to be correlated with a particular degree of language proficiency of the speakers in English and Spanish. The novel reads:

Time. Time, sabes? Turtle tried to remember her Spanish, words that were boxed in storage. Pan, mantequilla. Ven pa’ cá. But what was the word she couldn’t find? The sound escaped into a deserted labyrinth of midnight street corners and padlocked doors. She felt as if she had to burglarize her own memory in order to get to the Spanish words. Turtle point to the womans watch. You know, hora. ¿Sabes que hora?

This passage reveals a semi-proficient voice, characteristic of a transitional bilingual Spanish-English interface (Lipski, 13). As time itself threatens to take captive and erase the

memory of Spanish words in Turtle's mind. In classic studies of language erosion amongst minority communities the technical term semi-speaker has been used, as distinguished both from the fluent bilingual or monolingual speaker of the language (Spanish or English), and from origin or beginning speakers of the language. In the evolution or advancement of semi-fluent speakers, there is usually a shift away from a minority language to the national/majority language (in this case English/Spanish) within the timeframe of a single generation or at most two. This phenomena is signaled by a transitional generation of 'veiled' or underlying speakers who once spoke the language during their childhood but who have subsequently lost much of their native ability, and characteristic of true transitional bilinguals.

This passage further serves as evidence that she is a transitional bilingual who had a foundation of Spanish language at one time in her life yet Spanish words were locked away in a fortress far away and the sounds of her language, while familiar, flee into the darkness of abandoned city streets. The concept of time juxtaposed by "burglarize her memory" illustrated by "you know, hora" signify the way in which time slowly erases her knowledge of Spanish. Time itself absorbs and hides away memory of Spanish.

Reinforcement of Motif or to Emphasize a Setting

Another use of code-switching in Viramontes novel reveals the author's literary technique to reinforce a motif or setting. Throughout the novel, frequent rain storms occur: "Mama yelled over her shoulder, but the rising wind spirited her words away. She had to shout it again, ¡Otra tormenta! The rains percolated into puddles, glutting the gutter grates (33)." The motif of incessant, unrelenting rain is the thread uniting famous literary works in Chicano literature. Authors like Lucha Corpi and Gloria Anzaldua incorporate the motif of rain to express a striking

image that depicts not only the act of writing, but her own precarious existence. More concretely, in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* it reads: “And there in the dark I meet the crippled spider crawling in the gutter, the day-old newspaper fluttering in the dirty rain water (72).” Code switching for emphatic purposes is also frequent in oral bilingual speech in order to draw attention to a word, sentence or idea. This function is directly related to the concept of ‘foregrounding’ discussed previously by Valdés-Fallis (1977) and Keller (1976) (Montes-Alcalá, 272).

While the narrative of the novel is predominantly in English, code-switching is a literary device used revealing conversation between characters as well as the internal dialogue of characters. For example, when the granddaughter of Chavela peers out of her grandparents living room, she reflects on her bizarre surroundings. “Qué locura, she thinks. The world is going crazy (12).” The sense that the world is spinning out of orbit into despair and destruction is conveyed by incorporating the literary technique of code-switching and underscores this prominent motif in the novel.

Convey the Migratory Experience

In the novel, written correspondence between characters is a request for financial support. In written correspondence between characters, code-switching is used. In this sense, code-switching is used to convey the practice of sending remittances that characterizes the immigrant experience and lived reality of many Mexicans who send money, supporting families south of the U.S.-Mexico border. She writes,

His wife barely wrote. Each sentence amounted to three, four, five words. Tu mayor, no se murió . . . The r in murió rolled its tail like bait, a slight space between mur and ió, stopped at mid syllable as if she paused the pen in gratitude for their eldest son not dying. El doctor, 562 pesos . . . Punctuation so random it charmed him. (139)

Rafael Pérez Torres explains how this lived reality occurs when Mexican Americans "forge and sustain multifamily social relations that unite their societies of origin and settlement (Basch 993)." It further reveals the role remittances play in the everyday life of many Mexican immigrants living in the U.S.

Multilingual Spaces with a Double Imaginary

The incorporation and borrowing of Spanish words is used to narrate the story of the characters demonstrates the role of Chicano English or caló (Chicano slang) in a specific linguistic community. Guerrero explains, "in Los Angeles, Chicano English is an identity marker of membership to the Latino/a community" (57) and Chicano English becomes a membership card into a particular community, establishing a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group. Other example of code-switching in the novel occur in conversations between the fictional characters. In a dialogue between two characters she writes, "I 'member you could see the chalk marks where he just laid there like a dog. Dead. The malflora was bad news all around. (Aunt Mercy). Bottom-line it, Tío Angel replied. Get to the point of your chisme (167)." This further reveals a specific dialect spoken in the East Los Angeles barrio.

The conclusion thus establishes both a sense of unification and a sense of alterity; Chicanos are held together by their differences and this realization and recognition of difference is crucial to hybrid identity. What Viramontes illustrates through her text is just this: that the "fragmented pieces" of identity and subject position can begin "to fall together" into persuasive argument via a hybrid textual form which makes room for multiple ways of knowing and expressing the self.

Many Chicanos carry a sense of loss and indignation due to the loss of their linguistic traditions. Viramontes further speaks to the indignation of feeling robbed of one's language, both

Spanish and indigenous languages as well.⁸ Linguistic suppression can have a psychological impact at a young age. In an interview with Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak and Nancy Sullivan, Viramontes says, “I have to (write in Spanish). These people speak it. I hear them...when I use more Spanish, I am going to have to refocus my English because I have to contextualize the two languages so that they work out together.”⁹ The ability to provide the context of both Spanish and English speak to her own linguistic heritage and of her community born in East Los Angeles.

Language choices of Latinos in the US continue to gain attention from educators, linguists, journalists, academics, and the general Hispanic and non-Hispanic public. Criticism by Spanish-English bilinguals and monolingual speakers of English and Spanish is that code-switching, the mixing and borrowing between Spanish and English or ‘Spanglish’ is grammatically incorrect and is limited in its application to informal situations and should not be considered legitimate. Ethnolinguistic minorities, individuals who speak varieties of languages and dialects are often deemed “less than” and “inferior to” dominant language varieties (e.g., African American Language (see Baugh, 1999; Smitherman, 1999); Spanish language varieties (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987/1999; Zentella, 2004), and accordingly, are granted lower status in American society (Lippi-Green, 2004). Despite these criticisms, code-switching is valid as a linguistic option employed by Chicanos that has its own linguistic identity. Code-switching may be employed for stylistic reasons, aesthetic purposes, to communicate biculturalism, humor, criticism, reveal ethnicity, and lend credibility.

Many scholars and literary critics place a high social value attributed to Chicano literature because it marks an individual’s cultural identity within a specific community (Guerrero, 60). Identity marking, alienation, characterization, and style are among the possible

⁸ Ibid, 87.

⁹ Ibid., 88

functions of literary code-switching saying it is 'the single most unique characteristic element of US Hispanic creative literature' (Keller 1993: 166). Gloria Anzaldua implies an understanding of code-switching as a linguistic choice as legitimate and way to find her authentic voice as a Chicana feminist author,

Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without always having to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. (Anzaldua 59)

Rather than reject Spanish influence upon her language she seeks to incorporate Spanish and English to create a new language that affirms and hears her longings for legitimacy in code-switching without feeling as though she much translate to accommodate an English speaking audience.

Susan Muñoz describes how code-switching is often the preferred choice of Chicanos to express an "indigenous connection, a Spanish-linguistic heritage, and an Anglo-centric reality (79)." Mexico's colonial heritage, first Spanish and more recently American, affects the speech community of Chicanos and their language use. Caught between the impulse to imitate the colonizer (Spanish/English use only) and linguistic autonomy, authors must use the colonizer's words and learn the colonizer's language before articulating his or her own speech. (Alvarado; King; Lopez, 151).

Since there can be no nostalgic return to pre-colonial purity, no unproblematic recovery of national origins undefiled by alien influences, the artist in the dominated culture cannot ignore the foreign presence but must rather swallow it and recycle it to national ends (Vieira; Stam).

The speaker acknowledges the impossibility of returning to a pure state prior to the conquest. An author such as Viramontes recreate and innovate language in order to subvert the

dominant culture in language use by forming her own transcultural style by code switching or “recycling” of taking something old and refashioning it.

Chicano literature is not apolitical nor is it fossilized. Aparicio (1994: 797) argued that ‘while some prescriptive linguists, editors, and authorities in education would judge the interference of Spanish and English as a deficit, a postmodern and transcreative approach would validate it as a positively creative innovation in literature.’ As Torres (2007: 76) points out, ‘using Spanish in an English language text serves to legitimize the much-maligned practice of mixing codes in vernacular speech.’ The novel *Their Dogs Came with Them* embodies Deborah Cohen’s definition of transculturalism as lived in-between two cultural worlds. This chapter considers the sociolinguistic functions of code-switching, alternations that take place between two languages, namely Spanish and English. This chapter further aims to analyze common attitudes and perceptions of the use of code-switching in vernacular speech and language. In doing so, I aim to show it as the use of a hybrid literary form that is reflective of the ways Chicanas use language.

Contemporary Latino writers in the US, such as Viramontes, are presented with several language choices in literary works: English, Spanish, and code-switching. The linguistic choice to incorporate both English and Spanish defines her work as a Chicana feminist writer and characterizes her linguistic community. *Their Dogs Came with Them* illustrates a fictional world that reveals a real-world phenomena, namely code-switching. Broadly speaking, Chicano literature is unique in that it places side- by-side, within the same scene, the same stanza, the same verse, the same phrase, English and Spanish words. This translates the dialectical reality of Chicanos (Rocard, 31) and this linguistic choice reveals cultural hybridity. As Sanchez affirms,

there are certain phrases that he cannot “traducir ciertas cosas en el idioma gringo” (“translate certain things in the gringo language”, Authors translation), (Rocard, 39).

Nativating Two Cultural Worlds: Code-Switching

One result of transculturalism is the need to navigate the murky waters of tension between two cultural worlds. As described in the introduction, one of the outcomes of the prolonged contact between English and Spanish speaking groups in North America is the metamorphosis of language. This type of language mixing or code-switching smoothly blends languages without violation of the grammatical rules of either language. Inclusion of Spanish words and phrases, along with English words and phrases, identifies multiple cultural forces at play, meshing two languages into a conglomerate whole, giving rise to new patterns, words and expressions (Fought 2003, Romain 1989, Stavans 2003). Silvia Spitta says the context of Latin America and other colonial contexts are defined by dynamic nexus of cultures that are "split between two or more worlds, cultures, and languages (8), as Gilbert Muller would say “Any national identity emerging from this landscape must acknowledge the complex issues of competing histories and cultural mixing that are played out against the historical backdrop of ancient worlds, colonial societies, and emerging civilizations (61).”

Code-switching reveals the complexity and multifaceted nature of transculturalism as a process that is useful in understanding it as a political act. Indeed, Chicano writing involves the reader as a political act by confronting the reader with a cultural dilemma and awakening a national consciousness. Similar to other ethnic literatures, Viramontes’ novel is concerned with the minority’s history and quest for cultural survival. It is marked by tensions of “dialectical process of contradictions and opposing elements.” These characteristics of the novel are further relevant to the study of transculturalism in Chicano art because they reveal the “trans-” prefix of

as created in-between two cultural worlds, two languages, transcending established boundaries of language use. As Marcienne Rocard eloquently expresses,

Chicano literature acts through opposing forces as mirroring two mutually incompatible ways of life. Opposition between the barrio, the guardian of traditional values, and the dominant Anglo society modulates into a series of oppositions: the opposition between yesterday (the Mexican past) and today (the Anglo reality) between today (a grim present) and tomorrow (a hopefully better future), as expressed in Alurista's poem. (34)

An example of such opposing elements occurs between languages, namely English and Spanish in the novel. Through conflicting cultural worlds, Viramontes forges a way forward toward a proper way of self-affirmation, revealing tensions woven into story, as it also informs her work by reflecting on the language use itself.

These characteristics of the novel are further relevant to the study of transculturalism in Chicano art because they reveal the "trans-" prefix of as made in the in-between two languages, transcending established boundaries of language use and emerging between and betwixt the U.S. and Mexico. I argue toward evidence of creation and recreation, reclamation and redefinition, of a Chicano identity that further embodies the Chicana/o experience in the United States. This chapter analyzes five main functions of linguistic code-switching to reveal the linguistic identity of individuals and groups, reinforcement of a motif and setting, aspects of the migratory experience, generational distinctions related to language fluency, and fragmented subjectivities marking a hybrid experience. I attend to the hybrid dynamic of her writing to illustrate how code-switching is a transcultural feature of Viramontes novel, engendering powerful knowledge by offering new possibilities of knowing and seeing.

Continuing to legitimize Chicano literature, scholar Francisco Lomelí speaks to the "growing relevance to close the gap between Latin American literature and the Americas because "with the evolution of languages and the growing presence of Chicano studies in global

universities, Chicano artistic expression has captivated the attention of international academics and readers. The alteration of two languages in "a verbal or written text, is a common feature in poetry, the art of performance, particularly the work that is published by Latino presses (Torres 76)." Scholars see Chicano literature as a vehicle to better understand American culture and its confluential nature as a way to overcome dichotomies across geographic borders, the colonizer and the colonized, the native and immigrant. George Vargas further says Chicano art is a "new symbol of a new American art for a new America (9)." Chicano literature shares common features with Mexican, American, and Latin American literature. Latin American literature is an example of a contact area where English and Spanish face each other in the same realm (Pratt; Torres 92). While similarities exist between them, Chicano literature is considered a literature with its own distinctive literary personality.

A particular strength of Viramontes' work is the way in her novel allows us to see the generic and linguistic boundaries that shape the reader's perceptions. As Gloria Anzaldúa says, "I see a hybridization of metaphor, different species of ideas popping up here, popping up there, full of variations and seeming contradictions (66)." It is these very "different species of ideas" rendered through "popping up" throughout the hybrid form of writing that provides rich ground for seeing the ways that the novel fulfills an intellectual venture. Moving across linguistic boundaries and subverting binary structures that have long plagued Chicano literature – male/female, rational/non-rational, subject/object, Spanish/English – Viramontes pushes wide the scope of available feminist discourses we use to better understand cultural hybridity. Rhetorical and metaphorical, narrative-based and argumentative, critical and embodied, these challenge the reader to expand practices of Chicano reading and writing to encompass new ways of seeing and perceiving.

Perhaps the most significant finding through analysis of code-switching in Helena Viramontes *Their Dogs Came with Them* reveals biculturalism, and not only bilingualism, accounting for the majority of code switches found in the corpora. As Torres explains, ‘these texts, which cannot be translated into either Spanish or English without losing the essence of the intercultural message, are not easily decipherable by monolinguals (2007: 90).’ Code-switching is therefore an intentional literary option for the bilingual writers who—living between two cultures—and choose to write in both languages, borrowing words and phrases, in order to fully express themselves. The search for self-identity is reflected by the continuous use of code-switching throughout the novel in dialogue between the characters. Code-switching represents the true Chicano identity -- drawing on both Anglo and Mexican culture -- but a distinctive blend of its own characteristics and personality. This further captures the multidimensional lived experience of their communities and as Spanish speakers grow in numbers and prominence in the US, the nuanced English and Spanish that result from transculturalism are enriching the linguistic landscape of our diverse community. We are united as one nation under God with *libertad* and justice for all...in English y *en español*.

Chapter Three: Beyond Borders of the Nation-State in the Film *Chicano Park*

Transculturalism is rooted in the pursuit to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders while transforming culture whether by necessity, conflict, revolution or slow integration and adaptation.¹⁰ Social groups exist within the perpetual volition of change and hybridization of cultural elements.¹¹ Cultural transformations occur at this interstice suggest a hybrid of both Americas. Transculturalism is a phenomenon of the contact zone (Pratt 7). Contact zones shift the center of gravity and alter the point of view. Pratt says

¹⁰ See introduction

¹¹ See introduction

ethnographers use the term transculturalism to describe how subordinated and marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. In this way, Chicano cinema is rooted in the pursuit to define its own identity apart from films produced by Hollywood. Through self-representations of their choosing, Chicanos participated in larger and more subtle efforts by white activists to undermine the imposed boundaries of racial identities (12)” Chicanos actively sought to negotiate their social positioning of their own design in dialogue with their heritage, their times, and their social surroundings (Pagan, 13).

Since the publication of Gloria Anzaldua’s 1987 book *Borderlands/La Frontera* and the blossoming of Chicana/o studies, Anzaldua’s work incorporates division of race, gender, and sexuality to construct a hybrid identity creating the notion of “a mestiza borderlands consciousness (Smith 28, 29).” This positioning places Chicano cinema between two worlds located on both sides of *la frontera*. Indeed, borders mark contours of nations, states, cities and even neighborhoods. A border may be natural — an ocean, a river, a chain of mountains — or it may be artificial such as a solid concrete wall or a fence adorned with sharp barbed wire or glass shards, fragmenting a homogeneous landscape. Borders as material objects may reflect divides between citizenship identities.

The poignant film *Chicano Park* is characterized by a different kind of journeying, as Chicanos cross borders, both real and imaginary. The border as both material object and metaphorical space reflects a transcultural hybrid consciousness of living between two spaces -- one real, another imaginary -- these spaces are revealed in the film *Chicano Park*. The cross-border experience – both from the south and north – and the meaning of the border is unfolded in the film as it involves the discourse by Chicanos surrounding the impact of border policies on their population. This geopolitical space is an important feature in border films, more

specifically, in Chicano studies. When borders are imaginary they represent the crossings between one culture and another, revealing cultural transformations that occur. In other words, regardless of the form it takes, a border --as both imaginary and real -- conveys a deeper meaning. Spaces occupied by the concept of “border” enjoy wide currency as a paradigm of transcultural experience, drawing our gaze to spaces “within and between” what were once defined as “homogenous communities” (Clifford). Physical, exterior borders as economic and political realities do not match the fluidity of the personal internal spaces of those who move through its rigid boundaries. The erosion of some borders through the proliferation of technological advancement and mass human migration has provoked more immediate confrontations of culture and identity (Morley; Robins, 87).

This chapter examines *Chicano Park (1989)*, a documentary film, directed by Marilyn Mulford a co-produced alongside Mario Barrera. Mulford, an Oscar nominee, has directed a variety of documentary films and television series concerned with issues related to race, ethnic diversity, and art which underscore political issues and preserve culture through ethnic minority films. Her most recent work, *Archeology of Memory: Villa Grimaldi (2008)* follows the life of an exiled Chilean musician, Quique Cruz, as he creates his masterwork, journeying from the Bay Area to Chile and back. Mario Barrera, a professor of Chicano/Latino Studies at UC Berkeley, is co-director of the film. He has published extensive books entitled *Race and Ethnicity in the Southwest* and *Beyond Aztlan: Ethnic Autonomy in a Comparative Perspective*.

The film *Chicano Park* underscores the U.S.-Mexico border. Ethnographic border films such as *Chicano Park* respond to the injustices of border constructions between nations, within states, and in the city of Los Angeles. Ethnographic border films feature ethnic and minority groups, document immigration, and reveal other realms of race relations are united in a journey

across borders. Border films are inextricably tied to a binomial focus to reinforce the concept of a "nation within a nation" model of Latinx studies: the focus of such scholarship focuses on the historical and cultural "contact zones" which occur along a border where two national cultures meet. These kinds of cultural confrontations are defined by Mary Louise Pratt as 'contact zones' and signify points of cultural crossings. Mary Pratt uses the term to refer to space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.

By analyzing *Chicano Park* my aim is that in doing so, I examine the points of encounter as Chicanos embark on journeys of border crossing, both literal and psychological, as as border subjects living between spaces in the U.S. and in Mexico. The intersectionality and culture crossing occur are relevant for understanding the border and how border subjects are treated and impacted by the process of crossing from one space to another. *Chicano Park* showcases Chicana/o artists and activists that both engage with and retell a borderlands history. This particular film is selected as cultural artifact because it is profoundly Chicano - California, the U.S.-Mexico border, family traditions, the vibrant barrio, relatives living on both sides of the border, and the myth of Aztlán are all elements relevant to the study of transculturalism in Chicano film, revealing Deborah Cohen's understanding of the "trans-" prefix of transculturalism as moving beyond the borders of the nation-state and transcend established boundaries, whether they be literal or figurative.

Cinematic *chicanismo*, the strong ethnic pride exhibited by Chicanos, is an underlying current in popular cinema on both sides of the US-Mexico border, positioning itself outside dominant hegemonies of two nation-states. One of the unifying principles of the Chicano

Movement was the concept of Chicanismo. Art historian Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino defines *chicanismo* as the complex of nationalist strategies by which Chicano origins and histories, as well as present and future identities, were constructed and legitimized. It further lended as a strategy of resistance to Anglo models of cultural assimilation. Mulford relies on interviews with witnesses, artists and activists to document border subjects. Personal interviews with Chicanos active during the Chicano Movement are featured and the filmmakers actively engage with border subjects, revealing convergence of two cultures and nationalities.

Imaginary Spaces of a Lost Homeland: The Myth of Atzlán

Today, Atzlán refers to the place in which Chicano culture flourishes while providing a solid basis for scholarship, literature, and visual and media arts. As illustrated in the image below, the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* was an activist manifesto and reveals the Chicano struggle for autonomy. Fabio Chee says that in the case of Chicana/o subject, myth is related to the “unconscious desire for the return to the Real, but it is also an attempt to negotiate the desire of the colonizer, to challenge their own myth of origin (Chee, 7).” It provided an integrated vision of the Chicano community and its political struggle for equal rights. According to Chon Noriega,

The Plan made explicit the movements assumption about the role of cultural production within political struggle, and, more generally, the way in which cultural nationalism mediated between the Chicano family and dominant society...calling upon artists, musicians, writers, and poets to assist in this process by defining the cultural values of the family and home as a “powerful weapon” against the “gringo dollar value system.” (Ethnic Eye, 10)

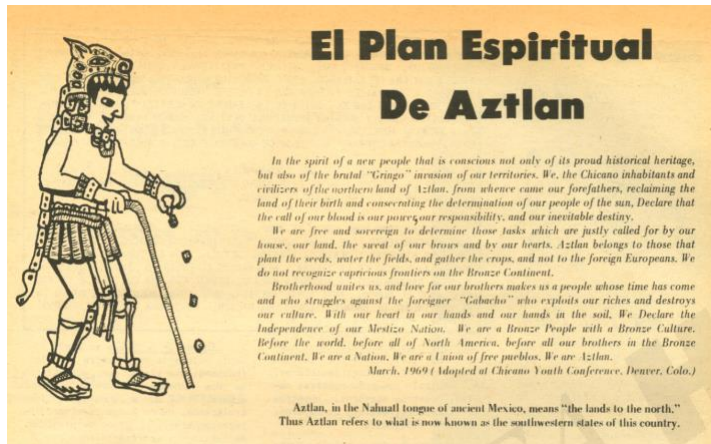


Fig. 5, Chicano Park, El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán

Chicano cinematic expression and production, creation and recreation, reclamation and redefinition of a Chicano identity is explored. It is a mythic consciousness that has sustained these cultural transformations in Chicano cinema and served to reconcile the divisions imposed by acts of bordering. The conversation of Chicano cultural studies beyond the borders of a nation, revealing a transnational turn in Chicano studies. The words of the last Aztec emperor in the film. He once said, "One day our sky shall bloom in new splendor And you my people will rise up like trodden grass to find Aztlán once more. " This prophetic word spoken by an Aztec emperor demonstrates ways that Chicanos sought a sense of calling and destiny to carry them into the future through connection to the previously lost homeland named Aztlán. This blazed a trail forward to a new political and cultural identity by looking back to an imagined past.

In the first scene of the film, the atmosphere shifts, shrouded in a mysterious aura, ethereal Andean flute music plays, and a poetic voice emerges, capturing natural landscapes of canyons and open expanse of uninhabited lands. Plana says, "San Diego was once Mexican, Spanish, Indian, and, in the time of myth and history, it was called Atzlán." It is a kind of picturesque pastoral landscape that prompts imagination on part of the viewer to see a geographic space differently as belonging to the Aztecs prior to European settlement and a time past in which borders were nonexistent. Atzlán is thought to be located in the Southwest United

States, formerly the Mexico's northern territory. Atzlán is the Nahuatl tongue of ancient Mexico that means "lands to the North." As illustrated in the film, the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy came to fruition when Chicanos rediscovered their culture and history, claiming their destiny as a people. As the Chicano voice was amplified, Atzlán provided a physical and spiritual link to community, privileging the marginalized voice. Raul Villa's observation that "the experience of being displaced in multiple ways from a perceived homeland has been an essential element of Chicanos' social identity in this country" (10) is illustrated in the film as Chicano artists, authors, and filmmakers use the concept of dispossession and diaspora in the late 1960s as the springboard and impetus for Chicano nationalism.



Fig. 4. *Chicano Park, Aztlan, A Mythical Homeland.*

The identification of Atzlán as a lost homeland enabled Chicanos to call on resistance to a history of oppression and provided a space for a diaspora to unite under the banner of resistance and collective lamentation. The open expanse of land shown in the shot above in which uninhabited land and mysterious cumulus clouds hover over canyons and float above the shadows cast by their coverage. The identification of a lost homeland further served to unite under a common identity that was both reinvented and reengineered for a diaspora whose land

was gradually dispossessed as whites moved into their original territory under the banner of Manifest Destiny.

Cultural myths of this kind are written and visualized narratives that explain the condition of a subject group. Rosa Linda and Fregoso explain the importance of Aztlan for Chicanos: “Chicano identity was framed in Aztlán. And, Aztlán provided a basis for a return to the roots, for a return to an identity before domination and subjugation - a voyage back to pre-Columbian times.” (Fregoso and Chabram-Dernersesian, 27) The act of defining oneself as Chicano had significant repercussions within the dominant Americanization practices and concept of an assimilationist America as a melting pot because it represented a new collective consciousness centered around the myth of Aztlan. The voyage *atrás* and *adelante*, backward and forward, birthed a new cultural identity that challenged the limits of a single nation-state by crossing boundaries between cultures and nation-states. Mediating two worlds, Chicano cinema negotiates across and between spaces, both imaginary and real. The challenge to the myth of origin is a voyage back in time as illustrated in the film *Chicano Park*. In a mesa redonda interview, Herrera Sobek says,

There was a real need for us - when I say us, I'm talking about the Chicanos all over the land; wherever there are industrial centers, there is a raza that lives across the tracks. There was a real need for all of us to find a way, a metaphor, let me put it that way- and at this level I think I'm equating metaphor with myth - a metaphor would serve as a unifying tool...to forge a national consciousness. Our unity is not bound to homogeneity. I mean we aren't all the same, and because we recognize that, we looked for something older than us and that had more future than us, that was based on the present. The myth of Aztlán, as I saw it, in the 60's was just a way to identify a people, a land, and a consciousness that said, “Struggle, do not be afraid.”

Equating metaphor with myth, Aztlán was a unifying force during a time of political and social struggle. It serves as a call to remembrance of one's roots, creating a new popular consciousness. This emerging consciousness sought to account for the diverse population of

Chicanos living throughout the entire US. Aztlán is not only a physical territory by Alurista, the poet who first borrowed the term as a sign of cultural solidarity, but is a space of racial origin.

An internal colonialism paradigm provide the theoretical impetus for Chicanas/os to create Aztlán as mythical homeland. Adapted at the Chicano Youth Conference the Plan of Atzlán says,

Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and water the crops, and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the Bronze Continent...with our heart in our hands, and our hands in the soil, we declare the Independence of our Mestizo Nation. We are a Bronze People with a Bronze Culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the Bronze continent. We are a nation. We are a nation of free pueblos. We are Aztlán (1969)

The Plan signified the death of the old and rebirth to expand the frontiers of the mind. Its relevance to 21st century times is to political resistance movements. It provides a space to express resistance, claim to space, innovation, and celebration of Chicano political identity by carving out a space for themselves to disrupt the stereotypes of Hollywood.

Hollywood Stereotypes and Self-Representation in Chicano Cinema

Prior to the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Chicanos were often defined by stereotypes imposed by Hollywood and the dominant society. The 1980s were an era of change: increased immigration and transit across the U.S.-Mexico border, the consolidation of globalization, the waning of the Cold War, and it was a time troubled by the recent past of the Vietnam War and the revolution in social attitudes wrought by the Civil Rights Era (Fojas, 83). Several border films exerted conscious efforts to form a clear cultural response to these crises of the 1980s: *Borderline* (1980), *The Border* (1982), and *Flashpoint* (1984). Explosion of Chicano culture and art resulting from political activism, sparked new recognition and value for Chicano art, eroding old barriers.

The border in *Chicano Park* is a multicultural space in which multiple layers of tension exist. Renato Rosaldo describes the US-Mexico border region as “peopled with multiple subjectivities and a plurality of languages and cultures” (Renato, 84-93). Hamid Naficy describes “journeys of identity” and ways that the two-thousand-mile long U.S.-Mexico border resulted in a great amount of feature films than any other, precisely 147 films Mexico between the 1979-1989. The feature of the border in modern Chicano films is represented by Chicanos that cross cinematic boundaries, representing a fusion of two cinemas and synthesis of a third cinema located on the borderlands. Chicano cinema is one type of border film that emphasizes border subjectivities of the filmmakers (Naficy, 239). The emergence of a third cinema in the 1960s and 1970s challenged Hollywood’s model of entertainment as a money-making enterprise for it condemned the forces of neocolonialism, racial stereotyping of the “other”, namely the Mexican portrayal as ‘banditos’ (Mexican outlaws) or ‘greaser’ (a derogatory term for youth subculture of Mexican descent).

Ideas surrounding cultural origins fashioned a new identity by creating images and narratives as Chicanos themselves wished to be represented apart from the mainstream American voice of Hollywood. Rather than accepting a "master narrative" imposed from outside the movement, Chicano cinema mediates between two identities and incorporates symbols gleaned from both the ancient past and contemporary realities. It is my interpretation that an ethnic sociopolitical identity or double consciousness, distinguishes Chicano cinema apart from Chicano-themed scripts of Hollywood and Mexico.

Chicano art is a combination of cultural influences which include American “pop” culture, art-world, Mexican, and *barrio* influences. According to Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, this experience allowed artists, writers, and filmmakers alike to figuratively break through a wall

of silence that confined them to the *barrio* or to assimilationist practices by liberating them to explore new artistic forms and new relationships to the dominant society itself (Cockcroft; Barnett-Sanchez, 18). Self-representation in Chicano art is represented by mural paintings, revealing elements gleaned from an indigenous past. Chicana artist Yolanda Lopez says, “We finally had a chance to define ourselves the way we wanted to be seen”, reinforcing notions of self-representation by Chicanos.

Similarly, an ethnic sociopolitical identity and double consciousness, distinguishes Chicano cinema apart from Chicano-themed scripts of Hollywood and Mexico. Chon A. Noriega defines Chicano cinema as it “juxtaposes and straddles two locations: America and América (18).” Hollywood is often said to communicate the American dream. To Juan Salazar, his vision of American culture is one that fragments and splinters. He says,

We are the last ingredient to make the American dream real...I believe that the mestizo...is the real existential, modern, paradoxical man. He is bilingual, bicultural, divided. We must find a way to reconcile the division, to explore our lives, to understand ourselves and to give the other culture a way of understanding us.

Salazar’s concern for the fulfillment of the American dream is important in developing an awareness of the work left before us as a nation, reminding us that the American dream belongs to all equally, “lighting up the silver screen in shades of brilliant bronze (The Bronze Screen, 1:28).”



Fig. 1. *Chicano Park*. U.S. Mexico, scene still. Dir. Marilyn Mulford. Metro-Golden-Mayer, 1989.

The border between the United States and Mexico is a thin line on a map that traces the path of Rio Grande and is located at an important cinematic location since its earliest days of cinema and continues to feature in modern film-making (Fuller 147). *Chicano Park* showcases Chicana/o artists and activists that both engage with and retell a borderlands history that capturing Chicano history beginning at the turn of the 20th century until the late 1990s.

The film's opening scene begins with narration of the modern urban development in San Diego today and contrasts its modernity to a time prior where myths and legends abound. The proximity of San Diego seventeen miles from the border between the US-Mexico illustrates the significance of the border in the film that guards differences between cultures, languages, and citizenship identities. As seen in the shot below, *Chicano Park* uniquely highlights the border as physical object and represents the borderlands as metaphorical space separating two citizenship identities. Its engagement with the historical events predating the Chicano Movement provides a unique historical perspective to the corpus of Chicano film-making, marking it as equally as valuable, though it is not as renowned as other documentary films inspired by the politics a changing public consciousness, social movement, and political protest sparked by the Chicano Movement.

The majority of critics of Chicano cinema attempt to recuperate former representations of Chicanos in Hollywood and Mexican cinema. Their critical lens engages with more authentic representations by Chicanos themselves as they themselves wished to be represented. Chicano self-representation was an organizing tool and means of representing the Chicano movement to a national audience (Noriega, 7). This removed them from Anglo-centric viewpoint and

challenges of the stereotyped images communicated by Hollywood. As MacDougell eloquently describes,

Visually based media - including film, photography, television, and video - have already significantly undermined stereotypical perceptions of national identity often in the face of nationalist interests. A transcultural perspective accommodates cultural shift, movement, and interchange, which more adequately fits the experience of ... populations often identified as indigenous, migrant, or diasporic. (261)

Real Spaces: U.S.-Mexico Border and Life in the Borderlands of Barrio Logan

The film is both binational and bicultural, interacting with life on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border and interviews subjects that live in the borderlands. Residents of San Diego's Barrio Logan annually celebrate April 22, 1970 when the Chicano community established Chicano Park. Logan Heights or Barrio Logan became a site of cultural survival reinforcing language, religion, and social habits of its residents.

Once the second largest Chicano community on the west coast, Barrio Logan was home to Mexican immigrants, who in the 1920's, filtered through the porous border to work as longshoreman and cannery workers in the U.S. During the Great Depression, the neighborhood became fragmented and diminished as residents were forcefully deported south across the U.S.-Mexico border. With the outbreak of World War II, Chicanos were again recruited, this time to labor in the aircraft and naval industries and the community blossomed once again. Barrio Logan was re-zoned for industrial expansion in the 1950's; the Coronado Bridge was constructed and inhabitants internally displaced as the city was transformed from a residential community to industrial zone that forced residents to leave. The chronological storyline of *Chicano Park* further depicts its historical roots taking to the turn of the twentieth century until the late 1970s when Chicano Park was established and the collective dream of the people came to fruition. Inhabitants of Barrio Logan survived additional rounds of urban redevelopment but in 1987,

earned the right to expand Chicano Park to the bay under the campaign slogan as depicted in the film as “All the Way to the Bay.”

Combining archival footage, photographs and contemporary interviews, the film tells the history of Barrio Logan and its struggles to reclaim a part of "Aztlán," the mythical Aztec kingdom of the Southwest that has come to symbolize the powerful renewal of Chicano pride. This reveals a facet of transculturalism as extending beyond the boundaries of a nation extending back to a time long ago when they had a homeland prior to conquest and forced displacement. The chronological storyline further depicts its historical roots taking to the turn of the twentieth century until the late 1970s when Chicano Park was established and the collective dream of the people came to fruition. Residents of San Diego's Barrio Logan annually celebrate April 22, 1970 when the Chicano community established Chicano Park. Logan Heights or Barrio Logan became a site of cultural survival reinforcing language, religion, and social habits of its residents.

The film provides the viewer with a rich panorama of major historical moments taking place in the US which impacted the Chicano community living in Barrio Logan, reminding the viewer how Chicanos create a new identity fashion new images for themselves as they wished to be represented. The film can be categorized as binational and bicultural as it interacts with life on both sides of the US-Mexico border and interviews subjects that live in the borderlands. The film documents how the border was not always strictly enforced until 1924 when the Border Chain and Checkpoint was established.



Fig. 3: *Chicano Park*, Image, scene still. The establishment of Border Chain and Checkpoint in 1924

Chicano cinema as a genre includes border films that emphasizes border subjectivities of the filmmakers (Naficy, 239). Personal interviews with Chicanos active during the Chicano Movement are featured and the filmmakers actively engage with border subjects, revealing convergence of two cultures and nationalities and the emergence of new cultural phenomena.



Fig. 2. *Chicano Park*, The mass deportation of Mexicans during the Great Depression from Barrio Logan, California.

As seen in the shot above, the forced deportation of Mexicans during the Great Depression from California greatly diminished the vibrancy of the Chicano community living in the Southwest as people were herded into trains destined for Mexico. The mass deportation of Mexicans from California was pockmarked by this emotional memory etched into the minds of

many Chicanos interviewed in the film. It diminished the vibrancy of the community because thousands of workers were sent back to Mexico. This is demonstrated in the film when Rodriguez says,

During the Depression people were just herded...children born here had to go with parents who weren't citizens. I remember my friends and I went to go down here to the railroad and see the train taking them. It was really very sad. (08:15)

Conquest of northern Mexico by the US signified the imposition of a border in the Southwest. For generations after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) there was a free flow of Mexicans across the frontier. Although the border between Mexico and the US existed, it was porous, allowing for the free movement of people traveling across its contours in the borderlands. In the film, an interview with another border subject named Laura Rodriguez reveals the experience living on the US-Mexico border. Rodriguez says,

Being on the border, I don't remember any of my neighbors even mentioning it, we never heard the word undocumented, alien, illegal alien. People came and went. It was just like you went across the street or went downtown. There was no big issue (07:45).

Massive migration of Anglos under the banner of Manifest Destiny significantly altered the experience living on the border or in the borderlands. Prior to the establishment of the Border Chain and Checkpoint in 1924, it was convenient for Chicanos to live and interact on both sides of the border for many Chicanos. Hamid Naficy says that borders inscribe metaphorized borders and border crossings and many of them deal centrally with the empirical borders, and the emotions and wounds they inflict. (240) Indeed, the hardening of the physical border between the US and Mexico was marked by an emotional memory. Sadness and nostalgia are expressed by Rodriguez as community members living in Barrio Logan were suddenly uprooted and taken back to Mexico during the Great Depression.

**Chapter Four: Transculturalism in Chicano Visual Art:
Melding of Old and New Culture in the Mural Painting *Quetzalcoatl***

*Many primitive cultures have used me as a symbol for both good and evil
I (Quetzalcoatl) symbolize the Morning Star, and have been blessed with many different names
Nevertheless, I am worshiped by many cultures of mankind as a powerful being
I am the Light-Bringer, and the Knowledge-Bringer
to mankind and am similar to Prometheus
I seduced Eve to bite the apple in order that she may have knowledge and become like Yahweh
I am also Quetzalcoatl, the revered sky god of the Aztecs
Without the symbolism that mankind has placed upon me
I am nothing more than a plain reptile
- Serpent, by Eric Shelman*

California is the site of numerous mural paintings, capturing the Chicano community's cultural expression and claim to space prompt social change. A truly public art, Chicano murals provide society with symbolic representation of collective beliefs and values. Chicano muralism differed from Mexican muralism. Rather than sponsorship from the Mexican government, Chicano artists emerged out of a struggle by the people themselves against the *status quo*. The new muralist movement was characterized by community involvement and the philosophy of community input as a guide (Barnet-Sanchez, 9). Collectively, these works promote cultural resistance and awareness. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, they educate and implicitly validate transculturalism in Chicano visual art.

Chicano mural paintings reflect a blending and borrowing of cultural elements from various historical periods that served to unify and rally people to fight for a common cause and secure space, ensuing cultural survival. Located in San Diego, Chicano Park is the home to the world's largest collection of outdoor public murals. Over eighty murals bring life and color to the barrio. Individually, each piece historicizes different aspects affecting Chicano culture, ranging from Mesoamerican influences to local San Diego Chicano struggles. Concerns about permanence, composition, and aesthetic quality became important to muralists, including the immediate political and organizing impact.

This aims to capture the evolution of Chicano culture through the prefix “trans-” as transforming the relationship between the binary of the old and the new, the ancient and the modern, that which precedes and that which represents the present moment. In other words, this chapter investigates transculturalism by tapping into a popular consciousness and the formation of collective identity through the visual arts. I focus on the visual record of transcultural features in Chicano art surrounding the Chicano Movement, drawing primarily on mural art produced in California during and after the Chicano Movement. I continue to analyze evidence of creation and recreation, reclamation and redefinition, of a Chicano identity that further defines the Latina/o experience in the United States as a dynamic process. These characteristics discovered in visual art relevant to the study of transculturalism in Chicano art as they reveal the “trans-” prefix of as synthesis of the old and new cultures.

Artists such as Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros painted public murals as instruments of social and cultural transformations. As artists during the Chicano Movement collaborated on projects, they drew inspiration from these famous Mexican muralists from which emerged a new iconography and symbolic language which not only articulated *el movimiento* or the Chicano Movement itself, but represented the heart of the artistic renaissance as artists sought to unify and come together as a community by incorporating elements of both the new and the old cultures. This artistic renaissance represented a birth and flowering of a Chicano aesthetic and because of its close alliance with and commitment to social change and political activism as reaching back into the past to redress present grievances.

Artifacts painted in Chicano mural paintings carry deeper symbolic meaning in Chicano Park. Themes include elements from traditional Mexican culture such as Aztec gods, Mexican revolutionaries, and *la raza*. This new emerging aesthetic incorporated traditional Mexican

culture while reaching beyond Mexico to Aztlán. Chicano murals as public and collective art form proudly display Mexican, Latin American, and Chicano cultural elements, hybridizing objects around which the community could identify and construct stories about their origins as a people that looked back to the past, continued into the present, and reached beyond into the future.

Chicano mural art assisted in the formation and reflection of reinforcing a public consciousness to serve efforts toward formation of a new identity -- a public consciousness that centered on issues of transculturation - and the blending of cultural elements toward the creation of a fusion between the old and the new. Through this intermixture and hybridization of cultures, older certainties and foundation of identity are continuously and necessarily undermined (Morley; Robins). A rich panorama of the major historical events is illustrated in murals. Built in 1969, the the construction of the San Diego-Coronado Bridge containing mural paintings in a variety of styles, humanizing this forest of concrete slabs with multicolored images that are a visual and public expression of social, political, cultural and historical statements of the past and present struggle of the class Chicano of the working class. Chicanos transformed the old to create new images for themselves as they wished to be represented through new mural art paintings. Artists showed Indians and Mexicans together demonstrating connections past and present cultural figures.

The mural painting *Quetzalcoatl* is selected as cultural artifact because it represents the process of transculturalism. The mural was created by a group of artists in 1971 and is represents important elements of Chicano cultural and the vibrant Chicano Park in San Diego, California. *Quetzalcóatl* extends beyond the boundaries of the park, making a claim to space beyond the outer limits of Chicano Park. Its placement is significant as it is representative of a claim to

public space and recognition as an artistic collective that Chicanos pushed the boundaries of the space beyond Barrio Logan. In the early stages of the mural, hundreds of Barrio Logan residents in 1971 participated in replacing the slab of concrete highway wall with vivid color. Barrio Logan is claim to space for Chicanos to create change, learn more about their cultural roots, and address the existing struggle for survival.

To remain valid and relevant, Chicanos called upon a new generation of artists. The activists and artists involved in the mural projects in Barrio Logan built on old lessons of the past, while creating a new future of their own. A core group of artists in Barrio Logan worked on the mural *Quetzalcóatl* for an entire year, attempted to unify the various images. Due to physical deterioration from environmental elements, *Quetzalcóatl* was renovated in 1987 by a lighter palette and retained the initial symbolism of the original version. *Quetzalcoatl* transforms a concrete slab on the IB ramp in Chicano Park, San Diego into an exquisite work of collective art. Originally created in 1971 and later renovated in 1987 it uniquely speaks to the Chicano experience as a conglomeration of the old (Mexican and Indigenous) and the new (American culture).

Drawing back to their indigenous cultural origins and roots turned objects into intercultural identifiers or markers of a public changing consciousness. Chicano muralists were among the most ardent political activists who began to shift a public consciousness by covering gigantic stanchions of the Coronado Bridge with murals depicting objects and figures inspired by ancient Aztec and Mayan myth, providing visual testimony to Chicano political leaders like Cesar Chavez and iconic artist Frida Kahlo. As such, Chicano murals celebrate all the images representing the Chicano experience.

The transformation of a public consciousness was transcultural at its core because in order to come together collectively as a group, Chicanos needed unifying objects with which to identify and rally around. The United Farm Workers Flag, the black and red Aztec symbol pointing four directions, the Kiosco Mexican pyramid, the Mexican *La muerte* death skeleton and the Mestizo face, anchored in pre-Columbian images, recycling cultural artifacts, public icons, and historical figures painted in murals on the same surface of concrete underpass. The visual record of this mural art offers an opportunity to investigate the way in which transculturalism emerged as an artistic theme in Chicano art during the Chicano Movement in the 1960s and 70s.

Highways and Byways as Canvases

Most of the Chicano Park murals have been painted on the pylons that sustain the Coronado Bridge, the very bridge that forcefully displaced many residents living in Logan Heights with its construction in the late 1960s. By utilizing the pylons and interstate highway as canvases, Chicano artists envisioned a landscape that would mark a claim to space and cultivate an emerging public consciousness.



Fig. 2. *Quetzalcóatl*, Photo credit: Chicano Park Museum, Web.

As illustrated in the image above, the Quetzalcóatl, mythical feathered serpent of pre-Columbian Mexico, stands boldly before the Coronado Bay Bridge. Quetzalcoatl was one of the most powerful gods in ancient Mesoamerica. The god known as the plumed serpent is a hybrid between a bird and a rattlesnake. Indeed, the name itself is a fusion of the Nahuatl words for the *quetzal* - the emerald plumed bird - and *coatl* or serpent. *Quetzalcóatl* observes the master plan of Chicano Park with the children's play area, the handball courts, and the small pier of the waterfront park at the end of Crosby Street. As La Raza, representing Chicanos, stand at the water's edge, their shadows cast the image of an eagle, soaring into an explosive light. Another bird in the mural is located on the red United Farm Workers (UFW) flag, signifying the farmworkers struggle during the Chicano Movement. The graceful curve of the Coronado Bay Bridge is supported by its supporting structure, four T-shaped pylons, prominent features in the composition as a reflection of their integration into Barrio Logan in San Diego.

As we cast our gaze from left to right, we see common themes found in other Chicano mural art in Quetzalcoatl. The following categories provide some examples. There are religious motifs such as Pre-Columbian pyramids and temples, the Virgin of Guadalupe's roses, and the cross. Quetzalcoatl has indigenous motifs of Pre-Columbian warriors and tribes, flora and fauna such as the nopal cactus or prickly pear, and non-religious symbols, for example, hearts, feather, chains, a black eagle, the United Farm Worker (UFW) flag, suns and sun symbols, extended hands, clasped hands and clenched fists, and calaveras or skeletons. We see two Mayan indigenous profiles, a Catholic rose, and the Chinese Yin-Yang symbol, fusing the old and the new, the ancient and the modern. In the foreground a stepped-pyramid known as a kiosko marks the heart of Chicano Park. The huelga eagle soars above a series of Mexican pueblito where

nopal or prickly pear cacti are situated in the foreground. Calaveras or animated skeletons menacingly emerge with a cross upheld in one boney hand as if to give testimony to the Christian cross, once a source of death for thousands of indigenous people during the period of evangelization between 1524 and 1572.

The Mayan profiles of a prince and princess, an Aztec eagle warrior, the Catholic rose, the huelga eagle and the Yin-Yang symbol. Behind the skull of death dawns the life of the sun, whose eye represents the ollin, symbolizing movement. The sun is one aspect of Huitzilopochtli, an Aztec tribal deity who was transformed into their most powerful god of war. The myth of his birth relates that Huitzilopochtli defended himself with a serpent of fire, the Xiahcōatl, illustrated in the mural as a shocking lightning bolt cradled by the hand of the sun. The Mexican pueblo depicted in the mural illustrates Chicanos united holding hands in a circle, reminding this viewer how they stood in a circle to keep developers from constructing a highway patrol station in the barrio of Logan Heights. Three large portraits painted in varying shades of bronze representing the farmworker, the revolutionary, and the contemporary Chicano maintain a westward gaze keeping watch over the mural. These complete the mural and seem to be representative of the diverse Chicano community.

Just as many of the murals in Chicano Park tell the story of a claim to the space under the pylons, Aztlán calls attention to reclaiming Chicano ancestral land of Aztlán. This is a singular example of how murals capture and tell histories that lie outside the lines of dominant historical narratives. As Chicanos reexamined and redefined themselves during *el movimiento*, so we too can retell standard visual and verbal narratives that run counter to the *status quo*.

Chapter Five: Conclusion: A Transcultural Chicano Identity

Returning to my opening question in the introduction: What does it mean to identify as Chicano rather than American or Mexican? I have posited that Chicanos live in a dynamic sphere in which they share a dual frame of reference defined by a lived reality shared among numerous spaces. This lived reality is carried across borders, representing a synergy of cultures as Chicanos do not identify fully with Anglo or Mexican values or labels such as Mexican American. This thesis acknowledges the complexity, diversity, and multifaceted nature of transculturalism as a process that is useful in understanding Chicano cultural and political identity that adapts and adjusts in order to survive. I have posited a very active, transnational dynamic to Chicano identity by drawing upon Deborah Cohen's sensibility of the "trans" prefix.

Transcultural dimensions of cultural analysis are included in the discussion of transculturalism in Chicano literature, film, and visual art. I have sought to continue the conversation in Chicano cultural studies as active and having a transnational dynamic to Chicano cultural identity. I argue toward evidence of creation and recreation, reclamation and redefinition, of a Chicano identity that further embodies the Chicano experience in the U.S. Tapping into a popular consciousness and the formation of collective identity it is necessary to discuss public art as created for the community at large to both express and produce art to inspire societal change.

As Chicanos reclaim spaces that acknowledge and celebrate their community's unique identity, Chicano art continues to speak to us today. Can the transcultural Chicano experience be representative of all Americans to acknowledge their cultural and political identity? Are we

capable of forging a path forward together of two or more cultures uniting to acknowledge the existence of many ways to be from the United States. Indeed, the word Chicano is an American word (not only an English, or only a Spanish word) (Sanchez-Tranquilino 101) for it was birthed in the United States yet was inspired by the past.

Chicano culture as seen through the lens of transculturalism is vibrant and dynamic. The study of Chicano culture through the lens of literature, film, and visual art as explored in this thesis explains what Claudia Sadowski-Smith defines as the creation of “hybrid cultures and identities that complicate dominant US notions of citizenship.” All three objects of the novel, film, and mural painting, share a common geographic space in southern California. They were inspired by and created during the Chicano political movement of the 1960s and 1970s. These objects reveal various facets of the nature of transculturalism in Chicano studies through analysis of Chicana/o cultural artifacts.

Chicana/o identity connects an ancient past with contemporary political realities and ancient myths with European aesthetics and modern culture. Chicano art blends together the ancient and the modern. It has become a way of seeking spaces to freely forge a way forward through forms, colors, and narratives by constantly renegotiating the terms of what it means to identify as Chicana/o. Chicano visual art, literature, and film has historically evolved and been informed, sustained, and driven by community-based construction of a Chicano cultural identity. All these chapters bring out the importance of the search for identity and collective self-redefinition that resulted in a flowering of Chicano literature, film, and visual art. All narratives -- whether they be literature, film, or visual testimonies -- are constructed and negotiated, revealing the legacy of socially engaged and community-based artistic practices in literature, film, and

visual art. To be Chicana/o signifies the amalgamation of the old and the new, the switching between languages, and border crossing journeys.

Bibliography

- Black, Charlene Villasenor. DIEZ: 10 Artists, 10 Stories. Youtube, UCLA Santa Barbara, www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_papMzbb-I&feature=share.
- Boros, Diana. *Creative Rebellion for the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Public and Interactive Art to Political Life in America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Brady, Mary Pat, and Gutiérrez y Muhs. "Metaphors to Love By: Toward a Chicana Aesthetics in Their Dogs Came with Them." *Rebozos de Palabras: An Helena María Viramontes Critical Reader* (2013): 167-191.
- Chavez, Denise, and Linda Feyder. *Shattering the Myth: Plays by Hispanic Women*. Arte Publico Press, 1992.
- Chee, Fabio. *Visual Origins: Chicana/o Representations in Film and Narrative* 73.05 (2012): 1933.
- Clifford, James. "Diasporas/Borders", paper presented at the Borders/Diasporas conference, University of California, Santa Cruz, April 1992.
- Christie, John S. *Latino fiction and the modernist imagination: Literature of the borderlands*. Psychology Press, 1998.

- Cockcroft, Eva Sperling and Holly Barnet-Sanchez. *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*. Social and Public Art Resource Center, 2001.
- Cohen, Deborah. *Braceros : Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (2011). Web.
- Dagnino, Arianna. *Transcultural Literature and Contemporary World Literature(s)*. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271153903_Transcultural_Literature_and_Contemporary_World_Literatures.
- De Los Santos, Nancy. Racho, Susan, De Jesús, Wanda, Bronze Screen Productions, Latino Entertainment Media Institute, and Questar, Inc. *The Bronze Screen 100 Years of the Latino Image in Hollywood* (2002). Film.
- Díaz-Quiñones, Arcadio. "Fernando Ortiz y Allan Kardec: Transmigración y Transculturación." *Latin American Literary Review*, vol. 25, no. 50, 1997, pp. 69–85. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20119754.
- Elizondo, Sergio. *Perros y antiperros: una épica chicana*. Quinto Sol Publications, 1972.
- Fojas, Camilla. *Border bandits: Hollywood on the southern frontier*. University of Texas Press, 2009.
- Keller, Gary D. "Chicano Cinema." *Binghamton, NY* (1985).
- Drescher, Tim. *San Francisco Murals: Community Creates its Muse, 1914-1994*. Pogo Pr, 1994.
- Duran, David, Hernandez-G., Manuel De Jesus, Alarcon, Justo, and Rosales, Jesus. *El Compromiso Social Y El Futuro De Aztlán: El Mestizaje En "La Raza Cósmica"* (1925) De José Vasconcelos Y La Novela "Crisol" (1984) De Justo S. Alarcón (2012).
- García, Mario T. *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge, 2014.
- Garcia, Mario, T. *Literature as History: Autobiography, Testimonio, and the Novel in the Chicano and Latino Experience*. TUCSON, University of Arizona Press, 2016. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1f89twk.
- Galeano, Eduardo. *Open veins of Latin America: Five centuries of the pillage of a continent*. NYU Press, 1997.
- Heisler, Martin O. "Now and then, here and there: Migration and the transformation of identities, borders, and orders." Albert, M., Jacobson, D. and Lapid, Y. *Identities, Borders, Orders: Helena María Viramontes and Carmen Flys-Junquera* *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* Vol. 5 (2001), pp. 223-238
- Indych-López, Anna. *Muralism Without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927-1940*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 2009.
- Rethinking International Relations Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN (2001): 225-247.
- Keller, Gary D. *Chicano Cinema : Research, Reviews, and Resources*. Binghamton, N.Y.: Bilingual Review/Press, 1985. Print.
- Kevane, Bridget A., and Juanita Heredia. *Latina self-portraits: Interviews with contemporary women writers*. UNM Press, 2000.

- Latorre, Guisela. *Walls of empowerment: Chicana/o indigenist murals of California*. University of Texas Press, 2008.
- Lipski, John. "Is "Spanglish" the third language of the South?: truth and fantasy about US Spanish." *3rd Language Variation in the South (LAVIS III) conference, Tuscaloosa, AL*. 2004.
- Leal, Luis. "Mexican American Literature: A Historical Perspective." *Revista chicano-riqueña* 1.1 (1973): 32-44.
- Trujillo, Roberto G., Rodríguez, Andrés, and Leal, Luis. *Literatura Chicana : Creative and Critical Writings through 1984*. 1st ed. Oakland, Calif.: Floricanto, 1985. Print.
- Lopez-Flores, Jacqueline, and Ada, Alma Flor. *Living in Two Languages: Code -switching in Picture and Chapter Books Authored by Chicanos and Latinos (2006): ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Print.
- Madsen, Deborah L. *Understanding Contemporary Chicana Literature*. Univ of South Carolina Press, 2000, 5.
- Martin-Rodriguez, M. (2001). "A Net Made of Holes": Toward a Cultural History of Chicano Literature. *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly*, 62(1), 1-18.
- Martín Rodríguez, Manuel M. "History, Poetry, and Politics in Gaspar De Villagrà's "Historia De La Nueva México"." *Camino Real: Estudios De Las Hispanidades Norteamericanas* 6 (2012): 87-100. Web.Mendez, Angela. Brandeis University. Interview. 2018.
- Mermann-Jozwiak, Elisabeth, and Nancy Sullivan. *Conversations with Mexican American writers: languages and literatures in the borderlands*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2009.
- Monroy, Douglas. "Trans-Americanity: Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality, and the Cultures of Greater Mexico." (2014): 109-111.
- Montes-Alcalá, Cecilia. "Code-switching in US Latino literature: The role of biculturalism." *Language and Literature* 24.3 (2015): 264-281.
- Morley, David, and Kevin Robins. *Spaces of identity: Global media, electronic landscapes and cultural boundaries*. Routledge, 2002.
- Mulford, Marilyn and Barrera, Mario. "Chicano Park" video documentary (Berkeley: Red Bird Film, 1988)
- Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Nichols, Bill. *Representing reality: Issues and concepts in documentary*. Vol. 681. Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Olalquiaga, Celeste. *Megalopolis : Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1992. Print.
- Pagán, Eduardo Obregón. *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime LA*. Univ of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Palmowski, Jan. *A Dictionary of Twentieth-Century World History*. Oxford Univ. Press, 1997.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 2007.

- Rama, Ángel. *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*. Siglo XXI, 1982.
- Renato, Rosaldo. "Fables of the Fallen Guy." *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology* (1991): 84-93
- Rosales, Jesús, Fonseca, Vanessa, and Lomelí, Francisco A. *Spanish Perspectives on Chicano Literature : Literary and Cultural Essays*. 2017. Print. Global Latino Americas.
- Rosales, J., Hinojosa, Rolando, & McDonald, Leigh. (2014). *Thinking En Español : Interviews with Critics of Chicana/o Literature*.
- Rangel, Jeffrey J., and Montse Conill. *Arte y Activismo En El Movimiento Chicano: Judith F. Baca, La Juventud y La Política Cultural*. *Historia, Antropología y Fuentes Orales*, no. 21, 1999, pp. 111–129.
- Rocard, Marcienne. "The Chicano: A Minority in Search of a Proper Literary Medium for Self-affirmation." *Missions in Conflict: Essays on US-Mexican Relations and Chicano Culture* (1986): 31-40.
- Rosaldo (eds). Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Blackwell Reference Online. 03 February 2018 <http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9781405126229_chunk_g978140512622946>
- Saldívar-Hull, Sonia. "Feminism on the border: From gender politics to geopolitics." *Criticism in the borderlands: Studies in Chicano literature, culture, and ideology* (1991): 203-20.
- Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. "From the Borderlands to the Transnational? Critiquing Empire in the Twenty-First Century." *A Companion to Latina/o Studies*. Flores, Juan and Renato
- Schiller, Nina Glick, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton. "Towards a definition of transnationalism." *Annals of the New York academy of sciences* 645.1 (1992).
- Scholes, Robert. *Semiotics and interpretation*. Vol. 465. Yale University Press, 1982.
- Segrott, Jeremy. "The Human Mosaic: A Thematic Introduction to Cultural Geography (Book Review)." *Area* 32.2 (2000): 248. Web.
- Seliger, Mary A. "Racial Violence, Embodied Practices, and Ethnic Transformation in Helena Maria Viramontes "Neighbors" and Their Dogs Came With Them." *Bilingual Review* 31.3 (2012): 262-278.
- Spitta, Silvia. *Between Two Waters: Narratives of Transculturation in Latin America*. Rice University Press, 1995.
- Spitta, Silvia. *Misplaced Objects: Migrating Collections and Recollections in Europe and the Americas*. University of Texas Press, 2009.
- Tatum, Charles M. *Chicano and Chicana Literature: Otra voz del pueblo*. University of Arizona Press, 2006.
- Tobar, Héctor. "Translation Nation." (2005).
- Torres, Lourdes. "In the Contact Zone: Code-switching Strategies by Latinola Writers." *MELUS* 32.1 (2007): 75-96. Web.
- "Transculturation, Memory, and History: Mary Helen Ponce's Hoyt Street—An Autobiography." *Literature as History: Autobiography, Testimonio, and the Novel in the Chicano and Latino Experience*. TUCSON: U of Arizona, 2016. 54. Web.
- Vargas, George. *Contemporary Chicano Art*. Univ of Texas Pr, 2010.

Vertovec, Steven. "Migrant transnationalism and modes of transformation." *International migration review* 38.3 (2004): 970-1001.

Viramontes, Helena Maria. *Their Dogs Came with Them* a Novel. Washington Square Press, 2008.

Viramontes, Helena María. "Marks of the Chicana Corpus: An Intervention in the Universality Debate." *A Companion to Latina/o Studies*. Flores, Juan and Renato Rosaldo (eds). Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Blackwell Reference Online. 03 February 2018
<http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9781405126229_chun_k_g97814051262292>

Waldinger Roger, and Fitzgerald, David. "Transnationalism in question." *American journal of sociology* 109, no. 5 (2004): 1177-1195.