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Dangerous Crossroads:
Mestizaje in the U.S. Latino/a Imaginary

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ABSTRACT

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My dissertation interrogates mestizaje and nationalism to rethink academic tendencies that construct resistant methodologies and singular national representations of hybrid theories and racial identities. To ground this argument, chapters one and two analyze how nationalism compromises current theoretical and feminist uses of mestizaje. The introductory chapter traces the influence of Latin American cultural theorists such as José Vasconcelos (1925) and Fernando Ortiz (1940) on contemporary U.S. Latino/a cultural critics. I argue that by selectively borrowing theoretical elements from Ortiz and Vasconcelos, U.S. Latino/a scholars unintentionally consolidate divergent Latino/a histories as well as ignore issues of nation building, class differences, and racial tensions to promote a unitary discourse of subversive mestizaje. Likewise, my analysis of Jovita González’s novel Caballero (1930) reveals how González’s feminist tactics counteract Mexico’s patriarchal oppression of women by going against traditional feminist themes esteemed in Chicano/a Studies. For González, nationalist
tropes of indigenous curanderismo (spirituality) and magical realism
insufficiently respond to the needs of oppressed Mexican American women.

The final two chapters evaluate the ramifications of constructing
unitary racial identities of whiteness and blackness. My final investigation
uncovers the existence of ethnicities within North American racial
categorizations of whiteness and blackness that provide new insights to
mestizaje’s disruption of ordered classifications of race in the United States.
Chapter three argues that the southeastern European immigrant experience
of racial inclusion and exclusion from Anglo Saxton whiteness allowed
Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton to play off of new conceptions of whiteness
in an evolving imaginary of white U.S. mestizaje to write her novels The
Squatter and the Don (1885) and Who Would Have Thought It? (1872).
Chapter four examines the rise of the New Negro Movement during the
Harlem Renaissance as a cultural event that required the erasure of
individuals in the black community who did not mirror the collective
identity of African Americans. This chapter specifically studies Puerto Rican
archivist Arthur A. Schomburg as a figure who broadened the conception of
the New Negro to recognize the intellectual participation and contribution of
Afro Caribbeans to the Harlem Renaissance.
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I am most indebted to my family. Elena, your support and patience bind the pages of this dissertation. I share this accomplishment with you. To my daughters, Breanna, Maya, and Avery, you have always been my motivation and the driving force behind my academic career. I can only hope this achievement motivates all of you to follow your dreams.

I dedicate this dissertation to all of you.
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Mestizaje Unveiled

The cultural collision between the United States and its southern Latin American neighbors engendered a history beset in conflict that defines the U.S. Latino experience—from the Texas independence movement of 1836 to the Caribbean take over at the end of the Spanish-American War of 1898. Walter Mignolo has asserted that 1898 (signing of the Treaty of Paris) marked a new order of domination that reconfigured Spain, Latin America, and the Caribbean along a north-south axis that ultimately provided the framework of the modern Hispanic/Latino subject.¹ Although this statement makes sense in terms of territorial expansion, the accumulation of natural resources, and the establishment of a new Latin American subaltern population, I take issue with the absence of the Mexican-American War in Mignolo's formulation of U.S. hemispheric domination. The colonial history of expansionism, direct and indirect armed interventions, and the unequal economic policies pushed by the U.S. in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century is the initial cause of Latino/a immigration to the United States; the first border crossings, if you will, initiated by the sudden contact between the North American metropolis and Latin America. In my estimation, 1836 and 1898 are dates that not only proclaimed the United
States as a colonial power, but also placed Latinos on the peripheries of North American culture, language, economy, and political representation.

It is within this periphery that Chicano/Latino scholars began to recognize and study an interstitial Chicano/Latino subjectivity, which oscillates between its oppressed status as a marginal subject in the United States and its impulse to disrupt the hegemonic colonial order of the North American metropolis. Reared to navigate both these spaces as oppressed and resistant subject in the United States, Chicanos/Latinos quickly learned to appropriate, borrow, and alter from the dominant culture in order to create a hybrid culture that is built to subvert oppression through resistant cultural practices. As such, the political force of the hybrid subject relies on its mobility and instability—the potential to continually reconstruct itself and remain always in process.² Daily cultural manifestations in language, music, art and performance art, and various literary genres epitomize expressions of this hybridity. Within the Chicano/Latino community, the cultural expressions of mestizaje reconstruct a legitimate history and its political fiber. The rise and increasing popularity of resistant hybrid cultures represents the watershed moment in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies that redefined American Studies—propelling the study of mestizaje along side postcolonial and postmodern studies. Within this hybrid
movement sprang terms such as *mestizaje*, transculturation, transcreating, *transfrontera* contact zones, and tropicalizations that are all grounded by the subversive impulse to resist North American culture.

Instead of aligning my project with predictable resistant practices, I argue that *mestizaje*, with all its copious cultural possibilities, need not be contained or defined by a prescriptive hybrid blueprint. Unlike contemporary studies that tend to broaden the theoretical field of hybridity, my project offers a needed historical background that localizes *mestizo/a* histories, texts, and cultural movements in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. By localizing *mestizaje*, I intend to forward new readings and interpretations of hybrid theories, feminist identities, and race relations that might otherwise be overlooked. As such, I am interested in historicizing how the term *mestizaje* became the theoretical basis for race analysis within Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. *Mestizaje*, in both academic camps, is interpreted as a transgressing cultural signifier, shifting in and out of racial identities and cultural practices to resist and subvert any U.S. hegemonic structure. I argue, however, that the continual academic interpretation of *mestizaje* as solely resistant toward centers of power has created critical lapses of inquiry in the manner in which race relations and hybrid cultural productions are studied.
My central thesis argues that *mestizaje* must be understood as a socially constructed concept catering to specific political agendas in different time periods that in turn serve particular regional concerns. Only by understanding the cultural and political evolution of this term can one then measure *mestizaje*’s intricate role in Chicano/Latino cultural productions, political engagement within race discourses, and the academic development of a standardized rendering of *mestizaje* in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. Again, my dissertation analyzes manifestations of *mestizaje* that are usually ignored, or simply not considered part of the resistant arsenal of cultural hybridity.

No survey in hybrid cultures is complete without the inclusion of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. Anzaldúa’s breakthrough lies in the metaphorical vastness of the borderlands, the diversity of its inhabitants, and the ensuing transcendental consciousness arising from these borderlands. In this manner, border discourse ceases to represent only a geographical site by also including the psychological, sexual, and spiritual borderlands, “wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.”³ As a marginal subject, the border-
crosser develops a "third element" as he or she navigates through the various cultural encounters that inform his or her social consciousness. Anzaldúa explains this experience:

That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the *mestiza* stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (80)

This third element not only reframed Chicano/a Studies from a historically centered border conflict approach to a more inter-cultural analysis of border contact, it also became a tool to incorporate the wider experience of border-crossers in the United States. Scholars have theorized how Chicano/as, because of their geographical position in the U.S., are able to teach new forms of polyglot cultural creativity from their experience of cultural blending within these third spaces. In this sense, these third crossings inform the study of cultural theorists who are intent on constructing new intercultural analyses that are sensitive to both local and global crossings that fuel the reality of Chicano/Latino culture. 

Scholars have since emphasized the cultural diversity and heterogeneous community defined by biculturalism, bilingualism, and bi-
nationalism. Over time the "bi" that defines the Chicano/Latino experience in the United States has constructed a hybrid identity and subjectivity from these various third spaces. Once theorists began to interrogate the significance of a multinational subject influenced and formed by the extensive reach of globalism, a transnational dimension was added to the characterization of border-crossers. In order to widen the context of border theory—typically thought of as a Southwestern phenomenon—scholars came up with new neologisms to cover the various hemispheric borders Latinos occupy and travel through in the Americas. For example, José David Saldívar's refiguration of Mary Louis Pratt's concept of "contact zones" acknowledges the many fronteras/borders that exist globally. In this manner, contact zones become "transfrontera contact zones" that inform the "social spaces of subaltern encounters, the border line in which people geopolitically forced to separate themselves now negotiate with one another and manufacture new relations, hybrid cultures, and multiple voiced aesthetics." I quote Saldívar at length because most cultural theorists utilize these terms and methodologies in very similar ways.

Chicano/Latino critics are now referring to the cultural awakening from the border as a "decolonized transnation," occupied by the world tribe of U.S. Latinos who are loyal to their nations of origin and ambivalent about
their loyalties to the United States. The sociopolitical consciousness uniting the various third spaces within the decolonized transnation relies on a hybrid ethos that expresses the resistant cultural practices of U.S. Latino communities. For Juan Flores, the formation of U.S. Latino/a identity relies on cultural practices instead of representations of Latinidad. Everyday cultural performance takes precedence in the dialectics of Chicano/Latino political expression and self-determination. Echoing other resistant neologisms, Flores’s appellation to this act is “Trans-creation.” The term follows from the subversive claim that the contact between two cultures does not result in the acculturation of the subordinate class to the ideology of the elite. The act of trans-creating, states Flores, is more than a culture of resistance toward hegemonic domination because it confronts the prevailing ethos with that of its own alternative ethos (218). The construction of a resistant Chicano/Latino ethos corresponds to mestizo/a discourses that drive the political zeal of subversive neologisms in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. As such, the U.S. mestizo/a imaginary is constructed by what is popularly known as subaltern spaces from the margins, borders, and third spaces—all of which represent the interrelated processes of hybridity. The interconnected indebtedness of these terms to one another not only begins to undermine our critical commitment to identify and investigate the
various Chicano/Latino relationships with and within social relations of power, but it also begins to lay down a singular historical, cultural, theoretical, and literary criterion for U.S. Latino paradigms to follow.

In order to explore the many confluences of mestizaje, I thought it prudent for this dissertation to undertake a comparative approach. As such, my analysis of literary texts as well as my archival research unveils surprising forms of mestizaje that are often ignored by prominent definitions of resistant hybridity. This approach emphasizes the enactment of border forms of hybridity as event-centered to understand the social structures that shape and inform the dialectics of mestizaje. The utilization of a comparative approach to the study of mestizaje is not meant to outline a traditional study of hybrid cultures, but rather a move toward a methodology that will push for new subject studies within Chicano/Latino literary texts and archives. This comparative analysis specifically examines the commonalities, differences, and sometimes ambiguous and surprising ventures of an always resourceful and ambitious U.S. Latino community. To avoid the limiting move to establish a period-focused research project, I structured my analysis away from a singular historical period to present a cross-historical approach to the study of mestizaje. This methodology allows a comparison of nineteenth- and twentieth-century race relations,
especially the manner in which *mestizaje* is politically enacted in literary
texts from both time periods. I also investigate the sociopolitical struggles
between North Americans and U.S. Latino communities. This examination,
however, is not limited to an Anglo/Latino analysis, but also delves into
intra-contending race relations within minority ethnic groups in the United
States. From these cultural collisions between North Americans and U.S.
Latino/as, new and evolving routes of cultural expression flourish in what
George Lipsitz has labeled as the “dangerous crossroads” in the production
of popular culture.

Lipsitz, like Mary Louis Pratt and many others, argues that the
decisions made at the cultural crossroads within contact zones provide a
unique perspective from the multiple sites that popular culture is produced
in.\(^{10}\) Although my project does not cover Chicano/Latino popular culture,
my own literary and archival research makes surprising inroads into the
multiple intersections of *mestizaje*. Typically, scholars identify the
subversive and resistant cultural strategies of U.S. Latino communities as a
response to North American mechanisms of hegemony. While I agree with
this interpretation in current Chicano/Latino cultural and literary studies, I
contend that these same crossroads also produce nonresistant cultural
productions that must be placed alongside resistant cultural strategies
informing current Chicano/Latino paradigms. If hybrid subjectivity arises from the cultural exchanges between two entities—the marginal subject and the colonial elite—why is it surprising for the hybrid subject to be attracted to colonial structures that are also part of his or her own cultural makeup? These non-subversive moments often reflect individual attempts to participate within North American circuits of power, to take advantage of potentially liberating cultural movements in the United States.

I have arranged the dissertation into two sections to provide a clear understanding of the ramifications garnered by the existence of nonresistant cultural texts. The first section of the dissertation reviews the development of Chicano/Latino hybrid identities, the principle methodological approach in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. To carry out this review, I examine the synthesis of mestizaje and nationalist rhetoric in the construction of literary tropes and national identities in U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies. I historicize the linkages between discourses of mestizaje and nationalism to rethink academic tendencies that construct resistant methodologies and singular national representations of literature, hybrid theories, and racial identities. I critique one-dimensional elucidations of subversive hybridity that ignore contradictions in the political use of mestizaje. To ground this argument, chapters One and Two analyze the
forms in which nationalism compromises current theoretical and feminist uses of mestizaje.

Chapter One investigates the epistemological evolution of mestizaje in U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies. This chapter traces the influence of Latin American cultural theorists such as José Vasconcelos (1925) and Fernando Ortiz (1940) on contemporary U.S. Latino/a cultural critics such as Mary Louise Pratt, Frances Aparicio, Rafael Pérez-Torres, and Gloria Anzaldúa. I reveal how Vasconcelos’s concept of “the cosmic race” and Ortiz’s theory of “transculturation” have been used to construct and validate contemporary theoretical models such as “contact zones,” “tropicalizations,” “mestizo transculturations,” and the “New Mestiza Consciousness.” I argue that by selectively borrowing theoretical elements from Ortiz and Vasconcelos, U.S. Latino/a scholars unintentionally simplify divergent Latin American histories as well as ignore issues of nation building, class differences, and racial tensions, all in an effort to promote a unitary discursive practice of subversive mestizaje.

Chapter Two looks at how Jovita González, a folklorist writer, disrupts the nationalist containment of mestizaje under traditional hidalgo rule. The narrative tension of racial miscegenation in González’s novel Caballero (1930) illustrates how patriarchal structures of power attempt to
prevent interracial unions between *Tejanas* and *Americanos*, an intervention intended to construct a domestic national identity through the masculine *hacienda* system. My analysis investigates González’s surprising narrative tactic to subvert the paternalistic containment of *mestizaje* between Anglo American men and *Tejana* women. As such, the backdrop of the Mexican American War in *Caballero* is not a feminist critique of U.S. colonial expansion by González, but rather a historical transition where intermarriage with Anglo American men represents a less sexist space for *Tejanas*. González strategy to escape Mexico’s patriarchal oppression through domestic unions with Anglo American men goes against traditional feminist tropes esteemed in Chicana literature. For González, idealized notions of subversive nationalism, recodifications of the native woman, and *curanderismo* (magical realism) is not sufficient, nor the answer, to address the colonial suppression of women in Mexico and the greater borderlands of the American southwest. Clearly, González views the patriarchal history of her native homeland as a gendered colonial prison. In contrast, I argue, North American culture is increasingly described as a better-suited feminist home space for women in U.S. Latina literature.

The second section of the dissertation and final two chapters evaluate the ramifications of constructing unitary racial identities of binary whiteness
and blackness to establish a perpetual oscillation of racial difference. My concluding investigation uncovers the existence of divergent ethnicities within North American racial categorizations of whiteness and blackness that provide new insights into mestizaje’s disruption of ordered classifications of race in the United States. Chapter Three argues that the southeastern European immigrant experience of racial inclusion and exclusion from Anglo Saxon whiteness allowed María Amparo Ruiz de Burton to re-situate the fluidity of whiteness as a racial and civic category after the Civil War to imagine the possibility of white U.S. mestizaje. My reading of Ruiz de Burton’s re-fashioning of whiteness reveals the racial logic of white mestizaje in mid-nineteenth-century North American culture. As such, the possibility of mutable whiteness in the United States presented the ideal model for María Amparo Ruiz de Burton to write both her novels Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don. The sudden influx of foreign whiteness as a result of mid-nineteenth century emigration waves of southeastern European immigrants to the United States placed these immigrants in a peculiar in-between racial category: between full exclusion and inclusion and neither white nor non-white. To take advantage of the racial instability of U.S. whiteness in the mid-nineteenth century, Ruiz de Burton appropriated whiteness to establish the first literary community
and alliance of white U.S. *mestizos*. Her alignment with whiteness, I argue, is intended to curb discriminatory views against a white Mexican class of *castizos* and *castizas* in California.11 As such, Ruiz de Burton’s novels reveal the racial logic of white U.S. *mestizaje*.

My fourth and final chapter explores the opposite end of U.S racial categorizations: African American blackness. Similar to the predetermined view of whiteness in the mid-nineteenth century, the racist categorization of African Americans in North America in the early twentieth century constructed a singular view of blackness that resulted in the homogenization of black communities in the United States. The New Negro Movement during the Harlem Renaissance provided a cultural space for artistic expression and intellectual self-determination for African Americans. The nationalist aspect of the movement, however, replaced one form of racial exclusion with another, resulting in the marginalization of Afro Caribbean representation in the Harlem Renaissance, or, more specifically, the erasure of “*BlackTinos*” (Afro Latinos) who did not mirror the collective identity of African Americans. As many have noted, the New Negro’s quest to contradict racist stereotypes of the African American community resulted in the regulation of black representation in the Harlem Renaissance. This chapter uses the Schomburg Papers—compiled by archivist Arthur A.
Schomburg—to broaden the conception of the New Negro and recognizes the intellectual participation and contribution of Afro Latinos to the Harlem Renaissance.

The employment of the aforementioned texts in both sections of the dissertation highlight the complex development and interracial relations of *mestizaje* in the United States. My use of a comparative methodology serves as a cultural sieve filtering through the intersecting crossroads of *mestizaje* to acknowledge the ambiguous, resistant, and sometimes surprising sociopolitical uses of hybrid identities.

As section one illustrates, the disjointed theoretical epistemology of *mestizaje* in the United States needs to be recognized in order to address these awkward moments in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. By disclosing the unstable politics of nationalist *mestizaje*, scholars can begin adjusting their interpretation and use of *mestizaje* to construct more dynamic hybrid methodologies and feminist subjectivities. Section two, on the other hand, reveals the racial messiness of whiteness and blackness in the United States. By utilizing the work of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and Arthur A. Schomburg, I demonstrate how *castizo/a* whiteness is constructed to engage and integrate with U.S. culture—while *BlackTino* identities become susceptible to ethnic discrimination due to their disruption of North
American blackness. My analysis of Ruiz de Burton’s nineteenth-century novel and Schomburg’s early twentieth-century archival collection links cross-historical forms of white and black hybridity that continue to disrupt contemporary conceptualizations of U.S. Latino/a mestizaje. The methodological framework of this project draws from the critical work of José F. Aranda Jr., Krista Comer, Maribel Ortiz-Márquez, Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, and Kirsten Silva Gruesz, who all argue that traditional forms of reading and interpreting U.S. Latino/a cultural productions need to be refurbished to serve as better-suited paradigms that make sense of these new Chicano/Latino identities.

My overall goal with this dissertation is to present a historical appreciation of mestizaje as continuously evolving to understand the various and often conflicting usages of hybridity in Chicano/Latino cultural narratives. The stakes of taking up this venture are beneficial at two distinct pedagogical levels. For one, the investigations carried out in this project revisit historical blind spots that have inadvertently erased specific U.S. Latino/a cultural moments from being studied by its own institutional discourse. Second, and more importantly, by investigating these overshadowed topics in nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultural texts, we—as a community of scholars—can begin to come to terms with the
reality that paradigms must become adaptable to the spontaneous cultural combustions of their own objects of study. Critical dialogues such as these make sense of Angie Dernersesian-Chabram’s assertion that Chicano Studies, as well as other existing paradigms, are in the position to link “transnational studies of ethnicity with other divergent ethnic pluralities.”\textsuperscript{12} I cover these topics to understand the healthy complications that arise from acts of decolonization that are internal to Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies as opposed to external. As such, the cultural investigations of this project account for and address alternative cultural movements of \textit{mestizaje} that continually step outside nationalist paradigms that support resistant cultural strategies.
Notes


7 Chapter one of this dissertation specifically covers this topic.


10 For urban and musical popular forms see Mike Davis’ *City of Quartz* and George Lipsitz *Dangerous Crossroads*, and Juan Flores’ *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*; for borderland popular forms see Gloria Anzaldúa’s *The New Mestiza*, Mary Louis Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, and Jose David Saldívar’s *Border Matters*; and for diasporic popular forms see James Clifford’s *Diasporas* and Khachig Tölölyan’s *Rethinking Diaspora(s).*

11 Castizas were racially mixed women who were fair complexioned and were highly valued as marriage partners in colonial Mexico. Refer to Martha Menchaca’s *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001, 65.

12 Angie Dernersesian-Chabram, “‘Chicana! Rican? No, Chicana Riequeña!’: Refashioning the Transnational Connection.” In *Between
Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State.

Chapter One

**Cosmic Races, Transculturation, and Mestizaje: Epistemologies of Hybrid Theory**

Livingstone assures that the *tonga* pull their teeth to look like the ox.

*(Fernando Ortiz, *Los Negros Curros*)

The hidden doctrine of the school of Zapata was the return of Mexico to the primitivism of Montezuma. [The] *teocalli* of human sacrifices is the only Aztec institution that survives. The followers of Zapata perfected it with machine guns and automatics.

*(José Vasconcelos, *Mexican Ulysses*)

José Vasconcelos and Fernando Ortiz are regarded in academia as intellectuals who championed the cultural value of *mestizaje* in Latin America. Their contributions in politics, anthropology, literature, and cultural theory have had such an impact on Latin American Studies that their scholarly work has become embedded within U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies. Contemporary Chicano/Latino scholars have utilized the intellectual work of Vasconcelos and Ortiz to construct a distinct U.S. Latino praxis, one that provides “oppositional codes” for critiquing North America. These codes forward “a dialectical view of the American continent and of the Americas’ many literatures” (Saldívar, *Dialectics 7*). As a scholar, if I
were to follow the academic impulse to resist the North American center, I would be expected to cite the works of these intellectuals with passages that resonate with the subversive forms in which U.S. Latinos utilize their distinct, hybrid subjectivities to undermine the institutional hegemony of the Colossus of the North. However, by choosing epigraphs that go against the grain of normative understandings of Vasconcelos and Ortiz, I am trying to convey the need to revisit the epistemological roots of *mestizaje* and its circulation in U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies. It is my contention that by selectively borrowing early twentieth-century theoretical constructions of *mestizaje* from Latin America to establish a U.S. Latino/a discourse of hybridity, contemporary Chicano/Latino scholars have unintentionally created theoretical lapses within their own discursive fields of study by consolidating national differences that ignore the colonial tensions of nation building in Latin America. In order to unravel the implications of this theoretical exchange between early twentieth-century Latin American uses of *mestizaje* and current U.S. Latino/a understandings of hybridity, I examine two foundational texts on the cultural phenomenon of mestizaje: José Vasconcelos’s *The Cosmic Race / La Raza Cósmica* (1925), and Fernando Ortiz’s *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940).
My overall goal is to uncover how acclaimed cultural theories such as Fernando Ortiz's idea of "transculturation" and José Vasconcelos's concept of "la raza cósmica" are informed by underlying racist agendas that contradict current Chicano/Latino interpretations of those theories. Such an investigation reveals how contemporary notions of a unitary paradigm of U.S. mestizaje built on selective theoretical borrowings of a mestizo imaginary from early twentieth-century Latin America are counterproductive. By uncovering the theoretical irregularities within contemporary studies of mestizaje, scholars can adjust their analyses of mestizaje to avoid simplistic and limiting notions of subversive hybridity in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. From this understanding, both institutional camps might embrace a more dynamic critical paradigm of mestizaje. More importantly, the inconsistent epistemological history of hybridity should not be viewed as a threat to U.S. Latino/a Studies or Chicano/a Studies, but treated as questions that revise the parameters of traditional ethnic paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s. By revisiting the academic development of ethnic studies during the Civil Rights Movement, we can reach a better understanding of why Latin American figures became incorporated into studies of the U.S. Latino/a experience.
The initial attraction of Latin American intellectuals to U.S. Latino/a scholars makes sense at two levels. The achievement of establishing ethnic studies departments throughout North American universities during and after the Civil Rights Movement created a new and unique moment for underrepresented academics of color. For the first time in U.S. history, Chicano/Latino scholars had the responsibility to set the foundations on which to study the history of Latinos in United States, in addition to selecting the type of cultural narratives that would represent the U.S. Latino/a experience. One of the many questions academics needed to address during this time period was and still is: How far back does U.S. Latino/a history extend? And, more importantly, how do we describe the different stages of U.S. Latino/a history, its literature, and intellectual thought? The academic mandate to find answers to these questions resulted in the gravitational pull toward Latin American exiles, as well as diasporic communities, that lived or resided for a short time in the United States since the nineteenth-century. The goal of Chicano/Latino academics to provide a corpus of Latino/a figures actively producing literature in the United Sates resulted in the inclusion of nineteenth-century Latin Americans in the work of Chicano/Latino scholars.
Since intellectuals such as José Martí, Eugenio María de Hostos, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, and Alejandro Angulo Guridi were some of the first Latinos/as to write about life in North America, Chicano/Latino academics quickly identified their intellectual work as essential contributions to the historical documentation of the Latino/a presence in the United States. The impressive and monumental gains of uncovering and collecting lost Latino/a texts through the *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage* project is an example of the academic push to reveal and legitimize the Hispanic contribution to North American history and literature. Article publications in the *Recovery Project* by Raymond Paredes ("Mexican-American Literature: An Overview"), Juan Flores ("Puerto Rican Literature in the United States: Stages and Perspectives"), Rodolfo J. Cortina ("Cuban Literature of the United States"), and Silvio Torres-Saillant ("Before the Diaspora: Early Dominican Literature in the United States") begin their interpretation of a Latino/a literary historiography in the United States through nineteenth-century intellectual figures of the Caribbean and greater Mexico. This extensive analysis produced by Paredes, Flores, Cortina, and Torres-Saillant not only documents the literature of Latinos/as in the United States, but also provides a transnational account of North America’s many literatures. By including Martí, María de Hostos, Ruiz de
Burton, and Angulo Guridi in the literary history of U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies, these scholars began to establish the roots of a distinctive U.S. Latino/a foundation in the literary imaginary of North America.

If the initial goal of Chicano/Latino academics was to prove the existence of a “Latino voice” within the United States, the second objective was to delineate the use and representation of that discursive voice within U.S. academic institutions. With ethnic programs now in place and a corpus of intellectual figures at hand, Chicano/Latino scholars began the daunting task of bridging the gap between the barrio/colonia and the university. As Virginia E. Sánchez Korrol points out, efforts to merge the community with the academy not only sought “to combine knowledge, research, and praxis with community empowerment,” but also “brought a strong dose of diversity to the university, even as faculty fought continuous battles for survival and legitimacy” (Colonia 232). Academic attempts to empower the community by making the university accessible resulted in the fusion of theory with political activism, which quickly allowed community activism to stream through the academic halls. Such a merger helped seasoned Chicano/Latino activists attain tenure track positions in higher learning institutions. These scholars, of course, regarded social activism as an essential component in
constructing a distinct U.S. Latino/a academic paradigm. The scholarship that emerged from ethnic studies programs in the 1960s and 1970s forged a strong sense of social responsibility among scholars to always uncover and represent a maligned U.S. Latino/a heritage, as well as construct a political ethos able to resist social inequality.

The introduction of the *barrio/colonia* as an object of study helped U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies become sites where “new syncretic forms of cultural convergence are merging [...] toward the reconstruction and reappropriation of a cultural tradition [...] by those groups generally excluded from the U.S. cultural mainstream” (Acosta-Belén 182). The academic need to advocate for a resistant and subversive methodology to continually reconstruct and expand U.S. Latino/a historiography produced a cultural “tradition of affirmation” in U.S. Latino/a Studies as well as Chicano/a Studies. Scholars trying to maintain a communal solidarity based on traditions of affirmation began to incorporate Latin American theorists such as José Vasconcelos and Fernando Ortiz into their academic methodologies. The Chicano/Latino tendency to resist the influence of North American culture encouraged these scholars to embrace non-Anglo American intellectual thought.
As a result, these academics constructed a theoretical paradigm of *mestizaje* that mirrored their resistant ideologies based on their critique of U.S. colonialism. The problem, however, in appropriating Vasconcelos and Ortiz lies in their detachment from a specific Latin American historical period and their subsequent placement in a completely different setting. The impulse to incorporate Latin American thought within a U.S. context without considering the implications of Latin America’s colonial history and colonial consolidations made by Vasconcelos and Ortiz, assumes that these Latin American thinkers achieved resolutions to their colonial problems without facing any serious impediments or compromises in their venture to resolve colonial tensions. The assumption that Latin Americans corrected their colonial problems by simply constructing a national identity based on *mestizaje* erroneously portrays a universal model of hybridity as the answer to resolve the oppression of the lower classes. This romantic academic fiction had the intended effect of simplifying divergent Latin American and U.S. Latino histories and regional differences in order to promote a unitary theory of subversive *mestizaje*.

**Mexico’s Nationalist Routes of Mestizaje**

José Vasconcelos’s utopic vision in *La Raza Cósmica/The Cosmic Race* is an example of a cultural text that has been appropriated outside of
Latin America by a U.S. Latino community. In Vasconcelos’s particular case, Chicanos found the concept of the “fifth mestizo race” presented in *La Raza Cósmica* particularly useful as a beacon of unity during the Chicano/a Movement. Vasconcelos’s *mestizo* vision provided the right rhetoric for a marginalized Mexican American community trying to establish its own cultural, economic, and political space in the United States. The concept of *mestizaje* became attractive to Chicanos/as to combat Anglo American racism that “obscured and misrepresented the collective histories, worldviews, and cultural practices of Mexicans and Mexican Americans” (Haas 167). Vasconcelos not only celebrated *mestizaje*, but also constructed Mexico’s *mestizo* culture into a national identity that represented the fifth and final race of humanity: the *cosmic race*. Because Vasconcelos viewed the *cosmic race* as the progeny between the four races—white, red, black, and yellow—Chicano/a activists quickly associated the *cosmic race* with the political emergence of the Chicano.

In the summer of 1969, three thousand Chicanos took part in the Crusade for Justice at the Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado. At this conference, activists produced the highly celebrated Chicano manifesto *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. Like Vasconcelos’s cosmic vision of a “universolópolis” on the Amazonian shores of South
America, Chicanos/as began to view the American Southwest as the point of origin and return for Mexicans and Mexican Americans: the mythical site of Aztlán. By selecting the Southwest as the natal grounds of Chicanos/as, activists were able to assert an identity by reclaiming territory lost by Mexico with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As Luis Leal argues, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* is important because it enabled Chicanos to recognize their indigenous origins; it recognized Aztlán as a Mexican territory annexed to the United States in 1848; and it endorsed the basic idea of the Mexican Revolution: that the land belongs to those who work it (11). Consequently, Aztlán became a cultural landmark in the political imaginary of Chicanos/as in the American southwest. Similar to the way Aztlán was utilized as a cultural symbol for the social and geographical location of Chicanos, the *cosmic race* began to represent the national identity of Chicanos/as.

Like all cultural symbols, the *cosmic race* not only connected the past to a shared collective memory, but also constructed a *mestizo/a* identity for Chicanos in the United States. In his essay “The Emergence of the New Chicano,” Guillermo Fuenfrios describes the Chicano as “a pluralistic man, a universal man, combining the racial strains and cultures of the entire world in his own person” (284). Fuenfrios goes so far as to suggest that Jose
Vasconcelos “coined the term ‘la raza cósmica’ to describe him” (ibid.).

The pluralistic, universal, and multiracial elements of the *mestizo* subject quickly became a celebrated cultural aspect of Chicano/a identity. Fuenfriøs’ closing at the end of his essay exemplifies this point:

> For the Chicano, Indian forms and symbols are no affectation. They are in his blood, his religion, and his culture. [...] Oh, Chicano: you are here at the crisis of man’s existence on the earth, the legitimate heir to the culture of the entire community of man. Wandering Jew, exiled Arab, dispossessed Indian, Spanish bastard and American orphan, you have in your language all the cultures of Europe; in your blood the mystery and wisdom of Native America and the Orient and Africa—the “Cosmic Race.” Find your voice and sing and you will save the world. (Fuenfriøs 288)

Clearly, Chicano/a artists and activists ventured into Vasconcelos’s terrain to validate the existence of a new breed of people. Fuenfriøs’ “New Chicano” not only constructs a national identity for Chicanos/as in the United States, but also establishes the cultural genesis to affirm the roots of a U.S. *mestizo/a* identity.

In another narrative of origins, this new man or New Chicano, states Luis Valdez, discovered his indigenous roots in the United States as a consequence of “La Plebe”—Mexican Revolutionaries who were fleeing Mexico’s bloody and fading revolution. In the North American setting, however, the revolution persisted in the memory, the folk music, and the oral history of Mexican Americans, and eventually ascended in the
consciousness of the *barrio* "through two generations of Mexicans, to create the Chicano" (xxix). According to Valdez, the Chicano is the grandson, or perhaps even the son, of the Mexican plebe that came to represent the *mestizo* face of colonial Mexico. One can begin to understand how the colonial history of Mexico, or for that matter of all the Americas, can easily respond to the national call of the Chicano/a Movement. Indeed, Chicano/a self-identification rested on the continual colonial oppression of its people in the United States, Mexico, and the Americas as a whole. Valdez relates this communal experience by stating that he sees:

[M]illions upon millions of bronze people, living in Mestizo nations, some free, some yet to be freed, but existing: Mexicanos, Guatemaltecos, Peruanos, Chilenos, Cubanos, Bolivianos, Puertoriqueños. A new world race born of the racial and cultural blending of centuries. La Raza Cósmica, the true American people (Valdez xxxiv).

As a national symbol for the "bronze people" of the Americas, Chicano/a representation began to move away from a regional Mexican American experience and into a transnational identity of the America’s colonized people: *las razas cósmicas*. In this manner, Chicano/a identification, mobilization, and representation transformed a shared *mestizo/a* heritage into a cultural movement of resistance.

Perhaps the affinity of identifying and experiencing the cultural contact between the colonized and the colonizer in such a broad manner
attracted Gloria Anzaldúa to Vasconcelos’s *cosmic race*. The two thousand mile contact zone that separates northern citizens from southern foreigners is the same “*herida abierta*” (open wound) affecting the indigenous class throughout the Americas. Vasconcelos’s influence on Anzaldúa is evident through her version of his written motto for the National University of Mexico, “*Por mi raza hablará el espíritu*” (For my race my spirit shall speak) with her own Chicana reinterpretation “Por la mujer de mi raza hablará el espíritu” (For the women of my race my spirit shall speak) (Anzaldúa 77). Anzaldúa not only considers Vasconcelos’s *cosmic race* as a theory of racial inclusion, but also views the fifth *mestizo* race as the hybrid building blocks of an “alien consciousness presently in the making—a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is the consciousness of the borderlands” (*ibid*.). Anzaldúa’s synthesis of the *cosmic race* with the new mestiza has become a renowned theoretical discourse in Chicano/a Studies, as well as a methodology in U.S. Latino/a Studies.

Gloria Anzaldúa has single handedly changed Chicano/a Studies from a historically and nationalist centered orientation of border conflict between Mexicanos and Anglo Americans into a pedagogy augmented by the cultural occurrences within the various borders “where two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where
under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (1). Anzaldúa’s essential contribution to Chicano/a Studies is that border theory does not elide gender and sexuality issues from its rubrics and, more importantly, is willing to address the inherent contradictions of the Chicano/a community. The cultural practice of having to juggle two cultures or more opens the possibility to develop a pluralistic mode, a consciousness in constant flux and transition, a perpetual state of mental nepantilism: the way of the new mestiza (78-81). The border subject’s ability to speak and move within hegemonic centers of power has propelled border theory into widespread usage alongside postcolonial theory and postmodernism. Like Vasconcelos’s idea of a new mestizo nation, Anzaldúa’s border subjectivity is motivated by the cultural contact between the south and the north to set the stage for new-world mestizaje. Although Vasconcelos describes, and to some extent can identify with the Chicano experience, we must remember that the rhetoric of a mestizo nation described by Vasconcelos was tailored in a particular time period for a specific political agenda.

The connection I am trying to establish between la raza cósmica and the Chicano/a Movement is not intended to chronicle Vasconcelos’ place within Chicano/a historiography. My investigation of Vasconcelos’s mestizo
formulation, as an ideological concept for Mexico, attempts to demonstrate how a cultural production such as the cosmic race is altered once appropriated by a different cultural movement outside of a Mexican national context. The irony of fusing the cosmic race with the New Chicano to later be reformulated by Anzaldúa’s New Mestiza consciousness lies in Vasconcelos’s dislike of Mexicans that became naturalized U.S. citizens after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In his autobiography, A Mexican Ulysses, Vasconcelos labels Mexican Americans as pochos with inherent Yankee-loving and Yankophilic tendencies, what he refers to as a pochismo bordering on barbarism (31,146). In Vasconcelos’s memoir, Memorias, pochismo is described as a detrimental doctrine to Mexico’s northern states, which was trying to substitute Mexican culture with a “North American primitivism that infiltrates pochos since childhood” (513). If Vasconcelos viewed the hybridity of pochos as a national threat to the stability of Mexico, one must wonder and ask what other forms of mestizaje Vasconcelos considered dangerous to the national identity of Mexico.

Since the colonial history of the Americas has always been and will continue to be a topic that cannot be ignored in any conversation pertaining to Latin American nation building, Vasconcelos’s racial theory of a cosmic race is precisely the type of rhetoric that underestimates the brutality of
Latin American colonialism by romanticizing the colonial violence of miscegenation. As Marilyn Grace Miller points out, late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Latin American intellectuals interpret a "colonial history that is marked by war and atrocity [to] paradoxically produce utopia" (14). Following Miller's critique, Vasconcelos's fifth race is predestined to fuse "the four races that have been forging History apart from each other" (Raza 18). In this context, Spanish colonialism no longer represents a catastrophic event in the history of the Americas, but rather honors the "so called Latin peoples [that] have been more faithful to their divine mission in America, are the ones called upon to consummate this mission" (ibid.). The missionary work of the Spanish Empire, however, cannot be achieved until all unwanted aspects of society are expunged by the cosmic race. In this manner, states Vasconcelos, "the very ugly will not procreate, they will have no desire to procreate" (30). In theory, the cosmic race selectively erases the inferior class to do away with a degenerate human species such as "the Black, and step by step, by voluntary extinction, the uglier stocks will give way to the more handsome" (32). Vasconcelos's comic simplification to erase the colonial past from Mexico's history represents, in his view, "an accursed stain that centuries have not erased, but which the common danger must annul" (16). Obviously, the ideological
concept behind the *cosmic race* is nothing more than a rhetorical tool meant
to contain the "common danger" not fused by Spanish blood: the Indigenous
and Negro.

Without a doubt and despite his efforts to create nationalist *mestizo/a*
identity, Vasconcelos would clearly dislike the national identity the
Chicano/a Movement is founded on. Unlike Chicanos/as who searched for a
usable indigenous past as a national point of departure, Vasconcelos
preoccupied his efforts with constructing a usable future. In the fifth *mestizo*
nation, Vasconcelos foresaw an opportunity not to mix but to homogenize
the Mexican population so as to construct a fictional national identity for
Mexico. Latin American intellectual circles have historically utilized
*mestizaje* as a rhetorical web to cloak Latin America’s racial differences
with pro-indigenous liberal discourses to maintain power during
independence movements.³ Coincidently, the cosmic vision of a fifth
mestizo race is the progeny of a Mexican Ulysses that not only partook in
the Obregón regime during Mexico’s revolution, but also served as a vital
part of the Obregón nation building machine as Minister of Education. All
this being said, *mestizaje* continues to gain momentum as a theoretical
approach in Latin American Studies, Chicano/a Studies, and U.S. Latino/a
Studies.
In the 1980s and early 1990s, border studies gained academic popularity outside of Chicano/a Studies, and began to influence research in American Studies and transnational border studies beyond a U.S./Mexico context. I would argue, however, that *mestizaje* was already exhibiting its potential as a unifying national identity in Latin America since the late nineteenth century that later became appropriated in the Chicano/a Movement. Mexico’s return to an indigenous identity is evident in their use of the Aztec calendar as the crest for Mexico’s national soccer team, the eagle devouring the serpent as the symbol of Mexico’s national flag, and the iconic pre-Columbian images on Mexico’s currency is similar to the nationalist goals of the Chicano/a Movement. Chicanos retrieved their indigenous roots by proclaiming Aztlán as the mythical homeland of Chicanos/as, incorporated Montezuma, Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa as emblematic figures in the Chicano/a Movement, and used the Mexican eagle as the symbol for the United Farm Workers’ flag. Following this nationalist trend, the incorporation of Vasconcelos’s *cosmic race* within the work of Guillermo Fuenfríos, Luis Valdez, and Gloria Anzaldúa is not surprising.

What is alarming, however, is the complete erasure of Vasconcelos’s racism and eurocentrism by Chicano/a activists and intellectuals alike. If Vasconcelos *cosmic race* found a cultural niche in the Chicano/a
Renaissance, are Chicano/a scholars privileged to practice a form of academic amnesia for the sake of an ongoing resistant politic? Have Chicano/a scholars intentionally consolidated the racial tensions of mestizaje in order to foster a unitary epistemology of hybridity? If this is the case, and it seems to be, scholars have inadvertently homogenized mestizaje into a discursive tool of resistance to continually refashion Chicano/a scholarship. The ease with which Vasconcelos’s racism became embedded to a seminal text such as Anzaldúa’s Borderlands raises serious questions regarding the interpretation of mestizaje in Chicano/a Studies. The fusion of the cosmic race with the New Chicano/New Mestiza reminds academics that mestizaje will always reveal the contradictory impulses of its own hybridity.

**Afro Cuban Transculturations**

Fernando Ortiz has, perhaps, had the most impact on Caribbean studies in western academic institutions. A catalyst in the field of cultural theory, Ortiz’s introduction of transculturation established a methodology to study hybrid cultures in ethnography. Where traditional anthropologists opted for a “doctrine of salvage ethnography [to] record the precious culture before it disappears forever” (Rosaldo 81), Ortiz realized that the colonial contact between two distinctly different populations does not necessarily result in the complete erasure of the subordinate culture. Using Cuba as an
example, he makes use of its colonial history to illustrate the different forms of transculturation: from the unpolished paleolithic stone of the Ciboneys and the Guanajabibes to the polished neolithic stone of the Taino Indian conquest; from Taino chieftains, or caciques, and priests to the succession of the European King, church, and banker; and from indigenous forced labor to African slavery. In Cuba, the cultural contact between eastern and western civilizations condensed thousands of years of distinctly different cultures into one geographical location where all peoples, economies, and cultures became subjected to the process of transculturation. *Transculturation*, then, represents the legacies of colonial contact manifested through cultural productions that exhibit multiple origins and identities. According to Ortiz, the deculturation process of a subject’s uprooting and loss of a previous culture is the initial phase of transculturation. Subsequently, the cultural contact with a new foreign culture by the deculturalized entity results in a mutual oscillation of cultural influence and exchange between the deculturalized being and foreign culture. This union results in a progeny that resembles both cultural origins, but is always different from both—what Ortiz sees as neoculturation and finally terms transculturation.⁴

The subsequent exposure of Ortiz’s neologism received extensive academic acclamation in Latin America and the United States. The use of
transculturation has become a common methodological tool of analysis in various sub-fields of U.S. Latino/a Studies. As such, transculturation has influenced the creation of further transcultural neologisms: transnationalism, translation, transnation, and trans-creating to name a few. The contiguous “trans” opening each of these terms share a hybrid praxis that has become an endemic practice in Latin American Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. For instance, Mary Louise Pratt argues that the geographical convergence, the point of contact, between two distinctly different cultures creates contact zones. It is within this dialectical space where the marginal group can select and invent from the material provided to them by the metropolis (Imperial 5). Thus, transculturation, in Pratt’s final analysis, is a distinct cultural phenomenon of contact zones. Pratt’s merging and use of transculturation with contact zones as a deconstructive tool to analyze nineteenth-century European travel writing has been expanded by Chicano/Latino scholars to critically engage contemporary U.S. Latino/a cultural productions.

As editors of *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad* (1997), Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman bring together an impressive collection of essays that are in dialogue with the rubric of transculturation and contact zones. Admittedly influenced by Ortiz’s idea of transculturation and Pratt’s discourse of contact zones,
Aparicio’s and Chávez-Silverman’s neologism of *tropicalization* is also indebted to Edward Said’s concept of *Orientalism*. Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman consider the term *tropicalization* as the etymological correlative of Orientalism within a Latino context: “the system of ideological fictions with which the dominant (Anglo and European) culture trope Latin American and U.S. Latino/a identities and cultures” (1). To tropicalize, as they define it, means to:

[T]rope, or imbue a particular space, geography, group, or nation with a set of traits, images, and values. These intersecting discourses are distributed among official texts, history, literature, and the media, thus circulating these ideological constructs throughout various levels of the receptor society. To tropicalize from a privileged, First world location is undoubtedly a hegemonic move. (8)

The First World impulse to tropicalize Latino/a identities, or for that matter any facet of Latino culture, defines what Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman label as “hegemonic tropicalizations.” To contest First World hegemony, Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman hark back to resistant strategies of re-writing history reminiscent of Chicanos/as and U.S. Puerto Ricans during their respective Civil Rights Movements. Reverting back to traditional resistant methods, states Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman, allows for the process of subjectification by which Latinos/as can redistribute newly invested meanings to stereotypes by re-tropicalizing the context of master
narratives—what Aparicio declares as a discursive war to resist, oppose, rewrite, and subvert stereotypes (*Sub-Versive* 195).

In my opinion, however, no recent study on the subject of mestizaje is more illuminating than Rafael Pérez-Torres’s text *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture* (2006). Particularly useful is his critical approach toward the deployment of hybridity found within Latin American national identities and culture. The separation of Latin American interpretations of *mestizaje* and those found in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies initiates the type of dialogue the needs to take place within hybrid discourses in current studies of mestizaje. Although I agree with Pérez-Torres’s critique of José Vasconcelos’s theory of *La Raza Cósmica/The Cosmic Race* and its ideological agenda to homogenize and consolidate the racial tensions of a rather heterogeneous Mexican society, I am not entirely convinced with his reading of Fernando Ortiz’s ethnographic work.

While Pérez-Torres posits a strong case as to how Ortiz’s work has influenced the trajectory of hybrid studies, I believe his interpretation of Ortiz’s concept of *transculturation* overlooks a major issue. My extensive research—as well as Pérez-Torres’s own work—outlines how Ortiz’s transcultural formula has established itself as a model for Chicano/Latino
scholars interested in the various ways through which hybridity is enacted to resist and subvert dominant circuits of power. As such, the subversion of hegemonic structures through language, poetry, literature, performance art, and popular music and culture are examples that identify and validate transcultural practices in the U.S. Latino/a community—what Pérez-Torres refers to as a countertradition, or anti-aesthetic evolving from *mestizo* transculturations (39). I compare and connect the academic work of these scholars to draw attention to the growing body of knowledge influenced by Ortiz’s theory of transculturation.

Clearly, Pratt’s idea of contact zones, Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman’s concept of tropicalizations, and Pérez-Torres’s *mestizo* transculturations are rooted in a Latin American interpretation of *mestizaje*. As a result, the utility of Ortiz’s transcultural theory resulted in a transnational jump from a Cuban *contrapunteo* to a U.S. counterpoint—truly embodying its own transcultural methodology in a U.S. cultural landscape. As a community of scholars we need to consider the theoretical shortcomings resulting from the continual refashioning of similar cultural theories. By repeating and privileging a specific hybrid epistemology, are cultural theorists inadvertently endorsing a standardized, unifying rhetoric or stylistics of hybridity? If this is true, we need to take into account the critical
oversights stemming from this academic practice. Consider Guillermo
Fuenfrios’s, Luis Valdez’s, and Gloria Anzaldúa’s significant
misinterpretation of Vasconcelos’s racist concept of *La Raza Cósmica*.
Though the predisposition of Vasconcelos’s *La Raza Cósmica* is motivated
by a nationalist agenda trying to consolidate class, political, and racial
differences of an unstable Mexico, one can argue that the same cultural
theories motivated by transculturation are at risk of displaying similar
inadequacies in U.S. Latino/a Studies.

For example, U.S. Latino/a scholars assume Ortiz has been a long-
standing advocate of transcultural contributions of the Afro Cuban
community to the national identity of Cuba. Consequently, these academics
relate their oppositional and resistant stance toward North America to
Ortiz’s theory of transculturation. However, like José Vasconcelos,
Fernando Ortiz has very contradictory beginnings. Ortiz’s intellectual
development during his formative years in anthropology demonstrates an
inclination for positivist thought and is clearly obsessed with enlightened
notions of national modernity. His interest and anthropological work in the
criminal element and criminal psychology of Afro Cubans takes up positivist
discourse to assess the social corruption of Cuban society, and specifically
the role the Afro Cuban figure plays within the *hampa* (life of vagabonds).
Ortiz’s criminal investigation of the Afro Cuban *hampa* associates the primitive pathology of the Afro Cuban population as the element hindering the development of Cuba. Luis Duno Gottberg points out that Ortiz not only considers the African facet of Cuba as backward and primitive, but also uses racist references to describe the causes of African primitivism.\(^5\) Influenced by the biological reductionism of Italian criminologist Cesar Lombroso, Ortiz adheres to European and U.S. understandings of race that assume people of African decent “were a source of social disruption and stagnation” (Coronil xviii). Within Ortiz’s study of the Cuban *hampa*, Afro Cuban religious practices, the merging of Spanish and African culture, and biological deficiencies of Africans are all atavisms of the criminal spontaneity of the Afro Cuban community. One can argue that Ortiz has a particular dislike towards the “Afro Cuban” and not necessarily the African.

The synthesis of African religions with Spanish Catholicism (Santeria), the noticeable merging of Spanish customs with African cultural traditions, and racial miscegenation between black and white Cubans are the criminal acts in Cuba. Ortiz’s intolerance for transcultural manifestations in Cuba is extremely evident in his publication and study of *Los Negros Curros* (1993).\(^6\) According to Ortiz, *curros* were free slaves that lived in a ghetto called “El Manglar” outside of Habana constructed by a select group of elite
gangsters in the criminal underground of Cuba. In his study of Afro Cuban curros, he pays special attention on their hybrid cultural character. As Ortiz openly states, “Let’s make it clear: the black curro is the bastard child of Don Juan Tenorio and his black servant slave” (16). His statement resonates with the eurocentric belief of degrading the human condition through interracial miscegenation, and, thus, the darker gene provides the criminal contagion. Although Ortiz presents no real evidence linking the Afro Cuban curro with criminal activity, he is very elaborate with the physical description of the curro. Ortiz’s depictions are so concise that one is inclined to tie the cultural practice of mixing Spanish cultural customs with African traditions as the criminal signifier of the Afro Cuban curro. His barefaced annoyance with the curros ability to hybridize traditional flamenco pants of Andalucía, their aptitude to alter the traditional use of Andalucian handkerchiefs, and their modification of Andaluz shoes to a Afro-Cuban style are all “exhibitions of dress attire, and its ostentatious use to attract wanted attention is all too familiar to the infantile vanity of the Africans” (44). Not surprisingly, the neighborhood of Manglar—the scene of such crimes—is described as a “raigambre” (united mass) of “cenagosa” (muddy) “marismas” (swamps) to reflect the filth of transcultural productions in the Afro Cuban ghetto. The united mass, or “raigambre” as
Ortiz calls it, of transcultural fusions in Cuban society is not a celebration of Cuban culture, but a reflection of the African distortion of Cuba. If Ortiz first thought of the term “transculturation” to describe the unstoppable African influence in Cuba, can it be argued that his popular cultural theory of “transculturation” has racist origins that ignore the colonial tensions of Cuba?

I would argue yes, this is a definite possibility. Although Ortiz’s extensively circulated chapter in *Cuban Counterpoint* (1995), “On the Social Phenomenon of ‘Transculturation’ and Its Importance in Cuba,” is not overtly racist toward the Afro Cuban community, he is quite ambivalent about the form in which the transcultural subject counters colonial domination. In the new introduction to the 1995 edition of *Cuban Counterpoint*, Fernando Coronil points out that Ortiz “offers no predictions and seeks no closure” to the colonial problems in Cuba (xxiii). What is clear, however, is Ortiz’s disinclination to discuss the colonial conflict in Cuba. His national trope of Cuban matrimony between Don Tobacco and Doña Sugar is typical reformist rhetoric that advocates for cohesive national imaginaries of *mestizo* identities: “*la patria mestiza,*” “*la patria transculturada,*” “*la patria sin color,*” “*el ajiaco,*” “*el cóctel,*” and “*el barroquismo.*” Luis Duno Gottberg explains that most “*mestizo*
imaginaries” privilege certain intellectual sectors that define and carry out national projects to overshadow their own national conflicts of heterogeneity (16). Ortiz’s metaphorical cloak of transculturation mentions colonial problems without specifying the resolutions of racial integration. As such, the permanent cultural transitions of the transcultural subject reveal Ortiz’s inability to resolve Cuban colonial tensions of heterogeneity. As such, I am inclined to argue that Ortiz’s transcultural epiphany is not a result of his effort to resolve Cuba’s colonial disintegration, but rather an ensayo (essay) of finally coming to terms with the fact that the Afro-Cuban population cannot be blanquiado (whitened) or acculturated.

New Conclusions

Since Ortiz’s and Vasconcelos’s account of transculturation and la raza cósmica, Chicano/Latino critics have reconstructed these cultural theories to analyze contemporary U.S. Latino/a cultural manifestations of hybridity. The numerous ways in which U.S. Latino/a communities combine their own cultural traditions with those of the United States is the theoretical subject matter informing current research in U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies. The need for scholars to define, or at least start formulating, a discursive praxis to legitimize the contributions of Latinos/as in the historical development of the United States has been the cardinal goal
of Chicano/Latino intellectuals. These academics have relentlessly tried to
accomplish this objective by conceiving a methodology informed by their
own cultural origins, histories, and traditions. From Ortiz’s Cuban
counterpoint to José David Saldivar’s *transfrontera* contact zone, it is clear
that Chicano/Latino intellectual circles have utilized the collision between
the West and the Americas as a point of departure. Critical inquiries into the
ramifications of the discovery of the Americas have become the watershed
moment in Chicano/a Studies, U.S. Latino/a Studies, and Gender Studies.
Consequently, the colonial legacies of racism, sexism, institutional
hegemony, and cultural erasure of the colonized class have since begun to be
deconstructed and resisted. The theoretical approaches put forth by Pratt,
Aparicio, Chávez-Silverman, Pérez-Torres, and Anzaldúa clearly go against
the grain of the Enlightenment. Where European colonialism justified their
subordination of the colonized class as a means to tutor and assimilate the
non-European population to develop their human potential, these
Chicano/Latino scholars are invested in revealing the different and
innovative forms in which colonial subjects use *mestizaje* and
transculturation to resist acculturation and contend with North American
power relations. The purpose of relating the theoretical similarities between
these cultural critics is not intended to legitimate their claims by means of an
illustrative count. My investigation reveals critical oversights in the construction of these hybrid theories resulting from subversive preoccupations in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. It is here, within the pedagogical crux of borrowing, altering, and re-imagining hybrid theory where I believe current Chicano/Latino scholars are potentially creating critical oversights within their own studies.

The non-existent acknowledgement of Ortiz’s racist work in contemporary usages of transcultural theory in U.S. Latino/a cultural studies is either completely unaware or selectively ignores the contradictory implications of Ortiz’s contentious scholarly work. Likewise, the theoretical fashioning of a cultural theory such as Gloria Anzaldúa’s border re-imagining of José Vasconcelos’s La Raza Cósmica is vulnerable to criticism for selectively ignoring Vasconcelos’s racist political agenda against the indigenousness and African population of Mexico. Although Anzaldúa’s border theory is distinguished for its incapability to be contained by a single pedagogical rendering, the theoretical indebtedness to Vasconcelos’s La Raza Cósmica—which she attributes to the development of the new mestiza consciousness—seriously complicates the theoretical claim to tolerate the contradictory and ambiguous tendencies of mestizaje. If scholars can pick and choose certain discursive features without addressing the conflicting
intellectual history of theorists such as Ortiz and Vasconcelos, Chicano/Latino scholars are not fulfilling their own claims of re-writing their communities’ history.

The prevalent practice of expanding hybrid theories by borrowing only specific aspects of hybrid concepts has become a scholarly trend in academia that can seriously hinder the methodological use of mestizaje and transculturation in both Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. The tendency to utilize the transcultural and the mestizo exclusively as a counteractive cultural expression of resistance toward oppressive structures of domination too easily begins to construct a specific political agenda for mestizaje and the transcultural. Influenced by the community-based rhetoric of radical intellectuals and activists during the Civil Rights Movement, identity politics retrogrades toward the language of race and nationalism to build a political base of affirmation. The problem with constructing an identity based on race and nationalism begins once these discourses gloss over intercultural differences within the U.S. Latino/a community, and ignore the contradictions mestizaje carries as part of its own arsenal of hybridity. The paradox of this theoretical dilemma lies in our own founding institutional methodologies that have hindered new critical developments within Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. The greatest challenge
we currently face is learning to separate traditional resistant theories of the 1960s and 1970s from our scholarly research in order to keep an objective position in our fields of study. The total immersion and devotion to one’s academic discipline cannot only begin to be informed by rigid discursive boundaries, but also inadvertently condition ourselves to represent the Chicano/a “intent not to only remember an obligation but to recall the sources of strength, the original elements from which he came and from which he can once again regain that strength” (Rivera 26). The academic preoccupation to always represent the oppositional and resistant can result in critical lapses of inquiry, such as Ortiz’s and Vasconcelos’s racist intellectual contributions to the study of mestizaje and transculturation.

If contemporary Latin American scholars have already begun to deconstruct the use of mestizaje by late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Latin American intellectuals as further embedded rhetorical tools of exclusion, why are Chicano/Latino scholars unwilling to take up these same questions within our own discursive fields? Is it not possible that contemporary understandings of mestizaje may be excluding certain U.S. Latino/a cultural practices and representations from its own institutional discourse? If academics are willing to ignore the racial tensions in Vasconcelos’s and Ortiz’s respective scholarship, who is to say
Chicano/Latino scholars are also willing to marginalize U.S. Latino/a cultural productions that do not necessarily align themselves with a subversive model of hybridity. As Frances Aparicio openly states, “Latinidad always already carries within it an underlying cultural nationalism that constantly negotiates with the performance of an inter-Latino subjectivity” (Reading 11). If scholars recognize the inherent nationalist tendency of U.S. Latino/a discourse, it should not be surprising to find an academic agenda that advocates for pedagogy of resistant and subversive inter-Latino mestizaje. Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres have poignantly pointed out that cultural nationalism has commonly been used to consolidate power within Latino/a communities, which seriously ignores class differences and cultural contradictions present among different sectors of the Latino population (10). If this trend continues in the academy, Chicano/Latino critics are duplicating what Carl Gutiérrez-Jones describes as “uncritical repetitions of resistance” in Chicano/a Studies (101). The academic impulse to continually represent the oppositional in U.S. Latino/a Studies and Chicano/a Studies runs the risk of repeating the theoretical misuse of mestizaje in Latin America during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century—what Marilyn Miller describes as the “overuse of
mestizaje suffer[ing] from epistemological poverty and inherent cultural obliqueness” (5).

The disciplinary inclination to read U.S. Latino/a cultural productions as always resisting North American culture leaves little critical review for cultural practices that do not necessarily suit with oppositional discourse. The impulse to exclude unfamiliar subject studies to preserve a nationalistic past and future is the moment we prohibit new dialogues in history, literature, cultural studies, and modalities of representation to flourish. Instead of utilizing the creative borders of the transcultural, it seems as though Chicano/Latino scholars are narrowing the discursive parameters of our own research. The reality of this dilemma is an example of how academic scholars are always treading a fine line between participating in a maturing, expanding, and always contradictory U.S. Latino/a cultural movement and the potential to annul this progress by neutralizing the heterogeneity of mestizaje.

The discursive need in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies to highlight the “valued difference” of mestizaje runs the risk of ignoring hybrid ambiguities that do not correspond with traditional definitions of oppositional cultural tactics. By finally coming to terms with the fact that all Latino/a historiography and culture—and therefore all cultural theories—are
potentially informed by contradictory cultural, political, and economic manifestations, scholars can begin adjusting their academic view toward the history, literature, and cultural tendencies of U.S. Latino/a communities. Although this methodological adjustment is definitely a radical change in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies—academic fields founded on and accustomed to oppositional and subversive intellectual practices—such changes should not be alarming to both academic camps since hybrid cultural productions cannot be contained and interpreted by a single discursive methodology. In an effort to understand and find a place for these contradictory moments, Chicano scholar José Aranda has argued that the contradictory impulses existing within our own communities provide the proper starting place to re-imagine the status and currency of ethnic studies departments such as Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. If this dialectical currency gains value in the academic market place, scholars can begin to sort through and make sense of the cultural productions resulting from the various crossroads Latinos/as navigate through on North American soil. These investigations will not only revisit historical blind spots in our discursive fields, but also allow scholars to come to terms with the reality that paradigms must become adaptable to the spontaneous cultural combustions of its own object of study. Stuart Hall’s opinion on the
importance of this pedagogical practice impels scholars “to make assessments, not from the completed base, but from the “leading edge” of change” (232). Our commitment to these investigations is of particular importance at a time when Chicano/Latino scholars, such as myself, are not only beginning to ask new questions about our communities hybrid identities and practices, but are also trying to figure out the pedagogical framework to teach the history, literature, and culture of Chicanos/as and U.S. Latinos/as in an evolving North American landscape.
Notes


2 In Vasconcelos’s biography, *A Mexican Ulysses*, his experience as an elementary student in Eagle Pass Texas is very similar to that of Chicanos. His description of racial conflict on school grounds and stone throwing battles across the Rio Bravo with Anglo American schoolboys are classic themes in Chicano literature.

4 For a close and full reading of transculturation see Fernando Ortiz’s section “The Social Phenomenon of ‘Transculturation’ and its Importance in Cuba” in *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*.

5 For a detailed description of Fernando Ortiz’s education and a critical review of his scholarly work see the last chapter in section two of Gottberg’s text *Solventando Las Diferencias: La Ideologia de Mestizaje en Cuba* (Vervuert: Iberoamericana, 2003).

6 *Los Negros Curros* is an earlier publication that became part of Ortiz’s criminal compilation in *Los Negros Brujos*.

7 Refer to Luis Duno Gottberg’s text *Solventando Las Diferencias: La Ideologia de Mestizaje en Cuba* (Vervuert: Iberoamericana, 2003) for a critique of *mestizaje* and its use in Cuba.
Chapter Two

The Forgotten Daughter: Caballero and the Rise of the Castiza

“...In truth the old woman was torn to shreds at leaving this her home where she had served so long and been nurse to its children. The old roots, she told herself determinedly, would grow in new soil” (286). These are the thoughts of Old Paz once she realized Susanita’s marriage to lieutenant Warrener would carry her to the foreign land of the Americanos—what Gloria Anzaldúa and Americo Paredes would later call and refer to as North America’s southwestern borderlands. It is quite obvious that Jovita González’s narrative use of the Mexican American War purposely reinscribes women to change, or at least effect, the masculine recitation of the war. By providing a feminist interpretation and voice to this war narrative, González illustrates the type response women had to carry out to confront and overcome gender specific impediments during the construction of the American southwest. As such, Caballero (1939) and its Tejana protagonists follow similar thematic traditions in Chicana feminist writing that rebel against patriarchal norms. However, the author’s creative relocation of Inez, Susanita, and Angela is not an easy feminist strategy to unravel. Their choice to marry the invading Americanos has had mixed reactions among literary scholars. Critics have argued that González’s
subversion of patriarchal structures of power through matrimony
consolidates the real violence of warfare as well as elide long-standing
Anglo Mexican racial tensions—what Doris Sommer has referred to as the
conciliatory fiction of the Latin American national romance.

I would like to argue, however, that the matrimonial alliance between
Tejanas and Norte Americanos responds to the patriarchal violence that
subjugates women under Mexico’s hacienda system. This feminist narrative
tactic is quickly misinterpreted as a conciliatory idealist future as a result of
el Complejo Malinchista (Malinchista Complex) that continues to hold
women accountable for their social, political, economic, and sexual
transgressions. To strip away the misogynist characterization of “unruly”
women, this chapter reviews the recodification of La Malinche by Chicana
feminists. Although the modification of La Malinche reveals the multiple
patriarchal planes women struggle against, I contend traditional Chicana
narratives of resistance limit this feminist trope to the image of the native
woman, la india, and the mestiza. As such, my interpretation of Caballero
introduces the rebellion of the castiza against the masculine hacienda. Sister
to the new mestiza, this lighter castiza further complicates the paradigmatic
figure of La Malinche by introducing solidarities of difference found in
whiteness, class privilege, and alliances with North American men.1
With the conclusion of mid-nineteenth century independence movements throughout Latin America, newly established political leaders were confronted with the daunting task of integrating a formerly colonized population into their country’s new national fabric—a political objective that is yet to be realized in many Latin American nations. The national fiction of this integrating process lies in the inscription of the criollo (Euro-Americans) within the history of indigenous and African resistance against Spain and Portugal. The work of Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (1991), specifically studies the use of the national romance by the criollo elite as a literary strategy of nation building. According to Sommer, this literary formula attempted to consolidate deeply rooted racial and class conflicts between the elite and the lower class through an erotics of politics (what she finally terms “irresistible attractions”) that illustrated how “a variety of novel national ideas are all ostensibly grounded in “natural” heterosexual love and in the marriages that provided a figure for apparently non-violent consolidation during internecine conflicts at mid-century” (6). Because Sommer’s analysis can be tied, in some sense, to the romances in *Caballero*, scholars utilize the irresistible attraction formula to critique the romantic courtships taking place between
sworn enemies of the Mexican American War: *Tejanos* and *Norte Americanos*.

González’s irresistible attraction to resolve inter-racial conflicts during and after the Mexican American War through consensual relations between these former adversary communities has been interpreted as a non-violent consolidatory strategy. José Limón has gone as far as stating that the mutual attraction between *Tejanas* and U.S. soldiers—as well as the peon’s desire for American paid labor—is simply too much romance. After the Mexican American War, argues Limón, Anglos not only saw themselves as racially superior to the Mexican, but also sought to dispossess Mexicans of their land through legal and illegal means. If we combine American contempt toward Mexicans for the fall of the Alamo to Limón’s argument, we can begin to understand how González’s use of the national romance would seem to elide these tensions. Scholars who concur with Limón’s analysis of *Caballero* usually follow his interpretation of the novel’s romances to describe the conciliatory consequences.

The two major love interests in the novel result in the matrimonial alliance between *Tejanas* and *Norte Americanos*, as illustrated by Susanita and Robert Warrener’s marriage as well as Angela and “Red” McLane’s union of interest. Their marriages, however, represent starkly different
historical imaginaries. Many scholars have argued that the nuptial romance between Susanita and Warrener represents the ultimate consolidation of conflict in nation building: a post-epic conciliatory matrimony that must triumph over all obstacles. Whether it is cultural, class, or racial differences, their helpless love represents the future of a new national identity in the United States after the Mexican American War. Susanita’s role in the national romance must be one of accommodation in order to convert former enemies into allies. This national fiction, as Sommer calls it, allows Mexicans and Americans to live harmoniously with one another. As Lieutenant Warrener explains to “Red” McLane, “I want to take Susanita to Virginia later when she knows English and can enjoy talking to the people there; my folks must see her and she them” (292). This quote, as others throughout the novel, neutralizes Susanita’s racial difference in two distinctly different manners. First, she must socially adapt herself to American customs as well as conform to the English language to be accepted within the elite class of Virginia. Only in this manner can Susanita complete her journey to the natal grounds of North America’s English roots—Virginia being the first English colony in North America. In addition to “knowing English,” Susanita’s phenotype is exactly what Warrener’s “folks must see” in their son’s wife: white skin, green eyes, and
rubia (blonde)—what hidalgos would consider a true “castiza.” Critics have argued that the author’s compliance with these two requisites of assimilation is the consolidation in the national romance that purposely veils cultural, class, and racial tensions between the colonized and the colonizer. This reading, however, is too simplistic and overlooks major gender issues in the text—topics I shall refer to and cover later in this chapter.

In contrast, Angela and “Red” McLane’s marriage is not saturated in rapturous romance. Angela’s motivation to serve her community through the spiritual guidance of the church and “Red” McLane’s vision to control the Mexican vote to insure his prominence in Texan politics are mutual interests made possible through a matrimony of convenience. In the end, bride and groom exchange vows to consummate their own political agendas. Love, to Angela, is an accessory in their relationship that she can do without, a sentiment “Red” McLane is completely conscious of. “Well, I wouldn’t say she exactly poured out her love to me, but she is too modest for that anyhow. Look at it another way, she wouldn’t have had to put in that last line, but she wanted me to know she liked me. That’s what she meant, all right” (244). As a union of convenience, they each supply accessibility into foreign social settings that would otherwise be restricted to them—especially after a war that established deeply seated fault lines between Anglos and
Mexicans. Angela and "Red" McLane's matrimonial consensus represents a historical shift away from racial oppression to social negotiations in the American southwest—what Limón refers to as politics of negotiation and compromise. Although Angela and "Red" McLane approach their relationship completely aware of the racial tensions, cultural differences, and outright hate between Anglos and Mexicans, scholars continue to interpret their marriage as a conciliatory move by González to replace a violent history for an idealist future.

In a recent study, Monika Kaup believes González purposely misreads the historical record of south Texas in order to construct a creative feminist response to a new social, economic, and political order after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This new social order, argues Kaup, resulted in the intersection of conflict in south Texas that was later incorporated within *Caballero*. The novel, as a network of intersecting dialogues of conflict, allows González to utilize an anachronistic formula to rearrange the historical experience of *Tejanos*. According to Kaup, González not only develops an anachronism to backdate the twentieth century fall of the *hacienda* system to 1848, but also reverses the postwar Mexicanization of Anglo pioneers who married into elite Mexican families in order to portray the Americanization of south Texas families after the
Mexican American War. Kaup believes, as does Limón, that the matrimonial Americanization of Susanita and Angela consolidates long standing racial tensions between Anglos and Mexicans in the American southwest. Consequently, González’s irresistible attraction to use an anachronistic formula to disrupt the patriarchal structure of the hacienda through a national romance creates an “interethnic structure of peace” (568). By altering the historical accuracy of Texas history, González creates a literary narrative that presents a feminist response toward issues effecting women during this transitional period in Texas history. Whether this structure of peace represents a new feminist line of Tejana subjectivity, or simply meant to incorporate los Mexicanos de afuera into the national imaginary of the United States, scholars continue to interpret the matrimonial merger of Tejanas and Norte Americanos as a non-violent consolidation of inter-racial relations in south Texas.

Given that Sommer’s national romance blueprint (irresistible attractions) resolves interracial and class-based conflicts in Latin America through a literary strategy of nation building, scholars tend to incorporate Sommer’s work to their analysis of Caballero. We must remember, however, that the national romance novel served a specific political agenda in Latin America that benefited the newly established ruling class. If the
same scenario is being played out in *Caballero*, the author of the novel should be Anglo rather than Mexican American—since Americans represent the new governing order in Texas as well as the rest of the American southwest after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In this sense, I concur with Kaup’s claim that the foundational fiction in *Caballero* is not about nation building on behalf of the Mexican community, but rather about Mexican Americans becoming a minority class and dependent citizens of the United States. Kaup goes on to state,

*Caballero* is about becoming a minority, not nation; about becoming dependent, not independent; about the transformation of the Mexican self into the role of the cultural other within an American nation, family, cultural structure, and language. (575)

All this being said, Kaup continues to interpret Susanita and Angela’s interracial marriages as nonviolent consolidations that incorporate Mexicans as subordinate insiders within the United States. Although I agree with certain aspects of Limón’s and Kaup’s analyses of *Caballero*, I would argue that González’s use of the inter-racial romance does not necessarily consolidate interwar or postwar border conflicts.

Even if González misread and rearranged the historical accuracy of the *Tejano* experience under North American rule, it is not at the expense of consolidating the racial tensions and outright violence that engulfed south Texas. In my opinion, *Caballero* does not elide the conflict that existed and
continues to exist between Anglos and Mexicans, and stands in as one of the more violent novels describing this rancorous period. Don Santiago’s hate of and conduct toward Anglos is much different than, say, Don Mariano Alamar—the Californian rancher from Marfa Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s novel *The Squatter and the Don*. Unlike Don Alamar, who is willing to work alongside Anglos in California, Don Santiago would rather kill any squatter that sets root on his land. The confrontation and shooting of a squatter in *Rancho La Palma* marks the type of violence González describes throughout the novel. She goes on to state:

War, Texas knew, is a fecund mother whose children spring from her full grown. Want, wrapped in a tattered sheet; hunger drooling over bleached lips; disease, mouth open, hands spotted; contamination, dipping hot fingers in wells; despair, black and ugly, screaming curses; lust, the vile one, stealing the innocent; misery, babbling senseless prayers; intolerance, which coined the words “gringo” and “greaser” and impregnated them with contempt; prejudice, the long lived, driving new nails in the barrier of racial and religious differences. Revenge, and Hatred, and Murder, and Greed—ah, Greed!—the four that never slept.

The war. Yes, the war was over. So said the record.⁵

González realized these four sentiments—revenge, hatred, murder, and greed—could never be divorced from south Texas history because they continued to exist during the construction of the novel. Violence, in my opinion, is actually the driving meta-narrative within *Caballero*. 
Since scholars concentrate on the significance of the novel’s interracial romance, they tend to take for granted González’s use of violence throughout the text. The male characters clearly dominate the more visible violent acts in the novel: the squatter’s death at the hands of Don Santiago’s men, the beating of peons at *Rancho la Palma*, the bar fight between Alvaro and the Rangers, and the symbolic appearance of the guerilla leader Juan Cortina. Chicana feminists, however, are not guilty of such an oversight. As many have argued, *Caballero* breaks traditional structures of patriarchal violence in order to include the multiple voices of the *Tejano* experience.⁶ To a greater degree, the strategy behind the novel deliberately emphasizes *Tejana* involvement in the social, political, and economic changes taking in place during the Mexican American War, which has traditionally been limited to the male heroic figure within the Chicano war narrative. Consequently, Chicana scholars have extended their patriarchal critique of the novel to include prominent figures and themes found in Chicana/o Studies and Chicana/o literature. Americo Paredes’s *With a Pistol in His Hand* (1958) is a foundational text that limits the response toward economic exploitation, social oppression, and violent repression to the Chicano warrior hero. By privileging masculine narratives of resistance, the female subject is reduced to a submissive object to be protected and, ultimately, controlled by
the nationalist bravado of characters such as Don Santiago and Alvaro. In the words of Maria Cotera, “a man fighting for his right with a pistol in his hand, is fighting for his right and the rights of other men to maintain a traditional patriarchal order” (346). As a novel, *Caballero* breaks new ground by providing a narrative space that highlights the *Tejana* response to the Mexican American War. This prominent and highly accepted critique of the novel among Chicana feminists should dismiss arguments implying González’s consolidation of violence for romance in south Texas history.

I am not implying that romance is not a significant element within the text. Indeed, the Anglo-Mexican courtship and subsequent union is the climatic feminist resolution to the novel. However, the Anglo-Mexican merger comes with a destructive consequence that disrupts the foundational harmony of the national romance. Because the *Tejana* protagonists must first subvert their own community’s patriarchal structure, therefore renouncing their loyalty to the Mexico, romance becomes a narrative vehicle representing distinctly different experiences and circumstances for individual female protagonists. As such, *Caballero* does not carry out an identical portrayal of romance, as does the national romance that produced a desired effect of identification on the “tenuous citizenry of newly consolidated countries.” Various factors such as the traditional practice of
betrothal and class distinctions influence the type of romance bestowed on the *Tejanas*. Of greater significance is the violence tied to cultural traditions and class differences that affect characters such as Gregorio’s granddaughter Juanita.

A telling example is Alvaro’s attempt to rape Juanita, a malicious act completely justified by his father. Historically, *el patrón* (landowner) of the *hacienda* has the freedom to do as he pleased with his female servants. These sexual transgressions, whether consensual or forced, are the early sexual escapades and conquests that confirm the young patron’s right of passage as colonial heir of the *hacienda*. In an effort to intervene, Gregorio (orchard caretaker) asks Don Santiago to stop Alvaro:

Santiago, in the lifetime that I have worked for you I have asked no favors. The fruit you have had in abundance came to you because of me and I worked for that gladly, asking little in return. But I ask a favor of you now. Alvaro has been looking overly long and often at my grandchild Juanita. Her father, as you should remember, was killed by the Indians and her mother died from snakebite, so Juanita is both daughter and granddaughter to us. We have been proud of her delicate beauty and are glad that she loves Silvestre because he is kind and good and will never be harsh to her. She was too young when the *padre* was here last, but we planned marriage at his next visit. Santiago, order Alvaro to keep his hands from her! (296)

To this plea, Don Santiago simply answers with a shrug and raised eyebrow,

“The servant belongs to the master, Gregorio, as does everything he has. God made the one to serve the other and that is the law. You know the
saying: ‘‘Tie up your little hen, for my rooster has the world to roam’’ (297). In the patriarchal world of the rooster, all female bodies, or hens, are meant to be conquered and exploited. As such, Alvaro is able to roam *Rancho La Palma* to exercise his right to sexually assault Domitila and Leocadia. In an effort to prevent Juanita from having a similar faith, Gregorio, his wife, and Juanita leave *Rancho La Palma* and seek employment with an American rancher. This sort of sexual aggression directed toward women is not readily taken into account outside of a Chicana feminist critique.

By arguing that González consolidates Anglo-Mexican conflicts for romance, I believe critics are veiling our own community’s involvement within this violence. That we betrothed our women for monetary gain, that we raped indentured women and thought of it as a God-given right, that we could be oppressed as well as be the oppressor are historical facts we would much rather leave dormant. In order to conceal this baggage we consolidate this history by constructing and focusing on Anglo-Mexican binaries of conflict. Implications, I argue, that confuse González’s subversion of these violent patriarchal structures as the conciliatory plot in the novel: the national romance. If the inter-racial marriages of the text represent what Sommer calls irresistible attractions, academics completely ignore Susanita and Angela’s choice to marry outside their race as a way to escape their
community’s repression of women. Their decision to select whom their partner will be is the rebelling act against patriarchy. Since consensual relations within the *hacienda* are nonexistent, Juanita, Inez, Susanita, and Angela must turn their backs on the patriarchal order that justifies their oppression. As Angela explains to Susanita, “Why not both of us married to *Americanos*? They are for us the best men” (285). American men, in Angela’s mind, are the best choice because they present, as I argued earlier, a new colonial order that carries different social, economic, and political hierarchies that can be potentially liberating for women living in the newly constructed American southwest. Because Juanita, Inez, Susanita, and Angela chose to form alliances with the *Americanos*, González becomes susceptible to accusations of hiding, erasing, and forgetting the violence that existed between Anglos and Mexicans—what scholars refer to as the consolidation of south Texas history within *Caballero*. This interpretation elides the violent repression *Tejanas* experienced at the hands of our own community by highlighting Anglo-Mexican conflict. This consolidation, I argue, is a subconscious reproach toward *Mexicanas* that choose to side with the new colonial order of *el enemigo* (the enemy)—what I would like to call *el Complejo Malinchista* (Malinchista Complex).
The knee-jerk reaction to interpret the novel’s cross-racial marriages as a conciliatory tactic is part of a male-oriented nationalist history that holds women accountable for the fall of the male phallus. Patriarchal societies have historically condemned women who have made independent decisions that have resulted in the demise of dominant male figures. Their betrayal and their fall from national grace are now utilized in nationalist rhetoric to maintain patriarchal structures in order to control women physically and psychologically. In Mexico’s colonial imaginary, Malintzin Tenepal forever tainted her name for becoming Cortéz’s translator and lover: Doña Marina, better known as *La Malinche.* Due to her important role as translator and guide for the Spanish during the colonial takeover of the Aztec Empire, Tenepal has embodied the quintessential symbol of betrayal: the woman who sold out her race, the fucked one who laid down with the enemy, and the woman the bore the first *mestizo* child: *los hijos de la chingada* (sons of the fucked one). Contemporary usages of the term *Malinche* or *Malinchista* in Mexico refer to a person who adopts foreign values, assimilates to a foreign culture, or, worst yet, serves foreign interest, thus, representing the ultimate traitor of the nation. Like all migratory, diasporic, and exilic communities, popular vernacular terms such as *la malinche* were also uprooted from their regional origins to transplant
themselves in a new North American setting, but always holding steadily to the same misogynist context.

Since Chicano/a subjectivity sprang from the ashes of the Mexican American War, the novel illustrates the shift from Malinche’s betrayal of racial infidelity to Mexico to one of gender disloyalty within the newly established Mexican American community after the war. In the Chicano colonial imaginary, the political goal to organize the community was based on a patriarchal system that privileged male leadership: the paternal role of the Chicano warrior hero. These new Zapatistas and Villistas proclaimed their right to fight for their right with a pistol in their hands on behalf of the entire Chicano/a community, which placed Chicanas as the idyllic adelitas that followed behind their men into battle. Tired of being treated as domestic servants rather than political servants to the movement, Chicanas began to protest their limited role within leadership positions and decision-making procedures that censored their political grievances. Not only did Chicanos fail to acknowledge their colleagues’ concerns, but they also began to consider Chicana feminist thought as detrimental to the patriarchal order of the Chicano Movement. Once Chicanas began to organize and question the paternalistic carnalismo (brotherhood) of their compatriots, these feministas were blamed for “dividing the Movement and spouting Anglo
middle-class beliefs that had no place in the life of Raza. They were called
men-haters and *agraingadas* and sell-outs because, in seeking equality with
men and personal liberation for themselves as women, they were accused of
putting the individual before the culture."9 Chicanas who strived to attain
their individual right to think for themselves were instantly labeled
*Malinchistas* for refusing to uphold the patriarchal structures within the
Chicano/a Movement. Similar to the patriarchal structures that prevented
Chicanas from full political participation within the *movimiento*, the women
in *Caballero* also find themselves restricted from engaging with a new
social, economic, and political order in south Texas. Their restriction, of
course, is based on the paternalistic belief that men deal with business
matters while women wait to be instructed. Although my comparison of
*Caballero* to the Chicana Feminist Movement might seem like an unfair
association, I would argue that González’s patriarchal critique of the
*hacienda* corresponds to the same masculine bravado displayed during the
Chicano Movement.

Similar to the paternal role of the Chicano warrior hero, the Mendoza
y Soría patriarchs are described as the domineering leaders carrying out the
nationalist call to resist everything American. During a private meeting
between *hidalgos*, Don Gabriel wisely suggests three possible relationships
they could establish with the *Americanos*: First, move back to Mexico and rely on the support of the government and extended family. Secondly, meet the *Americanos* halfway by learning their language and customs, or, lastly, fight and resist the Americans always. To the last suggestion Alvaro shouts, “fight them until we kill them all or they kill us all. The blood of conquerors runs through our veins—the Mendozas, the Sorías, know no defeat! Fight, I say!” Not surprisingly, Don Santiago supports his son’s outburst by stating that “our ancestors have spoken through you. So shall it be; we fight them to the end; whatever end that may be!” (10). The significance of this meeting, and others throughout the novel, lies in the strict regulation of an all male audience during these gatherings. Only *hidalgos* are allowed to attend secret organized meetings to decide the manner in which to deal with the encroaching *Americanos*. Women are completely left out of these meetings, and if they are present their attendance is of no significance since they cannot participate in the discussions.

Clearly, the absence of the female figure from these meetings demonstrates the masculine inclination and structure of the *hacienda*. As such, the erasure of the female figure confines to be them perpetually dependent on the social, economic, and political arrangements of the male *hidalgo*. As the narrator describes, “Hands behind him, he paced slowly
across the floor, hard packed as stone by the countless tread of master, guest, and prolific generations of servant and peon” (16). Don Santiago’s footsteps trace the hierarchal order that has established him sovereign ruler of his own private empire. Even their image is phallic in description, “Alvaro’s spurs clinking, swaggered past the servant women, lustful, possessive eyes on the youngest and prettiest ones. Slender but powerfully built, the muscles revealed by the tight-fitting suit of buckskin moved with the coordination of a creature of the woods. Don Santiago watched his son with approval” (5). Alvaro’s patriarchal grooming epitomizes the evolution of the Chicano warrior hero: physically fit, sexually aggressive, and absolute monarch of the Chicano family, community, and national culture. Under this dictate, women must unquestionably follow and respect the systematic male privileging within the *hacienda*.

Needless to say, much of the critical work on *Caballero* utilizes a feminist approach to deconstruct the patriarchal culture of the *hacienda* to acknowledge the feminist impulses that usurp Don Santiago and Alvaro’s dominance over the female protagonists of the text. As such, the betrayal of these *Tejanas* follows that of ‘Tenepals’. By choosing to side with the enemy, Inez, Susanita, and Angela subvert the mechanisms that try to dictate their choices and behavior by taking control of their own bodies. Ownership
of the female body, in this sense, is an essential component that sustains the patriarchal structure of the *hacienda*. To literally claim a woman’s body means control over the reproduction of the *hidalgo* in order to manage the selection of the next heir to the *hacienda*. It should not be surprising, then, for Don Santiago to feel threatened by the possibility of Susanita and Angela transgressing outside traditional parameters set by the *hidalgo*. A clear anxiety Don Santiago expresses to his sister Dolores:

> Just a dance, Dolores. A touch of the hand, a smile, a glance—tinder for the spark, and a *gringo* will steal the hearts of our girls. I had not known that they could be so personable, and I confess it was Alvaro of whom I was ashamed.

> Doña Dolores thought. Yes, that was hitting his pride; that was the shame, that his son was the lesser man.

> He walked to the table, gulped coffee and threw the cup on the table. It rolled in a half circle and crashed to the floor. He picked up a broken piece and threw it at his sister’s feet. “That would be my daughter, married to one of them.” He banged the table, raised his right hand, and in a voice which made Angela and Doña María Petronilla shrink with terror he proclaimed: “I swear by almighty God and by the souls of my ancestors that rather than see that happen I would wish them in their coffins.” (98)

The romance and courtship of Susanita and Angela by an *Americano* will not only taint their ancestral lineage, but also threatens Don Santiago and Alvaro’s masculinity. By preferring an *Americano* over a *hidalgo* suggests their impotence to satisfy their women. As such, the *hidalgos* not only become emasculated, but also begin to lose their patriarchal stronghold over women—a demise exhibited in Alvaro’s attempt to conquer Inez.
For some reason, academics have overlooked the significance of Inez’s character role in the novel. An analysis of her romantic relationship with Ranger Johnny White is quite telling, especially if we consider the negative perception of Texas Rangers in the historical memory of Chicanos. To summarize, Inez comes from an elite circle of the Mexican aristocracy. Inez is suddenly reduced to a mere pecuniary object to be bartered between Alvaro and Inez’s father Don Eulalio. Although Susanita and Angela experience similar circumstances, Inez’s betrothal to Alvaro is much more sinister. It becomes quite clear that Inez Sánchez y Argensola’s family fortune is in dire straits and the family name is quickly descending into the lower stratum of the aristocratic order of south Texas. Since there is no financial gain in marrying into the Sánchez y Argensola lineage, Alvaro’s interest in Inez stems from pure misogynist indulgence. Don Santiago warns Alvaro of his choice and, more specifically, of Inez’s non-subversive ways. Alvaro dismisses his father’s advice and simply states, “Another reason why I want her. I want the joy of taming a woman and breaking her to my will.” To which his father replies, “That has its points. And its dangers. Women are unpredictable creatures.” To Alvaro, however, capriciousness is not an issue since he will “do the predicting as to what [his] wife will be” (110). This short, but potent exchange between father and son reveals how the
betrothal of women within the traditional *hacienda* infrastructure completely disregards Inez’s feelings toward Alvaro, a consensual oversight that borders on the physical and mental abuse of women caught up in this patriarchal web. The practice, tradition, and norm of arranged marriages among the elite class in the novel represents the cultural precedent that justifies and downplays the patriarchal exploitation of these women. Inez, however, does not sit idly and accept a predestined future not of her choice.

Inez’s decision to sabotage her parents’ matrimonial arrangement is the initial rebellion in the novel that breaks traditional gender lines. Her love affair with Johnny White brings to light the severity of her betrayal in more than one way. Traditionally speaking, Inez’s involvement with White goes against the decorum—but more specifically the type of sexual restraint—she is supposed to observe as a member of an aristocratic class. A disgrace Don Eulalio is obviously disconcerted about:

Don Eulalio was both the outraged, humiliated father and the stern judge. Nor did Doña Juana intercede for her wayward daughter, in this double bludgeoning of family pride and hopes. The clandestine affair with a despicable Ranger was bad enough, the end of their dreams of an alliance with the Mendoza y Soría house an unforgivable thing. Don Eulalio glared over his folded arms at his daughter and repeated,

“The convent. Only by proper punishment can your mother and I hold up our heads here, as you very well know.” (142)
Thus, Inez’s double bludgeoning affair not only ruins her family’s name and reputation, but also assures their financial fall. With Inez’s depreciated value as a soiled bride, Don Eulalio’s reminds his daughter “perhaps a vaquero will ask for you, to bake his tortillas in a jacal” (142).

Traditionally, the jacal is a space inhabited by the india (indigenous woman) servant. As such, Inez tainted India body represents Malinche’s disgrace to her family, community, and nation. As Cortina and Alvaro relate in a conversation, “What are you going to do about it? Me I would not want her, not after a gringo.” “Nor I.” Alvaro swaggered a little as they turned back to town” (134). By breaking traditional gender roles, Inez repeats Tenepal’s betrayal of sleeping with the enemy. In the Mexican American colonial period, Johnny White, the Texas Ranger, stands in as the Hernán Cortés of the nineteenth century.

Unlike Malinche’s disloyalty to an entire indigenous nation, Inez’s betrayal lies in her subversion of patriarchal mechanisms that set in motion the debacle of the dictating patriarch. Once Inez initiates her rebellion, Susanita and Angela follow up with their own offensive assault to complete the destruction of the hacienda. By revealing to their father their wish to marry Americanos, Don Santiago foresees the demise of his patriarchal rule and the rise of a new south Texas sociopolitical order. Going against his
wishes and against tradition, Don Santiago is forced to disown both Susanita and Angela for betraying the honor of all hidalgos. As he reminds his daughter, “Your honor, Susanita, was also mine, and that of the man to whom you were promised. You took what was not only yours and mine, but his also” (280). Clearly, the honor of Don Santiago and Alvaro depends and rests on the complete acquiescence of women. González, however, is able to piece together a creative feminist response that allows these Tejanas to take part in and make choices during a historical event such as the Mexican American War. I find it fascinating how González interprets the Mexican American War as a transitional change in colonial power structures that can potentially undo Mexico’s masculine hacienda culture. She exchanges an oppressive war narrative in Chicana/o history and converts it into a potentially liberating historical circumstance for Mexican American women. In Doña Dolores’s words, “I shall sleep whether I am called a Mexican, Texan, or Americano, and be quite ready for chocolate in the morning” (16). Since all of the leading female protagonists share the same optimistic feeling toward North American culture, literary critics have connected González’s use of romance to Sommer’s formulation of “irresistible attractions” in late nineteenth-century Latin American novels. Their Tejana impulse to divorce cultural nationalism in order to be courted by the new Americanos is the
ingredient of the national romance narrative. However, to simply label *Caballero* as a national romance ignores the patriarchal oppression these *Tejanas* experienced during this colonial period. Why not interpret their interest and alliance to the *Americanos* as a means to escape the misogynist grip of the *hacienda*?

Yet, their escape depends on the fall of the *hacienda*, which relies on the fall of the ruling patriarchs. Interestingly enough, the demise of the *hidalgo* in the novel is highly symbolic in many respects. For instance, Alvaro’s decision to join the rebels against the Americanos and his subsequent death at the hands of the Texas Rangers are all consequences linked to the insurrection of women. Revenge pushed Alvaro to join Cortina in order to amend the castrating wound inflicted by Inez’s choice to love a Ranger over him. A clear hostility Alvaro relates to Cortina, “Maybe I’ll kill me this Ranger” (134). Ultimately, it is the unfaithfulness of his lover, Cruz that pushed Alvaro over the edge by giving away his ring to a Ranger. Confronting and accusing the Ranger of stealing the ring, Alvaro realizes he was once again betrayed and humiliated by a woman. “Oh, not stole, señor. She gave it to me, and a right pretty lady she was too. Made me a present of it,” revealed the smirking Ranger (306). An ensuing gunfight results in the fatal shooting of Alvaro in the banks of the Rio Bravo, a symbolic setting
representing the violent racial currents that will forever divide Mexican from Anglo. With the heir of the hacienda deceased and no castizas to betroth in order to ensure a hidalgo successor to Rancho La Palma, it becomes quite obvious Don Santiago’s patriarchal dominion is crumbling to pieces. In the end, the fall of the hacienda stems from women finally rebelling against the patriarchal structures that have traditionally controlled their bodies.

The loss of an entire generation of hidalgos is simply too much damage for Don Santiago to endure. For this reason, literary critics connect Alvaro’s death to the eventual passing of Don Santiago. I argue, however, that Don Santiago’s fatal mourning is bigger than Alvaro’s death. His inability to control Susanita and Angela emasculated the phallic potency of Don Santiago—symbolically castrating the hidalgo’s manhood. A loss that is visible in his physical description toward the end of the novel, “Tomás noticed, when his master climbed into the saddle, that his movements were those of a very old man. He remembered how Don Santiago had lifted the large stone and flung it into the river, and he asked solicitously whether there was anything wrong, was he hurt somewhere?” (307). Morally, physically, and publicly castrated from his patriarchal powers, Don Santiago receives a last demoralizing blow when he is told of Angela’s and Susanita’s pregnancies. The following passage describes this fatal premonition:
"Angela? María de los Angeles to have a baby?" He laughed. He threw the petals in the air above him and let them shower on him and laughed. Laughed until a hundred devils were mocking each other from the walls, in an insanity of glee over this jest.

He was still laughing when he mounted the horse that always stood saddled for him by the gate. He rode like the wind past Victoriano watching his sheep, who crossed himself and muttered a prayer. When he got to the top of the bluff, he dismounted and sat on the stone slab at the foot of the big cross until the big bell over the well in the patio called him in faintest tinkle.

It sounded, today, like the toll of a requiem. (330)

The deflowering of Angela is simply the beginning of the end for Don Santiago—who frantically throws his daughters virginal petals in the air.

While Angela’s pregnancy certainly distressed Don Santiago to the point of madness, it is the birth of Susanita’s daughter that rang the requiem hymn of the patriarch’s death.

The arrival of Susanita’s newborn daughter to Rancho La Palma at the conclusion of the novel represents the rise of a new order in south Texas.

With the end of Don Santiago’s paternalistic dynasty, he retreats to the sacred bluff where his “pride could have a man’s stature, here he was on a throne” (32). From the high bluff and in total solitude, Don Santiago saw the approaching cavalcade that carried the new castiza granddaughter and heir to Rancho La Palma. Worried of her father’s delay to return to the hacienda after their arrival, Susanita tells Warrener to search for her father at the bluff she refers to as “papás alter.” Ironically, Don Santiago’s sacred site
is no longer a place where woman and peon worship the patriarch, but rather an area where Don Santiago’s alter will stand to mourn his death. His daughter’s union with Americanos and the rise of a new sociopolitical class in south Texas was simply too much for the patriarch to endure. As such, by taking control of their own bodies and refusing to be bartered as cattle among prominent hidalgos, Inez, Angela, and Susanita prevent the patriarchal conception of the masculine hacienda—thus, sealing the death of Don Santiago.

González’s feminist tactics as a creative writer and scholar of the Tejano community and its folklore, has gained her recognition as one of the pioneras (pioneers) of Chicana folklore and, more importantly, been referred to as a foremother to the Chicana intellectual community. If González is to be characterized as a proto Chicana who seeks, in María Cotera’s words, to “expand our vision of American history and culture from both a racialized and gendered perspective,” we must trace the historical sources utilized to express these feminist impulses. Traditional Chicana feminist thought directs us to the multiple subjectivities of the dark india, the native woman, and the new mestiza to uncover her many embodied histories of oppression and resistance. As such, the reconstruction and recodification of the native woman not only gives voice to women found at the bottom of an economic
and political hierarchical order, but also counters what Norma Alarcón calls "regulative psychobiographies" of good and evil women: *La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona*. But if we attempt to track the native woman in González's feminist subversion of the *hidalgo* warrior hero, we quickly realize no such woman exists in *Caballero*. What can be found, however, is a completely different *castiza* woman leading the resistance against paternal structures of patriarchal power.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, fair complexioned *castiza* women were highly valued as marriage partners in colonial Mexico. The differentiation between a *mestiza* (Indian/white mixture) and the *castiza* (mestizo/white mixture) lies in the social mobility that favored the castizo/a in the economic and political order of colonial Latin America. This mobility, of course, relies on the racial mixture away from indigenous lineage. Therefore, if we insist on hailing Jovita González as a *pionera* (pioneer) of Chicana folklore and foremother to Chicana feminists, we must recognize her delineation away from Chicana tropes. Where traditional Chicana feminist themes resist the incursion of American culture, González chooses to contend with Mexico's patriarchal culture by describing the U.S. as a better suited feminist home space. The liberation of these *Tejanas*, paradoxically, depends on the matrimonial union with a Texas Ranger
(Johnny White), an army lieutenant (Robert Warrener), and an American politician (Red McLane). If we are to interpret González’s narrative alliance with Norte Americanos as a Chicana response to patriarchy, non-traditional resistant strategies need to be accounted for and discussed.

The castiza consciousness of these Tejanas not only foresees the inevitable establishment of the southwestern borderlands, but they also consummate (initiate?) the rise of white U.S. mestizaje. The difference between Anzaldúa’s new mestiza and González’s new castiza lies in the introduction, or reminder, of a crucial element within the mestizo/a imaginary: whiteness. Let us remember that the discovery of the Americas was followed by the introduction of the European strain that gave birth to Latin America’s mestizo/a nations. It should not be surprising, then, to find the merging of the Mexican criollo with the prevailing whites after the Mexican American War. Considering the racial, political, and economic planes these Tejanas inhabit, their “identity-in-difference” lies in a racially privileged class identity that culturally subjugates them as bartered objects among an elite, but patriarchal, circle of hidalgos. Although there is a definite class issue surrounding the status of whiteness in colonial Mexico and the United States, González reminds us that patriarchal oppression transgresses through all class categorizations as well as exploits all
women—whether it’s the native body or the white body. In this sense, if Chicanas justify the recodification of *Malinche*’s betrayal to Mexico, we also need to recodify whiteness to understand the significance of the matrimones in *Caballero*, an understanding that will lead us beyond Sommer’s conciliatory national romance formula.

Because the fall of the patriarch and *hacienda* depends on the matrimonial alliance between *Tejanas* and *Americanos*, scholars will continue to interpret these marriages as conciliatory romances that veil the historical violence between Anglos and Mexicans. Once again, this interpretation covers up the violent repression *Tejanas* experienced under the patriarchal structure of the *hacienda*. An oversight, I argue, caused by *el Complejo Malinchista* that subconsciously continues to hold women accountable for their cultural, political, and sexual transgressions. As the paradigmatic figure of Chicana feminism, *La Malinche* embodies an epistemological trajectory of figures—whether historical or fictional—who demand a more extensive decolonizing process that revises simple binaries, handles internal issues critically, and re-writes history. In this manner, Inez, Angela, and Susanita’s betrayal and subversion of the *hidalgo* warrior hero foresee the recodified betrayal of past, present, and future *Malinchistas, mestizas*, and *castizas* of the Chicana Feminist Movement.
Notes

1 *Castizas* were racially mixed women who were fair complexioned and were highly valued as marriage partners in colonial Mexico. Refer to Martha Menchaca’s *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2001: 65).

2 By English roots I am referring to the first English colony in North America: the Virginia Colony 1607-1776.

3 Refer to José Limón’s article “Mexicans, Foundational Fictions, and the United States: *Caballero*, a Late Border Romance.” *In Modern Language Quarterly* 57:2, June 1996.

4 Refer to Monika Kaup’s article, “*The Unstable Hacienda: the Rhetoric of Progress in Jovita González’s and Eve Raleigh’s Caballero.*” *In Modern Fiction Studies* 51:3, Fall 2005.

5 In this narrative sequence, I am referring to two distinct moments in the novel were González recognizes the violence and hatred between Anglos and Mexicans as a constituting part of Texas history well after the Mexican American War. Turn to pages 195, 265, and 331 for these scenes.

6 Refer to Maria Cotera’s epilogue contribution to *Caballero,* “*Hombres Necios: A Critical Epilogue.*” Also, John M. González’s “*Terms of
Engagement: Nation or Patriarchy in Jovita González’s and Eve Raleigh’s Caballero.”


9 Refer to Alicia Gaspar de Alba’s “Malinche’s Revenge.” In Rolando Romero and Amanda Nolacea Harris. Feminism, Nation, and Myth: La Malinche (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2005).


14 Refer to Amanda Nolacea Harris, “Critical Introduction: La Malinche and Post-Movement Feminism,” in Rolando Romero and Amanda Nolacea Harris’s Feminism, Nation, and Myth: La Malinche (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2005).
Chapter Three
The Racial Logic of White Mestizaje in María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don

...not to keep the reader in suspense—which, by-the-by, I notice is a very popular sort of artifice freely employed by “sensational” novelists—as my aspirations are humble—which these pages sufficiently demonstrate ...

(María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, 141)

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s reference to “sensational” novelists in Who Would Have Thought It? is peculiar since sensational literature was considered to be a lowbrow form of literary entertainment. Why would Ruiz de Burton take the time to recognize the artifice of suspense in sensational literature, or, for that matter, compare her “humble” novel to such a genre? Although Ruiz de Burton offers no definite answer beyond this quote, it is clear she recognized the potential value of the techniques employed by this genre to capture the interest of its audience. Such an odd reference to the artifice of suspense during the narration of her novel suggests a partiality to sensational narrative form rather than the more popular mode of sentimentalism among female American authors of the nineteenth century. By way of her husband, U.S. Colonel Henry S. Burton, Ruiz de Burton had the privilege of finding herself at the front of American domestic conflicts. Her familiarity with the Mexican-American War, Native American Indian removal, and her direct involvement with the American Civil War would
presume a closer affiliation to such literary works as Harriet Beecher
Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) or Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*
(1884); given that the political grievances concerning Indian removal and
slavery correlate with Ruiz de Burton’s own personal aspiration to speak for
the disenfranchised *Californios*. Unfortunately, the authoritarian difference
between the native Californian novelist and her contemporaries, in Jackson
and Stowe, lies in Ruiz de Burton’s racial exclusion from mid-nineteenth-
century literary circles. Although sentimental novelists such as Stowe and
Jackson created a literary space where female authors were able to
participate in a literary field once dominated by male novelists, recent
studies in nineteenth-century sentimentalism has revealed the paradoxical
tendency of this genre to reify and segregate cultural, national, and racial
identities.¹

Since a literary paradigm such as sentimentalism has the ability to
reify racial and national differences, this chapter will examine how Ruiz de
Burton’s *mestiza* heritage as a white *castiza* allowed her to navigate through
fictional narrative constructions of U.S. whiteness. By assembling her own
narrative imaginary of white U.S. *mestizaje*, Ruiz de Burton is able to
deconstruct and re-fashion U.S. racial constructions of colonial whiteness.
This racial re-figuration, I argue, became possible by the sudden influx of
southeastern European immigrants to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The growing presence of southeastern Europeans on North American soil created, what Matthew Frye Jacobson describes as a “nineteenth-century political crisis of remarkable urgency and scope” (40). The regional distinction between southern and eastern European immigrants from the longer established northern and western European colonial founders of the United States resulted in the racial categorization of southeastern European immigrants as white Others. By placing Ruiz de Burton within the same racial vicinity as southeastern European immigrants, a new understanding of racial inclusion and exclusion from whiteness reveals the untidiness of this racial category in nineteenth century North American culture. As such, I argue that the possibility of changeable whiteness in the public domain of politics, economics, and popular culture allowed for the possibility that someone of Ruiz de Burton’s background could construct a national imaginary of white U.S. mestizaje. To be racially different or mixed while simultaneously located within whiteness in the United States became the ideal model for Ruiz de Burton to write Who Would Have Thought It? (1872) and The Squatter and the Don (1885).

To examine the full trajectory of nineteenth-century ideas of whiteness, this chapter provides a historical account of the vicissitudes of
U.S. whiteness, and how Ruiz de Burton sought to take advantage of the instability of this racial category to participate within new narrative constructions of U.S. whiteness. Unlike the sentimental novel, a body of literature that required a specific female author whose reading audience had learned to listen to the domestic discourse of a white "republican" maternal figure, southeastern European immigrants created sensational literature to forge a national identity for themselves. ³ Because sensational literature opposed, even mocked the sentimentality of the domestic novel, this essay examines how Ruiz de Burton created a "sensational domestic novel" to blend the narrative techniques and political culture of sensational authors to rearrange the content of the sentimental novel to contradict traditional U.S. views of the national domestic order. Furthermore, Ruiz de Burton's alignment with the narrative style of sensational authors was intended to counter discriminatory views against white Mexicans by strategically creating an imagined narrative community of white U.S. mestizos in Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don.

Critically engaged with southwestern historical accounts and thoroughly preoccupied with social protest of the North American political arena, both Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don masterfully orchestrate a narrative imaginary of the United States in what is
one of the most significant moments in North American history: territorial occupation after the Mexican American War. Ruiz de Burton’s unapologetic attempt to give a narrative voice to Californios, or Spano Americans as she refers to them, has intrigued and created a highly contested debate in Chicano/a Studies. How are we to understand and interpret a woman who considered herself part of a dispossessed Mexican class in California but simultaneously managed to circulate and profit from a privileged positioning in U.S. political circuits of power? Recovery scholars, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita quickly identified Ruiz de Burton as an author that created a “narrative space for the counter-history of the subaltern” (7). Academics continued to pursue the subaltern dialogue by considering Ruiz de Burton as a “subaltern supplementary subject” traversing the “new politics of location” in the southwestern borderlands (David Saldívar 170, 178). The counterside of this interpretive coin calls attention to Ruiz de Burton’s conflicting tendencies under a subaltern rubric. Academics such as José Aranda (Contradictory Impulses, 1998) and Jesse Alemán (Historical Amnesia, 2002) accentuate the necessity to recognize Ruiz de Burton’s contradictory biography and polemical narrative strategy to realign Californios within the new colonial rule of Anglo Americans after the Mexican American War. Although the recovery and introduction of Ruiz de Burton’s novels created
binary viewpoints within Chicano/a literary circles, recent studies of *Who Would Have Thought It?* and *The Squatter and the Don* have now turned to the Ruiz de Burton canon to analyze female counter-traditions that confront issues of gender, race, and ideology to widen the literary field of U.S. literature (Montes 2000, 2002). Other scholars have taken up a much broader use of Ruiz de Burton’s texts to point towards a transnational, anti-imperialist discourse that pits *Nuestra America* against the Colossus of the North (Pita 2006). The recently published collection of essays assembled by editors Amelia María de la Luz Montes and Anne Elizabeth Goldman in *María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: Critical and Pedagogical Perspectives* (2004) is demonstrative of the creative approaches that widen the criticism and academic value of a polemical Mexican American figure such as Ruiz de Burton.

However, existing scholarship covering Ruiz de Burton’s preoccupation with racial whiteness continues to interpret the performance of whiteness in *Who Would Have Thought It?* and *The Squatter and the Don* as narrative signifiers trying to align *Californios* with the North American colonial elite. For John M. González, the blushing white countenances in Ruiz de Burton’s character descriptions coalesce nationalism around whiteness as the prerequisite to claim civil rights and political agency in the
United States (157). Only in this manner, states González, can Ruiz de Burton attain an "affective economy of circulating sentiment that enables Californio claims to [...] the very structure of a laissez-faire, entrepreneur capitalism that might ensure continued Californio social standing among the nation's elite" (ibid.). Although González provides a very provocative connection between white blushing bodies and the political and economic value of U.S. national whiteness, his inquiry into national whiteness only scratches the surface of wider political implications whiteness represents in the historical narrative of racial distinctions in the United States. To believe whiteness guaranteed entry into the arena of public politics and the national economic market does so only if we ignore the racial tensions within whiteness during the mid-nineteenth-century emigrational waves of southern and eastern European immigrants to the United States.

The form in which whiteness is categorized and depicted in Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don reflects the shifting sociopolitical climate of nineteenth-century North America. With the end of the Mexican American War as well as the social, political, and economic changes at the conclusion of the American Civil War, American identity experienced such an unsettling rupture that the notion of a cohesive U.S. national identity is hard to imagine during this time period. To acknowledge
the dramatic shifts of colonial power in the mid-nineteenth century, Jesse Alemán interprets Ruiz de Burton’s preoccupation with white bodies as a strategic move by the Californian author to systematically place Californios within the same social plane as white southerners. Alemán’s merging of white southerners with landed Californios is much more than the inclusion of Mexicans into the national category of U.S. whiteness, as John M. González claims, but a recognition of the colonial similarities southerners share with Californios. For example, the southern colonial plantation system in the United States resembles the Spanish colonial model Californios used to “define their territorial government’s right to control the land of mission Indians” (Hass 3). And similar to southern slaves, southwestern Indians suffered from “stark social divisions that had long defined colonial society” in California (Hass 44). However, when white southerners could no longer depend on a slave based plantation system in addition to their social decline and economic yield to northern capitalism suddenly “felt themselves equally victimized by Yankee imperialism, equally excluded from the emerging discourses of Anglo American socioeconomic privilege” as did the native Californio elite in the southwest after the Mexican America War (Alemán, Thank God 98). Although Alemán’s comparison of the Anglo American white/black colonial paradigm to Spanish/Indigenous colonial relations is a
keen observation of colonial structures that can potentially allow *Californios* to attain a social standing as white privileged elite, I believe his synthesis of two racial paradigms that specifically privilege the highest hierarchal form of colonial whiteness limits explorations of mid-nineteenth-century processes of white racialization in North American culture.

Whether the racial binary is white/black, Spanish/Indio, or Anglo American/Mexican mestizo, constructed racial paradigms that solidify U.S. national whiteness against the colored Other helps scholars reduce race relations into binary oppositions in order to make racial debates manageable. Taking the lead from historian David Roediger, my analysis of Ruiz de Burton’s interest with U.S. whiteness demonstrates the instability of whiteness itself in mid-nineteenth-century North America and emphasizes white racial “messiness as a central characteristic of the racial order” of this period in U.S. culture (37). For example, the 1790 U.S. naturalization law that opened the door to all “free white persons” to obtain U.S. citizenship has erroneously been understood as a federal policy that welcomed all European immigrants to assimilate into North America. The singular use of the word “white” in the 1790 naturalization law ignited massive immigration waves to the U.S., beginning with the Famine Migration from Ireland. Soon after, German and Scandinavian immigrants followed, as well as European
Jews, Italians, Greeks, Poles, Ruthenians, Slovenians, Magyars, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians. The immediate and glaring presence of these European immigrants resulted in republican ideas of “racial refinement from white to Anglo-Saxon” (Jacobson, 49) that reflect the political refashioning of U.S. Anglo Saxon whiteness. To reiterate Reginald Horseman’s words, Anglo-Saxonism was “at last working out its destiny with institutions that made possible the protection of man’s natural rights and allowed him full self-realization” in the Anglo Saxon North American Republic (85). Anglo Saxon nativists soon began to consider southeastern European immigrants as a political disruption to the democratic order of the republic; and, consequently, led to the racial splintering of national whiteness in North America.

Although Ruiz de Burton had gained access into influential political circles in the United States, her narrative preoccupation with race, specifically Spano American whiteness, suggests that the interstitial positioning of Californios—between citizen and non-citizen—had a close affinity with the in-between standing of southeastern European immigrants. As David Roediger explains in his latest book Working Towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White (2005), southeastern immigrants were “in-between peoples” at several fronts: between hard racism and full
inclusion and neither exclusively white nor non-white (12). Similar to the contested whiteness of southeastern European immigrants, Mexicans also weathered the storm of U.S. racialization by denying them full political rights on the basis that the majority of the population was not white. Only Mexicans who were white were given full citizenship, while mestizos, Christianized Indians, and Afromestizos were racially restricted from attaining political rights under U.S. rule. After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, states Marta Menchaca, “Mexicans entered a new racial order similar to that practiced in Spain” (217). Ruiz de Burton’s propinquity to this new racial order of North American whiteness and familiarity with Spanish colonial ideas of whiteness permitted her to forge a new conception of white U.S mestizaje. Similar to the Spanish castas system that granted the purchase of whiteness through decrees such as limpieza de sangre and gracias al sacar, the dubious positioning of in-between whiteness contained the possibility of social change over time for southeastern European immigrants and Californios such as Ruiz de Burton.  

The splintering of American identity and the possibility of social change for Ruiz de Burton’s in-between whiteness is textually visible within the character descriptions of Lola and Mercedes in Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don. In this manner, the blushing
white faces of Lola and Mercedes and Don Alamar’s preference for the “trusting South” (Squatter 285) is not an effort on Ruiz de Burton’s part to erase the possibility of mestizaje in the Californio/Anglo merger, as Jesse Alemán would have us believe, but rather narrative signifiers playing off new conceptions of “in-between” whiteness in the North American Anglo Saxon Republic. Consider Mrs. Darrell’s French Catholic surname Moreneau that tactfully plays upon the common Spanish last name Moreno and as a word describing a dark-skinned person. A better example is Clarence’s confession to Mercedes regarding his own racial inferiority, “I do not blame you for renouncing me, for it must be repugnant to you to unite yourself with one who has such rough blood in his veins” (Squatter 284). These narrative gestures by Ruiz de Burton point towards Europe’s own foreign status and social difference in the Protestant U.S. By establishing the Darrell matriarch as a French Catholic and have Clarence refer to his family’s heritage as containing “rough blood,” Ruiz de Burton foregrounds the similarities between European foreigners and Spano Americans. The white racial tensions within Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don and outright unpredictability of white racial identity in nineteenth-century U.S. culture are clear indications of a developing community of white U.S. mestizos in North America. Furthermore, white
U.S. *mestizaje* contained the possibility of navigating through U.S. racial barriers in order to be perceived as racially fit for self-government, which consequently became the overarching theme for a group of southeastern European immigrant authors in the mid-nineteenth century.

In line with their low economic standing and minimal social status in the U.S., southeastern European immigrants created a lowbrow literary genre known as sensational literature. Through sensational literature, southeastern immigrant authors were able to fashion a positive narrative depiction of themselves within the national imaginary of the United States, while simultaneously constructing a political identity that recognized and advocated for the integration of southeastern European immigrants into the national fabric of North America. With improvements in and affordable access to print technology between 1831 and the 1860s, sensational authors were able to circulate an estimated 60 percent increase in the production of sensational literature, while “genteel-sentimental” novels dropped to around 20 percent (Reynolds 171). The disproportion in production between these two genres is not only representative of the developing gap between two divergent national communities in the United States, but also the “growing chasm between serious and popular culture” (Levine 68).
Once sensational authors achieved the production and distribution of their literature in great quantities for the marginalized masses—increasingly made up of southeastern European immigrants—they imbued their narrative style with class and racial tensions. Their literary genre not only questioned the economic stronghold of Republican oligarchies that benefited a select few, but also converted their foreign whiteness into a nationalistic identity in order to consolidate their white racial difference in the United States. These characteristics were so prominent amongst sensational authors that David Reynolds classified their narrative style as subversive literature. This literary style is defined by two elements: first and foremost it is a literature of protest with definite links to democratic political dimensions, which repeatedly took the side of oppressed groups to expose the corruption of elite society.

Second, it was an experimental genre both thematically and stylistically. Thematically, it was informed by a radical-democratic vision of nineteenth-century America, which was depicted as a nightmarish society of class divisions and inequalities. As far as narrative style, it took up a highly irrational method that featured intentional disruptions of linear patterns and conventional literary rules (Reynolds 198). The literary irrationalness of the subversive style was a direct assault on gentile literature that is characteristically thought of as ordered, well mannered, and decent. To
counteract the hypocritical and racist assumptions of sentimental literature, Ruiz de Burton appropriated the subversive style of sensational authors to fashion a hybrid “sensational domestic novel” to cast an assemblage of white U.S. *mestizo* characters that mirrored the racial disorder of whiteness in mid-nineteenth century North America culture.

**National Conflicts in Sentimental Literature**

The sentimental novel proved to be a form in which women, specifically white women, were able to create their own feminine discourse within an expanding North American nation. As a result, this genre constructed a model of the domestic female figure in which women’s maternity came to represent a process of civility in North American culture. With the influx of southeastern European immigrants to the United States as well as the introduction of new Mexican American citizens after the Mexican American War, sentimental authors proved to be an effective force to neutralize the foreign element of a changing North American population. As northern American families began to spread their homes throughout the southwest, these frontier inhabitants looked to the maternal figure as the “moral guardians of their husbands and children” who laid the foundation as “standard – bears of piety, decorum and virtue” (Stansell xii). To be sure, the cult of domesticity is indebted to the industrial development and commercial
expansion of the north, which supported the emergence of an urban bourgeoisie society that quickly designated to women the task of maintaining the domestic household. With the rise of a middle class, women were given the authority to regulate over the domestic sphere. Domesticity "quickly became an element of bourgeois self-consciousness" that "refined their own sense of themselves as social and spiritual superiors capable of remolding the city in their own image" (ibid.). Once this sense of superiority ingrained itself as a virtue of domesticity, women initiated an official discourse that outlined a process of national domestication, which—in Amy Kaplan's words—"entails conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien" (502).

As Amy Kaplan argues in her essay "Manifest Domesticity," women's sentimental fiction functioned as an imperial tool to domesticate foreignness both at an international and national level. The popular perception that the bourgeois white woman needed to be sheltered within a patriarchal household became increasingly stressed in sentimental discourse. The outcome of this ideology resulted in nineteenth-century literature that polarized black womanhood "against white womanhood in the metaphoric system of female sexuality, particularly through the association of black women with overt sexuality and taboo sexual practices," argues Hazel Carby
(32). The distinction between Kaplan’s and Carby’s critique of a metaphoric system of female sexuality in the U.S. lies in that Ruiz de Burton actually reacted to these racial taboos at a time when women such as herself were not accorded the opportunity to respond to the social anxieties of sentimental authors. Her exclusion from literary and intellectual circles silenced the possibility of a public critique of the colonizing tendencies of sentimental authors who were struggling to maintain the national identity of an expanding imperial nation. Ruiz de Burton quickly made up for her exclusion from public politics by publishing her own counter-narrative novel *Who Would Have Thought It?* There is no denying that the sexual taboos that threatened the North American matriarchal order of the domestic home are explicitly at work within *Who Would Have Thought It?*

From the outset, Lola’s introduction to the Norval household fills Mrs. Norval with anxieties due to the ambiguous nature of Lola’s racialized body. Throughout the novel, Lola is referred to as a Negro, Indian, and foreign Mexican. Mrs. Norval’s apprehension toward Lola’s *mestiza* body reflects popular nineteenth-century views of Mexicans being conceived as a mongrel race of half-civilized Indians, free Negroes, and mulattoes. It is no wonder that Lola’s presence in the Norval household would threaten Mrs. Norval:
The matron was, of course, perfectly terrified. Oh, that Lola! She was always the reptile in the innocent paradise of Mrs. Norval! What was to be done? (Who Would 218)

Ruiz de Burton's open-ended question at the end of the passage is a narrative tactic directed toward the reader. Is Lola the allegorical serpent in the North American Garden of Eden that threatens to defile the "innocent paradise" of Mrs. Norval's domestic space? Or does Lola represent a new feminine identity that is being unfairly prosecuted by the domestic rhetoric of sentimental authors? Since Ruiz de Burton was an immediate member of an elite military class, she could not openly defy the intolerance of sentimental authors. Instead, Ruiz de Burton turned to her narrative wit to both emulate and tone down the confrontational themes of sensational authors. As such, her narrative use of satire, cynicism, and parody must be viewed as countering the "mobile and mobilizing outpost that transformed conquered foreign lands into the domestic sphere of the family and nation" (Kaplan 25).

These narrative tactics allowed Ruiz de Burton to directly confront the discourse of sentimentalism without having to domesticate her racial, cultural, and gendered interiority.

Even though Ruiz de Burton had attained a niche within U.S. military circles of power, her social status did not change discriminatory views that continued to perceive her as an alien female subject in the United States. The
imperial eye of domesticity and its relationship to the foreign “involves more than seeing the external settings anew; it means turning inward to the privileged space of the domestic novel—the interiority of the female subject—to find traces of foreignness that must be domesticated or expunged” (Kaplan 43). She clearly understood her foreign interiority would never be accepted in the American domestic realm. As she expressed to historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, “You can afford it [...] being an American you can say many things that the American people would perhaps not accept from a foreigner.” Foreignness, then, becomes the embodied representation native Californios attain under North American rule. For this reason, Ruiz de Burton’s narrative assault on the sentimental novel is an effort on her part to try and redeem the marginal status of Californios in the United States. By turning inward to the privileged space of the sentimental novel—rather than her own interiority—she is able to subvert the very structures that deem her race, culture, and gender a threat to the U.S. domestic order.

Ruiz de Burton’s criticism of the sentimental novel responds to the particular burden of Mexican women who had to negotiate more than one gender system within North American culture. As Lisbeth Haas explains, “they were vulnerable as women in U.S. society, where women were not
accorded equal status in law or custom, and they were vulnerable to the anti-Mexican prejudices of Anglo-American migrants” (86). By way of her novel, Ruiz de Burton navigated both gender systems to deconstruct and construct new narrative forms to “reinterpret history and, [by] using new symbols, she shapes new myths” (Anzaldúa 82) to reconstruct moveable domestic (b)orders where she is able to cross and expand rigid boundaries. The narrative plots that carry Lola and Mercedes from southwestern territories to the east coast are tied to Ruiz de Burton’s own experience of crossing and expanding geographical borders in the North America continent. Consequently, Ruiz de Burton’s choice to focus her hostilities towards sentimentalism in Who Would Had Thought It? is a seditious act that undermines the privileged gender system central to the cult of domesticity.

The interesting aspect of this narrative strategy is Ruiz de Burton’s choice to attack the domestic sphere that privileged the pious image of the white female figure. Such an assault on the North American matriarch tends to suggest that all was not properly ordered in the domestic home. Here, Ruiz de Burton turns to her narrative humor to portray Mrs. Norval as “a strict hater of popery, a pious, proper churchwoman” to only later deconstruct this domestic housewife by comparing her adulteress affair with
Major Hackwell to "just [...] one of those creatures—whom she so abhorred—who go to parties in low neck and short sleeves, and go to theatres, and, in their wild chase after worldly pressures, do court such thrills" (Who Would 173). Ruiz de Burton’s satire intentionally disrupts the myth of the ordered Protestant home in sentimental literature. In so doing, an alternative narrative plot in Who Would Have Thought It? situates Lola as the modest heroine in constant danger by the deceitful and promiscuous figures of Mrs. Norval and Major Hackwell. By restructuring the order of protagonist and antagonists, Ruiz de Burton is able to expose the duplicity that existed in nineteenth-century sentimental discourse. Her rebelliousness toward sentimentalism through a cynical perspective and satirical depiction of the Protestant home resembles the same spirited defiance of sensational authors.

The nature of subversive literature conveniently aids Ruiz de Burton’s agenda to counter the colonizing discourse of sentimentalism. The similarities between Ruiz de Burton’s cynical and satirical portrayal of the North American domestic home with the objectives of subversive literature is extraordinary. As David Reynolds points out, the tyrants that became emblematic villains in subversive literature were statesmen, capitalists, lawyers, clergymen, and the idle rich of American society (200), which are
actually the same villains that antagonize the protagonists in both Ruiz de Burton’s novels. Major Hackwell and Hammerhard stand in as the corrupt government official and clergyman in *Who Would Have Thought It?*, while the railroad monopoly in *The Squatter and the Don* represent the corrupt businessmen and statesmen. The similarities between Ruiz de Burton’s tyrants and those of subversive authors are a little too precise to be coincidental. The use of the subversive style to counter the domestic novel is but the first thematic element Ruiz de Burton applied to *Who Would Have Thought It?*

Ruiz de Burton’s thematic plots for *Who Would Have Thought It?* follow the same narrative formulas of Laura Jane Libbey, one of the most successful serial authors of sensational women’s literature in the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike the sentimental novel that always represented working class women as social victims in order to confine them to their lower class status, Libbey’s character description of working class heroines were converted into keen protagonists who refused to be fall prey to the economic exploitation of the ruling elite (Denning 195). The resemblance between Ruiz de Burton’s novel *Who Would Have Thought It?* and, say, Libbey’s *Leonie Locke; or, The Romance of a Beautiful New York Working Girl* pivot around shared thematic plots in their literary work. For example,
two thematic features of Libbey's narrative formulas are clearly present in *Who Would Have Thought It?* The first similarity centers the problem of cross-class marriages (poor heroine and rich hero) as the driving drama within Libbey's *Leonie Locke*. In Ruiz de Burton's hybridized version, the possibility of racial miscegenation heightens the problem of matrimony beyond class issues in order to transcend racial divides in nineteenth-century North American culture. As Shelley Streeby states, views that opposed the annexation of Mexican territory to the United States hinged around racial and sexual connotations that mobilized fears of racial amalgamation taking place within the Union (114). The second feature situates a forced or false marriage as the matrimonial barrier between the heroine (Leonie) and the hero (Gordon), as depicted in *Leonie Locke*. Again, Ruiz de Burton engineers a villain in the form of Major Hackwell to trick Lola into a forced marriage to create a sensational affect that melodramatically prohibits the union of Lola (heroine) and Julian (hero). Of course, there are several other formulaic themes that further sensationalize the cross-class marriage and forced marriage narrative plot.

As Michael Denning explains in *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in America*, most of Libbey's thematic plots depict the heroine as an orphan through a sensationalized misfortune that separates
the heroine from her parents for a long period of time, or, simply, orphaned
due to her parents' death. The heroine's tragic circumstance, then, attracts
the unwanted advances of the villain that threatens the chastity and moral
judgment of the heroine. Sound familiar? Not only is Lola's mother's
abduction by the Apache Indians a great sensational beginning for *Who
Would Have Thought It,*? but it is also the dramatic event that leaves Lola an
orphan after her mother's death under the captivity of the Mohave Indians.
With the death of her mother, absence of her father, and Dr. Norval's leave
to Africa, Lola finds herself in a vulnerable position to the sexual advances
of Major Hackwell. Unlike the moralistic fall or redemptive melodrama of
working class woman in sentimental literature, Lola's misfortune never
impairs her moral judgment, and, more importantly, her steadfast
commitment to moral values allows her to preserve her chastity and
innocence throughout her plight.

Libbey's thematic formulas provide an excellent narrative model to
portray the Spanish heroine as a pious figure whose chaste and moral
character is attributed to Lolita's inheritance of "pure Spanish blood," since
her mother is "of pure Spanish decent and her father the same, though an
Austrian by birth, he having been born in Vienna" (*Who Would* 26). Clearly,
Ruiz de Burton's obsession with "pure Spanish blood" in both *Who Would*
Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don is an attempt to address racial reservations of cross-class/cross-racial marriages between Mexicans and Anglo Americans. Although Denning's analysis of the dime novel and Libbey's thematic formulas is a useful study to understand why this literary genre would have been attractive for the construction of Ruiz de Burton's novels, Denning's complete omission of factoring in race within his study leaves a huge void in the analysis of race in a literary genre that flourished during North America's expansion westward.

Where Michael Denning left the race question unanswered, Shelley Streeby provides a comprehensive response to the racial positioning of Mexicans within sensational literature. Of particular interest, for this study, is Streeby's analysis on the international race romance. Her study of the international race romance centers the possibility of racial miscegenation between the Mexican heroine and the heroic Anglo American soldier. During the Mexican American War, international race romance narratives produced between 1846-1848 "register and attempt to manage such concerns about racial amalgamation" (Streeby 115). The managerial tactics of cross-racial courtships in the international race romance metaphorically unites national bodies (U.S./Mexico) through representations of Anglo American male soldiers and Mexican females in order to justify the invasion of
Mexico. In this manner, military force is replaced with consensual romances. Although the international race romance attempted to compensate imperial violence for romanticized narratives of national matrimony, a major requisite for cross-national matrimony necessitated, first and foremost, white heroines from Mexico. Coincidentally, Mexican women who were fair complexioned were available and highly sought after for marriage in colonial Mexico. These fair-skinned maidens were known as *castizas* and were usually the daughters of Spaniards (Liss 1975; Weber 1992; Menchaca 2001). In line with Mexico’s colonial attraction to *castizas*, the international race romance necessitated white Spanish heroines as the only national body worthy in Mexico to receive the imperial love of an Anglo American soldier.

It would seem, then, that sensational authors were pondering with the possibility of cross-racial unions with Mexico so far as the Mexican inheritance of the heroine was Spanish white. This would suggest, as Streeby states, that the Spanish element of Mexico helped Mexicans move closer into the “magic circle of whiteness” and possibly marry the heroic U.S. soldier. To Ruiz de Burton’s pleasure, one can argue that sensational authors were at least considering the assimilation of white Mexicans into the Union. Perhaps the attraction of Spanish lineage in the international race romance is the contributing factor that influenced the love interest between Lola
(Spanish heroine) and lieutenant Julian Norval in *Who Would Have Thought It*? The inclusion of the Spanish heroine, however, came with consequences that usually resulted in the exclusion of others. As Streeby explains, “[a]s a potentially assimilable foreign body, she was frequently contrasted with other types of Mexicans who were viewed as decidedly non-white and inassimilable” (103). Thus, the assimilable and inassimilable Mexican subject is distinguishable by racial hierarchies that privileged white mobility within the U.S. national imaginary.

Coincidentally, Ruiz de Burton’s novels, like international race romances, are full of racial slurs that separate “Spano Americans” from the “stupid Indians” (*Squatter* 240) in an effort to privilege old world colonial ideas of whiteness found within Mexico’s *gente de razon*.* The struggle to reconcile cross-racial relations within the international race romance as well as Ruiz de Burton’s novels consolidate racial differences by reconstructing “hierarchies of gender, race, and sexuality to legitimate their respective visions of postwar inter-American power relations” (Streeby 116).

If Ruiz de Burton’s narrative effort is to depict *Spano* Americans as worthy citizens of the United States, it is at the cost of degrading and justifying the subjugation of the inassimilable class of Mexican *mestizaje*. We must remember, however, that the great exodus of southeastern
European immigrants to the U.S. formed a new class of foreign whiteness that quickly learned the social processes of claiming white rights, and, more importantly, how access to white humanity “could require participation in inhumanity” (Roediger 34). As such, the messiness of racial whiteness in the mid-nineteenth century created an aperture where Ruiz de Burton could create a narrative case for Spano Americans to utilize their status as white Mexicans to possibly gain access to higher circles of power in North America. The possibility of achieving privileged whiteness, or, as Streeby calls it, the magic circle of whiteness relied on a specific attribute of mestizaje: whiteness. The usefulness of thinking about whiteness as an element of mestizaje during the mid-nineteenth century lies in that whiteness adds a completely new dimension to the discursive use of mestizaje. Unlike typical interpretations in Chicano/a Studies that normally interpret mestizaje as a cultural discourse that gives voice to the underrepresented and racially excluded Other, white U.S. mestizaje represents a moment in the historical landscape of the United States were ethnically distinct populations began to share a common experience under whiteness that disrupted fixed understandings of Anglo Saxonism.

By taking into account how southeastern Europeans immigrants created a cultural space in the United States where whiteness could respond
to and participate within different cultural movements can only expand our understanding of *mestizaje* and the manner it progressed in North America. This approach allows *mestizaje* to be measured alongside its own historical framework, which considers the social constructs that defined whiteness and *mestizaje*. Ruiz de Burton’s own hybrid identity as a *castiza* in the mid-nineteenth-century was timely since whiteness had established itself as a contested racial category in the U.S. sociopolitical arena. As such, the in-between status of southeastern European immigrants in the United States established a context of whiteness that both included and excluded foreign whiteness from the national imaginary. White U.S. *mestizaje* provided Ruiz de Burton with an outlet that afforded her—as well as native *Californios*—the prospect of change over time to be recognized as fit citizens of the United States. Put plainly, Ruiz de Burton’s familiarity with Mexico’s colonial hierarchy of *mestizaje* allowed her to recognize and take advantage of nineteenth-century social processes of racial categorization in the United States to try and redeem her own *mestizaje*: white Spanish lineage. My argument for a critical approach that examines the racial ambiguity of nineteenth-century U.S. whiteness is not meant to overshadow the discriminatory obstacles that questioned the land rights of most *Californios* and racial marginalization of Mexican *mestizos*, Christianized Indians, and
Afro-Mestizos under North American rule. However, to only view Ruiz de Burton’s use of whiteness in binary paradigms that unify whiteness against racial minorities constructs a false image of a unitary white racial class in nineteenth-century North American culture. Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don are narrative playgrounds that not only illustrate the racial tensions of an expanding North American empire, but also texts that capture the gender, racial, class, and political implications within U.S. whiteness. Ruiz de Burton’s literary productions vividly harness the complex negotiations Mexican Americans had to contend with as part of an evolving community of white U.S. mestizos.

Ruiz de Burton’s positioning as a disjointed author who had to continually negotiate her Mexican identity and politics with her privileged positioning to inner circles of power provides a sobering insight to the nature of American domestic affairs. By appropriating sensational literary forms, Ruiz de Burton fashions a sensational domestic novel that reveals the bigotry, greed, and corruption sentimental authors chose to overlook. Consequently, her novels respond to Ross Herbert Brown’s assertion that sentimental authors of the nineteenth century inadequately confronted the “conquest of a continent” by ignoring the “realities of this raucous period in which were being fashioned the sinews of a new nation” that was
increasingly being informed by notions of Manifest Destiny (367-8).

However, the paradox of Ruiz de Burton's narrative project rests with her appropriation of a sensational narrative form that is heavily influenced by ideologies centered on white centrism, racial stereotypes, and Western expansionism. Despite these discriminatory discourses, I feel Ruiz de Burton's interest with the *artifice* of sensation lies in its effectiveness to possibly stimulate a mass audience of white marginalized readers. As is noted by the correspondent of the *Daily Alta California* in his review of *Who Would Have Thought It?*:

> It is no mere idle story, but is a satire directed against certain exhibitions of hypocrisy, shoddy, codfish aristocracy and demagoguism. It is remarkable for its French frankness and detail of narrative and its total disregard for the common denouement of novels—characteristics that are developed with *sensational* effect.\(^1\)[my emphasis]

Her ability to produce a "sensational effect" that deviates away from traditional novels demonstrates Ruiz de Burton successful use of the subversive style in *Who Would Have Thought It?* Though the novel succeeds in uncovering the duplicity of sentimentalism and the possibilities of white U.S. *mestizaje* in mid-nineteenth-century American culture, I believe Ruiz de Burton's primary narrative goal is to create a community of white U.S. mestizos that will "emancipate the white slaves of California" (*Squatter 344*).
White U.S. Mestizo Communities in *The Squatter and the Don*

Ruiz de Burton’s agenda to somehow incorporate *Californios* into the North American political and economical stage lies in the pervasiveness of sensational literature to create a national identity. Thus, the artifice of suspense, as Ruiz de Burton pointed out, is a technical effect of the larger national project of sensational authors. Following Benedict Anderson’s formulation, the presence and circulation of sensational literature in newspaper dailies, the penny press, and various novelette forms is representative of a modern media that allowed southeastern European immigrants to imagine themselves as a complex interactive community through print-capital, which “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways” (36). As an imagined literary community, sensational literature aligns itself perfectly with the fact that between 1842 and 1855 the book trade advanced at a rate ten times faster than that of the American population growth. Furthermore, it is estimated that from this period and this massive body of literature cheap sensational literature was the largest genre within the literary collection.\(^{12}\) Accordingly, this genre stands in as a cultural product of an imagined community that was being constructed and dispersed at the height of literary production in nineteenth-
century America. Placing Ruiz de Burton as a participant of this literary movement establishes her as an author who not only understood the rhetoric of nation building in American popular culture, but also intended to try and utilize the momentum of this imagined cultural body to the advantage of Mexican Americans.

Ruiz de Burton’s ability to not only recognize the beneficiary aspects of American popular culture, but to also deconstruct the underlying rhetoric of this popular movement is reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldúa’s psychic sense of *la facultad*. Anzaldúa’s assertion that this psychic awareness is an intrinsic quality to borderlanders who utilize this psyche to travel, crossover, and navigate the borderlands is interesting when thinking of Ruiz de Burton’s own cultural journey in mid-nineteenth-century North America. As Anzaldúa states, “*la facultad* is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. […] The one possessing this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world” (38). Ruiz de Burton’s ability to unapologetically brake racial and gender lines by crossing over hegemonic confines is where Ruiz de Burton learns to develop “a tolerance for contradictions, [and] a tolerance for ambiguity” (Anzaldúa 79). In crossing into terrains that are contradictory to her status as a *Californiana*, Ruiz de Burton can take advantage of North American literary
forms to manipulate, rewrite, and textually disperse new readings that include Spano Americans as part of a literary movement of social protest.

As José Aranda points out, the central narrative plot of *The Squatter and the Don* "is not about the illegal dispossession of lands held by Californios but about corporate monopoly and political corruption, [...] for Ruiz de Burton, what is often wrong with the U.S. is not its ideals but those who fail to practice them" (Contradictory 559, 574). For this reason, she seems to be intent on constructing a narrative community in *The Squatter and the Don* that stand together against an elite circle of men that corrupt the economic prosperity of San Diego. Obviously, Ruiz de Burton's objective to assemble a narrative community of white U.S. mestizos within the *Squatter and the Don* is intended to reduce racist perceptions of native Californians. The inclusion of Californios as part of the white citizenry of San Diego is not surprising since Californios such as Ruiz de Burton were considered white Mexicans under North American rule. As Martha Menchaca has pointed out, Mexicans have been spared the full impact of racism because their cultural heritage consists of a European lineage from Spain (37). With a cultural heritage made up of indigenous, black, and European roots, Mexicans found themselves in ambiguous circumstances when privileges usually accorded to Anglo Americans became attainable to white Mexicans
such as *Californios*. Although native Californians found themselves in such circumstances, Ruiz de Burton realized lobbying for the inclusion of Mexican Americans into the white citizenry of the United States could not be achieved by only speaking for and to the Californio. To create any sort of social change a larger audience needed to be reached, which is exactly what subversive literature is about: a literature of protest that speaks for the marginalized class. In order to effectively persuade a wider audience, she turned to the second element of subversive literature: an irrational style that featured intentional disruptions of linear patterns and conventional literary rules of sentimental literature.

In accordance with this style, Ruiz de Burton creates an intrusive narrative voice in *The Squatter and the Don* to communicate with the reader. Although the stylistic irrationalness that characterizes subversive narrative form is not exercised openly throughout the novel, it is developed enough within the text to be detected by Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita, leading scholars and editors of both novels, who state that “the narrators voice in *The Squatter and the Don*, in some sense the most developed, […] clearly it responds to particular interpellations of ethnicity, class, and gender” (*Squatter* 47). Sanchez’s and Pita’s description of the developed narrative voice clarifies the narrator’s noncompliance of being the objective
storyteller. As another interactive character within the narrative, explains Sanchez and Pita, the omniscient abilities of the narrator can intervene “throughout the novel to interject strong moralizing editorial comments,” which begins to take on a partisan voice that “assumes a more global perspective, the voice of all Californians, “we of California” (ibid.). Ruiz de Burton’s tactical shifts throughout the novel form what M. M. Bakhtin terms as an internally persuasive discourse. The internal persuasiveness of the narrator has a stronger presence and is better developed in The Squatter and the Don than in Who Would Have Thought It? This strategic approach usually occurs during the introduction of a new narrative chapter. Chapter thirty-four’s introduction illustrates my point:

Mr. Stanford says that if he did not cause misery someone else would, for “misery there must always be in this world!” Sound philosophy, truly! Why should he recoil from adding to the sum total of human misery when so many others do the same! Mr. Huntington was about the same time writing from Washington that he would “see the grass grow over Tom Scott” before he stopped his work of convincing Congressmen. And he kept his word. He carried conviction to Washington, distress to the South and ruin to San Diego. Mr. Crocker was answering, “Anything to beat Tom Scott!” The thing was to prevent the construction of San Diego’s railroad, no matter to whom ruin came thereby. “No matter how many were sacrificed.” Nothing was more helpless, therefore, than to suppose that any of those men would swerve one iota from their course of greedy acquisition, out of respect for equity or humanity. Not a word was spoken until the three saddened friends reached Don Mariano’s parlors at the hotel (Squatter 297).
The internal persuasiveness in this passage lies on the presupposition of another voice, since “not a word was spoken” by the three friends on their way to the hotel. In the passage, not only can the narrative voice point to the moral deficiency of these businessmen, but can also quote the corrupt words of Mr. Stanford, Mr. Huntington, and Mr. Crockett to put forth a more convincing argument. The astonishing aspect of this intrusive narrative voice lies in its ability to speak through various narrative subjects simultaneously.

In Bakhtinian theory, the speech produced by this intrusive narrative voice has the ability to represent the absent voices that could not narrate this historical event. Ruiz de Burton’s manipulation of the narrative voice is a tactic that tells untold and different stories through the novel—what Bakhtin calls “heteroglossia.” The complex interrelated elements that form the *Californio* experience are potentially accessible through the social heteroglossia of the narrative. Bakhtin explains this possibility by stating that the, “authorial speech, the speech of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships” (263). Not surprisingly in this content, the intrusive
voice of Ruiz de Burton anticipates a very similar experimental technique in subversive literature that soon became labeled as “stream of consciousness.”

Subversive authors typically applied this method as a stylistic tool with the intention to disrupt the coherent narrative patterns of middlebrow literature. Narrative disjunctures played themselves out through rapid leaps between gory scenes, erotic escapades, shifting images running through the minds of dreamers or madmen, or an irregular direct address to the reader. Although Ruiz de Burton is not as hostile towards the reader, her intervening narrative voice is anything but composed in its tone, “Sound philosophy, truly! Why should he recoil from adding to the sum total of human misery when so many others do the same!” (Squatter 297). As the narrative gets closer to the novel’s end, the narrative voice becomes more cynical in tone and more textually intrusive, thus producing a certain air of anxiety and urgency in the narrative. Although these feelings of anxiety do not disrupt the consistent narrative pattern of the novel, the disjunction lies in the narrator’s ability to speak through different characters to build a narrative coalition that share identical grievances.

 Ruiz de Burton’s strategy to construct a diverse narrative community is a testament to the aspiration of the novel to appeal to a wider audience, specifically the marginalized white reader. In the introduction of Chapter
Ten, for example, Ruiz de Burton utilizes the politicized rhetoric of Addison and Carlyle to condemn the legislative corruption in California. The difference, however, is that she places this rhetoric within George Mechlin’s thoughts. The introduction states:

But how many of the influential of the earth think thus? If only the law-givers could be made to reflect more seriously, more conscientiously, upon the effect that their legislation must have on the lives, the destinies, of their fellow-beings forever, there would be much less misery and heart-rendering wretchedness in this vale of tears. Now, the lawgiver is a politician, who generally thinks more of his own political standing with other politicians than of the interests entrusted to his care. To speak of constituents sounds well, but who are the constituents? The men who govern them, who control votes, those who guide the majorities to the polls; the politicians, who make and unmake each other, they are the power – the rest of the people dream that they are – that’s all. And if these lawgivers see fit to sell themselves for money, what then? Who has the power to undo what is done? Not their constituents, surely. But the constituencies will be the sufferers, and feel all the effect of pernicious legislation. These were George Mechlin’s thoughts as he sat, with his uncle, in the gallery of the House of Representatives, listening to a debate, a few days after their arrival to Washington (Squatter 190-1).

This portion of the introduction resonates with the cynical outburst in Chapter Thirty-four’s introduction, which I quoted previously. The significant difference lies in Ruiz de Burton placement of the utterance within Mr. Mechlin’s thought—a well-to-do white American banker of San Diego—rather than having the speech come in intrusively by the narrator. As a result, Ruiz de Burton’s political views links itself to Mr. Mechlin’s thought through a shared history of oppression the speech represents, the
distinctive links and interrelationships of the utterance that defines heteroglossia. The use of heteroglossia is an ingenious strategy that creates a narrative stage for Ruiz de Burton to passionately plea for social change in California by interlocking the political disorder that subjugates both Californios and the white populace of San Diego. Ultimately, the strategic goal of this shared history of coercion is meant to situate a common political cause for the subaltern white residents of California.

Of course, this commonality is constructed through a shared history of oppression that is meant to assemble a mutual enemy for the white U.S. mestizo community of San Diego. In so doing, Ruiz de Burton can shift antagonistic perceptions away from native Californios to redirect them towards the corrupt monopoly of the Central Pacific Railroad Company and the bought public officials in Washington. Although Ruiz de Burton effectively plays with the narrative voice to inform the reader of the corruption of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, she knows it might not be enough. To reinforce the confessed corruption of Mr. Stanford, Mr. Huntington, and Mr. Crockett, Ruiz de Burton provides a well-researched governmental document that clearly proves the fraudulent transactions of the Central Pacific Railroad Company.¹³ The blatant evidence of bribery that infects the sacred halls of Washington is precisely what sensational authors
seek to uncover and address through their subversive literature. Thus, Ruiz de Burton’s agenda is surprisingly similar to sensational novelists, especially those who employ subversive literary tactics. And akin to subversive politics, Ruiz de Burton’s final objective would be to start a popular movement against the railroad monopoly that, in effect, might create a new national identity inclusive of native Californios. And indeed, Ruiz de Burton suggests this possibility at the conclusion of the novel:

It seems now that unless the people of California take the law into their own hands, and seize the property of those men, and confiscate it, to reimburse the money due the people, the arrogant corporation will never pay (Squatter 338; original emphasis).

Ruiz de Burton’s popular movement, again, is comparable to the activism of radical sensational authors. Her use of phrases that emphasize “the people” conjures up a popular movement that echoes a nationalist identity to reinforce the authority of the marginalized class to demand economic equality and to relentlessly strive for justice. Such a movement would incorporate Californios as part of the urban political class of radical democrats that were changing the face of politics in nineteenth-century America. As Michael Rogin suggests, “the dispossessed in the cities were the bearers of a national culture” (47).
Rogin's assertion of a national culture constructed of dispossessed citizens would explain the preoccupation of subversive authors and Ruiz de Burton with marginalized subjects in U.S. society. David Reynolds recognized the use of the marginal subject in popular culture and explains that "antebellum America as a whole was a justified pariah" (181). Thus, the rebellious tactical approach of subversive authors toward the middle-brow novel and its audience is a deliberate assault on the status-quo by these novelists whose priority is to take the side of the oppressed lower-class: an imagined community of pariahs. Because Ruiz de Burton recognized the pervasive affect that an imagined literary community had over its readers, the heteroglossic community constructed in *The Squatter and the Don* becomes a narrative scheme to incorporate *Californios* into the imagined community of the American pariah. By constructing an alliance of diversely distinct subaltern figures made up of squatters (the Darrel family, Gasbang, Miller, Hughes, Hager and Mathews), American businessmen (Mr. Holman and Mr. Mechlin), and *Californios* (Alamar family), Ruiz de Burton reveals how each of these social groups is affected by the greed of the railroad monopoly. This oppressed collective tied together by the intrusive narrative voice along with the subversive thematic plots that depict *Californios* and Anglos alike as a subjugated class is meant to appeal to a wider audience of
white American readers, and, more importantly, initiate a possible social movement against a new common enemy in the form of corrupt officials.

Comparative Conclusions

There is much to see in the United States and much to think about, particularly if one wishes to make comparisons. In reality, to really appreciate one thing it is necessary to view another critically. The best thing for me to do is write a book.¹⁴ (Letter to M.G. Vallejo 1860, Ruiz de Burton)

As literary texts, Who Would Have Thought It? and The Squatter and the Don explicitly capture and critique the sociopolitical climate of the U.S. in the mid-nineteenth-century. More importantly is the form in which Ruiz de Burton can effectively appropriate popular forms of American literary culture to her advantage. The thematic resemblances of Ruiz de Burton’s literary work to those of sensational authors to deconstruct and reveal the duplicity of the ruling class is too coincidental, especially “if one wishes to make comparisons” between elite and popular culture. Clearly, Ruiz de Burton’s ability to recognize and create narrative texts from the divergent and highly contradictory fabric of North American culture places her well ahead of her time as a Mexican female author in nineteenth-century America. The historical shifts of power in the nineteenth century provided Ruiz de Burton with a living model of a changing national community that could be replicated in narrative form to not only manipulate the inhabitants
of this communal imaginary, but also the way in which this community interacted and thought of itself. The complexity of this narrative project could only be imagined by Ruiz de Burton’s own personal experience in the United States that began “her conflicted and even paradoxical existence, caught between a subordinated culture and a new social order” (Pita and Sánchez, Conflicts 58). From her conflicting life circumstances and critical perspective as an interstitial subject, Ruiz de Burton was able to formulate a narrative discourse where Spano Americans are able to imagine themselves as part of a constantly changing society. Thus, literature and the appropriation of American popular culture allow Ruiz de Burton to unapologetically navigate in and out of gender, racial, and national paradigms. This tactical approach places this castiza as one of the first Mexican American authors to shape the cultural, political, and social atmosphere of nineteenth-century America to her literary convenience.

Finally, my interpretation of Ruiz de Burton’s literary work is an interesting approach to consider when thinking about how and to what ends this Californian author was trying to take advantage of the racial instability of whiteness in the mid-nineteenth-century. By recognizing the racial, regional, and class tensions that was splintering the national identity of the U.S., Ruiz de Burton was able to mimic popular literary movements such as
sensational literature to participate and profit from the construction of a new white U.S. *mestizo* community. Her ability to effectively utilize her interstitial positioning as both a foreign and privileged U.S. subject speaks volumes of the tenacity and energy of this *Californiana*. By reading Ruiz de Burton as a white U.S. *mestiza*, scholars will not only tolerate her systematic impulses to be swayed by “the same hegemonic forces she so often railed [against]” (*Conflicts* xvii), but also begin to consider the numerous racial and literary currents in mid-nineteenth-century North American culture that potentially influenced the construction of *Who Would Have Thought It?* and *The Squatter and the Don*. 
Notes

1 The recent work of literary scholars such as Amy Kaplan’s *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of the U.S.* (2002), Laura Wexler’s *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of Imperialism* (2000), and Michelle Burnham’s *Captivity and Sentimentalism: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (1997) has shown how the domestic discourse of sentimentalism constructs a unified national imaginary while simultaneously reducing nineteenth-century U.S. colonial tensions in order to conceal the continual oppression of racial identities in the North American Anglo Saxon republic.


For a brief summary of how *limpieza de sangre* and *gracias al sacar* work within the Spanish caste system see Martha Menchaca’s *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (2001) and Lisbeth Haas’s *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936* (1995).
5 Political figures like southerner John C. Calhoun and John O’Sullivan publicly expressed concerns over the introduction of a racially mixed Catholic population into the Union after the annexation of Mexican territories.

6 Ruiz de Burton letter, July 15, 1878 in Eds. Sanchez and Pita’s *Conflicts of Interest*, p. 477. [My emphasis.]

7 For a great analysis and further examples of how the international race romance substitutes the military conquest of Mexico for romanticized versions of consensual relations between the U.S. and Mexico see Shelley Streeby’s text *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*, specifically section two of her text.


9 Scholarship on *mestizaje* usually recognizes the racial categorization of *mestizos* that separates the white citizen from “the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal’”(Anzaldúa 3). Soon, however, *mestizaje* ceased to be a
historical marker of racial inferiority that had stigmatized the indigenous population to such an extent as to exclude them from the confines of a standard national identity. Contemporary interpretations of mestizaje in Chicano/a Studies have now attached a perpetual discursive alterity to the hybrid subject as its cultural means of liberation. As a transgressing cultural signifier, mestizaje can now shift in and out of racial identities, cultural practices, and political alliances to resist and subvert any hegemonic structure restricting mestizaje to a prescribed identity.

10 Rafael Pérez-Torres makes a similar claim by describing the mestizos’ bodies as being “bound in and bounded by the social and historical conditions in which they act” (173).

11 From San Francisco Daily Alta California, September 15, 1872. Review part of the archival research in Sanchez and Pita’s Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton.

12 New York Times, September 18, 1855. Article states that at a banquet held by the New York Publisher’s Association, it was estimated that between 1842 and 1855, a period when America’s population increased by 80 percent, the number of American-authored novels increased by 800 percent, so that literature and the book trade grew at a rate ten times faster than its population.

Original letter: “*Mucho hay que ver en Estados Unidos y mucho que hacer pensar, particularmente si uno empieza a hacer comparaciones. Realmente para apreciar bien una cosa es necesario mirar bien otra. Creo que lo mejor que yo puedo hacer es escribir un libro.*”

The historical shifts of power resulting from the War of 1812, along with the birth of the Second National Party, Mexican-American War, and American Civil War produced societal changes that profoundly altered the way American citizens viewed themselves. Thus providing cultural fissures for Ruiz de Burton to textually incorporate *Californios* into the cultural imaginary.
Chapter Four

Archival Conflicts: The New Negro Movement, Nationalism, and the Caribbean Other

In the recently released film *Domino*, comedian and actress Mo'Nique plays the role of Lateesha Rodriguez, a mixed race woman struggling to locate her Afro Caribbean identity within U.S. categorizations of race. In an effort to affirm her heritage, Lateesha participates as a panelist on the *Jerry Springer Show* to discuss American inter-racial identities. On the show, and to the audience's surprise, Lateesha identifies herself as a “BlackTino” woman who “speaks for all mixed race people in America” and believes inter-racial people in the United States need their own racial category to forge and affirm their dual racial identities.¹ Unconvinced by Lateesha's self-identification, the audience tells her “you do not look Latino, you look black.” The audience finally dismisses Lateesha’s self-proclaimed identity since her black phenotype obviously represents African American blackness. By the end of the program, the inter-racial debate is resolved in typical fashion: a Jerry Springer stage fight.

So what does a *Jerry Springer* cameo appearance in a film such as *Domino* have to do with the Schomburg archive? I believe Lateesha's conflictive identity is a contemporary example of a longer history of black intra-contending identities in the United States. The archival research I
conducted of the *Arthur A. Schomburg Papers* resulted in the recovery of written correspondence as well as the retrieval of miscellaneous journal and newspaper clippings that convert Lateesha’s fictional scene into an ongoing racial debate. The public hostility Lateesha experienced, as a BlackTino, resembles the conflicting relationship between West Indians and African Americans during the development of the New Negro Movement. The recovery of these archival pieces demonstrate the existence of competing ethnic identities of blackness in the United States that disrupts the assumption of a singular African American national identity during the New Negro Movement. My study of the *Arthur A. Schomburg Papers* not only reveals the diverse ethnic backdrop of Harlem, but also sheds light on the cultural complexities, the political tensions, and competing identities that are a part of the intellectual history of the New Negro Movement.

Although my examination of these archival pieces attempts to historicize the causes of West Indian and African American antagonisms, I confront these ethnic tensions as a new line of questions that complement recent work in gender, sexuality, class, and nationalist studies of the New Negro Movement.\(^2\) As such, my approach toward West Indian and African American ethnic relations is not confined to conflict alone, but an interdisciplinary study that utilizes the archive to inscribe the West Indian,
but specifically the BlackTino presence in African American Studies. This chapter, then, complicates our current understanding of the New Negro Movement to illustrate how a multi-ethnic black population in Harlem impacts and changes our understanding of black studies in the United States. My reading of these archival materials places Schomburg at the center of Harlem’s intellectual movement, providing him with the opportunity to collect primary documents that reflect the multi-ethnic sensibility of the New Negro Movement.

I.

The rise of the New Negro Movement produced a wide array of artistic and intellectual expressions that pieced together a cultural representation of the black community known as the Harlem Renaissance. The history, literature, music, art, and intellectual thought circulating during the Harlem Renaissance not only celebrated black heritage, but also became the collective cultural body articulating the progressive social strides of African Americans in the United States. In order to redeem a history of racial oppression, intellectual leaders of the black community foresaw the need to re-appropriate blackness itself. To affirm one’s African heritage became a political strategy that differentiated the New Negro from the passive “Sambo” caricature of plantation slaves. Booker T. Washington’s
text *A New Negro for a New Century* and magazines such as *The Crisis* (NAACP) and *Opportunity* (NUL) are cultural productions of the New Negro Movement that recognize the progress of African Americans, as well as their social contribution to the advancement of U.S. society. Ultimately, the political goal of the New Negro Movement sought to construct positive cultural representations of African Americans to change negative Anglo American perceptions of the black community. Their commitment to this political objective was so prominent during the New Negro Movement that Henry Louis Gates Jr. refers to it as "the trope" intended to thwart stereotypes of plantation slaves, blackface minstrelsy, vaudeville, and racist pseudoscience affecting the image of African Americans at the turn of the new century (Gates 137).

Nathan Huggins and David Levering Lewis have since stated that the goal to influence Anglo Americans through positive and empowering depictions of African Americans ultimately failed. With only a small, elite group of intellectual leaders taking charge of such a daunting task in the history of black oppression, states D.L. Lewis, became a "delusional" battle against U.S. racism (117). In 1987, Houston A. Baker’s publication of *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* immediately questioned the academic necessity to prove how and why the Harlem Renaissance failed as
a potentially libertarian movement. For Baker, the unprecedented
distribution and visibility of black culture in the early twentieth century
“signal[ed] a realization of change” for future generations to study the
“traditional expressive possibilities” of the New Negro Movement (72). The
production of African American art, literature, and intellectual thought
circulating in the United States—at a time when Jim Crow laws were still
segregating blacks—correspond to a “mastery of form and the deformation
of mastery” (Baker 15). According to Baker, the act of mastering form and
deforming mastery through a family of concepts, images, and figures that
challenged Anglo American racist presuppositions of the black community
became the discursive practice to tunnel “out of the black holes of
possession and tight places of old clothes, into, perhaps, a new universe” of
black intellectual history (56). Baker’s claim of a growing and publicly
visible discourse of black intellectual thought during the early twentieth-
century coheres well within the historical record that chronicles the
contestation of longstanding stereotypical caricatures of African Americans
in the United States.

However, recent studies of the New Negro Movement have begun to
re-evaluate the heterosexual and masculine orientation of the Harlem
Renaissance. Australia Tarver and Paula C. Barnes’s text, *New Voices on*
the Harlem Renaissance (2006), brings together an impressive collection of essays that reflect the need to revisit "criticism in theoretical areas such as identity politics, race, rhetorical studies, and multidisciplinary studies" in the Harlem Renaissance (21). Their restructuring of the Harlem Renaissance utilizes race as an overarching topic that intersects with gender, sexuality, class, and nationalist questions to present a holistic perspective of this extraordinary movement in African American history. Likewise, Anne Elizabeth Carroll's manuscript Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance (2005), reveals the prominent use of a uniform identity in the development of the New Negro during the Harlem Renaissance. Carroll's research on the political use of identity and image during the Harlem Renaissance demonstrates how singular identities exclude individuals and characteristics of the black community that did not reflect dominant and traditional interpretations of the New Negro (157). The publication of both these texts provides an analysis of gender, sexuality, class, and nationalist topics that broaden the field of study of the New Negro Movement.

In the spirit of expanding further venues of investigation, I would like to add ethnicity as another subject study within the New Negro Movement. I believe the inclusion of ethnicity automatically changes the racial, cultural,
and political terrain of the New Negro Movement. Now, my research is not meant to dispute the work of the aforementioned scholars. My study of the Schomburg Papers and my analysis of the following archival material illustrate the cultural complexities, the political tensions, and competing identities that are a part of the intellectual history of Harlem. The following section of this essay complicates our current understanding of this period by highlighting the role the West Indian as a Caribbean Other in the nationalist rhetoric often found in the New Negro Movement.

II.

Schomburg stepped on North American soil for the first time on April 17, 1891. As a social activist, he immediately became involved with Puerto Rican and Cuban independence movements—but as an intellectual, he dedicated his life to archive a Negro “[h]istory [that] must restore what slavery took away.” In 1911, Schomburg was one of the founders of the Negro Society for Historical Research and in 1922 became president of the American Negro Academy. His defining moment came in 1926 when the New York Public Library purchased Schomburg’s collection of books, pamphlets, prints, and manuscripts for $10,000 through a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Six years later, the Carnegie Corporation secured funding for Schomburg to curate his own collection at the 135th Street
Library. By this time, the library branch had not only become a popular gathering place for prominent and rising artists and intellectuals alike, but also established Schomburg as a renowned historian, scholar, and leader of the Harlem community. Schomburg’s relentless quest to uncover and record Negro history earned him the title of the “Sherlock Homes of Negro History.” However, the distinguished position Schomburg held in Harlem was not always a pleasant experience.

His knowledge of Negro history was well known and was regularly sought after by eminent intellectual figures such as James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, and Claude McKay. Unfortunately, colleagues who benefited from Schomburg’s research skills and knowledge did not always acknowledge his aid. In a letter to friend in 1934, Schomburg expresses his frustration:

First chance you have at a Library get hold of J.W. Johnson’s Black Manhattan, [t]hen turn to the Preface and see for yourself the passive way this “great American” thanks his fellow man. It is a scream! I mean he thanks the collection and mentions my name for having collected play-bills, no personal reference of a man’s thought. It is hell, how some men do things. But the good Lord has kept me this long for some purpose or other. 6

Whether his complaints are warranted or not is beyond the scope of this project for the moment. What I want to point out in reference to this letter is the close interaction between an African American such as James Weldon
Johnson and a Puerto Rican scholar like Arthur A. Schomburg. The intellectual cooperation between Johnson and Schomburg reveals a Renaissance equally influenced by the African American as well as the Afro Caribbean. Acknowledgement of the West Indian influence, however, is a different matter as noted previously. My intention with Schomburg’s letter is not meant to portray a conflicting relationship between both groups, but rather point out the value and esteem of Schomburg’s grasp of the African diaspora, not to mention the hostility exposed to writers taking part in the publication of texts pertaining to the Negro experience.

With the rise of the Harlem Renaissance, the publication of Negro history, poetry, short fiction, and the novel began to transition into the professional realm of intellectual ownership. The individual awareness to lay claim to one’s knowledge, particularly specialized knowledge, implies two things. One, the existence of a U.S. market actively publishing Negro texts. And two, the marketing value of these publications will inevitably try to dictate the representation of the New Negro and its literature. I am not saying publishing houses controlled and selected which literary materials to publish. To the contrary, publishing firms depended on insider information from reputable Harlem intellectuals to publish the work of prospective authors. As noted by Lewis, established community leaders such as Charles
S. Johnson, editor of the bimonthly journal *Opportunity*, not only sought to foster the advancement of African American arts, but also strived to "cement an alliance between the movers and the shakers of the white and black communities in New York and beyond" (Lewis 115). Unfortunately, the movers and shakers of Harlem had a great deal of influence over the exposure and marketing of upcoming artist. Writers were completely aware of the benefits of such an alliance, but also quite cognizant of the vulnerability to place one's career in the hands of an elite circle of Harlem intellectuals.

For instance, in a letter written in 1925, Jamaican author Claude McKay related to Schomburg the completion of his first novel, *Home to Harlem*. In the correspondence, McKay conveyed to Schomburg his wish to place the "book and the driving of a good pecuniary bargain" in his hands. This responsibility, however, came with strict guidelines. For one, McKay instructed Schomburg to "guard the secret of the title of the book" until the publisher released it. "It is necessary that no one should know that I have finished—specifically *certain* groups of so called liberals in New York," maintained McKay. His concern with "certain liberals" did not involve editors from specific publishing firms, but rather individuals within Harlem
itself—what D.L. Lewis previously referred to as the movers and shakers of New York. McKay goes on to state:

Not the least of the persons that should know anything of it is that Miss Pauline Rose. If you should say anything about it to her, I am sure that it will find its way back in a very galled form to the N.A.A.C.P and others.\(^8\)

McKay knew that bad reviews or negative publicity before the novel’s publication from journals such as *The Crisis* (NAACP) and *Opportunity* (NUL) would fend off potential publishers. As he commented to Schomburg, “If it is known that I have finished my precious supply of bread and butter it may be cut off entirely” (*ibid.*). According to McKay, *Home to Harlem* was not a typical Negro novel and was sure to “shrive some of our ultra-respectable, hypocritical Negroes, but I think I’m nearer the truth and tragedy and paint of Negro life than Miss Jessie Fauset” (*ibid.*). His criticism of Fauset, I am sure, was also a direct affront to the literary criterion endorsed by organizations such as *Opportunity*.

After all, Jessie Fauset’s publication of *There is Confusion* (1924) was publicly honored in New York’s Civic Club thanks to the support of Charles S. Johnson—who, consequently, became the new editor of *Opportunity* that same year. Furthermore, there is evidence that warrants McKay’s anxiety. In 1926, Waldo Frank reviewed Eric Walrond’s collection of short stories *Tropic Death* in the November issue of *Opportunity*. One would think
Frank’s evaluation of the text would be a positive review since Walrond was the standing Business Manager of *Opportunity*. His critique of *Tropic Death*, however, fell well short of that. The review article itself, “*In Our American Language,*” is nothing less than an essentialist critique of Walrond’s un-American penmanship. “There is, for one thing, the matter of accent[,]” Mr. Walrond is using a raw instrument—a language whose relation with literary English is not organic at all,” proclaimed Frank. The review goes on to list all the un-American traits of the text and ends, unfortunately, with a racist metaphor of Walrond’s heritage. Frank closes the piece by stating:

> Wherefore, having cavalierly made him my brother, I claim the right to scold him. I don’t like your sophistications brother Walrond. I wish you’d realize that you’ll wield your noble youthful language better if you’ll take it easier. Perhaps one of your ancestors was a Caribbean peasant. When he wielded the hoe or knife, did he not grasp it loose in his brown hand? Do you likewise with your language. Let your fine instrument lie easy in a palm half-open.

If Charles S. Johnson allowed the publication of such a terrible and racist review of one of his own staff members—who, by the way, was attempting to launch his career as a writer—McKay certainly had reason to be cautious with his literary ventures. The perplexing, if not paradoxical, feature corresponding to this review lies in that the article was part of a special issue of *Opportunity* intended to mend hostilities between American-born Negroes
and foreign-born Negroes—that is, African Americans and West Indian Caribbeans.

The preparation and completion of this November issue benefited greatly from the assistance of Eric Walrond, a native of British Guiana—who gathered article contributions by prominent Harlem intellectuals such as Claude McKay, W.A. Domingo, Casper Holstein, E. Franklin Frazier, and Arthur A. Schomburg. If the journal profited from Walrond’s labor, as noted in the editorial introduction, why would Charles S. Johnson include Frank’s demeaning review of Walrond’s text in an edition meant to improve relations between West Indians and African Americans? Johnson was well aware of the existing friction between both groups. His own editorial introduction acknowledged these tensions:

This well selected group posited in the midst of a large and varied Negro population has brought its questions and difficulties. The situation has encouraged snobbishness and jealousies, resentments and group selfishness. The American Negro who dislikes West Indians and applies to them offensive names, can be matched by the West Indian who can outlaw a fellow countryman for associating too much with American Negroes.¹¹

Since Johnson’s actions seem to contradict the journal’s goal to foster camaraderie “through [a] conviction that friendships usually follow the knowing of one’s neighbor,” perhaps Walrond’s collected articles can provide a better understanding of the origins of these hostilities (ibid.).
The articles to this special edition consist of poetry pieces and critical essays ranging from Caribbean history to critical commentary on West Indian-African American relations. The latter two subjects, however, provide a historical context to identify the social differences between both communities. For example, Casper Holstein’s “The Virgin Islands: Past and Present,” W.A. Domingo’s “The West Indies,” and E. Franklin Frazier’s “The Garvey Movement” cover different West Indian histories that highlight independence movements that have improved the social, political, and economic condition of the West Indian. In the minds of these authors, these accomplishments are models that can potentially improve the Negro condition in the United States. As W.A. Domingo fervently affirms:

Enjoying a fair degree of justice in the courts, forming an important part of the civil administration, free to marry without the interference of anti-intermarriage laws, unhampered by insulting segregatory laws, having unrestricted freedom of residence and movement within their particular colony, and with their lives and property safe from mob attacks, West Indians, rightly or wrongly, regard their condition as superior to any that they would secure if controlled by the United States.  

Domingo’s boasting of these Caribbean accomplishments can not only come across as a bit snobbish, but also taken as a condescending articulation describing the superiority of the West Indian to the African American. In all fairness, however, these authors understood that the solution to the Negro
problem in the U.S. relied "on the intelligent cooperation of the two branches of Anglo Saxonized Negroes" (ibid.).

Domingo's statement adds another ethnic piece to the puzzle. Is the "Anglo Saxonized Negro" the official spokesperson representing the black community in the United States? After all, the common use of English ties the Anglophone Caribbean (West Indian) to African Americans. Where would Domingo's Anglo Saxonized Negro branch place a Hispanophone Caribbean such as Arturo Alfonso Schomburg? One can assume Schomburg's "BlackTino" heritage would cause him further alienation within the English-speaking Harlem community. Now, combine Schomburg's linguistic difference with his academic goal to incorporate the Spanish Caribbean as part of the historical narrative of Africana Studies. I am not suggesting that Schomburg favored an Afro Caribbean interpretation of Negro history. What is clear, however, is Schomburg's preference for a Pan-African approach toward the recovery of Negro history and heritage.

For example, Schomburg's article "Racial Integrity: A Plea for the Establishment of a Chair of Negro History in our Schools and Colleges" discusses the inaccuracies of white historians in their documentation of Negro history that have, according to Schomburg, left us "indebted for little that is right and much that is wrong."13 The article goes on to outline a
history that highlights the accomplishments of past black figures who attained a university education since the sixteenth-century, studied the composition of music, excelled in poetry and literature, contributed to the field of theology, and participated in the exploration of Africa. The article tactfully relates these events by relating the success of African Americans such as Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass alongside the accomplishments of Juan Latino and Ignatius Sancho. This strategy is repeated in Schomburg’s article contribution to the special November issue of *Opportunity*. His article, “West Indian Composers and Musicians,” presents a brief but extensive history of internationally recognized black musicians in the nineteenth-century. All of the artists named in the article mastered western classical music, received their musical education in Europe, performed in international settings, and conducted their own orchestras at some point in their careers. The interesting aspect of Schomburg’s piece is his focus on Spanish West Indian musicians from Cuba and Puerto Rico. If Schomburg wanted to make a case for BlackTino contributions in the narrative of Negro history, he certainly made it very clear. This historical scheme, I argue, is a holistic attempt on the part of Schomburg to revise the pan-African experience within a North American context.
Schomburg’s Pan African stance is important, in my estimation, for two reasons. For one, he recognized the global impact of slavery on all the diasporic communities of African origin; and, therefore, understood that his campaign to recover and affirm Negro history would be through a pan-African study of these events. As Lisa Sánchez González has stated, “Schomburg understood that racialization throughout the Americas was born of diverse experiences of slavery, miscegenation, cultural syncretism, and politics, and he informed an inclusionary historical rubric in which to situate the African diaspora’s transatlantic and transamerican archives.”¹⁴ His pan-African, transatlantic, and transamerican archival research resulted in a panethnic interpretation of Negro history, which bore fruit to the first and largest combined archive in the study of the African diaspora. He understood, however, that working out of a North American base necessitated a contention against singular binary constructions of U.S. whiteness and blackness that could potentially nullify the panethnic character of the African diaspora in North America. Schomburg’s stance on this matter was quite clear. Not only did he believe that the “American Negro must make his past in order to make his future,” but also reminded the historian, scholar, and reader that the various “racial origins of the Negro [...] offer a record of credible group achievement when scientifically viewed,
and more important still, that they are of vital general interest because of their bearing upon the beginnings and early development of human culture. "15 My interpretation of Schomburg's work is by no means trying to simplify the study of a panethnic reading of African history in the United States. As my findings from the Schomburg Papers make quite clear, intellectual cooperation between West Indians and African Americans was anything but collaborative.

Their lack of cooperation raises my last thought on Schomburg's invaluable input to the study of African history: his acknowledgement of inter-ethnic conflicts over the national representation of U.S. blackness. Schomburg foresaw how Anglo American doctrines of racial superiority bred in his Ethiopian counterpart an absolutist discourse that has "glibly tried to prove half the world's geniuses to have been Negroes and trace a pedigree of nineteenth century Americans from the Queen of Sheba."16 Without a doubt, Schomburg's satirical statement is directed toward nationalist discourses that inevitably take the form of what Paul Gilroy terms "ethnic absolutism" (Gilroy 190). This final essentialist rendering confines national identities, cultures, and histories into fixed categorizations of racial difference. My interest with ethnic absolutism is not concerned with an analysis of Eurocentric doctrines that construct racial divides between the
Anglo Saxon and the Negro, but rather the national and cultural insiderisms that created ethnic rifts between West Indians and Africa Americans.

A newspaper clipping I retrieved from the Schomburg Papers that reads "DuBois's Friends Would Oust Schomburg" is an example of how growing tensions between both groups leak over into the professional and intellectual sphere of black representation in the United States. When the Carnegie Corporation secured funds to appoint Schomburg curator of his own collection at the 135th Street Library, certain Harlemites, but specifically a DuBois group responded by going "on a war path" as a result of his official appointment. The article goes on to state:

The Library powers that be have designated Arthur A. Schomburg "curator pro tem" at the 135th Street branch, thus superseding Miss Latimer of Brooklyn, much to the discomfiture of friends of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, editor of the Crisis and an associated Harlem colored group. It has been reliably [...] reported that friends of Dr. DuBois and a committee of Harlemites made a formal protest at the main library located at the Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street against the change and even went so far as to demand the ousting of Schomburg.¹⁷

Why would DuBois formally protest Schomburg's appointment to curate an archive Schomburg assembled and, more importantly, that is named after him: The Schomburg Collection. As the journalist of the Defender points out, "[h]e is authoritatively conceded to be the foremost colored bibliophile, and none here appear to find anything amiss about his assignment to
“strengthen cut” his own collection.” Perhaps Dr. DuBois’s response to diffuse the scandal can provide a better understanding of this conflict.

The article in question, “Harlem Library Fight Not Against Schomburg; But to Save Employees,” appeared seven days later in the *Afro American*. Although the piece is intended to steer the DuBoisian conflict away from Schomburg, the statements made in the article introduce a new set of problems. The following article excerpt reads as follows:

Not Opposed to Schomburg

From persons familiar with the part played by Dr. DuBois in the controversy it is said the fact of the matter is that for years the group has been trying to get colored library assistants into the public library system, meeting a great deal of difficulty. Two years ago Dr. DuBois is said to have taken up the matter of one appointee who was not getting promotion as she deserved. A quiet, but insistent conference resulted in her appointment as the first assistant librarian, the highest appointment that we have had.

Despite this, today there are only four in the system, and on the occasion of the appointing of Mr. Schomburg as temporary curator, it was proposed to put Mrs. Latimer out of the system and have her do adult education work.

The first and most obvious problem with this article is the absence of a direct statement by Du Bois. The article’s explanation that disclaims Du Bois opposition to Schomburg’s appointment that read, “denied by friends close to the editor” and “from persons familiar with the part played by Dr. DuBois” are all second-hand accounts. One would think Du Bois, as an
intellectual giant of the Harlem community, would provide a clear statement to relive the public controversy between these two prominent scholars.

More telling, however, is Du Bois's influence and personal investment to secure the employment of black librarians within New York. Mrs. Latimer's appointment as the first black assistant librarian in the city suggests early developments in employment negotiations between Du Bois and library administrators. Perhaps Schomburg's appointment by the Carnegie Corporation undermined Du Bois's sway within the administrative ranks of the New York Public Library system. By working outside established lines of communication to attain his position as curator pro tem, Schomburg could have inadvertently undervalued Du Bois's authority by attaining jurisdiction over the collection without his endorsement. Or, perhaps, a more practical business approach toward the administrative management of the Schomburg Collection is needed to understand the stakes of being named curator pro tem. Jurisdiction over the Schomburg Collection not only meant cataloging the items of the archive, but also signified control over available funds to maintain and acquire new items for the collection. This type of control and influence within the New York Public Library would clarify Du Bois's interest to have a DuBoisian affiliate such as Mrs. Latimer involved in the management of the Schomburg Collection.
Unfortunately, to my knowledge and in my archival research of the
Schomburg Papers, I have not found or heard of any written correspondence
between Schomburg and Du Bois discussing this topic.

So the question remains: Might the basis of this controversial episode
been a matter of undermining Du Bois’s public authority, a strategy to retain
influential affiliates within the library system, or a more complicated
question of representation? After all, Schomburg’s appointment fulfilled Du
Bois’s objective to increase the employment of blacks in the New York
Public Library. Furthermore, all of the archival pieces I retrieved from the
Schomburg Papers deal with historical, literary, and professional struggles
over black representation in the United States. Winston James’s 1998
publication Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in
Early Twentieth-Century America foregrounds many of these issues, as well
as the recent publication of Joyce Moore Turner’s Caribbean Crusaders and
the Harlem Renaissance (2005), Michelle Ann Stephens’s Black Empire:
The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United
States, 1914-1962 (2005), and Louis J. Parascandola’s Look for Me All
Around You: Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance
(2005). These texts have begun to reevaluate ethnic differences within
Harlem’s black intellectual class and do a magnificent job explaining the
regional particularities between divergent communities of the African diaspora in the United States and elsewhere. The historical depth of these studies and their thorough analysis of class and political differences, dissimilar responses to American racism, and organizational distinctions between African Americans and Afro Caribbeans are beyond the immediate goal of this article. My interest lies in uncovering the development and structuring of a “black imaginary” in the United States that overshadowed the ethnic diversity of Negroses in the early twentieth-century.

The goal of the New Negro Movement to organize a united national movement brought together, in Houston A. Bakers words, a “unified community of national interests set in direct opposition to the general economic, political, and theological tenets of a racist land” (77). Although this intellectual collective affirmed the progressive social strides of African Americans in the United States, it did so by converting this intellectual enterprise into a national culture based on the political currency of “race.” By associating the social, artistic, and political development of the New Negro to the rise of a “new black race,” African American intellectuals began to fashion the foundation of a black national culture.

Indeed, the reconstruction of the Old Negro to the New Negro required the psychological shedding of an inferiority complex to gain
renewed self-respect for black identity. One must only look to Alain Locke, dubbed the Dean of the New Negro Renaissance, to understand how race was utilized as a cultural signifier in the development of a new consciousness in the black community. For the New Negro, explains Locke, the “deep feeling of race is at present the mainspring of Negro life,” making the black intellectual “radical on race matters, [but] conservative on others, in other words, a forced radical, a social protestant rather than a genuine radical” (Enter 9). Certainly, Locke’s statement should be taken with a certain degree of prudence. When Locke speaks of a radical stance on racial issues in the United States, he is not suggesting or referring to a separatist political movement on the part of the black community. To be a “forced radical” meant that African Americans found it necessary to actively voice their right to participate in American democracy. However, before exercising any sort of institutional autonomy as a “social protestant” of the United States, the New Negro had to be identified, first and foremost, as a collective racial entity.

As a spokesman for his generation, Locke realized that black integration into American democracy depended on a united front portraying a singular black identity. The construction, however, of a common black community in Harlem in the early twentieth-century was, and still is,
impossible to imagine. Locke, himself, had a clear comprehension of the different ethnic currents in Harlem. In his essay, “Enter the New Negro,” he proclaimed Harlem the home of the Negro’s Zionism. “The pulse of the Negro world has begun to beat in Harlem,” asserted Locke (Enter 10). He went on to observe the circulation of three New York newspapers in English, French, and Spanish representing the West Indies and Africa in Harlem, the large scale publication of two cosmopolitan Negro magazines in New York, and the American auspices and support of three pan-African congresses addressing the colonial problems and development of Africa. The result, according to Locke, was the creation of American Negro internationalism (ibid.). Although Locke initially recognized the international character of Harlem, he quickly un-fashionned the transnational quality of the Harlem black belt. By the conclusion of “Enter the New Negro,” the West Indian political movement becomes a transient phenomenon, but “the possible role of the American Negro in the future development of Africa is one of the most constructive and universally helpful missions that any modern people can lay claim to” (10). To institute African Americans as a “modern people” of a “modern society,” the West Indian, the African, and the African American had to fuse as one in order to establish a democratic relationship between the dominant races: the black and the white.
Locke understood that the country as a whole was struggling with the idea of integrating African Americans into the democratic fabric of the United States; therefore, the notion of a heterogeneous black race on American soil would have been a frightening thought for Anglo Americans to fathom. As an essayist, Locke understood this anxiety and developed a rhetorical style of writing that alleviated these feelings by celebrating the fusion of black cultures in the making of the New Negro. Indeed, Locke viewed Harlem “as a laboratory of a great race-welding” (Harlem 6). Locke’s cultural synthesis of the New Negro is strictly strategic. By consolidating the heterogeneity of Harlem, ethnic, class, and political differences existing within the black intellectual community were disregarded in order to portray a cohesive national identity. In Locke’s mind, a common race was needed to identify the New Negro. The outcome of Locke’s collective national identity resulted in binary constructions of whiteness and blackness. As many have noted, this racial formula simplifies national narratives of whiteness and blackness to make race relations in the United States manageable.\textsuperscript{18} In other words, singular identities correspond to singular political agendas.

Clearly, the archival material I have presented shatters the myth of a “great race welding” in Harlem. Ethnically diverse and politically divergent,
Harlem hailed the New Negro as both national and international subjects that has since fractured the representation of blackness in the United States. The rupture of the North American color line brings up a pressing question. How do scholars address ethnic differences and conflicts within the New Negro Movement without questioning the pioneering literature of one of the earliest and most important movements of black intellectual thought? Obviously, the racial quandary I uncovered in the *Schomburg Papers* raises more questions than answers. Why would Schomburg conserve written correspondence and collect journal and newspaper articles that highlight African American and West Indian hostilities? Maybe he realized that settling national differences and negotiating the political goals of a diverse community was simply inconceivable during this time period. Perhaps this may be a task better suited for future generations to unravel and address? As a member of this future generation, I would like to provide an alternative interpretation to these hostilities.

Instead of focusing on binary oppositions of political conflict, why not understand these ethnic disparities as the initial stage of cultural contact leading into divergent, but new intellectual exchanges of blackness. These exchanges, however, must be viewed as inter-ethnic relations that shape the cultural productions of West Indians and African Americans; therefore,
inscribing ethnicity as part of the cultural, literary, and intellectual imaginary of the New Negro Movement. This rendition of novels, short stories, poetry, and other primary documents traces the existence of divergent ethnic identities within the African diaspora in the United States. By excavating the existence of divergent black ethnic identities within African American texts, scholars can begin refashioning the connection between African Americans and an often overlooked West Indian population such as BlackTinos, to use a contemporary fictional term. Similar to Angie Chabram-Dernersesian’s argument to expand the Chicano/a agenda to the transnational moment to acknowledge the rise of new ethnicities within Chicano/a identities, the prospect of opening a comparative literary approach between African American Studies and Chicano/Latino Studies provides an “alternative mode of writing social identities and agencies within a larger context” of North American blackness (271). The value of understanding the transnational variances of blackness lies in its refusal to exclude Other Afro identities from the historical narrative of the United States. Only in this manner can West Indians and BlackTinos shed their role as the fictional Caribbean Other.

The erasure of Afro Caribbean identities from the African American imaginary has obscured the diverse heritage of perhaps one of the most
important figures in the development of black intellectual thought. W.E.B. DuBois’s San Domingo, Haitian inheritance, from his father Alfred DuBois, can potentially introduce new subject studies in African American Studies. Although Du Bois acknowledged his cultural roots quite openly, personal discussions concerning his Caribbean heritage throughout his career seem to clash in very contradictory ways. In a very jubilant and patriotic letter, Du Bois explained to W.A. Domingo that “American Negroes to a much larger extent that [sic] they realize, are not only blood relatives to the West Indian but under deep obligations to them for many things. For instance without the Haitian revolt, there would have been no emancipation in America as early as 1863. I, myself, am of West Indian descent and am proud of the fact” (Aptheker 263). His West Indian heritage, however, was not a pleasant family topic behind closed doors. Apparently, the Burghardt family did not approve of Mary Silvina Burghardt’s marriage to Alfred Du Bois due to his Francophone white complexion. Shortly after W.E.B. Du Bois birth, his parents parted ways due to continuing family hostilities toward Alfred Du Bois. When asked about his father’s departure during an interview conducted by William T. Ingersoll in 1960, Du Bois hesitantly responded, “I don’t suppose it was simply a matter of color. It was a matter of culture” (Lewis 27). Whether it was a matter or color or culture, one must wonder
how the close proximity of inter-racial prejudice affected Du Bois as a child and throughout his adult and professional career.

Taking into consideration the growing tensions between West Indians and African Americans in Harlem, Du Bois’s personal experience with this issue must have surfaced in some form or another throughout his intellectual career. Let us think back to the Du Bois/Schomburg fall out. Should these conflicts inform or change the way we interpret his historical, literary, and theoretical work. For example, could there exist a third consciousness or third space within the souls of certain BlackTino folk? To be viewed as a problem from a white and black North American standpoint surely places the BlackTino above binary racial constructions of black and white double consciousness. Perceived as racially inferior by white America and construed as a foreigner within the African American community, develops in the BlackTino a third degree of difference. This third degree of difference prohibits him/her from whiteness as well as excludes him/her from blackness. As Evelio Grillo testifies to in his memoir *Black Cuban, Black America* (2002):

The black Americans who lived in the blocks above Nebraska Avenue did not always accept us, particularly those of us whom they did not know because we did not attend the public schools. The feelings were reciprocated. Our parents’ fears of black Americans were transmitted to us in the home, where they lived in isolation both from white Cuban and black American worlds.
What new insights can this third degree of difference provide to the study of BlackTinos in the United States? Obviously there would be a second tier of racial prejudice to consider in North American race relations.

More creatively, however, is the fluid subjectivity this third degree of difference can take under North American racial pressures. For the BlackTino, passing as Anglo American or African American would be a matter of racial degrees of whiteness and blackness. The ability to pass as both white and black not only challenges North American racial binaries of identification, but also provides a whole new dimension to the construction of racial hierarchies established in U.S. race relations. As Grillo clearly states:

Our choices became clear: to swim in black American society or drown in the Latin ghettos of New York City, never to be an integral part of American life. This is why the experience of black Cubans who joined with black Americans is so different from that of black Cubans who remained loosely tethered to the white Cuban society. Integration presented us with a simple option: join the black American society, with its rich roots deep in this country, or have no American roots at all.\(^\text{20}\)

The choice was clear: remain a Caribbean Other in the margins of U.S. society or pass. Grillo’s third degree of difference provides new insights that can potentially alleviate the national, racial, and cultural barriers separating and connecting the black Cuban and the black American.
By recognizing the existence of a Pan African community in the United States, the West Indian and BlackTino presence will no longer be marginal within North American studies of the black community. The discovery of blackness outside an African American context can augment studies and research in African American Studies, U.S. Latino/a Studies, and Chicano/a Studies by acknowledging the cultural, social, and political implications of a diverse black population in the United States. Whether the cross analysis of North American blackness reveals a cooperative or conflictive history, this type of research provides new insights to interpret texts such as Martin R. Delany's *Blake or The Huts of America*, Sutton E. Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio*, Evilio Grillo’s *Black Cuban*, *Black American*, and Gayle Jones’s *Mosquito*. Although some of these texts were produced in different literary periods, their transhistorical connection relate what Carl Pedersen calls the existence of the “extended Caribbean” within “new hemispheric” texts in African American literature.

The racial tensions that arise from the archival material I reviewed in this chapter reveal the need for scholars to revisit and excavate the Hispanophone, Francophone, and Anglophone Caribbean heritage of African American Studies. Such investigations can open the New Negro Movement and the Harlem Renaissance as a new field of study for disciplines such as
Chicano/Latino Studies. The collaboration between these academic fields can potentially result in the recovery of the distant and forgotten voices of BlackTinos, West Indians, and others that are simply read as fictional Caribbean Others in the imaginary of North American blackness. I would like to believe Schomburg preserved his correspondence and collected journal and newspaper clippings for future scholars to discover and begin formulating critical approaches to answer these pressing questions. While the New Negro Movement represents a generation of scholars that established the foundation of black studies in the U.S., it is up to a new generation of academics to reevaluate the archive to unearth “New” Negro histories in African American Studies. Besides, it would be a shame to let Jerry Springer have all the fun.
Notes


2 Recent studies of the New Negro Movement have begun to re-evaluate the masculine and nationalistic representation of the Harlem Renaissance. Australia Tarver and Paula C. Barnes’s text, *New Voices on the Harlem Renaissance* (2006) and Anne Elizabeth Carroll’s manuscript *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance* (2005) reevaluate the Harlem Renaissance by intersecting race with gender, sexuality, class, and national questions to present a holistic perspective of this extraordinary movement in African American history. In the spirit of expanding further venues of investigation, I would like to add ethnicity as another subject study in the New Negro Movement. I believe the inclusion of ethnicity automatically changes the racial, cultural, and political terrain of the New Negro Movement.

3 For further criticism on the shortcomings of the New Negro and the Harlem Renaissance see Nathan Huggins’s *Harlem Renaissance* and David Levering Lewis’s *When Harlem was in Vogue*.

4 Schomburg, 414.
My use of the term Negro corresponds to the context in which prominent Harlem intellectuals used it during the New Negro Movement and the Harlem Renaissance. Terms such as African American and black were not extensively used during this time period.

Schomburg to Boddy, 1934; Reel 7, Schomburg Papers.

McKay to Schomburg, 1925; Reel 6, Schomburg Papers.

McKay to Schomburg, 1925; Reel 6, Schomburg Papers. Apparently, McKay had suffered a major financial blow in Paris due to Pauline Rose’s influence within the NAACP, which was funding McKay during his overseas trip.

Frank, Waldo. “In Our American Language.” Opportunity Nov. 1926: 352. Most of the Opportunity articles I will be discussing from the 1926 special issue are found in Reel 9, of the Schomburg Papers.

Ibid.

Opportunity, Nov. 1926: 334. This quotation is taken from Johnson’s editorial introduction to the journal’s special issue on African American and West Indian relations.


Schomburg, Schomburg Papers.


16 Schomburg, *The Negro Digs* 419.


Epilogue

From the beginning, I got the worse of it. My opponent beat me up methodically. Next day, at lunch time, while I was brooding over my defeat of the previous day, a Mexican fellow student, one of those born and brought up beside the river, came up. “Here take this,” he said, handing me a sharp razor. “I’m lending it to you. These gringos are afraid of the blade. Keep it for this afternoon.”

The historical legacy of conflict between Mexicans and “gringos” proved to affect all aspects of José Vasconcelos’s daily life while attending school in Eagle Pass, Texas. His childhood memories of Mexicans and Anglo Americans engaged in school yard fights, as noted in the epigraph, and stone-throwing battles across the Rio Grande is the classic material of border conflict *corridos*. Clearly, Vasconcelos’s *pachuco* like moment closely resembles the Chicano experience. So much so that Vasconcelos declared himself an activist for Mexicans on both sides of the river since, “the Yankees put us all in the same category.”

I close this dissertation with José Vasconcelos to reiterate, once again, the irregular currents produced by borderlanders, border cultures and border histories that travel on both sides of the river. In one instance, Vasconcelos is hailed as a forefather to Chicano/a intellectual thought, culture, and history. To only later uncover the underlying racism behind his ideological construct of *las razas cosnicas*. How can two distinctly different usages of mestizaje be merged without first addressing their divergent political
agendas? The academic practice of collapsing the complex historiography of Vasconcelos to one specific borrowed concept limits the complete analysis of all of his work. This dilemma is complicated further by reducing his work to a mere footnote. In one stroke, the footnote catalogs a singular interpretation that delays the full review of a problematical figure such as Vasconcelos. Unsurprisingly, I credit the footnote as an essential contributing feature in the development of this project.

This dissertation is my initial response to unravel the footnote and place it on the page to understand how colonial differences function within our own communities. I believe this topic needs to be discussed to comprehend the intricate and sometimes conflicting process of decolonizing knowledge within Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies. I follow Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez and Anna Sampaio’s suggestion to apply a “processual approach” to the study of U.S. Latino/a communities in order to restrict cultural omissions from my academic analysis. Their methodological approach focuses on historical relations between and within populations, as well as within fields at the local, regional, national, and transnational level. As a methodology, the processual approach can trace the decisions, maneuvers, resources, relationships, and constructs of culture at various organizational junctures.
As such, the interdisciplinary character of each chapter of this dissertation reveals the shortcomings of recycling mestizo/a imaginaries in order to establish multiple hybrid theories, the existence of competing identities within the heterogeneity of U.S. Latino communities, and the rise of new critical studies that question nationalist discourses to engage issues in gender, class, and race relations. The stakes of experimenting and extending research in Chicano/a Studies and U.S. Latino/a Studies ensures the longevity of both academic fields by becoming interdisciplinary models of study. This is a vital objective in the construction of a more dynamic paradigm that can keep up with, but also slow down the present transnational wave in academia.
Notes


2 Ibid.


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