

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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From Hom(e)ophobia to Hom(e)*erotics*:

Searching for a “Substitute for Salvation” in the Corpus of John Rechy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Omar González

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Chair

Several years before the chants of “¡Si se puede!” and “Chicano Power!” echoed through the fields of central California and against the pavement of East Los Angeles, a burgeoning Chicano writer named John Rechy from El Paso, Texas, disrupted the established rhetoric of racial binary politics with works such as “El Paso del Norte,” *Evergreen Review* (1958), and “Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero,” *The Nation* (1960). These articles represent two of the earliest works describing the racial apartheid experienced by Chicanas/os in Texas written from a Chicano perspective. Rechy then exposed another taboo, the homosexual underground of the pre-Stonewall Rebellion (1969) era, when one’s presence in a gay bar elicited harsh retribution from the state—from sex-offender status registration to involuntary electroshock therapy. Rechy’s debut novel, *City of Night* (1963), is a semi-autobiographical tale of a nameless protagonist navigating urban America as a hustler defying a society that criminalized queer

bodies, desires, and lives. Rechy, a participant in this twilight world of hustlers, drag queens, and scores offers a bleak, unfiltered view into the subaltern sexual underground of post-war America during an era when “gay rights” was a foreign concept. In the face of rising violence against queer brown bodies, most notably the 2016 Pulse nightclub massacre, the 2013 murder of eight-year-old Gabriel Fernandez, and soaring HIV rates, I utilize interdisciplinary methods to propose a theory of “hom(e)erotics.” Hom(e)erotics is a decolonial framework drawing from themes from Rechy’s corpus to accomplish the following outcomes: construct a queer Chicano literary genealogy, interrogate the intersection of Chicanx and LGBTQ+ activist history, and examine the historical and contemporary toxicity of gay male masculinity and sexuality. I ground critical queer Chicano theory in Rechy’s works to name, explicate, and heal the multiplicity of violence exacted upon the bodies of gay Xicanx men, as Chicana lesbians have accomplished for their community for decades.

The dissertation of Omar González is approved.

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Opening Petition

I ask for permission from the antepasados, the ancestors—those with whom I share DNA and those queer hermanx who died of AIDS with whom I long to share a dance, a kiss, and an embrace in the next realm. In Yoruba, the ancestors are *eggun*, and always come first. *Les pido permiso.*

I ask for strength from the feminine energy of the universe concentrated in three key figures—a triumvirate of powerful women: *la Virgen de Guadalupe* as *Tonantzin*, the goddess of the Americas; *Oshún*, the Yoruba orisha of the river representing love, beauty, and sexuality, who is my spiritual mother as I am initiated into the mysteries of *Lucumi* aka *Santería*; and *Santa Muerte*, the patron saint of Death, oft-maligned and misunderstood, the protector of those living in the shadows of the margins/the margins of the shadows, those who dare transgress societal norms and thrive on the energy of moonlight...when magic happens. *Les pido firme.*

I ask for life energy from *Sylvester James*—the fabulous queer Black disco singer who succumbed to AIDS in 1987—who continues to inspire me to dance, to celebrate, to *live* until the serpent in my veins awakens and decides to devour me whole. *Le pido vida y energía.*

Dedications

I dedicate this work to many.

First, I honor the ancestors, for in my spiritual tradition, *the dead come first*.

Secondly, I am greatly indebted to those mortals who guided and mentored me. This list is abridged, as an exhaustive list would take volumes. My committee, especially Alicia Gaspar de Alba (Profe), who pushed me to my intellectual and creative limits. To Alma Lopez, for your constant encouragement and generous spirit. To Hector Calderón, who also recognizes the genius of John Rechy. To Renee Moreno, my mentor, friend, and kindred spirit.

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To my cats—Spooky, Marci, and Fluffy.

To my biological family.

To the memories of Horacio, Gabriel, and Anthony.

To the city of “El Chuco.”

Finally, to the genius of John Rechy. Thank you for your works of inspiration.

Ashé.

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Introduction

Escaping the “Enemy Camp”:

John Rechy’s Corpus as a Path from Hom(e)ophobia to Hom(e)*erotics*

“Essential in ‘normalizing’ homosexuality within the horizon of acceptability is this consideration: Homosexuals are the only minority *born* into the opposing camp; call it the ‘enemy camp.’”—John Rechy

The only crime eight-year-old Gabriel Fernandez committed was playing dolls with his older sister. Witnessed by his mother and her boyfriend, they constructed a house of horrors solely for Gabriel—they spared his siblings. They starved Gabriel, beat him, bound and gagged him before locking him in a cupboard, forced him to eat cat feces and cat litter, and cut and burned his genitals. The week before he went unconscious at the hands of tormentors, his school found a suicide note in his second-hand, but authorities responded with inaction. According to testimony given by Gabriel’s older brother, their mother and her boyfriend slammed Gabriel’s eight-year-old body into a bedroom wall until he fell unconscious. After paramedics whisked him to a hospital, he passed away two days later without regaining consciousness. Coroners discovered he had a cracked skull, broken ribs, along with a burned and bruised body. His intestines resembled a cat’s litter box, as his body could not digest the feces or the litter. The only transgression committed by eight-year-old Gabriel Fernandez of Palmdale, California, was to play dolls with his sister. It cost him his life. Rechy’s “enemy camp”¹ claims another life. Those of us who manage to escape must remember and honor the dead.

When a Home Becomes a “House of Horrors”²

Homophobia within the Chicano community continues to represent a critical issue resulting in a myriad of negative outcomes, such as rising HIV seroconversion rates,³ suicide rates,⁴ illicit drug usage,⁵ and familial violence. Activists for LGBTQ causes have earned substantial victories since the start of the millennium. The United States Supreme Court case, *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), rendered the sodomy law of Texas unconstitutional, as well as all other remaining sodomy laws in the United States. President Barack Obama overturned former President Bill Clinton’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in 2011, thus allowing lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to serve openly in the military. Transgender individuals, currently, remain in a limbo regarding their right to serve openly. Another Supreme Court case, *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) legalized same-sex marriage uniformly throughout the United States. Despite these gains, HIV/AIDS remains a critical issue to intersectional segments of the LGBTQ community. Gay and bisexual Chicano/Latino men are seroconverting at rates faster than white men, second only to Black men. With the advent of the lifesaving HIV “cocktail” and “PrEP” (Pre-exposure prophylaxis),⁶ the epidemic no longer commands urgent attention from the mainstream LGBT movement.

Several years before the chants of “¡Si se puede!” and “Chicano Power!” echoed through the fields of central California and against the pavement of East Los Angeles, a burgeoning Chicano writer named John Rechy from El Paso, Texas, disrupted the accepted rhetoric of racial binary politics with works such as “El Paso del Norte” (1958) published in *Evergreen Review* and “Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero” (1960) published in *The Nation*. These two articles represent early works describing the racial apartheid experienced by Chicanas/os in Texas written from a Chicano perspective. Rechy then exposed another taboo, the homosexual underground of the

pre-Stonewall Rebellion (1969) era, when one's presence in a gay bar elicited harsh retribution from the state—from sex-offender status registration to involuntary electroshock therapy. Rechy's debut novel, *City of Night* (1963), a semi-autobiographical tale of a nameless protagonist navigating urban America as a hustler, defying a society that criminalized queer bodies, queer desires, and queer lives. Rechy, a participant in this twilight world of hustlers, drag queens, and scores offers a bleak, unfiltered look into the subaltern sexual underground of post-war America during an era when "gay rights" was a foreign concept. Throughout his seven-decade writing career, Rechy continues to speak out against the criminalization of queer bodies, critical in this era of "LGBTQ equality." In the face of rising violence against queer brown bodies, most notably the Pulse nightclub massacre in 2016 and soaring HIV seroconversion rates, my theory of "hom(e)erotics," examines the historical and contemporary toxicity of gay male masculinity and sexuality. I draw this framework from Rechy's corpus to ground critical queer Chicano theory to explicate, heal, and prevent the multiplicity of violence exacted upon the bodies of gay Xicanx men, as Chicana lesbians have accomplished for their community for decades.

Despite the HIV pandemic's devastating effects on the gay Xicanx/Latino community, few Chicana/o Studies scholars have focused their research agendas to critically examine the intersectional nature of living and dying under the spectre of racism, homophobia, linguistic terrorism, poverty, citizenship insecurity, and the stigma of AIDS-phobia. Gay Xicanx/Latino men with HIV/AIDS ("poz," gay vernacular for HIV-positive) negotiate the multiple dimensions of their positionality, which exacerbates the continuing stigma of the disease once referred to as "gay cancer."⁷ Disproportionate seroconversion rates and deaths due to AIDS complications

among gay and bisexual Chicano/Latino men demand more attention by Chicana/o scholars, particularly as the rates increase in the Chicana/Latina populations.⁸

The current landscape of HIV/AIDS history is parallel to the revisionist retelling of the birth of the mainstream LGBT movement—colorless. In the heterosexual public imagination, the first “victims” of the AIDS epidemic were the former matinee idol Rock Hudson who died in 1985, a close friend of the Reagans, and the Midwestern youth, Ryan White, a hemophiliac who acquired HIV from a blood transfusion and who died in 1990. A lesser known yet still reported case is Alison Gertz, an upper-class young white woman who contracted the virus from a casual heterosexual encounter as a teen-ager and who passed away in 1992. Gertz’s life inspired the television film, *Something to Live For: The Alison Gertz Story* (1992). Hudson, White, and Gertz fit the narrative of “AIDS victimhood” as they inhabit the terrain of whiteness. The most “innocent” of the three is the canonized Ryan White, who through “no fault of his own” acquired HIV and died subsequent to the challenges he faced when he attempted to return to his high school after his community realized he had contracted the virus. I still remember the images of Michael Jackson, Elton John, and other celebrities visiting the White home, but now I cannot help but think of the gay men, particularly those of color, afflicted with the illness whom society had rendered invisible. In 1990, the United States Congress even named its AIDS appropriation bill after the youth, The Ryan White Care Act.⁹ Although the Affordable Care Act of 2010 has absorbed the Ryan White Care Act, an “innocent” Midwestern, white, heterosexual male face, will always represent the legislative and collective memory of the governmental response to HIV, akin to the Amber Alerts.¹⁰ The media images of the “innocent” Ryan White contrast to those of the “guilty” gay (usually White) men. The latter, stricken with Kaposi Sarcoma lesions

and AIDS-wasting syndrome,¹¹ “sinned against nature,” according to the homophobic rhetoric of mainstream public figures, such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.

Meanwhile, as HIV seroconversion¹² rates rise among gay and bisexual men of color, the predominantly white mainstream LGBT movement has focused on neoliberal causes, such as, military inclusion and same-sex marriage. The advent and success of the so-called AIDS drug “cocktail” has allowed “poz” men and women to live relatively normal lives, at least those with access to medical insurance and competent healthcare professionals. Consequently, the mainstream LGBT movement no longer considers the HIV epidemic to be deserving of urgent action.¹³ However, as statistical data illustrates, gay and bisexual Chicano and Latino men living with HIV are, according to the recently deceased scholar, Horacio Roque Ramirez, “dying to be remembered” (103). This crisis necessitates a new theoretical framework to interpret gay “poz” Brown lives as texts that the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies can no longer afford to ignore. For me, a “poz” Chicano gay man since 1993, this issue does not sit on a bookshelf collecting dust. But my bookshelf is where I locate the work of several gay Chicano and Latino authors who were among the first to represent the disease and its tragic consequences in their writings: John Rechy, Reinaldo Arenas, Arturo Islas, Gil Cuadros, Michael Nava, and others.¹⁴ This work offers a method for searching for Rechy’s elusive “substitute for salvation”¹⁵ for gay Xicanx/Latino men living with HIV and those who have succumbed.

Rechy’s “Substitute for Salvation”

A recurring theme throughout his corpus, Rechy describes the “substitute for salvation” as a replacement for the false promise of eternal life peddled by the Catholic Church. I find it critical to recall those dreadful Saturday afternoon lessons of catechism and confirmation classes—those hours when a laywoman would detail the behaviors we must abstain from lest we

relegate our souls to purgatory or Hell. The Catholic concept of salvation is described by the website, www.catholic.com, as the following:

The Church understands that we are all sinners in need of a savior (Rom 5:12-21). We are inheritors of original sin and all its consequences, and by actual sin we distance ourselves from God. We can't save ourselves, but we don't need to: Jesus Christ has paid the price for our sins. The Catholic Church teaches that salvation comes through Jesus alone (Acts 4:12), since he is the "one mediator between God and man" (1 Tim 2:5-6).

The saving grace won by Jesus is offered as a free gift to us, accessible through repentance, faith, and baptism. We turn away from our sins, we are sorry for them, and we believe in Jesus Christ and the gospel. Repentance shows our willingness to turn from things that keep us from God, and baptism renews us, filling us with grace necessary to have faith and to live it. This belief is more than just "head knowledge." Even the demons have that (Jas 2:19). It's more than just believing you're saved. Even the Pharisees had that (Jn 5:39). True, saving faith is one lived and exhibited daily: It is "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6, cf. Jas 2:1-26).

Sometimes the Church is accused of teaching "salvation by works," but this is an empty accusation. This idea has been consistently been condemned by the Church. Good works are required by God because he requires obedience to his commands (Mt 6:1-21, 1 Cor 3:8, 13-15) and promises to reward us with eternal life if we obey (Mt 25:34-40, Rom 2:6-7, Gal 6:6-10, Jas 1:12). But even our obedience is impossible without God's grace; even our good works are God's gift (Rom 5:5, Phil 2:13). This is the real biblical plan of salvation.

According to Rechy, the Catholic Church violates this pact, as it does not exist; rather, the Miltonian edicts of fire and brimstone serve as behavioral yokes. When queer men act, indeed, when we just conjure fantasies of our homoerotic desires, the Church commands us to repent. The Church deems our desire sinful, thus we must resist temptation, lest we suffer a similar fate as the cursed Eve. According to the passage on www.catholic.com, even our good works originate from the biblical god and, therefore, negates our agency. Rechy alerts his audience to the Church's deception early in his body of work. When Rechy's nameless protagonist in *City of Night* witnesses the rotting carcass of his beloved dog, Winnie, he awakens to the lie of the Church. This realization of the Church's deception led Rechy's protagonist to challenge Christian piety into the twilight underground of male hustlers, drag queens, and "scores."

Rechy's repetition of finding a "substitute for salvation" throughout his corpus reveals his fascination with the history and the dogma of the Catholic Church. Following is a graphic representation of the occurrences of this phrase over sixty years of publications, illustrating the concept's importance to Rechy's thematic literary motivations. Unlike some ex-Catholics who reject any association with the religion, Rechy is a student of its history and culture, as well as one of its fiercest critics. In a response to a question I posed to him over the medium of email about this recurring theme, Rechy responds:

Yes, that phrase [substitute for salvation] recurs; and I'm referring to one of religion's greatest betrayals: the promise of redemption based on various reactionary codes that invoke judgment. But, in early years, one may believe that spurious promise. As life unwinds with its panorama of horrors—and, yes, times of beauty and joy—but because of the former (horrors) the promise is violated. The perfect "salvation" is not available. We

do search for substitutes through psychoanalysis, cults, exotic religions, sex, etc.—none fills the longing for the promised, impossible “salvation,” complete, unassailable.

The promise of salvation is akin to the constructed yet faux reality of *The Matrix* (1999).

Rechy’s writings are analogous to swallowing the red pill—the rupture compelling the readers to turn our gaze towards the gritty harshness of a dystopic landscape. Rechy’s texts probe this concept thoroughly yet, as great literature does, they raise more questions than are answered.

For gay Xicanx men, the horrors of which Rechy speaks and others I detail throughout this work stem from the structural and cultural homophobia we internalize resulting in self-destructive behaviors. If an eternal, scriptural concept of home does not exist, as Rechy argues, his corpus removes the horse blinders from those who dare enter the taboo world he simultaneously participates in and documents.

Table 1: Sixty Years of Searching for a "Substitute for Salvation" in the Corpus of John Rechy

Novel	Year of Pub.	Page No.	Context
<i>Pablo!</i> (originally written in the late 1940s)	2018	6	The Xtabay is a Mayan female demon who lures men to their death, like Homer's sirens, and wanders "searching for a substitute for salvation."
		39	The Pol, a Mayan sorceress, resembles La Llorona of Mexican folklore and searches for something she will never find.
<i>City of Night</i>	1963	19	When the protagonist ponders leaving his hometown of El Paso, "embarking on that journey through nightcities and nightlives-- looking for I dont know what--perhaps some substitute for salvation."
		366	During Mardi Gras, Jeremy suggests he and the protagonist could love each other, but he is not ready for the actual substitute for salvation.
<i>Numbers</i>	1967	372	After rejecting Jeremy's offer to return to New York, the protagonist ponders this concept of love but escapes in the crowd.
		166	Johnny Rio once loved the feeling of absolution after confession. No longer believing in God, he seeks a substitute.
<i>This Day's Death</i>	1969	121	Jim, the protagonist, and Miss Lucia, his ill mother's caretaker, watch over her. Miss Lucia states, "There's no substitute for salvation," when speaking of his mother's impending physical death.
<i>The Vampires</i>	1971	124	An eclectic group of people convene on a mysterious island and begin to play a "confessions" game with an actual priest.
<i>The Fourth Angel</i>	1972		When one of the guests blasphemes by suggesting forgiving God, the priest proclaims, "There's no substitute for salvation."
		58	Shell, the ringleader of the "four angels" offers Jerry some acid. He contemplates accepting and figures this may be his salvation. Or at least a substitute.
<i>The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary</i>	1977	66	In an imaginary interview, Rechy is asked about the "despair" in his novels. He discusses his Catholic upbringing and the feelings of betrayal, as "there's no substitute for salvation," which never existed.
		165	In the bar, Don, the least attractive of the four, is desperate to score. Endore knows, "A momentary substitute for salvation."
<i>Rushes</i>	1979	202	James Huston, a controversial intellectual, opens his lecture at a Los Angeles-area university by speaking of salvation as completeness,
<i>Bodies and Souls</i>	1983		Still lecturing, James Huston poses a rhetorical question, "What shall we substitute for salvation? Meditation, Quaaludes, neostructuralism? The arrogant perfections of the sciences? Mathematics! Yes, and the perfection of love. Love."
		205	Huston suggests a substitute for salvation could be found in one of Swedenborg's equations or in one of Blake's paintings.
<i>Marilyn's Daughter</i>	1988	391	A Black woman televangelist known as "Sister Woman" preaches, "There are no accidents in heaven. In the divine order of things all is perfect, and God's perfect design is called 'salvation.' There is no substitute."
		225	Marilyn Monroe admits herself to a psychiatric hospital in New York City and once locked into her room, she regrets the decision. "She waited for salvation, even a substitute."
<i>The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gomez</i>	1991	156	When Amalia, the protagonist, enters the confessional, she knows the priests can only offer a "substitute for salvation," as she believes true salvation is granted upon death.
		312	Jesus of Nazareth declares, "There is no substitute for salvation," while in a sexual polyamorous relationship with Judas and Mary Magdalene, and believes he is on a mission from God after witnessing a religious vision.
<i>Our Lady of Babylon</i>	1996	153	Father Norris, searching for the young man with the crucifixion tattoo, imagines he speaks to him, "I'm here to answer your plea to salvation, because there is no substitute."
<i>The Coming of the Night</i>	1999	131	Sylvia curses the ghost of her mother, Eulah Love, who tormented her and turns to liquor as her substitute for salvation.
<i>The Life and Adventures of Lyle Clemens</i>	2003	270	In his memoir, Rechy recounts the blur of days and nights of Mardi Gras, the drag queens, and their entourage. He feels trapped with them, not even desiring the possibility of a substitute for salvation.
<i>About My Life and the Kept Woman</i>	2008		

Hom(e)erotics—Mapping Our Erotic, Whole Selves as Queer Chicano Men

Building on the pioneering scholarly works of Tomas Almaguer, David Román, and Horacio Roque Ramirez, the revolutionary creative works of John Rechy and other writers, and a range of decolonizing disciplines, I propose a theory of *hom(e)erotics* analyzing the desires, pleasures, lives, and deaths of gay and bisexual Chicanos/Latino men negotiating the HIV virus and its stigma. I situate my theory of *hom(e)erotics* within a discourse of established interdisciplinary frameworks that build on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity—Chicana lesbian feminism, Black feminism, Latina/o Critical Race Theory (Lat Crit), Queer Critical Race Theory (Queer Crit), and Queer Indigenous Studies. Each of these radical frameworks and their theories/theorists speak truth to white supremacy and patriarchy and the resulting intersecting oppressions gay Xicanx men negotiate, particularly “poz” (HIV+) men. The motivation behind the italicization and bolding of “erotics” is to confront the silence surrounding the erotic desires and identities of gay Xicanx men, just as Audre Lorde and Ana Castillo have done for their respective communities. One of the major advantages of an interdisciplinary field such as Chicana and Chicano Studies is the freedom with which I can construct my theoretical framework of *hom(e)erotics* from a range of overlapping disciplines. Each of these fields was born out of the powerlessness of a specific population. One of the major aspects of my own theory is a recognition of the effects of the HIV epidemic on the Chicano/Latino gay community, an accounting that scholars such as the late Roque Ramirez and David Román, a performance studies scholar in the American Studies Department at the University of Southern California, began but remains underdeveloped. Each of these theories provides me the necessary tools with which I can begin to construct a framework that contextualizes the desires, pleasures, lives, and deaths of gay poz Chicano men.

I comprise my theory of hom(e)*erotics* of four methods all stemming from major themes from the corpus of John Rechy: 1) Construct a gay Xicanx/Latino literary genealogy with the works of Rechy as the foundation; 2) Read Rechy's works as historical, thus contributing to a history of LGBTQ+ history, including building a historiography of LGBTQ+ Latinx activism; 3) Reconcile and rectify the misogyny of gay men referenced by Rechy in order to adopt and embrace an Anzaldúan, feminist of color, social justice-based masculinity; and 4) Heed Rechy's warnings regarding violent sexual practices and develop healthy, non-shame-based attitudes towards sexuality and eroticism and no longer shaming people living with HIV/AIDS. These methods build on the interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks previously mentioned. The tenets of hom(e)*erotics* provide a decolonial path for Chicano, particularly poz, men to chart their lives free of internalized homophobia, racism, and shame, then empowering them to challenge external forms of oppression.

The main problem I want to address in this dissertation is the issue of gay Xicanx and Latino erasure from the literary canon and from the academic literature on HIV/AIDS. I build hom(e)*erotics* upon Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of homophobia "as the fear of going home,"¹⁶ expanding upon what Audre Lorde theorizes as "the power of the erotic,"¹⁷ and Ana Castillo's concept of an "erotic whole self"¹⁸ in the lives of gay Xicanx/Latino men. The first half of the term "hom(e)" references Anzaldúa's concepts of "homophobia" and "cultural tyranny" from her intricate healing process of "mestiza consciousness" outlined in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). In the second chapter, "Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan," Anzaldúa explains how she experienced homophobia when teaching at a New England university. She found solace with the other lesbian faculty and students who mistakenly (or appropriately) defined homophobia as:

[T]he fear of going home after a residency. And I thought, how apt. Fear of going home. And of not being taken in. We're afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *la Raza*, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged. Most of us unconsciously believe that if we reveal this unacceptable aspect of the self our mother/culture will totally reject us. To avoid rejection, some of us conform to the values of the culture, push the unacceptable parts into the shadows. (*Borderlands* 20)

The heteropatriarchal structure of the Chicano family does not allow its *jotería* to exist, let alone flourish. As the Bronski Beat lyrics in "Smalltown Boy" (1984) describe, queers cannot find the answers or the love we seek or need at home. Faced with intersectional pressures, the queer Chicano man may adopt a hypermasculine persona and live a life in the closet—what Anzaldúa considers the "shadows"—and seek clandestine rendezvous with other like-minded men or he may fulfill his homoerotic desires and choose a journey into Rechy's "cities of night" (*City* 1) to escape the judgment of his family, the state, and the Church.

For the second half of my theory, I invoke two other powerful women of color, Audre Lorde, and her powerful essay, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," published in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (1984), and Ana Castillo's decolonial concept of erotics in her essay, "*La Macha: Toward an Erotic Whole Self*," published in *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (1994). Sexual attraction and practice between two men must reengage with the power of true eros or *erotics*. Lorde and Castillo argue for women to reclaim the erotic as a source of innate power against their oppression. In my theorization of a hom(e)erotics, I italicize and bold the word, "*erotics*" as a method of highlighting Chicano gay "poz" men's internal power of *erotics* and stripping it of religious shame or closeted secrecy. Modeling on Lorde, I endeavor to differentiate our sexual desires

from the pornographic, as she declares, “But pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasizes sensation without feeling” (54). Hom(e)*erotics* allows gay “poz” Chicano men to “feel” once again.

Lorde cites western “civilization” as the source of the devaluation and degradation of women’s bodies, desires, and pleasure. Lorde examines patriarchy through the lens of the negation versus the exploitation of women’s sexuality and carnal desires. Lorde proposes a radical alternative to a “suppression of the erotic,” for this self-censure also serves patriarchy. Self-imposed “chastity belts” are not the path towards liberation, Lorde argues, rather the opposite end of a pornographic spectrum exploiting women in perverse methods—either through the lens of hyper-sexuality serving only heterosexual cisgender male desire or through the lens of the chaste woman who never allows herself any semblance of erotic pleasure.

Gay Xicanx men, superficially, share little with women of color regarding our eroticism. Men, gay or otherwise, perpetuate patriarchy through a myriad of exploitative methods—from those who smuggle underage girls to work in brothels serving men at major sporting events, such as the World Cup and the Olympics, to fashion designers who create clothing in size “00” forcing models and their fans to starve themselves into trendy garb. Both the heterosexual cisgender male human trafficker of girls and the gay cisgender male fashion designer of size “00” perpetuate Lorde’s “male models of power” ultimately exploiting women. So, too, does the gay Xicanx/Latino brother who, through the inaction of compliance, serves patriarchy when his mother commands his sister to serve him. These actions and inactions serve patriarchy through the silencing of cisgender girls and women and subordinating them to positions of servitude.

Furthermore, Lorde’s “male models of power” coerce women to distrust their “deepest and nonrational knowledge” (53), what Anzaldúa calls women’s “*facultad*,” (38) an extrasensory

perception that grows as one moves further towards the margins of bell hooks’ “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”¹⁹ (46). Those people negotiating multiple and intersectional dimensions of oppression develop a heightened awareness—their “facultad”—as a mechanism of survival. Conversely, those who enjoy multiple privileges are often unaware and *are* wearing Peggy McIntosh’s “invisible knapsack of white privilege,”²⁰ obfuscating their recognition of the awkward, uncomfortable, and dangerous situations others endure because of identities based upon racial, ethnic, gendered, sexualized, disability, class, and citizenship status difference. For example, according to the National Center for Transgender Equality:

[A]t least 28 people have been [killed] in 2017 after being attacked for being transgender or being perceived as transgender, up from the 25 such victims we identified in 2016. Of these murders, victims have overwhelmingly been Black transgender women and other transgender women of color, pointing to the compounding effects that factors like race have on discrimination and violence against transgender people

(<https://transequality.org/blog/these-are-the-2017-victims-of-anti-transgender-homicides>).

Lorde’s “male models of power” create a ripple effect upon other categories of identity, compounding the negative outcomes on populations negotiating multiple oppressions.

Ana Castillo, one of the most prolific scholarly and creative writers of Chicana letters, author of the anthology, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (2014), originally published in 1994 and republished in 2014 (I refer to the 2014 version here), contains an essay, “La Macha: Toward an Erotic Whole Self,” which informs my theory of hom(e)*erotics*. Just as Lorde writes to and about Black women, Castillo decries the objectification, hypersexualization, and censoring of the Brown female body. Castillo’s words possess the strength of an archaeologist’s mattocks unearthing the patriarchal roots of women’s oppression—the *Bible*,

particularly the Leviticus book of the Old Testament—with a poet’s deftness. Using interviews, historical and popular culture examples, and personal experience, Castillo illustrates how the institutional structures of organized religion and, later, global capitalism control and regulate women’s bodies.

As Castillo decries the “virgen/puta”²¹ dichotomy that restricts the desires and pleasures of women to roles defined by the men who rule them—fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons—I, too, wish to imbue a true *erotics* into the lives of gay Xicanx men not dictated by the Church, the State, or any other form of institutional violence. In the “Macha” chapter, Castillo cites a respondent’s answer to a sex survey she conducted in which the woman’s husband called her a “whore” for voicing her erotic fantasies and desires. Another respondent speaks openly about her sexual conquests after her divorce, including an affair with another woman, yet admitted to her reticence regarding broaching the topic of safer sex practices. The hesitation for gay Xicanx men to speak openly and honestly regarding our sexual practices, including the use or non-use of prophylaxis, stems from internalized homophobia and a social pressure to adhere to “acceptable” sexual acts. However, the power of the Church and the dialectic of the fear of contracting HIV with the desires and practices of gay men place an S/m ball gag in our mouths when the topic of our sexualities is raised or when we should be asking what our partner’s HIV/health status is. The silence enveloping the sexualities of Xicanx women affects the lives of gay Xicanx men in similarly devastating ways, as the HIV seroconversion rates for gay and bisexual Latinx men continue to rise.

In my research I continue the work of Tomas Almaguer, David Román, Richard Rodriguez, Richard T. Rodriguez, and Horacio Roque Ramirez: How do I define a theory of hom(e)*erotics*? How does hom(e)*erotics* contribute to gay Xicanx men as Audre Lorde’s

theory of the power of the erotics and Ana Castillo's model of an holistic eroticism does for women? In what ways does home(o)*erotics* build and expand Anzaldúa's concept of the "fear of going home" (20)? How is "home" an interpretation of Rechy's "substitute for salvation"? How can a theory of hom(e)*erotics* construct a genealogy of Chicano/Latino gay literary works, beginning with the corpus of John Rechy, the first Chicano author to write openly and unapologetically of homoerotic desires and practices?

The Hom(e)erotic Corpus of John Rechy

The foundation of a gay Xicanx literary genealogy begins with the revolutionary work of John Rechy. Rechy is the first Chicano writer to describe the intersection of race/ethnicity, poverty, religion, patriarchal violence, "cultural tyranny,"²² and homoeroticism. Before his much acclaimed first novel, *City of Night* (1963) was published, Rechy wrote several revealing articles²³ regarding the impoverished state of Chicanas/os in Texas for such national publications as *The Nation* and *Evergreen Review*. While at *The Nation*, Rechy was under the tutelage of Carey McWilliams, the author of *North from Mexico* (1949), arguably the first Chicana/o historical text. Rechy's early writings serve as windows into the false dichotomy of race relations in the U.S. as solely Black/White; they could be considered proto-studies of Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), four decades before the theory even existed, as the essays meet several criterion of the framework.²⁴ Subsequent to the publication of *City of Night*, Rechy produced several novels describing the corrupting nature of power, whether in a queer sadomasochistic leather bar in *Rushes* (1977) or in a cruel "Truth or Dare" type game among "friends" in *The Fourth Angel* (1973). Unfairly characterized as strictly a "gay writer," Rechy oeuvre spans seven decades, but he is often excluded from the canon of Chicana/o literary greats—how often is *City of Night* assigned versus Tomas Rivera's text, *y no se lo trago la tierra*

(1971), or Rodolfo Anaya's novel, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), in Chicana/o Studies classrooms? Of the three, which do Chicana/o literary scholars consider canonical? How many Chicana/o Studies scholars recognize Rechy's contributions to the fledgling historiographies of Chicanas/os? Rechy's eye observed the *de facto* segregation of Chicanas/os in Texas in the 1940s, the marginalization of LGBT people in pre-Stonewall urban settings, the degeneration of the gay male community from one of exalting liberation to that of exclusionary sexual excesses, and the historical oppression of women. Rechy's corpus is a living hom(e)erotic archive.²⁵

The (Overlooked) Intersection of HIV with Gay Xicanx Studies

Rechy is one of the few Chicano creative writers to have broached HIV in a major work, *The Coming of the Night* (1999). HIV is becoming a forgotten issue in the mainstream LGBT movement, despite (or rather *because of*) the rising seroconversion rates among gay and bisexual Black and Chicano/Latino men. A knowledge of the history of HIV is imperative to understanding the lingering stigma and the disconcerting rates of new infections. One early article I highlight is Ronald Bayer's 1985 work, "AIDS and the Gay Community: Between the Spectre and the Promise of Medicine."²⁶ Bayer's article asks a critical ethical question regarding the for-profit healthcare system and the HIV/AIDS epidemic that was beginning to mushroom at the time of the article's publication. Bayer's article serves as a historical marker of the AIDS epidemic. Bayer documents the public reaction in those early years of the disease, which amounted to very little coverage because of the affected groups—gay and bisexual men, IV drug users, Haitians, and later, hemophiliacs.

Furthermore, Bayer argues, "A commitment to protection against the abuses of medicine could not obscure the demands of social justice; the structural barriers to health care had to be eliminated. Human need, not ability to pay, it was argued, should drive the health care system"

(582). This is a critical dimension to explore as the first drugs to fend off the virus would cost extraordinary amounts of financial resources. The first drugs to actually deliver long-term positive outcomes would not be released to the public until 1996—the “cocktail” of different medications. However, the average working-class or middle-class person with no access to health insurance would not be able to afford a month’s worth of medication, which could range in the thousands of dollars. Another issue Bayer documents is the trepidation some gay leaders in embracing HIV as a cause, thus further pathologizing homosexual desire and people. Upon first reading this, I became enraged at the callous disregard for people living with HIV/AIDS. However, to put this in historical context, the APA had only recently declassified homosexuality from the conditions listed as “abnormal” by the American Psychological and American Psychiatric Associations.²⁷ What I find interesting about Bayer’s article is that he engages in deficit language in defending the HIV-afflicted community, “Reports began to appear that detailed the refusal of prison guards, undertakers, garbage collectors, and even health care workers to perform their duties with those *suspected* [emphasis added] of having AIDS as well as with AIDS patients themselves” (588). The use of the term, “suspected,” is rooted in criminalization. Even though Bayer is attributing this action to the people discriminating against people living HIV/AIDS, the term promotes the discourse of criminalization of the HIV body and, by extension, the desires that emanate from the body.²⁸ This is apparent in today’s court rulings against HIV positive convicted of not disclosing their serostatus before engaging in consensual sexual activity.²⁹

Bayer continues to document the history of HIV in the United States and the vitriol spewed by religious leaders and conservative political leaders. The history of HIV, I argue, is a definitive chapter of queer history as it decimated the gay male population and fomented radical

social activism within groups such as Queer Nation and the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power (ACT-UP!). Bayer also historicizes the rift in the gay community—one camp advocating monogamy and abstinence and the opposing camp, which included John Rechy, “How eagerly do even perhaps ‘good heterosexuals’ impose grim sentences of abstinence on others” (595). Gay Xicanx living with HIV bear the double stigma of historical trauma. Immigration officials sprayed incoming Mexican women and men with dangerous chemicals, including Zyklon B, as officials assumed they were carrying lice and infectious diseases.³⁰ People living with HIV have survived the stigma of proposed quarantine and the current legal trend of criminalization. Bayer’s article ultimately broaches issues of state power and intrusion and surveillance versus civil liberties and sexual desires and practices.

I highlight the work of Bayer as it historicizes the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a social issue, as well as a medical emergency. The disease claimed a generation of gay men—our own Holocaust.³¹ Society at-large exacerbated the problem of self-marginalization with the social hysteria and the extreme homophobia that ensued because of the outbreak of the so-called “gay cancer” in the 1980s. Heterosexual Americans have ostracized few other communities like gay men dying of AIDS during the 1980s. The mainstream news coverage of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s consisted of fear, confusion, and apathy, e.g., *The New York Times*’ first article about HIV, titled “Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals,”³² Popular media cultural productions broaching HIV/AIDS from the early 1980s to the early 1990s framed the narrative in a white, usually upper-class cultural context. Films like *An Early Frost* (1985), *Longtime Companion* (1989), *Philadelphia* (1993), and *It’s My Party* (1996), all fit the white, homonormative,³³ upper-class male model which Lisa Duggan describes as, “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising

the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (179). Rarely, if ever, did mainstream media outlets contextualize the AIDS epidemic in working-class communities of color.

Early writings on HIV rarely, if ever, intersect race with the epidemic. This corresponds to White feminists marginalizing women of color during the women’s rights movement. To overcome this racial barrier, I have established one of the primary tasks of home(o)*erotics* to create a familiarity with the existing Chicana/o literature broaching HIV, as certain Chicana and Chicano creative writers represent the vanguard in the arena of HIV subjectivity. To that end, I focus on the novels and memoir of John Rechy. I consider Rechy a groundbreaking Chicano gay writer, who, as this dissertation will show, marginalized by Chicano academics because of his writings and their overt representation of homoerotic male desire. However, even among mainstream gay writers, where Rechy has now become canonical, he remains somewhat of an outlier, for his books often reference both his home community of El Paso, Texas, or feature Mexican and Chicano characters—something unheard of especially in early white gay literature. Rechy’s writings on discrimination against Chicanas/os, the pre-Stonewall gay subculture, internalized and externalized homophobia, HIV/AIDS, and gender bias map his work as counterhegemonic.

A Cartography of Chicana/o Queer Texts: Chicana Lesbians Decolonizing and Queering the Field as the Men Cling to Patriarchy or Succumb to HIV

Because I wish to educate and speak to my community—the Chicana/o community at large and Chicano gay men specifically— regarding same-sex erotic desire and HIV/AIDS, my dissertation will centralize the Chicana/o Studies perspective. The scholars who created the discipline of Chicana and Chicano Studies sought a homeland free of U.S. American white

supremacy. However, the Chicano homeland known as Aztlan³⁴ marginalized feminist Chicanas and LGBT Chicanas and Chicanos because of the patriarchy imbued within Chicano cultural nationalism, the ideology conceived to unify Chicanas/os under a common mythology, Chicana feminists and Chicana lesbian feminists³⁵ were the first to challenge the internal patriarchy of our movement, of our discipline, of our *homes*, seeking gender and sexual equity through transformation.

A few brave Chicano/Latino male scholars ventured into the taboo territory of homosexuality and HIV/AIDS. Their work makes it possible for me to develop my own theory of hom(e)erotics. Tomas Almaguer's cartography of homoerotic desires of gay Xicanx men, "Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior" (1991),³⁶ broke new ground, yet his analysis did not include the forbidden territory of HIV. Almaguer's "Chicano Men" relies primarily on social science data and on the work of Cherríe Moraga; he laments the dearth of scholarly and creative writings by gay Xicanx authors in relation to the output of Chicana lesbians. "Chicano Men" stands as one of the earliest, most critical works on Chicano gay men and recognizes the works of John Rechy, Arturo Islas, and Richard Rodriguez. Years later, I am attempting to extend the legacy of the few scholars examining Chicano homoeroticism by bridging their works along with the challenges put forth by Cherríe Moraga at the 2008 NACCS Joto Caucus Conference³⁷ and Dr. Alicia Gaspar de Alba in her article, "Thirty Years of Chicana/Latina Lesbian Literary Production," in which the scholar issues a challenge to gay Xicanx/Latino men to construct a body of work comparable to the layered creative and scholarly works produced by Chicana and Latina lesbians.

Chicana lesbian feminist theory is the central philosophy of my theory of hom(e)erotics. The voices of Chicana lesbians broke through patriarchal chains with the release of *This Bridge*

Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (1981) and the subsequent writings by Chicana feminist lesbians, from creative works such as Terri de la Peña's novel, *Margins* (1993), to scholarly works such as Elle D. Hernández's text, *Postnationalism in Chicana/o Literature and Culture* (2009). Scholars such as Juan Bruce-Novoa³⁸ began to contribute to a gay Xicanx ethos, but it was not until the early 1990s when a substantial study examining the eroticism of gay and bisexual Chicano men became available.

The controversial yet engaging Richard Rodriguez provides another gay Xicanx perspective specific to the home and the HIV/AIDS epidemic in his essay, "Late Victorians," published in his collection, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* (1992).³⁹ In this essay, Rodriguez positions himself as a reporter from the front lines of Ground Zero during the AIDS epidemic—San Francisco. Rodriguez's position could also be interpreted as a survivor of war, one who is catapulted into a state of shocking disbelief at the carnage at his feet. What could it have been like for a gay man living/surviving in the urban centers of the U.S. during the peak of AIDS-related deaths? The gay male community enjoyed the sexual excesses of the 1970s and suffered the horrific fatalities of the 1980s/1990s. The essay's title, "Late Victorians," references the architecture of the city's dwellings and the passing of a generation of gay men who retreated from the radical activism of such groups as The Mattachine Society⁴⁰ and ACT-UP!⁴¹ to gaudily decorated coffins of domesticity. As feminists escaped the chains of the home, gay men who witnessed their brethren's demise reclaimed the same space as some sort of homonormative shield against the burgeoning plague.

In terms of examining the intersection of Chicana/o/Latina/o scholarship with HIV, Román has ventured into this taboo territory as no other Latino academic has with the exception of Roque Ramirez. Roman's chapter, "Teatro Viva!—Latino Performance and the Politics of

AIDS in Los Angeles,” from his groundbreaking text, *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS* (1998), analyzes Latino theatrical productions of the early 1990s. Román is particularly critical of the cultural nationalism of the much-lauded theater troupe, Culture Clash⁴², as homophobic and AIDS-phobic, in its performance entitled, *S.O.S.* Conversely, Román celebrates the queer-positivity and recognition of HIV in the play, *Deep in the Crotch of My Latino Psyche*, featuring the talents of Luis Alfaro, Alberto “Beto” Araiza, and Monica Palacios. Román asserts the potential power of teatro in terms of education of queer sexuality and HIV within a Latina/o cultural context.

Another important text broaching queer Chicano subjectivity is the article, “The ‘Macho’ Body as Social Malinche,” by Gabriel S. Estrada and included in Gaspar de Alba’s important anthology, *Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture and Chicana/o Sexualities* (2003). This critical article locates gay Xicanx subjectivity beyond neoliberal notions of “rights” and moves queer Chicanos towards a Mexica-Nahuatl based framework of masculinity, old age, femininity, and youth. Estrada invokes the sacred properties of the four directions as a repositioning of queer Chicano masculinity and desire. A return to indigeneity is crucial for the health of queer indigenous, according to Estrada. Estrada critiques Rechy and Islas for not *overtly* intersecting Chicanidad and jotería, but I argue these two authors still map homoerotic Chicano male desire as no other writers had previously. Importantly, Estrada’s contribution to queer Chicano subjectivity orients consciousness in an indigenous framework; however, I argue we need a broader indigenous paradigm instead of focusing solely on a Mexica worldview.

This leads me to interrogate the current state of intersectional gay Xicanx HIV scholarship. Where are the images of working-class queer people of color negotiating HIV/AIDS? The late scholar, Roque Ramirez, documents the silence that follows gay Latino

living with HIV men even into death in his article, “Gay Latino Histories/Dying to be Remembered: AIDS Obituaries, Public Memory, and the Queer Latino Archive” (2010).⁴³ Roque Ramirez poses the question, “How do queer Latinos, both the living and the dead, enter historical consciousness in this new millennium, almost thirty years in the ongoing AIDS pandemic?” (104). Roque Ramirez’s interrogation of gay Latino male existence provides an analysis of the obituary of Felix Velarde-Muñoz, a popular, young Latino lawyer and Bay Area civil rights activist who succumbed to AIDS in 1984. Velarde-Muñoz represents the first death of a Latino caused by AIDS complications whose obituary appeared in the *Bay Area Reporter*, a San Francisco-area LGBT newspaper. The obituary provides details about Velarde’s academic and professional life but nothing regarding his family or personal life. How many other Brown queer “poz” voices are waiting to be exhumed?

Although their research centers on life and death issues, the research of Almaguer, Román, Rodriguez, Estrada, and Roque Ramirez I cite here represents an anomaly in Chicana/o Studies, for the field has neglected the issue of HIV/AIDS. The flagship journal of the discipline, *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, has published one article broaching HIV during the entire thirty-five year breadth of the disease, an article, “‘My Bones Shine in the Dark’: AIDS and the De-Scripture of Chicano Queer in the Work of Gil Cuadros” (2007), analyzing the work of Gil Cuadros, who succumbed to AIDS complications in 1996.⁴⁴ Other than Roque Ramirez and Román, the most substantive treatment of HIV/AIDS from a gay Xicanx perspective is located in *Queer in Aztlán: Gay Chicano Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* (2013), an anthology edited by one of the earliest Chicana feminists, San Diego State University professor, Dr. Adelaida del Castillo. The anthology highlights personal narratives of gay Xicanx living with HIV, as well as a posthumous piece by the aforementioned

Cuadros, but its publication date in 2013 (not to mention that its editor is a Chicana feminist) shows to what degree Chicano gay men were not producing a critical mass of literary or academic work in the 20th century. Arguably, the previous forty years were all about Chicana lesbian writers and theorists, and it is to theorists like Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Emma Pérez, and others that many young Chicano gay men owe their concientización, or, consciousness raising, as queer brown bodies positioned at the margin of the margins.

The work of the aforementioned male scholars would not be possible if it had not been for the paradigm-shifting work of Chicana lesbian feminists. Although these women battled and negotiated multiple oppressions, including the home, Chicana lesbians asserted their agency and documented their own realities. The work of Chicana lesbian feminists challenged the patriarchy, racism, and homophobia of the Chicana/o Movement, traditional Chicano culture, and the broader society. Chicana lesbian feminist writings represent a rupture swallowing archaic, colonial ways of thinking about gender. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa created this fissure when they collaborated to create the co-edited anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981). *This Bridge* is not technically a Chicana lesbian feminist text, but its editors are two pillars of this theoretical movement. In the introduction, Moraga and Anzaldúa comment on the rationale for the anthology, “We want to create a definition that expands what ‘feminist’ means to us” (xxiii). *This Bridge* began the cartography of mapping the intersection of sexuality, race, class, and gender, as it applied to women and lesbians of color.

In 1983, South End Press published Moraga’s *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*. Moraga problematizes her lesbian desires with race, gender, and class, particularly her status as a “half-breed” Chicana. Moraga argues that our erotic desires as queer

people force us to write, and her text, a mixture of prose and poetry, was a compromise so a multitude of readers could understand her experiences as a Chicana lesbian. Moraga speaks intimately of the memories of her mother and father. For many of us, this intimacy with our family is the source of our desires as adults. In our Judeo-Christian society, we loathe to associate our sexualities with our families, particularly our parents. The conversation with her mother regarding Moraga's father's true sexuality is uncomfortable, but this honesty paved the way for gay and lesbian Chicanas/os to speak their realities. Moraga's experiential writings clash with the narrow Chicano Movement conceptualization of masculinity, heterosexuality, and genetic familia.

Aunt Lute Press published the paradigm-shifting text by Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* in 1987. This revolutionary work of theory, poetry, history, and autobiographical narrative represents the vanguard of writing about living in-between worlds, in a reality where identities are constantly in flux—the indigenous concept of nepantla. Anzaldúa describes a painful process of self-discovery throughout the first seven chapters of the text: recognizing borders, the two faces of the Shadow Beast (Rebel and Monster), entering the serpent, the Coatlicue State, (un)taming wild tongues, writing with red and black ink, and the final culmination of mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa incorporates pre-Cuauhtemoc belief systems to challenge our entrenched system of White Supremacy and represents a decolonial methodology for Chicanas and Chicanos. The second half of the text includes works of poetry that are both personal and historical in scope.

Third Woman Press published another pivotal work of Chicana lesbian writings, the anthology, *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mother Warned Us About* (1991), edited by Carla Trujillo. The anthology contains a cornucopia of Chicana lesbian writers—Moraga, Anzaldúa,

Terri de la Peña, Ana Castillo, Emma Pérez, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, and others. In the introduction, Trujillo argues for the need for a specific collection of *Chicana* lesbian writings, as she was simply “teased” by the collection of works in the earlier anthology, *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians* (1987) edited by Juanita Ramos. Far from embracing nationalism, Trujillo argues that the specificity of Chicana culture demands an anthology of Chicana perspectives. Chicana lesbian experiences, thus, are heterogeneous; Trujillo argues that we must know ourselves before we can begin to build a pan-Latinidad. Furthermore, Chicanas and Chicanos negotiate a legacy of colonialism unlike other Latina/o groups.

South End Press published Moraga’s next collection of writings, *The Last Generation*, in 1993. Like *Loving in the War Years*, Moraga fuses prose and poetry to construct her argument in *The Last Generation*. I focus on her foundational essay, “Queer Aztlán: The Re-formation of Chicano Tribe.” What would the early architects of the Chicano Movement think of a “queer Aztlán” had it been posited in the late 1960s/early 1970s? Would they have reconsidered their patriarchy and homophobia had they read Rechy’s early novels? Ultimately, Moraga attempts to “re-form” the original concept in her essay. Although Moraga craved to join the Chicana/o activists, her lesbian identity is what engaged her political consciousness (146). The queering of the Chicano Movement demands more than the simple addition of Chicana lesbians and Chicano gay men to its historiography. Although LGBT Chicanas/os were not included in the original “Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” Moraga recreates the founding vision of those brave souls who dared to write the Planes that provided the architecture for the Chicano Movement. Her lesbian desires allow her to remap Aztlán as more than just the U.S. Southwest. With this lesbian-centered geography, Moraga includes the terrain of her body and the associated erotic pleasure into a “queer Plan.”

Among her many works, Emma Pérez offers three important texts. First, Pérez's essay, "Sexuality and Discourse: Notes from a Chicana Survivor," (1991) introduces the radical concept of "sitio y lengua." This concept allows Chicana lesbians to assert their positionality and their voice within our patriarchal, racist, homophobic society. Pérez's concept of "*un sitio y una lengua* (a space and language)...rejects colonial ideology and the by-products of colonialism and capitalist patriarchy—sexism, racism, homophobia, etc." (161). Pérez's concept of a person's "sitio y lengua" is analogous to asserting one's positionality and is critical for a person negotiating multiple oppressions. Secondly, her book, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, (1999) offers a methodological and theoretical tool for excavating the stories of Chicanas buried under layers of racism, misogyny, and homophobia. Pérez argues the decolonial imaginary represents the time lag between the colonial and the postcolonial. The decolonial imaginary can be described as the interstitial, "unofficial" spaces where Chicanas' voices reside, like Roque Ramirez's work with gay Latino AIDS obituaries. Pérez's revolutionary concept of a "decolonial imaginary" put forth in her text, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999) allows for unconventional, historiographical methodologies in order to construct a queer of color history. Because women, particularly women of color and by extension, queer persons of color, are missing from the "official" archives of history, queer persons of color must search interstitial spaces to construct our memories in order to add them to the historical record. Lastly, her essay, "Decolonial Border Queers: Case Studies of Chicana/o Lesbians, Gay Men, and Transgender Folks in El Paso/Juárez," published in the anthology, *Performing the U.S. Latina and Latino Borderlands* (2012), edited by Arturo J. Aldama, Chela Sandoval, and Peter J. García presents the voices of queer Chicanas/os negotiating their lives along the Texas/New Mexico/Mexico border. Pérez's

essay is a powerful work broaching the topic of LGT Chicana/o identity and life. Perez's case studies are powerful examples of the complexity of juggling seemingly contradictory factors of identity—Brown and Queer—among others.

Other Theoretical Interventions

Black Lesbian Feminism

Complementing the vast works of Chicana lesbian feminists, Black feminists greatly contributed to the landscape of works speaking truth to power. Black feminism is critical to my theorization of a hom(e)erotics, as Black women, along with other women of color, created an intersectional nexus incorporating gender, race, class, and sexuality. One of the major contributions to the analysis of women of color and their marginality is Patricia Hill Collins' text, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Hill Collins' preface broaches a concept that is relevant to the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies, which is a connection to the community and her theoretical contribution of the “*matrix of domination* [which she] describes [as] this overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained” (227-228). Understanding how social institutions organize intersecting oppressions is critical to my theory of hom(e)erotics in which an HIV+ status adds another layer of oppression upon gay Xicanx/Latino men.

One of the most prolific and accessible Black feminist intellectuals is bell hooks. According to hooks, popular culture is “where the pedagogy is, where the learning is” (*Cultural Criticism and Transformation*). In this lecture, hooks dissects cultural productions of the 1990s, which reinscribe her conceptual framework of a “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,” to factor in colonialism and its effects on our current world. hooks' texts *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* and *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* are both

critical to my theorization of hom(e)*erotics*. In plain, direct language, hooks delivers a powerful argument for the benefits of everyone espousing and practicing feminist politics. One of the critical subtopics hooks dissects is that of a feminist-based masculinity, which is central to my theoretical framework. hooks critiques gay male sexuality for similar reasons as her analysis of heterosexual male practices based on power and, often, abuse in some of its manifestations. hooks views mainstream gay male sexual practices as pornographic rather than erotic because of the abuse of power from one man onto another and does not witness any true sense of intimacy. I address this issue of power imbalance with my theory of hom(e)*erotics*, which also includes an analysis of important legal cases pertaining to gay Xicanx/Latinos.

Lat Crit Theory

Included in my hom(e)*erotic* genealogy is a timeline of critical legal cases that an analysis of gay Xicanx/Latinos demands. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a field of study that examines our legal system as it intersects with race, racism, and power. According to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction, 2nd ed.* (2012): “Critical race theory sprang up in the 1970s, as a number of lawyers, activists, and legal scholars across the country realized, more or less simultaneously, that the heady advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s had stalled and...were being rolled back” (4).

CRT centralizes race and racism in all analyses of power inequality. Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) expands the scope of CRT by focusing on additional issues affecting a pan-Latina/o population, such as cultural and linguistic differences, status of immigration, and sexuality. CRT and LatCrit employ the strategy of “counterstorytelling” to expose the inequalities based on race and racism. Counterstories are narratives written to challenge the

dominant group's belief in accepted so-called "truths" that are based on the endemic racism in our society. Daniel Solórzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal, along with Tara Yosso, are three of the leading scholars of LatCrit. In their article, "Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and LatCrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context," Solórzano and Delgado Bernal incorporate oral histories from students who participated in the East Los Angeles school walkouts of 1968 and the hunger strike for the creation of a Chicana and Chicano Studies department at UCLA in 1993 to create "counterstories"⁴⁵ to illustrate examples of transformational resistance in their article, LatCrit begins to branch out and examine facets of identity that CRT neglects; LatCrit addresses the population of Latinas/os more holistically than CRT.

To reiterate, LatCrit focuses on a wider breadth of issues than CRT, some significant to Latinas/os and other people of color, such as language attrition, accent, phenotype, citizenship status, and sexuality. Because of the inherent racism of the current educational system, Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso merge two powerful theoretical and practical perspectives—critical pedagogy and CRT/LatCrit Theory—as a means to realize outcomes based on social justice for historically oppressed student populations in their study, "Maintaining Social Justice Hopes within Academic Realities: A Freirean Approach to Critical Race/LatCrit Pedagogy." Critical theory, for the authors, represents a set of strategies to achieve social justice transformation, not reforms, for marginalized populations in educational settings. A LatCrit analysis of the educational experiences of gay Xicanx and Latinos intersects structural racism with other such critical factors, such as poverty, violence, and homophobic bullying. Negotiating burgeoning homoerotic desires in a racist educational system requires further analytical tools to build a holistic framework to examine the intersectionality of race/racism and

homosexuality/homophobia. A new branch of CRT—Queer Critical Race Theory (Queer Crit)—adds another dimensional to my analysis.

Queer Crit Theory

Complementing LatCrit Theory is a relatively new branch of theory stemming from CRT—Queer Crit Theory (Queer Crit). Mitsunori Misawa explicates the tenets⁴⁶ of queer crit theory as a queer social justice branch of CRT. Because CRT centralizes the race and racism in any discourse of social justice, so does queer crit and intersects these components with sexual orientation, homophobia, and heteronormativity. In “Social Justice Narrative Inquiry: A Queer Crit Perspective” (2012), Misawa outlines the specific tenets of queer crit theory. Queer crit adds the dimension of sexual orientation to CRT’s thorough examination of race and racism and, like the field of Chicana/o Studies, focuses on social justice but specifically for queer people of color.

Misawa asks in his work “Musing on Controversial Intersections of Positionality: A Queer Crit Perspective in Adult and Continuing Education” (2010), “When both these elements are combined [race and sexual orientation], can we still have dialogues about both without discounting the other?” (187-188). Misawa’s work challenges the lack of racial analysis of traditional queer theory as compared to Queer Crit, as the former does not factor his identity as a person of color in any substantive manner. Queer Crit demands a racial analysis when broaching homosexuality and its social stigmas. Hector “Arlene” Díaz, one of Emma Pérez’s “border queers” was a working-class, transgender Chicana whose killer shot her on the U.S-Mexico border. Arlene does not inhabit the same reality as Caitlyn Jenner, a privileged, White transgender woman. Queer Crit provides the tools to map the stark differences of their social

locations on Hill Collins' "matrix of domination" (227). Finally, I weave another thread into my tapestry of hom(e)*erotics* broaching the concept of gender fluidity and non-patriarchal forms of masculinity.

Queer Indigenous Studies

My theory of hom(e)*erotics* includes the powerful theoretical frameworks of Queer Indigenous Studies. The mythologies of Mexica culture and, to a lesser extent, Maya culture are woven into the fabric of Chicana and Chicano Studies as a method of countering the colonization of Iberian hegemony. However, the notion of all Chicanas and Chicanos uniting under the banner of Aztlan represents a similar hegemonic model for other indigenous peoples. To expand the parameters of Chicana and Chicano Studies pedagogy, I argue that a Queer Indigenous framework is as critical to my theory of hom(e)*erotics* as any other ingredient, as studying other indigenous cultures can broaden the discourse of gender and sexual identity for LGBTQ Chicanas and Chicanos. For example, Deborah Miranda's article, "Extermination of the *Joyas*: Gendercide in Spanish California" (2010), informs the reader of a "third gender" (256), which represented an affront to the Catholic explorers who waged a campaign of intentional genocide against these indigenous cisgender men who assumed women's roles. Another example is the third gender found in Juchitán, Mexico amongst the Zapotec indigenous group.⁴⁷ Such works also help to dispel the erroneous assumption that LGBTQ sexuality is somehow foreign but is actually rooted within the multiplicity of indigeneity. Along with scholars from Chicana and Black feminism, LatCrit, and Queer Crit, queer indigenous scholars represent the vanguard in decolonial thought *and* praxis. By invoking the past, queer indigenous scholars are broadening the potential realities for Chicano gay "poz" men and Chicana lesbians.

Other works by scholars are expanding the concept of gender and sexuality by describing the past and current practices of tribes in North America. For example, Will Roscoe paints the portrait of a different-gendered member of the Zuni tribe in *The Zuni Man-Woman* (1992). In *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (2008), Roscoe documents the tribes in North America that considered gender and sexuality as fluid rather than a binary. According to Roscoe, approximately three-fourths of known tribes integrated gender and/or sexual fluidity into their worldviews. Margo Tamez problematizes border identity beyond the Mexican/Anglo binary along the U.S-Mexico border with her article, “Place and Perspective in the Shadow of the Wall: Recovering Ndé Knowledge, and Self-Determination in Texas” (2013). The practices of North American indigenous tribes represent a diversity of genders and sexualities—well before the so-called “cutting edge” writings of white queer theory. Thus, Queer Indigenous Studies allows for my theory of hom(e)erotics to destigmatize same-sex erotic desire while claiming our rightful place in our communities. By broadening and redefining gender and sexual roles from an indigenous, decolonial space, gay “poz” and HIV- (“neg”) Chicano/Latino men can begin to unlearn the patriarchy and misogyny we inherit from our families and society at-large. Rechy’s work, though not indigenous-based, exemplifies a true love for women; they are never one-dimensional caricatures. Applying Queer Indigenous Studies frameworks to my theory of hom(e)erotics allows for a broader discourse of gender and sexuality, one rooted in an historical framework located within familiar geographies and cultures.

Decolonial Practices/New Mestiza Methods

During the height of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s-1990s, biological families shunned their gay children and siblings living with HIV. Black and Latina Lesbians, however, cast aside gendered differences and became the caretakers to their dying brethren.⁴⁸ These brave women

led the way in critical areas of the AIDS crisis, particularly activism and caretaking. As Rechy implores, gay men must honor these lesbians of color for their heroic efforts during one of the most frightening and tragic periods of gay history, 1981-1996, the time before the advent of the life-saving AIDS cocktails. Furthermore, gay Xicanx scholars must recognize Chicana and other lesbians of color for blazing the trail with the creation of revolutionary theoretical works, thus creating a path for gay male scholars to follow. The bravery of the lesbians who cared for their dying hermanos is analagous to the courageous writings of those whose works are the foundation of my theory of hom(e)erotics. This work recognizes the bravery of Almaguer, Román, Roque Ramirez, John Rechy, and the other scholars and creative writers who dared venture into the taboo territory of homoerotic desire and HIV/AIDS.

Gloria Anzaldúa's groundbreaking text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), introduces myriad methods contributing to the concept of decolonizing one's mind, body, and soul. Recognizing borders, nepantla, cultural tyranny, "homophobia,"⁴⁹ entering the serpent, the two faces of the Shadow Beast, Coatlicue State, taming wild tongues, and writing in red/black ink all culminate in the transformative state of being Anzaldúa calls mestiza consciousness. Mestiza consciousness represents a state of being that decolonizes one's self from the internal and external traumas people of color, particularly LGBT people of color, inflict on one another and themselves. Mestiza consciousness not only recognizes but also celebrates contradictions and ambiguities among people of color negotiating legacies of colonialism. To achieve mestiza consciousness, Anzaldúa forces Chicanas and Chicanos to look deeply into our reflections and recognize that the harm we have inflicted on others. Part of being colonized is to become the colonizer. If we only cast ourselves in the role of "victim," then we will never achieve a spiritual, mental, and emotional state of decolonization.

Fifteen years later, Anzaldúa presented another radical decolonial practice—conocimiento—in the essay, “Now Let Us Shift... The Path of Conocimiento... Inner Work, Public Acts,” published in the anthology she and AnaLouise Keating edited, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (2002). Anzaldúa defines her concept of conocimiento as “that aspect of consciousness urging you to act on the knowledge gained” (577). The stages preceding conocimiento are el arrebatado, nepantla, the Coatlicue State, el compromiso, putting Coyolxauhqui together, and a clash of realities. El arrebatado represents a rupture, a significant event to throw a person out of a person’s routine, forcing them on the path towards conocimiento. In her essay, Anzaldúa uses the metaphor of a mugging to jolt her from the familiar; for (too) many gay men it is when a clinician tells us we are HIV-positive. Nepantla, one of Anzaldúa’s most recognized concepts, represents a liminal space between two opposite polarities. After being shocked out of our zone of familiarity, we exist in a state of flux between what is known and the unknown. Knowing we will forever endure the stigmatic label of “HIV positive,” we regret past choices and fear future uncertainties. Coatlicue, “She Who Wears a Serpent Skirt,” the Mesoamerican female deity of life, death, and regeneration with the head of two serpents, eagle talons, and who wears a necklace of human hearts and hands, also figures greatly in Anzaldúan theory with the “Coatlicue State.” The uncertainty and the fear from living in nepantla cause us to withdraw into ourselves as we self-flagellate psychically and fall into our addictions rather than confront our fears and anger. After some time, we awaken from our paralyzed state realizing our trauma is also our source of strength. What Anzaldúa calls “the call...el compromiso...the crossing and conversion” (554) is our spirit leaving our body as we negotiate trauma (our HIV-positive diagnosis) because of the realization of our physical limitations, perhaps because of the nausea or diarrhea caused by the HIV meds. We recognize

our mortality. We locate ourselves on a bridge, “a barrier and point of transformation” (Anzaldúa 537). We learn to adjust to the toxic medications; the side effects force us to care for ourselves holistically. We stop drinking and doing drugs. We eat plant-based and less fried foods. We meditate and go for long walks. Although the virus lives within us, we are healthier than before the *arrebato* of the diagnosis, and we are now able to cross the bridge. Anzaldúa bases the fifth stage, “putting Coyolxauhqui⁵⁰ together...new personal and collective ‘stories’” (558) upon the trope of Frankenstein. We write our own stories and discover ones countering the dominant narrative of our oppressive culture. For gay Chicanos, we read John Rechy, Arturo Islas, Michael Nava, Gil Cuadros, and Benjamin Saenz and realize we are not the first to experience the strangeness of homoeroticism. We read Chicana feminist writings and marvel at their bravery. The more we read, the more we contextualize our shard of a story in the larger mosaic of *jotería* identity. The sixth stage is what Anzaldúa calls, “the blow up...a clash of realities,” and represents a crossroads. As a queer person of color, I have had to make the difficult decision of retreating into the safety of my intersectional tribe, or do I, as Anzaldúa does, become a bridge between different factions, white queer people and cisgender heterosexual Chicanas/os and Latinas/os? The path of *conocimiento* requires us to mediate, “so that the whole world many become un pueblo” (Anzaldúa 568).

The seventh, but not final (the stages of *conocimiento* are cyclical and may repeat for we experience multiple ruptures in our lives), stage Anzaldúa names, “shifting realities...acting out the vision or spiritual activism” (568). A critical part of *conocimiento*, like *mestiza* consciousness, is the exploration of and engagement with non-Western ideologies in order to reconnect our minds, bodies, and spirits. According to Anzaldúa, to achieve healing and growth, we must move beyond identity politics in order to cross the bridge between “nos/otras” (570).

This work is spiritual activism (Anzaldúa 572). Mestiza consciousness and *conocimiento* are two powerful decolonial methods combatting the Western colonial forces of White supremacy and patriarchy. Anzaldúa, more importantly, recognizes the damage and harm Chicanas and Chicanos inflict upon each other and themselves. Anzaldúa's processes of mestiza consciousness and *conocimiento* are difficult, painful processes of transformative healing, ones which gay Xicanx men need in order to (re)connect our spiritual and erotic desires.

Chela Sandoval's revolutionary concept of "methodology of the oppressed," from her book of the same name and published in 2000, is yet another set of tools, or technologies, with which marginalized people can decolonize themselves. Like Anzaldúa's difficult processes of mestiza consciousness and *conocimiento*, Sandoval's path towards this non-Western state of enlightenment is arduous. The methodology of the oppressed includes the technologies of radical semiology, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, democratics, and differential movement. Radical semiology and deconstruction are what Sandoval categorizes as "inner" technologies, while the last three are "outer" technologies. The first two processes of radical semiology and deconstruction are internal, which are the reading of signs with the goal of social justice liberation and separating form from concept to achieve a decolonial goal. For example, the term, "Chicana/o," historically, represented an ethnic slur, evoking the ideas of a criminal, a person of poor pedigree in a person's mind. Before engaging in radical semiology, Chicanas/os accepted the negativity of the term. However, as Chicana/o activists empowered themselves through community organizing, they adopted the term by "reading" or deciphering the power of the term. These same activists applied the technology of deconstruction through the separation of the sign from its signifier, thus rejecting the original negative meaning.

The third technology, meta-ideologizing, is external or “outer” and engages the person towards activism in social justice movements and represents a method of subversion as it “moves in, through, then outside of dominant ideology” (Sandoval 111). Engaging the term, “Chicana/o” through meta-ideologizing redefines this once negative as one of revolution. By applying these first three technologies, Chicanas/os reclaimed the term as a political and cultural identity, one based upon a dedication to uplifting their community through a celebration of Mexican/Chicana/o culture. The fourth technology, democratics, is a practical application of love based on the equality of social realities and is a utilization of the first three steps. After reading the power of the original, negative meaning of “Chicana/o” through radical semiology, deconstruction allowed activists to separate the original meaning from the word, or sign. Meta-ideologizing empowered activists to imbue “Chicana/o” with a revolutionary ethos. Democratics is the technology of activism and social justice for the population who are now empowered “Chicanas/os,” not criminals or self-hating “vendidas/os,” or sell-outs. The student activists of the East LA Blowouts of 1968 engaged democratics as the technology to achieve their demands of educational parity from a white supremacist school board. The fifth technology is differential movement; the method or “clutch” a person utilizes to negotiate each of the first four technologies of the methodology of the oppressed. Differential movement is a higher form of consciousness allowing us to “change gears” of the first four technologies, which allows us to switch between any of the four as new critical social issues arise. Sandoval’s five technologies represents a “punctum” through which a person can challenge colonial modes of thought in order to achieve a liberatory state of being, a “differential consciousness” (147).

A new edition of *This Bridge* (2015) commemorates over three decades of decolonial praxis originating from lesbians of color. Moraga’s words from *This Bridge* (2015) are prescient

for my work, “A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (23). Moraga demands that our erotic desires are as critical as our other desires and must be included in any analysis of our subjectivities. Moraga’s “theory in the flesh” speaks to an intersectional lens that I must employ in order to map the lives Chicano “poz” men and Chicano literary works in any accurate fashion. I can map the desires of Chicano gay literary characters by applying Moraga’s “theory in the flesh,” particularly to the texts of Rechy, who practiced decolonial methods in his earliest writings regarding the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and sexuality.

In the introduction of *[Un]Framing the “Bad Woman”: Sor Juana, Malinche, Coyolxauhqui, and Other Rebels with a Cause*, “Activist Scholarship and the Historical Vortex of the ‘Bad Woman,’” Gaspar de Alba creates her own methodology in how to “do” cultural Chicana/o Studies. Drawing on Michel Foucault, Stuart Hall, and Emma Pérez, Gaspar de Alba argues for a radical new methodology. “This is an *activist methodology*, engaged in for a specific political purpose: to raise awareness, to effect social change, to represent, to give voice, to make visible, to expose, to problem-solve, to bridge community needs with academic resources” (4). Evident in Gaspar de Alba’s writings is a social justice praxis engaging public consciousness surrounding the epidemic of murdered women of Juárez, Mexico and the intersection with patriarchy, racism, and global capital. I plan to employ Gaspar de Alba’s “activist methodology” for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS in the gay Xicanx/Latino community. This “activist methodology” is crucial for theorizing a decolonial process that fulfills the mission of Chicana and Chicano Studies—to give back to the community. Additionally, Gaspar de Alba builds on Anzaldúa’s *conocimiento* by introducing her theory of

re-conocimiento, or “radical recognition” (257). Gaspar de Alba’s describes her concept of *re-conocimiento* as, “takes that process [Anzaldúa’s *conocimiento*] outside the self and involves perceiving, naming, knowing, accepting, acknowledging, and identifying the Other in who you see a reflection or expression of yourself” (259). Gaspar de Alba uses the concept of “gaydar” as an example of *re-conocimiento*. In one of the most tragic sections of this work is the homophobic murders of Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos, ages 8 and 10, respectively, by their families. I see my own femme-boy performance in their countenances through *re-conocimiento* and “activist methodology” calls me to action to try to prevent future homophobic-based violence in our community. Chicana lesbian feminist scholarship is both landmark and revolutionary for its readers and is similar to that of Black feminists who struggled against a multiplicity of oppressions.

My positionality as a queer, working-class, Indo-Xicanx from the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez border (the same as Rechy, Islas, Gaspar de Alba and other Xicanx literary giants) living with HIV and an AIDS diagnosis demands another radical method. Gaspar de Alba’s practice of ethnography based on her theory of “alter-Native,” (102) which describes Chicana/o culture as both alien to the White supremacist culture of the U.S. but is also autochthonous to the U.S Southwest, the area once belonging to Mexico. My race/ethnicity (Indo-Xicanx) places me outside of hegemonic queer culture, and my *jotería* (gayness) banishes me from heteronormative Chicana/o culture. Yet, I belong to both. Gaspar de Alba’s concept of an “insider/outsider” status is necessary for my interpretation of Rechy’s texts, writings which are mirrors of my own life of internalized and externalized oppressions, although one and a half to two generations of gay life separates the two of us. My positionality factors greatly into my interpretation of Rechy’s corpus. Alter-Nativity allows me to position myself as a critical observer as I travel the

terrain of Rechy's works. This framework allows me to read the signs he posted from his earliest essays in *The Nation* and *Evergreen Review* in the 1950s describing racial discrimination against Chicanas/os in Texas to his latest novel, *After the Blue Hour* (2017), through the lens of my theory of hom(e)erotics. As an homage to the bravery of Chicana lesbian writers who dared to write in Anzaldúa's "red and black ink" (65). I dare to tread upon the gritty landscape, perhaps a battlefield is a more apt descriptor, where gay men engage in such *un-erotic*, indeed, I would characterize them as *violent*, acts, such as "chem sex"⁵¹ and "stealth breeding"⁵² and become willing "bug chasers" and "toilet pigs." To be a sexually active gay man in this era where men dehumanize each other with such greetings as, "woof," "grrr," and "oink" is the current manifestation of the 1970s-era handkerchief code, an elaborate sexual semiotic system of color intersecting with acts of domination and submission. The current participants of this vacuous world (myself included) of dehumanizing animal identification and voluntary pictorial dismemberment reduces us to sexual synecdoches, hungry orifices and aching appendages represent our whole selves.

Significance of Rechy's Corpus

White gay scholars conveniently overlook Rechy's background as a working-class Mexican Catholic from "El Segundo Barrio,"⁵³ which may force them to confront their own racism. Chicana/o scholars, conversely, marginalize him for not writing about Chicana/o themes explicitly and for exclusively writing about gay subjectivity, thus justifying their own homophobia. At this historical moment when gay Xicanx/Latino men are seroconverting⁵⁴ at increasing rates in the shadows while HIV rates for white gay men have declined steadily, Rechy's corpus is as prescient as ever as it lays the foundation for a holistic analysis of the homes, lives, desires, and deaths of gay Xicanx/Latino men.

Rechy is one of the few Chicana/o authors to broach HIV in their work.⁵⁵ Knowing the history of HIV is critical to understanding the lives of Chicano gay “poz” men. Chicano gay “poz” men bear the historical legacy of criminalization because of our ethnic and racial background, the historical legacy of criminalization of our erotic lives, and the current criminalization of our sexual practices. The silence surrounding same-sex erotic desire and HIV in the Latina/o community is producing grim outcomes. For example, Latina/o youth are vastly undereducated regarding HIV/AIDS. At the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies Conference (NACCS) in 2012, I presented original research I conducted with several classes of my students. I teach mostly first and second-year college students, and I had them take a short quiz regarding basic information about HIV. The average age of the student was nineteen, and the total number of responses was 125. The mean number of correct responses was less than three, even with three of the questions being of the true/false variety. Very few of the students, less than ten, answered the two most crucial questions, “What are the fluids that transmit the HIV virus?” and “What are the methods of transmission of HIV?” Not one student answered more than five of the seven correctly.⁵⁶ The lack of knowledge is more disconcerting considering the latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). According to the CDC.org webpage, “HIV among Youth”:

In 2016, youth aged 13 to 24 made up 21% of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States. Most (81%) of those new diagnoses occurred among young gay and bisexual men. Young black/African American and Hispanic/Latino gay and bisexual men were especially affected...African Americans accounted for 54% (3,719) of infections attributed to male-to-male sexual contact. Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 25% (1,687),

whites accounted for 16% (1,094), and other races/ethnicities accounted for 5% (<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/age/youth/index.html>).

These alarming statistics, coupled with the silence mired in shame regarding the gay Xicanx who have succumbed to AIDS, spur me to action. I realize I must continue the work of Román, Rodríguez, Roque Rodríguez, and Robb Hernandez,⁵⁷ scholars who challenge the static heteronormativity and HIV-phobia of Chicana and Chicano Studies. Applying a theory of hom(e)erotics and constructing a Chicano gay literary genealogy with the founded on the corpus of John Rechy is the first step in recognizing the men negotiating racism, homophobia, and HIV, and remembering those who succumbed to the specter of AIDS, whether surrounded by loved ones or alone in an alley.

Methods

The field of Chicana/o Studies is interdisciplinary, allowing the researcher to develop new perspectives and methods to explore and analyze critical social problems. To flesh my theory of hom(e)erotics, I employ a variety of methods. My “data” is a portion of Rechy’s corpus—several of his novels, *City of Night* (1963), *Rushes* (1979), *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez*, *The Fourth Angel* (1972), his memoir, *About My Life and the Kept Woman* (2007), his “documentary” text, *Sexual Outlaw* (1977), and a number of his essays. The method I employ to analyze Rechy’s works originates from the broad field of cultural studies.

Cultural studies methodologies span a wide array of techniques borrowed from more established, traditional disciplines. In the introduction to the anthology, *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* (2008), Michael Pickering, the editor, explains in the introduction the importance of storytelling and by extension, narrative analysis:

Stories are central to the way in which people make sense of their experience and interpret their social world. In everyday life and popular culture, we are continually engaged in narratives of one kind or another. They fill our days and form our lives. They link us together socially and allow us to bring past and present into relative coherence. (6)

Pickering's argument makes the types of stories Rechy tells critical as they speak of multitude of marginalized communities—Chicanx people negotiating codified discrimination along the border, cisgender women and men who transgress their prescribed gender roles, the spiritually disillusioned, and gay men who dare act upon their homoerotic desires. How would I have negotiated my *jotería* as teen-ager had I not read *City of Night* at the age sixteen?

Steph Lawler, a contributor to the *Cultural Studies* anthology, expands this discursive intervention. Lawler's chapter, "Stories and the Social World," continues Pickering's argument of the importance of narratives as we contextualize our lived experiences and of others through the different manifestations of a story:

That is, stories surround us, not only in novels, films, memoirs, and other cultural forms which *explicitly* present themselves in terms of stories, but also in therapeutic encounters, newspaper articles, social theories and just the everyday ways in which people make sense of all of the discrete and diverse elements of a life. (32)

The qualitative methods of the social sciences, such as ethnography and autoethnography, are jargonistic terms for a story told within established guidelines. Even statistics contain hidden narratives. For example, the rising rates of HIV seroconversion among gay Latino cisgender contain stories of themes found in Rechy's novels—tales of culture-based homophobia, religious dogma, and familial indifference and violence.

Narratives, Lawler argues, are fragments of an interconnected dimension of sociality. Before she offers three methods of narrative analysis, Lawler argues, “Narratives are collective in the sense that no narrative belongs to the teller alone: they also incorporate the narratives of others” (43). This collectivity creates a community of narratives that the author and the readers participate in discursively. The power of such a community galvanizes marginalized peoples in the sense that someone, somewhere has experienced pleasure and trauma similar. Stories make us feel less alone in a neoliberal world of individuality based on commerce, rather than on identity and experience. The three methods of analysis Lawler presents are: empathic, interactive, and transaction. The empathic method privileges the author’s standpoint, as the reader attempts to view the world through the writer’s perspective. The interactive method begins a dialogue with author discursively, as the reader offering more of a critical stance of the text. Finally, the one I employ with Rechy’s novels and writings, the transactional method of analysis “there is more active engagement with the text” (Lawler 44). Out of this engagement, the reader constructs new meanings, perhaps ones the author never intended. But because of such deep analysis of the text, the reader births new avenues of inquiry. In this dissertation, my engagement vis-à-vis the transactional method with Rechy’s novels, essays, and interviews, inspired my theory of hom(e)*erotics*.

Chapter Outline

In each of my chapters, I argue how Rechy’s corpus serves as a guidepost for gay Xicanx/Latino men to achieve a decolonial sense—in material and metaphorical ways—of “home” through a “substitute for salvation.” I offer in-depth analyses of select texts of Rechy inspiring each tenet of my theory of hom(e)*erotics*. Each chapter offers an interdisciplinary method. In Chapter One, “(not) ‘Being Boring’: Constructing a Queer Chicano Genealogy vis-à-

vis ‘Mestiza Consciousness,’”⁵⁸ I focus on the foundation of hom(e)*erotics* on the work of John Rechy and as a means of exploring the first tenet, constructing a gay Xicanx literary genealogy. I explain the impetus for focusing on the literary, historical, and non-fiction works of Rechy throughout the chapter. This critical mapping of gay Xicanx literature answers the challenges posed by Moraga and Gaspar de Alba—for gay Xicanx writers to construct a literary genealogy, as Chicana lesbians have done, and is the first step for theorizing “home” for gay Xicanx men. Knowing that someone else has experienced the same feelings of shame, familial rejection, and desire for self-harm will resonate with the reader, which, I argue, is one of the powers of Chicana/o literature. In the first chapter, I include research from Gloria Anzaldúa’s archive, which the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin houses. John Rechy was generous to answer several questions over email, and I incorporate his responses throughout the chapters. I conclude by analyzing Rechy’s first novel, *City of Night* (1963), through Anzaldúa’s decolonial process of mestiza consciousness.

In the second chapter, “Rechy as Tlacuilo: Reviving Ghosts of the Sacred Historical QTPOC Space of *allgo*,” I address the second tenet of hom(e)*erotics*—developing a fluency of the histories of LGBTQ/HIV Chicana/Latinx activism, specifically the organization *allgo*. Mainstream U.S. education reduces Chicana/o history to a footnote and focuses on discrete events such as the Battle of the Alamo or the United Farmworkers’ Movement. Similarly, educators reduce LGBTQ history to the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969 or to the assassination of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected public official in California, in 1978. I argue LGBTQ history, particularly the history of HIV/AIDS activism, is “hidden” history, just as Chicana/o history remains unearthed for much of the U.S. population. Furthermore, I focus on Rechy’s “mixed-media” text, *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary* (1977), as the text captures the

historical period of the 1970s, the decade after the Stonewall Rebellion yet still strife with cultural, institutional, and religious sanctioned homophobia. To continue the task of documentating of LGBTQ history, I analyze the newsletters of the first two years, 1986-187, of the revolutionary non-profit organization, ALLGO, based in Austin, Texas, the longest-surviving Latinx LGBTQ organization in the U.S.

The third chapter, “From *Rushes*’ Meat Trucks to *tumblr*’s Bug Chasers: Heeding Rechy’s Warnings of Toxic Masculinity and Violence-Based Sexual Practices,” focuses on the novels, *Rushes* (1979) and *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez* (1991). The chapter explores the violent sexual practices of gay men, including the rampant HIV-phobia of the gay male sexual community, exacerbated by the mobile dating “apps,”⁵⁹ the willingness to engage in high-risk sexual behavior, including the act of “slamming,”⁶⁰ “slam-sharing,”⁶¹ and “blood-slamming,”⁶² and the mainstreaming of behaviors gay men once considered highly fetishistic. This apparent contradiction represents different aspects of the social problems stemming from four decades of the HIV epidemic. Stigma against gay men who are HIV-positive continues even in this era of “undetectable”⁶³ HIV status. Furthermore, because of the advent of “PreP,”⁶⁴ many gay men are engaging in unprotected anal sex, even though the pill does not protect against sexually transmitted infections. Rechy warned the gay community against such violence-based sexual practices in his novel, *Rushes* (1979). I address the third method of creating a feminist of color-based masculinity and the fourth tenet of transforming the current toxic state of gay male sexuality to one of true *erotics*. The desire for “masculine” and “straight-acting” men and the hyper-masculinization performance of gay men represent attitudes of misogyny, both external and internal. Rechy warned of the dehumanization of men through BDSM practices in his earliest texts. Half a century later, quantity of encounters, rather than intimacy, defines gay male

sexuality. To parallel these complementary issues, I conduct blog analysis of the gay dating application, *BarebackRT*, and blogs housed on the app, *tumblr*, to analyze the growing phenomenon of “Gift givers” and “Bug chasers.”

The conclusion, titled “Community as Communion: Deciphering the Rechy Enigma” is a discursive tapestry, an extension of the powerful AIDS Memorial Quilt, and provides my own critical response to a search for Rechy’s “substitute for salvation.” Because of the advent of the AIDS drugs and PrEP, the epidemic no longer commands attention from the mainstream LGBT movement. However, I argue the new generations of gay Chicanx men need a reminder of the horrors of the 1980s and 1990s as a means of education, not out of fear, but as a grim artifact as gay men of color represent the fastest rising segments of new HIV seroconversions. The conclusion catalogs each time Rechy uses the phrase “substitute for salvation” as a running theme throughout his corpus, and I provide my own “substitute” for the “salvation” of gay Xicanx men. The conclusion also is a personal testament to my own vision of “home” for gay “poz” Chicanx men—a discursive space where we live without stigma and we can transition without any sense of shame or regret.

A Brief Commentary on Terminology

Debates on term of identity continue within spaces of academia and leftist activism regarding ethnic/racial and sexual/gender identities. Although I bristle at the conservative term “Hispanic,” I am indifferent to the pan-ethnic label of “Latina/o/x,” yet I use it for the sake of inclusivity. In some instances, I use the term, “Latinx,” even though I focus on gay Chicano men. The “x” in “Latinx” speaks to the gender and sexual fluidity and categories of identity beginning to reemerge after centuries of Western colonization. I use varying forms of the

politically charged “Chicano.” I incorporate “Chicano,” “Chicana/o,” and the latest reiteration, “Xicanx,” depending on the context. This is a work in the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies, which assumes a binary of gender, a concept that is historically inaccurate from an indigenous perspective. Coming from an indigenous background, (my maternal side hails from the Pueblo-Tiwa tribe from Ysleta del Sur, Texas), I use the term “Xicanx.” This term moves closer to a recognition of indigeneity, albeit based upon a Mexica/Nahuatl worldview, *and* begins a discourse on gender and sexual fluidity. For terms of sexual identity, I mostly embrace the breadth of terms to describe my homoerotic desires. I am gay, homosexual, two-spirit, queer, joto, maricón, and mariposa. I reject the argument that the term “gay” is too “white,” as growing up in the late 1970s and 1980s, as the only gay culture I could locate mostly consisted of musical acts from England, except for the disco singer, Sylvester. Some people may bristle at these terms, but I am more concerned with the material realities of my community. I rarely engage in debates over terminology—the U.S. government is caging children at the border, many states are threatening women’s rights to reproductive health, an epidemic of murders of transgender women of color continues, and HIV rates for gay men of color are rising alarmingly with little response. Out of deference to the author whose works I examine, John Rechy, I rarely use the term, “queer,” in this work. Rechy considers the word to be rooted in homophobic violence, as he responded in an email interview with me, “You may note that I do not use the word ‘Queer’ except in reference; I detest that word, a toast to our oppression.” Finally, because of my focus on cisgender men of Mexican descent who sexually desire other cisgender men, I use the phrase, “gay Xicanx.”

Notes

¹ Published in *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring 1995), p. 113-125.

² I had the privilege of collaborating with the internationally renowned Chicana artist, Alma Lopez Gaspar de Alba, regarding my content and she coined the phrase “house of horrors” regarding the tragic case of Gabriel Fernandez.

³ According to the Centers for Disease in Control, Latino men who have sex men represented the second-highest group in the U.S. exposed to the HIV virus, 7,689 new cases out of 33,577. The report also states the rates are increasing for gay and bisexual Latino men, more so for youth, 13-24 (<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/racialethnic/hispaniclatinos/index.html>).

⁴ The study, “Mental Health and Suicidality among Racially/Ethnically Diverse Sexual Minority Youth,” by Bostwick, et al., found, “Compared with heterosexual peers, sexual minorities reported higher odds of feeling sad; suicidal ideation, planning and attempts; suicide attempt treated by a doctor or nurse, and self-harm. Among sexual minorities, compared with White youths, Asian and Black youths had lower odds of many outcomes, whereas American Native/Pacific Islander, Latino, and Multiracial youths had higher odds” (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24825217>).

⁵ The comprehensive review of literature conducted by Nathaniel Lewis and Kathi Wilson in their article, “HIV Risk Behaviours Among Immigrant and Ethnic Gay and Bisexual Men In North America and Europe: A Systematic Review,” published in *Social Science and Medicine* (2017), finds that substance use is among the many factors in high rates of unprotected anal intercourse, often leading to HIV seroconversion.

⁶ PrEP, pre-exposure prophylaxis, is a recommended drug protocol for sexually active people considered at high risk for acquiring HIV. The daily regimen is an HIV drug that prevents a person from seroconverting in the case that he/she is exposed to the virus. PrEP is analogous to birth control.

⁷ Peruse any gay dating website or “app” and one will find men searching for sex partners who are “clean” and “DDF” (disease and drug free) with no “bugs.” The implication is obvious; HIV-positive men are “dirty” and are “infested.” AIDS-based discrimination, I argue, is as rampant as ever in the gay male community as we approach forty years of the pandemic.

⁸ Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control webpage, “HIV Among Hispanics/Latinos” for more statistics illustrating the dire situation.

⁹ According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, The Ryan White Care Act of 1990 “works with cities, states, and local community-based organizations to provide services to an estimated 536,000 people each year who do not have sufficient health-care coverage or financial resources to cope with HIV disease.”

¹⁰ The kidnapping and murder of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman remains unsolved, yet authorities remain committed to solving the case that inspired the “Amber Alert,” the child abduction warning system that has aided law enforcement in the recovery of more than 700 children, according to Hannah Parry of *The Daily Mail* (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3396335/The-unsolved-murder-girl-inspired-Amber-Alerts-Police-renew-vow-slasher-kidnapped-murdered-Amber-Hagerman-20-years-ago.html>).

¹¹ For example, *People* magazine featured Ryan White on the cover three times with pictures affording him with dignity and strength. Contrast this with the photograph of Ken Meeks, a 42-year-old man stricken with full-blown AIDS, taken by Alon Reininger which portrays the man in a hospital gown covered with Kaposi Sarcoma lesions or the infamous Benetton clothing advertisement of a family gathered around the deathbed of a man dying of AIDS.

¹² I use the innocuous term, “seroconvert,” as the word, “infect,” has gained a negative stigma, conjuring comparisons to archaic yet damaging images such as Typhoid Mary.

¹³ According to Michael Kolber, M.D., professor of medicine and the director of the Comprehensive AIDS Program and Adult HIV Services at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in Florida, the average cost of a year's worth of HIV treatment costs between \$14,000 to \$20,000 for a person with no health insurance (<http://www.everydayhealth.com/hiv-aids/can-you-afford-hiv-treatment.aspx>).

¹⁴ I must recognize the trailblazing works of the Chicana lesbian writers and scholars who paved the way for gay Chicano writers and scholars. Writers and their works, such as Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) and Cherrie Moraga's *The Last Generation: Prose and Poetry* (1993), Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* (1993), and the anthologies *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), co-edited by Anzaldúa and Moraga, and *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (1991), edited by Carla Trujillo, forged the path for queer Chicano writers and scholars.

¹⁵ The theme of “searching for a substitute for salvation” is a recurring concept in all of Rechy's work. To date, no scholar has analyzed this theme as it appears throughout Rechy's body of work.

¹⁶ From the second chapter of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), “Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan.”

¹⁷ Sexual attraction and practice between two men must reengage with the power of true eros or *erotics*, as does Audre Lorde in her essay, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” published in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (2007).

¹⁸ Ana Castillo's important text, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (1994, republished in 2014) contains a chapter titled, “*La Macha*: Toward an Erotic Whole Self.” In this work, I plan to cite the 2014 version of the text.

¹⁹ From her book, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (2000).

²⁰ From Peggy McIntosh's essay, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” an excerpt from Working Paper 189, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies,” (1988).

²¹ Irene Lara, in her essay, “Goddess of the Americas in the Decolonial Imaginary: Beyond the Virtuous Virgen/Pagan Puta Dichotomy,” (2008), published in *Feminist Studies*, uses the Spanish translation of the “virgin/whore” phrase to demarcate the racialization and the specific time and culture of the colonial period in Mexico. The Catholic Church superimposed the “good mother” represented by the Virgen de Guadalupe upon the frightening female deities of the Nahuas, symbolized by the “bad mother,” also known as the traitorous “La Malinche.” The “virgin/puta” dichotomy reinforces the purity of the La Virgen de Guadalupe while stressing the devious sexuality (outside of the confines of marriage) of La Malinche. Lara further explains the imposition of the Catholic value system upon the deities of the Nahuatl, as the Nahuatl language contains no terms for “virgin” or for “puta” (103). Through the conduit of Spanish colonization, the Catholic Church assigned the dichotomous terms to the figures of the adored Virgen de Guadalupe and the reviled Malinche.

²² Anzaldúa proposed the concept of “cultural tyranny” in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987).

²³ Two of his most lauded articles are “El Paso del Norte” *Evergreen Review*, Autumn 1958, and “Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero” *The Nation*, October 10, 1959.

²⁴ According to the article, “Writing Latina/o Historical Narratives: Narratives at the Intersection of Critical Historical Inquiry and LatCrit,” (2016) written by Cinthia S. Salinas, María E. Fránquiz, and Noreen Naseem Rodríguez, the tenets of LatCrit include: “(1) a recognition of the centrality and permanence of racism, (2) the act of challenging dominant ideologies, (3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of the experiential knowledge of Communities of Color, and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary perspectives in order to publish historical narratives excluded from the dominant narrative...are fundamental to challenge majoritarian tales” (263-264). Furthermore, Rechy’s early essays fit within their argument, as “Historical inquiry acknowledges the telling of history as ‘a cultural act that teaches students about the nature of understanding, and about their role in making historical knowledge’” (qtd. in Salinas, Fránquiz, and Rodríguez 267). For example, in Rechy’s memoir, *All About My Life and the Kept Woman* (2007), he writes of the societal discrimination endured by people of Mexican descent, e.g., segregated public facilities. Rechy also writes of the incident when an Anglo teacher renamed him “John” from his legal name, “Juan” in “Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero.” These accounts of institutional racism against Chicanas/os Rechy documents in his work fit within LatCrit framework and offer valuable insight to improve the public educational system.

²⁵ I conceived my theory of hom(e)erotics during my time conducting research in the Gloria Anzaldúa archive housed in the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin during the summer of 2015.

²⁶ Bayer's article can be found in the publication, *Social Research*, 52.3, Autumn 1985.

²⁷ Because of the groundbreaking work started by Dr. Evelyn Hooker in the 1950s, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), which had classified gays and lesbians as having a sociopathic personality disorder, in 1973. The American Psychological Association followed the example of its companion organization in 1975.

²⁸ According to the Center for HIV Law & Policy, “Dozens of states explicitly criminalize HIV exposure through sex, shared needles, or in some states, exposure to 'bodily fluids' that can include saliva. Many states have singled out people who have tested positive for HIV for criminal prosecution or enhanced sentences, either under HIV-specific criminal laws or under general criminal laws governing crimes such as assault, attempted murder or reckless endangerment” (http://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/sites/www.hivlawandpolicy.org/files/PJP%20fact%20sheet_11.14.2012.pdf).

²⁹ For example, in 2009, Kerry Thomas of Boise, Idaho, was convicted of failure to disclose his HIV status to a sexual partner and was sentenced to twenty years in prison. Thomas', 44, HIV status is “undetectable,” meaning that the virus is essentially dormant and used a condom in the act of consensual sex. The sexual partner did not seroconvert.

³⁰ Please see David Dorado Romo's excellent 2005 historical text, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923* for a thorough and pictorial analysis of this unjust practice.

³¹ This references the work of Larry Kramer, *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist* (1989).

³² Lawrence K. Altman wrote the article published on July 3, 1981.

³³ Lisa Duggan's 2003 *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* establishes homonormativity as the LGBT movement's desire to mimic heteronormativity through a framework of equal rights.

³⁴ The place-name, Aztlan, is usually accented on the second “a”; however, I do not place accent marks on Nahuatl words, as I was fortunate to have studied under a prominent Nahuatl scholar, Fermin Herrera. Nahuatl

grammar dictates the stress fall on the penultimate syllable with no exceptions, and, therefore, no accent marks are necessary. The more typical pronunciation and spelling, Aztlán, is indicative of the multiple layers of coloniality Chicanas/os negotiate. I realize classes in Nahuatl are not readily available, yet I make the choice to share this sliver of recuperated knowledge (memory).

³⁵ Cherríe Moraga's iconic essay, "Queer Aztlán: the Re-formation of Chicano Tribe" (1993), provides a substantive retort to the patriarchy and homophobia of Chicano cultural nationalism and calls for a queer-inclusive expansion of Chicano identity, culture, and politics.

³⁶ Published in the scholarly journal, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 3.2 (1991), 75-100.

³⁷ Cherríe Moraga, in her keynote address, boldly asked, "Where are the queer Chicano writers? Where *are* you?"

³⁸ Bruce-Novoa's contribution to the beginning of an analysis of the intersection of gay and Chicano identity, "Homosexuality and the Chicano Novel," was published in *Confluencia*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1986. In the article, Bruce-Novoa begins a dialogue regarding a gay Chicano literary genealogy yet makes disappointing comments regarding the state of homophobia in the Chicano Movement and the community at-large, "...Chicanos simply reflect the norms of the wider [Anglo] sociocultural context" (69). In Bruce-Novoa's analysis, Chicanas/os are no different from Whites in regards to homophobia.

³⁹ *Days of Obligation* is the second of a trinity of autobiographical texts by Rodriguez. The first is the controversial *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982), followed by *Days*, and concluding with *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (2003).

⁴⁰ John D'Emilio's text, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (1983) offers a background of The Mattachine Society, one of the oldest gay rights organizations in the United States.

⁴¹ ACT UP! is an acronym standing for AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power and its history is chronicled in three documentaries, *We Were Here* (2011) directed by David Weissman and Bill Weber, *How to Survive a Plague* (2012) directed by David France, and *United in Anger: A History of ACT-UP* (2012) directed by Jim Hubbard.

⁴² "Culture Clash is a Chicano/Latino performance troupe composed of the writers-satirists Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas, and Herbert Sigüenza" (<https://twitter.com/cultureclashon?lang=en>).

⁴³ "Gay Latino Histories" is published in the anthology, *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America* (2010), edited by Gina Pérez, Frank Guridy, and Adrian Burgos.

⁴⁴ The article, "My Bones Shine in the Dark': AIDS and the De-Scripture of Chicano Queer in the Work of Gil Cuadros," by Paul Allatson was published by *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* in its Spring 2007 issue, 32.1.

⁴⁵ The strategy of "counterstories" is a methodology of Critical Race Theory that allow historically oppressed peoples challenge the hegemony of the dominant ideology guided by white supremacy.

⁴⁶ According to Mitsunori Misawa, "[A] queer crit perspective was born from Critical Race Theory to pursue human rights and social justice for People of Color who are sexual minorities by focusing on the intersectionality of race and sexual orientation. There are six components in the queer crit perspective: 1) the centrality of the intersection of race and racism with sexual orientation and homophobia; 2) the challenge to mainstream ideologies; 3) confrontations with ahistoricism; 4) the centrality of experientiality knowledge; 5) multidisciplinary aspects; and 6) the social justice perspective" (242).

⁴⁷ The documentary, *Juchitán—Queer Paradise* (2002), is described as, “This is a fascinating portrait of Juchitán, a small Mexican city near the Guatemalan border. Here homosexuality is accepted; gays are simply a third gender. If a boy shows a predisposition to homosexuality his family will rejoice and be thankful for receiving what is considered a blessing. In Juchitán, a man who wants to be a woman only has to dress like a woman to be considered and treated as a woman by the entire community.”

⁴⁸ The longest surviving Latina/o LGBT organization, ALLGO, was founded in 1985 In Austin, Texas, by LGBT Latinas/os as a direct response to the racism of white AIDS organizations and the homophobia of the heterosexual Latina/o organizations. Lesbians of color often became the surrogate family members for dying men of color whose families rejected them.

⁴⁹ In Chapter 2 of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), a graduate student of Anzaldúa interprets “homophobia” as the fear of going home.

⁵⁰ Coyolxauhqui, the Mexica moon goddess, was a victim of fratricide as her brother, Huitzilopochtli, the sun god, defended their mother, Coatlicue, from her and their other celestial siblings, the stars in the sky.

⁵¹ “Chem sex” is the act of engaging in sexual activities while high on crystal methamphetamines, as the drug purportedly removes all sexual inhibitions.

⁵² “Stealth breeding” is the act of protected anal intercourse and at a moment before climax, the active inserter removes the condom to ejaculate into the recipient without his knowledge or consent.

⁵³ “El Segundo Barrio” is an urban community located in south El Paso, Texas, and is, according to Yolanda Chávez Leyva, professor of history at the University of Texas at El Paso, “is one of the most historic barrios in the United States” (Cornejo).

⁵⁴ Seroconverting has replaced the deficit term “infected,” which carries stigma against the “poz” community.

⁵⁵ Other notable authors transgressing into this forbidden territory are Michael Nava, Ana Castillo, Gil Cuadros, and Harry Gamboa, Jr. Also, the recent anthology, *Queer in Aztlán: Gay Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* (2013), contains a section of HIV testimonios.

⁵⁶ The seven questions on the quiz are: 1) What does the acronym HIV stand for? 2) What does the acronym AIDS stand for? 3) Name all methods of HIV transmission. 4) Name all bodily fluids that transmit HIV. 5) T/F HIV and AIDS are the same thing. 6) T/F People die from HIV. 7) T/F There is a cure for HIV.

⁵⁷ Like I endeavor in this project, Robb Hernandez searches for the intersection of queer and Chicano in the non-traditional spaces as he does in his work on the late queer Chicano artist, Mundo Meza (succumbed to AIDS), “Drawn from the Scraps: The Finding AIDS of Mundo Meza” (2015).

⁵⁸ “Being Boring” is the name of a song sung by the The Pet Shop Boys, a British electronic group, and was recorded on their album, *Behaviour* (1990).

⁵⁹ For example, one such app, “BarebackRealTime,” connects users who wish to engage in condom-less anal intercourse and any number of high-risk sexual activities.

⁶⁰ “Slamming” is vernacular for injecting crystal meth intravenously.

⁶¹ “Slam-sharing” is the act of sharing syringes when injecting crystal meth intravenously. Often, men who “slam-share” are living with a high viral load of HIV and wish to “share” each other’s strain.

⁶² “Blood slamming” is the act of men intravenously injecting HIV-infected blood from another man.

⁶³ “Undetectable” HIV status is the state when a person living with HIV contains such a low amount of the virus in the blood, the disease is dormant. This is the healthiest status for a person who is living with HIV.

⁶⁴ “PreP” is a daily medication, Truvada, which sexually active people can take as a prophylaxis against the HIV virus.

Chapter One

(not) “Being Boring”: Rechy’s Corpus as the Foundation of a Gay Xicanx Literary Genealogy vis-à-vis Anzaldúa’s “Mestiza Consciousness”

Today I find myself a Texas writer left out of discussion of Texas writers; a Chicano writer omitted from anthologies of Chicano writers; a California writer ignored in books about California. And even though excluded from several homosexual anthologies, I am still known as “the homosexual writer.”—John Rechy¹

I remember first reading *City of Night* (1963) in my sophomore year of high school in 1988 in El Paso, Texas. I had already come out to myself two years prior in the eighth grade. Well, I outed myself through my daily wardrobe—pastel-colored pants pegged high above my ankle, flowy, flowery shirts, sometimes paisley, espadrilles in every color of the still-unknown freedom rainbow, and my Esprit-brand satchel that held my hair products, since my Morrissey-like hairdo started to flatten in the desert heat around fifth period. Two years later, I was starving for any type of gay representation in any medium. I consumed what little queer-identified popular culture existed, which I found in alternative popular music from Great Britain. The Pet Shop Boys are a British group most famous for their 1986 hit, “West End Girls,” yet subsequently produced a string of queer-identified songs. The chapter’s short title refers to a song I most relate to John Rechy. The lyrics of “Being Boring” (1990) speak of the bravery of a young queer man who leaves home to live his truth in the 1970s and the sobering experience of surviving the AIDS epidemic in the 1990s. I devoured *City of Night*, a semi-autobiographical

tale of economic and emotional poverty leading to the unmasking of a subaltern world of homoerotic desire through the urban centers of America nearly two decades before the explosion of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion. The text, as well as his later works, liberated the young queer inside of me and helped me “bolt through the closing door.” In this chapter, I explore the first method of hom(e)erotics of constructing a gay Xicanx literary genealogy with the foundation being the work of John Rechy. I first provide a rationale for such a project, namely examples of homophobia-based violence against gay Xicanx and Latino boys and men, and the omission of HIV as a critical area for study by the field of Chicana/o Studies. For nearly forty years, Chicana lesbians have had the privilege of referring to a Chicana lesbian literary legacy; creating such a foundation for gay Xicanx teen-aged boys and men is one of the goals of this work, beginning with the work of John Rechy. I do not impose any sort of patriarchy label upon Rechy as “the father of gay Xicanx literature,” rather his body (of work) represents a bridge between multiple eras of LGBTQ reality, a cisgender gay male companion to the landmark publication, *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981). Rechy’s corpus is journalistic and prophetic as he documents the cultural and institutional racism against Chicanas/os in El Paso, the homophobia of U.S. society before and after the Stonewall Uprising of 1969, and the dangers of toxic masculinity and violent sexual practices emerging in the 1970s. Finally, Rechy’s quote in the epigraph describes his location as Anzaldúa’s “thin edge of barbwire,” (3) a liminal space of straddling borders, as he describes his multiple subjectivities as a writer.²

My Discovery of Rechy—Bolting Through the Closing (Closet) Door

The “closing door” refers to the violent space of the closet and the resulting heterosexual mask I would be fated to don had I remained in El Paso. The closet is a static void impeding growth, like The Nothing, the evil force in the 1984 fantasy film, *The Neverending Story*,

destroying everything in its path.³ Like *The Nothing*, the closet devours our identities and is a refuge of heteronormativity that LGBTQ+ people negotiate until we cross the threshold into another reality, akin to the characters of Madeline L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door* (1973), the sequel to her beloved classic, *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962). In the second installment of the *Time Quintet* series, the wunderkind Charles Wallace falls ill to an otherworldly disease caused by the Ecthroi, winged demon-like creatures, whose death would cause an intergalactic chain reaction. To cure Charles Wallace, his older sister, Meg and her boyfriend, Calvin, become microscopic to enter and heal his ailing mitochondria, a la the 1966 science fiction film, *Fantastic Voyage*.

L'Engle's themes of the interconnectedness of one boy's dying mitochondria to the fate of the galaxy prompts me to ponder the significance of one man's corpus—his body (of work)—and the intricate webs of meaning pouring forth from each text, most importantly the strength to keep the closet door from shutting me in an enclosed purgatorial space of heteronormative mediocrity. From Rechy's earliest articles published in the late 1950s regarding discrimination against Chicanas/os in Texas to his latest novel, *After the Blue Hour* (2017), his sixty-plus years of storytelling continue to inspire me to examine the liminal space of “the closing door” of the closet and how gay Chicanx men navigate our intersectional realities. Even as an out and proud gay Chicanx, I negotiate the closet in certain situations. For example, as protection against potential gay-bashing in certain areas of Los Angeles, I am grateful for my privilege as “straight-looking.” Eve Sedgwick argues in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990):

Even at an individual level, there are remarkably few of even the most openly gay people who are not deliberately in the closet with someone personally or economically or institutionally important to them. Furthermore, the deadly elasticity of heterosexist presumption means that, like Wendy in *Peter Pan*, people find new walls springing up

around them even as they drowse: every encounter with a new classful of students, to say nothing of a new boss, social worker, loan officer, landlord, doctor, [*sic*] erects new closets whose fraught and characteristic laws of optics and physics exact from at least gay people new surveys, new calculations, new draughts and requisitions of secrecy or disclosure. (67)

Sedgwick's words give me pause to consider my own relationship with the closet and the influence of Rechy's corpus on my life. Rechy's works force me to go beyond a mere examination of the closet door. He demands I unhinge it, deconstruct it, and create a passageway into a reality that exists only in Rechy's "blue hour," the fleeting moments between dusk and night, "when everything reveals itself as it is...[when] everything is both clearest and most obscure—a light that challenges perception, revealing and hiding" (24). Although the closet provides a safety net, indeed, it operates as a survival mechanism for many of us; our homoerotic desires often overcome our sensibilities and drive us to self-destructive behaviors.

Unhinging the closet door for gay Chicana men, however, requires a new set of discursive tools, like those envisioned and created by Chicana feminists. Chicana lesbian theorists, such as Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, Emma Pérez, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, have all created theoretical frameworks through which Chicana lesbians can name and negotiate their intersectional oppressions. Because Chicana lesbians found themselves at the edge of the margins, they empowered themselves by envisioning radically new "ways of seeing,"⁴ as John Berger would say.

Although scholars such as Tomás Almaguer began to create tools to analyze the realities of gay Xicanx men, such as his foundational article, "Chicano Men," they leave me with a feeling of incompleteness. Almaguer applies his training in sociology to map the lives of gay

and bisexual Chicano and Mexican men. Unfortunately, Almaguer dismisses the work of Rechy and other gay Xicanx authors:

Unlike the writings on Chicana lesbianism, however, these works fail to discuss directly the cultural dissonance that Chicano homosexual men confront in reconciling their primary socialization into Chicano family life with the sexual norms of the dominant culture. They offer little to our understanding of how these men negotiate the different ways these cultural systems stigmatize homosexuality and how they incorporate these messages into their adult sexual practices. (256)

Although I read the texts of Rechy differently from Almaguer, his article does provide critical insight into the attitudes towards homoerotic desire, practice, and identity for Mexican and Chicano men. I intend for homo(e)erotics to be another tool in the analytical toolbox to examine critically the lives of gay Xicanx men by including Rechy's corpus and the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Almaguer's article examines the root causes of toxic masculinity and its disdain, even hatred, for women and feminine qualities. Almaguer argues that, like Mexican men who engage in homoerotic behavior and are stigmatized only if they are the passive recipient (bottom), Chicano men must negotiate this colonial legacy of Spanish conquest of the indigenous while contending with the Euro-American systems of homosexual stigmatization, which are more relaxed. The privileged social position of gay white men afforded them the opportunity to "come out of the closet" and form identity-based organizations, such as, The Mattachine Society in the early 1950s. Almaguer makes a valid point that Chicano gay men, historically, have occupied the lower strata of racial and class hierarchies, unlike the privilege enjoyed by gay white men. Thus, Chicano gay men, negotiating from a racialized and working-class social location, do not

have the same freedoms as gay white men who can isolate their sexual identities, as they benefit from racial and class privilege.

Whatever its limitation, Almaguer's landmark article serves as solid foundation for my own work. After an analysis of Cherríe Moraga's iconic essay, "Queer Aztlán: the Re-formation of Chicano Tribe" (1993), as a template to analyze gay Xicanx men, Almaguer concludes by posing probing questions regarding gay Xicanx men and our relation to the gender hierarchy present in traditional Chicano families. Almaguer concludes:

My impression is that many Chicano gay men share the Chicano heterosexual's underlying disdain for women and all that is feminine. Although it has not been documented empirically, it is likely that Chicano gay men incorporate and contest crucial features of the Mexican/Latin-American sexual system into their intimate sexual behavior. Despite having accepted a "modern" [as in aligned with white gay men from the U.S.] sexual identity, they are not immune to the hierarchical, gender-coded system of sexual meanings that is part and parcel of this discursive practice. Until we can answer these questions through ethnographic research on the lives of Chicano gay men, we must continue to develop the type of feminist critique of Chicano male culture that is so powerfully articulated in the works of lesbians such as Cherríe Moraga. (269-270)

Although Almaguer dismisses the works of Rechy, Arturo Islas, and Richard Rodriguez as unsatisfactory as these writers framed their experiences in literary and semi-autobiographical methods. I can respond to Almaguer's lament at the lack of "empirical" research available with an analysis of the literature available—*actual* literature, namely the corpus of John Rechy. Almaguer writes this article through the lens of social science, but the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies strives to examine Xicanidad from an interdisciplinary perspective. I echo

Almaguer's concern yet cannot dismiss the bravery of Rechy, Islas, Rodriguez, as well as Michael Nava, Rigoberto González, Benjamin Alire Saenz, and emerging writers such as Joe Jimenez and Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano.

The value of interdisciplinarity rests in the broadened perspective of what a scholar can consider "data." One of the secondary objectives of my work is to alter the discourse of the academic preference for social science research over humanities-based work in the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies. I was warned by a faculty member in my department when I chose the subject of this work, "You don't want to be known as *just* a 'lit' person." Another faculty member reaffirmed the previous statement as this person told me that I focus "too much" on Rechy, even though in my personal statement I made it evident that I wanted to analyze his corpus from a Chicana/o Studies perspective. In her text, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (1992), Shulamit Reinharz argues fiction *is* a valid source of data and is reflective of the necessity of multiple and interdisciplinary methods in her text:

In the appendix to *The Mirror Dance*, Susan Krieger explains how fiction can become a model of social science, even though it deviates from standard social science practice.

Feminist foremothers who used fiction to communicate sociology are Harriet Martineau, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (who also wrote science fiction), Mari Sandoz, and Zora Neale Hurston, among others." (227).⁵

Another author linking fiction to "actual" research is the Chicana feminist writer of mysteries, Lucha Corpi. In her novel, *Black Widow's Wardrobe*, (1999), the protagonist's mother and her friend conduct library research to assist her daughter in ascertaining the killer's identity. One of the themes of the novel is the deconstruction of the historical figure of Malintzin Tenepal, more commonly known as La Malinche, the indigenous woman who allegedly acted as a translator

between Hernán Cortes and Emperor Moctezuma and thus is blamed for the fall of the Aztec empire. While conducting research, the sleuth's mother and her friend excavate the history of other indigenous tribes aligning themselves with the Spanish conquistadores, namely the Tlaxcala, who paid heavy tribute to the Mexica. The patriarchy of Mexican and Chicano writers⁶ assign blame to Malintzin Tenepal, analogous to the biblical figure of Eve; however, as the detective's mother and friend discover, the Tlaxcala are the actual betrayers, so far as to declare, "How about all those Tlaxcalteca warriors who fought the Aztecs alongside Cortes' army?" she asked. 'N-o-o-o-o. They were men. Men do not betray. Ha!'" (Corpi 73). *Black Widow's Wardrobe* serves a similar purpose as the first publication to vindicate Malintzin Tenepal from the misogynistic categories of traitor and concubine, the Chicana feminist, Adelaida del Castillo's landmark essay, "Malintzin Tenepal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective" (1977). Del Castillo's article provides an historical context for Malintzin Tenepal's actions, particularly her alleged "betrayal" of the Aztec empire. Just as the fictional characters of *Black Widow's Wardrobe* recategorize Malintzin Tenepal, del Castillo's historical essay provides the sociohistorical context to excavate the motivation for the indigenous woman's actions.⁷ Rechy's works serve as the "data" Almaguer laments is missing from the annals of research on gay Xicanx men.

Constructing a Gay Xicanx Literary Home

In this chapter, I address the first tool or method of my hom(e)erotics: attempting to discursively construct, or rather "conocer" in Anzaldúan terminology, a gay Xicanx⁸ literary tradition, beginning with the decades of Rechy's corpus which spans from the 1950s to the 2010s. By establishing Rechy as the foundational root of a gay Xicanx literary genealogy, I bring Rechy "home" to the field of Chicana/o Studies, and particularly Chicana/o literature, as

literary scholars, such as Harold Augenbraum and Margarite Fernandez Olmos, have failed to recognize the intersectional⁹ aspects of Rechy's novels.¹⁰ Viewed through the reductionist worldview of heteronormativity, Chicana/o literary scholars would not consider Rechy's works as auth. This point is illustrated when reading the biography of Rechy in *The Latino Reader: An American Literary Tradition from 1542 to the Present* (1997). Augenbraum and Fernandez Olmos, editors of the anthology, claim that Rechy's novel, *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez* (1992), published twenty-nine years after his groundbreaking first novel, *City of Night* (1963) was "...his first to focus on Hispanic themes and situations" (253). Although inclusion in the anthology represents an acknowledgement of sorts, Augenbraum and Fernandez Olmos create a division between queer and Latinx subjectivities by arguing "[b]ecause Rechy's well-known works have focused more on the culture of homosexuality than on Latino life, he has usually been omitted from discussions of the Latino 'canon'" (253). Augenbraum's and Fernandez Olmos' assertions reinforce a reductionist view of Xicanx/Latinx subjectivity as they could not imagine that Rechy's earlier works could describe a Xicanx male reality. Their view of homoerotic desire is informed by their homophobia and their white supremacy. Furthermore, their statement perpetuates the division for the jotx who continue to struggle to reconcile the seemingly disparate strands of their lives and invalidates the efforts and activism of those who have struggled to broaden the discourse of Xicanx/Latinx subjectivity.

Reductionist scholars such as Augenbraum and Fernandez Olmos have always questioned Rechy's Xicanidad¹¹. The opening excerpt of Rechy's first novel, *City of Night*, establishes his working-class Chicano identity from South El Paso, the son of Mexican immigrants (his father being a Mexican of Scottish descent). Rechy, whose own phenotype is light-skinned (possibly passing for Italian) may have enjoyed the freedom of "passing" as Anglo in an era of overt

racism towards Mexicans and Chicanas/os in Texas. Augenbraum and Fernandez Olmos continue the discourse of historical erasure; Rechy's courageous writings seek to contest the violence of our heteropatriarchal society.

Finally, by establishing a foundation of queer Chicano literature, I begin to respond to Cherríe Moraga's probing question at the Joto Caucus Conference held at California State University, Los Angeles¹² in October of 2008. Mapping a queer Chicano literary tradition provides solace, a discursive "home," for those of us who are navigating the intersection of racism, homophobia, toxic and feminist masculinities, and the historical, lingering, and increasing specter of HIV/AIDS. At a subsequent Joto Caucus Conference held at the University of Oregon in 2010, at which the organizing committee asked me to give one of the two keynote addresses, I was speaking with an attendee, an undergraduate queer Chicano and I inquired which (gay Xicanx) authors he had read. He had no idea such a genre existed. He had read works by Chicana feminists, but his professors had never assigned any novels by gay Xicanx authors. He mentioned how he loved reading Chicana feminist writings, but he longed to see himself and his experiences in the pages of a text. Since our conversation, gay Xicanx and Latino have begun to answer Moraga and Gaspar de Alba's challenge with the publication of two anthologies, *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader* (2011), edited Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, and *Queer in Aztlán: Queer Chicano Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* (2013), edited by Adelaida del Castillo and Gibran Guido. The project of mapping queer Chicano literature, beginning with the work of Rechy, continues as a critical endeavor to respond fully to Moraga and Gaspar de Alba.

The Point of Origin—El Paso del Norte/The Pass to the North

The El Paso/Ciudad Juárez borderlands, the twin cities Gaspar de Alba describes as “umbilically connected,”¹³ reside at the center of a crossroads of contradictions. The resulting borders of the Texas Revolt (1836) and the Mexican-American War (1848) vivisected the land of the once-unified cities, with families and neighbors finding themselves on opposite sides of the meandering, snake-like Rio Grande. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848 established the river as the official boundary which was once seemingly innocuous¹⁴ and porous. However, the border continues to be a site of violence, evoking Anzaldúa’s description of the Mexico/U.S. border as “una herida abierta” [an open wound] (3) found in her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, because of the blood spilled by an unquantifiable number of people negotiating meager existences at this crossroads of unabated capitalism and tightly regulated immigration. Unfortunately, the Mexico/U.S. border continues to serve as a target of the federal government’s schizophrenic¹⁵ attitude towards Mexican laborers.

The crossroads at which El Paso¹⁶, affectionately dubbed “El Chuco¹⁷,” resides is both historical and metaphorical. During the colonial period of “New Spain,” 1519-1821, the northernmost seat of the crown lay in current-day Santa Fe, New Mexico. The path between the capital of New Spain, built upon the vanquished Tenochtitlan, and Santa Fe became known as the “Camino Real,” or the “royal road.” El Paso del Norte, “the pass to the North,” now current-day Ciudad Juárez, roughly represented two-thirds of the journey from the former to the latter—the two major seats of power. This vertical line of Spanish colonial power intersects with the somewhat horizontal United States border established in 1848. Where they intersect sits El Paso/Ciudad Juárez, the borderlands negotiating several layers of colonialism—Spanish, Mexican, Texan, and U.S.

Alternately, the path between El Paso and Isleta, New Mexico symbolizes another path of coloniality. Subsequent to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680¹⁸, the first indigenous revolt against a colonizing force in the United States, the defeated Spaniards enslaved a splinter of the Isleta tribe and marched them south towards El Paso. There, the Spaniards forced the captives to build a mission, La Misión de Corpus Christi de San Antonio de la Ysleta del Sur. Several hundred years later, the city of El Paso annexed the reservation in the 1950s. The tribe (of which I am a descendant) continues to suffer at the hands of imperial Texas rule¹⁹. These representations of layered colonial power form a rudimentary cross, the four directions, or a crossroads.²⁰ The crossroads represents a space of liminality and possibilities, of life and of death, particularly the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez area, the site of centuries of colonial violence. I also interpret the crossroads as an intersection of homoerotic desire and Chicanidad, a juncture that essentialist thinkers like Augenbraum and Fernandez Olmos and others could not fathom.

Just north of the meandering Rio Grande in central El Paso, John Rechy²¹, the Chicano son of Mexican immigrant parents fleeing the upheaval of the Mexican Revolution, began to document the realities of his impoverished childhood of Depression-era Texas. As Rechy describes in a response to question I posed to him over e-mail²²:

I was born in 1933, the depth of the Great Depression, and my earliest years were lived during that time. Those times were so ruled by surviving that—imagine this—even sexual discrimination, if it existed (and I'm sure it did, entirely invisibly) was not acknowledged, not known, certainly not by me, not those early years. I was aware of discrimination against Mexicans, yes, because although El Paso was and has always been less racist than, say, Dallas, [where] there were signs on buses that designated a few seats as “colored.” The water faucets [at] the Greyhound depot did, too, separating restrooms;

and some restaurants (coffee shops) also enforced separation [against Mexicans]—although it was not as violent as discrimination against black people in the deeper South...The large population of Mexicans who came across the river to Texas—like my mother, Guadalupe Flores Rechy, did not, and often refused to, speak English. At home, we—two brothers, two sisters, all older than I—spoke only Spanish until, like me, we went to school. My first school year, I spoke only Spanish; an “Anglo” teacher changed my actual name—Juan Francisco Rechy—to Johnny because of a confusion between “Juan” and “one.” Even within the extending poverty of the first years, there was a “class” division. Though as poor as everyone else, we considered ourselves “middle class” because others had no home, traveled through El Paso on freight trains...It was only into my teen years. In those years, I became very aware of discrimination against Mexicans, although, being somewhat fair, I was not the object of it.

Rechy’s memory of his racial, ethnic, linguistic, and class positionality in his youth in El Paso offer a point of commonality for the gay Xicanx born of immigrant parents in any subsequent decade. His experience of being renamed by a white teacher is the precursor to that of the Chicana/o activists who endured their teachers’ racist attitudes in later years. For example, in the PBS-funded series, *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (1996), the episode, “Taking Back the Schools,” includes personal testimony from the world-renowned artist, Harry Gamboa, Jr. Gamboa started elementary school in the early 1950s in East Los Angeles, “I was the only [monolingual Spanish-speaking] student in my kindergarten class...I was...led to the front of the class and was instructed how to construct a cone hat out of construction paper. The teacher...told me I could take it off when I learned to speak English, and the word she painted was Spanish.” Rechy’s educational experiences should cause early

Chicana/o activists who doubted his Chicanidad (his Chicano authenticity) to reflect. Rechy's recollections of the intersection of race, phenotype, language, and class in a Chicax border context in the United States during the Great Depression and World War II eras illuminate the uniqueness and importance of his earliest articles for national publications, such as *The Nation* and *Evergreen Review*. These writings pre-date the texts of one of the few Chicano journalists,²³ Frank del Olmo, and the emergence of the Chicano Movement by nearly a decade.

Although the field of Chicana/o Studies has largely overlooked the works of John Rechy, what few scholars in the field fail to realize is his early influence by Carey McWilliams, considered by some as the “grandfather of Chicano Studies,”²⁴ author of the text, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (1949). When McWilliams held the position of editor of the historically leftist publication, *The Nation*, he advised a young journalism graduate from the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy to write of his experiences growing up as a Chicano in El Paso. This mentorship produced important works such as the articles “Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero” and “El Paso del Norte,” both published in 1959 in *The Nation* and *Evergreen Review*, respectively. Besides McWilliams’ text, there existed no substantive historical writings regarding the Xicanx population until the first edition of Rodolfo Acuña’s *Occupied America: The Chicano Struggle for Liberation* in 1972.²⁵ As editor of *The Nation*, McWilliams influenced Rechy’s early writings on racial discrimination against the Xicanx people. Thus, McWilliams’ *North from Mexico* and Rechy’s articles represent early ruptures in the Black/White binary classification of racial identity in the United States.

The physical border of the Rio Grande assumes both a material and symbolic role in El Paso history. The terms outlined by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo specified the river’s

deepest channel as the official border; however, the U.S. negotiators, Nicholas Trist and General Winfield Scott, failed to factor the disruptive nature of bodies of water. Despite such international rows such as the nearly century-long Chamizal Dispute,²⁶ Rechy argues in the article, “Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero,” “the real boundary is formed by the tracks that daily block the flow of city traffic with fat freight trains spilling business in this prosperous, growing Southwest border area” (211). Rechy’s use of a distinct class signifier, railroad tracks, establishes an economic border between the poverty-stricken group of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans subsisting on the nebulous border and distinguishes them (his own family included) from the “substantial group of middle-class Mexican Americans [who live] nicely integrated with its Anglo-American neighbors in the newer communities of El Paso” (211). Rechy is applying an intersectional analysis to class and race by distinguishing between the Mexicans believed to be “gente de razón”²⁷ and those who occupied lower socioeconomic statuses. Rechy, although possessing a white-passing phenotype, lived in the neighborhood known as “El Segundo Barrio,” also referred to as the “Second Ward” by locals, an impoverished area dotted with tenement-style housing projects and located just north of Ciudad Juárez in South Central El Paso. The site of increasing gentrification struggles,²⁸ El Segundo Barrio and its neighboring historical communities of Chihuahuita (Little Chihuahua) and Duranguito (Little Durango) and their residents are finding themselves displaced because of city and corporate interests. Nonetheless, this area straddling the U.S.-Mexico border is the context of the opening section of Rechy’s groundbreaking novel, *City of Night*, a potential reading of “home” for questioning Xicanx adolescents who long to make sense of their burgeoning desires within a familiar cultural context:

Sundays during summer especially I would hike outside the city, along the usually waterless strait of sand called the Rio Grande, up the mountain of Cristo Rey,²⁹ dominated at the top by the coarse, weed-surrounded stature of a primitive-faced Christ. I would lie on the dirt of that mountain staring at the breathtaking Texas sky. (25)

Although Mt. Cristo Rey officially resides in Sunland Park, New Mexico, the cities of Juárez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas, are adjacent. During this historical moment (the early 1950s), the border was inconsequential. This passage from his first published novel locates Rechy distinctly within the borderlands of Texas/New Mexico/Mexico.

Home for Gay Xicanx Men

My conceptualization of “home” as part of hom(e)*erotics* began with my reading of Anzaldúa’s passage of homophobia. One of the revolutionary concepts Anzaldúa introduces in *Borderlands/La Frontera* informs my theory of hom(e)*erotics*—the fear of going home. Anzaldúa provides the context for refashioning the definition of homophobia:

In a New England college where I taught, the presence of a few lesbians threw the more conservative heterosexual students and faculty into a panic. The two lesbian students and we two lesbian instructors met with them to discuss their fears. One of the students said, “I thought homophobia meant fear of going home after a residency.”

And I thought, how apt. Fear of going home. And of not being taken in. We’re afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *la Raza*, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged. (19-20)

This fear of going home coupled with erotic desire represent the impetus for Rechy’s protagonist’s journey in *City of Night*. The protagonist fled El Paso with the same urgency that Mexicans left their homeland during the Mexican Revolution—for survival. Anzaldúa writes

that she is the first among many generations to leave the valley of South Texas. In Arturo Islas' *The Rain God* (1984), the queer Xicanx character, Miguel Chico (loosely based on Islas), leaves the Texas border town of El Sapo for San Francisco. I remember wanting to run away to any major metropolitan area when I became aware of my own homoerotic desires.

These “queer migrations,” as termed by Anne-Marie Fortier in “‘Coming Home’: Queer Migrations and Multiple Evocations of Home” (2001), can be read along with Pat Mora's (another El Paso writer) text, *House of Houses* (1997), a memoir in which the living commune with the dead within a material and metaphysical space of home. Mora's text fits within Fortier's concept of “‘home’ [as] a destination rather than an origin” (407-408). The characters inhabiting the Mora house, the living and the dead, still harbor desire yet each character has found their own distinct space, an attribute not found with Rechy's or Islas' protagonists; they still journey towards “home” or rather Rechy's concept of a “substitute for salvation,” which he describes in his own words as:

Yes, that phrase recurs; and I'm referring to one of religion's greatest betrayals: the promise of redemption based on various reactionary codes that invoke judgment. But, in early years, one may believe that spurious promise. As life unwinds with its panorama of horrors—and, yes, times of beauty and joy—but because of the former (horrors) the promise is violated. The perfect “salvation” is not available. We do search for substitutes, though, psychoanalysis, cults, exotic religions, sex, etc.—none fills the longing for the promised, impossible “salvation,” complete, unassailable.

Rechy's “substitute for salvation” is a thematic thread tying the works of his corpus into a tragically beautiful bouquet of existentialism and unfulfilled desire. Concurrently awed by the pageantry of the Catholic Church yet critical of its institutional biases and hypocrisy, Rechy

introduces this concept in *City of Night* as he doubts the existence of a god subsequent to the death of his beloved dog, Winnie. The protagonist's growing rage culminates in his liberation from Catholicism and journeys towards an unknown and undefined destination:

I hang up the telephone and I know that now Forever I will have no father, that he had been unfound, that as long as he had been alive there was a chance, and that we would be, Always now, strangers, and that is when I knew what Death really is—not in the physical discovery of the Nothingness which the death of my dog Winnie had brought me (in the decayed body which would turn into dirt, rejected by Heaven) but in the knowledge that *my Father was, for me*—that there was no way to reach him now—that there was no way to reach him now—that his Death would exist only for me, who am living... The army passed like something unreal, and I returned to my Mother and her hungry love. And left her, standing that morning by the kitchen door crying, as she always would be in my mind, and I was on my way to Chicago, briefly—from where I would go to freedom: New York!—embarking on that journey through nightcities and nightlives—looking for I don't know what—perhaps some substitute for salvation. (27-28)

The Chicano Movement's re-claiming of the United States Southwest as the true Chicano homeland is rooted in a patriarchal notion of cultural nationalism (a form of salvation for heterosexual Chicano men). Rechy's concept of a "substitute for salvation" is more aligned with Cherríe Moraga's iconic "Queer Aztlán: the Re-formation of Chicano Tribe," published in *The Last Generation: Prose and Poetry* (1993). In this landmark essay, Moraga argues for a reconceptualization of the Chicano motherland of Aztlan. The queering of the Chicano Movement demands more than the simple addition of Chicana lesbians and Chicano gay men to its historiography. Moraga argues, "When 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán'³⁰ was conceived a

generation ago, lesbians and gay men were not envisioned as members of the ‘house’; we were not recognized as the sister planting the seeds, the brother gathering the crops” (159). Although jotas and jotos were not included, Moraga begins to recreate the founding vision of those brave souls who dared to write the Planes that provided the architecture for the Chicano Movement. Her lesbian desires and pleasures allow her to remap Aztlan as more than just the Southwestern United States that had been lost with Texas independence and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. With this lesbian-centered geography, Moraga includes the terrain of her body and the associated erotic pleasure into a queer Plan. However, this is not just a theoretical exercise but rather a critical argument regarding the material conditions of the lives of queer Xicanx men. Thus, I build on Moraga’s concept of a “queer Aztlan” as both a theoretical construct but also, and more importantly, the physical, emotional, and spiritual building blocks of queer Xicanx men’s realities.

Class analysis is another border queer Xicanx men are often enclosed behind. The pursuit and consumption of a wealthy lifestyle are linked inextricably with modern gay identity. Moving to and living in one of the “gay ghettos” of the United States—West Hollywood, the Castro, the West Village—is cost prohibitive for working-class, queer PoC, and are sites of queer white supremacy, as toxic to queer PoC as any Klan rally³¹. Arguably, these “gay ghettos” represent bubbles of economic white supremacy and do not represent a “home” for queer Xicanx men. The racism exhibited by white gay men towards queer men of color represents a stinging banishment from the gay “community,” yet another example signifies a deeper and more profound betrayal.

Part of my positionality as a gay Chicaxx cisgender man is my indigeneity, which I trace from my mother’s lineage, who grew up on a Native American reservation straddling the Rio

Grande in the southeastern corner of El Paso County. My mother's ancestors, slaves of the Spanish soldiers who fled the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, built the mission still standing in Ysleta, Texas. Another aspect of "home" for gay Xicanx men is the reconciliation with our indigeneity, a theme explored brilliantly by another writer from El Paso, the late Arturo Islas, in his texts, *The Rain God* (1984) and its sequel, *Migrant Souls* (1990). These two novels of a Mexican family migration from Mexico to the fictional border town of El Sapo (an anagram for El Paso). As if channeling my indigenous grandfather, Islas' character of Mama Chona, christened Encarnación, surname Olmeca,³² denies her phenotype, as it betrays her alleged Spanish heritage. My grandfather, while never claiming Spanish ancestry, often counseled my mother to "always say you're Mexican, mi'ja," because of the racism from whites and Mexicans alike. The beginning of *Migrant Souls*, less read than its predecessor yet just as impactful, sets the tone for the colonized mind of internalized racism:

In their mother's, Josie Salazar knew, she and her sister Serena were more like the Indians than the Spanish ladies they were brought up to be.

When they were children and growing up on the "American" side of the Mexican Texas border, it was, "Serena, get that braid out of your mouth. Do you want to be taken for Indian?" Or, "Josie, how many times do I have to tell you that a young lady does not cross her legs like an Indian?"

Later, when they were teenagers in the late forties and still on the border, Serena was criticized for wearing clothes that were too bright and immodest and Josie was told that if her hair got any stringier because she refused to wash it every day, the Indians were going to claim her as their own and drag her off to Ysleta, or worse yet, to San Elizario, even farther into the lower valley. (3)

The anti-indigenous attitudes displayed in the first three paragraphs of the novel reflect the entrenchment of the internalized and externalized racism found in the Chicana community but also within the gay male community, as racial preferences (usually excluding Black, Asian, and dark-skinned Latinos) abound on the popular dating applications.³³

Gabriel S. Estrada expands upon this search for our lost indigenous past by advocating queer Xicana move toward a Mexica-Nahuatl based framework of masculinity, old age, femininity, and youth³⁴. Estrada invokes the sacred properties of the four directions as a repositioning of queer Chicano masculinity and desire. A return to indigeneity is crucial for the health of queer indigenous, as Estrada illustrates:

“In Alberta, Canada...[Salish] saw sobriety grow from less than 5 percent to 98 percent today. The Salish tell other Natives how they regained control over their land and their destiny by ousting white traders, setting up Native commerce, reinstating a traditionally designed council, and gathering for community prayer.” The rapid decrease in the cycles of drinking and criminal behavior is hopeful for other Indigenous communities whose sicknesses are embedded in colonization. It also repudiates the hegemonic white ideology that Indians are dependent upon white social models and epidemiologies for improved health. (47)

Estrada endeavors to reposition queer Chicano men as “social Malinches”—traitors who subvert neocolonial practices of patriarchy and homophobia—through the Mexica symbolic worldview of the East (akatl/reed), North (tekpatl/obsidian blade), West (calli/house), and South (tochtli/rabbit) (41-50). As Chicana lesbians reclaim the position of “social Malinche” as warriors to combat the intersectional oppression of homophobia, racism, and misogyny, queer Chicano men must embrace a decolonial masculinity, one rooted in a balanced indigeneity of male and

female. Ultimately, I return to Anzaldúa and Rechy to draw up my own blueprints for a queer Xicanx architecture to construct a home, which acknowledges our fears yet does not attempt to assuage them with false narratives of salvation.

Chicana/o Studies on Trial for Crimes against Jotería

One of the objectives of my theory of hom(e)erotics is to correct a nearly forty-year injustice perpetrated by the field of Chicana/o Studies to recognize HIV/AIDS as a critical issue of study, as the disease broaches issues of stigma, silence, and sexuality that intersect with race and class. If I could put the discipline of Chicana/o Studies on trial for the omission of jotería and HIV from the curriculum, I would allow David Román to be the lead prosecutor. In the text, *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Forum: Critical and Ethnographic Practices* (2006), edited by Angie Chabram-Dernersesian, Román presents the prosecution's opening statement (presented in full below). He argues for the inclusion of HIV as a critical object of study, in a sense to recover "the lost syllabus of HIV/AIDS-related curriculum"³⁵:

As for me, I would like to see the field of Chicana/o Latina/o cultural studies critically examine the AIDS epidemic from the multiple disciplines that comprise the field. I know that we all have our own issues that are important, that we feel should be the field's priority, but my own personal interest falls here. People might wonder why AIDS ought to be prioritized over issues of health care and/or citizenship, but, as far as I am concerned, all these issues are interconnected. And it's not as if other people outside of academia haven't taken note of what's going on. Among political leaders of communities of color we do see people, such as California's Congresswoman Maxine Waters, organizing to recognize the crisis state of HIV in Black communities. We're also seeing this advocacy among the Latina/o representatives who lobbied Clinton to provide

more funding for Black and Latino communities, both in terms of HIV prevention and treatment. *But Chicana/o Latina/o intellectuals have not been addressing this.* [emphasis added] There was a great essay published in *Differences*, the feminist journal, in 1989, entitled “Silences: ‘Hispanics,’ AIDS, and Sexual Practices,”³⁶ that served as a springboard for my own work on Latinos and AIDS. Still, few people in Latino studies seriously address AIDS in their work...

In my opinion, the lack of attention to AIDS in area studies is striking, given that women and people of color now comprise the new demographics of AIDS/HIV in this country. I actually don’t understand this omission... “What does it mean that homosexuality isn’t addressed in the essays of this volume [*Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology* (1991)]?” “What does it mean that AIDS isn’t included among the social issues addressed by the anthology?” “How can Latino studies engage these topics?” This was in 1991, when we were already seeing how AIDS was moving directly into communities of color. For me, the questions were, and remain: When and where do we begin to intervene as intellectuals? How can we make our work in the public sphere? (62-63)

Román’s words are the prosecution’s opening statement. The defense attorney stays mute, for the exclusion of *jotería* and HIV/AIDS epidemic from study by an academic discipline *founded* by activists claiming to address the inequalities of the Xicanx community is criminal, particularly as we have lost such queer Xicanx artists as Mundo Meza (1955-1985) and Carlos Almaraz (1941-1989) and writers Arturo Islas (1938-1991) and Gil Cuadros (1962-1996) and other unknown artists, writers, and intellectuals.

In the second incarnation of the *Star Trek* franchise, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, a celestial being named Q, part of a group of god-like beings called the Continuum, puts humanity on trial for being a violent race in the first episode of the initial season and the final episode of the closing season, the entire series being a continuous trial. Captain Jean-Luc Picard is the defendant representing humanity, or what Q calls a “dangerous, savage child-race.”

Q continues, “You’re guilty.”

Picard retorts, “Of what?”

Q explains, “Of being inferior. Seven years ago, I said we’d be watching you, and we have been. Hoping that your ape-like race would demonstrate some growth, give some indication that your minds had room for expansion...You obtuse piece of flotsam! You are to be denied existence! Humanity’s fate has been sealed. You will be destroyed...He doesn’t understand! I have only myself to blame, I suppose. I believed in you. I thought you had potential. But apparently, I was wrong. May whatever god you believe in have mercy on your soul. This court stands adjourned.”

Ultimately, Picard completes Q’s Herculean task by thinking paradoxically about time and space, saving humanity. Unlike Picard, however, Chicana/o Studies scholars have yet to expand their minds regarding the subjectivity, save Román and Horacio Roque Ramirez, broach the topics of HIV and jotería and their work. The prosecution offers further evidence. Irene Isabel Blea, a former chairperson of the Chicana/o Studies Department at California State University, Los Angeles, writes in her text, *Researching Chicano Communities: Socio-Historical, Physical, Psychological and Spiritual Space* (1995) under the subheading, “Activist Scholarship,” “Much of the work done on Chicano communities still focuses upon the dysfunctional, the deviant, [*sic*] elements of the Chicano experience (gangs, drug addiction,

HIV). Not much is being done to counteract this. In fact, Chicano scholars are writing books about it” (36). This evidentiary statement of classifying such critical social issues as “dysfunctional” and “deviant” represents Blea’s homophobia, AIDS-phobia, classism, moralism, internalized racism, internalized misogyny, and victim-shaming mentality. Her lament that Chicana/o scholars are studying such social problems is baffling. Her use of the term, “deviant,” reinforces the stigma of Chicanas/os grappling with these issues. Additionally, this is the only mention of HIV/AIDS in this text, and Blea mentions homophobia only as a tangent in another section, “In the case of discrimination, the racist, the sexist, and the homophobic are also sick” (144). A more apt self-diagnosis I have not read. Never does Blea cite the pioneering work of Chicana lesbians, failing to cite the influences of Anzaldúa, Moraga, Gaspar de Alba, Pérez, Trujillo, et al., on the emerging field of Chicana scholars. I conclude that the “Chicano communities” Blea recommends researching are those Chicana (presumably heterosexual) who have emulated the Horatio Alger myth of achieving middle-class economic success by “pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.”³⁷

Blea’s use of the term “deviant” deserves further analysis and is cause for alarm as it connotes the history of homosexuality as a mental disorder, her implicit bias showing. In her article, “When Gay was Not Okay with the APA: A Historical Overview of Homosexuality and its Status as Mental Disorder,”³⁸ (2011) Sarah Baughey-Gill details the medical establishment’s consideration of homoerotic desire as pathological, “The classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder by the APA [American Psychological Association] had a huge impact on the homosexual community as well as on the general public’s view of homosexuality... One of the major issues that emerged due to the APA classification was that, because it was supposedly based on scientific findings, it was difficult for homosexuals to dispute views which held them as

deviant” (7-8). Coupled with the criminalization of sodomy, the medical establishment’s classification of homoerotic desire as deviant led to the gruesome history of reparative protocols, such as “hypnosis, electroshock therapy, lobotomy, and various behavioral treatment, such as abstinence and aversion therapy” (Baughey-Gill 9). The first volume of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) published in 1952 described homosexuality as a “sociopathic personality disturbance” and in the second volume as a “sexual deviation” (7) in 1968. Five years later, the APA declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder.

However, the legacy of the APA’s classification of homosexuality as pathological remains, as Jeremy W. Peters explains in “The Decline and Fall of the ‘H’ Word,” published in *The New York Times*.³⁹ Peters’ article provides an historical overview of the term, “homosexual,” as clinical and dated, as it is no longer used by the Associated Press because of pressure by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). Peters cites the influential linguist and cognitive scientist, George P. Lakoff, in his reporting on the negative connotations of the word. The word, “homosexual,” contains an explicit reference to sexual activity, argues Lakoff, between members of the same gender. The prefix, “homo,” continues to be a slur. The images the term evokes in the mind are ones of deviant, aberrant sexual behavior. Although Blea does not use the term, “homosexual,” in her text, the word she *does* use, “deviant,” evokes the history of discrimination against queer communities. Ironically, as Peters reports, “Historians believe the first use of ‘homosexual’ was by Karl-Maria Kertbeny, a Hungarian journalist who wrote passionately in opposition to Germany’s anti-sodomy laws in the 19th century.” However, the term is currently used by the homophobic right wing of U.S. politics, as in “the homosexual agenda, the homosexual lobby,” perhaps as a strategy of

reminding the general populace of the queer community's sexual deviancy and the stereotypes of pedophilia and "recruitment"⁴⁰ of youth.

The legacy of homosexuals roving playgrounds and high school gyms leering at youths in their prime and actively attempting to "recruit" them as aggressively as the armed forces or Scientology is now laughable yet represents a tangible fear in the minds of heterosexuals. Michael Nava and Robert Dawidoff tackle this fear and a plethora of other stereotypes in their important text, *Created Equal: Why Gay Rights Matter to America* (1994). Even though this book is somewhat dated because of recent legislative victories such as, *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003)⁴¹ and *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015)⁴², and public sentiment and popular culture reflect the country's evolving attitude towards the LGBTQ community, the struggle for full equality and true liberation remains, as only twenty states and the District of Columbia offer protections in the arenas of "employment, housing, and public accommodations" based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and three other states offer lesser safeguards against discrimination, according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).⁴³ The emergence of "religious liberty"⁴⁴ legislation further threatens the tenuous rights recently won by the LGBT community.

In constructing their argument for LGBT rights, Nava and Dawidoff confront the long-standing belief as homosexuals as active recruiting others to the "gay lifestyle," particularly youth. Nava and Dawidoff argue that heterosexuals sexualize LGBT people and then assume we desire all people of the same sex. The heterosexual stereotypical view of homosexuals is one of sexually obsessed vampires⁴⁵ seeking to transform "natural" heterosexuals towards a life of deviancy. As Nava and Dawidoff note, the LGBT community are not the first minority to have the label of sexually immoral thrust upon them. Our country's anti-miscegenation laws were founded upon the racist beliefs of slaveowners against Black people, particularly Black men,

even though it was white men who routinely raped their slaves. The film, *Birth of a Nation* (1915), directed by D.W. Griffith, features a Black male character (a white man in black face) who chases a white woman who jumps off a cliff rather than be raped. Nava and Dawidoff also cite Hitler's a passage from *Mein Kampf* warning that Jewish men were predators towards white women (37). Thus, Nava and Dawidoff conclude that homosexuals are only the most recent minority to be labeled as deviant by the white, heterosexual majority; however, the egregious stereotype of sexual predator persists in the popular imagination.⁴⁶

Finally, the prosecution lists the deaths of prominent queer Xicanx who succumbed to HIV—the visual artists, Mundo Meza and Carlos Almaraz, and the writers, Arturo Islas and Gil Cuadros. Four lives extinguished among an unquantifiable number of AIDS-related deaths in the Xicanx community. The prosecution rests. The jury, consisting of Xicanx, known and unknown, who succumbed to AIDS renders its verdict—guilty on all counts. The judge—a nameless transgender mujer who died of AIDS, glares at the patriarchs who remain silent, as they have done throughout the epidemic, and pronounces the sentence—banishment to the vestibule of Hell.⁴⁷

Further Evidence for a Critical Genealogy of Gay Xicanx Literature—R.I. Power Arlene Díaz, “La Lupe,” Victoria Arellano, and Gabriel Fernandez

The first method of my theory of hom(e)erotics entails a critical mapping, rather an Anzaldúan “conocimiento” of gay Xicanx literature. Mapping stories mirroring the confusing, taboo desires of adolescence and adulthood not only represents a theoretical exercise—these are stories of chronicling the intersection of life, death, homoerotic desire, and fleeting pleasure. Rechy and the other authors I “conocer” represent the material realities of generations of gay Xicanx men shackled by centuries of heteronormative institutions—namely the Catholic Church,

the traditional, heteronormative family, and the state. Although queer Xicanx men hold male privilege, and often represent the worst perpetrators of external *and* internal misogyny, we, too, suffer at the hands of patriarchy, for as Anzaldúa argues in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987):

Men, even more than women, are fettered to gender roles. Women at least have had the guts to break out of bondage. Only gay men have had the courage to expose themselves to the woman inside them and to challenge the current masculinity. I've encountered a few scattered isolated and gentle straight men, the beginnings of a new breed, but they are confused, and entangled with sexist behaviors that they have not been able to eradicate. We a new masculinity and the new man needs a movement. Lumping the males who deviate from the general norm with man, the oppressor, is a gross injustice. (84)

Unfortunately, many gay men still cling to their male privilege, projecting a toxic form of violent heteronormative masculinity, indicated by the common phrase, "Masc for masc only" (an allegedly masculine gay man who rejects "femme" gay men), upon their feminine counterparts and cisgender and transgender women. Dr. Deena J. González writes of this misogyny in her article, "Speaking Secrets: Living Chicana Theory," published in the anthology, *Living Chicana Theory* (1998), edited by Carla Trujillo, in which the author describes the experience of having her academic credentials questioned by gay Xicanx male colleagues. González reveals in the section of her article, "On Misogyny Among 'The' Chicano":

It was recently brought to my attention that two Chicano (gay) academics were gossiping about me and severely undermining my standing as a Chicana historian...As a person who has spent over ten years on said manuscript, two of those double-checking all of my

sources at each of the three archival repositories I use...I took grave offense at the charges, let alone at their patriarchal, authoritative rendering. The remarks were made indirectly, with malicious intent, and they caused me to reevaluate how woman-hating operates in this society, how it infects and incarcerates Chicanos as it obliterates Chicana scholarship. (64-65)

That two queer Xicanx men disparaged a Chicana of González's stature is as much ahistorical as it is a Napoleonic display of external and internalized misogyny. That Chicanas were the unrecognized leaders of the Chicano Movement (often subsumed by the "o"), queer women of color not only organized grassroots efforts in the HIV awareness movement and took care of their queer brethren as died of AIDS, they also died in silence of the disease.

Thus, I modify Anzaldúa's macro argument that it is queer Xicanx men, specifically, who need a new masculinity, one forged from nurturing, feminist principles and, as difficult as the task may be, to reject patriarchal practices and to examine and re-examine our male privilege. Although *Borderlands/La Frontera* delineates the Anzaldúan theory of *mestiza* consciousness, she remained concerned with the fate of her queer brethren, as evidenced by the preceding excerpt. In Anzaldúa's archive, I discovered the following quote, "I feel a fellowship with faggots. I don't envision a society without men. Sorry" (Box 32, Folder 5). This quote follows Anzaldúa's desire of not isolating herself from lesbians of racial and ethnic backgrounds other than Latinx and Xicanx.

In this section, I offer evidence as to why such a critical mapping, rather an Anzaldúan "conocimiento" of a queer Xicanx male genealogy is necessary and how a framework of hom(e)erotics to explicate gay Xicanx realities can possibly make sense of the following tragedies. The crossroads of desire/death/life/home exists where the colonial clashes against the

non-normative. The following cases illustrate how the non-normative suffer at the hands of colonial structures, similar to Anzaldúa's description of the border in *Borderlands/La Frontera* as “*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against First and bleeds” (3). The “Third World” in this context are those existing at the margins of our heteropatriarchal society. The marginalized subjects I describe in the following pages are one gay Latinx cisgender man (one from Orlando), two transgender Latinas (one from El Paso and one from Los Angeles), and one young Latinx child from the Antelope Valley, a working-class area north of Los Angeles, who should have been unburdened by issues of erotic desire or gender identity, whose only crime was to dare play with dolls with his sister, yet is memorialized in these pages.

I begin in El Paso, as I follow Rechy's opening page in *City of Night* (1963), “...but it begins in El Paso, must begin in El Paso...and it begins in the Wind” (1). In El Paso during the 1980s/1990s/2000s, the most popular gay bar was The Old Plantation, or “The O.P.” for short. Housed in a nondescript building in an industrial area of downtown El Paso, the “O.P.” represented an escape for the city's queers. Other LGBT bars dotted the vicinity, but the “O.P.” was *the* spot to dance, to drink, to pick up, and to hear the latest house music. I remember the first time I dared venture into the structure that would soon become my haven. I circled the bar at least a dozen times before I summoned the courage to park and nonchalantly stand in line with my fake ID. Although it was a crisp December desert night, I had already sweat through my “Tennis, anyone?” white and navy Gap sweater. The cashier⁴⁸ scrutinized my credentials and collected the entrance fee. I entered the serpent and shed the first skin of my heteronormative existence.⁴⁹ The pulsing siren's song beckoned—the drumbeats of the house music—and I was enchanted. It was 1990. That night, I may have crossed paths or perhaps even danced or made

out with another queer Latinx, Hector (Arlene) Díaz. I managed to escape the heteropatriarchal restraints of El Paso, yet Arlene stayed—the violence of the border city killing her several times.

Later in the 1990s, Hector, one of Dr. Emma Pérez’s “decolonial border queers”⁵⁰ realized Hector was not her true self, rather “Arlene” was her true self. Arlene began to transition and live her life as a transgender, working-class Latina. Arlene Díaz is one of Pérez’s subjects in her essay, “Decolonial Border Queers: Case Studies of Chicana/o Lesbians, Gay Men, and Transgender Folks in El Paso/Juárez,” published in the anthology, *Performing the U.S. Latina and Latino Borderlands* (2012), edited by Arturo J. Aldama, Chela Sandoval, and Peter J. García. In her essay, Pérez collects the experiences of several people negotiating the intersection of Chicanidad, homoerotic desire, border crossings, familial politics, and the colorful history of the El Paso/Juárez borderlands. Pérez discovered Arlene’s story posthumously when it appeared in *The El Paso Times*, as Arlene was the victim of hate crime in several dimensions. A young man is awaiting the death penalty for shooting Arlene in the back and leaving her to die in a desolate part of the border where El Paso, Texas, Juárez, Mexico, and Sunland Park, New Mexico converge. Ironically, the dirt road is named Anapra—the same name of the Juárez neighborhood where hundreds of Mexican women’s bodies have been discovered after being abducted, raped, mutilated, and murdered, the infamous femicides of Ciudad Juárez. This represents Arlene’s first death at the hands of her killer whom I will not name.

Arlene’s second death occurs at the hands of the writer of *The El Paso Times* article reporting the circumstances surrounding her murder and the commenters of the online version of the article. The author of the article Pérez references, Louie Gilot, and the article commenters assassinate Arlene’s character with the use of homophobic and transphobic language and stereotypes. Gilot’s article, “Victim of Hate Crime Led Two Lives, Friends Say,” (2002) shames

Arlene's transition from her male persona of Hector to her chosen identity. Framing a transgender person's border crossings of gender, in Arlene's case out of familial politics, as someone leading "two lives" suggests deception or some sort of nefarious motive. Living at home with her mother and several siblings made it impossible for Arlene to live her life openly, thus her clandestine wardrobe changes at a local chapter of Planned Parenthood which housed a transgender support group she frequented. Gilot reports:

"She would go to work in male clothing and dressed as a boy at home. She respected her family's wish not to see her like that," said [Sascha] Adams, a soft-spoken transgender person, sitting in a corner of the Lambda Community Center on Ochoa Street. Before cruising the clubs, Diaz would get ready at the Planned Parenthood's Desert Rainbow Center on Montana Avenue. At the end of the night, Diaz would change again on the way home. "She'd wake up as a boy," Adams said. "She used to say as soon as she got her own apartment she'd be a girl 24-7." (<http://freerepublic.com/focus/news/676356/posts>)

Gilot begins a sentence "Before cruising the clubs" to refer to Arlene's routine of dressing in women's clothing for the evening. Here, Gilot engages in slut-shaming Arlene with the connotation of "cruising the clubs." Because Arlene dressed in woman's clothing to "cruise," the choice of this verb frames her as a "bad woman," someone who deserves whatever grisly fate she may encounter.

The comments section of the article does not treat Arlene any more fairly or offer any sort of sympathetic sentiment. Most of the comments question the motives of the El Paso Police Department to treat Arlene's murder as a hate crime.

A user named FITZ questions, “If a gay is murdered by another gay how can it be called a hate crime?”

The user, Ciexyz, responds to FITZ, “Seems there was a relationship there that deteriorated. That’s not a hate crime.”

Another user, jlogajan comments, “The police seem to think the attacker was not gay. But our local homophobes always seem to know better. I’m sure their *[sic]* glad this guy is dead though—after all the Bible commands we kill homosexuals.”

In a later post, Jlogajan cites Leviticus 20:13 as justification for Arlene’s murder.

FITZ opines, “How many straight men would be hanging around the gay bar scene for some time? This looks like a gay on gay killing—but maybe they need to boost the numbers of hate crimes or something.”

Others questions the motives of hate crime legislation, akin to then Texas Governor George W. Bush’s opposition to the James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes legislation, named after the horrific, racist murder of a Black man in Texas by two white men.⁵¹

The user Savage Beast comments, “The entire concept of a ‘hate crime’ is ridiculous. What are the others? Love crimes?” He does offer *some* condolence, “However, such a murder is horrifying. Such a murderer should receive the full punitive force of the law.”

Another makes the false equivalence of Arlene’s murder to that of eleven-year-old Eddie Werner by 15-year-old Sam Manzie,⁵² “*The law describes a ‘hate crime’ as an offense committed ‘because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, or disability’ of the victim...they forgot the amendment to that law: ‘unless the victim is a white murdered by a black, a hetero murdered by a gay, a male murdered by a*

woman...’ the murder of ten-year-old Eddie Warner *[sic]* by the homosexual teenager John Manzi *[sic]* in Jersey a few years ago was certainly never classified as a ‘hate crime.’”

Others are incredulous Planned Parenthood houses a transgender support group, as the user, Republic writes, “Planned Parenthood supports this crap????? How is providing a haven for boys who want to dress like girls and hunt out for other males for same sex adventures related [to] PLANNED PARENTHOOD?”

One of the final commenters, mountaineer, blames Arlene for her own death, “I don’t suppose that’s because they’re expressing a great deal of self-loathing which comes from the knowledge, deep down, that what they’re doing is perverse and an abomination to God. *[sic]* Naaaah, that can’t be it. Their lifestyle is just another way of ‘loving,’ after all, and we must be tolerant of all its variations.”

Gilot’s lack of understanding of gender identity as a related yet distinct issue from sexual identity lend to the slut-shaming and transphobic tone of the article, leading to the overtly hateful comment, which condemn Arlene’s memory to a graveyard of forgotten victims of violence, had it not been for Dr. Pérez’s meticulous eye reading the daily newspaper. I combine Arlene’s final deaths; one is intimate while the other is structural. Regarding the latter, Arlene’s death will never make national headlines. Too much time has passed and too many LGBTQ people of color (PoC) have perished because of their sexual and/or gender identities, yet save for the murder of the young transgender Latina, Gwen Araujo⁵³, none will become national icons in the same vein of Matthew Shepard, Brandon Teena, Ryan White, or Amber Hagerman. As Black feminist scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw⁵⁴ and Patricia Hill Collins⁵⁵ argue, white supremacy forces society’s attention to the plight of some victims of violence who occupy the territory of whiteness while it silences the cries of others. The aforementioned quartet represent

victims of homophobic violence, transphobic violence, governmental indifference, and pederasty. Because they all occupy the territory of whiteness, however, all four become the semiotic representation of their own strand of violence. Arlene Díaz, who existed in the nether regions of Hill Collins' matrix, is remembered only by those who choose to tell her story, first by Dr. Pérez and now in this work. The desert wind carried Arlene Díaz's muffled cries the moments before she died alone among the sand dunes and mesquite plants. Arlene's final death is familial—through the hands of her mother. I am sensitive to the unknowable depths of grief experienced by Arlene's mother, Rosa Díaz, and siblings, yet she was buried under the name "Hector" and in a man's suit. According to Gilot, "Díaz's family knew. Their baby boy had come out many years ago. But the mere mention of the name 'Arlene' causes Rosa Díaz to tense up. 'It's Hector. That's the name he was born under,' she said." However sympathetic I try to feel towards Rosa Díaz,⁵⁶ I hear Arlene's cries, "I'm not Hector. I don't like this suit. I'M ARLENE!" Dr. Pérez and I hear you, Arlene.

Another familial tragedy befalls the next life, a person whose name is not in the public sphere—the final body to be claimed of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, on June 12, 2016. I write this paragraph five days before the one-year anniversary of the then-worst mass shooting in U.S. history.⁵⁷ The Pulse nightclub was hosting a "Latin" night, as many gay bars are wont to do as a means of attracting the LGBTQ Latinx population and their friends and admirers. I choose not to write the names of any of the murderers in this section, as our popular culture is fascinated with perpetrators of gruesome murders and with only *certain* types of victims, to restate Crenshaw's argument regarding intersectionality and violence. The names Jeffrey Dahmer and John Wayne Gacy, two white gay serial killers, will forever remain in the

public zeitgeist; however, does anyone know the names of *one* of their victims, particularly those of the former who preyed upon young men, sometimes boys, of color?

The mainstream media and our government immediately framed the Pulse nightclub massacre as an act of terrorism because of the shooter's background, an Arabic name, brown skin, and a supposed allegiance to ISIS. Although I highly doubt this was an act of terrorism based on religion, rather an act of *self*-terrorism (internalized homophobia) which he projected onto others, but he is not the focus of this writing. I remember waking up Sunday morning, June 13, 2016, to the news of the shooting. Like the rest of the country, I remained frozen, fixated on the horrific images streaming forth, the chaos and pandemonium ensuing from an evening of lighthearted revelry. As I digested the stories of the deceased over the course of the next few days, e.g., a mother cried about her son and his boyfriend, a young gay couple recently engaged, I stumbled upon a story that left me in tears. The shooter killed forty-nine people and was eventually subdued by law enforcement. According to Maria Padilla in her article, "Father Refused to Claim Pulse Nightclub Shooting Victim," published in the *Orlando Latino*, of the fifty bodies, family members claimed forty-nine bodies (including the shooter's) within seventy-two hours, "'We effectively and efficiently completed the identification, notification and autopsy process within a 72-hour period—a monumental task,' according to an earlier statement by OCME [Orange County Medical Examiner]" (Padilla). The fiftieth body belonged to a gay Puerto Rican man who, like Arlene Díaz, was killed on several levels. The *Orlando Latino* chose not to reveal the identity of the victim as to not further inflame the situation. I choose to refer to this person as La Lupe after the fabulously tragic Puerto Rican singer of the same name. Not my intention to emasculate but rather to diffuse the violent patriarchy of the circumstances surrounding his death.

First, the Puerto Rican Studies scholar, Yarma Velázquez-Vargas, argues that colonialism is one of the major factors surrounding the murders of so many queer Latinx that night, as they should have been on the island. They should not have had to immigrate to the mainland for economic reasons. However, Puerto Rico's unmanageable debt crisis⁵⁸ over the last two decades forces generation of residents to flee to the mainland for better opportunities. Historically, one of the major economic destinations for Puerto Ricans is Orlando, Florida.⁵⁹ Velázquez-Vargas contends that the colonial outcomes of the Spanish-American War, where the Philippines and Cuba gained their independence, yet Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States, and its economic strangulation on the island's economy represent a "pull" factor for immigration to the mainland. For the island's LGBTQ population, the patriarchy of the island can also represent a "push" factor; Padilla continues, "The fact is, Puerto Ricans on the island are socially conservative and oftentimes anti-LGBT. While the U.S. Supreme Court declared that same-sex marriage was constitutional in June 2015, gay marriage didn't reach Puerto Rico until April 2016—10 months *after* the highest court's ruling—because a San Juan district court said the Supreme Court's decision didn't apply to Puerto Rico" (Padilla). Padilla's article provides a chart containing percentages of Latin American countries, including the U.S. Latinx population, comparing the population's opposition and approval of same-sex marriage. (A slight majority of Puerto Ricans—55%—oppose same-sex marriage. This compares to Mexico's 49% *approval* which surpasses U.S. Latinx' approval at 46%.) According to Velázquez-Vargas, La Lupe and her queer compatriots should have been at home on the island.

Padilla's article continues to illustrate the personal tragedy of the story—the victim's father refused to claim his son's body because of his son's sexuality. To reiterate, La Lupe's body remained in the morgue while the *shooter's* family claimed his body. Padilla explains,

“But it was touch and go for one particular shooting victim whose father didn’t want to claim the body. Because his son was gay. Because the father was ashamed. Finally, and after much convincing, the body was released to Orlando-area relatives and he has been buried.” I can only speculate the familial drama surrounding the issue of La Lupe’s sexual orientation and the circumstances of her death. What must have La Lupe’s spirit been experiencing as its corporeal remains lay in an antiseptic freezer while *someone* in the family realized the injustice of the situation. Is her spirit at peace? Padilla closes the article with a final comment, “And the victim’s family—or at least his father—didn’t accept the son’s sexual orientation, adding further insult to the sad and sensational circumstances of his death.” A follow-up article by Padilla⁶⁰ regarding this situation thanks the community for its “amazing sense of generosity, decency, and spirit in their desire to claim or bury the victim.”

La Lupe’s posthumous death urges me to recall a bleaker time for gay men—1980s and early 1990s during the height of the AIDS epidemic. During this tragic chapter of our history, families abandoned their sons and siblings, gay men’s bodies who died of complications due to AIDS, bodies buried in paupers’ graves, their spirits forever caught in a liminal space of grief and rage. These deaths themselves are tragic, yet the intersection of structural and familial violence against these queer Latinx necessitates another dimension of analysis, one that my theory of hom(e)*erotics* provides. Daniel Reynolds makes a similar argument in the mainstream LGBT publication, *The Advocate*, regarding the case of La Lupe. Reynolds’ article, “A Father Refused to Claim Body of Pulse Victim,” analogizes the homophobia of the death of La Lupe to that of the AIDS crisis and another historical tragedy every LGBTQ person should know and contemplate—the New Orleans’ Upstairs Lounge Fire of 1973. Reynolds cites the story of AIDS caretaker, Ruth Coker Burks, who tended to *hundreds* of people who died of

AIDS whose families had rejected. The Upstairs Lounge tragedy was a case of arson motivated by homophobia in which thirty-two people perished. Like the case La Lupe, families abandoned their kin and subsequently the victims were buried in paupers' graves. Reynolds reports, "Filmmaker Robert L. Camina revisited the tragedy and was astounded that many of the victims' bodies were never claimed. 'I think a lingering issue that is rarely talked about is the mystery surrounding the unknown victims,' Camina told *The Advocate*. 'These men went missing and no one claimed them? I can't wrap my head around it. It's unfathomable. I grieve for the unidentified victims of the fire. I don't believe they have found peace yet. I am shocked and sickened that the families never claimed them and that their bodies were dumped into a pauper's grave.'" This societal and familial homophobia is an issue Rechy, and the other authors I will cite, confronts in his oeuvre. What is critical about Rechy's treatment of the differing forms of homophobia, particularly internalized, is that his works span *six decades*, yet because of the early myopic view of the field of Chicana/o Studies, his contributions to the Chicano community have not been properly analyzed or contextualized within Chicana/o scholarship. Thus, a new theory such as hom(e)erotics is necessary to accomplish such a task.

Hom(e)erotics attempts to problematize the intersectional forms of violence experienced by queer Latino men. Although I focus on gay and bisexual cisgender Latino *men* in this work, I include two cases of transgender Latinx women as the third tenet of hom(e)erotics focuses on deconstructing toxic masculinity with the queer Latinx community. Transgender women of color face an inordinate amount of intersectional issues, and I argue they are the true revolutionaries as they consciously relinquish their male privilege. The feminine energy within gay and bisexual men is not celebrated; the discriminatory slogan "Masc for masc" (A masculine man who desires only another masculine man) is rampant among the current dating "apps"

(smart phone applications) and websites. Gay and bisexual men wearing this “mask of masculinity” harbor internalized homophobia and misogyny and express reactions from apathy to disdain to hostility. Openly feminine men (“femmes”) are objects of derision, yet as Rechy illustrates in his texts, femmes (and butch lesbians) are the true heroic figures of the movement and the community as they confront and question toxic masculinity and heteronormative gender roles and expression.

Another queer Latinx victim of differing levels of violence, particularly institutional, is Victoria Arellano, an undocumented Mexican transgender woman who perished while in detention at the Terminal Island facility in San Pedro, California, operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. The case of Victoria Arellano illustrates the necessity of an intersectional analysis and represents another dimension of Crenshaw’s argument regarding institutional violence against women. Her death symbolizes our society’s xenophobia, misogyny, white supremacy, and transphobia and represents a call to action for queer PoC to wrench the LGBTQ movement away from upper-class, white, privileged gay men who often hold reactionary positions on issues of race, class, immigration, and national security.⁶¹

Unlike the other victims of violence, Victoria Arellano’s death did receive some news coverage. Leslie Feinberg, author of *Stone Butch Blues* (1993), writes of Victoria Arellano’s life and death in *Workers World*, “Death of Trans Immigrant in Detention Forges United Protests.”⁶² Victoria Arellano was brought to the United States from Mexico when she was a child. According to Feinberg, Arellano worked at a supermarket in West Hollywood and volunteered at a drug and alcohol treatment facility. Considering my lengthy knowledge about HIV/AIDS as a person living with an AIDS diagnosis, I infer from Feinberg’s article that Arellano seroconverted early in her life, as she is described as “asymptomatic” and had been taking a series of

antibiotics, including Bactrim, a medication I used to take as a precaution against pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP). Medical providers usually prescribe Bactrim to people living with HIV (poz) only as they have a low T-cell count and possess a detectable viral load⁶³. My own timeline from seroconversion to testing positive to an AIDS diagnosis and contracting pneumocystis pneumonia was seven to eight years, from the age of eighteen to twenty-six. Victoria Arellano was only twenty when she started taking Bactrim, according to Feinberg. This tells me she must have seroconverted as a young teen-ager.

I imagine Victoria as a femme little boy, perhaps pretending to be Gloria Trevi or Selena. Over a decade older than her, I would have recognized the signs, the mannerisms, the fey yet innocent ways about her. Part of this project is the recognition of a lack of mentorship amongst queer Latino men, which I argue is critical for the sexual, emotional, and spiritual health of queer Latino youth. I was fortunate to have a father who did not police my gender performance when I lip-synced to Donna Summer's "Last Dance" (1978) or twirled alongside Linda Carter during episodes of *Wonder Woman* in the late 1970s. I hope this work becomes a discursive form of mentorship to queer Latino youth and young men who are beginning to embark on a journey of radical self-discovery and self-exploration. The institutional violence of our immigration detention system snuffed out Victoria's chance for such a journey; her corporeal reality ended in a place apropos of such a tragedy—Terminal Island. Ben Ehrenreich writes of Victoria in an article titled, "Death on Terminal Island," (2008) in *Los Angeles Magazine*⁶⁴, providing a detailed account of Victoria's early years, detention, and eventual death. Like most parents of an LGBTQ person, Victoria's mother, Olga, experienced difficulty adjusting to her child's genderqueer performance yet remained supportive. Ehrenreich describes the intersecting margins Arellano negotiated and how she represented the label of "undesirable," "Until 1996,

immigration law used a telling term to refer to noncitizens who can be legally denied residency in the United States. They were not only excluded, although they were that, too; they were ‘excludable.’ The idea still prevails. They provide an opportunity for exclusion, for the nation to define itself by what it is not. Victoria Arellano was almost perfectly unwanted: not just a Latina, but an immigrant; not just an immigrant, but illegal; not just gay, but transgender; not just transgender, but infected with HIV—and an addict to boot. She did not merely slip through the cracks of the system. The system, cracks and all, was built with her in mind.” Ehrenreich maps Victoria’s identity to the most extreme margins of our “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”⁶⁵ and of Hill Collins’ “matrix of domination” (22).

Victoria’s status as a person living with HIV and more critically, a diagnosis of AIDS, complicated her immigration status. As Eithne Luibheid documents in her text, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (2002), the U.S.’ immigration system, one that can be described as one of exclusion if the immigrant “looked like a lesbian” (77) or represented any number of “undesirables,” particularly if the person is emigrating from the Global South. Persons living with HIV can be analogized with the stereotype of Mexican immigrants as “unclean,”⁶⁶ therefore harboring infestations of lice and other vermin, thus necessitating immigration authorities to conduct inspections of the immigrants disrobed (both men and women), dousing the immigrants in kerosene, and subjecting them to contact with the toxic gas, Zyklon B, later used by the Hitler regime.⁶⁷ During most of Victoria’s life, the United States enacted and enforced a travel ban against people living with HIV or AIDS. Although President Barack Obama ended the travel ban against future HIV-positive visitors and immigrants⁶⁸ in 2010, this would not have helped Victoria had she survived her detention stay. According to the AIDS Legal Referral Panel, an organization dedicated to providing essential legal services to

persons living with HIV and AIDS in the San Francisco area, Victoria Arellano would not have been able to “naturalize” as a U.S. citizen because of her HIV-positive status. A document written by Linda Tam housed on the alrp.org website titled, “Immigration and HIV,” provides an informative guide to the labyrinthian world of U.S. immigration law. Victoria’s immigration status as “undocumented” and her HIV-positive diagnosis possibly precluded her from being eligible for a green card, as she would have had to have submitted to a medical examination. Tam writes, “Under the law, HIV is considered a ‘communicable disease of public health significance’” (9-10). Although Olga Arellano may have been able to petition her daughter’s residency to receive an “HIV waiver,” Victoria’s HIV-positive status along with the charges of driving under the influence and her past substance abuse would have established a tenuous case in immigration proceedings. Victoria represents intersectional and structural violence, yet I will consider her another fallen comrade in the war against xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and AIDS-phobia.

The final person whose life to whom I bear witness is the youngest. Gabriel Fernandez, an eight-year-old Chicano from Palmdale, a working-class suburb of Los Angeles County, lived with his mother, her live-in boyfriend, and his two older siblings. In 2013, Gabriel’s mother noticed him playing dolls with his sister. According to James Nye reporting for *The Daily Mail*⁶⁹, the mother and her boyfriend taunted Gabriel calling him “gay” and then subjected him to a litany of physical and psychological horrors, leading prosecutors to argue, “‘for eight straight months, Gabriel was abused, beaten and tortured more severely than many prisoners of war,’ even writing his own suicide note.” A review of the reports from various news outlets uncovers the suffering endured by Gabriel; however, several omit the homophobic motivation of the abuse⁷⁰. Over the course of several months, Gabriel’s mother and her boyfriend forced the

child to wear girl's clothes to school, locked him in a closet for hours with a sock in his mouth, forced him to eat rotten food and his own vomit, shot BB pellets into his skin at close range, and beat him with a belt buckle, a metal hanger, and a wooden club⁷¹. According to Nye, "On the day of May 22, 2013, Gabriel's siblings told the grand jury that Fernandez beat her son because he wouldn't clean up his toys. Then she took him to a bedroom and was joined by Aguirre [her boyfriend] and chillingly, the next thing Gabriel's siblings heard was screaming and banging and then silence. Gabriel's 13-year-old brother said, 'It just went quiet.'" Fernandez called 911 and claimed Gabriel had hit his head on a dresser. Paramedics found him unconscious with a cracked skull and ribs, BB pellets embedded in his skin, markings on his ankles, possibly because he was restrained.

I first read of Gabriel's tragic case in *The Los Angeles Times*, as the horrific case of child abuse garnered the attention of the local media outlets. The writer of the *Times* articles wrote nothing of the parents' homophobic motive, however. I remained unaware of this dimension of the case until I happened to search for an update on Gabriel's case. Another article, printed by the LGBT news magazine, *The Advocate*, came up in my search. I was curious as to why *The Advocate* would publish a story about Gabriel's case. When I clicked on the link, I realized why an LGBT news magazine would take interest in this case. The title of the article, "Couple Indicted Over Torture Death of 8-Year-Old They Thought Was Gay," dated August 21, 2014, saddened and angered me, as *The Los Angeles Times* article, "County Missed Signs of Boy's Abuse," dated May 31, 2013, mentioned *nothing* of the homophobia behind the parents' beating of Gabriel. Sunnivie Brydum of *The Advocate* unearthed the tragic motive behind Gabriel's death, while in *The Los Angeles Times* dated May 31, 2013, Garrett Therolf focused on the negligence of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, who did not

remove the boy from the home despite repeated alerts by Gabriel’s teacher and extended family members; the only parental motive he apparently could uncover is the following specious reason, “His mother’s boyfriend allegedly told authorities that he beat Gabriel repeatedly for lying and ‘being dirty,’ according to confidential county documents reviewed by *The Times*.” Richard Winton, author of another *Los Angeles Times* article regarding Gabriel’s murder, “L.A. Sheriff’s Deputies Disciplined After Horrific Torture Death of 8-Year-Old Boy,” omits any mention of the parents’ homophobia. A search of all *The Los Angeles Times* articles never revealed the homophobic motive of the parents as *The Daily Mail* and *The Advocate*. Did the writers of *The Los Angeles Times* articles believe that had they reported on the homophobia of the parents they would have diminished the public sympathy for Gabriel?

I cannot help to analogize this omission with the obituaries of people who died of AIDS whose families obscured the actual cause of death to save themselves shame, as first argued in the work of Horacio N. Roque Ramirez in his article, “Gay Latino Histories/Dying to Be Remembered: AIDS Obituaries, Public Memory, and the Queer Latino Archive,” published in the anthology, *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America* (2010), edited by Gina M. Pérez, Frank A. Guridy, and Adrian Burgos, Jr. In this groundbreaking work, Roque Ramirez performed content analysis on obituaries published in the *Bay Area Reporter*, an LGBT-focused newspaper serving the San Francisco Bay area, over a ten-year period, from 1984 to 1993, what he calls “arguably the period of greatest loss from AIDS” (108) of Latino and White men to illustrate the differences in the treatment of the epidemic. In this radical and necessary work, Roque Ramirez poses questions intersecting and informing my own interrogations of this subject matter:

How do queer Latinos, both the living and the dead, enter historical consciousness in this new millennium, almost thirty years into the ongoing AIDS pandemic? What was the public record of life and death for simultaneously queer and racial/ethnic subjects like myself in the early 1990s, or other gay Latinos in the 1980s positioned in historical margins, or today amid the no-longer-seen-as-crisis age of AIDS? (103-104)

Horacio Roque Ramirez is one of the few⁷² scholars to devote efforts to the analysis of the intersection of homoerotic Latinx/Xicanx desire, identity, and HIV/AIDS. The horrors of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly the period from 1981-1996 but also continuing to the present, represent a hidden branch of Xicanx Studies scholarship, lost among the foliage of heteronormative and homophobic fear of the field, as *The Los Angeles Times* articles precluding the homophobia of Gabriel's mother and her boyfriend.

Whether Gabriel would discover any homoerotic desire is irrelevant; his mother and her boyfriend committed a hate crime against the child motivated by homophobia. Although Gabriel's mother and *de facto* stepfather are culpable for his injuries and death, I wonder if Gabriel's last unspoken words were, "Take me home, Mommy"? What were his thoughts as his final screams emanated through the walls, his siblings also paralyzed with fear? Did his broken body manage to release his spirit so it could find some semblance of peace? The firing of the social workers handling his case will not bring his soul peace. An examination of the structural inequalities causing the physical violence directed at Gabriel by his guardians and the negligent violence perpetrated by the Department of Children and Family Services is beyond the surface analysis of *The Los Angeles Times*' Melissa Etehad and Richard Winton, who wrote the newspaper's most recent article regarding Gabriel's death, "Four L.A. County Social Workers to Face Trial in Horrific Death of 8-Year-Old Boy," published on March 20, 2017. While these

four social workers did fail Gabriel, structural racism, homophobia, and poverty fail children in abusive homes. Nevertheless, as a survivor of homophobia-based familial violence, Gabriel's face haunts me. Indeed, the preceding group represent ghosts who invade my psyche— imploring me, *demanding* I document their lives, not merely for posterity but for immediate action, one that I hope my theory of hom(e)erotics will spur.

Arlene. La Lupe. Victoria. Gabriel. All perished due to intersecting forms of violence, yet my theory of hom(e)erotics provides redress for those of us who have had to negotiate Eve Sedgwick's "epistemologies of the closet" (1990), always forced to express our multiple subjectivities as a living mosaic, yet with some shards of rock and glass hidden by external and internal homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, racism, and classism. In the film *La Mission* (2009), Jeremy Ray Valdez portrays a queer Xicanx high school senior, Jesse, in the Mission District of San Francisco living with his single father, a working-class ex-convict, played by Benjamin Bratt. Closeted to his family and neighborhood friends, Jesse seeks solace with his white, upper-class, privileged boyfriend who takes him to the Castro for his first trip to a gay bar. After the initial shock dissipates, Jesse leans on the bar and takes a shot. He gazes at his reflection, split by two mirrors fracturing his brown countenance into disparate identities—his working class, Xicanx heteronormative exterior distinct from the burgeoning, internal queer White self. I remember watching this film with anticipation, for perhaps this could be the film that reflected my own subjectivities in a non-deficit manner. I was quickly disappointed, beginning with this scene. Nowhere in the film could I locate any sort of intersectionality of Jesse's queer and Xicanx identities; the queer was static, white, and was housed within the upper-class enclave of the Castro while the Xicanx remained heteronormative and working-class, framed in male violence. Astonishingly, the film which is named after the Mission District and

attempts to historicize its Latinx culture while decrying the violence of gentrification, neglects its own queer Latinx history by not incorporating the city's first queer Latinx bar, Esta Noche, located in the heart of the Mission District. The establishment closed its doors in 2014, according to Laura Jaye Cramer, who writes in her piece for the *SF Weekly*, "Drag Queens Say Farewell to Mission Institution Esta Noche"⁷³, "The venue, which for the past 33 years has catered to the queer Latino crowd and played host to weekly drag shows, was a little rough, for sure... The first of its kind, Esta Noche was a godsend for LGBT minorities... Something about the end of a gay Latino bar in a once predominantly Latino neighborhood seems twisted." To expand Cramer's analysis, not only is this "twisted" but is the type of intersectional violence recognized by Crenshaw and Hill Collins against women of color and subsequently against queers of color by Roque Ramirez and Román.

Mestiza Consciousness and Conocimiento as Tools of Cartography—Mapping Rechy's Corpus Utilizing the Anzaldúan Code

The four lives/deaths described above demand new perspectives as multiple issues intersect their corporeal realities. Tomas Almaguer's "cartography" of gay and bisexual Mexican and Chicano men began the conversation regarding the specificity of our lives. The important works of Román and Roque Ramirez add the critical dimensions of the impact of HIV/AIDS and the resulting activism. Just as Xicanx lesbians created multiple tools of cartography to map their lives and desires, queer Xicanx men must follow their bravery to confront the various forms of violence experienced by the four aforementioned lives. Our desires and pleasure must factor into this new cartography that I call hom(e)erotics that I draw from transactional method of reading the work of John Rechy.

Thus, the power of the narrative begs the questions: Why has no Chicana/o Studies literary scholar begin to map gay Xicanx literature, as Alicia Gaspar de Alba did for Chicana and Latina lesbians with her essay, “Thirty Years of Chicana/Latina Lesbian Literary Production” (2013)? Where are the narratives describing the intersection of issues experienced by Arlene, La Lupe, Victoria, and Gabriel? Why have the themes of John Rechy’s work not been applied to the lives of queer Xicanx men? How can such a model as *hom(e)erotics*, based upon the power of narratives, help queer Xicanx youth and men locate their own social realities?

Just as Rechy granted readers a radical new perspective of gay masculinity in his essays, novels, and plays, *hom(e)erotics* represents a feminist-based approach to analyzing the social realities of queer Xicanx men. In the 2017 film⁷⁴ incarnation of Wonder Woman, a clueless cisgender male has the good fortune to crash land near an island paradise named Themyscira and is saved by Diana, daughter of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. He asks her, “What is this place? Who are you people?” Diana responds, “We are the bridge to a greater understanding.” Clueless male replies flippantly, “Right.” For Themyscira to be unseen and unknown by Western, androcentric methods of cartography is logical, for how could a matriarchal society of fierce Amazonian womyn be recognized by the limited sight of cisgender, heterosexual men or be located by tools limited by the scientific method. Thus, I need tools based on gynocentric ways of experiencing the world, as the terrain of queer Xicanx (cisgender male) literature remains uncharted—to see the world through serpent eyes.

In 2015, I applied and was fortunate to receive a summer research grant, which granted the opportunity to conduct research in the archive of Gloria Anzaldúa, housed in the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the Benson Library at the University of Texas, Austin. I was experiencing both personal and professional lows in my life. I questioned whether I

possessed the intelligence, skill, and grit to finish my doctoral program in addition to continuing an abusive relationship with a person I had just discovered was hiding an addiction to methamphetamines. The library air conditioner provided a respite from the sweltering central Texas humidity as I perused the boxes of papers from the archive. Trying to shut out my various crises, I immersed myself in the various drafts of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, drafts of other her other writings, and the myriad memorabilia. I came across a bibliography for what seems to be her oral qualifying exams during her first attempt in a doctoral program. Listed in her bibliography of several dozen texts is Rechy's first novel, *City of Night* (1963). Her inclusion of Rechy's text piqued my curiosity, but I did not place much significance on this finding.

At three subsequent times in my excavation of her papers, however, I discovered John Rechy's name—twice scribbled on a sheet of paper and once printed on a flyer announcing a lecture by Arturo Islas. The two times Gloria wrote Rechy's name had nothing to do with the primary subject matter of the page; rather, his name was located at the margins of the paper as if his name invaded her psyche and felt compelled to jot his name, perhaps as a reminder to herself for a future writing.

When I encountered his name a second time (as a note written on the margins of the paper⁷⁵), I was surprised but dismissed it as a coincidence. Gloria *does* mention Rechy in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, indeed, she addresses one of the epigraphs of this chapter regarding a person questioning his work as “Chicano.” In the fifth chapter titled, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” Gloria reveals, “In the 1960s, I read my first Chicano novel. It was *City of Night* by John Rechy, a gay Texan, son of a Scottish father and a Mexican mother. For days I walked around in stunned amazement that a Chicano could write and get published” (59). Unlike other

Xicanx scholars, she recognized the Xicanidad of Rechy's first novel, particularly the first section in which he describes the violence of the soul-crushing poverty on the border vividly.

The *third* time, however, forced me to stop and reconsider my own colonized mind. The concept of a "coincidence" is to have full faith in rationality, to only rely upon the five basic senses, as Merriam-Webster defines it as, "a remarkable occurrence of events or circumstances without apparent causal connection." The third time I encountered Rechy's name in her archive was the flyer announcing Islas' talk; he was invited to give the Ernesto Galarza lecture of 1990. As I began to ponder the notion that this was *not* a coincidence, an academic excitement began to grow in my own psyche, particularly since I can infer that Gloria was interested in Islas' work (the transcript of his lecture is included in the archive, also). The fourth time I encountered Rechy's name was on a scratch piece of paper. Gloria wrote "Rechy" below where she wrote "Saenz, gay Chicano writer." Like the connection between Rechy and Islas, I immediately thought of another queer Xicanx author from El Paso, Benjamin Alire Saenz. I am confident that Anzaldúa is referring to this prolific author, and I continue to be overwhelmed upon discovering signs of three gay Xicanx male writers from El Paso—Rechy, Islas, and Saenz—in her archive; however, I only encounter Rechy's name multiple times.

Samuel Ramos, Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico, 1934.

John Rechy, City of Night

Rich, Adrenne. "Woman and Honor: Some Notes on Lying." Lies, Secrets and Silences.

Fig. 1-1: Rechy's *City of Night* included on a reading list of Gloria Anzaldúa.

****Coming up****

April 20, 1993 -- Gay Men's Literature panel discussions with **John Rechy** ("Looking Back")
Dennis Cooper and **Michael Cunningham** ("Now and Tomorrow") and others to be announced.

PEN events are sponsored in part by a grant from The William and Mary Greve Foundation, Inc., Salad King, Inc., Time Warner, Inc., The National Endowment for the Arts and The New York State Council on the Arts.

Fig. 1-2: Rechy included as an upcoming event. The main event being promoted was a night of lesbian literary reading sponsored by the PEN Center, from which Rechy was granted its lifetime achievement award.

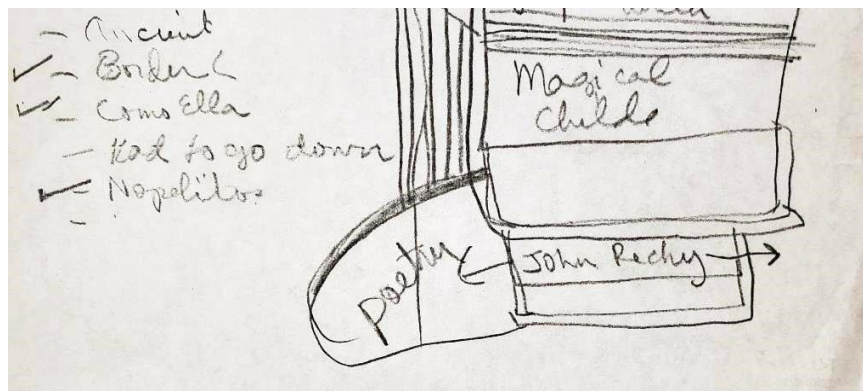


Fig. 1-3: Gloria jotting John Rechy's name on a sheet of doodling and notes.

colony - history of resistance

in workers - fight against injustices:

Alianza - reform and ~~that~~ guaranteed

Quedehue Hidalgo

student walkouts

A Brown Berets

no separatism - El Plan Espiritual

Aslan developed by student groups

Denver in 1969

Diego Plans in 1917-1915

ra Amigalini 188 1856

arquistas in 1940's

John Rechy
 U.S.C
 Univ. of CA
 Los Felice

Fig. 1-4: Gloria writing Rechy's name on a sheet of notes reviewing Chicana/o history and the Chicano Movement.

I perused several more boxes when I discovered a legal pad full of her own notes regarding the HIV virus. On one page, Gloria's notes revealed her own concern with the virus, particularly during her time living in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s. Her notes revealed herself to be a medical sleuth, attempting to crack the code of the virus that continues to decimate queer communities of color. I paused to wonder, "How many people does she know who are living with the disease? How many people in her life have succumbed? Were these notes her way of not feeling so helpless in the face of so much death?" In an interview which aired on October 7, 1990, Bill Moyers interviewed the contradictory Richard Rodriguez on his program, *World of Ideas*. During the interview, Rodriguez professed his own war-weariness of living in the San Francisco Bay area after the most frightening decade for the sexually adventurous:

I live in a city, this Chinese city of mine, which is now a city in which death is at the door. [Moyers: Because of AIDS?] AIDS. I know a number of people who are dying of AIDS, and in fact, I know about 20 or 30 people right now, which is a lot of people to know. And it's not so much that I know a lot of people who are dying. I know a lot of young people who are dying. It's changed my opinion of youth. I don't look at young bodies anymore the way I used to, as a kind of disease against death. The AIDS epidemic came at the peak of what was, in San Francisco, certainly this utopian outburst. Many Americans would see it as this great, great period of pagan decadence, where men and women who had suffered sexual persecution in Kansas, in Iowa and Illinois had come on the Greyhound bus to San Francisco and there was this immature explosion. You couldn't get enough sex. You couldn't go—you couldn't be out late enough. And people thought they'd found paradise. [Perhaps their "substitute for salvation"?] And

suddenly there was death at the door. The lessons of death, the lessons of sorrow that have come to San Francisco, that have come to the gay community in San Francisco, are really astonishing, because when you have sorrow, what you suddenly have is, you have a “we.” You suddenly have people holding together. You suddenly have the necessity for communal existence, which is what, of course, ancient cultures always know. (7)

Rodriguez in his grandly eloquent yet deeply colonized manner (at one point during the interview, he continues to insist on the maintenance of the linguistic border between English and Spanish) expounds his feelings of loss for the countless throngs of lives lost to the epidemic, bodies robbed cruelly of vitality and transformed into barely living calaveras. I pause with the implication of his phrase, “immature explosion,” as if slut-shaming people for possessing the temerity to express their taboo erotic desires without fear of familial, state, or religious persecution. Nonetheless, as a person who seroconverted before the life-saving cocktail of pharmaceutical drugs yet is alive because of the fervent activism of groups such as the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP), I can only ponder the emotional and spiritual wounds of bearing witness to such death. How many people did Anzaldúa know? Did witnessing the wasting away of a generation of young queer people motivate her to decipher the HIV code?

A discovery in another folder in her archive led me to my own epiphany. A brochure titled, “When a Friend Has AIDS,” provided the emotional, spiritual, and academic connection I had been searching to heal my soul, heart, and mind. The brochure, sponsored by The San Francisco Community Partnership on AIDS, listed an assortment of activities that people could do for people living with AIDS to make their lives easier. Some of the activities suggested include:

Try not to avoid your friend. Be there—it instills hope. Be the friend, the loved one you've always been, especially now when it is most important.

Like everyone else a person with AIDS can have both good and bad days. On good days treat your friend as you would any other friend. On the bad days, however, treat your friend with extra care and compassion.

If you and your friend are going to engage in sex, be informed about the precautions which make sex safer for both of you. Follow them. Be

imaginative...touching, stroking, and massage can also be fun. (Box 163, Folder 1)

Again, I wondered, “For whom and which of these tasks did Gloria perform?” I found other documents, articles and handwritten notes, related to the AIDS epidemic in her archive. Her empathy for the decimated HIV-positive community emanated from the pages I held, particularly knowing her own struggles with diabetes.

I began to make the connection between the work of Anzaldúa and Rechy threaded together with the red fibers of an HIV-awareness ribbon. Like the fictional Robert Langdon scouring the Vatican Archives for clues to locate the “Path of Illumination”⁷⁶ or deciphering anagrams to discover the Holy Grail,⁷⁷ I began to create the mental pathways between these the works of these three queer Xicanx El Paso-border writers, the queer Xicanx border writer from the Rio Grande Valley, and the HIV epidemic. I realized that Elegua, the orisha of the crossroads and messenger of the gods (analogous to Hermes), carved the crossroads of Rechy, Islas, Saenz, Anzaldúa, and HIV in *me*, in my own veins. Anzaldúa writes:

A chicken is being sacrificed

at a crossroads, a simple mound of earth

a mud shrine of *Eshu*,⁷⁸

Yoruba god of indeterminacy,
who blesses her choice of path.

She begins her journey.

Su cuerpo es una bocacalle. La mestiza has gone from being the sacrificial goat to becoming the officiating priestess at the crossroads. (80)

As a person who has had the good fortune to receive the mysteries of the orishas (I am a child of Obatalá, ruler of the head and intellect, and Oshún, the goddess of the river who rules love, beauty, and sexuality), Anzaldúa's words, which I first read in 1992, never felt more personal or prescient than now. I recognize the crossroads of Anzaldúan theory, queer Xicanx literature, and the HIV epidemic on my corporeal and spiritual selves, the two constantly at odds with one another.

As a young queer Xicanx boy coming of sexual age in the 1980s, I was starved for *any* intersectional representation. Reading *City of Night* at the age of sixteen was a respite for my sexual thirst. I thought, "At least there is at least *one* other gay Chicano." Up until my discovery of this text, I had resigned myself to a life of adopting whiteness in order to express my homoerotic desires. The only references to *anything* sonically queer in the 1980s, except for the Black disco singer, Sylvester, were produced by British pop singers, such as The Pet Shop Boys, who wrote and performed the lyrics of the title of this chapter, "Being Boring" (1990), along with the alternative or "new wave" music of Bronski Beat, The Communards, Erasure, Soft Cell, Dear or Alive, and The Smiths. The few scant images in television shows and films all portrayed gay men as white and middle-class, save for the fabulous Black queer, Lindy, in *Car Wash* (1976), who retorts to the homophobia of his co-worker with the comeback, "Honey, I am more man than you'll ever be and more woman than you'll ever get!" Snap! Lindy notwithstanding,

the representations of queer men were all white. Rechy's nameless protagonist set in the decades before any visible LGBTQ movement was my only solace before I discovered other queer Xicanx authors.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa incorporates a mestizaje of genres as a method to describe the stages of "mestiza consciousness." To construct a queer Xicanx literary genealogy is to "conocer" or "to know" in Anzaldúan theory. "Conocimiento" is an Anzaldúan process of transformation that she describes in the article, "now let us shift...the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts," published in the anthology, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformations*, edited by Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating. The noted Chicana feminist scholar, Aida Hurtado, applied Anzaldúa's theory to the personal transformation of her brother in the article, "Gloria Anzaldúa's Seven Stages of Conocimiento in Redefining Latino Masculinity: José's Story" (2015). In this brave and revealing writing, Hurtado recounts the journey of her brother, José, a cisgender, heterosexual man. Authorities arrested José, a low-level drug dealer living in Minnesota, yet because of his relatively unblemished history which included an honorable discharge from the U.S. Navy, the presiding judge sentenced him to a minimum sentence. After serving his sentence, José served time in a halfway house and began to rebuild his life with the help of his accomplished, feminist sisters. As Hurtado recounts José's remarkable transformation from a troubled young Chicano man to a confident person with a sense of purpose, she describes how he embodies the seven stages of Anzaldúa's decolonial process of "conocimiento" or "knowing." Using the methodology of testimonio, or testimony, Hurtado illustrates how the Anzaldúan process of "conocimiento" can be applied to cisgender, heterosexual Xicanx men as a method of stripping away the self-violence embedded within patriarchy.

Another model I use to construct or conocer a queer Xicanx literary genealogy is Gaspar de Alba's article, "Thirty Years of Chicana/Latina Lesbian Literary Production," (2012). Gaspar de Alba constructs a genealogy of Chicana/Latina Lesbian literature as evidence of the depth and breadth of this genre, one that stands alone. Gaspar de Alba's argues:

My purpose here is to historicize the exponential growth of Chicana/Latina lesbian literary production since 1991, by looking at selected novels, multigenre anthologies, autobiographies, and critical/theoretical texts authored by self-identified Chicana/Latina *lesbians*, with an overtly lesbian purpose, during each of the last three decades. What I mean by an overtly lesbian purpose is that the text is written by a lesbian and/or it deals explicitly with lesbian characters, lesbian life, lesbian identity, lesbian desire, and/or other issues related to lesbian sexuality. (462-463)

Because of the lesbian-phobic attitudes harbored by some Chicana/o critics, Gaspar de Alba constructs a Chicana/Latina lesbian-centric genealogy as a protestation against the historical erasure of lesbian identity, desires, and literature.

Although Gaspar de Alba includes Latinas in her genealogy, she argues for the specificity of Chicana lesbian literary production because of the crossroads of oppressions—misogyny and racism—Chicana feminists, lesbian and heterosexual, negotiated in the Chicano Movement and second wave feminist movement (464). Noted Chicana lesbian scholar and author Carla Trujillo agrees with Gaspar de Alba in the preface of the landmark anthology, *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (1991):

In 1987, Juanito Ramos published an anthology on Latina lesbians entitled *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians*. At that time, *Compañeras* gave presence to the voices of Latina lesbians who, with the exception of Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, had been

largely unheard. Exuberant at its arrival, I anxiously read it from cover to cover. At the book's end, however, I was bothered. I realized that the book wasn't lacking in the context of Latina lesbian experiences, if anything it was very thorough in the types of issues covered and the number of Latina contributors. The problem was that since Latinas comprise a very diverse group, capturing them *all* in full context was virtually impossible. As a Chicana lesbian, I wanted to see more about the intricacies and specifics of lesbianism and our culture, our family, mixed-race relationships, and more. *Compañeras* had only teased me. Not only did I want more, I needed more. (ix)

Following Gaspar de Alba's and Trujillo's argument, I include only Xicanx writers, not out of any outdated notions of cultural nationalism, but because of the unique colonial history Mexico possesses and our own complex identities regarding language attrition, colorism, assimilation and acculturation, spirituality, institutional and internalized racism, misogyny, and homophobia.

Gaspar de Alba lauds other Latina lesbian works in her article, and I, too, consider works by other queer Latinx as transformational. For example, Reinaldo Arenas' revealing memoir, *Before Night Falls* (1992), paints a complex picture of post-revolutionary Cuba, one in which homosexuals were not welcome, and of his exile to the United States, where he eventually succumbed to complications of HIV/AIDS. The plight of queer Cuban men suffering under the Castro regime is a fascinating topic yet differs from the impetus for the immigration of Rechy's parents to El Paso—fleeing the violence of the Mexican Revolution. Certainly, a comprehensive genealogy, a “conocimiento,” of queer Latinx is a worthy endeavor, reflected in several anthologies, such as, *My Deep Dark Pain is Love: A Collection of Latin American Gay Fiction* (1983), edited by Winston Leyland, *Bésame Mucho: An Anthology of Gay Latino Fiction* (1999), edited by Jaime Manrique and Jesse Dorris, *Virgins, Guerrillas, and Locas: Gay Latinos Writing*

about Love (1999), edited by Jaime Cortez, and *From Macho to Mariposa: New Gay Latino Fiction* (2011), edited by Charles Rice-González and Charles Vasquez⁷⁹. The importance of a queer pan-Latinidad, notwithstanding, I focus on Rechy, as his oeuvre alone spans a wide breadth of gay cisgender male realities from the underground experiences of the 1950s and 1960s—*City of Night* (1963) and *Numbers* (1967)—to the hyper-sexuality of the 1970s—*The Sexual Outlaw* (1977) and *Rushes* (1979)—to the apocalyptic arrival of HIV on the West Coast *The Coming of the Night* (1999)—to his memoir *About My Life and the Kept Woman* (2008) and his self-described “true fiction,” *After the Blue Hour* (2017). This does not include the articles published in the late 1950s or his most recent work, *Pablo!* (2018), a work found in Rechy’s archive by Francisco Lomeli and originates in the late 1940s. Thus, Rechy’s corpus alone spans seven decades, and the addition of gay Xicanx works by the late Arturo Islas and Gil Cuadros (both succumbed to complications of AIDS), Michael Nava, Benjamin Saenz, Rigoberto González, and recently established writers, such as Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano and Joe Jimenez create its own richly textured literary genealogy that many gay Xicanx men, particularly the youth,⁸⁰ have yet to discover.

I consider Anzaldúa’s processes of “mestiza consciousness,” a method of decolonization and as applied Chicana lesbian feminism, an actual tool for our own daily lives as gay Xicanx men, particularly those of us negotiating HIV or the uncertainty of *not* knowing. Anzaldúa’s method forces us to confront traumas that have been inflicted upon us and those we have inflicted upon others, and Rechy’s works offer an unfiltered view of sexuality that is as much liberating as it is protests society’s hypocritical Victorian attitudes and Judeo-Christian moralization. Because of Rechy’s frankness with gay male sexuality, one that has been as equally decolonial in my own life and as I continue to negotiate my sense of (lingering) Catholic

guilt and internalized shame, he engages in what I call “unprotected inter(dis)course.” Rechy’s graphic scenes of sexuality, mostly homosexual but sometimes heterosexual and bisexual, e.g., in his feminist revisionist novel, *Our Lady of Babylon* (1996), Mary Magdalene engages in a passionate, ongoing ménage-a-trois with Jesus of Nazareth and Judas Iscariot and the protagonist of *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez* (1991) is a heterosexual Chicana with an active, yet sometimes unfortunate, sex life. Rechy’s tour de force, though, are the scenes painting homoerotic desire as a bodily dissent against the violent homophobia of the state, the Church, and the home.

As a person living with an AIDS diagnosis for twenty years, I can attest to the HIV stigma rampant in the gay community, which I analyze further in chapter three of this text. I select the language “unprotected inter(dis)course” not only to refer to Rechy’s initiation of a critical dialogue of gay sexuality lacking in the field of Xicanx Studies but as a decolonial filter for gay men to acknowledge HIV-phobia and the rising seroconversion rates among queer Xicanx and Latinx men. Nearly twenty years after its publication, *Latino Gay Men and HIV: Culture, Sexuality, and Risk Behavior* (1998) by Rafael M. Díaz remains prescient as a need for an unfiltered, rather an unprotected, unsheathed, discourse regarding our sexual practices to confront HIV-stigma and the fear of seroconversion. Díaz analyzes the HIV epidemic through a social science framework to explicate the disconnect between the knowledge gay and bisexual Latinx men possessed regarding HIV/AIDS and their unprotected sexual practices. Díaz argues:

[O]ur safer sex intentions are too often weakened by strong factors in our culture such as machismo, homophobia, poverty, racism, and sexual silence, to name a few. These factors are larger or greater than the individuals who intend to perform a given behavior. These factors, however, are no longer outside of ourselves; they are socializing and

oppressive forces that have become internalized in our sexual development. It is my belief that these cultural values and socialization forces have not only shaped but also currently regulate our sexuality, competing against self-formulated plans of action regarding safer sex. For example, a strong machismo discourse, widely diffused within the socialization practices of many Latino families, does associate masculinity with risk taking, low sexual control, and sexual prowess with multiple partners. For Latino boys, machismo is further ingrained by the message that manhood is neither biologically given nor environmentally acquired, but rather must be “proven” from an early age with “macho acts” congruent with the culture’s definition of masculinity. (3-4)

Díaz’s argument is evidenced throughout Rechy’s works, even those pre-dating the HIV epidemic, particularly *City of Night* (1963) and its quasi-sequel *Numbers* (1967). These texts illustrate the violence of internalized and externalized machismo through a father’s molestation of his young son and his subsequent rage in *City of Night* and the mission of *Numbers*’ protagonist, Johnny Rio, who strives to achieve a certain number of sexual conquests during one weekend in Los Angeles’ infamous cruising area, Griffith Park. Thus, Rechy’s first two works begin an “unprotected inter(dis)course” regarding the dangers of machismo as heterosexual Chicano men began to protest white supremacy and assert their dominance over Chicanas via the Chicano Movement.

An “unprotected inter(dis)course” as a tool of decolonization for gay Xicanx men complements Anzaldúa’s process of “mestiza consciousness,” which consists of seven steps yet are not linear, as in a twelve-step program targeting substance abuse. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) is divided into two sections, “*Atravesando Fronteras/Crossing Borders*,” which consists of seven chapters explaining each phase of “mestiza consciousness,”

and “*Un Agitado Viento/Ehécatl—The Wind*,” which contains six chapters of poetry. The first stage of “mestiza consciousness” is the act of recognizing borders, both external and internal, detailed in the first chapter, “The Homeland, Aztlán/*El otro México*” (1). Anzaldúa utilizes the symbolism of the U.S.-Mexico border as a metaphor of the violence havoiced by the geopolitical, racial, gender, sexual, linguistic, economic, and spiritual borders that are thrust upon Xicanx people but also how we internalize such borders. The internalization of such borders, I argue, correlate to Rafael M. Díaz’s assertion of the factors impeding gay Latinx men from the utilization of safer sex practices. Although Anzaldúa speaks specifically to the borders terrorizing Xicanx women, these borders affect queer Xicanx men as well. The first step though is recognizing the borders that separate those with power from the powerless.

The second stage of “mestiza consciousness” contains many concepts that deserve thorough explanation. The chapter titled, “Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan,” begins with a Xicana feminist quasi-manifesto as Anzaldúa establishes herself as part of the rebellion movement against traditional patriarchal Xicanx culture. She refuses to obey the misogyny, racism, and patriarchy of her mother, the Catholic Church, or Anglo culture, “*Me entra una rabia cuando alguien—sea mi mama, la Iglesia, la cultura de los anglos—me dice haz esto, haz eso sin considerar mis deseos. [Rage overcomes me when someone—albeit my mother, the Catholic Church, or white culture—commands me to do something, to do something without considering my own desires]*” (15). I sense Anzaldúa’s rage—the same rage I felt when my budding homoerotic desires clashed with the priest’s sermons and my family’s constant utterances of “pinche joto.”

Leaving home is an act of fortitude, an act of rebellion born out of an intersection of trauma and desire. I hear Rechy when Anzaldúa writes:

The Strength of My Rebellion

I have a vivid memory of an old photograph; I am six years old. I stand between my father and mother, head cocked to the right, the toes of my flat feet gripping the ground. I hold my mother's hand.

To this day I'm not sure where I found the strength to leave the source, the mother, disengage from my family, *mi tierra, mi gente*, and all that picture stood for. I had to leave home so I could find myself, find my own intrinsic nature buried under the personality that had been imposed upon me. (15-16).

In the opening section of *City of Night*, Rechy's narrative flows alongside Anzaldúa's testimonio and as they are both queer Xicanx products of different areas of the same river of tears, the Rio Grande, they *should* share a similar longing to escape the violence of their homes. Rechy writes of his childhood of poverty in El Paso:

When my brothers and sisters all got married and left home—to Escape⁸¹, I would think—I remained, and my father's anger was aimed even more savagely at me.

He sat playing solitaire for hours. He calls me over, begins to talk in a very low, deceptively friendly tone. When my mother and I fell asleep, he told me, he would set fire to the house and we would burn inside while he looked on. Then he would change that story: Instead of setting fire to the house, he will kill my mother in bed, and in the morning, when I go wake her, she'll be dead, and I'll be left alone with him...

Soon, I stopped going to Mass. I stopped praying. The God that would allow this vast unhappiness was a God I would rebel against. The seeds of that rebellion—planted that ugly afternoon when I saw my dog's body beginning to decay, the soul shut out by Heaven—were beginning to germinate. (23-25)

Both Anzaldúa and Rechy expose their bravery as they refuse to remain silent in the face of the monstrous violence of religious and cultural patriarchy. Instead of exalting the patriarchy of Aztlan through the father and the eldest son, Rechy dares to expose the violence of a Xicanx family and the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, as does Anzaldúa. Both desire to flee persecution and victimhood, instead seeking to mold their own identities through claiming agency over their desires. They fight against what Anzaldúa labels, “cultural tyranny,” as “Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them” (16). The rebellious spirit of Anzaldúa and Rechy allowed them to forge their escapes.

In his naming and description of the factors inhibiting gay Latinx men from engaging in safer sex practices, Díaz cites examples reflective of the acts of “homonegativity” stemming from homophobic beliefs. “Homonegativity” is defined by Shoptaw, et al., in the study, “Homonegativity, Substance Use, Sexual Risk Behaviors, and HIV Status in Poor and Ethnic Men Who Have Sex with Men in Los Angeles,” (2009)⁸² as a reflection of “a lack of positive beliefs about being gay, about valuation of the larger gay community, and about the morality of being gay” (578). As Shoptaw, et al., and Díaz explain externalized and internalized homophobia and homonegativity encompass both the fear *and* attitudes, beliefs, and actions towards others and the self. Anzaldúa and Rechy challenge the heteropatriarchy of the Chicano Movement’s construction of the homeland, Aztlan. In one of the group interviews Díaz conducted, one of the participants repeated a sobering illustration of homonegativity uttered by his father, “*Mi hijo, mejor muerto que maricon*” [My son, better dead than a faggot] (89).

Anzaldúa's student who redefined homophobia provides a prescient warning to queer Xicanx considering crossing the confessional door of "coming out."⁸³

Another commonality of Rechy and Anzaldúa is their focus on the introspection of one's self. Anzaldúa's concept of the two faces of the Shadow-Beast—one monstrous reflecting our external and internalized oppressions and the rebellious which empowers us to "talk back," as bell hooks would say, to our oppressors. In hooks' text, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1988), she describes the relationship between those negotiating marginality and the power of language, "Language is also a place of struggle. The oppressed struggle in language to recover ourselves—to rewrite, to reconcile, to renew. Our words are not without meaning. They are an action—a resistance. Language is also a place of struggle" (28). The rebellious face of Anzaldúa's Shadow-Beast calls the oppressed to act against their oppressor, especially if the oppressor is the person staring at them in the mirror. The nameless protagonist of Rechy's *City of Night* flees the oppressor of his father and internalizes this rage upon others throughout his quest of unfulfilled desire—the text is a pre-cursor of the monstrous Shadow-Beast. The nameless protagonist had been trained by his father to use his body for money, pre-pubescent sex-work:

When I was about eight years old, my father taught me this:

He would say to me: 'Give me a thousand,' and I knew this meant I should hop on his lap and then he would fondle me—intimately—and he'd give me a penny, sometimes a nickel. At times when his friends—old gray men—came to our house, they would ask for 'a thousand.' And I would jump on their laps, too. And I would get nickel after nickel, going around the table. (Rechy 21-22)

Rechy's rebellious Shadow-Beast continues throughout his oeuvre, as his works "talk back" against a swath of injustices—from racial and gender oppression to exposing the cultural tyranny of a patriarchal family. Throughout *City of Night*, however, it is the cowardly face of the monstrous Shadow-Beast that the nameless protagonist and the supporting characters wear as a shield against true intimacy between cisgender queer men.

The rebellious face of Anzaldúa's Shadow-Beast is the antithesis of the monster. The Rebel Shadow-Beast is the side which summons the courage to "talk back" against the injustices one experiences. The Rebel Shadow-Beast fights for social justice on behalf of all oppressed peoples. Anzaldúa describes the Rebel Shadow-Beast as part of her intrinsic self:

There is a rebel in me—the Shadow-Beast. It is a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities. It refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is that part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self-imposed. At the least hint of limitations on my time or space by others, it kicks out with both feet. Bolts. (16)

The Rebel Shadow Beast that urges Anzaldúa is the same spirit within Rechy that motivates to leave the stifling cultural restraints of El Paso. Later in the emotionally devastating introduction of *City of Night*, the nameless protagonist leaves for the military but is summoned back to his father's deathbed. His death only exacerbates the protagonist's feelings of loss, rage, and wanderlust, forcing him to escape his mother's suffocating love. Both Anzaldúa and Rechy summon the strength from their respective Rebel Shadow Beasts to flee the confines of the culturally tyranny of the border. I imagine what Anzaldúa must have thought about reading of sexual, physical, and emotional violence in a Xicanx home, violence mirroring what she wrote about so intimately in the second chapter of *Borderland/La Frontera*.

The third stage of Anzaldúa's transformative process of mestiza consciousness she calls, "Entering into the Serpent" (25). In this chapter, Anzaldúa recounts thousands of years of pre-Cuauhtemoc history to illustrate her argument of the danger of splitting the energies of masculine and feminine and eventually lowering women to a second-class position as what occurred during the rule of the Mexica. The history of pre-Cuauhtemoc Mexico spans from Olmecs, "the mother culture of Mesoamerica⁸⁴," who venerated the female body, particularly the vagina, according to Anzaldúa:

The Olmecs associated womanhood with the Serpent's mouth which was guarded by rows of dangerous teeth, a sort of *vagina dentate*. They considered it the most sacred place on earth, a place of refuge, the creative womb from which all things were born and to which all things returned. (34)

Anzaldúa continues to recount pre-Cuauhtemoc civilizations as a balance between the masculine and the feminine, some matriarchal in their structure. Pre-Aztec cultures engaged in equitable relationships between the ruling and the common classes. However, the Aztecs' adoption of the sun deity who symbolized war, Huitzilopochtli, began the slide towards patriarchal rule and class domination, ultimately causing the Aztecs' fall to the Spanish.⁸⁵

The split between the masculine and the feminine is a lament of Anzaldúa as she educates Xicanx of their indigenous histories. What is revolutionary about Anzaldúa's text counters the cultural nationalism of the Chicano Movement that romanticized Mexica (Aztec) culture by exposing the equally patriarchal practices of the Spanish. Anzaldúa argues that as part of "entering the serpent" and coming to consciousness is to de-romanticize the Mexica and recognize the triple systems of patriarchal rule that Xicanx women must endure—the Mexica, the Spanish, and the U.S. Anglo. For Texas Xicanx women, I would also add a fourth, a Texan

patriarchal rule, as the invading Anglo Texans colonized Texas several decades before it entered the Union as a slave state in 1845. Rechy, too, protests patriarchy throughout his oeuvre, as he often frames both queer and heterosexual women and femme gay men characters as people with complete agency, not caricatures intended for comic relief or pitiable condescension. In one of the most beloved texts of the Chicano Movement, for example, is Rudolfo Anaya's coming-of-age text, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972). A tale of a young Xicanx boy growing up in rural New Mexico during in the years following World War II, a local curandera (a woman versed in the ways of a syncretic worldview of indigenous and Catholic folk healing) mentors young Antonio as he stands at the crossroads of his mestizaje—his father's Spanish conquistador wanderlust signified by his surname, Marez (oceans) and his mother's indigenous agricultural roots represented by her surname, Luna (the moon). His father dreams of a rancher's life in California while his mother urges Antonio to become a farming priest. As memorable a character as Antonio is, however, the text's women characters lack depth, and Anaya resigns them to stereotypes—whores (Rosie's girls), lesbians (Tenorio's daughters who are witches), and “good” women who harbor no desire of their own (Antonio's mother and sister and even the title character, Ultima). Anzaldúa offers an analysis of the three categories available for Xicanx women in this chapter, what Gaspar de Alba calls “Las Tres Marías,” from her essay, “Poor Brown Female: The Miller's Compensation for ‘Free’ Trade” (2010).⁸⁶

The three archetypes of Mexican/Xicanx women further represent Anzaldúa's concept of cultural tyranny from the previous chapter. Learning, rather *un-learning*, the myths of Malinche, La Llorona, and la Virgen de Guadalupe is to make women whole, as Anzaldúa would say “to put Coyolxauhui together,” (2015, 138) a step in the process of “conocimiento,” another process of decolonization. This stage is critical for queer Xicanx men to begin to un-learn the

misogyny we practice daily, both the external *and* internal forms of sexism, to be true allies to women. Harboring anti-femme attitudes is to *be* anti-woman and results in internalized homophobia, which according to Ilan H. Meyer and Laura Dean in their study, “Internalized Homophobia, Intimacy, and Sexual Behavior Among Gay and Bisexual Men,”⁸⁷ can lead to high-risk sexual activities.

Femme-shaming and bottom-shaming are common practices amongst gay men; the tagline, “Masc 4 Masc” or some variation is ubiquitous in the world of on-line dating and hook-ups. Rechy courageously exposes the internalized misogyny of queer cisgender men in several of his texts, most notably his text, *Rushes* (1977). This text may be Rechy’s most Catholic and most sexually graphic writing. *Rushes* is set in a leather bar and an adjacent sex club in New York City in the late 1970s, the decade that the director of the revealing documentary, *Gay Sex in the ‘70s* (2005), comments to an interviewee, “So, Elvin, the period we’re going to talk about is June ‘69, Stonewall, to June ‘81, the beginning of AIDS. You know some people have talked about it as the most libertine period that the Western world has ever seen since Rome, basically.” Elvin’s smile widens and nods in agreement, eyes twinkling with reminiscence and loss, “It was.” This newfound sexual liberty, however, catalyzed a sexual caste system of desirability—the more masculine, the more desirable. *Rushes* documents the façade of butch gay men juxtaposed against the least desirable of the gay community, the old (over 35) and the femme. The split between the masculine and the feminine and its resulting damage for gay cisgender men is exposed by Rechy, as Anzaldúa does for Mexicana/Xicanx women.

The fourth stage of “mestiza consciousness” is the “Coatlicue State,” a state of immobilization one enters when her/his/their traumas and the weight of their colonization becomes too burdensome. Named after one of the most powerful and terrifying (to the

Spaniards) deities in the Aztec pantheon of gods, Coatlicue is a sight to behold, two snake heads for her head, full bosom with a necklace of human hearts and hands, a skirt made of serpents, and eagle talons, and represented the Earth, life/death, and regeneration. According to Anzaldúa in the chapter, “*La herencia de Coatlicue/The Coatlicue State*”:

Coatlicue depicts the contradictory. In her figure, all the symbols important to the religion and philosophy of the Aztecs are integrated. Like Medusa, the Gorgon, she is a symbol of the fusion of opposites: the eagle and the serpent, heaven and the underworld, life and death, mobility and immobility, beauty and horror. (47)

The sexual excesses of cisgender gay men, particularly the 1970s, represents a “Coatlicuan” duality for Rechy—it protests both the heteronormative and homophobic violence from heterosexuals *and* the “homonormativity”⁸⁸ of the White, upper-class segments of the LGBT community, represented in such popular situation comedies as *Will and Grace* and *Modern Family*, cultural productions where the queers are white, middle-class, sanitized eunuchs.

Addiction, what Anzaldúa calls “a repetitious act, is a ritual to help one through a trying time; its repetition safeguards the passage, it becomes one’s talisman, one’s touchstone” (46). Addictive behavior, therefore, are not necessarily destructive in Anzaldúa’s worldview, rather are survival strategies to cope with trauma. She warns, however, that our addictions will consume us and impede our progression towards “mestiza consciousness.” As a “middle-aged” (over thirty-five, or rather ancient) queer cisgender man, I have borne witness to the addictions my community utilizes to combat against the external and our internal oppressions, primarily high-risk and hyper-sexual activity and alcohol and drug addiction, the relatively harmless amyl nitrate (poppers) and X (ecstasy) have given way to the deadly Tina (crystal meth). Again, Rechy provides accounts illustrating hyper-sexual activity as a protest and as a path towards self-

destruction. In what I deem Rechy's manifesto, *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary* (1977), supersedes any writing as a critique against the hypocritical Victorian attitudes towards sexuality espoused by U.S. culture, both queer and heterosexual. What Rechy calls a "mixed-media" genre, he incorporates traditional third-person narrative with "imagined speeches" to different demographics, short essays, and clips from *The Los Angeles Times* and other periodicals documenting the institutional homophobia of law enforcement. Rechy challenges homonormativity before the term's invention. The text follows the protagonist through a long weekend of sexual protest, often in blatant defiance of law enforcement. *The Sexual Outlaw* represents a polemical argument against societal and internalized homophobia and a critical examination of sexuality, as Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano argues in her article, "Sexuality and Chicana/o Studies: Toward a Theoretical Paradigm for the Twenty-First Century" (1999).⁸⁹ Yarbro-Bejarano urges Chicana/o Studies scholars to prioritize the examination of sexuality as central to the experiences of Xicanx people, especially LGBTQ Xicanx.

For some Xicanx people, language continues to be a site of emotional and linguistic confusion and insecurity. Thus, Anzaldúa addresses the topic of lenguaje, identity, and agency in the fifth chapter of *Borderlands/La Frontera* which she titles, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." The opening paragraph speaks of a pain familiar to Xicanx people of Anzaldúa's generation, "I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess—that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for 'talking back' to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name" (53). In the episode, "Taking Back the Schools," of the PBS series, *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, based on the text by Francisco Rosales published in 1996, Harry Gamboa, Jr., a prolific artist and educator and one of the founders of the avant-garde

troupe, ASCO, is interviewed about his own linguistic experiences in elementary school.

Gamboa recalls:

I started elementary school in the early 1950s. I was the only student in my kindergarten class who was a monolingual Spanish-speaking child. I was immediately led to the front of the class, and I was instructed in how to create a cone hat out of construction paper.

The teacher painted a word on it and told me I could take it off when I learned to speak English. And the word she had painted on it was the word, “Spanish.”

My own parents, both of Anzaldúa and Gamboa’s educational generation, hold vivid memories of white teachers reprimanding and punishing them for speaking Spanish—in a border community. Rechy, of the educational generation preceding Anzaldúa, Gamboa, and my parents, remembers his own struggles with English as he entered elementary school in El Paso as a monolingual Spanish speaker. My own pocho Spanish caused by internalized colonialism has caused me my own personal traumas; some comical as in the seventh and eighth grades when I assumed an *English* identity and accent, precipitated by my obsession with British new wave music, “Soy un ingles,” and “I’m British with a severe tan,” is what I would tell people.

Rechy also experienced linguistic terrorism in his youth in the El Paso educational system. Rechy’s account predates those of Gamboa and me and are evidence of a longstanding entrenchment of white supremacy against Mexican and Xicanx children in educational settings. In a response to a question over email, Rechy remarked on his own linguistic origins in the 1930s and 1940s in El Paso, “At home, we—two brothers, two sisters, all older than I—spoke only Spanish until, like me, we went to school. My first school year, I spoke only Spanish; an ‘Anglo’ teacher changed my actual name—Juan Francisco Rechy—to Johnny because of a confusion between ‘Juan’ and ‘one.’” A monolingual Spanish-speaking child named “Juan”

must have thought the teacher was saying his name each time she uttered the homophones, “one” and “won.” Most likely speaking with a West Texas accent, Rechy’s “Anglo” teacher’s pronunciation of his Christian name, “Juan,” confused him as he probably never heard his name butchered in such a manner. Unlike me, Rechy did not internalize this racism and never “un-learned” his Spanish as I attempted to in my early teens.

In the sixth chapter of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, entitled, “*Tlilli, Tlapilli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink*,” Anzaldúa reserves this stage of mestiza consciousness to discuss the mysterious power of writing one’s traumas. She considers this “psychic unrest... a Borderland, [and] is what makes poets write and artists create” (73). Anzaldúa also invokes the Nahuatl concept of “face”/“heart” (in *ixtli* in *yollotl*), a “difrasismo” or a phrase consisting of two discrete words joined to evoke a greater meaning.⁹⁰ She compares the act of writing as not just creative but *creation*. Thus, I frame Rechy’s works, as can the works of the gay Xicanx authors who follow, through the Anzaldúa’s process of “mestiza consciousness.” These brave authors create works from their own internal borders speaking to the hidden desires of gay Xicanx men, ones that remained unrecognized by the Chicano Movement.

In the revised and expanded edition of *Youth, Identity, and Power: The Chicano Movement* (2007), Carlos Muñoz, Jr., himself one of the major figures of the movement, argues for research projects revealing LGBT Xicanx participation⁹¹. The anguish of Rechy’s characters who constantly in search of their own “substitute for salvation” are written in Anzaldúa’s red ink—a blood sacrifice similar to the first feminist poet of the Americas—Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who signed her last missive with the self-deprecating, “Yo, la peor de todas,” [I, the worst of all] in her own blood. The material links between Anzaldúa’s poetic reference to Aztec sacrifice and the gritty text of Rechy’s prose summon the same muse:

Daily I court it, offer my neck to its teeth. This is the sacrifice that the act of creation requires, a blood sacrifice. For only through the body, through the pulling of flesh, can the human soul be transformed. And for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, they must arise from the human body—flesh and bone—and from the Earth’s body—stone, sky, liquid, soil. (75)

Both writers create works with the ability to force us to recognize those living at the margins. For Rechy, the queer is outlaw, literally *outside* of the law, as homosexual sex would not be legal for another half a century with the United States Supreme Court case of *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003). For Anzaldúa, the queer is a shape-shifter with the power to alter the patriarchy of culture. As the latter describes the liberating pain of the creative process, the former does so by writing the tormenting freedom of such characters in *City of Night* as Miss Destiny, who dreams of her fabulous wedding, or of Pete, the once-handsome hustler who flashes a faded Polaroid to remind others (and himself) of his faded youth. The pain of the “tlilli, tlapilli” is necessary as through the destruction come, to paraphrase Morrissey and The Smiths in their song, “Rubber Ring (1987),”⁹² “But don’t forget the [stories] that made you cry and the [stories] that saved your life...they were the only ones who ever stood by you.” I remember listening to The Smiths and Morrissey’s anguished wail every day during my adolescence, the same moment when I first discovered the world Rechy uncovers in *City of Night*. The red ink of Rechy’s “alter-Native” queer culture, Morrissey’s self-loathing, and Anzaldúa’s blood offering to her craft lead me here to my own sacrificial altar, as I endeavor to create this document, to recover the lost syllabus of queer Xicanx/HIV curriculum, the lost amoxtli written specifically for my queer Xicanx brethren. I write in my own red ink of tainted, dirty blood.

The seventh stage in Anzaldúa's process is mestiza consciousness, a crossroads of multiple possibilities, as internal and external borders are recognized, overcome, and obliterated. For queer Xicanx men, the internalized homophobia, misogyny, racism, and AIDS-denial represent barriers that keep us immobilized in the Coatlicue State and from journeying towards mestiza consciousness, crossing over to Platform 9¾. The nameless protagonist of *City of Night* escapes a border city to encounter the subculture of the queer who are seeking their own redemption on the margins of society. Rechy's text, a literary achievement that is part ethnographic and part historical, defies borders, as it both represents Xicanx literature and queer literature yet also transcends these categories. Rechy's characters exist in a state of flux, or what Anzaldúa refers to as "nepantlism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways" (78). Constantly negotiating their identities in the face of state violence, their internalized oppressions hinder their progress towards mestiza consciousness, save for one character, Jeremy.

Anzaldúa's seventh stage of mestiza consciousness and Rechy's "substitute for salvation" are not utopic destinations yet represent catalysts of desire propelling us towards more evolved states of consciousness. For gay Xicanx men, mestiza consciousness and searching for a "substitute for salvation" are acts of decolonization from the heteropatriarchal violence of the state, traditional Xicanx culture, and the Catholic Church achieved through arduous self-examination, as a utopia is unattainable as it literally means "no place." Jose Esteban Muñoz describes queerness in similar terms in his text, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009). Muñoz states, "Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (1). Anzaldúa also speaks of a queer futurity in the seventh stage of mestiza consciousness as she argues for more than simple

inclusion when she implores heterosexual Xicanx to recognize the contributions of queer Raza. For Anzaldúa and Rechy, the marginalization of the queer is no longer a viable option, while Muñoz's "critical methodology [which] can best be described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision" (4). Thus, the journey towards Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness and the search for Rechy's "substitute for salvation" may be located by applying Muñoz bi-directional vision of queer history and queer futurity.

For much of the Chicano Movement, heterosexual Chicanas/os marginalized the very existence of their queer until brave Xicanx lesbians, such as Anzaldúa and Moraga forced heterosexual Xicanx to turn their attention towards the intersection of race, class, gender, *and* sexuality. Anzaldúa indeed looks back as a means of theorizing a queer futurity when she argues:

Colored homosexuals have more knowledge of other culture; have always been at the forefront (although sometimes in the closet) of all liberation struggles in this country; have suffered more injustices and have survived them despite all odds. Chicanos need to acknowledge the political and artistic contributions of their queer. People, listen to what your *jotería* is saying. (85)

This forces me to pause to contemplate. How would the Chicano Movement have developed had the so-called "Four Horsemen" (Reies Lopez Tijerina, Jose Angel Gutierrez, Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, and Cesar Chavez) been four queer and transgender Xicanx? What intersectional insights could they have brought to the Movement had they been allowed to confront the white supremacy of our economic system while addressing the misogyny and homophobia of our homes and communities?

Thus, embracing Muñoz's utopic lens complements the decolonial processes of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness and Rechy's (apparent) pessimistic search for a "substitute for salvation." Anzaldúa non-linear approach to recognizing, overcoming, and eradicating the geopolitical, emotional, economic, and spiritual borders that confine Xicanx, particularly LGBTQ Xicanx, to existences of colonial bondage. Rechy's dark existentialist worldview of a futile search for a substitute for something that, according to the author, never existed, may not seem to coincide with such a hopeful paradigm as Muñoz's cruising for a utopic existence. However, it is exactly *because* of Rechy's bleak worldview that a utopia could even be imagined, let alone theorized, due to Anzaldúa's difficult processes of decolonization—mestiza consciousness and *conocimiento*.

To cruise utopia is to have a renewed sense of hope and optimism in the face of historical and contemporary oppression, however seemingly naïve such a stance may appear. In the 2007 dystopic film, *Children of Men* (2007), Alfonso Cuarón presents a post-apocalyptic world where England maintains itself as a functioning society only through a hyper-Orwellian police state where Muslims and immigrants are detained and caged on the sidewalks as ordinary citizens sidestep the atrocities. Meanwhile, the global crisis is a worldwide infertility, and an industry following the youngest person in the world develops (in the beginning of the film, people are transfixed by the murder of the current youngest person, an eighteen-year-old man in Buenos Aires). An Antifa-type group protesting the xenophobic and Islamophobic government policies kidnaps the protagonist, Theo, played by Clive Owen, a low-level government employee who, despite his own apathy, becomes emotionally invested in the group's goal to smuggle a young African woman, a *pregnant* woman, out of the country. Muñoz takes a daring approach by arguing:

If, as indicated in the famous quotation from Oscar Wilde that appears in the epigraph, “a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth glancing at,” then affective and cognitive maps of the world that a critically queer utopianism can create, maps that *do* include utopia, need to be attended to in a fashion that indeed resembles a kind of politicized cruising. In the place of various exhausted theoretical stances *Cruising Utopia* not only asks readers to reconsider ideas such as hope and utopia but also challenges them to feel hope and to feel utopia, which is to say challenges them to approach the queer critique from a renewed and newly animated sense of the social, carefully cruising for the varied potentialities that may abound within that field. (18)

Muñoz’s challenge forces me to question my own thoughts regarding queer Xicanx utopia, despite its etymological root as “no place.” Rechy’s own theoretical stance regarding the recurring theme in his own work that we are searching for a “substitute for salvation” does not provide a material location—I cannot “drop a pin” on utopia on Google Maps—only that the salvation we were promised by the Catholic Church does not exist.

Standing in the center of a crossroads of identity for gay Xicanx men reveals the relative safety of heteronormativity while simultaneously negotiating the violence of the closet, illustrated in Arturo Islas’ classics, *The Rain God* (1984) and sequel, *Migrant Souls* (1990), compared to the thrilling sensory unknown of the bleak twilight world of Rechy’s *City of Night*, *Numbers* (1967), *This Day’s Death* (1969), *The Sexual Outlaw* (1977), *Rushes* (1979), and *The Coming of the Night* (1999). As accurate a portrait as Islas’ texts are of the crushing heteronormativity of “El Sapo,” Rechy’s corpus forges a defiant queer path through the thick brush of homophobic violence for queer Xicanx men, one that I continue to follow in my own subversive manner, pointedly with my weaving of HIV/AIDS into the discourse of queer Xicanx

subjectivity. Muñoz's definition of "queerness" is what propels us to leave spaces of hom(e)ophobia in order to seek the love we cannot find at home by bolting through the Pet Shop Boys' closing (closet) door. This queerness resides in the center of Gloria's encrucijada, the crossroads of Eshu.

To (re)member Gabriel. Arlene. La Lupe. Victoria. Gil. Arturo. Mundo. To remember those who succumbed to the violence of AIDS, the violence of our homes, the place where we should have felt secure and to ensure the current generation of Xicanx LGBTQ youth remember those who dared defy the sexual conventions of traditional Xicanx *and* Anglo cultures, in addition to not forgetting the blood red Holocaust of HIV/AIDS, which the mainstream LGBT movement has reduced to shuddered whispers of shame, just as in the early days of epidemic. As mainstream organizations, such as the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), focus on neoliberal concepts of legal equality, which I argue are critical for our advancement, the arrebató of HIV/AIDS rates among gay and bisexual men and transgender PoC continues unabated and unrecognized, thus establishing prime conditions for yet another wave of deaths.

I describe Rechy's corpus, because of the author's contrast between homoerotic defiance and heterosexual propriety, as an Anzaldúan arrebató or rupture, the first stage of her decolonial process of "conocimiento," or "knowing." In *City of Night*, the nameless protagonist experiences various forms of violence early in his life—the violence of poverty, the violence of his father and his friends, and the realization of the Catholic Church's false promise of eternal salvation vis-à-vis the death of his beloved dog, Winnie. The rupture regarding discovering one's homoerotic desires in a heteropatriarchal culture is the source of a range of internal and external oppressions. These forbidden desires, however, should not be considered the source of our angst, rather, as Rechy writes so passionately throughout his corpus, it is the hypocritical homophobic and

heteronormative attitudes towards same-sex desire. The structural oppression of homonormativity embedded in our legal, educational, healthcare, criminal justice, and labor systems is what LGBT people must negotiate daily. Intersect this homonormativity with the white supremacy upon which this country is founded and LGBT PoC constantly sidestep the minefields of racism from our white LGBT “family”⁹³ and the homophobia of heterosexual PoC. Moreover, an HIV-positive serostatus, or worse, a diagnosis of AIDS complicates our realities further. Thus, constructing a gay Xicanx literary genealogy is the first step in creating and sustaining a gay Xicanx consciousness—one acknowledging the brave tlacuiloqueh (scribes) who dared write of homoerotic desire. The arrebató of reading texts reflecting our hidden desires draws our closeted psyches into a crevice of homoerotic possibilities. Such spaces rupture heteronormative movement histories and leads to activism speaking to the intersectional identities of LGBTQ+ PoC. This includes a thorough analysis of the impact of HIV/AIDS, one that only a few brave Xicanx scholars, artists, and writers dared to attempt, leaving the others as complicit actors in an unknowable number of seroconversions and deaths.

Rechy and Anzaldúa are two border tlacuiloqueh who transgressed cultural norms by writing of homoeroticism in spaces where it should not exist, let alone be acknowledged. Over thirty years since its publication, Chicana/o Studies departments continue to assign and extract meaning from *Borderlands*. Anzaldúa shifted the paradigm regarding the analysis of Chicana/o experience. Rechy, as Anzaldúa alerted me as I excavated her archive, also represents a radical intervention with the publication of *City of Night*, five years before any Chicana/o Studies programs existed. However, nearly sixty years after the publication of *City*, Rechy’s contribution to the expansion of the breadth of Chicana/o experiential reality is only now being discovered and celebrated. Rechy’s early essays and *City of Night* complement Anzaldúa’s

Borderlands on any Chicana/o Studies syllabus, in any Chicana/o Studies classroom, where the instructor dares to venture outside the cultural nationalist patriarchy of the late 1960s and 1970s. Finally, *City of Night* represents the roots for a gay Xicanx literary genealogy, a novel from which all succeeding queer Xicanx writings branch and flower.

Notes

¹ Gregg Barrios interviewed John Rechy upon the 1988 release of his novel, *Marilyn's Daughter* (1988), for *The Los Angeles Times*.

² From *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987).

³ The importance of literacy is one of the major themes of *The Neverending Story*, as the heroic character is a bookish young boy who saves the universe by reading and naming the princess of Fantasia.

⁴ In his canonical text, *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger writes, “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. In the Middle Ages when men believed in the physical existence of Hell the sight of fire must have meant something different from what it means today. Nevertheless their idea of Hell owed a lot to the sight of fire consuming and the ashes remaining—as well as to their experience of the pain of burns” (8). Chicana lesbian theorists

⁵ To illustrate the necessity of a multiple method approach to research, Reinharz cites the work of U.S. sociologist Kathleen Barry, who conducted research on sex workers and former sexual slaves. Because of the issues inherent in conducting research with a population that has endured unimaginable trauma, a myriad of research methods is necessary to not cause the informants further damage and to analyze the issue from both a micro and a macro perspective. According to Reinharz, “Although she relied on interviewing for its particular assets, Kathleen Barry was careful not to analyze prostitution as the ‘personal problem’ of the particular woman. Rather, she was interested in the conditions that had enslaved these particular women as prostitutes, and that could have had that influence on any woman. In other words, her multiple methods helped her link the case of the individual woman with a broader complex of social and economic issues. Multiple methods are used by many feminist researchers because of our recognition that the conditions of our lives are always simultaneously the product of personal and structural factors” (204). Thus, instead of the cliché practice of blaming women for their supposed agency in choosing sex work as a viable career, Barry recognizes and applies the utility of multiple methods to recognize the institutional patriarchal structures that force women into sex work, e.g., lack of affordable childcare or substance abuse issues. According to Reinharz, the use of multiple methods does not allow for victim-shaming by analyzing the problem from a holistic approach.

⁶ The Mexican cultural critic and Nobel Prize winner, Octavio Paz, labels Malintzin Tenepal, “la chingada” (the raped or fucked one), in his essay, “The Sons of La Malinche,” published in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1961). One of Paz’s arguments is the state of eternal damnation the children of La Malinche (modern Mexicans and Xicanx) will suffer because of our mother’s transgression. Furthermore, Paz asserts Mexicans and Xicanx, because of our mixed-blood (European, indigenous, and African) and as products of rape, we are mongrels forever living in the shame of a Mexican sort of original sin, “If the *Chingada* is a representation of the violated Mother, it is appropriate to associate her with the Conquest, which was also a violation, not only in the historical sense but also in the very flesh of Indian women. The symbol of this violation is Doña Malinche, the mistress of Cortés. It is true that she gave herself voluntarily to the conquistador, but he forgot her as soon as her usefulness was over. Doña Marina [Malinche’s Christian name] becomes a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated, or seduced by the Spaniards. . . the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal” (25). Paz’s racialized misogyny perpetuates the racialized classification system practiced during the colonial period of Mexico, 1519-1821. The casta system was a hierarchy based on one’s parental lineage. A child of a Spaniard and an indigenous woman produced a mestizo or mestiza, for example. The mestiza/o child occupied a social position below the father (the casta of peninsular) but above the mother (the casta of india). According to Ilona Katzew in her text, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (2005), “In 1770, Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, a Spanish prelate and the archbishop of Mexico from 1766 to 1772, remarked on the diversity of Mexico as opposed to Spain: ‘Two worlds God has placed in the hands of our Catholic Monarch, and the New does not resemble the Old, not in its climate, its customs, or its inhabitants. . . In the Old Spain only a single caste of men is recognized, in the New many and different. . . [T]he social composition of Mexico during the eighteenth century was based on the existence of various castas. This term was used in Mexico to refer to the different races that comprised

society; it also served to indicate socioeconomic status” (39). Katzew also stresses the aspect of the *casta* system as a hierarchy of race, class, and by default, gender, e.g., a mulatto (a male offspring of an African and a Spaniard) always outranked a mulatta (a female offspring of the same racial mixture).

⁷ Adelaida del Castillo’s article serves an important purpose as she contextualizes an alternate path for Malintzin Tenepal other than victim, traitor, or concubine, as writers such as Octavio Paz have condemned her. Del Castillo provides a detailed account of Malintzin Tenepal’s birth into Aztec nobility and her subsequent life as a slave in a Mayan tribe at the hands of her mother. Members of the Tabasco indigenous tribe, upon their defeat by the Spanish, presented Malintzin Tenepal, who was still a teen-ager, to Hernan Cortés as tribute. Del Castillo writes, “Malintzin not only made communication between the two worlds possible, she made it meaningful as well. The indios recognized that this woman was also Indian and that she was in a position to help them through her direct influence on and contact with the Conquistador himself. In fact, the extent to which the indios recognized the dual leadership of both Cortés and Malintzin can be better understood when we learn that the indios referred to both as ‘Malinche’...In effect, when Doña Marina is accused of being ‘una traidora a la patria,’ [the fatherland] one wrongly assumes that there was a ‘patria’ (similar to the patrias of today). The fact is, there were many Indian nations within the Aztec Empire and these nations were always attempting, through one rebellion or another, to regain their former independence” (130-131). Thus, because of the structural flaws of the Aztec political system, the indigenous tribes from which they exacted tribute of taxes and human sacrifice were did not possess any fealty to the Mexica, always ready to revolt. Malintzin Tenepal, according to del Castillo, learned Spanish in a few weeks, and because of the similarities between the Toltec deity of peace, Quetzalcoatl, and Jesus Christ, a syncretism of the two belief systems occurred within her. Ultimately, del Castillo argues, given Malintzin Tenepal’s relative agency to one in her precarious position, is not a figure of scorn, rather of one of resilience and survival, yet the phallogocentric lens of history judges her harshly, “Because history is notorious for depicting the female as being one of the main causes for man’s failures, it’s extremely important that we understand the ethics with which historians, most of whom have been men in the past, distribute blame and justice...Woman is perceived as being one whose innately negative nature only serves to stagnate man, if not corrupt him entirely. So just as Eve was chosen long ago by misogynistic men to represent the embodiment of ‘the root of all evil’ for western man, Mexico’s first and most exceptional hero, Doña Marina “la Malinche” now embodies female negativity (*traición*) for our Mexican culture. Yet, why is Doña Marina demeaned and obscured in history?” (139). Del Castillo ascribes Malintzin Tenepal’s unfortunate assignment to a misinterpretation of her motives and to an androcentric distrust, even hatred, towards women, particularly those who exert agency.

⁸ I use the newest reiteration of “Chicano” throughout this work. The first “X” replaces the “Ch” of the original spelling and refers to the Mexica-indigenous origins of the term. The second “x” of “Xicanx” represents a more inclusive term in terms of gender and sexuality, finally eradicating the confining binaries of gender and sexuality. In some instances, I use the term, “Chicano,” as a reference to the patriarchal roots of the Chicano Movement and of the Spanish language.

⁹ The term and concept of “intersectionality” is one that is repeated, sometimes *ad nauseum*, yet is critical to queer PoC seeking to understand and explicate the nuanced complexities of our realities. In a major contribution to furthering the incorporation of “intersectional analysis” in critical analysis is Patricia Hill Collins’ and Sirma Bilge’s text, *Intersectionality* (2016).

¹⁰ To his credit, the late scholar Juan Bruce-Novoa broached the intersected homoerotic desire and Chicana/o literature in his article, “Homosexuality and the Chicano Novel” (1986). Bruce-Novoa argues, “Of the seven novels published by Chicanos between 1959 and 1970, the three written by John Rechy have homosexuality as their main concern” (69). Furthermore, Rechy’s Chicano identity is undeniable to Bruce-Novoa, “In *City of Night* (1963), the narrator/protagonist, whose Chicano origin [*sic*] is never in doubt, leaves his home in El Paso, Texas to explore the vast, dark side of U.S. society” (71). As progressive as the article begins, Bruce-Novoa’s heteronormativity creeps into his analysis in the conclusion, “Rechy has consistently given us images from the gay world, but always from the perspective of an outlaw among outlaws, the gay hustler. These new authors [Arturo Islas and Sheila Ortiz-Taylor] seem to locate their characters and narrators in a more centralized position within their group” (76). Bruce-Novoa, whom I met coincidentally at a John Rechy reading in 2008, unfortunately, perhaps

bound by the ethos of Chicano patriarchal nationalism he purportedly is decrying, clings to the safety of family structures with which he can identify. His choice to use the conjunction, “but,” is problematic, as if writing from the extremities of the margins is somehow a liability rather than a brave endeavor and an exciting prospect. Had Rechy written from a “centralized position,” his texts would not endure as the engaging polemics against institutional homophobia and heteronormativity, exposing decades of governmental violence against the LGBTQ community. To read literature from the perspective of “an outlaw among outlaws” is to read from the margin of the margins and brings solace to those who locate themselves in parallel positions. Bruce-Novoa is alternately applauding Rechy for the stark glimpses into a gay “alter-Native” culture yet simultaneously prefers the familiarity of Islas’ closeted reticence.

¹¹ One of my instructors, Dr. Margarita Nieto, whom I took for several classes during my Master’s coursework at California State University, Northridge, professed to me that as a lecturer at California State University, Los Angeles, in the 1980s, she had to defend the idea that Rechy was a Chicano and that his work qualified as Chicana/o literature.

¹² According to the website of the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS.org), “Caucuses are sources of initiative in the Association. Caucuses are groups of members of the Association who address substantive issues and organizational structure relevant to the Association... The Joto Caucus consists of gay, bisexual, and transgendered men. [There is a separate caucus for queer women called the Lesbian, BiMujeres, and Trans Caucus.] The caucus is concerned with homophobia, heterosexism and equity and the needs and interests of gay, bisexual, and transgendered men. The Caucus addresses the issues of ‘sexualities, identities, homophobias, masculinities, and every day Chicano practices.’” Over the days of October 9th-11th, 2008, the Joto Caucus held their second annual conference entitled, “Sacred Space Making: Mapping Queer Scholarship, Activism, and Performance.” Cherríe Moraga gave one of the keynote addresses. During the Q&A portion, a queer Chicano graduate student (a friend of mine), asked the legendary Chicana lesbian writer to comment on the state of gay Chicano literary production. She responded by asking my friend a semantically sly question, “Where are you [queer Chicano writers]?” My friend and I became uncomfortable with her answer/question, but after *years* of discussing and deconstructing her question, we concluded that as queer Chicano men, we did not know where to locate ourselves other than in a crossroads, in nepantla, for we had no distinct literary tradition analogous to the dynamic one forged by Chicana lesbian writers. Out of this probing question came the impetus for my friend and I to begin the work of mapping queer Chicano literary productions, thus contextualizing our own lives and identities, aligning ourselves with the very mission of the NACCS Joto Caucus and the second annual conference. I will always be indebted to Cherríe Moraga’s question, as it stirred discomfort and unease, which later inspired me to dedicate my academic career to mapping queer Chicano realities.

¹³ From Alicia Gaspar de Alba’s noir mystery novel, *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* (2006), which situates the as-of-yet unsolved murders of hundreds of mostly young, indigenous maquiladora workers amongst the backdrop of the familial drama of a Chicana lesbian graduate student.

¹⁴ As innocuous as the border was before its militarization, a border patrol agent gunned down one of my maternal great-uncles, Isidro Villanueva, an indigenous person born north of the border, as he walked home from a day in the fields along one of the canals that jut from the Rio Grande in 1933.

¹⁵ An example of this schizophrenia is illustrated by the conflicting actions of the federal government’s enacting of Operation Wetback in 1954 which led to the deportation of over one million people of mostly Mexican descent, according to Kelly Lytle Hernandez in her article, “The Crimes and Consequences of Illegal Immigration: A Cross-Border Examination of Operation Wetback, 1943 t

o 1954” (2006), while simultaneously recruiting Mexican laborers through the Bracero Program, a necessity due to the labor shortage caused by World War II but lasted another two decades, 1942-1964.

¹⁶ The original name of El Paso, “El Paso del Norte” or “The Pass to the North,” is actually present-day Ciudad Juárez and remained the primary port of entry for Mexican immigrants during the first half of the twentieth

century, according to George J. Sánchez, author of *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (1995). According to Sánchez, “El Paso-Juárez [was] the major entry point of those on their way to Los Angeles in this period” (39).

¹⁷ According to Ramón Rentería, a columnist for *The El Paso Times*, the derivation of El Paso’s alter-moniker, “El Chuco,” can be traced to an urban youth subculture, or rather, “alter-Native,” culture of Juárez during the 1920s and 1930s. Rafaela Castro’s text, *Chicano Folklore: A Guide to the Folktales, Traditions, Rituals and Religious Practices of Mexican Americans* (2001) posits several theories of the origin of the term “El Chuco” for El Paso.

¹⁸ Refer to Randy Lee Eickhoff’s account of the history and fate of the captive Isleta natives in his text, *Exiled: The Tigua Indians of Ysleta del Sur* (1996).

¹⁹ Marty Schladen reports the ruling of U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone on March 10, 2017, in the case of Texas vs. the Tigua tribe regarding the tribe’s alleged violation against Texas’ prohibition on gaming as closed. The state continues to monitor the tribe’s activities, regardless that the tribe and the “casino” are located on sovereign, tribal land, <http://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/local/2017/03/10/judge-texas-gaming-case-against-tiguas-closed/99008458/>.

²⁰ In the Afro-Latinx tradition of Santería (in which I am an initiated santero or priest), the orisha (loosely equivalent to a saint) of the crossroads is Elegua, an impish, childlike character who serves as a mediator between the supreme deity, Oludumare, and the physical world, similar to Hermes or Mercury. One must always ask permission of Elegua, a trickster deity, before attempting any endeavor (like writing a dissertation). Otherwise, Elegua will impede all communication. Thus, I offer Elegua chocolates (his favorite) and toys so that he may bless this journey.

²¹ Juan Francisco Flores Rechy is the author’s legal name. His father, a Mexican of Scottish descent, a man of high class and status in Mexico, emigrated with Rechy’s mother to the United States because of the social upheaval caused by the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1921.

²² The quote is a partial response to the question: “I have read your memoir and have heard you speak of your childhood in El Paso. Can you elaborate on growing up in El Paso at the time that you did? What did it mean to be a working class gay Chicano in El Paso at that particular historical moment in terms of race, language, sexuality, and class?”

²³ Ruben Salazar, another lauded Chicano journalist who was murdered on August 29th, 1970, by a Los Angeles County sheriff during the Chicano Moratorium, an anti-Vietnam War demonstration held in East Los Angeles, also pre-dates del Olmo yet both concentrated on Chicana/o issues in Los Angeles.

²⁴ According to Peter Richardson, author of the text, *American Prophet: The Life and Work of Carey McWilliams* (2005), McWilliams, a journalist, was instrumental in diffusing the tension of the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles in 1943 and worked on the legal advisory board of the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee. Both the Zoot Suit Riots and the Sleepy Lagoon trials are landmark events in Xicanx history. Rudy Acuña and Jorge Garcia, two veteran Chicana/o Studies scholars, cite the importance of McWilliams as a scholar/activist and the uniqueness of *North from Mexico* as a text. Jorge Garcia, PhD, states, “The only text in the library that mentioned Mexico was McWilliams’ text.”

²⁵ Dr. Acuña has updated the text over the last four decades and is now on its eighth edition; he changed the subtitle with the second edition to *A History of Chicanos*.

²⁶ Because of the shifting nature of the Rio Grande, a century-long land dispute arose along the Texas-Mexico border soon after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. According to the Texas State Historical Society, “The river continually shifted south between 1852 and 1868, with the most radical shift in the river

occurring after a flood in 1864. By 1873 the river had moved approximately 600 acres, cutting off land that in effect made United States territory. Eventually the land was settled and incorporated as part of El Paso. The controversy started in 1895, when Mexico made a claim for the putative owner of the land, Pedro I. García, whose title dated to 1827...The dispute continued to affect Mexico-United States relations adversely until President John F. Kennedy agreed to settle it on the basis of the 1911 arbitration award [a tribunal had been established with a representative from Mexico, the United States, and an impartial member from Canada and decided to award both countries with part of the Chamizal; the United States refused to accept the terms of the agreement]...The dispute was formally settled on January 14, 1963, when the United States and Mexico ratified a treaty that generally followed the 1911 arbitration recommendations” (<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/nbc01>). The disputed territory, known as Córdova Island, under the jurisdiction of neither the United States or Mexico was a smugglers’ paradise, particularly during Prohibition, a geographic ne pantla, a Nahuatl term meaning “to exist in the middle” and a major foundation of Anzaldúan theory.

²⁷ The “gente de razón” represent the light-skinned, upper-class elite of Mexican society, often identifying with their Spanish roots, assimilating into Anglo culture, and discriminating against Mexicans with darker skin who held working-class employment.

²⁸ El Paso’s downtown, once suffering from decades of neglect, is currently infected by the scourge of gentrification. The historic neighborhoods of Segundo Barrio, Chihuahua, also known as the First Ward, and Duranguito are in various states of demolition or planned to be demolished to bring El Paso into modernity with a sports arena and a performing arts center. Home to historic buildings dating back to the Mexican Revolution, these communities symbolize a neo-Chamizal, as they separate El Paso’s downtown from the international border.

²⁹ According to www.mtristorey.com, Cristo Rey (Christ the King) is a statue of Christ on the cross atop a mountain peak in Sunland Park, New Mexico. Believing he witnessed a vision in 1933, Father Lourdes Costa proceeded to have a statue of Christ built on the mountain, formerly known as Cerro de los Muleros (Mule-drivers Mountain), now known as Sierra de Cristo Rey. After six years, the artist, Urbici Soler, completed the Christ statue from limestone quarried in Austin, Texas. The statue measures twenty-nine feet upon a thirteen-foot base. The statue was open to the public on October 29, 1939, and remains open to pilgrims who attempt the steep four-and-a-half mile trek.

³⁰ The Chicano poet, Alurista, penned the three-page document, and the activists at the First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in Denver in 1969 adopted *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* at the proceedings. Moraga speaks of the heteronormativity imbued throughout the document. Alurista writes of a “brotherhood” that unites us, the “us” being heterosexual Chicano men. Women and LGBTQ Chicanas/os need not apply. Further in the document, Alurista declares, “Our cultural values of life, family, and home will serve as a powerful weapon to defeat the gringo dollar value system and encourage the process of love and brotherhood.” Rechy’s first two novels, *City of Night* (1963) and *Numbers* (1967), focus on a young queer Chicano’s journey and exploration of his homoerotic feelings do not fit within Alurista’s narrow construction of the Chicano experience.

³¹ In a research paper I wrote under the guidance of Dr. Danny Solorzano, one of the leading and prolific scholars in the fields of CRT and LatCrit, titled, “Que Viva la Jotería: A Strengths-Based Analysis of Three Queer Chicano Undergraduates at UCLA,” I applied Dolores Delgado Bernal’s Chicana feminist epistemology and the tenets of Queer Critical Race Theory to construct what I call a “jotería epistemology”—a method of knowing through the intersection of a queer Chicanidad. During one of the interviews, one of the participants revealed the ugly racism experienced by queer PoC in affluent white gay spaces. At one of the more popular gay dance clubs in West Hollywood, Rage, a white “twink” (the term for a young, usually 18-25, gay man who is boyish and waifish) came up to this particular participant (who might be described as a cub, a young gay man possessing a larger body type) and told him, “Get the fuck out of here, fat ass. You don’t belong here. We don’t want no [sic] pigs here.” The violent racism of a predominantly white, affluent nightclub is not different than other white spaces refusing to serve or cater to PoC. This racism is historical for queer PoC, as evidenced by the brief yet informative documentary on Youtube.com titled, “Fuera del Closet: Gay Latino Immigrants in Dallas,” published by TXReporter on August 31, 2007. In this clip featuring interviews with members of the LGBTQ Latinx community

in Dallas, a community organizer, Fernie Sanchez, president of ValienteDFW, an LGBTQ Latinx organization, commented on the historical racism of the gay neighborhood, known as Oak Lawn. Sanchez recalls, “I do remember experiencing a sense of discrimination at time. Sometimes, Latinos and African-Americans were required to show three IDs, for example, instead of one. But things have certainly changed in the years that I’ve been here. Now, there’s even a Latino bar on the strip, Havana.” Although Sanchez acknowledges the racial progress made in Dallas, the participant I interviewed experienced this assault in 2013. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvV5qDlzRmE>). In Rechy’s novel, *Rushes* (1979), which I will discuss in depth in the third chapter, is the site of discrimination of gay bars against other demographics of gay men with the sign, “No Fats, No Femmes, No Over 35s.”

³² Islas’ brilliant naming of the family matriarch of “Encarnación Olmeca” offers readers a lesson in Mesoamerican history. The Olmecs, located in the Veracruz area of Mexico and creators of the enormous Olmec head statues, are known as the “mother culture of Mesoamerica,” according to Fermin Herrera, a leading Mesoamerican historian. Furthermore, the Spanish feminine name, “Encarnación,” translates to “incarnation.” Thus, Mama Chona is the incarnation of the mother indigenous culture of Mesoamerica, yet she denies this identity to claim a mythical Spanish heritage.

³³ The article, “Stress and Coping with Racism and Their Role in Sexual Risk for HIV Among African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Latino Men Who Have Sex with Men,” (2015) by Chong-suk Han, et al., reveals the effects of these critical factors and the AIDS epidemic. The researchers conclude, “Stress caused by perceived racism in the gay community increased the likelihood of engaging in UAI (unprotected anal intercourse) among African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latino men in our study. The association between stress due to perceived racism and unsafe sexual behavior did not significantly differ across these racial groups. These findings were not surprising given that stress from a multitude of sources has been linked to increased unprotected sex among MSM [men who have sex with men] in general” (417). The intersection of race, racism, and sexuality relegates gay men of color to negative health outcomes. Published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2015), Vol. 44, Issue 2. p. 411-420.

³⁴ From his essay, “The ‘Macho Body’ as Social Malinche,” published in *Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture and Chicana/o Sexualities*,” edited by Alicia Gaspar de Alba, 2003.

³⁵ This is a variation of a proposal title I submitted to NACCS in the fall of 2011 for the 2012 annual conference; the NACCS committee rejected the entire panel, which focused on the impact of HIV on queer Xicanx men.

³⁶ This article holds a wealth of startling data and deserves a substantial annotation here. Ana Maria Alonso and Maria Teresa Koreck’s devastating article provides a nuanced argument regarding Latinx sexual practices, sexual identity, HIV/AIDS transmission, framed by a linguistic analysis. They first deconstruct the term, “Hispanic,” as Ibero-centric with the purpose of “whitening” by the erasure of the indigenous and the Black but also as a marketing ploy to an emerging consumer demographic. The term, however, is misleading when HIV transmission information is analyzed. Gay men of Cuban descent in Florida, Puerto Ricans on the East Coast, and Xicanx in the Southwest all merit differentiated analyses to construct the appropriate prevention strategies rather than a “one size fits all” campaign. Moreover, the statistics of women of color and HIV *should* have been an alarm for Xicanx and Latinx women scholars, yet as Román notes, silence prevailed. The year of the article’s publication, 1991, marked a decade of the epidemic’s recognition, yet, except for groundbreaking works like the documentary, *Tongues Untied* (1989), directed by the brilliant Marlon Riggs, another casualty of the AIDS crisis, which was only available in limited release, popular culture represented AIDS as a problem for gay white men, e.g., *Buddies* (1985), *An Early Frost* (1985), *Parting Glances* (1986), *Longtime Companion* (1989), *Philadelphia* (1993), *And the Band Played On* (1993), *Jeffrey* (1995), and *It’s My Party* (1996). Alonso and Koreck also cite research from the 1980s studying the HIV epidemiology among Latinx youth and the geographic distribution of the disease. Additionally, they offer a fascinating analysis of Northern Mexican attitudes towards homoerotic desire and gender. They argue that “jotos” (feminine men who engage in the passive role during anal sex) occupy a third-gender, hovering between “machos” (masculine men who engage in the active role during anal sex) and cisgender women. Alonso and Koreck

also comment that erotic desire between women is not recognized as a possibility. This work builds on Anzaldúa's concept of the "Half and Half" (19), a story of a young woman who occupied a third-gender status. Because of the lack of understanding of the intersection of culture, race, and desire, white AIDS researchers construct erroneous methodologies when attempting to collect data in Xicanx communities. Regarding women, they rightly conclude, "For Latina women, to raise issues of sexuality is not only to challenge the male authority they are culturally enjoined to obey, but also to put their reputations as women on the line and to risk being perceived as 'loose' or 'immoral.' Thus, Latina women may be reluctant to ask their men to engage in 'safe sex practices' or to use condoms... For Latina women, breaking the silence involves particular risks and ultimately necessitates a politics which challenges the patriarchal constructions which have given men control over our bodies and sexuality" (278). Alonso and Koreck's article, still relevant nearly thirty years later, will be regarded as the warning nobody bothered to heed.

³⁷ Alex Pitofsky's article, "Dreiser's *The Financier* and the Horatio Alger Myth," (1998) compares the former to the popular series from the 19th century, which popularized the "rags to riches" myth for white American boys and men. In fact, Alger "was frequently applauded as the novelist whose works highlight 'the potential greatness of the common man, rugged individualism, [and] economic triumph in a fabled land of opportunity'" (Pitofsky 280). Alger's fantastical narratives of a downtrodden young man, always white, who achieves material success through sheer hard work, must have shone brightly for Blea, rather than the critical social problems facing the Chicana/o community during the time she wrote her book. Published in *Twentieth Century Literature* (1998), Vol. 44, No. 3.

³⁸ Published in *Occam's Razor* (2011), Vol. 1, Article 2.

³⁹ Published on March 21, 2014.

⁴⁰ In a comical portrayal of the heterosexual fear of queer people "recruiting" others to our ranks is the pivotal moment in the television sitcom, *Ellen*, when the character, Susan played by the luminously talented Laura Dern, assumes the protagonist to be a lesbian. Ellen retorts, "I think I know what's going on. It's not enough for you to be gay. You've got to recruit others." Susan snarkily replies, "I'll have to call national headquarters and tell them I lost you. Damn, just one more and I would've gotten that toaster oven." The writers' use of the "recruitment" stereotype, though comical in this context, evokes the heterosexual fears that queer people seek to "convert" their children.

⁴¹ *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) overturned the previous ruling of *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986). *Bowers* upheld the existing sodomy laws in the states that still observed this archaic prohibition. *Bowers*, however, held that sodomy laws against same-sex couples were constitutional not against heterosexuals. *Lawrence* overturned *Bowers*, thus striking down all remaining sodomy laws. Unfortunately, over a decade after the *Lawrence* decision, several states continue to observe their own anti-sodomy laws, despite the Supreme Court ruling of 2003. According to Tim Murphy of *Mother Jones*, as of 2011, fourteen states refuse to repeal their anti-sodomy statutes. Ten of the fourteen states ban the act for heterosexuals and homosexuals. Four states—Texas being one—reserve the law for homosexuals in direct defiance of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling. (<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/04/map-has-your-state-banned-sodomy/>)

As an interesting aside, Mexico struck down its own sodomy laws in the *nineteenth century*, in 1871 to be exact because of the influence of the Napoleonic code left from the brief French occupation of Mexico in the 1860s, according to de la Dehesa in his text, *Queering the Public Sphere in Mexico and Brazil: Sexual Rights Movements in Emerging Democracies* (2010). De la Dehesa continues that Mexico considered homosexuality a bourgeoisie decadence by the working-class movements growing in Mexico.

⁴² This case legalized same-sex marriage in all fifty states, territories, and possessions.

⁴³ <https://www.aclu.org/other/past-lgbt-nondiscrimination-and-anti-lgbt-bills-across-country?redirect=lgbt-nondiscrimination-and-anti-lgbt-bills-across-country>.

⁴⁴ Michaelangelo Signorile explains and exposes the threats of these “religious liberty” or “religious freedom” laws, which equal *de facto* discrimination against LGBTQ using the guise of the First Amendment protection of religious expression in his text, *It’s Not Over: Getting Beyond Tolerance, Defeating Homophobia, and Winning True Equality* (2016).

⁴⁵ In this section of the text, Nava and Dawidoff cite the fears of the infamous anti-gay activist, Anita Bryant, who associated cunnilingus between women as a form of vampirism, “the tongue is used to stimulate the clitoris producing an orgasm is a form of vampirism or eating of blood.” Perhaps she had seen the fabulous lesbian vampire film, *The Hunger* (1983), starring the exquisite Catherine Deneuve, too many times?

⁴⁶ In an episode of the popular situation comedy, *Modern Family*, Cameron (played by Eric Stonestreet), the “femme” gay character, is in line at a bakery when twelve-year-old Manny (played by Rico Rodriguez) calls him for advice to woo a classmate. In his attempt at playing Cyrano de Bergerac, Cameron uses the “I” voice when telling Manny what to say to the girl of his affection.

⁴⁷ In *Dante’s Inferno*, the vestibule of Hell is reserved for the opportunists, “those souls who in life were neither for good nor evil but only for themselves. Mixed with them are those outcasts who took no sides in the Rebellion of the Angels. They are neither in Hell nor out of it. Eternally unclassified, they race round and round pursuing a wavering banner that runs forever before them through the dirty air; and as they run they are pursued by swarms of wasps and hornets, who sting them and produce a constant flow of blood and putrid matter which trickles down the bodies of the sinners and is feasted upon by loathsome worms and maggots who coat the ground. The law of Dante’s Hell is the law of symbolic retribution. As they sinned so are they punished. They took no sides; therefore, they are given no place. As they pursued the ever-shifting illusion of their own advantage, changing their courses with every changing wind, so they pursue eternally an elusive, ever-shifting banner. As their sin was a darkness, so they move in darkness. As their own guilty conscience pursued them, so they are pursued by swarms of wasps and hornets. And as their actions were a moral filth, so they run eternally through the filth of worms and maggots which they themselves feed” (17). Because of the bewildering lack of action regarding HIV/AIDS from a discipline born in social justice, the vestibule of Hell befits the crime.

⁴⁸ The longtime cashier, an older Latinx femme queen named Alfredo (or was it Alberto?), always threw shade to the younger queens, obvious reminders of her faded good looks. After leaving El Paso in the early 1990s, I heard she tried to pick up some “rough trade” (a tough, straight guy who will sometimes have sex for money) who killed her.

⁴⁹ In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa utilizes the concept of shedding skins like a snake as a trope for un-learning the colonial beliefs regarding gender and sexuality. Entering the serpent is a Mesoamerican concept representing a person undergoing a radical transformation.

⁵⁰ From Emma Pérez’s essay, “Decolonial Border Queers: Case Studies of Chicana/o Lesbians, Gay Men, and Transgender Folks in El Paso/Juárez,” published in the anthology, *Performing the U.S. Latina and Latino Borderlands* (2012), edited by Arturo J. Aldama, Chela Sandoval, and Peter J. García.

⁵¹ According to Jake Tapper’s article dated October 16, 2000, in *Salon.com*, “Bush Angers Slain Man’s Family,” then-Governor Bush declined to attend Byrd’s funeral and was unmoved by the family’s pleas to support the hate crimes bill, thus memorializing their family member, because of the inclusion of LGBT people in the legislation, <http://www.salon.com/2000/10/16/byrds/>.

⁵² According to Laura Mansnerus in her article, “Eddie Was Murdered. Sam’s Doing 70 Years. But Who is to Blame?,” in the August 8, 1999 edition of *The New York Times*, a troubled adolescent named Sam Manzie discovered his homoerotic feelings and sought the companionship of older men; unfortunately, he befriended a convicted pedophile in a chatroom. Raised in a working-class, Catholic home, Sam spent more time with the pedophile yet also displayed fits of violent behavior towards his family. Suicidal, Sam’s parents sought psychiatric help, but the boy did not receive any substantive treatment. (A psychiatrist interviewed the boy for fifteen minutes,

determining Sam was not a threat to himself or anyone else.) Left alone on a Saturday afternoon, a neighborhood boy, Eddie Werner, 11, happened to stop by the Manzie residence selling candy for a school fundraiser. Sam coaxed Eddie into the house and attempted to sexually assault the boy. Sam eventually strangled Eddie with an alarm clock cord and disposed of the body in the wood later that night. Sam, clearly disturbed and grappling with his burgeoning homosexuality and possibly manipulated by his pedophile companion, did *not*, however, commit a hate crime as argued by the user, “Intolerant in NJ.”

⁵³ Gwen Amber Rose Araujo, born Eddie Araujo, Jr. on February 24, 1985, was beaten to death and ultimately strangled by four men on October 3, 2002. The four murderers dumped her body in a shallow grave in a nearby wooded area. They struck her repeatedly with their fists, and then one of the defendants hit her with a can of food and then a frying pan. Gwen had engaged in sexual activities with two of the four men, who asserted a “trans-panic” defense at their trial. Two of the four men agreed to testify against their peers in exchange for lesser sentences. In the documentary, *Trained in the Ways of Men* (2007), Gwen’s mother, Sylvia Guerrero, is interviewed and explains her decision to support Gwen’s decision to live as a girl at the age of fourteen. Extensive coverage of the trial and its aftermath is included in the documentary. Out of Gwen’s tragic death, Guerrero found solace in the activism she performed on behalf of Gwen’s life and death. The documentary also explains the murder of Joel Robles, 29, who was murdered by a romantic interest when he found out Joel was a biological male. In this case, the defense also asserted the “trans/gay panic” strategy. According to the website, transgenderlawcenter.org, “The nation’s first bill to address use of panic strategies, the Gwen Araujo Justice for Victims Act (AB 1160), was signed into law today [September 28, 2006] by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Authored by Assemblywoman Sally Lieber and sponsored by Equality California, a statewide LGBTQ rights organization, the bill puts California firmly on record as opposing a defendant’s use of societal bias against their victim in order to decrease their own culpability for a crime” (<https://transgenderlawcenter.org/archives/339>). However, this law did not produce the intended legal outcomes, according to Autumn Sandeen, writing for lgbtweekly.com. The trial for the murder of fifteen-year-old Larry King of Oxnard, California, in 2008 by a classmate illustrates the weakness of the Gwen Araujo Justice for Victims Act. In this case, the court was allowed to instruct the jury “not to allow bias based on sexual orientation, gender identity or other protected bases to influence their decision” (<http://lgbtweekly.com/2014/10/02/on-gov-brown-signing-bill-prohibiting-gay-panic-defense/>). Thus, the jury exonerated Larry King’s murderer of a hate or bias crime. As a result of this case, more activism on behalf of the victims of homophobic and transphobic violence ensued, and in 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed the “End the Panic Defense Act.” Equality California states, “End Panic Defense/AB 2501, authored by Assemblymember Susan Bonilla, would eliminate the so-called ‘gay panic’ and ‘trans panic’ defenses, outrageous tactics used by defendants who claim their violent acts were triggered by the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity” (<http://www.eqca.org/legislation/past-legislation/>). Out of grief, the courageous activism of Sylvia Guerrero has allowed future victims of homophobic and transphobic violence to receive justice and her daughter, Gwen Amber Rose Araujo will forever be remembered. I submit Arlene Díaz’s name to a metaphorical altar dedicated to the victims of such violence, so that she, and all other nameless victims, may return home.

⁵⁴ A leading scholar in the field of Critical Race Theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw’s iconic article, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” (1991) argue that the intersection of white supremacy and patriarchy silence the cries of cisgender women of color while white privilege amplifies the attention by the media and the criminal justice system on white women who are victims of sexual and physical violence. For example, Crenshaw examines the Central Park rape case as a stark example. The conviction of several young men of color (recently exonerated by DNA evidence) elicited a racist, lynch mob mentality against the teen-age boys, even spurring then-private citizen, Donald Trump, to pay for full-page advertisements in several newspapers calling for the reinstatement of the death penalty and the teen-age boys’ executions. The case made national headlines yet as Crenshaw writes, “Yet another is the devaluation of Black women and the marginalization of their sexual victimization. This was dramatically shown in the special attention given to the rape of the Central Park jogger during a week in which twenty-eight other cases of first-degree rape or attempted rape were reported in New York” (1268). Twenty-six of the twenty-eight women were PoC. I apply Crenshaw’s concept of structural intersectionality to the examples of Ryan White, the white Midwestern teen-age boy who contracted HIV through a tainted blood transfusion (thus absolving him of guilt) whose memory is etched in history through the passage of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency (CARE) Act in 1990 and Matthew Shepard, the young

white man who died in 1998 at the hands of two men who had flirted with him, represents all victims of hate crimes with the signing of the Matthew Shepard Act of 2009. The legislation, signed by President Obama, is also named after James Byrd, Jr., yet according to the legal encyclopedia powered by nolo.com, the legislation is “more commonly called the Hate Crimes Act or the Matthew Shepard Act” (<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/content/hate-crime-act.html>). Seth MacFarlane, the creator of such shows as *Family Guy*, *American Dad*, and *The Cleveland Show* provides a satirical reference in popular culture to the structural inequalities given to white victims of crime in an episode of *American Dad* titled “Rapture’s Delight.” In this episode, the patriarch, Stan, implores his wife, Francine, to hurry as they are running late for Christmas service. He shouts, “Hurry up, Francine. God pays twice as much attention on Christmas, like the media when a white kid goes missing.”

⁵⁵ In the anthology, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), Patricia Hill Collins introduces the concept of a “matrix of domination” (26) as a model for locating one’s positionality in society in relation to others. Hill Collins’ “matrix of domination” illustrates how the intersecting paths of our privileges and oppressions provide a societal “location.” To locate your unique location on this matrix, you must reflect deeply on the aspects of your identity society considers a privilege and what personal traits are oppressions.

⁵⁶ Rosa Díaz’s reluctance to “see” her daughter, Arlene, even in death, contrasts with the mother of Gwen Araujo, Sylvia Guerrero, who had her daughter’s name changed posthumously to Gwen Amber Rose Araujo. As Guerrero explains in the aforementioned documentary, she never had a son named Eddie, rather she just could not “see” Gwen until she was older. Hopefully, Rosa Díaz will recognize her daughter, Arlene.

⁵⁷ When the Pulse shooting in Orlando occurred in June of 2016, it was the largest mass shooting in U.S. history—forty-nine victims. Only a year later, in October of 2017, the Las Vegas concert shooting claimed fifty-nine lives.

⁵⁸ (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/business/dealbook/puerto-rico-debt-crisis-explained.html?_r=0)

⁵⁹ Alfonso Chardy’s article, “How Puerto Ricans are Changing the Face of Florida,” provides a brief history of Puerto Rican migration to Florida, particularly the Orlando and Tampa areas over the last century since the U.S. seized control of the island because of the Spanish-American War. Chardy reports, “In 1910, the population of Puerto Ricans was estimated at only 1,513 people [in the United States.]” As of 2015, just over a million Puerto Ricans reside in Florida, according to Chardy. Written before the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria, Florida’s Puerto Rican population likely will increase dramatically. <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article128081289.html>.

⁶⁰ <http://orlandolatino.org/2016/06/message-orlando-latino-readers/>.

⁶¹ In a fascinating article entitled, “Gays for Trump? Homonationalism Has Deep Roots,” Robert Deam Tobin traces the presence of gay men in the far-right political movements in Europe. Tobin argues, “This ‘right-wing liberal’ approach toward homosexuality could be called ‘homonationalist,’ because it turns gay rights into a matter of national pride and even chauvinism, often connected with Islamophobia. While there is reason to be proud of the progress made in gay rights in many Western countries, sometimes this progress can be used to deflect attention from other pressing social issues. Israel in particular has been accused of ‘pinkwashing’ its treatment of Palestinians by touting its exemplary gay rights record, in comparison to the harsh treatment of gays in many of its neighboring countries.” Ironically, the roots of the relationship between right-wing nationalist movements and homosexuality are found in the writings of a gay, Jewish scholar, Otto Weininger, in his “1903 dissertation, *Sex and Character*, glorified Aryan masculinity.” Subsequently, “in 1917, Hans Blüher built upon many of Weininger’s ideas in his two-volume study, *The Role of Erotics in Male Society*, which claimed that male-male erotic desire was the glue that united men in patriarchal institutions from sports teams and fraternities to corporate boardrooms and government agencies.” Thus, the current trend of femme-shaming and emphasis on hypermasculinity in the gay male community can be traced to Aryan thought.

⁶² <https://www.workers.org/2007/us/trans-0913/>.

⁶³ A “detectable” viral load is one in which the person’s virus is actively replicating. When a poz person is under care, their doctor has them undergo bloodwork periodically, usually three to four times a year. One vial of blood measures the copies of the virus; another counts the number of T-cells. When a person is “undetectable,” the number of copies of HIV is negligible. The virus is, in effect, dormant, and is not actively infecting T-cells (white blood cells) forcing the body to replicate more copies of the virus. The higher the viral load and the lower the T-cell count, the more susceptible a person is to opportunistic infections, thus necessitating the need for antibiotics such as Bactrim. Pneumocystis pneumonia is caused by a bacterium that lives in our lungs but is innocuous until a person’s immune system is severely compromised.

⁶⁴ “Death on Terminal Island” by Ben Ehrenreich in *Los Angeles Magazine* was published on September 1, 2008. (<http://www.lamag.com/longform/death-on-terminal-island/>)

⁶⁵ See bell hooks’ *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (2000) among her many texts.

⁶⁶ A focus of my third chapter is an examination of toxic gay Latino masculinity and sexual practices. Men in the online gay dating community routinely refer to HIV as a “bug” or as a man who is HIV- as “clean” while those of us living with HIV are “toxic.” An unfortunate sexual practice nearly forty years into the epidemic is the fetishization of “bug chasers” (HIV- men who *desire* to seroconvert) and those wishing to give their “toxic load” to someone (an HIV+ man with a detectable viral load desiring to seroconvert an HIV- man). I discuss various permutations of the fetishization of HIV in the third chapter.

⁶⁷ David Dorado Romo provides a detailed accounting of the inhumane treatment of Mexican immigrants at the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez border in his text, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923* (2005).

⁶⁸ Julia Preston writes in *The New York Times*’ article, “Obama Lifts a Ban on Entry into U.S. by HIV-Positive People,” “It [the policy] was enacted in 1987 at a time of widespread fear that HIV could be transmitted by physical or respiratory contact. The ban was further strengthened by Congress in 1993 as an amendment offered by Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina. Because of the restriction, no major international conferences on the AIDS epidemic has been held in the United States since 1990. Public health officials here have long said there was no scientific or medical basis for the ban. Under the ban, United States health authorities have been required to list HIV infection as a ‘communicable disease of public health significance.’ Under immigration law, most foreigners with such a disease cannot travel to the United States. The ban covered both visiting tourists and foreigners seeking to live in this country” (<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/31/us/politics/31travel.html>). What is significant about Preston’s article is the fact that she omits (out of ignorance or bias, I can only surmise) the blatant AIDS-phobia of the Reagan administration which instituted the travel ban against persons living with HIV or AIDS. Amongst the many transgressions of the Reagan administration must be the fact that it ignored the epidemic for the totality of both presidential terms. President Reagan did not utter the word “AIDS” until 1987. Moreover, I argue that history should hold Nancy Reagan as culpable regarding AIDS as her husband, particularly because of her friendship with Rock Hudson, the 1950s matinee idol who was forced to reveal his AIDS diagnosis on July 25, 1985, by hospital officials at the American Hospital in Paris, which had a policy of not accepting AIDS cases, according to his biographer, Sara Davidson, reports Andrew Belonsky in *Out* magazine (<https://www.out.com/entertainment/today-gay-history/2013/07/25/today-gay-history-rock-hudson-has-aids>).

⁶⁹ The article by James Nye, “Boy, Eight, ‘was tortured more severely than a PoW’: Mother and Boyfriend ‘Forced Her Son to Eat Vomit and Doused Him in Pepper Spray Before Beating Him to Death after Eight Months of Abuse’” was published in *The Daily Mail.com*, on August 19, 2014.

⁷⁰ A review of the *Los Angeles Times* articles regarding the abuse and murder of Gabriel Fernandez from August 18, 2014, to March 20, 2017, reveals that not one discusses the homophobic motive underlying the violence from his mother and her boyfriend. Only the LGBT media reported this “angle” of this tragedy. A similar case

which occurred in 2012 in Oregon. Carol Kuruvilla reports in *The New York Daily News* on April 4, 2014, in the article, “Oregon Mom Found Guilty of Murdering 4-Year-Old Son She Thought Was Gay,” that Jessica Dutro commented to her boyfriend, Brian Canady, in a Facebook message that her son, Zachary, might be gay (although Dutro allegedly used a gay slur), ““He walks and talks like it. Ugh.” She told Canady to “work on [the boy] big time.” Zachary’s older sister testified to the abuse, ““They beat up my brother, then he died,’ the 8-year old girl told her counselor. ‘I seen them.’” Dutro and Canady allegedly beat Zachary so severely that his intestines ruptured, causing fecal fluid to leak from his bowels. Canady accepted a plea, and a jury found Dutro guilty of murder, among other charges. Dutro and Canady targeted Zachary’s siblings for abuse, as his brother was found to have five broken ribs, (<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/oregon-mom-found-guilty-murdering-4-year-old-son-thought-gay-article-1.1746234>).

⁷¹ Other articles that included homophobia as the motivation for Gabriel’s murder include, “Couple Indicted over Torture Death of 8-year-old They Thought was Gay,” by Sunnive Brydum, published in *The Advocate.com* on August 21, 2014 and “Man Accused of Calling Girlfriend’s 8 Year Old ‘Gay,’ Torturing, Murdering Him Rejects Plea Deal,” by David Badash, published on *TheNewCivilRightsMovement.com* on October 31, 2014.

⁷² Other Xicanx/Latinx scholars in the same category as Roque Ramirez are David Román, arguably the scholar who has argued the most vehemently for this vein of scholarship, Robb Hernandez, and Carlos Ulises Decena.

⁷³ Cramer continues in her article that “at the height of its popularity, *Esta Noche* was putting on up to six drag shows a week.” Cramer continues that the unstoppable forces of gentrification are responsible for *Esta Noche*’s closure, even more reason for its inclusion in *La Mission*. Ultimately, *La Mission* fails in its attempt intersect Xicanidad and *jotería*, as it does not delve into the possible (and probable) homoerotic desires of the father, Che (far from a revolutionary character), and Jesse’s neighborhood nemesis who shoots him because he is too fearful to disclose his own homoeroticism. Later in the film, a public altar is erected in honor of the shooter, complete with Aztec dancers and Mexican mother clad in black, Llorona style, to mourn her son, who was socially acceptable as a violent criminal on the condition of his apparent heterosexuality. Earlier in the film, Che outs and beats Jesse in front of the entire neighborhood, thus Jesse is emasculated and shamed.

⁷⁴ During the opening weekend of the film, the Austin, Texas-based chain of movie theaters, The Alamo Drafthouse, announced a “Women’s Only” screening of *Wonder Woman* at the flagship location. This caused a litany of men crying “reverse sexism” at the theater’s announcement, writes Peter Holley of *The Washington Post* in his article, “Why a Gay Law Professor is Trying to Shut Down Women-Only *Wonder Woman* Screenings.” Theater management posted on their website, [drafthouse.com](http://www.drafthouse.com), “The most iconic superheroine in comic book history finally has her own movie, and what better way to celebrate than with an all-female screening? Apologies, gentlemen, but we’re embracing our girl power and saying, “No Guys Allowed” for one special night at the Alamo Ritz. And when we say, “People Who Identify as Women Only,” we mean it. Everyone working at this screening—venue staff, projectionist, and culinary team—will be female.” Stephen Clark, a gay White law professor at Albany Law School, attempts to argue the legality of the theater’s promotion. Clark cries foul at being excluded, ““It’s the principle of the thing...I’m a gay man, and I’ve studied and taught gay rights for years. Our gay bars have long said that you do not exclude people because they’re gay or straight or transgender—you just can’t do that for any reason. We have to deal with the bachelorette parties that come to the gay bar...They’re terribly disruptive, but if you forbid women from coming to a gay bar, you’re starting down a slippery slope. It’s discrimination.” For a law professor who claims to teach gay rights, Clark’s ahistorical and myopic view of the blatant discrimination at gay bars against gay men of color, lesbians of any color, and those men who were excluded by signs commonly displayed at gay bars and bathhouses, “No Fats, No Femmes, No Over 35s.” Clark is emblematic of gay White men who do not recognize their own misogynistic practices, a theme common in Rechy’s oeuvre which I will explore in my third chapter. Instead of decrying at this so-called discrimination, perhaps he could have donated passes to women’s shelters or to a transgender social services agency as a sign of solidarity? Perhaps all the men crying “reverse sexism” could buy tickets for the women in their lives and use that time to reflect on their own male privilege and to attempt the Anzaldúan practice of seeing through both “eagle” (man) and “serpent” (woman) eyes.

⁷⁵ The second mention of John Rechy's name in Gloria's archive revealed the city of his residence, Los Feliz California, possibly as a reminder of contacting him for possible inclusion into one of his writing groups, which produced, among others, notable writers such as Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours* and *A Home at the End of the World*.

⁷⁶ From Dan Brown's novel, *Angels and Demons* (2000).

⁷⁷ From Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (2004).

⁷⁸ Eshu is an aspect or camino of the orisha, Eleggua, one of the major orishas (saints). The structure of Ifá, the mother religion of Santería, is similar to that of Catholicism—Oludumare (God) created the pantheon of orishas in order to intercede on the behalf of human beings and our material concerns. In their decolonial brilliance, African slaves in the sixteenth century who practiced Ifá "hid" their orishas with the mask of a corresponding Catholic saint as a means to placate the soul-hungry priests. After centuries, these two belief systems syncretized into Santería. Similar syncretic processes occurred in Brazil with the creation of Candomblé and Macumba and in Haiti with Voudun. Every orisha in Santería, aka Ocha and Lucumi, possesses several caminos or paths. Dr. Migene González-Wippler, a prolific scholar on Santería and other esoteric spiritualities, writes in her text, *Santería: The Religion—Faith, Rites, and Magic* (1989), "Eleggua is said to have twenty-one paths, and in each one he has a different set of characteristics. Each of these names is preceded by the name Eshu" (29). More importantly, Eleggua must be satisfied in order for any ebbo (spell) to work properly. The eggun (ancestors) always come first, but Eleggua follows.

⁷⁹ Another anthology, *Queer in Aztlán: Chicano Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* (2013), like its lesbian companion anthology, *Chicana Lesbians*, focuses on the experiences of queer Xicanx men when dealing with the intersection of homophobia, familial violence, coming out, and the impact of HIV/AIDS.

⁸⁰ During the third annual NACCS Joteria Conference held at the University of Oregon, Eugene, October 15-16, 2010, I was chatting with a young undergraduate queer Xicanx student who asked me what my research interests were. I responded, "Queer Chicano literature." He had no idea that such a genre existed. I asked him what his major was, and he was a double-major—one being Latina/o Studies at a university that shall remain nameless. I asked him if he had ever taken a Chicana/o Literature class, and he responded yes. His instructor failed to assign any Chicana lesbian or gay Chicano text.

⁸¹ Throughout *City of Night*, Rechy italicizes seemingly random words, yet he does this for emphasis. In an earlier quote to emphasize their poverty, Rechy writes, "I flick the cockroaches off the walls, stamping angrily at them. The house smells of Rot. I went to the bathroom. The tub was full of dirty water, and it had stagnated. It was brown, bubbly. In wild dreadful panic, I thrust my hand into the rancid water, found the stopper, pulled it out holding my breath, and looked at my arm, which is covered with the filthy brown crud" (19). I interpret "Rot" and the other "mis-capitalized" words as beacons Rechy provides as a method of drawing the reader further into this work of a subterranean world of forbidden desire that inspired the iconic James Baldwin to write the following praise to Grove Press, "Rechy is the most arresting young writer I've read in a very long time. His tone rings absolutely true, is absolutely his own, and he has the kind of discipline which allows him a rare and beautiful recklessness. He tells the truth, and tells it with such passion that we are forced to share in the life he conveys and accept that this searching and horror and hope and pain and love is what lives, and will live forever, in this great, uncharted jungle of the human heart. He reminds us of what we do not know, and even more, perhaps, of what we do not want to know, and this is a most humbling and liberating achievement" (ix). This peculiar convention, Rechy adopted, from the most of innocuous of literary inspirations, A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). In an interview with Steve Lafreniere and Terry Richardson published in the online version of *Vice* on November 30, 2010, Rechy explains, "One of the main stylistic influences on me is *Winnie-the-Pooh*... That's the truth. It really is... There's a stylistic thing in *Winnie-the-Pooh* of using capital letters very oddly to emphasize a word, and I thought, 'Geez, that's really great,' and so I used that" (https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/yvnpmk/john-rechy-646-v17n12).

⁸² Published online 2009 July 13 in the *Journal of Urban Health*, <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11524-009-9372-5.pdf>.

⁸³ I have mixed feelings regarding the queer ritual of “coming out.” First, I argue that “coming out” is not a singular event but rather consists of several stages—a coming out to one’s self, to close friends and family we believe will be supportive, then disclosing to those people in our lives who hold homophobic ideals and express homonegativity, and finally to the world at-large. In my Master’s Thesis entitled, *Constructing an Ofrenda of My Memory: An Autoethnography of a Gay Chicano* (2006), I argue that “coming out” is an extension of the Catholic confessional, as if it is a personal moral failing we must “admit” and for which we must be granted absolution by our confidante. Like the flawed concepts of “tolerance” and “acceptance” with which the queer person holds no agency, the results of “coming out” rest on the individual or group hearing the news. Alternately, I do feel there can be a spiritual dimension to “coming out.” In a piece published in the anthology, *Queer in Aztlán: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* (2013) edited by Adelaida del Castillo and Gibran Guido, entitled, “Mapping New Directions for a Radical Jotería Agenda,” I propose that the first person to whom a queer Xicanx discloses her/his/their homosexuality who does not judge, does not frown, does not throw us shade but holds our hand, kisses our cheek, and embraces us is our own personal queer Xicanx santo. I engage in this act of popular religiosity as a way of queering spiritual practices familiar to many queer Xicanx. Although the Catholic Church is responsible for much of the repression of homoerotic desire, our canonization of the first person we come out to who reacts with total support and love negates the hierarchal power of the Church. , “coming out” is a complicated process for queer PoC who must negotiate working-class neighborhoods and live in violent households, such as Gabriel Fernandez. In the recent documentary, *Kiki* (2016), which chronicles the contemporary underground ballroom scene of New York City, one of the young, queer participants states, “I remember, like, being in school, we did a dance to the song called ‘Peaches and Cream. So I came home to show my dad the dance. He was so upset. So I just went into my room. My mom was like, ‘Don’t dance.’” This was his way of coming out to his parents, yet he found his home in the House of Kiki, not with his biological parent. The average working-class queer PoC cannot simply move to West Hollywood or the Castro.

⁸⁴ According to Nahuatl scholar, Professor Fermín Herrera, of California State University, Northridge, who teaches a class titled, *Pre-Cuauhtemoc Civilization of Mesoamerica*. The Olmec civilization was concentrated in three cities in the Gulf Coast region of Mexico, La Venta, Tres Zapotes, and San Lorenzo. The Olmec civilization flourished from 2000 BCE to 200 BCE. Moreover, the numbering system, often attributed to the Maya, which includes the conceptualization of the zero, is actually an invention of the Olmec people.

⁸⁵ In this chapter, Anzaldúa describes the stranglehold the Aztecs held on other tribes in the Valley of Mexico, particularly the Tlaxcala, who eventually sided with the Spaniards as a method to wrangle control, “Nevertheless, it took less than three centuries for Aztec society to change from the balanced duality of their earlier times and from the egalitarian traditions of a wandering tribe to those of a predatory state. The nobility kept the tribute, the commoner got nothing, resulting in a class split. The conquered tribes hated the Aztecs because of the rape of their women and the heavy taxes levied on them. The *Tlaxcalans* were the Aztec’s bitter enemies and it was they who helped the Spanish defeat the Aztec rulers, who were by this time so unpopular with their own common people that they could not even mobilize the populace to defend the city. Thus, the Aztec nation fell not because *Malinali (la Chingada)* interpreted for and slept with Cortés, but because the ruling elite had a solidarity between men and women and between noble and commoner” (34).

⁸⁶ Gaspar de Alba argues that Mexican women are confined to the Tres Marías Syndrome, a triad based on biblical woman archetypes, the virgin mother of Jesus Christ, Mary, the mortal mother of James of Joseph, and Mary Magdalene, the reformed prostitute, all present at the supposed crucifixion. In Mexican/Xicanx culture, Mary Magdalene can be interpreted as the racialized subject of La Malinche, the indigenous woman who betrayed her people on behalf of the Spanish invaders. According to Gaspar de Alba, “the Tres Marías discourse outlines a code of ethics and behaviors that Mexican patriarchy for all of its women” (81). Gaspar outlines examples of such prescribed behaviors for each Marian camino: for María, La Madre, “She who has sex only to procreate...”; María, La Virgen, “She who has no knowledge of sex, not even with herself...”; and María, La Prostituta, “She who shames her family” (81-82). Under the patriarchal constraints of Mexican culture, Mexican/Xicanx women must

comport themselves within the first two models. Queer Xicanx are failed men and are aligned with La Malinche, as we betray our patriarchal masculine birthright by desiring other men, particularly those who desire penetration.

⁸⁷ Published in the anthology, *Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice Against Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals* (1998), edited by Gregory M. Herek, Meyer and Dean define internalized homophobia as “the most insidious of the minority stress processes, [and] is the gay person’s direction of negative social attitudes towards the self, leading to a devaluation of the self and resultant internal conflicts and poor self-regard” (161). Meyer and Dean conclude that internalized homophobia can result in devastating mental and physical health outcomes, “[W]e found internalized homophobia to be a predictor of mental health problems, intimacy problems, and AIDS-related risk-taking behavior” (179). Meyer and Dean do not account for race in their study, perhaps because white gay and bisexual men account for a majority of the participants. However, the homophobia found within Xicanx culture cannot be overlooked when examining internalized homophobia and queer Xicanx men. When Juan Gabriel, the late effeminate balladeer of Mexican song, cannot come out directly and instead remarks, “Lo que se ve no se pregunta,” (What can be seen does not need to be said), race and culture must be accounted for. The work of Díaz cited earlier discusses this relationship between Latinx gay men and high-risk sexual behavior.

⁸⁸ Lisa Duggan, author of “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism,” published in the anthology, *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics* (2002), describes homonormativity as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (179). The asexual gay couple in the television series, *Modern Family*, is a queer representation exemplifying homonormativity and reference their apolitical attitudes in an episode entitled, “Little Bo Bleep,” which aired on January 18, 2012. In an exchange between Mitchell and Cameron, the former retorts, “Oh, now we’re political? We leave town on Gay Pride weekend because we don’t like the traffic.” Furthermore, in her text, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (2004), Duggan argues that both conservative and liberal politics operate within the superstructure of neoliberal economics which systematically concentrates wealth in the hands of a few, defunds critical social welfare programs, and marches to the steady beat of privatization. Duggan laments the breakdown of intersectional politics evidenced in the 1960s to the co-optation of political discourse of economic inequality by corporate interests to the liberal politics of movements of equality in the 1980s, “During the 1960s and 1970s, the proliferation and expansion of progressive-left critiques and social movements constituted a fertile ground for connections—as well as for conflict and confusion...Gay liberation newspapers included anti-imperialist manifestoes and analyses of the racist legal and prison system. Black feminists set out to track the interrelations of capitalism, patriarchy, and racism” (xvii). However, as Duggan writes, these intersectional coalitions of radical and progressive politics retreated to reformist solutions rather than ones of systemic transformation, “Focused narrowly on U.S. domestic politics, and even more narrowly on courtroom litigation, legislative battles or electoral campaigns, large portions of the organized efforts of social movements succumbed to liberalism’s paltry promise—engage the language and institutional games of established liberal contests and achieve equality” (xviii). The danger of mainstream “acceptance” and political apathy is referenced in the documentary, *United in Anger: A History of ACT-UP!* (2012) when one of the interviewees comments that the AIDS epidemic forced the LGBTQ community to return to its politically radical roots.

⁸⁹ Published in the journal, *Cultural Studies*, v. 13, no. 2 (1999): 335-345.

⁹⁰ According to Miguel León-Portilla’s text, *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind* (1963), a “‘difrasismo’ [can be defined as] a procedure in which a single idea is expressed by two words, either because they are synonymous or because they are placed next to each other... This stylistic form... is usual in Nahuatl... Almost all of these expressions are employed metaphorically, and for this reason must be considered within their context. Taken literally, their meaning is distorted or lost completely.’ *In xóchitl in cuicatl*, ‘flower and song,’ is one of the many examples of ‘difrasismo’” (75). The difrasismo, according to León-Portilla, of “‘face, heart’ (*ixtli, yollotl*), [is] understood as parallel to that of ‘person.’ The relative abundance of texts in which these two words are expressed permits a glimpse of at least something of the complexity of their connotations. Another

source of evidence concerning the richness of connotations of ‘face, heart,’ is provided by the Nahuatl vocabulary itself, in which hundreds of compound words are found including the *ix(tli)* and *yol(lotl)* roots” (xi-xii).

⁹¹As a part-time lecturer at California State University, Northridge, I have had the opportunity to speak to several “veteranas” and “veteranos” of the first years of the Chicano Movement. Over the years, I have informally asked several active participants, including the artist, Harry Gamboa, Jr., and the writer, Roberta Oroña-Cordova, of their recollections of any “out” queer Xicanx active during the 1960s/1970s of the Chicano Movement. Neither recalls any “out” queer Xicanx. They both agreed that *had* anybody come out, the heteronormativity of the Chicano Movement would have ostracized them to the point of having no other option but to leave. Evidence of the erasure of any sort of queer identity within a Xicanx context is the founding document of the discipline of Chicana/o Studies, *El Plan de Santa Barbara* (1969). Alongside a master plan of implementing Chicana/o Studies at the high school, community college, and university levels is a recommended reading list by Xicanx authors. The *Plan* authors include the landmark essay by Rechy, “El Paso del Norte,” (1959) yet they omit the novels published before the adoption of *El Plan*—*City of Night* (1963), *Numbers* (1967), and *This Day’s Death* (1969). Rechy, arguably the most productive Xicanx author by the adoption of *El Plan*, is recognized for his powerful work detailing discrimination against Xicanx in El Paso yet the works broaching homosexuality are marginalized. Xicanx novels were a rarity at this historical moment (Rudolfo Anaya and Tomas Rivera had yet to have their respective iconic first novels published), yet the authors of *El Plan*, (I can only surmise out of their homophobia), overlook three novels by Rechy.

⁹² Released on The Smiths’ album, *Louder than Bombs* (1987).

⁹³ Two of the many glaring examples of LGBT white supremacy appear in the documentary, *Before Stonewall* (1984), Audre Lorde and another Black lesbian are recalling their days as part of the “gay girls” in the bars. Lorde’s companion recounted a racist incident against her in a bar and when she told a white lesbian about it, the white lesbian dismissed it as nothing of consequence. Furthermore, although the documentary features Lorde, her companion, and other people of color, the directors, Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, neglect to even *mention* the brave transgender women of color, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who reportedly threw the first bottles at law enforcement that instigated the riot. This erasure is nothing short of misogynist, transphobic, and racist.

Chapter Two

Reading Rechy as Tlacuilo:¹

Reviving Ghosts of the Sacred Historical QTPOC Space of *allgo*

“During the AIDS crisis...lesbians rushed to the defense of stricken men, contributing hours to provide care, food, transportation. Their dedication was truly awe-inspiring. I would hope that gay men would rally with equal devotion to the causes of lesbians—and all women—especially in the battle against breast cancer.”—John Rechy²

I walk in from the cold Texas January air into the dry heat of the clinic for my test results. The bored receptionist instructed me to take a seat in the gaudy waiting room. With each new entrant, the precious heat escapes until the room's temperature rivaled the frigid air of the Chihuahuan desert. Each person's eyes dart towards non-existent objects on which to fixate. No one dares make eye contact with another in the free clinic, a space filled with as much shame as any confessional. A mix of teen-aged single mothers, infirmed elders, and men who succumbed to their most primal desires yet now are afflicted with the Biblical-type punishment of a pox. A number is called and a young man whom I recognize from El Paso's infamous gay bar, The Old Plantation (the O.P. for short), follows the nurse down a gangplank of a corridor. I turn away from him. I had chosen anonymous over confidential, corresponding to the type of trysts in which I was engaging in order to survive. I shift in the cracked vinyl seat waiting for a nurse to call my number. The young man I knew from the O.P. had yet to emerge from the bowels of the clinic. I knew that when one tests HIV-negative, the visit lasts less than a minute—he had been

gone at least ten. The glare of the fluorescent lighting exposes the fear and shame on my unstubbed face. Another nurse emerges from the shadows of the hallway and calls my number. I enter the mouth of the serpent as another has taken root in my veins.

The Intersection of LGBTQ & Chicax Activist Histories—Rechy’s Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary as Historical Text

The universe of social media dating applications, or “apps,” designed for gay men, particularly ones such as Grinder, Growlr, and Scruff, has facilitated a vernacular of new terms specific to gay male sexuality through which gay and bisexual men seek other men for everything from friendships and relationships to erstwhile trysts.³ This world of virtual dating eases the facilitation of gay men, of course to make instantaneous connections with other men, whether they are fifty feet away or on another continent. Once two men establish a mutual attraction, the logical outcome could range from a coffee date to NSA (no strings attached) sex. However, sometimes, one of the participants is “ghosted.” In dating app vernacular, “ghosting” is the act of not responding to a person’s communication without any type of closure. It is the method of “standing up” a person in the virtual world of dating. One may lament what could have been with a “ghost,” but with a simple search, the user discovers that thousands of others await. In this chapter, I intend to revive the “ghosts” of a queer Chicax activist historical past in Texas to disrupt further the assertion posed by Carlos Muñoz, Jr., regarding the Chicano Movement. Alternately, the importance of the Stonewall Rebellion for me lies in its co-optation by white mainstream activists who deny the true “mothers” of the movement, two transgender women of color who lived with meager resources yet remapped the terrain regarding LGBTQ+ visibility, Marsha P. Johnson and Silvia Rivera.⁴ I seek to resuscitate neglected voices of the “ghosts” of the HIV/AIDS activist movement of the 1980s and 1990s in Austin, Texas. As

Rechy writes in the epigraph above, the stories of lesbians coming to the rescue of their gay brethren a critical artifact of LGBTQ history rendered invisible by the marginalization of HIV as a critical subject of study and activism. As I cited in the introduction, HIV seroconversion rates among gay and bisexual men of color continue to explode, forcing those of us afflicted with the virus to continue to negotiate the stigmatic silence of judgment, pity, and apathy.

The second method of hom(e)erotics, the excavation of queer Chicana activist histories, interrogates the intersection of queer and Xicana activist histories in central Texas during the height of the AIDS epidemic in the mid-1980s. In what form does this interrogation manifest itself? By reading Rechy's works through an historical lens, along with applying the courageous research conducted by the late Horacio Roque Ramirez, Jr., how do I begin to construct such an LGBTQ+ Xicana historiography? Because of the activist roots of Xicana Studies as a discipline, I focus on the history of radical LGBTQ+ PoC politics. To maintain the red thread of an Anzaldúan "arrebato," or rupture, of the HIV/AIDS epidemic upon the gay Xicana community, I examine the revolutionary, intersectional work of the grassroots organization, ALLGO, which phonetically sounds like "algo," Spanish for "something," (originally the Austin Latina/o Lesbian and Gay Organization) based in Austin, Texas. Founded in 1985, the organization simply known now as ALLGO, a Queer PoC Organization, responded to a multiplicity of oppressions in progressive activist communities in the central Texas area. The founding members were active in other local causes rooted in the LGBTQ+ and Chicana/o communities. However, white LGBTQ+ activists rarely showed interest in "non-queer" causes, such as the farmworker's movement. Conversely, heterosexual Chicano activists rejected any association with LGBT issues. ALLGO's founders decided to create their own intersectional space practicing queer coalitional politics through a Third-World feminist perspective.

In *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002), Robin D.G. Kelley writes of the Black feminist movement, “[T]he masculinist posturing of both the New Left and Black Power movements, the failure of many white feminist groups to grapple with racism, and the growing presence of a Third World feminist critique set the context for radical black feminism” (143). Kelley describes the struggles of the Combahee River Collective, created by a group of radical Black feminists who “found themselves fighting many oppressions at once—racism, sexism, capitalism, and homophobia [thus] they regarded radical black feminism as fundamental to any truly revolutionary ideology” (149). Similarly, the founders of ALLGO located themselves at the intersection of racism, homophobia, classism, and misogyny.

The year, 1985, represented the year that the HIV/AIDS epidemic “came out” to most heterosexuals in the U.S. with the stunning disclosure of an AIDS diagnosis by the former matinee idol, Rock Hudson. The epidemic was continuing to decimate queer cisgender male communities and certain demographics of women—women of color and those grappling with substance abuse who had contracted the virus via infected syringes—in all areas of the country by this year. Although central Texas did not experience similar waves of deaths on par with New York City, San Francisco, or Los Angeles, the epidemic did not spare Austin or the surrounding communities. LGBTQ+ Xicanx and other PoC progressive activists in the Austin area felt frustrated by the racism and classism of the white queer community and its refusal to support causes such as the farmworkers’ movement, as they were not “queer” issues. Conversely, the heterosexual Xicanx activists of the area continued to hold the homophobic and misogynist attitudes of the Chicano Movement based in cultural nationalism. Beginning as a safe social space for queer PoC, the founders discussed the need for a community-based,

grassroots organization that would tackle all forms of oppression, including homophobia, as radical Black lesbian feminists conceptualized decades earlier, according to Kelley.

An examination of LGBTQ+ Xicanx activism is, I argue, a broadening of the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Xicanx feminists “talked back” against the patriarchy of the movement by protesting their relegation to supporting roles and their demand for the inclusion of gender-based issues. One of the original patriarchs of the Chicano Movement, Muñoz, Jr., writes of this marginalization in the revised edition of his personal account of his participation in, *Youth, Identity, Power* (2007). In the preface to the second edition, “Reframing the Chicano Movement,” Muñoz, Jr., reflects on his journey:

In my personal journey, I had grown away from some of the negative male-centered attitudes and behavior associated with Mexican and US patriarchal cultures. My experience as a single parent had contributed toward my re-examination of family gender roles and patriarchy. My research on revolutions in Mexico and the Third World had opened my eyes to the historical reality that women played important roles in struggles for social change...

The men and women of the Chicano Movement were products of both a patriarchal and a homophobic culture. In contrast to gender issues, however, gay and lesbian issues did not emerge within the movement until after its decline. We were therefore not confronted with those issues at the time of the Chicano Movement. However, since gays and lesbians have of course been part of Mexican American communities, there must have been movement activists who were gay or lesbian. My exposure to gay/lesbian issues after the movement and my interaction with gay/lesbian activists in social justice and anti-war movements since the 1960s contributed to my re-

examination of my own homophobia. Unfortunately, there continues to be an absence of literature specifically focused on the gay/lesbian activist experience in the Chicano Movement, which remains one of the missing chapters of the movement's history to be researched and written. (5)

Muñoz's reflection exposes a critical gap in the literature examining the Chicano Movement. Certainly, a queering of the Chicano Movement is Cherríe Moraga's intent in her iconic essay, "Queer Aztlán: the Re-formation of Chicano Tribe" (1993). Although an examination of the queer Xicanx activists of ALLGO is not what Muñoz was referencing, I argue that these activists were not only fighting against racial and economic oppression of Xicanx people but also misogyny and homophobia all while linking their activism with all marginalized peoples. Although a gap in the literature examining the intersection of the participation in the height of the Chicana/o Movement and the LGBTQ+ Movement remains, the activism of grassroots organizations, like ALLGO, confronted the HIV epidemic in intersectional and coalitional ways. First, however, a reading of Rechy's texts through an historical lens is necessary to ground the work in the fertile, if overlooked, terra firma of LGBTQ history.

Rechy's Works as Historical Documents

Documenting the history of homoerotic desire and practices has been fraught with institutional roadblocks. However, the taboo of "the love that dare not speak its name"⁵ and the fear of criminal and social retributions did not occlude all attempts at historical and contemporary research on homosexuality. In the introduction of the anthology, *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past* (1989), the editors, Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., comment on notable examples of scholarship documenting

homosexual behavior, including John Addington Symonds, “the nineteenth-century British classicist and arguably the first modern historian of homosexuality” (1). The text also includes an essay describing the infamous Nazi book burning of the collection housed at the Institute of Sex Research founded by Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin in 1933. Other anecdotal evidence included is the self-misrepresentation of scholars attending an international gay historical conference in Toronto in 1982 fearing entry refusal. Ultimately, Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, Jr. rightly conclude:

[The history of homosexuality] has already demonstrated that personal sexual behavior is never simply a private matter, but is always shaped by *and* shapes the wider social and political milieu...Just as the lives of lesbians and gay men are enhanced by a knowledge of their history, so too will the field of history be enriched by a reclamation of the homosexual past. (13)

The more LGBTQ+ history is excavated, the richer the overall discipline of history, just as Chicana history broadened the field since the publication of McWilliams’ *North from Mexico* (1949). Much of Rechy’s corpus helps to fill other gaps of the historical moment in the United States Post-World War II and preceding and during the queer ruptures of the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969 and the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1981.

The focus of this chapter is Rechy’s mixed-media text, *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary*. In the previous chapter, I wrote of Rechy’s essays documenting the discrimination against Chicanas/os in Texas, disrupting the discourse of a racial binary.⁶ *Sexual Outlaw* begins the discourse of institutional homophobia at a historical moment when nearly the totality of all U.S. states criminalized same-sex relations through sodomy laws.⁷ Rechy’s invention of a new genre, “mixed-media,” includes narrative, imaginary speeches, and excerpts

from newspaper articles reporting on police raids of gay establishments and cases of entrapment. In the foreword of the second edition of the text, Rechy describes his intentions:

In writing *The Sexual Outlaw*, I attempted what I consider a new approach to the so-called non-fiction novel: I arranged random “real” experiences so that their structured sequence would stand for narrative development. Although there is a protagonist whom the book follows intimately, minute by recorded minute for a full weekend, there is no strict plot. Although there is a vast cast of characters, most are nameless and appear only briefly as their lives intersect with the short segment—virtually “pastless”—of Jim’s life isolated for attention here. I wanted to create characters, including the protagonist, who might be defined “fully”—*by inference*—only through their sexual journeys.

This book was composed in two main parts: the “experimental” passages in which the protagonist, Jim, sexhunts throughout Los Angeles for three days and nights; and various “essay-style” sections. The “experiential” chapters were written first, straight through, with only noted designations of where a certain “essay” would be inserted later. Then I wrote the individual “essay” sections. (15-16)

Rechy continues to explain that the two editions are separated by a dividing line of horror—the AIDS pandemic. Thus, the book stands as a historical document of the gay sexual subculture of the late 1970s, the last respite before the war continuing to decimate the gay male community, communities of color, and various cross-sections of women.

Sexual Outlaw continues the radical politics that defined the early years of the gay and lesbian movement. Rechy’s radical positions in *The Sexual Outlaw* are a precursor to the activism since the early 1980s. LGBT movement activism has yielded tangible outcomes, most notably coercing the federal government to develop treatments and benefits for people living

with AIDS, the *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) Supreme Court decision, which decriminalized sexual practices between people of the same gender, the termination of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and allows LGBTQ+ people to serve openly, and the *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) decision allowing marriage equality. Since 1996, a large percentage of people living with HIV are surviving because of the advent of the "drug cocktail," at least those who are privileged enough to access these expensive therapies. While the *Lawrence* decision represents a critical moment in queer people's agency over their erotic desires, military inclusion of LGBTQ+ people is complicated as this serves the imperialist project of the U.S. military. I do acknowledge, however, the economic draft experienced by working-class and impoverished youth who lack the access to higher education or vocational training and feel military service is their only economic escape. Marriage equality is another historic victory, as it grants same-sex couples the dignity and the tangible rights non-queer married couples enjoy. For example, during the peak of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s-1990s, hospitals often denied the partners of dying men visitation rights, biological families who had rejected their AIDS-stricken son stripped the surviving partner of all material resources, and the federal government did not grant the surviving partner social security benefits. A marriage certificate grants the partner of a terminally ill person the dignity of not dying alone and the right of his partner to care for him and inherit any accumulated wealth, just as heterosexual couples have enjoyed since the advent of social welfare programs.

However, the political focus of the white mainstream LGBTQ+ Movement has shifted towards the center under the mantra of acceptability and neo-liberal ideology, instead of protesting our government's neoliberal expansionist agenda, as Rechy illustrates in his essay, "The Army Fights an Idea," (1970):

This group of GIs [GIs for Peace—soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas who opposed the Vietnam War] often met in my home. One of its main purposes was to print flyers opposing the war. Several of those of us in El Paso who supported the GIs drove them to Fort Bliss at night. While we waited in our cars in darkness, the soldiers would “raid” the barracks and spread the flyer among the sleeping soldiers. They would then rush out into our cars and be whisked away. (57)

Rechy, a veteran of the Korean War, realizes the futility of war, and his essay represents the leftist activism in the late 1960s. This essay serves to add another dimension to the anti-war activism and could read as a call to action for LGBTQ+ youth to recapture its radical ethos. In fact, the founders of one of the first LGBTQ+ groups in the United States, the Mattachine Society, were members of the Communist Party until the rise of Stalin (xi), according to John D’Emilio’s text, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (1983).

The *Lawrence* decision aligns itself with the anti-Victorian protestations of *Sexual Outlaw*. For Rechy, who is quoted as saying, “Gay men should not follow the heterosexual model of dating. Gay men should always have sex first,” and “Promiscuity is our birthright as gay men,” what could be more materially important as the freedom to have sex without the fear of being imprisoned. However, although our homoerotic practices are no longer criminalized,⁸ being open about our identities precludes LGBTQ+ people from full citizenship, as of May 2019, twenty-nine states do not cover LGBT persons under their non-discrimination policies regarding employment and housing. More critically, the HIV/AIDS epidemic rages gay men of color and transgender PoC.⁹ Thus, a more radical politics than equality is necessary for liberation.

Indeed, some of Rechy's earliest texts, *City of Night* (1963), *Numbers* (1967), and *This Day's Death* (1969) complement *The Sexual Outlaw* as historical texts archiving one version of the gay male experience at a tenuous historical moment—before the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS yet when the worst of gay stereotypes as sociopathic child molesters still occupied the collective unconscious of the heterosexual public and law enforcement routinely harassed and terrorized the few spaces that existed. *City of Night* documents the realities of queer men in urban centers years before the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969. *Numbers* explores the capital accumulation of “tricking” as a form of existential and social protest during an historical moment when the state criminalized homoerotic desires. *This Day's Death* equates the protagonist's mother's death with a charge of lewd and lascivious behavior when entrapped by a homophobic, closeted Los Angeles Vice Squad detective. Not unlike Martin Luther rebelling against the corruption of the Catholic Church, Rechy offers his own protestations against differing forms of violence—state, religious, cultural, and internalized. These four texts begin an historical document of homoerotic desire and its various manifestations in the face of such acts of violence.

Rechy's earlier writings for *The Nation* and *Evergreen Review* document the *de facto* racism against Xicanx; thus, Rechy's corpus is an unexamined codex, an amoxтли¹⁰ left to be dusted off, interpreted, and archived. In another of Rechy's essays, “Common Bonds and Battles” (1978), he laments the division between lesbians and homosexual men, particularly as both groups suffer from similar types of oppression:

Understanding that sexism that exploits women exploits homosexuals, acceptance that the erosion of all rights is implicit in antihomosexual legislation (the progression from “queers” to “broads” to “niggers” to “spics” to “kikes” is easy), would result in a unity and a release of energy that could sweep away all antihuman-rights movements. (72)

In a postscript to the essay he wrote in 2004, Rechy comments further on the history between gay men and lesbians also documented by Cherríe Moraga in *Queer Aztlán* (1993):

During the AIDS crisis—and this article was written long before that—lesbians rushed to the defense of stricken men, contributing hours to provide care, food, transportation.

Their dedication was truly awe-inspiring. I would hope that gay men would rally with equal devotion to the causes of lesbians—and all women—especially in the battle against breast cancer. (73)

In the first quote, Rechy provides an intersectional analysis of marginalized communities in the late 1970s and echoes Audre Lorde’s concept that “there is no hierarchy of oppression,” (219)¹¹ and Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez warning against engaging in an “oppression Olympics” (x).¹² The second quote offers a glimpse into the untold stories of lesbians caring for their afflicted queer brothers, histories urgently needing excavation.

Furthermore, generation of gay men born in the 1970s and later did not bear the full brunt of the AIDS epidemic. I was a young teen-ager in the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Certainly, I have known several people, mostly gay men of color, who succumbed to the virus, yet I wonder what it would have been like to be a teen-ager a decade earlier. Entering the world of homoerotic desire at the historical moment when a deadly stranger slipped into the dark recesses of the gay urban centers, lying in wait as if a serial murderer. Writers like Rechy are our guideposts to remind us of that time of confusion, horror, and tragedy for gay men. In another response to an email question regarding the first news reports of HIV and how it affected him, Rechy recalls:

Like every other gay man I was confused, panicked, and saddened... When it was determined that gay sexual contact was most likely the primary cause, it seemed to me—

yes—unfair that one area that was ours—rich sexual activity—was being, in effect, denied us. At the time, some of us felt that one of the factors that kept us going within an oppressive atmosphere was what was judgmentally called “promiscuity” but, to me was sexual abundance. The emergence of AIDS allowed homophobes to judge our lives, sexual and non-sexual. It was sex that was being indicted, of course. The crisis did provide a display of our endurance, courage. Alas, I think a young generation is not really aware of the catastrophe, unlike Jewish people’s remembrance of their own holocaust, a cautionary reminder of the manipulation of hatred... When I Michael [his partner of many years] went to see the [AIDS Memorial] Quilt, it was a blunt revelation of what had occurred. The dazzlement of colors evoking those who had died seemed to me to represent our striving for unjudged happiness, and yet each patch represented someone gone. I was stunned to read names of people I had known, many, many.

Rechy’s reflection of the horrors of the AIDS epidemic should make every gay man pause and reflect. Younger gay men, as Rechy observes, are unaware of the apprehension during the HIV test waiting period, sometimes up to two weeks in the 1990s. With the advent of PreP (Pre-Exposure Propholaxis) and the AIDS cocktail, the death rates have plummeted, yet as I highlighted in the introduction, seroconversion rates for gay Black and Latino men are rising. Chicana/o letters lost two brilliant writers, Arturo Islas in 1991 and Gil Cuadros in 1996, yet there has been no collective response from other gay Xicanx writers to document the epidemic within our community. To paraphrase Dr. Don Francis from the film adaptation of Randy Shilts’ chronicle of the epidemic, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (1987), I ask, how many more Chicanas/os have to die before our discipline takes notice?

The Sexual Outlaw is a document lost among the rubble of mainstream LGBTQ homonormative politics of acceptability—a manifesto of sexual difference and defiance. For gay Xicanx cisgender men, this text is a recovered historical document of homoerotic validation, a codex, or amoxтли, of desire.¹³ At the height of the hedonistic peak of the 1970s, Rechy produces an historical snapshot of an era living only in corporal memories of gay men in their mid-fifties and older and the graves of the multitudes who succumbed to the AIDS pandemic. Although LGBTQ visibility now pervades every part of U.S. culture, homophobia remains constant at structural and personal levels, as evidenced by the increasing passage of “religious liberty” laws and the ubiquitous tragedy of bullying and suicides by LGBTQ+ youth. Specifically, for gay cisgender Xicanx men struggling with feelings of confusion, self-loathing, and thoughts of self-harm, I offer this analysis of these overlooked but critical texts as a testament to our homoerotic desire not through the lens of religious shame or societal immorality but from a position of defiant strength and resolute pride.

Rechy’s manifesto offers no respite for various communities—the heterosexual community at-large and factions of the gay male community. Towards the last third of the text is a passage, “Voice Over: *Imaginary Speech to Heterosexuals*” (Rechy 231). The speech, three pages of succinct rhetoric, enrages and dismays the gay reader. Throughout the speech (and the text), Rechy condemns the institutional homophobic violence of the state perpetrated by law enforcement officers executing archaic laws criminalizing homoerotic practices. The gay bar today is no longer a hidden enclave of huddled figures raising their jacket collars shielding their identity from a scornful society; the gay bar has entered the mainstream consciousness as heterosexual cisgender women discovered these spaces. Even in the decade after the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, law enforcement continued to harass gay patrons and conduct raids and

conduct stings where gay men are entrapped and charged with lewd conduct, often resulting in being required to registering as a sex offender. In his collection of essays, *Beneath the Skin* (2004), Rechy, commenting on the *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) Supreme Court decision invalidating all remaining sodomy laws, writes of the decades of entrapment by vice squads in the essay, “*Lawrence Brings it All Back Home.*” Rechy, again in his role as historian, informs the reader that the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s revealed themselves to be more homophobic than anti-Communist as hundreds of federal government workers, especially in the State Department, as conventional wisdom dictated that one’s homosexuality could compromise national security. With his usual passion, Rechy decries the historical treatment of gay men by authorities, especially regarding the manufactured crimes of sexual entrapment:

Countless lives were destroyed by such arrests: men lost their jobs, were ostracized by their families, were threatened with shock therapy treatment, ordered to stay away from any place catering to “perverts”—in effect sentenced to a life of loneliness, away from their own kind. All men convicted of a gay sex offense had to register for life as “sex offenders.” As such, they were frequently summoned out of their homes at night to participate in lineups for unrelated offenses, heterosexual rape, or child molestation.

(253)

The number of ruined gay men’s lives from this era is unquantifiable. The institutional homophobia of the state is only possible because of the heterosexual public’s silent complicity. How will history treat the state violence and those who explicitly and implicitly supported such laws against homoerotic desire, particularly as conservative lawmakers are repackaging anti-LGBTQ legislation as “religious liberty”¹⁴ laws.

One of the major themes of Rechy's "speech" is questioning the societal heteronormativity choking queer people with a vice grip of hypocritical morality and antiquated jurisprudence, squeezing our necks unless we conform and live lives of false heterosexuality or (perhaps preferred) we take our own lives. In the recent film, *Love, Simon* (2018), the protagonist, a high school senior grappling with his homoerotic desires, questions the "coming out" process and imagines his clique of friends, three heterosexuals, having to declare their heterosexuality to their respective parents. The three sets of parents cry in anguish at the thought of their children embarking on a heterosexual life path. The scene is meant to be comical—one mother cries out, "Why, Jesus?!"—yet broaches the larger issue of the power differential in the lives of queer youth. Even in today's world of the modern, sensitive man (the father of the protagonist in *Love, Simon* is one such type of man), our society inundates youth with messages of heteronormativity. Thirty years earlier, the landmark film, *Torch Song Trilogy* (1988) based on the Broadway play, contains a pivotal scene questioning the societal heteronormativity interrogated in *Love, Simon*. Arnold Beckoff, the protagonist, implores for his intolerant mother to try to imagine a world where every movie, television show, and publication tells the viewer that they *should* be homosexual, but she dismisses her son's assertion. Advancements in technology notwithstanding, each film celebrates homoerotic desire; although, *Simon* is much more endeavoring to capture a heteronormative sensibility, as the protagonist imagines a campy musical number set to a Whitney Houston anthem but wakes up and decides he does not want to be "*that gay*." Arnold, whose occupation is the headliner of a drag queen revue and goes by the moniker, "Virginia Ham," makes no apologies for his homoerotic desire or how he chooses to live his life. Like Arnold's repudiation of his mother's judgment, Rechy's "speech," challenges

the audience to imagine a world of constant criminalization by law enforcement or by religious condemnation from Judeo Christian leaders.

Furthermore, Rechy applies an intersectional¹⁵ analysis when he speaks to people of color in the audience and equates homophobia with racism, misogyny, and other forms of discrimination. “Do you know that one who says ‘faggot’ also says ‘nigger,’ ‘broad,’ ‘chink,’ ‘kike,’ ‘spic?’” (Rechy 232). The “narrator” continues to speak directly to heterosexual Blacks and Chicano men, “Why do so many of you—who should know so well what it’s like—oppose us while you wallow in transparent machismo? The evil that pursues us is the same evil that pursues you. It only begins with us. We provide a barometer for tomorrow’s general repression. We’re first—but you’re next” (Rechy 233). Rechy recognizes the marginal social locations of groups other than gay men—people of color, women, and religious minorities—yet all engage in homophobic oppression.

Finally, Rechy speaks to two other constituencies of the imagined audience—liberals and parents of LGBTQ+ children. Rechy addresses liberals who espouse a myriad of progressive causes, save LGBTQ+ rights. At the time of publication, both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association had declassified homosexuality as deviant behavior, albeit only since the early 1970s. Although the Democratic Party continues to “evolve”¹⁶ (building on the Darwinian trope, the Democratic Party has finally reached the stage of the early vertebrates while the Republican Party has yet to achieve parity with amoebas) and some in the mainstream news media marvel at the rapid progress of LGBTQ+ rights (mostly in the arena of marriage), queer and transgender people of color navigating intersections of other critical dimensions, such as race, class, HIV, gender identity, and immigration know that gains benefitting mostly white gay men does not trickle down; for those occupying locations at the

extreme margins, progress, in the words of Toni Morrison, is “a slow walk of trees.”¹⁷ While wealthy white gay men ingest their PreP before taking ecstasy at the next circuit party in Palm Springs or some other exotic locale, queer and transgender PoC continue to wait for the seedlings of intersectional progress to sprout.

A master rhetorician, Rechy addresses the parents of gay sons, realizing the emotional impact of such a gesture. Between the issues of the rising rates of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness¹⁸ and suicides¹⁹, the movements of marriage equality and military inclusion overshadowed these critical problems and others, such as HIV medication accessibility and adherence and seroconversion rates for gay men and transgender women of color. Rechy, however, addresses the critical issue of parental acceptance:

And to the parents in the audience:

One of your children, right at this very moment, may be struggling to bring himself to tell you that he’s gay. You love him—he knows that. But will you still love him when he tells you?—will you turn him into a stranger? Will you, as so many before you, throw him out? (232-233)

In this brief yet poignant passage, Rechy speaks to the parents whose fear and hatred supersede their love and compassion for their children because of gender non-conformity and sexual difference. Forty years later, Rechy’s words could have been uttered to the families of Gabriel Fernandez, Arlene Díaz, and the last body claimed from the Pulse nightclub shooting, whom I named “La Lupe” in the previous chapter.

Film is a powerful medium in which the Chicax and Latinx communities have been featured, although mostly in stereotypical roles.²⁰ Films intersecting Xicanx identity and homoerotic desire are scant, save for the productions, *Quinceañera* (2006) and *La Mission*

(2009). The protagonists are both young urban Xicanx whose fathers exile them and threaten them with physical violence. In one scene in *La Mission*, the father, Che, portrayed by Benjamin Bratt, is a widower raising his teen-age son in the Mission District, an historically Latinx populated neighborhood of Los Angeles currently undergoing a violent wave of gentrification. Che discovers his son, played by Jeremy Ray Valdez, is gay and confronts him. During the ensuing argument, Che, a recovering alcoholic and ex-convict, publicly outs and physically beats his son, banishing him from his home. The disgust and rage on Che's face as he confronts his son about his identity is palpable, and the audience can only wince with each patriarchal blow.

Rechy interrupts the narrative with another twenty "voice overs" that cover a range of topics spanning a description of "promiscuous rage" and its utility to challenging the myth of the "gay threat" to a scathing critique of the gay men's participation in the S and M (sadism and masochism) scenes. Throughout the voice overs, Rechy delivers his pronouncements depending on the audience. Law enforcement, liberal activists, and gay men are three groups he excoriates for the overt and tacit homophobia, and each "voice over" stands as an historical marker, a reminder to future generations of LGBTQ people of the famously Larry Kramer's sentiment—they *hate us*.²¹ Over forty years after its initial publication, *The Sexual Outlaw* serves as the history of all oppressed peoples should—a warning that in societies where power is concentrated in the hands of a few, the gaining of rights and progress are tenuous, thus stressing the importance of not relegating such documents to the archive.

No group is safe from the sexual outlaw's critical acumen, including his own tribe. Although homosexual promiscuity is a backlash against the hypocritical Victorian²² prudishness of heterosexual Rechy counters his "imaginary speech to heterosexuals" with a "voice over" called "The Ugly Gay World" (242). In the narrative passages before this section is a memory

Rechy calls, “FLASHBACK: *Somewhere in Los Angeles, Last Summer*,” and Jim recalls “one or two or even three blurred days of drugs and sex and hatred” (239). The memory of this drug-induced orgy does not include any moments of realized pleasure, rather inflictions of wounded masculinity. Using their bodies as weapons, Jim awakens from his drug stupor to acknowledge the twisted desire he is both drawn to and repulsed by. This “flashback” foreshadows the epidemic of crystal meth in the gay community, spawning a type of amateur pornography known as “chem porn,”²³ a topic I analyze in the following chapter.

The “Voice Over” titled “The Ugly Gay World” provides an historical context of legal and cultural discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community, and Rechy begins with the third paragraph, “Every indictment of the gay world is a stronger indictment of the straight” (242). Rechy argues that we, LGBTQ+ persons, model ourselves after heterosexual society, as we are forced to fellate heterosexual norms from the time our parents wrap us in either a blue blanket or a pink blanket. This “voice over” transitions to an internal critique of the fledgling LGBTQ+ community (*Sexual Outlaw* was published only eight years after the Stonewall Rebellion), and the only model available is that of heterosexual hypocrisy. The hypermasculine gay man who tries desperately to appear “straight-looking” scoffs at a finger-snapping “nelly” queen and makes transphobic and lesbian-phobic remarks is such an example of this “ugly gay world,” “She—and she prefers ‘she’—hurts our image, we say. What she may hurt most is our symbolic lack of courage; she might just more easily take on a threatening bully or a vice cop than a black-leathered gay might!” (Rechy 243). As LGBTQ+ PoC, we can never allow the whitewashing of our histories and speak of Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, two transgender, working-class, women of color, who instigated the rebellion against the oppressive police at the Stonewall Inn that summer night in 1969. Rechy lionizes the drag queen and the effeminate homosexual as

true transgressors of heterosexual society's oppressive gender and sexual codes.²⁴ Does the current generation of queer youth, however, know these names or the intense criminalization of homoerotic desire or the history of the struggle against HIV/AIDS?

Just as Rechy challenged the Black-white binary of racial discourse with his essay, "El Paso del Norte" (1960) and "Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero" (1959), he broaches the concepts of homonormativity²⁵ and toxic masculinity decades before scholars created such terms. Rechy also decries the apathetic attitudes of queer people who represent the equivalent of current mainstream queer politics who advocate *solely* on middle-class issues of inclusion, such as marriage and military participation. Rechy writes:

I spoke once to a group of young homosexuals, so unaware, so unconcerned, and so conservative despite their youth, that I have come to think of them as "Nephew Toms." They sipped punch and nibbled crumbly sugar cookies—and expressed a murderous complacency. As long as they could go to dance bars and hold hands on campus, hey, well, ah, everything was okay, they kept repeating. (244)

These "young homosexuals," although Rechy does not specify their race or class, were probably white and middle or upper-class. Because they did not have to negotiate intersectional oppressions, like Johnson and Rivera, they could isolate their sexual identity from other issues that did not exist in their relatively privileged realities.

Rechy invokes the same rhetorical strategy as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when the latter forced the white people who remained silent on the sidelines to examine their reflections. Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963) and his speech, "The Injustice of Silence," given at the Dinkler Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, (1965), both denounce the complicity of those who remain silent in the face of injustice. The former writing contains the passage, "We will have to

repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.” Dr. King continues this argument in the latter, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Rechy evokes the power of these statements in the “voice over,” when he challenges the silent complicity of observers, “Complacency and indifference about our own are among the ugliest aspects of the gay world” (244). The oppressive tactics of law enforcement towards gay men is no longer protested by others, laments Rechy, and who reminds the reader to remember that the institutions of law enforcement and the military are sites of structural homophobic violence, so why join their ranks?

The last “voice over” I present here as historical writing Rechy titles, “The Gay Threat” (205). Not more than a page in length, Rechy inserts this commentary in between two narrative sections as the protagonist, Jim, is approached by a “youngman” on the turf of the sexual outlaws with the menacing cops surveying their actions yet remain defiant. “The Gay Threat” dismisses the historical falsehoods used to oppress homosexuals and questions institutional heteronormativity. In blunt fashion, Rechy dispels the common myths plaguing gay men *ad infinitum*—that of homosexual men as lascivious predators who prey on straight men and underage boys and as Biblical transgressors. Both arguments Rechy dismisses and poses the assertion that gay men threaten the current social fabric of our Judeo-Christian heteropatriarchy, “There are, in fact, two very real threats that the gay world poses to straight society. One is of course psychic—the fear of being what religion, laws, doctors have wrongfully branded, condemned, persecuted, prosecuted, punished, forbidden” (205). The psychic threat homosexuals represent is the fear created by religious and secular institutions. The ancient laws of Judeo-Christian doctrine and the secular laws rooted in religion coupled with medical

regulations based on pseudo-science causes significant fear of homosexuals, as evidenced by the consistent rates of familial abuse and rejection, attempted and successful suicides, and gay bashings.²⁶ In a patriarchal society, homosexual men are “failed” men, particularly men who are the receptive partners during anal intercourse, as Almaguer argues in, “Chicano Men” (1991), yet the masculinity of the active partners remains intact. Although homosexual men can often surpass our heterosexual counterparts in the arena of misogynistic behavior, we do not desire to “conquer” women sexually, and, as such, occupy a lesser status. What some heterosexual adults fear is the freedom from routine domesticity and the resentment that LGBTQ+ people offer a model of difference to their children and to them.

Rechy then asks provocative questions that over forty years later our society has not summoned the temerity to probe concerning human relationships and sexuality, “The second is that an acceptance of homosexuality—including, importantly, its tendency towards promiscuity—would result in a traumatic questioning of what, in the extreme becomes oppressive within the heterosexual norm” (206). Rechy challenges heterosexuals to interrogate the institutions of marriage, monogamy, and parenthood. Another important aspect of this “voice over” is Rechy’s use of the controversial term, “promiscuity.” Instead of shying away from a word fraught with moralistic judgment, Rechy applies it to the lives of homosexual men as part of our birthright²⁷ and as a direct challenge to the supremacy of the Catholic Church’s unnatural regulations surrounding human sexuality. Rechy ends the “voice over” arguing that such an interrogation would disrupt not just the hegemony of heterosexuality but the stagnancy of its progression. This and the previous “voice overs” contextualize the persecution of homosexuals within an historical framework.

Rechy's description of homosexuals as the "gay threat" references another historical example of the systemic persecution of the LGBTQ+ community. Heinz Heger's *The Men with the Pink Triangle: The True, Life-and-Death Story of Homosexuals in the Nazi Death Camps* (1980) chronicles the life of Friedrich-Paul von Groszheim, a gay German man tattooed with the infamous symbol of sexual depravity. As Dr. Klaus Miller describes in the book's introduction, the Nazis apprehended Groszheim in 1937 and imprisoned him for ten months. After release, Nazis arrested him for a second time and castrated him as a condition of his release. However, he was re-arrested in the 1940s and placed in a concentration camp. Dr. Miller contextualizes the arrests, detention, and death of queer men as a transition from the queer-friendly environment of Berlin in the 1920s to the fascist regime of Nazi rule, who considered homosexuality a threat to the goal of Aryan procreation and domination. As such, Nazis did not persecute lesbians to the same degree because of their potential to procreate, creating more soldiers for the *Wehrmacht*, the Nazi armed forces, according to Miller. This queer "threat" to Nazi domination spurred the leader of the SS (the Schutzstaffel, the Nazi paramilitary organization), Heinrich Himmler, to establish "the Federal Security Office for combatting abortion and homosexuality" in 1936 and is not unlike the one Rechy decries in his essay.

Rechy and Miller both criticize the codified homophobia and fascist actions of law enforcement of their respective societies. Like the sodomy laws of the U.S., pre-Nazi, Nazi, and post-Nazi Germany all enforced a section of the country's penal code known as Paragraph 175.²⁸ This history of pre-Nazi and Nazi codified persecution of homosexual men (according to Miller, Paragraph 175 did not include lesbians), the punitive measures, such as castration, the discrimination from fellow prisoners in the concentration camps, the continued marginalization by Allied Forces and the West German government, and the exclusion from Holocaust

memorials and scholarship illustrate the multiple layers of marginalization endured by LGBTQ+ persons. Thus, the LGBTQ+ community must never forget the stories of the men tattooed with the insidious symbol of the pink triangle, later reclaimed as a historical reminder by the AIDS activists of ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). Rechy's *Sexual Outlaw* serves the same historical purpose.

Rechy includes another radical disruption to the status quo of institutional homophobia strengthening his arguments embedded within the “voice overs.” The final “voice over” I include here is the final one and in which Rechy includes before the final narrative section of the protagonist's three-day “sexhunt.” The final “voice over” is titled after the text and is the conclusion of Rechy's argument as the “sexual outlaw” as, among other tropes, a “symbol of survival” (299). Rechy's sexual outlaw represents a rebel who sprang forth from an extraordinary historical moment—the twelve years after the Stonewall Rebellion and before the rupture, or *arrebato*, of the AIDS epidemic. Rechy's sexual outlaw is a solitary figure, as all forms of institutional power—the Catholic Church and the legal system, chiefly—legislate against his desire, his very existence. Conversely, Rechy's sexual outlaw acts out of true *erotics* and possesses the historical memory²⁹ to critique the adoption of sadomasochistic role play, particularly when the participants don Nazi regalia or police and military uniforms. The sexual outlaw questions, “Why replicate the dress and actions of our oppressors?”

Rechy condemns the growing practice of sadomasochism in the gay community in *Sexual Outlaw*. In another of his “voice overs,” titled “S & M,” the author expresses his sentiment of the growing acceptance of the fetish, “The proliferation of sadomasochism is the major internal threat to gay freedom, comparable only in destructiveness to the impact of repressive laws and persecution by cops. The basis of both is the same: self-hatred” (253). Although Rechy's

denunciation of sadomasochistic practices and the leather scene (they overlap but are not interchangeable) could be construed as incongruent with sexual freedom, Rechy argues that such acts of physical torture replicate the mental and emotional self-flagellation of the shame of the closet. Rechy starts the “voice over” with an epigraph from a character from his first novel, *City of Night*, (1963), Miss Destiny, a red-headed drag queen who acts as if she was displaced from Tara, “We too must love” (253). Miss Destiny recognizes that love is not reserved only for relationships consecrated by the Church and the state, validated by progeny and a thirty-year contractual obligation to a bank. Sexual outlaws find love in erstwhile trysts in littered alleys behind abandoned warehouses, not with a ball gag or on the receiving end of a fist—acts based upon pain and humiliation.

Rechy makes a stark distinction between two types of S & M and delineates the two sets of practices. Rechy argues that participatory S & M represents an oral contract agreed upon by willing and consenting people and is an act of agency. The object of Rechy’s derision is the sadism imposed upon gay men by law enforcement. Rechy decries “the legally sanctioned protected, imposed S & M of cops and other gay-haters... a totally unwelcome invasionary force is thrust on unwilling, non-consenting, uncontrolling, arbitrarily chosen victims... The legally encouraged, official cop-kind—stagnant from sexual repression—always deals in very real, life-crushing brutality” (254). For Rechy, the vice squad, police officers tangling with their own homoerotic desires, are sadists as they manufacture crimes by entrapping men in public places (sometimes private)³⁰ and ruining their lives by forcing them to register as sex offenders, a permanent legal status.

Rechy inserts newspaper and magazine articles from mainstream and queer-focused periodicals in three sections he labels, “Mixed Media.” These sections are only several pages in

length each yet provide the “evidence,” or, rather, the rationale behind the motivation of the sexual outlaws represented by the protagonist, Jim. Preceding the first “Mixed Media,” is a narrative of Jim’s sexhunt Rechy ends with the description of a memory he calls, “FLASHBACK: *Greenstone Park*” (53). The “flashback” is a memory of the murder of two outlaws by a “straight” man who “enter[s] the courtroom with his smiling girlfriend” (Rechy 53). The violence perpetrated by men wearing the mask of heterosexual identity concealing homoerotic desire is always a risk for the sexual outlaw, just as is that of arrest by undercover vice officers. The words of the “flashback” document the rage providing a context for the actions of the sexual outlaw. The sexual outlaw does not threaten the heterosexual or the heteronormative gay; he liberates all from the chains of archaic Victorian attitudes regarding sexuality. He is defiant against the systemic violence of ancient religious strictures and secular legal hypocrisies. From the memory of the two murders, Rechy provides evidence for his argument, the source of the collective rage of sexual outlaws.

Rechy organizes the first “Mixed Media” passage with articles organized under subheadings ranging from, “Police Refuse to Arrest,” (54) to “New Sex Case at Two Police Divisions Probed,” (59) to “Urges Tolerance for ‘Incurable’ Gays” (60). Under each subheading, Rechy includes an excerpt from an article, enough to extract the main idea and to connect them with the other passages. The combined excerpts form a discursive argument regarding the deliberate criminalization of the LGBTQ+ community. Meanwhile, law enforcement diverts resources from actual crimes, such as robbery and murder. One of the excerpts from *The Los Angeles Times*, dated December 28, 1975, describes an incredible part of the Los Angeles Police Department budget. For the fiscal year, 1975-1976, the “PDID [Public Disorder Intelligence Division, a Los Angeles police division which gathers information on

dissident groups and individuals] budget of \$3.26 million pays for 91 sworn personnel and 15 civilians” (Rechy 55-56). The article compares the PDID with other police departments.³¹ Only the narcotics division has a larger number of officers, and seventy-two people are assigned to the vice squad. How different was the PDID from the SS of Nazi Germany?

With his inclusion of articles describing more serious crimes occurring in the Los Angeles area, Rechy argues the systemic persecution of gay men having consensual sex allows for serious crimes to remain unsolved and proliferate. *The Los Angeles Times* published the preceding article on December 28, 1975. Other articles Rechy includes report a sharp increase in burglaries over the previous decade with only a 22% clearance rate and a 17.5% rise in the Los Angeles homicide rate in 1975 from the previous year. Another article reports the details of the rape and robbery of an elderly woman in her West Hollywood home in 1976. According to the article, “It was the 37th such incident in Los Angeles’ West Side since police began their search for the so-called West Side rapist in November 1974.”³² After the article detailing this brutal crime, Rechy includes an article from *New West Magazine*. The article is an admission from a former vice officer and his treatment of gay men, “The L.A.P.D. has always maniacally prosecuted vice and victimless crimes far beyond what they have to do... Well, the fact of the matter is, I’ve nothing to brag about, but I was a vice cop and I probably arrested 300 or 400 gays in my life.” Hundreds of lives ruined, and actual crimes go unsolved because of our society’s obsession with regulating sexuality, a McCarthy-like irrational fear of subversives, and a century-long futile “War on Drugs.”³³

Rechy begins the second “Mixed Media” with an excerpt from a *Time* article reporting the near-gay bashing by four teen-agers of two men leaving a gay bar. However, a group known as the “Lavender Panthers” intervened and chased the youths away before they could inflict any

physical harm upon the two men.³⁴ As the article dated October 8, 1973, observes, “The group they most assuredly did not want trouble with was the Lavender Panthers, a stiff-wristed [as opposed to the stereotype of “limp-wristed sissies”] team of gay vigilantes who have taken to the streets...to protect their confreres against just such attacks” (Rechy 140). As Rechy argues throughout *Sexual Outlaw*, these youths could have learned such anti-social behavior from the implicit and explicit homophobia of their families, churches, and society at-large.

Certainly, law enforcement represents one of the major institutions exerting homophobic practices. To illustrate this, Rechy includes an excerpt of an internal memo from a deputy chief of police of the Los Angeles Police Department to a police captain, dated December 12, 1974, advising against the hiring of homosexual as police officers, “Homosexuals have a corrosive influence...they attempt to entice *normal* [emphasis added] individuals to engage in perverted practices...In a recent court case...the court states, ‘Members of the police force must be above suspicion of violating the laws that they must uphold’” (140-141). Immediately after this memo exalting the lofty standard of morality for law enforcement recruits, Rechy includes several more excerpts, sometimes just headlines, of articles exposing the turpitude and incompetence of the Los Angeles Police Department and the homophobia of the California legislature.

The articles range from 1972 to 1977 from different publications and given the inflammatory rhetoric of the memo excluding LGBTQ+ persons from law enforcement, I find it critical to list a majority of the article titles, particularly as Rechy provides them as a counterargument in this rhetorical dance between institutional homophobia and speaking truth to power: “L.A. Policeman Cited in Assault Complaint by D.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, dated May 14, 1976; “Officer Charged Anew in Beating of Cyclist, 28,” *Los Angeles*, dated March 31, 1976; “Murders Raise Question about Officers’ Conduct: Illegal Arms, Intrigue Mark Slaying

Case,” *Los Angeles Times*, dated May 31, 1976; “Long Beach to Charge Some Police in Spree,” *Los Angeles Times*, dated April 23, 1976; “Long Beach Orders Inquiry on Suspended Theft Probe: Council Tells 2 Officials to Look into Charges That Police Halted the Effort When It Led to City Hall,” *Los Angeles Times*, dated June 30, 1976; “San Diego Police Officer Convicted,” *Los Angeles*, dated March 27, 1976, “LAPD Criticized for Giving Too Many Officers High Evaluations,” *Los Angeles*, dated June 14, 1976; “Police Dishonesty Called ‘Extensive,’” *Los Angeles Times*, dated December 29, 1972; “L.A. Crime Three Times Higher Than Reported, U.S. Survey Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, dated April 15, 1975; “Cops Have a Ball at the Ball,”³⁵ *The Advocate*, dated December 20, 1972; “County Homicides Soar at All-Time Annual High,” *Los Angeles Times*, dated December 13, 1972; and “Serious Flaws in Investigations of Crime Found,”³⁶ three *Los Angeles Times* articles dated February 14, 1976, September 12, 1976, and January 5, 1977. The excerpts of these articles illustrate the institutional homophobia, corruption, and incompetence of the Los Angeles Police Department during an historical moment when the LGBTQ+ community was beginning to assert its social and political rights. The criminalization of gay men during the 1970s represents a backlash against the newfound visibility since the Stonewall Rebellion, which occurred only a handful of years before the publication of these articles. As Rechy writes throughout *City of Night*, the majority of which takes place during the period before Stonewall in the late 1950s and early 1960s, police harassment of underground gay bars was routine. Law enforcement and the draconian laws used to persecute gay men during this historical period are methods of coercion back into a life of closeted denial.

Rechy closes the second “Mixed Media” with excerpts from articles in mainstream publications and one from a memorandum originating from United States Immigration and

Naturalization Service (INS). Since the late nineteenth century, U.S. policies have been concerned with the intersection of immigration and sexuality, most notably analyzed by Eithne Luibhéid's text, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (2002). Luibhéid's text examines primarily the occlusion of non-white women's bodies attempting to enter the United States, particularly those from Asia and Latin America, as U.S. policymakers considered Asian and Latin American women apt to produce a brood of children, thus straining welfare rolls. This is significant because, as Luibhéid writes, "To date, only cases involving men who were alleged by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to be gay have received substantive scholarly analysis" (78). Luibhéid also documents the homophobia of the INS in the chapter, "Looking Like a Lesbian," as she recounts how in 1960 an INS agent detained and denied re-entry of Sara Harb Quiroz, a permanent resident of the U.S. and who lived and worked in El Paso, Texas, after a day trip to Ciudad Juárez. The attorney representing Quiroz believed the agent denied her entry because of her masculine appearance and belief she was a lesbian, which existed in the category of excludable immigrants who were not necessarily "homosexual," rather included under an equally stigmatic label of "sexual deviants." Unfortunately, the medical and psychiatric establishments supported the false assertion of homosexuality as a mental disorder at this moment in history.

U.S. immigration policy excluded LGBTQ+ persons from immigrating to the United States until the late twentieth century. Luibhéid, editor of the anthology, *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings* (2005), along with Lionel Cantú, Jr., explains in the introduction, "Queering Migration and Citizenship":

Until recently, exploration of these connections between sexuality and migration was greatly hindered by the fact that lesbians and gay men were legally barred from migrating

to the United States. They came anyway, but most kept their lives and experiences hidden lest they face deportation. In 1990, the ban on lesbian and gay immigrants was finally lifted, and in 1994 Attorney General Janet Reno deemed that lesbians and gay men were eligible to apply for asylum if they had been persecuted for sexuality. Lesbian, gay, trans, and queer migrants to the United States continue to face substantial obstacles.

(x)

Given the institutional homophobia of U.S. immigration policy, performing a heteronormative identity would be critical to an immigrant's or refugee's survival.³⁷ The excerpt Rechy includes contains explicitly homophobic language regarding the attempt of a U.S. citizen applying for a visa for his male partner. The official written response from the INS to the U.S. citizen provided the following reason for the denial, ““You have failed to establish that a bona fide marital relationship can exist between two faggots” (Rechy 146). Analogous to a ban on LGBTQ+ immigrants and asylum seekers is the travel ban on visitors and immigrants living with HIV, known as the HIV travel ban, which the U.S. government under President Obama rescinded after two decades of implementation.³⁸ Rechy broaches the history of a homophobic immigration system, documented by scholars such as Luibhéid and Hanna, with the inclusion of this incendiary statement. Using *The Sexual Outlaw* as his platform for social justice, this manifesto has morphed into an important historical document, or represents an amoxтли waiting to be unearthed from decades of homophobic rubble.

LGBTQ Xicanx Activism—An Historical Case Study

For my examination of ALLGO, I use the work of Horacio Roque as a model for documenting the movement history of queer PoC in Austin, Texas, during some of the most difficult years of the AIDS crisis, 1985-1996, and the first years of the life-saving HIV drug

“cocktail,” although only those with health insurance had access to this protocol, as a typical month’s worth of medication averaged, and to this day, over three thousand dollars. In his article, “‘That’s *My Place!*’: Negotiating Racial, Sexual, and Gender Politics in San Francisco’s Gay Latino Alliance, 1975-1983” (2003), Roque Ramirez provides an important template for recording a group of queer Xicanx voices who organized a space to keep their ethnic and racial identities intact amidst a hegemonic gay white majority.

San Francisco’s Gay Latino Alliance (GALA) represented an important space for queer Brown gente whom the hegemonic gay white majority excluded, usually based on race. Roque Ramirez, firstly, expands the notion of “sexile,” a person who emigrates because of discrimination based on sexual orientation and identity to that of a person who relocates to a different region to find queer spaces. For Roque Ramirez, a “sexile” could transplant herself/himself from their home in Los Angeles to the queer mecca of San Francisco. GALA’s members consisted of “sexiles” and the “homegrown” (indigenous to San Francisco) as they began to explore the intersectionality of race, class, and gender with queerness, or as Roque Ramirez states, “I consider how Latinas and Latinos in GALA negotiated same-sex politics in the San Francisco Bay Area from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. GALA members bridged racial and sexual identities to give political purpose to a community struggling for cultural citizenship” (228). The founders of ALLGO, as I explore its archival documents, attempted to achieve a similar purpose in a much more hostile sociopolitical climate for queer PoC—central Texas in the mid-1980s. Nevertheless, despite such an extreme difference in setting, GALA and ALLGO are similar in their efforts for creating space in the whiteness of an emerging LGBTQ movement and the heteronormativity of traditional Latina/o politics. Utilizing oral history and

archival methods, Roque Ramirez describes the motivations of the founders to create queer Latina/o spaces.

One of the strengths of Roque Ramirez's article is how he extracts the motivations of the founding members of GALA to endeavor on the arduous task of clearing the brush of whiteness and heteronormativity. "That's My Place" reads like tracing the roots of a tree as the founders meet each other to form a solid trunk of queer Latina/o visibility in a forest of whiteness. One of the founding members of GALA, Jesús Barragán, a Vietnam veteran, recalls how he returned to the Bay Area in the late 1960s surrounded by an emerging Chicano consciousness. According to Roque Ramirez's oral history of Barragán:

[In 1966], I'm at [San Jose] City College, and some of us are calling ourselves Spanish, some of us are calling ourselves Mexicans. And I leave for the service, I'm gone and re-enroll in 1970...And I'm walking around campus, and I see this guy with a beret at a rally speaking, and he's saying "Chicanos"...I kinda know who he's referring to, but I really don't know what he means....The next semester I enroll in these Chicano studies [*sic*] classes, and then the full meaning of the word becomes known to me. And that's where changes start happening. I start thinking not only in learning this whole area of myself, this whole history, but then there's this whole *gay* side. (229)

Barragán's racial and sexual consciousness began to flower simultaneously yet diverged, as the standard curriculum of Chicano Studies in the early 1970s did not include any queer representation, even though Rechy had already published five novels by 1972.³⁹

Barragán then met Rodrigo Reyes, another gay Chicano living in the Bay Area who had posted an advertisement for other gay Chicanos to meet. Reyes' intersectional politics began to foment as he underwent a "browning" process, according to Roque Ramirez, as he came to

Chicana/o consciousness and observed the racism of the white gay community in the Bay area.

Reyes recalls:

The Castro was growing by leaps and bounds, and I was very much involved in that scene. And that time the bars were dominated by white folks, and there was no place for Latinos really to come together. Of course, we would go to the bars, but it was very difficult to make any contacts with other Latinos unless you were found to be sexually attractive. Basically that was it, I mean, it was a difficult bar situation. You didn't talk to people unless you were attracted to them or they were attracted to you.⁴⁰ So contact among Latinos was not easy. In addition to that, there were also some racist discriminatory practices on the part of the bars in that sometimes they would ask for an inordinate amount of IDs from people of color... They would ask for two, three, picture IDs⁴¹. So it wasn't a happy time for Latino gays... There were some places that Latinos felt welcome, and people did go to them. But still, we were still a marginal group. The dominant group was still white gay men. So these things are happening to me at the same time. On the one hand, I am still involved in the gay community, and I am starting to develop more of a consciousness of the Chicano movement, so this is going on hand in hand, more or less. (232-233)

Reyes' feelings of a divide between *jotería* and his Chicanidad must echo why Muñoz notices the gap of LGBTQ+ experiences within the Chicana/o Movement. I cannot imagine that the disparate branches of the Chicana/o Movement: the educational movement⁴² and the East Los Angeles Walkouts or Blowouts of 1968 organized by high school students and mentored by the late Sal Castro; the United Farm Workers Movement, started by Larry Itilong and other Filipino workers and subsequently led by Cesar Chávez⁴³ and Dolores Huerta⁴⁴, the anti-war coalition

including one of the major tragedies of the movement, the Chicano Moratorium on August 29, 1970, where law enforcement killed three participants of the protest, including Ruben Salazar, the noted *Los Angeles Times* and *La Opinion* journalist, the land reclamation movement led by Reies Lopez Tijerina that resulted in the occupation of disputed territory in New Mexico and the death of a state law enforcement officer; and the formation of a Chicana/o political party named La Raza Unida Party, distinct from the Democratic Party, by Jose Angel Gutierrez and others, and won elections in Texas, most notably in Crystal City, Texas. Certainly, as Reyes developed and began to reconcile his own political consciousness regarding the two major strands of his identity, other queer Xicanx must have participated in the different arenas of the Chicana/o Movement, as Muñoz, Jr. speculates. Roque Ramirez's work uncovers one such activist; however, she encountered homophobic resistance from the San Jose Chicano theater community. Finding Latina/o LGBTQ+ activists would be the only vehicle through which she could claim wholeness.

To make the vision of a Latina/o-specific LGBTQ+ organization reality, Reyes posted an advertisement in the local LGBT newspaper, *The Bay Area Reporter*, stating a new group is forming “to explore and attempt to fill the social, cultural and political needs of the Gay Chicano” (231). Barragán hosted an informal dinner at his home in San Jose attended exclusively by men. After this initial meeting, according to Roque Ramirez, the dinner attendees posted leaflets for a second meeting in several San Francisco neighborhoods. Reyes and Barragán held the second meeting at the Society for Individual Rights Center in San Francisco and attracted fifty to sixty people—both gay Latino men and Latina lesbians. One of the Latina lesbians who attended is Diane Felix, herself beginning to intersect her Chicana and lesbian identities and was inspired by the prospect of involvement with the group, she announced to her

lover she was moving from San Jose to San Francisco “‘with or without you’ [laughter]” (237). Felix’s radicalization vis-à-vis the Chicana/o Movement and parallel Third World struggles, e.g., Chile, did not cross over into mainstream LGBTQ+ movements until she encountered Barragán and Reyes’ flyer. Felix found herself in a similar quandary as the Black feminists of the Combahee River Collective about which Kelley writes, “Although actively involved in San Jose’s Chicano theater movement, trying to make the struggles of the UFW visible through that medium, she did not find a supportive community there when she announced that she was a lesbian” (Roque Ramirez 238). Felix continues to lament the homophobia of the Chicana/o community and questioned why whites seemed to harbor more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality. Finding Reyes and Barragán and relocating across the Bay to San Francisco was a serendipitous meeting to act upon her queer Chicana activism.

From its inception, GALA not only engaged in LGBTQ+ politics but in Third World issues and others not directly connected mainstream queer politics. GALA supported the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, Puerto Rican independence, and against Central American dictatorships. The founders of GALA took advantage of the dearth of Latina/o culture in queer spaces by organizing bailes that played Spanish music and using the proceeds to fund causes internationally and locally. As GALA’s work in the community proliferated, particularly in San Francisco’s Mission District where a large percentage of the city’s Latinx population live(d)⁴⁵, a local publication named *El Tecolote* profiled the agency in two consecutive articles written by a GALA board member. The first, a “sweeping social critique” (238) according to Roque Ramirez, did not include any names of members unlike the second article, which included Felix’s concerns about her identity as a Xicanx lesbian. In a revealing article, Felix writes in the second article:

The hardest and the most rewarding experience I felt in dealing with my Gayness is the acceptance of *familia*. It's a very sensitive subject, especially in the Latino culture when the daughter, who is expected to leave only after her wedding, decides to leave because of her Gayness...My gayness is very important to me, but my *Raza* consciousness tends to come first. So I feel the strong need for community to wipe away the ugliness and fear our *gente* [people] have towards homosexuality. At the same time more openness would help others who are confronted with it, be it someone in the family, your neighbor or even yourself. (Roque Ramirez 242)

Activists in the Chicana/o Movement, like Muñoz, Jr., could have reconciled his sexism and homophobia much earlier if he had read Felix's prescient words, who simply wanted to feel whole, as GALA fought a war on two fronts—the racism of the gay white community and the homophobia of the heterosexual Latino community.

GALA began to distance itself from the white gay community because of its endorsement of a straight Latino man over a white lesbian for representation of the Mission District on the San Francisco City Council. As GALA continued its work in the Mission District, it slowly earned its bona fides as a grassroots organization “despite” the fact that it was run by LGBTQ+ Latinx. Non-queer Latina/o organizations in the Mission District, such as El Comité Salvadoreño, appreciated and recognized the solidarity of GALA and marched alongside the group in the following LGBT Pride Parade. GALA's work in the Latina/o community established itself as an organic offshoot of the Chicana/o Movement and should be considered as such. This begs the questions—how many other Latina/o LGBTQ+ activists created similar organizations similar to GALA, ones that applied an intersectional analysis to their work?

Unfortunately, cracks in the foundation of GALA began to surface for several reasons, according to Roque Ramirez. The emergence of a queer Latina/o bar in the Mission District, *Esta Noche*, competed with GALA for opportunities for community and fundraising events was one reason. Many members burned out, which is not uncommon for activists, and tensions arose between Chicano and Puerto Rican male members. However, the most insidious reason—the patriarchal attitudes towards the women of GALA by the men—mirrored the Chicana/o Movement. This sexism by Chicano and Latino men towards their Chicana and Latina women, which fractured irrevocably the Chicana/o Movement, according to Maylei Blackwell in her text, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (2011)⁴⁶, was apparent from GALA’s inception.

Unfortunately, GALA never focused on issues pertaining to Latina lesbians. According to Roque Ramirez, “women were not part of the initial plan to create the organization and were not deliberately recruited. Social spaces were designed instead to make men feel comfortable: ‘GALA had thrown all these dances, basically for *men*’” (252). The sexism male GALA members expressed towards the few women who regularly attended organizational meetings was frustrating for the Latina lesbians who encountered racism, sexism, and homophobia in society at-large. Encountering discrimination from gay Latino *activist* men was even more disheartening, particularly since GALA’s first years coincided with the near passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. *Esta Noche*, which was opened by a former member of GALA, focused on the comfort of gay Latino men. Even though white gay bars in the Castro routinely discriminated against gay men of color *and* queer women, *Esta Noche* did not extend its welcome wagon to Latina lesbians. The opening of *Esta Noche* usurped the exclusivity of gay

Latina/o bailes, which GALA had utilized strategically as a tactic to raise funds and awareness.

Felix laments:

We [in GALA] always gave our money away, and then as soon as Esta Noche opened up, we promoted that as our gay Latino bar. And that's when I dropped out, that's when the sexism really came into play. Because he [the owner] had hired women bartenders, and we would have meetings and we would tell them, there's a lot of straight Latino men coming in and they're harassing the women, they're harassing the lesbians. [He'd say,] "Well, this isn't a political organization, we don't want to hear that anymore, this is a business, this is a bar." (Roque Ramirez 256)

The eventual demise of GALA is discouraging and revelatory. The childhoods of the men of GALA were most likely fraught with patriarchal customs, e.g., the women of the house having to serve the men and always eating second. However, as they immersed themselves in progressive activist circles, could they not recognize the hypocrisy of the misogyny they perpetrated against the people involved in the same struggle? The patriarchal attitudes espoused by gay Latino men is a critical problem needing to be addressed, examined, and corrected. The topic of internalized homophobia and misogyny is a frequent theme in the works of Rechy and is the focus of the following chapter. Ultimately, GALA, while revolutionary in its formation and (somewhat) intersectional politics, its coalitional work with other Mission District Latina/o organizations, and for addressing queerness from a Latina/o cultural and sociopolitical position, the men act in a regressive and reactionary manner because of their blatant sexism. GALA stands as an important yet disappointing case study of queer Chicana/Latina activism. Interestingly, although GALA's later years coincide with the proliferation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Roque Ramirez does not mention HIV as a factor in the politics of the organization. This begs another

question—did Felix and the other women of GALA nurse the HIV-afflicted men, as Moraga and Rechy remind us.

allgo—An Intersectional Rupture

Rechy's *Sexual Outlaw*, Roque Ramirez's research, and the other pioneering scholars and writers cited here provide the canvas for this analysis of a small yet dynamic organization—*allgo*, a Statewide People of Color Organization located in Austin, Texas and founded on Día de la Raza⁴⁷ in 1985. The organization's current website, www.allgo.org, describes its mission statement as, “*allgo* works to create and sustain queer people of color activists, groups, organizations, and allies through artistic expression, promoting wellness, and grassroots organizing. We believe that in doing so, together we can radically transform systems and policies toward a collective liberation.” Originally founded as ALLGO, the Austin Latina/o Lesbian and Gay Organization, the website describes its beginning:

A little bit about our history: in 1985, a group of Latina/Latino lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) activists founded ALLGO: Austin Latina/Latino Lesbian and Gay Organization. Our founders were motivated to address exclusion by, on one side, mainstream gay activists whose agendas ignored farm workers, police brutality, and racism; and on the other side mainstream Latino activists whose agendas excluded homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny.

These few sentences encapsulate the over three decades of work by *allgo*, transformative social justice work centering the issues, lives, and desires of LGBTQ+ PoC. Decades before the critical concept of intersectionality became infused into the public consciousness, the founders and first staff members of *allgo* embodied the praxis of LGBTQ+ PoC social justice on local, state, national, and transnational levels.

One of the flaws of the Chicano Movement leading to its splintering was the patriarchal attitude of Chicano cultural nationalists. By extension of this patriarchy, LGBTQ+ Chicanas and Chicanos were invisible. Carlos Muñoz, Jr., who was active in the Chicano Movement, laments in the revised edition of his experiences of the Chicano Movement, *Youth, Identity, Power* (2007), of the erasure of Chicana and Chicano LGBTQ+ experiences within the movement. Given the patriarchal and homophobic climate, LGBTQ+ Chicanas and Chicanos active in the movement could not have proclaimed their desires openly for fear of reprisal. The dismissal by heterosexual Latina/o activists of critical issues such as HIV, homophobia-fueled violence, and lesbian of color-specific concerns ostracized Chicana and Chicano LGBTQ+ activists. Conversely, white LGBTQ+ activists did not extend their efforts to causes challenging white supremacy and structural racism.

ALLGO represents not only an expansion of the Chicano Movement, its work transcends the mission of *El Plan de Santa Barbara* (1968). As Rechy's work paved another path for Chicano men grappling with homoerotic desire and their negotiation with structural homophobia and Roque Ramirez's research resurrected voices from an organization predating ALLGO, I examine the newsletter published by ALLGO, *¡ALLGO PASA!* (loosely translated as Something's Happening), to revive the lives of the brave activists who confronted the intersection of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, white supremacy, patriarchy, poverty, and a host of other critical issues confronting LGBTQ+ PoC during the Reagan era in the liberal bastion of a rapidly-changing state from moderate to ultra-conservative.

ALLGO's monthly newsletter represented a beacon for LGBTQ+ PoC in the central Texas area, primarily Austin, who sought culturally sensitive medical and other types of support services, historical articles, news about social events and current events. As Roque Ramirez

documents with the founders of GALA, racism amongst gay men and discriminatory policies practiced by gay bars was common, thus coercing some gay Latino men to assimilate, particularly those who were phenotypically “white-passing.” Others who could not or would not assimilate had to search or create their own social and community spaces. Moreover, because of stringent funding guidelines, LGBTQ+ non-profit organizations created by and for PoC to address a swath of critical issues, such as HIV/AIDS *and* racism, often could not attempt the work addressing the structural issues, such as white supremacy within the medical establishment, preventing these agencies from achieving the desired outcomes for their population.⁴⁸ However, the founders of ALLGO created the agency to contextualize the HIV/AIDS epidemic within issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, culture, and language, not to isolate the disease from other factors of identity and oppression.

The sociohistorical context of the founding of ALLGO is essential to address. The 1980s represents a time of reckoning for sexually active gay men, especially for those who lived during the hedonistic excesses of the 1970s. According to the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on June 1, 2001, “AIDS in the United States remains primarily an epidemic affecting MSM [men who have sex with men] and racial/ethnic minorities. A new generation of MSM has replaced those who benefitted from early prevention strategies, and minority MSM have emerged as the population most affected by HIV. Socioeconomic factors (e.g., homophobia, high rates of poverty and unemployment, and lack of access to health care) are associated with high rates of HIV risk behaviors among minority MSM and are barriers to accessing HIV testing, diagnosis, and treatment.” For men who occupy both the MSM and racial/ethnic minority categories, the threat of HIV/AIDS during the breadth of the epidemic has never wavered, as the percentage of Black and Latino MSM seroconverting and

dying of AIDS-related causes increased over the twenty-year period of the article. Black and Latino MSM represented 39% (25% and 14%, respectively) of PWA (Persons with AIDS) as opposed to white MSM who accounted for nearly 60% during the initial years of the epidemic (1981-1987). From the time period of 1988-1992, the percentage of Black and Latino MSM living with AIDS increased to 48.5% (31.2% and 17.3%, respectively) with white MSM accounting for a slight majority (50.4%). For the years just before the release of the life-saving “cocktail”⁴⁹ of medications in 1996, Black and Latino MSM represented a majority of PWA (38% and 18.4%, respectively) while white MSM with AIDS dropped to 42.4%. The decrease in white MSM living with AIDS continued to drop to 34% as MSM of color accounted for two-thirds of all cases. MSM of color having to navigate the white supremacy of the medical establishment and the stigma of living with HIV is reflected in the increase of the percentages, particularly in the years following the release of the “cocktail.” According to a CDC Fact Sheet titled, “HIV among Gay and Bisexual Men” (2017):

If current rates [of seroconversion] persist, CDC projects that approximately one in six MSM overall are at risk of being diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime if current diagnoses rates persist—and that black MSM (one in two) and Latino MSM (one in four) could be particularly impacted... Since the beginning of the epidemic, more than 360,000 MSM with AIDS have died.

The fact sheet states that as seroconversion rates among white and Black MSM have stabilized, new HIV cases continue to increase among Latino MSM. There is no cause to believe that rates among MSM of color will abate, as the political climate becomes increasingly more conservative, although California State Senators Lara and Atkins have introduced Senate Bill 562, which would implement a statewide system of universal healthcare. However, MSM and

others living with HIV who reside in red states would have no such recourse. This makes the work of organizations like ALLGO, who operate “behind enemy lines” in socially and politically hostile states critical for their communities and for the documentation of its history.

In the anthology, *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism* (2015), José Gutiérrez, a gay Latino activist, is the subject of one of the chapters, “We Must Preserve Our Latina/o LGBT History.” In this oral history, Gutiérrez, an immigrant from Reynosa, México, recounts his activist work in the Atlanta Metro area in the mid-1980s and worked as a HIV health educator for a HIV services organization called AID Atlanta. Upon discovering his own HIV-positive status, he relied on the network of friends and colleagues in the close-knit Latina/o LGBT community in which he had integrated himself. Gutiérrez states:

Time passed, and I discovered that I was also HIV positive. The fact that I lived in Atlanta and was involved in the community helped me a lot. I met good people who supported my evolution as an activist. There was a group of *compañeros* and *compañeras* who did LGBT Latina/o organizing in the state of Georgia, motivated by frustration with the lack of treatment. They were also angry about the neglect of Latinas/os living with HIV/AIDS. I believe that what motivated me to become an activist was the anger I felt at seeing my friends dying of AIDS and the feeling of impotence because little was being done to help them. (Quesada 184)

Already an activist working on behalf of the Latina/o LGBT community and doing AIDS education motivated Gutiérrez to intensify his level of involvement, especially since his life depended on this work of achieving access to medical treatment for underserved populations. In 1991, Gutiérrez and a Puerto Rican woman, Aida Rentas, founded an organization, *Latinos en Acción*, which focused on all aspects of LGBT Latinidad, particularly the social dimension. As

mainstream gay bars have a history of exclusion based on racism, sexism, ageism, phenotype, and masculinity, or rather a lack of masculinity.⁵⁰ *Latinos en Acción*, thus, not only provided access to culturally-competent HIV services, such as brochures and safer-sex information in Spanish, it provided a much-needed social space for LGBT Latinas/os in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Attending the historic 1993 LGBT National March on Washington and a retreat for gay Latino men, Gutiérrez learned of, applied for, and was awarded a position at SALUD, an HIV/AIDS organization in the Washington D.C. area. It was at this moment in his life that Gutiérrez “fell in love with the history of our community and started preserving memorabilia in my apartment” (Quesada 185). Friends from other community-based organizations, like ENLACE began to donate ephemera to Gutiérrez, as well as collecting materials from Latina/o gay bars in the Washington D.C. area. Gutiérrez began to give presentations at East Coast universities exhibiting the materials he had collected. Furthermore, in 2000, Gutiérrez founded the Latino LGBT History Project.⁵¹ Amazingly, after creating the Latino LGBT History Project, Gutiérrez co-founded the Rainbow History Project the same year. Now “somewhat retired,” Gutiérrez closes with sentiments, ones which inspire this work, “I want to reiterate the importance of historical preservation. As I said previously, we have suffered various forms of discrimination. Our Latina/o LGBT communities have been in the United States for years. Even though, in some moments in time, we were not organized, it did not mean that we did not exist. We were at Stonewall; we were in San Francisco before Stonewall. But we lack documentation of our presence as LGBT Latinas/os” (Quesada 190-191). To add to Gutiérrez’s statement, a LGBTQ+ PoC community existed and continues to thrive in Austin, Texas.

Another chapter in *Queer Brown Voices* titled, “We Are a Part of the History of Texas That You Must Not Exclude,” details the life and activist history of one of the founders of ALLGO, Dennis Medina. Medina grew up in South Texas, or the “valley,” the son of migrant farm workers who worked their way through university and became public school teachers. According to Medina, “I was born into activism. Both of my parents were migrants in their early years, and they had worked in the fields and worked their way through college—and received degrees. They were the first generation in their families to attend college and graduate” (Quesada 48). Much of his extended family who also worked in the field attended college and graduated. His family’s determination became the impetus for his own higher education and activism. He attended the conservative university, Texas A&M, where the “gayest” organization on campus was the science fiction club; however, he “hated science fiction” (Quesada 48). With the few other Chicanas/os on campus, he started a Mexican-American cultural awareness group on campus as a student in the early to mid-1970s. Medina mentions how his parents had been involved with the League of United Latin American Citizens in their youth, so social justice activism was not a foreign concept to him.

A similarity between Medina and Gutiérrez is their determination for organizing for social justice causes regardless of a lack of funding. When Medina and his group, Committee for the Awareness of Mexican American Culture (CAMAC), began to make demands of the institution for more educational resources for Chicanas and Chicanos, administrators quelled their activism. After graduation and a short stint helping to conduct medical research in Corpus Christi, Medina moved to Houston in 1979, “the Third Coast for gays and lesbians” (Quesada 50). Because of the Texas oil boom in the 1970s, Houston became a magnet for many seeking employment and other opportunities. Medina joined the throngs and continued his activism

within local LGBT politics. Medina calls to the reader's attention buried histories of LGBT activism in the Houston area and of archaic ordinances, such as women not being allowed to wear pants with a front zipper. Medina also recalls protesting the infamous Anita Bryant,⁵² the notorious anti-gay activist from Florida, when she gave a lecture in Houston.

During this activism, Medina met Arthur Cordova in Houston's gay bar scene. Medina refers to the bars as the only outlet for gays and lesbians even though they practiced open discrimination towards Latinos and thus with other gay and lesbian Chicanas and Chicanos they formed the Gay Chicano Caucus. Medina and others then formed the group, Gay and Lesbian Hispanos Unidos (GLHU), and he spearheaded a newsletter reflecting intersectional and transnational issues, such as police brutality⁵³ and the desaparecidas/os in Chile during the Pinochet regime. Some members disagreed with Medina's radical politics, yet he persevered with establishing transnational connection of solidarity. He reasoned that as LGBTQ+ PoC, "We couldn't be liberated as gay men and lesbians if we were oppressing people in El Salvador or if people in Brazil were suffering" (Quesada 52). After organizing successful bailes, Medina grew weary of the politics in Houston and moved to Austin to begin graduate school. He and other activists then founded ALLGO in 1985, with their first event being a Valentine's Day baile, which remains one of its most popular fundraising events. One interesting observation of Medina in the chapter is how much more political Austin activists were compared to those in Austin, apart from being more educated. Medina mentions gender issues at GLHU, where at ALLGO, inclusion of women in leadership positions was more organic. Medina observes that no women held leadership positions at GLHU. After helping to found ALLGO, Medina left for Washington D.C. in 1987 and worked for a national Latina/o LGBTQ+ organization, the now defunct National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGÓ), for seven years. Like

Gutiérrez, Medina's activism started at the local level and quickly transformed to a national, even a transnational, focus. The HIV/AIDS epidemic reinforced the importance of grassroots, community-based activism for leaders such as Gutiérrez and Medina. ALLGO's radical politics of which Medina recalls is apparent by reading its monthly newsletter, *¡ALLGO PASA!*

One of the major figures of the HIV/AIDS awareness movement, probably *the* most prominent and polarizing person is Larry Kramer. In the biopic, *Larry Kramer: In Love and Anger* (2015), the man who helped to start the Gay Men's Health Crisis foundation and the group, AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP!), reflects on his life and his work. The film opens with Kramer, considered acerbic and confrontational, being introduced as the final speaker at an AIDS forum in New York City in 1991. He receives hesitant, tepid applause. He is looking down as if in despair then erupts in rage, "Plague! We are in the middle of a fucking plague! Plague! Plague! Forty million infected people is a fucking plague, and nobody acts as if it is! Nobody in this hospital! Nobody in this city! Nobody in this world! Forty million people is a fucking plague!" This speech marked a decade of fear, confusion, anger, disease, and death for Kramer and the people bore witness to the effects of the virus. Towards the end of the film, he discusses his current work, an LGBTQ history of the United States. Kramer believes every group deserves to know its history, for without that knowledge, those in power can marginalize said people more easily, "I'm writing a very long book, *The American People*, which is a history of America that goes back to the beginning. And I have discovered that many, many people in our history were gay. Many people were gay. We are entitled to our history. We're entitled to know who these people were. I don't think you could be a people until you have a history." The following pages of this chapter represent a branch of LGBTQ+ history—how a group of people created their own social space reflecting their specific culture, as GALA did, and how they

responded to the plague that, despite the advances in treatment, threatens gay and bisexual men of color and transgender women of color. I scream rhetorically throughout these pages—ONE OUT OF TWO BLACK MSM AND ONE OUT OF FOUR LATINO MSM ARE LIVING WITH HIV OR WILL SEROCONVERT! NOT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO THE LIFESAVING DRUGS! WHITE SUPREMACY, HOMOPHOBIA, RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY, AND CAPITALISM ARE COMPOUNDING THE EPIDEMIC FOR LGBTQ+ PoC!

¡ALLGO PASA! YEAR ONE—Establishing and Fostering a Radical Queer of Color Politics

In the world before the internet, a monthly mailed newsletter from a non-profit organization represented the lifeblood of knowledge for the community it intended to serve, despite the inherent dangers of receiving material considered “obscene” by the United States Postal Service.⁵⁴ Moreover, if an LGBTQ+ person was not out and still living with family, receiving such material through the mail was not an option. Nonetheless, the monthly *¡ALLGO PASA!* represented a beacon for a community navigating intersectional oppressions. The monthly newsletters I examine in this space range from March 1986 to December 1993 (the first two editions—January and February 1986 are unavailable). These years represent the apex of deaths during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I choose these years to describe the first years of such a remarkable organization and to demonstrate the resilience of the ALLGO staff while bearing witness to such death.

Although not yet preserved in an official archive, the current executive director, Priscilla Hale, MSW, granted access to me to search through ALLGO’s files to collect and make copies of the newsletters as I am a former employee of the organization for a short period from early 2000 to mid-2001. Before my brief tenure at ALLGO, I was familiar with the organization in several capacities. Through friends, I became met and became friendly with the aforementioned

Dennis Medina, one of the organization's founders, and other gay Latino men connected with ALLGO. I attended ALLGO events, particularly its annual Valentine's Day Dance, or Baile as it was simply known, and other events throughout my ten years living in Austin. Because there was no official gay bar for LGBTQ+ Latinas/os in Austin (although the now-defunct Charlie's was a de facto Latino bar), I appreciated the ALLGO events for creating social spaces where I could celebrate all aspects of my identity, which echoes Roque Ramirez's work on GALA. In 1998, ALLGO became more critical to my life as my health began to decline due to my own HIV-positive status I had ignored for several years. However, my health began to fail and at first chose to do nothing, as I was unsure of how to navigate the healthcare system, particularly as my health insurance had a low ceiling for prescription medications. My HIV case manager, Trish, a Chicana lesbian, helped me to find a doctor (a lesbian of color HIV specialist!) and invited me to join ALLGO's weekly support group for Latino poz men.

The cliché of "HIV is not a death sentence" is both relevant and ironic to my life. Before seeking services at ALLGO, my T-cells hovered in the high teens and my viral load soared to the hundreds of thousands. I recovered from a bout of pneumocystis, a deadly form of pneumonia that made me feel as if I were drowning in phlegm and drove me delirious with a constant fever of over 103 degrees. Before Trish, I thought I would perish before the age of thirty. The activism and dedication of Trish and the other staff members of ALLGO granted me a stay, having commuted my sentence the past twenty years. After recovering from pneumocystis and gaining a more optimistic perspective on my health status, I applied for a position as a sex health educator for Latino and Black MSM at ALLGO. The executive director at the time, Martha Duffer, offered the position to me and, to evoke another cliché, found my LGBTQ+ familia. For me, ALLGO was both a space of support and education. To echo Medina, the majority of the

ALLGO staff were unapologetically radical in their politics, and more critically, centered the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ PoC. At ALLGO, LGBTQ+ PoC did not exist at the margins; every action the organization undertook centered LGBTQ+ PoC perspectives and lives. Thus, the ALLGO staff factored every aspect of identity of the target community—from sexuality, gender, race, class, immigration status, ability, and others—into account. As I integrated myself into the position of Health Educator, I bore witness to the praxis of social justice created by and for LGBTQ+ PoC. The experience was transformational, as the newsletters illustrate the same brand of dynamic activism that I frame as one of Rechy’s “substitutes for salvation.”

The first newsletter debuted in March 1986, and unlike the patriarchal leanings of GALA, the entire first page included an article regarding International Women’s Day, March 8th. The article is historical and speaks to a Latinx audience with the opening sentence, “Women have always taken an active part in the culture, society and politics of our history.” The rest of the article recounts the roles of women during the pre-Cuauhtemoc, colonial, and post-colonial periods of Mexican history. Many of the women mentioned fall outside of the mainstream knowledge of Chicana history, which is scant. For example, regarding the pre-Cuauhtemoc period, the article mentions Erendira, “a Tarascan noblewoman, who on horseback sought to warn her people of the deception of the Spaniards.” Women of the colonial period included are the poet and intellectual Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and two revolutionaries, Doña Josefa Ortiz and Gertrudis Bocanegra. Alongside the women of the Mexican Revolution, “las soldaderas,” the article mentions prominent Chicanas and Latinas, such as, Irene Tovar, Dolores Huerta, Delvina Hernandez, and Anna Nieto-Gomez, Enriqueta Valdez, and Cherríe Moraga. ALLGO’s commitment to Chicana and Third World feminist values is evident by dedicating the entire front page to International Women’s Day and educating a community regardless of the gatekeepers of

academy. How else in the pre-Internet world could working-class Chicax people access a breadth of Chicana history?

The second page of the newsletter includes a potpourri of news and announcements, entitled, “Chisme y Más.” This section includes a short paragraph discussing the success of ALLGO’s fundraiser and first “Baile de Amor,” news regarding collaboration with the organization, Gay and Lesbian Hispanos Unidos (GLHU). Announcements including monthly potluck dinners and a notice to register to vote. Included in the newsletter mailer is a registration card, signaling the ALLGO staff’s political savvy. The penultimate section of the newsletter discusses AIDS Awareness Week sponsored by the Austin AIDS Project. The week’s events include a blood drive, HIV-related legal cases, a conference for healthcare professionals⁵⁵, a candlelight vigil, and a variety of educational, social, and fundraising events for area HIV/AIDS organizations. The last piece of information is critical to the intersectional analysis of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, “In case you don’t already know, 40% of all AIDS cases reported in the U.S. are Black or Hispanic.” Thus, the first edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* begins with a history of Mexican and Chicana women and ends with a critical statistic missing from mainstream coverage of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

One of the recurring themes of *¡ALLGO PASA!* is the incorporation of Xicanx/LGBTQ+ history in its pages. As such, this furthers one of the objectives of the Chicano Movement and *El Plan de Santa Barbara*—the teaching of Xicanx/Mexican history Xicanx/Mexican gente. As many Xicanx gente did not have access to the spaces of privilege The March 1986 edition contextualized Mexicana/Xicana history within the framework of International Women’s Day. The Abril (ALLGO used only the Spanish names of the months) 1986 edition continued this practice by incorporating a detailed history of Cinco de Mayo and the Battle of Puebla.

Moreover, the article connected Cinco de Mayo to Texas History, “Cinco de Mayo is also a holiday for Texans in that commanding general at the Battle of Puebla, Gnrl. Ignacio Zaragoza was born in Goliad, Texas. There you will find a statue commemorating his part in history...As Latinos/as and as Lesbians and Gay Men, we should admire that [revolutionary] spirit would not accept domination by another power.” This article applies an intersectional lens to an article that could have just recited the basic facts about Cinco de Mayo but links it to a revolutionary ethos ALLGO endeavored to foster. The rest of the Abril 1986 newsletter contained information about upcoming events and discussed prior ones, including its participation in the Austin AIDS Project’s candlelight vigil but injected some humor in the write-up, “Afterwards this crowd plus Dennis ‘invaded’ Chicano Nite at the UT/Longhorn Tavern. (Mike, we didn’t know you were so interested in aerobics!)” I can only imagine what the reference to aerobics means. The newsletter closes with a calendar of future events, many of which are arts-related. Notable events include an art exhibit of the work of renowned Xicanx artist, Yreina Cervantes, at the local restaurant, Las Manitas, lectures, “The Chicana Clerical Worker,” by Chicana sociologists, Beatriz Pesquera, and “The Immigration Experiences of Mexicanas,” by Julia Curry, and by the renowned Chicana writer, Sandra Cisneros. I list these events to stress the difference between a group like GALA and ALLGO in terms of the inclusion of women and the focus of the former organization as androcentric while the latter demonstrates a more gender-inclusive community outlook. Indeed, every one of the events listed in “El Calendario” featured a woman speaker or artist.

The Mayo 1986 edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* connects to the criminality of homoerotic desire as Rechy does in *The Sexual Outlaw*. The opening article is titled, “Section 21.06,” the

section of the Texas penal code punishing people of the same gender for engaging in consensual sexual relations. The article provides a brief overview of the law:

The case of *Baker v. Wade* was filed in 1980. In 1982, a federal district judge held that the statute violated gay men and women's right of privacy and the right to receive equal treatment that all 'straight' persons presently enjoy. It was a great day for justice—21.06 was dead. The case was appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, and that court overruled the District Court's decision. It held that 'engaging in homosexual conduct is not a constitutionally protected liberty.' It was a terrible day for justice—21.06 was once again the law of the land. There is an appeal to the Supreme Court, and it is predicted that the Supreme Court will decide whether or not to hear the case by May 15. If it decides not to hear the case, then the appellate court's decision will stand and 21.06 will remain as our law. Even if it decides to hear his case, however, the margin to obtain a favorable decision from the Court is narrow. If just one more judge who lacks sensitivity to individual rights is appointed to that court, the chance for a fair decision will not return, perhaps, for decades.

The article continues to link 21.06 to the criminalization of LGBTQ+ bodies and lives in other arenas, such as, employment, housing, and child custody. The article also warns against the threat of quarantine because of exploding AIDS epidemic. The U.S. Supreme Court case of *Bowers v. Hardwick (1986)* reaffirmed the constitutionality of the remaining sodomy laws. As I have written earlier in this work, *Lawrence v. Texas (2003)* invalidated these laws, albeit Louisiana and several other states have kept their sodomy laws, more out of a socially conservative backlash against the riptide of LGBTQ+ acceptance over the past four decades since the Stonewall Rebellion. The article urges the readers to remain vigilant and provides the

mailing address for the Texas Human Rights Organization for information or to contribute financially. An engagement in grassroots politics is another constant theme found in *¡ALLGO PASA!* The remainder of the month's issue included the announcement of the upcoming election of ALLGO officers. The monthly "Chisme y Mas" corner, although light-hearted and certainly lived up to its title, revealed the intra-state coalition of Latinx LGBTQ+ community-based organizations. Organizations from the four major cities of central and southeast Texas—Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston attended a statewide meeting. The rest of the column involved a recap of the debauchery of the events post-meeting. This illustrates the importance of the social dimension of organizations like GALA and ALLGO for their members. The newsletter also includes an announcement of ALLGO's participation in the following month's Gay Pride Week Celebration.

The Junio 1986 edition opened with the banner "Fandango '86." "Fandango" was ALLGO's own Latinx brand of LGBTQ+ Pride celebration. The bottom of the first page contained another banner ad proclaiming dual events celebrating "Tejano Gay Pride," one in Austin and another in Houston. Continuing the historical education of ALLGO's readership, the second and part of the third page of the newsletter contains a history of the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969. The article mentions the non-white clientele of the Stonewall Inn and how the embattled New York City mayor, John Lindsey, targeted the bar for political purposes. As the article states, "Raids on gay bars were not uncommon." The article does mention that the patrons who pushed back against the police were drag queens and street youths of color. The article credits the rebellion on June 27, 1969, to the revolutionary ethos of the closing decade. Only one month after the rebellion, the article states, "By the end of July, women and men in New York had formed the Gay Liberation Front, and within a year gay liberation groups had

sprung into existence on college campuses and cities around the nation.” The article closes with an affirmative statement regarding the nationwide effect of the Stonewall Rebellion, “The quality of gay life in America was permanently altered as a furtive subculture moved aggressively into the open with the active involvement of large numbers of gay men and lesbians in their own emancipation movement.” The choice of the word, “emancipation,” rather than using the cliché of “fighting for rights” is revelatory in ALLGO’s revolutionary politics. This radical ethos continues in a commentary by Saul Gonzales, one of ALLGO’s founders. He ponders what there is to celebrate during the current Gay Pride Month amid the reactionary Reagan administration and the burgeoning AIDS epidemic. Gonzales recognizes the bravery of activists who organize “in a racist, sexist, and homophobic society.” Without corporate or government funding, Gonzales exclaims, activists built numerous organizations designed to tackle a wide swath of issues, particularly that of HIV/AIDS.

The rest of the article includes the monthly installment of “Chisme y Mas.” The first news item is the ALLGO officer and committee chair election results. Women represent only two of the eleven positions; however, ALLGO did possess the gender awareness to designate a Female Co-chair. This contrasts with GALA, as women never held positions of power, as Roque Ramirez reports. ALLGO continues to collaborate with GLHU of Houston by advertising its Gay Pride Baile. Furthermore, the article announces an upcoming statewide conference named Gay and Lesbian Tejanos, and a unique logo was created to symbolize the event. The logo is a depiction of the intersection of radical Xicanx politics with its incorporation of the United Farm Workers eagle with a triangle (presumably pink) in the center of the eagle’s chest. The eagle is floating above what seems to be a Mesoamerican temple platform, (indigenous ceremonial structures commonly misnamed pyramids) with the wording Gay and Lesbian Tejanos. [see

image.] The article closes with an announcement of the International Lesbian & Gay People of Color Conference being held at California State University, Los Angeles.

The Julio 1986 newsletter begins with an announcement of a women's event, ALLGO's "T.G.I.F. Bun Fun," at a local lesbian bar. Again, I reiterate the point of ALLGO's dedication to gender inclusivity, not ignoring the "L" in its acronym. Another article discussed the formation of another Latinx LGBTQ+ organization, Ambiente, in San Antonio, strengthening the network of such groups in Texas. A conference of gay and lesbian Tejanos in Houston is the subject of another article. Highlights of the conference include a presentation entitled, "AIDS and Ethnic Minorities," by Arturo Olivas, director of administration of the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center in Los Angeles. The topic of women's issues is included in a list of topics broached by the conference workshops, more evidence of gender inclusivity. Arturo Olivas is the subject of the last section of the newsletter, who is part of "a newly-formed federal government committee addressing the service, research, and training issues related to minorities and AIDS," as the article reinforces the growing trend of disproportionality of PoC and the AIDS epidemic.

The agosto 1986 edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* begins with a call to its readership to update its voter registration and to use the enclosed card. ALLGO recognizes the importance and power of not only grassroots political activism but also electoral politics. The current disillusionment among today's leftist activists with the franchise, e.g., the Bernie Sanders and Jill Stein crowd who refused to vote for Hillary Clinton, is not evident among the radical activists of ALLGO. The ALLGO staff, particularly those in charge of the newsletter, realize the practical outcomes of an election, such as the presidential privilege of selecting a Supreme Court Justice. This relates to the lead article of the newsletter, "An Offense to Our Dignity," which discusses the

recently decided Supreme Court case of *Bowers v. Hardwick (1986)*, the case that upheld sodomy laws against same-sex partners.

The article makes a passionate case for the injustice of the *Bowers* ruling but given the socially conservative climate of the 1980s, the outcome is not surprising. Nineteen eighty-six is one year before President Reagan would utter the word, “AIDS,” publicly. The article states, “What we have left is a law that allows the state to regulate the sexual conduct between consenting adults in the privacy of their own home. It is enraging, but not surprising, as a gay American to have to face second-class citizenship. The implications of this Court decision make it even more enraging.” The article continues to attack the decision, particularly regarding the right to privacy, which the Court determined with this ruling that LGBTQ+ individuals do not possess. The article continues to discuss the majority, concurring, and dissenting opinions of the decision. Both the majority and concurring opinions cite historical and Biblical reasons for the decision, yet the article provides cogent counter-arguments. The article then laments the decision “because it comes in the wake of the AIDS issue.” The article closes with a plea for privacy and individual liberty for LGBTQ+ persons, “A person, without hurting anyone, should have complete control over his/her mind and body.” The article recognizes that agency is impossible if an entire community is criminalized for its erotic desires and sexual practices. The radical political nature of the article echoes *Sexual Outlaw*.

The rest of the newsletter was a mixture of serious and lighthearted news (sadly, the column “Chisme y Mas” was renamed “Que Pasa”). A brief paragraph provided a recap of the previous month’s “T.G.I.F. Bun Fun.” Although this news may be dismissed as irrelevant fluff, the fact that the men cooked while the women could enjoy themselves again is indicative of ALLGO’s gender consciousness, especially since patriarchal attitudes and practices marred past

movements and organizations dedicated to social justice, the Chicano Movement being one. The following article covered a serious topic of harassment against the LGBTQ+ community. A conservative group, Citizens Against Pornography, picketed a local bookstore catering to the LGBTQ+ community, Liberty Books. The group held signs declaring homophobic message, such as “GAY means Got AIDS Yet?” and “This is an AIDS factory.” Unfortunately, an irrational fear of HIV/AIDS pervaded the public psyche during the first decade of the epidemic, and this act of harassment also illustrates the rise of evangelical activism, as Austin, though a liberal mecca, is situated in Texas. The remainder of the newsletter urges its readership to engage in statewide Latinx LGBTQ+ politics by attending the upcoming Gay and Lesbian Tejanos conference. Through its monthly newsletter, ALLGO endeavored to empower its readership, thus providing another outlet, a space that celebrated Latinidad as much as *jotería*.

The septiembre 1986 issue of *¡ALLGO PASA!* is twice the usual length (normally two pages, yet this one is four) tackles the HIV/AIDS epidemic directly. The main article, titled simply, “AIDS/SIDA,” provides a comprehensive overview of the epidemic—in Spanish. There is no English translation, as I gather the article’s author realized the disparity between English language and Spanish language safer sex literature. Yet more evidence of ALLGO’s commitment to women’s issues is the second article, “Lesbians & AIDS—The Risks and Reactions.” Written in English, the article presents the latest statistics on women and HIV/AIDS. Even though lesbians occupy a group with minimal risk exposure to HIV, the article cautions the lesbian community regarding certain factors—IV drug use, artificial insemination, and sexual activity with anyone in a high-risk group. The article closes by recommending the Winter 1986 issue of *On Our Backs*, a publication containing the article, “Safe Sex Guidelines for Lesbians at Risk.” The next section of the article also deals with the health concerns of

lesbians. Titled, “The Reactions,” the article continues to write of lesbians regarding the HIV epidemic, detailing a breadth of results. A portion of the lesbian community, surprisingly, felt “resentment that so much of the gay community’s resources [were] being directed to the AIDS crisis.” The issue of alcoholism in the lesbian community is a growing problem needing attention is the rationale. Conversely, “many lesbians are stepping forward to help unify the entire gay community in view of the AIDS crisis.” This references the epigraph by Rechy from his essay “Common Bonds and Battle” and what is a vein of historical ore needing to be mined extensively, if for no other reason but to offer gratitude to our lesbian hermanas who embraced and comforted us when many of our biological families shunned us. Although unquantifiable, how many gay men stricken with the twentieth-century version of leprosy did not suffer the indignity of dying alone on the street or in an alley because of the nurturement by lesbians?

“The Reactions” raises two more significant points regarding this hidden history. An organization, Blood Sisters of Austin, organized blood drives specifically for gay men living with HIV. The newsletter states, “The Austin chapter is just one of many such chapters springing up around the nation. The purpose of the group is for women, who are statistically at lowest risk of getting AIDS to give blood to ‘their brothers’ who are at risk. The Blood Sister organizations work in cooperation with the Women’s Caucus of the San Diego Democratic Society, which created the first such blood drive in 1983.”⁵⁶ This foresight is incredible, even more so since the first blood drive occurred so early in the epidemic and may have been a response to the newly-implemented policy of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ban blood donations from MSM, which was instituted in 1983, also.⁵⁷ The second additional point raised in “The Reactions” poses a critical rhetorical question if lesbians were the group fighting an unknown deadly disease. The article cites national gay leader, Gil Gerald, ““had the reverse

occurred—had lesbians been the ones primarily affected—would gay men have cared as much?” This sentiment is shared by Rechy and Cherríe Moraga—gay men have yet to reciprocate the kindness, compassion, and activism towards lesbians and transgender women on the scale that lesbians exhibited for gay men dying of AIDS. Our bill is past due—gay men must combat misogyny, lesbian-phobia, transphobia, and assist with activism around breast cancer and other health issues concerning cisgender and transgender women.

Another article focuses on another health issue concerning lesbians. Titled, “STDs in the Lesbian Community—The Unspoken Topic,” the article cites information from a portion of Suzann Gage’s work, *On Our Backs*. The article cautions that although the lesbian community carries a minimal risk of acquiring an STI, the lesbian community should still observe and engage in safer sex practices. The next article broaches a health issue affecting gay men and lesbians, alcoholism. The article opens the statement of over a quarter of gay men and over a third of lesbians struggle with alcoholism. The author intersects the issue of alcoholism with race, sexuality, and the social dimension of LGBTQ+ life. Most importantly, the author links alcoholism with structural homophobia, “In a homophobic society, we are made to feel guilty about a lot of things—we face losing our jobs, getting thrown out of our apartments, being shunned in our neighborhoods or by our families. Alcoholism may also relate to the fact that many of us live in a closet, in one way or another.” Latinx LGBTQ+ gente must negotiate racial, economic, cultural, and religious oppressions intersecting with homophobia. The author argues, the primary social space for the LGBTQ+ community is a bar. The Stonewall Inn, the site of the rebellion sparking the modern LGBTQ+ Movement, is a bar police raided frequently, often harassing and arresting its patrons. By providing this critical health information, *¡ALLGO PASA!*, in English and Spanish, proves itself more than a basic newsletter published by a

grassroots organization; it represented a beacon for the Latinx LGBTQ+ community in the Austin-metro area not provided by white LGBTQ+ establishments or by heterosexual Latinx groups. Now, *¡ALLGO PASA!* is an artifact for preservation and study; it is evidence of the revolutionary collective of ALLGO addressing the needs of its community which faced a deadly and mysterious disease and structural homophobia, misogyny, racism, and poverty.

Other notable entries in the septiembre 1986 issue are a column denouncing the upcoming election in California and the ballot initiative known as Proposition 63 and one of the announcements in its calendario of events. Proposition 63 was a ballot initiative that if passed would declare English as the official language of California. The irony of a making a state with a Spanish name and countless streets, cities, counties, and landmarks in Spanish, not to mention the Spanish were the first European colonizers. A move to indigenous reclamation of the land is what I would call revolutionary, yet the imposition of the English language as the state's official tongue represents another layer of colonialism as well as an act of xenophobia against the immigrants bolstering the economy and enriching the culture. The column acts as warning to Latinx gente in Texas that such a racist movement could invade Texas, as anti-immigrant sentiments ebb and flow. The article states, "The proposition is intended to kill bilingual education, bilingual ballots, and any other bilingualism." The article closes by linking this racist, xenophobic initiative to a holistic attack on society, "Proposition 63 is a cruel joke—not just on the immigrants whose labor is helping the state's economy but also on the taxpayers who will pay the consequences if it passes." The significant calendar event occurring is a speaking engagement by the iconic César Chávez at the Dallas Peace Center conference held at Southern Methodist University.

The octubre 1986 edition of ALLGO's newsletter is one of commemoration and celebration—*¡ALLGO PASA!* marks the one-year anniversary of the organization and announces the coinciding event—Día de la Raza Dance on October 11 (also National Coming Out Day, which was founded two years later). The front page announces the dance, an upcoming Gay and Lesbian Tejanos meeting, and an explanation of Día de la Raza as a protest to Columbus Day and is presented as a preface to an essay titled, “Who Am I?” The essay, written by a seventh-grade student in 1964, explains the *mestizaje* of the author and attempts to counter the racism against Xicanx people and reads like a middle-school version of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. I was thirteen years old when ALLGO published this newsletter and was also in the seventh grade. I had just acknowledged my homoerotic desires yet struggled with internalized racism. Had I read this essay at that moment in my life, I may have saved myself two years of internal struggle regarding my racial identity.

Another critical issue broached by this month's newsletter is that of the ongoing grape boycott. The article discusses the negative health outcomes suffered by farmworkers because of the pesticides sprayed on the crops, including “the miscarriage rate for female farmworkers is seven times the national average.” Additionally, the article explains how the pesticides affect the consumer and contaminates the groundwater. Finally, the article urges its readership to support the United Farmworkers Organization. What other LGBTQ+ organizations linked the oppression of farmworkers to that of sexual orientation? The “Chisme y Mas” column returns and contains an important announcement, “A picket line is being organized to protest those awful, fake pregnancy ‘clinics’ which advertise as medical facilities, but are really in the business of harassing people into making uninformed decisions. The picket is sponsored by the Texas Abortion Rights Action League (TARAL) and the Reproduction Rights Committee of

NOW” (National Organization of Women). Again, including news of this picket illustrates ALLGO’s commitment to women’s issues. Finally, this edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* contains an article describing the origins and practices of Día de los Muertos.

The noviembre 1986 edition is another long edition and contains a breadth of information and announcements. The lead article describes the success of the Día de la Raza celebration. Over three hundred people attended the event, according to the article, and the author adds, “ALLGO is rapidly developing a reputation for its dances, educational forums, and political actions. To keep abreast of up-coming events be sure to subscribe to *¡ALLGO PASA!* and become a member of this Latino/a gay and lesbian movimiento aqui en Austin.” The next article reveals another historical atrocity—the structural AIDS-phobia in employment, housing, and public accommodations. The article, “Protection for People with AIDS,” recaps an Austin City Council meeting in which the Travis County Human Relations Commission listened to testimony regarding a potential municipal ordinance barring such discriminatory practices. The testimony included examples of a person living with AIDS who was evicted because the landlord feared the resale value of the home would be affected negatively. Another example included a company who terminated the employment of a person who had just tested HIV-positive. The article closes with the statement that if the ordinance passes, Austin would be one of five cities with such protections for people living with HIV/AIDS. Just as Rechy does in *Sexual Outlaw* detailing the criminalization of homoerotic desire and practices in the 1970s, *¡ALLGO PASA!* serves as a document describing the irrational discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

This edition contains an article on a related subtopic of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Titled, “Early Education for AIDS,” the article discusses the report released by the surgeon general of the United States, Dr. C. Everett Koop. A maverick against the reactionary politics surrounding

individuals afflicted with HIV/AIDS, Koop did not advocate mandatory testing, quarantining, or the AIDS tattoos, all policy proposals set forth by conservative and hysterical factions of the general populace. Koop was not complicit in the crimes of the Reagan administration regarding HIV/AIDS; in his report he advocated action, “This silence must end... We can no longer afford to sidestep frank, open discussions about sexual practices—homosexual and heterosexual.” words uttered in the Reagan era and the rise of evangelism in electoral politics must have caused Jimmy Swaggart to bluster before his sex worker scandals. ¡*ALLGO PASA!* published the article in Spanish, as well.

Another significant section of this month’s edition is an article announcing the upcoming People of Color Conference in Los Angeles. That such a conference existed in the mid-1980s is significant, as well as the rationale provided by the writer of the article. Although Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw would not introduce the term, “intersectionality,” until her landmark article, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (1991), the author illustrates the concept with a rationale of why it is imperative staff of ALLGO attend the conference:

We need to be there because Lesbian and Gay Asians in Toronto should discuss sexism with Texan Gay and Lesbian Latinos; East Coast Black Lesbians and Gays must tell of their accomplishments in connecting with anti-apartheid with their counterparts on the West Coast; Lesbianas Latinas of Los Angeles should share their successes in networking with lesbians from Denver, Mexico City, and New York; Native Americans can share with us how not all cultures repress homosexuality; and Mexican and Peruvian homosexuals can show how progressive politics are incorporated in their struggles.

We need to be there because of the racism that still exists everywhere. In Los Angeles and Houston, every cent of much needed AIDS information must be fought for to get that information into the Latino communities. We need to be there to find out about California's Lyndon LaRouche-backed AIDS Quarantine Initiative (Proposition 64), so that it doesn't happen where we live. We need to be there to talk about AIDS.

We need to be there to identify international, national, regional, ethnic, local, etc. issues—what is to be our agenda. We need to be there to share our advances and success, to be visible and heard. We need to be there to perform, demonstrate, show, share, and be an audience to lesbian and gay people of color artistry at the Arts Festival.

We need to be there to grow, to develop our own identity through workshops, through the Arts Festival, or through just meeting people from all over. We need to be there to laugh, cry, recharge, and to show that we can make our own futures by coming together.

Yet again, the creators of *¡ALLGO PASA!* understand the intricacies and complexities of identity, that we can never isolate one dimension of identity or oppression. The article reminds us of the draconian measures suggested because of the hysteria surrounding the AIDS epidemic. Threats of compulsory testing for people in high-risk groups and quarantining and tattooing people living with HIV were considered viable options to protect the public. Nearly 700,000 Californians provided their signatures to place such a discriminatory initiative on the ballot.⁵⁸ Without Rechy and revolutionary groups like ALLGO to remind us, how would current generations of LGBTQ+ PoC activists organize effectively without the historical grounding?

The December 1986 (for some reason not provided, ALLGO used the English version) of *¡ALLGO PASA!* provides a less urgent yet still radical set of news and announcements. The lead

article is a summary of the ALLGO general meeting. Dennis Medina provides a summary of the International Gay and Lesbian People of Color Conference held in Los Angeles, which he and Ester Martinez attended. According to Medina's description of the conference, the event represented a transnational space of LGBTQ+ PoC collaboration and communion. In a pre-Internet world of organizing, these types of gatherings were critical and essential, particularly in that historical juncture of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The next article focused on electoral politics. Written by ALLGO member, Henry Gomez, the article, "Chicano Politics Today," discusses a student forum of the same name held at the University of Texas which covered the topics of education, immigration, voter rights, economic issues, and community organizing. Gomez cites several of the forum speakers, who all gave warnings about Republican attempts to curb the rise in Latinx voter registration. One of the speakers, Willie Velasquez, director of the Southwest Voter Registration Project, warned of Jim Crow-era tactics to depress Latinx voter participation, such as voter ID and English-only laws. This recalls the experiences of my maternal grandmother, a dedicated Democrat. In the 1950s, the electors in Ysleta, Texas, an impoverished community anchored by a Native American reservation, required the precinct's voters to pay poll taxes. To vote, which she did more regularly than attend Mass, my maternal grandmother paid the poll tax of \$1.50 to cast the vote for a straight Democratic ticket. Even though she earned less than ten dollars daily, she never ignored her civic duty. She also drove the indigenous people of the reservation to the polls and taught them how to operate the voting apparatus. These Jim Crow-era tactics are recounted in Rechy's essay, "Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero" (1959). Gomez's article in *¡ALLGO PASA!* alerts the readership to the potential implementation of such anti-democratic strategies. Had it not been for Rechy's brave writing in the conservative, post-war climate of the 1950s when the country was suffering through McCarthyism, the beginning of

the Cold War, and white supremacist government policies, such as “Operation Wetback,”⁵⁹ structural racism against Xicanx gente in Texas would have remained buried under the binary rubble of racial discourse for over a decade until other Xicanx writers and scholars, like Rodolfo Acuña, author of the first comprehensive history of Chicanas and Chicanos, *Occupied America* (1972), began documenting such policies.

The enero 1987 edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* celebrates the first anniversary of the newsletter. The editor, Dennis Medina, writes the opening article, which includes a congratulatory note to the editors of *Noticias*, the newsletter of the Houston organization, Gay & Lesbian Hispanic Unidos (GLHU). Medina mentions that GLHU has been publishing *Noticias* since 1981. This is significant as 1981 is the same year as the publication of the premiere edition of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Such radical, intersectional politics occurring in the face of a disease of biblical proportions and a mainstream culture increasingly adopting right-wing evangelical mores. Rechy warned us of this in the 1970s in *Sexual Outlaw* and ALLGO, GLHU, and the editors and contributors of *This Bridge* continued the messaging with their respective radical politics.

The newsletter includes a retrospective of the highlights of ALLGO’s events and actions since its birth on October 12, 1985 and a list of events planned for 1987. The article mentions the exclusion of ALLGO’s work from the pages of the statewide LGBTQ+ publication, *This Week in Texas (TWT)*. The publishers of *TWT* distributed copies free of charge at establishments catering to the LGBTQ+ communities of Texas. According to *¡ALLGO PASA!*, “ALLGO has just finished a busy and productive year of activities, none of which were reported in *TWT*’s Year in Review column for 1986.” Perhaps ALLGO’s radical intersectional politics and that it

strived to create a space for LGBTQ+ PoC rankled the editors and publishers of *TWT*. The highlight of the 1987 calendar is ALLGO's plan to host the second annual Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference over Labor Day weekend.

Two brief announcements in the "Clasificados" section reveal ALLGO's holistic vision towards its membership, its creativity in fundraising strategies, and wit:

INTERESTED IN WRITING, designing graphic layouts or becoming computer literate? These are skills which you can learn in the ALLGO Communications Committee. Knowing these skills can help you out in the job market also...

SAVE CANS FOR ALLGO. Donate your empty aluminum cans to ALLGO. Call Oscar for information and pick-up (the cans, not him) at...

These brief announcements illustrate ALLGO's commitment to the intersection of class to the other types of issues LGBTQ+ PoC confront daily. As computer literacy was not a common skill in 1986 amongst PoC⁶⁰, ALLGO recognized the value of its membership gaining a critical edge in the burgeoning technology market in the central Texas area that would be known as "Silicon Hills" in the 1990s. Recycling aluminum cans or reusing plastic food containers to store leftovers may be considered "green" now, but most working-class Xicanx recognize this as part of our grandmothers' thrift, known as *rasquachismo*⁶¹—how many times did I open the butter container and find leftover refried beans or chile colorado instead? The campy repartee referencing Oscar and the aluminum can drive represents the joy that ALLGO engaged despite, or rather *because*, of the multiple oppressions that LGBTQ+ PoC in the 1980s in central Texas confronted daily.

The remainder of this edition broaches a breadth of intersectional issues. A child custody case imbued with homophobia is the subject of another article. A father is contesting the custody

of his children solely on the mother's lesbianism. Austin-area lawyers are representing the woman pro bono, yet ALLGO announces a fundraiser to cover the cost of written depositions of expert witnesses. Other announcements demonstrating ALLGO's praxis of intersectionality is the inclusion of a "Dinner for Choice," a fundraiser hosted by and benefiting the Texas Abortion Rights Action League and a "Workshop on Racism" with Kenneth Jones, National Chairperson of the Venceremos Brigade, a group formed by the Students for a Democratic society and Cuban revolutionaries.⁶² Certainly, ALLGO's politics fall outside the margins of mainstream white supremacist LGBTQ+ politics and goals.

The February 1987 edition (there is no explanation regarding the switch from Spanish to English) discusses the ALLGO general meeting, which mentions social justice topics, such as the UFW grape boycott, including an insert outlining immigration rights in a future newsletter mailing, and the creation of a task force examining AIDS in the gay Latinx community. This edition advertises the event that first introduced me to ALLGO and is its most well-attended fundraiser—the Baile de Amor, "ALLGO has chosen 'Dia de Amor' to honor the special love we have for each other for our community." ALLGO's "Baile de Amor," like GALA did in the Bay Area, provides a unique social space for Austin's LGBTQ+ Latinx population. On this one night, LGBTQ+ Latinx could dance disco to Donna Summer and Sylvester *and* two-step *and* cumbia, all while contributing to an organization promoting and celebrating their intersectional identities and fighting a breadth of social injustices. No other event or space in Austin could provide a home for this marginalized community.

Saul González, one of ALLGO's founders, provides a blistering commentary after attending a workshop on minority outreach at the Texas Lesbian/Gay Resource Conference held at the University of Texas Law School in January 1987. In this column, González aligns Latinx

LGBTQ+ gente with other LGBTQ+ communities of color. González mentions that the workshop he attended was the sole part of the conference dedicated to LGBTQ+ PoC. González writes:

The problems of lesbians and gay people of color are not unique; my feelings as a gay Latino mirror those of many of our Black, Asian, and Native American sisters and brothers. Ethnic minorities are not represented in the mainstream gay movement in proportion to our representation in the population of lesbian and gay people. To put it bluntly, we remain invisible to the majority of the gay community. While we, as leaders, will continue to struggle for pluralism, equal opportunity and justice, the mainstream gay community will continue to struggle without our energy, commitment and talent. The reason for this is racism.

The racism of gay community leaders lies not in the color of their skin; it lies with the attitude which they impose on minorities by excluding them from the real decision-making process. By the time organizations have their meetings, much of the discussion and decision-making have already been done, without minority people's input. Until these leaders deal with their own racism, we will continue to be unheard. It is not my responsibility to educate them on racism. Just as I accept my responsibility to educate myself on sexism and do not blame my sisters for my ignorance, thus they must grapple with racism and restructure their own lives.

González makes an important analysis regarding the white supremacy of the mainstream gay movement; it is analogous to the patriarchy of the movements of PoC, and both are inexcusable. González is arguing for those of us harboring some privilege while negotiating oppression must constantly reevaluate said privilege; otherwise, hierarchies of power will impede the path

towards liberation. Furthermore, González broaches the issue of misogyny within the gay male community. The issue of misogyny, against both women and femme gay men, is a topic found throughout Rechy's corpus and one which I explore more deeply in the next chapter. For González to examine his own male privilege instead of believing that as a gay man he has the right to treat women disrespectfully, especially lesbians, is dialogue gay men need to engage now. The men of the Chicano Movement rejected feminism; the men of GALA kept the organization focused on androcentric ideals, but the men of ALLGO embraced the issues and needs of its lesbian membership recognizing their contributions to the community.

Another critical issue is discussed within the pages of the febrero issue of *¡ALLGO PASA!*—the availability of HIV/AIDS and safer sex information in Spanish. The article makes a similar argument to that of González; mainstream gay and HIV/AIDS organizations exclude LGBTQ+ PoC from the conversation, and, more critically, the resources to combat ignorance and misinformation. The article, “AIDS/SIDA Info in Spanish,” (SIDA is Spanish for AIDS) cites the text, *AIDS in the Mind of America (1986)*, by Dennis Altman, an Australian gay rights activist, ““The concern for AIDS does not seem to have mobilized the gay Black, Hispanic, or Asian organizations, in spite of the high incidence of AIDS...in the first two groups.”” This myopic observation precludes the argument the article and González make—the white supremacy of mainstream gay and HIV organizations precludes perspectives from PoC, only inviting these communities after all decisions have been made, if at all. The article cites evidence to the contrary. GLHU and the Milagros Project in Los Angeles are two organizations conducting workshops specifically for the Latinx community. ALLGO observes that much of the available AIDS and safer sex information contain cultural biases and may use varieties of

Spanish inappropriate for the target population. Despite the dearth of accurate and culturally competent safer sex materials in Spanish, ALLGO made them available to the community.

The marzo 1987 of *¡ALLGO PASA!* continues its commitment to Latina lesbians as the lead article announces an upcoming Lesbiana Latina Retreat. The idea for such an event was one of the outcomes of the inaugural Gay and Lesbian Tejanos Conference. One aspect of the retreat differentiating ALLGO from white supremacist patriarchal organizations is that a committee of Latina lesbians was formed to plan and organize the retreat, as it was an event specifically for Latina lesbians. Although this may aspect may seem like common sense now, the exclusion of PoC practiced by mainstream organizations is what Saul González was criticizing in the previous issue of *¡ALLGO PASA!* That ALLGO committed its lead to article to announce Latina lesbian-specific programming is further evidence of its engagement with and practice of feminist of color politics, as the article states the cost of attendance will be minimal and childcare would be provided.

The remainder of the month's newsletter contains a range of pertinent information. One article announces the formation of a task force to study issues pertaining to Latinx gente and HIV/AIDS. A group of experts from the medical, social service, and health education fields are convening to create a holistic program focusing on subgroups within the Latinx community—gay Latinx men, youth, women, families, and IV drug users. The summary of the “General Meeting Notes” included a workshop by AIDS Services of Austin soliciting volunteers, particularly those with bilingual skills. Another article announced the formation of a Black LGBTQ+ organization in Austin, The Ebony Connection. According to the article, people created The Ebony Connection out of similar intersectional concerns as those who founded ALLGO. Another brief article mentions a “tardeada” fundraiser. “Tardeada” can be translated

as a party which starts in the afternoon. Instead of using the term “tea dance,” which in the gay community is roughly equivalent, the creators of *¡ALLGO PASA!* incorporate and queer Mexican and Xicanx cultural signifiers. Another article discusses an educational project undertaken by GLHU, translating into Spanish safer-sex workshops created by a mainstream AIDS organization. Evidently, Latinx LGBTQ+ organizations were proactive in creating and providing the necessary materials critical in providing safer-sex information in a sex-positive and culturally sensitive manner. The practice of ALLGO situating itself within a node of statewide and interstate Latinx LGBTQ+ organizations illustrates the larger vision and scope of its mission.

The abril 1987 edition opens with a startling image, one that I can imagine elicited gay gasps from the newsletter’s readership as they opened it. The lead article begins after a photo of President Reagan with a speech balloon stating, “I’m gay...and I’m proud!” The article, “President Reveals Amazing Secret,” recounts a national press conference in which Reagan, allegedly, discloses sexual liaisons with Hollywood actors in the 30s and 40s (did he and Rock Hudson fight over who bottomed for Tab Hunter?), comes out and plans to sponsor a comprehensive gay rights bill. Throughout the article, the writer strategically bolded certain initial letters of sentences which spelled, “**APRIL FOOL.**” What is LGBTQ+ social justice without a bit of campy humor? Another aspect of ALLGO’s mission that is apparent by reading the first year and a half’s editions of *¡ALLGO PASA!* is its commitment and accountability to the Latinx LGBTQ+ community of Austin. The organization is fully transparent and constantly asks the community for increased involvement. Furthermore, I highlight ALLGO’s commitment to women as they report of a “tardeada” fundraiser for the Latina lesbian retreat that occurred in San Antonio in March and an upcoming event in Houston also benefitting the retreat.

The mayo 1987 edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* is another trove of information of for the local Latinx LGBTQ+ community. After an article discussing the monthly general meeting, the newsletter includes an article advertising and discussing the Latina lesbian retreat, including workshops that presenters will facilitate. Among the topics are “Being a Lesbiana Latina,” “Feminism/Lesbianism,” “Spirituality,” and “Relationships.” This was followed by an article describing the success of a fundraiser at Nexus, a local lesbian club, which featured a drag show. Another brief article advertises an event for the recently created Black LGBTQ+ organization, Ebony Connection at the annual Splash Day celebration, an Austin Gay Pride event held at Lake Travis. The distrust between the Mexican/Xicanx and Black communities, fomented by a “divide and conquer” strategy implemented by the white supremacist power structure, is a tragic outcome of centuries of colonialism, illustrated by the *casta* system in Mexico. ALLGO, however, negotiates through the layers of oppression to build an Anzaldúan bridge between the two communities most disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The monthly “Chisme Y Mas” column contains several important announcements. One is for AIDS Services of Austin, which is facilitating a bereavement workshop. This makes me pause to reflect on the amount of misery and death in the gay male communities during this historical moment. Nearly a decade away from the release of the life-saving AIDS “cocktail” of drugs (for those who could access it), every cross-section of the populations affected most by HIV suffered massive losses of humanity, but what of communities of color negotiating white supremacy, poverty, and religious and cultural stigmas? A devastating timeline published by the Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR) details the number of AIDS cases and deaths per years along with events occurring during the year. In 1981, authorities detected 159 cases. In 1982, 618 deaths out of 771 cases. In 1983, 2,118 deaths out of 2,807 cases. In 1984, 5,596 deaths out

of 7,239 cases. In 1985, 12,529 deaths out of 15,527 cases. In 1986, 24,559 out of 28,712 cases. In 1987, 40,849 deaths out of 50,378 cases. During these initial years, 86,869 deaths occurred due to HIV/AIDS in the United States. For any person in a “high-risk” group, the effects must have been akin to surviving a war.

Related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic are two other announcements in this month’s “Chisme” column. “Joe Perez, Communications Coordinator of Houston’s GLHU recently testified before a Congressional Committee for AIDS education funding for Hispanics,” according to the column. However, this positive event was tempered by the following, “While Houston ranks 4th nationally in AIDS cases, the \$84,253 it spends on AIDS goes to epidemiology—tracking the disease—not prevention. Chicago, which ranks 8th in number of cases, spends \$250,000 on AIDS education.” This lack of prevention effort must have exacerbated the number of seroconversions in southeast Texas. The second announcement intersects the HIV/AIDS epidemic with the recently passed legislation known as the “Immigrant Control and Reform Act” (IRCA) of 1986. *¡ALLGO PASA!* informs its readership, “So now the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] wants to test all applicants for amnesty under the new immigration law for AIDS. INS officials say that federal public health authorities would have to declare AIDS a dangerous and contagious disease to carry this program out. Under this program, the INS would test primarily Latinos.”⁶³ This is not without historical precedent as immigration authorities routinely inspected Mexican immigrants for lice and other pests, forcing them to bathe in kerosene and spraying them with the toxic chemical, Zyklon B.⁶⁴ The last section of the “Chisme” column is a linguistic analysis related to the immigration issue—referring to undocumented immigrants as the dehumanizing term, “illegal aliens.”

Finally, this edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* includes a section named, “Internationalism,” which includes two articles, “The Union Born from the Ruins,” and an untitled article. “Union” details the history of a working-class feminist triumph over adversity in Mexico in the wake of the earthquake devastating Mexico City on September 19, 1985. A seamstress named Guadalupe Conde Dorado helped to organize a labor union to help displaced seamstresses and their families, to hasten the reopening of factories, and to negotiate better working and living conditions. Named after the date of the earthquake, “El Sindicato [union] 19 de Septiembre,” grew to 4,500 members after a year and a half. This vindicated Conde Dorado, a twenty-year veteran of factory work, who had previously endeavored to start a labor union but was told by a former employer that she was “¡jamás sería más que una maldita costurera” [she was nothing more than a damned seamstress]. This news is significant as ALLGO is attempting to encompass a transnational vision as it commits itself to the local, state, and national issues of Latinx LGBTQ+ communities. The second article under the “Internationalism” argues for a transnational perspective of gay and lesbian issues, as homophobia is a global problem:

Gay and lesbian people are being harassed, tortured, and murdered every day. Reports have been heard that in Cali, Colombia, 50 people were murdered for suspicion of being gay and the media in that country blames homosexuals for the spread of AIDS. But we rarely receive confirmations in the mainstream media of these kinds of reports.

For this and other reasons, we need to develop networks of communication with gay men and lesbians in other countries. ALLGO is particularly interested in supporting our brothers and sisters in Mexico and Latin America. We have a list of organizations which are now thought to be active, but we need to step up our communication with them, particularly in light of a possible gay conference in Latin America during 1988.

One personal commitment you can make is to subscribe to *Paz y Liberación*, a newsletter of gay news from Mexico, Latin America and other Third World countries. Though less than two years in existence, ALLGO proved to be an organization that understands the importance of incorporating macro and micro visions of intersectional issues, to invoke the duality of the Mesoamerican deity, Coatlicue, the goddess of life and death, of feminine and masculine—to see through the eyes of both the eagle and the snake.⁶⁵

The junio 1987 edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* headlines the Lesbiana Latina Retreat happening later in the month. Unlike GALA which never strayed from its androcentrism, ALLGO continues to promote programming focused on Latina lesbian issues. According to the lead article promoting the retreat, “Lesbiana Latina Retreat,” attendees can participate in a variety of workshops and activities. The retreat is being held at Stonehaven Ranch, located in the Texas Hill Country near San Marcos, which will offer a tranquil setting for such physical activities as swimming, tennis, and jogging. Furthermore, “[w]orkshop speakers include: Houston psychotherapist, Carmen Zepeda, who will enlighten the group on issue of intimacy and bonding; Houston feminist, Rossann Daumas, speaks out on women’s issues; Maria Limón, Austin Chicana writer featured in Arte Público’s *Third Woman*, leads [a] discussion on ‘coming out’ issues as they relate to self, family, and institution; San Antonio’s Alicia Lopez shares insights on the spirituality of *nuestras antepasadas* [our women ancestors]; co-presenter and Austin sculptor, Marsha Gomez, takes a holistic approach to spirituality.” The retreat organizers created dynamic programming for the retreat participants, and ALLGO ensured its success through its support and promotion.

A breadth of news is included in this month’s newsletter. An article announced the election of officers to ALLGO’s board of directors during May’s general meeting. Out of eleven

positions, only two are women, one being the co-chair, but the article also states that during the meeting, participants discussed the topic of increasing women's participation within ALLGO. Also, the meeting participants allocated funds to apply for non-profit status for ALLGO. A fundraiser for the Lesbiana Latina Retreat held at the women's bar, Nexus, was a success. The newsletter announces the month's LGBTQ+ Pride celebration ALLGO calls *Fandango*, a Pride event focusing on the Latinx community. A group named, Austin Lesbians Speak Out (ALSO), are collecting responses regarding the state of the lesbian community in Austin via a questionnaire. According to ALSO, the organization is especially interested in responses from women of color. Finally, on a sobering note, ALLGO asks the community to volunteer to participate in the "Buddy" program facilitated through AIDS Services of Austin (ASA), which comments that the number of AIDS cases is increasing weekly. As a reminder, the FDA would not release the lifesaving "cocktail" of drugs for another nine years. The second annual Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference will be held in Austin over Labor Day weekend, according to *¡ALLGO PASA!* One of the foci of the conference will be strategizing AIDS education in the Latinx community. The newsletter includes ALLGO's continuing commitment to intrastate collaboration with LGBTQ+ organizations in Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, cities that are all within a two to four-hour drive from each other. A final, yet critical, blurb in the newsletter is an announcement of a fundraiser for the group, Chicanos Against Militancy Intervention in Latin America (CAMILA). The deadly wars in Central America and repression by South American regimes against their own citizens and the larger issues of U.S. militarism and empire are, unfortunately, not considered relevant to the mainstream LGBTQ+ movement, as evidenced by its substantive efforts to serve openly in the armed forces instead of working to dismantle the military industrial complex.

The julio 1987 edition, vol. 2, no. 7, of *¡ALLGO PASA!* begins with “General Meeting Notes.” Among the highlights of the meeting are the finalizing of plans for ALLGO’s Fandango LGBTQ+ Latinx Pride even, discussing the Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference, reporting on the Lesbiana Latina Retreat, and announcing the noteworthy event of a reading by renowned poet and scholar, Richard Howard. The event, open to everyone and free of charge, is sponsored by ALLGO and will be held at a private home with a wine and cheese reception. According to the Poetry Foundation’s website, “A distinguished poet, critic, and translator, Richard Howard holds a unique place in contemporary American letters. Howard is credited with introducing modern French fiction—particularly examples of the Nouveau Roman—to the American public.”⁶⁶ One aspect of ALLGO I argue has allowed to survive and thrive is its continual focus on the arts. During the past decade, ALLGO intensified its focus on the cultural arts by creating programming that “nurtures, explores, and promotes queer people of color aesthetics. We are committed to providing spaces for us to create, to tell our own stories through artistic expression, to unleash the power of art as activism” (<http://allgo.org/what-we-do/cultural-arts/>). Furthermore, ALLGO supports an artist-in-residence program for emerging LGTBQ+ PoC artists.

The next column, “Hey Buddy, Can You Spare Some Time?” is indicative of the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic and the activism fomented within the LGBTQ+ communities. The article, written by Doug Key, co-coordinator of the Buddy Program facilitated by AIDS Services of Austin, is an epistolary plea to the readership of *¡ALLGO PASA!* to consider donating their time becoming a “buddy” to a person living with AIDS (PWA). Key recounts his initial experience as a buddy:

I met my first Person With AIDS on Memorial Day, 1985. I later became his Buddy, and altogether had about five months to share with him: laughing, hurting, playing, crying.

I've done a lot of crying in the past two years, as I've worked with over a hundred People With AIDS and their loved ones, as well as many Buddies. Sometimes it's from sadness, but quite often it's from being a part of one of those 'special' moments in the life of another person...But there are worse things about this disease than death: there is the living hell of any prolonged illness, with episodes of despair and sadness; one debilitating illness after another; drugs that offer guarded hope with potentially nasty side effects; and for many People With AIDS, there is the added burden of facing all this alone.

Just as Rechy's *Sexual Outlaw* recounts the rampant criminalization against gay male bodies and our homoerotic desires and Roque Ramirez recovered the experiences of gay Latino men in the Bay Area who created their own social space yet marginalized women, ALLGO documents Latinx LGBTQ+ experiences as they pertain to multiple issues, particularly the AIDS crisis. The current discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS does not include disease, suffering, and death—only PreP and undetectable viral loads. The possibility to return to such a world as Key describes may be slim yet exists as the first generation to survive because of the “cocktail” begins to age. Will LGBTQ+ communities mobilize as they did if the death chambers of the 1980s reemerge?

Finally, *¡ALLGO PASA!* presents a life-affirming article with a report on the success of the Lesbiana Latina Retreat. The article, written in Spanish and English, begins with a quote from one of the participants, ““Para mi, esto es un sueño,”” [For me, this is a dream.] Fifty-five Latina lesbians attended the retreat, many originally hailing from countries such as Cuba, Paraguay, and Chile, “to validate and affirm our lives as lesbianas Latinas.” The workshops and other activities “served to bond the network, created lasting friendships, and opened the path to

healing.” Planning is beginning for the next Lesbiana Latina retreat and vow to work harder to serve the women who could not participate because of economic disparities or a lack of information. A retreat serving the needs of Latina lesbians in 1987 illustrates the revolutionary and necessary work of ALLGO, an organization with its roots in the heterosexual Chicano Movement and mainstream LGBTQ+ activism yet represent a dynamic representation of a social justice organization personifying intersectionality through a visionary, grassroots approach.

The agosto 1987 edition, vol. 2, no.7, of ALLGO’s newsletter represents a shift in the publication’s authorship as the primary writer, Dennis Medina, left for an internship at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. Despite Medina’s departure, *¡ALLGO PASA!* continues to offer an intersectional focus to its readership. The newsletter opens with an article discussing the final plans for the second annual Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference. The newsletter also includes the itinerary for the conference. Six sessions are planned over the four-day gathering. Topics include the intersectional identity of Latinx and LGBTQ+, three workshops tackling the multiplicity of issues regarding the AIDS epidemic, media literacy, racism, and a literature and arts presentation. Of course, no ALLGO-sponsored function would not include entertainment—the committee hired a Tejano band, Henry Rivas and the Zabado band are scheduled to perform the Saturday evening of the conference.

Although the Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference dominates the newsletter, there are other substantive issues addressed. An editorial written by Saul González discusses the critical topic of Latinx gente speaking Spanish. González encourages Latinx gente to embrace their bilingualism as a means of connection with our home culture. González argues:

Our economic survival in a predominantly English-speaking country and the survival of our identity as a language minority require that Hispanics in the U.S. be bilingual...If our

people lose their language, they will go the way of many other U.S. citizens who have developed a ‘coconut’ personality because they have not learned enough about their culture and linguistic ancestry. Such people have a problem of self-identity and self-image. Language is the umbilical cord to a culture. If we sever this cord, we will sever ourselves from our mother culture. Speaking Spanish will better enable us to know, appreciate, and preserve our sentiments, our humor, our music, our literature, our customs, our foods, and all those beautiful things that go into being Latinos. Those who would have us reject, forget, or eventually lose our Hispanic culture would love nothing better than to have our linguistic cord severed. This must never happen to us.

González is advocating a radical politics regarding language and bilingualism. Instead of taking an assimilationist approach, González encourages the Austin Latinx population to embrace their dual-language identities, which would strengthen the Latinx culture. This is a critical point, one made by Anzaldúa in the chapter, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” from *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Sandra Cisneros in her article, “An Offering to the Power of Language,” (1997). These Xicanx feminists argue a similar radical stance regarding Latinx gente and the Spanish language—we should not bow to pressure to assimilate linguistically or culturally.

This edition contains three other critical news stories and announcements. The first is a call for the ALLGO community to participate in the upcoming (and now historic) Gay and Lesbian March on Washington on October 11, 1987. A fundraiser is planned to help offset the costs, as the article mentions that participation by LGBTQ+ PoC is important for visibility. Related to the successful Lesbianas Latinas Retreat is an announcement of the Primer Encuentro de Lesbianas Feministas (First Meeting of Lesbian Feminists) being held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on October 14-17, 1987. Even though the timing of these two events may preclude people from

attending both, the activism surrounding LGBTQ+ issues on a national scale and broaching lesbian feminist issues on a *transnational* scale illustrates the global vision of these women and the men who supported them. Finally, *¡ALLGO PASA!* urges its readership to contact their congressional representatives to block the nomination and confirmation of Robert H. Bork to the U.S. Supreme Court. The newsletter warns Bork hold retrograde views on affirmative action, privacy rights for LGBTQ+ persons, free speech, and abortion. Ironically, the Senate rejected Bork's nomination and confirmed Anthony Kennedy, the justice who represented a "swing vote" in many crucial decisions concerning LGBTQ+ rights, such as *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015).

The following edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* combined September and October, vol. 2, no. 8, because of budget restraints yet still covers a range of critical topics. The newsletter begins with a discussion of the Gay and Lesbian March on Washington. Several members from ALLGO and the Gay & Lesbian Tejanos organizations are attending. The day before the march, a PoC caucus will meet, and LGBTQ+ Latinx from around the country will discuss the creation of a national Latinx LGBTQ+ organization, National Latino Lesbian and Gay Activists (NLLGA). In other reporting, the recent Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference attracted people from different part of the U.S., and much was accomplished, including the passing of resolutions broaching the topics of racism, gay men's misogyny, and a distinct space for lesbians to work within the structure of the organization. In a previous issue of *¡ALLGO PASA!*, the issue of gay men's misogyny is mentioned as an issue necessitating critical dialogue and examination. Now, this problem is being discussed at the state level, which illustrates the continual reflection of and revolutionary politics emerging from ALLGO and the other affiliated grassroots organizations.

One of the resolutions passed at the Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference referred to the increasing visibility of the AIDS epidemic with the Latinx community. Two articles in *¡ALLGO*

PASA! educate its readership further during this devastating historical moment. Some participants in the Gay & Lesbian Tejanos Conference are helping to form a statewide coalition, the National Association of People With AIDS (NAPWA). NAPWA is comprised of PWA who will decide what resources they need instead of letting others dictate to them. NAPWA will have caucuses representing different communities, such as a Latino caucus, a Black caucus, and a women's caucus. Another article discusses October, AIDS Awareness Month. ALLGO will increase its activism by distributing literature and condoms and engaging in critical dialogue at a local gay bar.

Finally, the issue contains another editorial, “¡Soy Lo Que Soy!” [I am what I am] by Saul González which can be read as an addendum to the previous month's column regarding the importance of Latinx gente retaining their Spanish and the cost of assimilation. In this column, González talks specifically of his identity as a Latino and how his positionality as a Brown gay man has facilitated his educational and vocational success, rather than impede his progress. Also hailing from El Paso, as Rechy and myself, González decried his white supremacist teachers who told his class (all Latinx) that they arrived on this continent on the Mayflower and because of his parents' insistence he learn Spanish and about his ethnic heritage in Mexico. González's words resonate with me as nineteen eighty-seven was the year I came out of the closet (I was in the eighth grade), *and* I decided being Chicano was incongruent with my sexuality. Had I had access to Gonzalez's words, I possibly could have navigated my internalized racism with my coming out process and not feel like I had to compartmentalize the two major parts of my identity. Moreover, his marginal position has empowered him, “Assimilate, me? Given the joys of an extra culture and language, I wouldn't want to. Has being ‘too Mexican’ held me back? No more, certainly, than if I engaged in a charade.” Over three decades later, mainstream

LGBTQ+ culture and media representation remain overwhelmingly white, thus reading Gonzalez's words would benefit a young Latinx man struggling with similar issues of racial and sexual identity.

The rest of the issue contains an article advertising the Texas Freedom Festival and another historical article educating the readership on Latina history. The Texas Freedom Festival, held in Dallas at the end of September, "celebrates the good old days when it was declared that Texas' Sodomy law, which prohibits gay men and lesbians from engaging in sex, was unconstitutional. Of course, we all now know that the U.S. Supreme Court stated that gay men and lesbians have no right to privacy in their own homes when engaging in this activity [because of the ruling in the previous year's case, *Bowers v. Hardwick (1986)*]." Rechy's argument in *Sexual Outlaw* was his protestation of the hypocrisy of the criminalization of homoerotic sexual practices, and *¡ALLGO PASA!* reminds us of the tenuous state of rights for the LGBTQ+ community depending on the political climate. The article, "Women in Hispanic History Now Being Recognized," decries the exclusion of Latinas from historical texts and their respective cultural and political contributions. The article cites noted historian, Ruthe Lewin Winegarten, who states, "Latinas were landowners, ranchers, supporters of patriotic causes and the mainstay of their community." Winegarten cites Doña Maria Hinojosa de Balli, the first cattle queen of Texas who owned one-third of the Rio Grande Valley in the 1970s; Maria Betancourt, one of the settlers of San Antonio in 1731; Jovita Idar, who created the League of Mexican American Women in 1911, and Blandina Cardenas Ramirez of San Antonio, who was the first Hispanic woman appointed to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. For much of the readership of *¡ALLGO PASA!*, even those who are college-educated, these names would be unknown in a mainstream U.S. or Texas history course. A person would have to take a Xicanx

history course from a progressive instructor to learn about the contributions of these women, and the inclusion of the article further demonstrates ALLGO's commitment to women's issues.

The final issue of the year, vol. 2, no. 9, was combined for November and December. Firstly, there were changes in the ALLGO Steering Committee, as several members tendered their resignations. One of the co-chairs, the secretary, the program chair and acting treasurer, and the communications chair all stepped down from their positions. The remaining board members appointed new people to the vacant positions. Although losing four committee members must have been damaging to ALLGO, more women (three) joined the steering committee and are now in decision-making positions. This contrasts GALA where women never occupied positions of power within the organization.

The lead article describes the success of the Gay and Lesbian March on Washington in October. People with AIDS led the march and such luminaries as Jesse Jackson, Whoopi Goldberg, and César Chávez spoke to the crowd numbering in the hundreds of thousands. The march included a "mass wedding" on the Saturday of the march, some participated in a civil disobedience on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court. Police arrested over 600 participants. The article's author and new ALLGO secretary, Arnoldo Longoria, stressed that actions such as the march and the civil disobedience are necessary tools to awaken the sleeping populace to the nightmare of the AIDS epidemic continuing to ravage the gay male community and other subpopulations.

According to the second front-page article, another critical event occurred before the start of the March on Washington. A group of Latinx LGBTQ+ activists congregated to discuss formalizing the creation of a national organization. Activists from thirteen states and the District of Columbia gathered and agreed upon three major issues to be addressed by the fledgling

organization: the AIDS epidemic as it affects Latinx communities; Latina American issues; and developing an organizational structure. One empowering aspect of the article addressed the distinction between the Latinx LGBTQ+ community and the mainstream, “For too long we have been addressing white gays about racism. It is more important for us to focus on our identities and where we stand in this society.” This is a liberating position and aligns itself with the origins of ALLGO—to make a distinct space for Latinx LGBTQ+ gente without having to compromise or to beseech the mainstream for acceptance.

Another critical section of this edition of *¡ALLGO PASA!* is the welcome news of a statewide organization focusing on the issues and desires of Latina lesbians. According to Maria Limón, a group of women who organized the first retreat, attended the retreat, and other who expressed interest all gathered in November to discuss the logistics of organizing such a historic organization. Representatives from Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston would form a committee to coordinate their respective regions. The organization, as yet unnamed, secured office space in San Antonio. On a related note, the article announces the release of the groundbreaking anthology, *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians* (1987), edited by Juanita Ramos, a perfect complement to the formation of a statewide organization of Latina lesbians.

The first two years of *¡ALLGO PASA!* illustrate the passion and activism of a dynamic group of individuals negotiating intersectional oppressions yet realizing the power of the collective to affect and create change. I situate ALLGO at Anzaldúa’s encrucijada where the impish and mischievous yet powerful orisha, Eleguá, resides and guides those who listen on their paths and others towards Ikú—Death. Eleguá, the Hermes-like messenger orisha, is preceded only by the ancestors, the antepasados—the eggún. The people who dared confront the multidimensional aspect of their oppressions—white supremacy, homophobia, poverty—while

coming to terms with and confronting the AIDS epidemic. What is remarkable about the origins of ALLGO is the inclusion of lesbian issues; the women, though not equal in terms of leadership, are never marginalized, which is evident throughout the various branches of the Chicano Movement and other Latinx LGBTQ+ organizations, as evidenced by Roque Ramirez's pioneering work on GALA.

One of the liberating aspects of Santería is the religion's openness towards women and LGBTQ+ practitioners; although in more traditional houses, patriarchy and homophobia continue to marginalize sections of the community. Technically, eggún are our blood ancestors, yet for LGBTQ+ gente, they can often represent our banishment. Thus, the history evoked by Rechy's and Roque Ramirez's writings and the activism produced by the founders and members of the initial years of ALLGO are the eggún I salute and honor on these pages. From his earliest essays in the 1950s to the genre-defining *City of Night* to the polemics of *Sexual Outlaw*, Rechy forces his readers not to look askance from the histories his work documents. Rather, his passion asks the reader, *demand*s that the criminalization of homoerotic desire, like the men branded with pink triangle in the German death camps and the men and women branded with the twentieth-century version of the scarlet letter, "A" for AIDS, never be forgotten, lest they continue to lay in the dustbin of history.

Notes

¹ A term of Nahuatl origin, a tlacuilo is a scribe, an artist. A person who conveys knowledge with extreme artistry, Rechy, I argue his works are historical documents.

² In a postscript to his 1978 essay, “Common Bonds and Battles,” published in his collection of writings, *Beneath the Skin* (2004), Rechy comments on a chapter of unheralded LGBTQ history.

³ Please see the articles, “83 Percent of Gay Men Have Sent a Dick Pic on Dating Apps, Says Survey,” by Mike Alvear, published on huffingtonpost.com, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-alvear/83-percent-of-gay-men-send-dick-pics-on-dating-apps-says-survey_b_6893316.html and “Finding Real, Lasting Love in Our ‘Dating App’ Culture” by Johnny Skandros on huffingtonpost.com, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johnny-skandros/finding-real-lasting-love_b_9212404.html.

⁴ One glaring example of the whitewashing of the Stonewall Rebellion is the 2015 film, *Stonewall*, attempting to depict the historical event. The director, Roland Emmerich, defended the film to *The Guardian*, “My movie was exactly what they said it wasn’t...It was politically correct. It had black, transgender people in there. We just got killed by one voice on the internet who saw a trailer and said, this is whitewashing Stonewall. Stonewall was a white event, let’s be honest. But nobody wanted to hear that anymore.” Although the film does include a portrayal of Marsha P. Johnson; her role is minor. This contradicts the fact that she, Silvia Rivera, and other transgender women of color were the first to physically retaliate against raiding law enforcement officers, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/roland-emmerich-stonewall-white-event_us_576ab781e4b09926ce5d493b.

⁵ A veiled reference to homoerotic love, this is the closing line of the poem, “Two Loves,” (1892) by Lord Alfred Douglas.

⁶ In his memoir, *About My Life and the Kept Woman* (2008), Rechy recalls spending a weekend with college friends, white fraternity members, at one of the boy’s family’s home in Balmorhea, Texas, a speck of a town in West Texas. He recalls attending a segregated movie theater, and as he could pass for white, Rechy sat with his fraternity friends (who did not know he was Mexican) on the left side, which was reserved for whites on Saturdays, which was also “spic day.” Rechy writes an eye-watering scene of racial hierarchy—rather racial terrorism—in the two-tumbleweed town of Balmorhea, an exotic sounding name which is merely an amalgam of the surnames of the founders, “Scott and I approached together for our tickets. The old man [the cashier] said, with a raspy chuckle: ‘Now you city boys be sure to sit on the left side, ya heah? Right side’s for spics, Saturday afternoon’s spic day.’ He snickered, or coughed, a combination of both that made a dirty sound...’Saturday’s spic day,’ the man said, as if he were being asked to embellish an appreciated joke. ‘They get to sit on the right side, just one day a week, mind ya—they come in from the fields then.’ (110). After Rechy and his friends exit the theater, Rechy notices a sign in the window of the local diner, “‘We do not serve niggers, spics or dogs’” (112). This type of institutional racism may seem to exist only as a historical relic, but I read it as a portent—a warning to remain vigilant in the struggle against white supremacy.

⁷ Ryan M. Bernstein explains in a case comment, “Constitutional Law—Civil Rights: The Supreme Court Strikes Down Sodomy Statute by Creating New Liberties and Invalidating Old Laws: *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003),” analyzing the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003). Aside from providing an analysis of the legal concepts applied to arrive at the decision, Bernstein provides an historical context for the existence of sodomy laws in the U.S., “To determine if sodomy is a liberty deeply rooted in the Nation’s history and tradition, the Court must ascertain if sodomy has ancient roots in American law. Courts typically do this by examining if sodomy practices have been condemned in Western civilization through Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards. The history of prohibiting sodomy acts can be traced back to Biblical times and Hebraic law. However, most scholars have concluded that sodomy was not an offense at the earliest common law. The first indication of a formal statute prohibiting the practice of sodomy was in 1533 after the English Reformation transferred powers of the ecclesiastical courts to the temporal courts. The Statute of Henry VIII, which came from the temporal court, famously coined the act as a ‘crime against nature.’ The common law established by the

temporal court carried over to the original thirteen states. At the time they ratified the Bill of Rights, all made sodomy a criminal offense at common law. This continued throughout the nation, as every state in the union outlawed sodomy until 1961. In *Bowers v. Hardwick* [a 1986 Supreme Court case that upheld a Georgia sodomy law, which *Lawrence* overturned], the Court addressed whether the liberty to engage in sodomy was deeply rooted in America's history. The Court...rejected the contention that sodomy was a fundamental right and should be protected by a higher level of scrutiny against the States. The Court stated that it was 'facetious' to claim the right to engage in sodomy was deeply rooted or implicit in the concept of liberty because of the consistent prohibition of the act throughout American jurisprudence." Bernstein's historical background of sodomy, particularly as it relates to the system of law upon which the U.S. legal system is based, English common law, provides a social and legal context for the enduring legacy of sodomy laws and, by extension, the criminalization of the men who partake in this act. However, as John D'Emilio reasons in his article, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," (1983), "I want to argue that gay men and lesbians have *not* always existed. Instead, they are a product of history, and have come into existence in a specific historical era. Their emergence is associated with the relations of capitalism; it has been the historical development of capitalism—more specifically, its free labor system—that has allowed large numbers of men and women in the late twentieth century to call themselves gay, to see themselves as part of a community of similar men and women, and to organize politically on the basis of that identity" (102). As industrialization increased, the heterosexual family relied less upon each member contributing to it economic sustenance, rather, as D'Emilio describes, it became a center of private life, one that was distinctly separate from the public economy. This became the norm for white, middle-class families. Another critical point raised by D'Emilio is the distinction between homosexual identity from homosexual desire and behavior. What he is arguing is the relative recent development of gay and lesbian identities as a result of the proliferation of industrialization and urbanization. Furthermore, the modern gay and lesbian identity, according to D'Emilio, owes a debt to the lesbians and gay men of the 1940s who created subcultures and communities in urban centers as throngs of people migrated to cities during and after World War II, "The gay men and women of the 1940s were pioneers" (107).

⁸ Even though the *Lawrence* decision invalidated all remaining sodomy laws in the United States, a handful of states refuse to remove them even though the federal ruling supersedes state laws. According to Christopher Coble, Esq., writing for the criminal justice blog, *Findlaw*, explains that only two states repealed their sodomy laws following the *Lawrence* decision. Only Montana and Virginia repealed their sodomy laws while Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah still carry anti-sodomy statutes. Coble writes that Louisiana continues to conduct stings, the same type that entrapped generations of gay men and which enrage Rechy, despite the state law's unconstitutionality (<http://blogs.findlaw.com/blotter/2015/09/do-sodomy-laws-still-exist.html>). Rechy's text, *This Day's Death* (1970), which I discuss at length in this chapter, revolves around one such sting.

⁹ According to the Centers for Disease Control, 73% of transgender men living with HIV are men of color (58% are Black, 15% are Latinx). Of the transgender women living with HIV, 80% are PoC (51% are Black, 29% are Latinx).

¹⁰ "Amoxltli" is the Nahuatl term for a text or a book.

¹¹ Audre Lorde's essay, "There is no Hierarchy of Oppressions," is found in the anthology of her writings, *I am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde* (2009).

¹² From her book, *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century* (1998).

¹³ Pete Sigal's article, "Queer Nahuatl: Sahagún Faggots and Sodomites, Lesbians and Hermaphrodites," analyzes one brief passage of the *Florentine Codex* in which he questions the motives behind the homophobia of the Spanish translation. The Nahuatl term in the amoxltli (the Nahuatl word for codex) is "cuiloni," which translates loosely to the man undertaking the passive role in anal sex, or more simply, a bottom. The Spanish translation, however, equates this term to "puto," the most denigrating and emasculating term for a cisgender Mexican/Xicanx man. The Spanish translation of the passage in question Sigal analyzes is "tu Tezcatlipoca [a deity of the Mexica people] eres un puto" (9). According to Sigal, Sahagún, a Catholic priest, and the Spanish conquerors "were

attempting to ‘feminize’ the ‘enemy’ by calling him a faggot or a sodomite, there seems little question that Nahuatl-speaking peoples found a role for an individual who, while biologically male, dressed as and performed some of the functions of a woman” (14). What Sigal finds problematic, as do I, about previous scholars’ translations and analysis is the substitution of one social reality (the Mexica indigenous belief system of erotic desire that did include the Catholic concept of sin) with the imposition of the conquering worldview (the Spanish Catholic belief system regarding sexuality and morality). For example, Sigal cites previous scholarship which translated the Nahuatl term, “xochihua,” (transliterated as “flower bearer”) as “pervert.” In Mexica society, a “xochihua” was a male cross-dresser who performed the traditional duties of a woman. Thus, this translation reveals more about the translators than it does about the Mexica’s attitudes towards sexuality. Sigal continues to argue that the *Florentine Codex* is a hybridization of two incongruent belief systems regarding homoerotic desire and gender expression. Finally, Sigal concludes correctly, “Translation is a political project and, unless modern interpreters take great care, they will assert a transcultural and transhistorical continuity that does epistemic violence to the conceptual universe of the Nahuatl” (29). Thus, while Sahagún attempted to institutionalize Roman Catholic values and beliefs, pre-conquest Mexica society included such roles as “xochihua” (crossdresser), “cuiloni” (bottom), and “patlache” (lesbian) and did not ascribe homoerotic practices to “sin” or “Hell,” as neither existed in the Mexica worldview. Sigal’s translation of “patlache” as “lesbian,” (earlier scholars translated “patlache” as “hermaphrodite”) is contested by Caroline Dodds Pennock’s assertion in her text, *Bonds of Blood, Gender, and Lifecycle, and Sacrifice In Aztec Culture* (2008), “Both of these translations are possible, supported by some similar sixteenth-century uses, but seem very much related to a desire to ‘discover’ homosexual identities in Aztec culture” (147). Dodds Pennock does concede that in modern Nahuatl, “*patlache* has something of the sense of the words ‘queer’ or ‘dyke’ and is sometimes used by gay indigenous women to describe themselves” (147). Ultimately, Dodds Pennock hedges towards the meaning of “patlache” in classical Nahuatl as “intersex” but does not state so definitively.

¹⁴ Michelangelo Signorile makes the argument that as LGBTQ+ made advances in arena of equal rights, so does the backlash against our community. In his text, *It’s Not Over: Getting Beyond Tolerance, Defeating Homophobia, and Winning True Equality* (2015), Signorile reports, “Since 2011, the expansion of marriage rights to same-sex couples in many states has been a catalyst for latent homophobia, and reports of these kinds [homophobic] incidents have actually increased. Bakeries, florists, reception halls, and catering companies have turned away lesbian and gay couples...In one of the most well-known cases, which became a national rallying cry for antigay evangelical religious leaders, the Bureau of Labor and Industries in Oregon determined in January 2014 that Sweet Cakes by Melissa, a Portland bakery, violated the civil rights of a lesbian couple when it refused to sell them a wedding cake. Co-owner Aaron Klein said this was an attack on Christian businesses and vowed to fight” (29). Moreover, Signorile cites the evocation of alleged attacks on “religious liberties” by such right-wing purveyors of institutional homophobia, such as, Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, Rich Santorum, Mike Huckabee, who frame incidents as “attacks” on Christians, constantly view themselves through the prism of victimization.

¹⁵ Although scholars in the social sciences and humanities have applied the concept of intersectionality for nearly three decades, I understand that the term is being somewhat overused and sometimes misused. Thus, I pause to provide a definition of intersectionality by the visionary scholar, Patricia Hill Collins, the author of the canonical text, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), and Sirma Bilge from the text, *Intersectionality* (2016). They define the concept as, “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves” (Hill Collins and Bilge 2). One of the many instructive features of this definition is the authors leave the possibilities for a plethora of axes that may affect the allocation of power to an individual or community, not only the major categories of gender, race, and class. Rechy understanding of intersectionality as an analytical tool is apparent throughout his corpus.

¹⁶ In an interview in 2010, President Obama (in)famously stated he had “evolved” on the issue of gay marriage, previously supporting civil unions for gay and lesbian couples. In the *Politico* article, “Obama Evolves Again on Same-Sex Marriage,” (2014), Josh Gerstein traces the evolution of President Obama’s position on same-sex marriage as incremental and waffles between a state’s rights approach to advocating for a federal remedy through the U.S. Supreme Court, making comparisons to the pivotal Supreme Court decision of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), the case legalizing interracial marriage in the United States (<https://www.politico.com/blogs/under-the-radar/2014/10/obama-evolves-again-on-same-sex-marriage-197348>).

¹⁷ In her iconic essay, “The Black Experience; A Slow Walk of Trees (as Grandmother Would Say) Hopeless (as Grandfather Would Say),” (1976) Toni Morrison recounts her grandparents’ and parents’ conflicting positions on the progress of the Black community in the United States. Morrison writes, “And like most black people of my generation, I suffer from racial vertigo than can be cured only by taking what one needs from one’s ancestors.” What if one’s (queer) ancestors are gone, taken away by disease?

¹⁸ According to the non-profit organization, True Colors, co-founded by the pop singer, Cyndi Lauper, although LGBTQ+ youth represent 7% of the U.S. youth population, they account for 40% of the homeless youth population. The organization estimates half of all LGBTQ+ youth experience negative reactions when disclosing their non-heteronormative identities. Familial rejection is the primary reason LGBTQ+ youth find themselves in precarious housing situations.

¹⁹ The prolific suicide of the Rutgers University student, Tyler Clementi, because of his roommate using a laptop camera to spy on Clementi and his male sexual partner, garnered international attention and criminal charges for the roommate and an accomplice, explains David S. Byers in his article, “‘Do They See Nothing Wrong with This?’: Bullying, Bystander Complicity, and the Role of Homophobic Bias in the Tyler Clementi Case,” (2013). Byers examines the role of bystander complicity, as the roommate who filmed Clementi spread the images to his social media following. Unfortunately, even in this era of increasing “tolerance” and “acceptance,” no one in Clementi’s dorm advocated for him, rather encouraging him to repeat the event. The quote in the article title refers to a comment Clementi posted to an online forum on an LGBTQ-oriented website. According to the investigation, Clementi checked his roommate’s social media account thirty-eight times after the event. However, as Byers reports, “Despite the fact that so many of the students were exposed to the story and messages, none expressed concern for Tyler” (253). Only eighteen years old, yet because of peer judgment, he chose to jump off the George Washington Bridge because of societal homophobia, as Rechy says, is condoned.

²⁰ The prolific documentary, *The Bronze Screen: 100 Years of the Latino Image in Hollywood* (2002), provides a thorough history of Latinx representation in the medium of film, yet no Latinx LGBTQ+ characters emerge. Conversely, in the documentary, *The Celluloid Closet* (1995), a film describing the long history of queer images in film, includes very few people of color, and not one Latinx character. Thus, homophobia erases our queer identities from the Latinx community, and white supremacy overshadows Latinx representations from visibility in the LGBTQ+ community.

²¹ In the “voice over” titled, “Promiscuous Rage,” Rechy responds to Kramer’s declaration discursively, “No stricture—legal, medical, religious—will ever stop him. It will only harden his defiance. Neither sinful, criminal, nor sick—he knows that to try to force him not to be a homosexual *is* sinful, criminal, and sick—and as impossible as forcing a heterosexual not to be a heterosexual. Why is the homosexual hated? Since he is not a child molester nor a seducer of the unwilling, how does he threaten the straight world?” (31). Rechy questions the institutional homophobia that trickles down to the interpersonal level to such acts as gay bashings, a crime he also broaches in the “voice over.”

²² The controversial writer, Richard Rodriguez, author of the memoir, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982), includes an essay titled, “Late Victorians,” in his collection of writings, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* (1992). The essay’s title contains a double meaning as description of the famed Victorian houses in San Francisco, also known as the “Painted Ladies,” and a reference to the throngs of gay men who died of AIDS who retreated from the militant political activism fomented in the 1970s

because of the rise and assassination of Harvey Milk and later in the 1980s by the specter of HIV into lives of homonormative domesticity. This essay is a lament, a eulogy for the lost generations of gay men. Alas, as Rodriguez's essay describes, even refurbished Victorian homes and a mimicry of heterosexual marriage could not keep the Red Death from visiting.

²³ "Chem porn" is an abbreviation of "chemical porn" and focuses on the use of the narcotic, crystal methamphetamines, or "Tina," by the method of "slamming," or injecting the drug intravenously, often sharing needles and engaging in unprotected anal sex, or "barebacking."

²⁴ In Rechy's text, *Rushes* (1979), which I explore in-depth in third chapter, the majority of the plot takes place in a leather bar in New York City. In one pivotal scene, two effeminate homosexuals who are escaping gay bashers, are allowed entrance into the bar, albeit, reluctantly because of the requirements for entrance, rather who they exclude, "fats, femmes, over 35s." Although fictional, gay bars of this era catering to a hypermasculine clientele, often enforced these body-shaming, femme-shaming, and ageist rules.

²⁵ Lisa Duggan defines homonormativity in her essay, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," published in the anthology, *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics* (2002), as "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but uphold and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (179). Homonormative queers are "safe" for consumption by the heterosexual general public, as seen in television series such as, *Will and Grace*, *Modern Family*, and the first season of *American Horror Story: Murder House*. These queers are not queer at all; they are white, middle to upper-class, and cisgender men who are wholly apolitical.

²⁶ According to the article, "Out on the Street: A Public Health and Policy Agenda for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Who are Homeless," (2014), Alex S. Keuroghlian, Derri Shtasel, and Ellen L. Bassuk report, "A disproportionate number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons experience homelessness each year in the United States, although the exact number is unknown...It has also been documented that LGBT youth comprise approximately 30-45% of clients served by homeless youth agencies, drop-in centers, outreach, and housing programs" (1-2). The researchers also report the high incidence rates of mental health problems, substance abuse issues, attempted suicide, and high-risk sexual behaviors. The subject of LGBT youth homelessness is an area of study that has gained attention within the last decade as the researchers comment, "The issue of homelessness among LGBT youth in the United States has remained largely unacknowledged until recently when this subgroup became part of a broader national conversation about how to prevent and end homelessness" (2). It was not until 2010 when the governmental report, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, was published that agencies working with homeless populations regarded LGBT youth as a viable and distinct category and one that is at substantial risk for homelessness. Fortunately, the publication of this report caused agencies to create new strategies for better outcomes regarding LGBT youth who are homeless. The 2012 report, "Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Who are Homeless or at Risk of Becoming Homeless," by Laura E. Durso and Gary J. Gates, both from the UCLA School of Law, contains the results of an online survey of agencies whose clientele includes LGBT homeless youth. The findings are predictably dire, "LGBT youth comprise approximately 40% of the clientele served by agencies represented in the sample" (Durso and Gates 3). The authors also report that the respondents all indicate they are serving more LGBT youth more than ten years prior. One interesting finding of the report is a list of the top five reasons why LGBT youth are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. The reasons are worth mentioning, particularly in the current climate of alleged "acceptance,": ran away because of familial rejection due to sexual orientation or gender identity (46%); forced out by family because of sexual orientation or gender identity (43%); physical, emotional, or sexual abuse at home (32%); aged out of the foster care system (17%); and financial or emotional neglect (14%). Nearly 70% of the respondents' clients experienced familial rejection, and over half reported experiencing some type of abuse. The "psychic threat" LGBT persons pose unfortunately is exacted upon the most vulnerable segments of our community. According to The Trevor Project, the most visible organization dedicated to providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ youth, "LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual

youth...[and] 40% of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt. 92% of these individuals reported having attempted suicide before the age of 25” (<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/preventing-suicide/facts-about-suicide/#sm.00001ecuamaxoefspzegfk575mbmh>). Regarding violence perpetrated against LGBT persons, the Human Rights Campaign reported 2016 statistics published by the FBI. The FBI reported a slight increase in hate crimes against LGBT people; “[h]owever, these numbers likely represent only a fraction of such cases, given that reporting hate crimes to the FBI is not mandatory. Thousands of law enforcement agencies throughout the country did not submit any data. And while the number of jurisdictions reporting hate crimes data increased to 15,251 in 2016 from 14,997 in 2015, this is still less than the 15,494 agencies that reported in 2014. The lack of mandatory reporting means that the FBI data, while helpful, paints a very incomplete picture of hate crimes against LGBTQ Americans” (<https://www.hrc.org/blog/new-fbi-data-shows-increased-reported-incidents-of-anti-lgbtq-hate-crimes-i>). This lack of reporting of hate crimes not only constructs an incomplete image of hate crimes against LGBTQ persons, but it also undercounts bias crimes against PoC, women, immigrants, and religious minorities. The lack of uniformity in reporting hate crimes is another example of institutional oppression. However, as Rechy states in an interview with Debra Castillo, “homosexuals are the only minority born into the opposing camp—call it the enemy camp,” (1996), I surmise that the number of hate crimes perpetrated against LGBT persons is more underreported than other bias crimes because many victims may not be “out” to their families or may feel reticent to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to law enforcement out of fear of further discrimination.

²⁷ In a joint interview with the queer Chicana writer, Felicia Luna Lemus, for *The Advocate*, Rechy does not equivocate regarding his stance on promiscuity, “That’s the difference between a man and a woman. I think something is going very wrong among gay men when they are now dating before they fuck. With gay men, we should have sex first...The biggest queens in the world are leather queens. And that gets back to a lot of the problems that gay men face being problems as men—not gay men, but as men. When our heterosexual friends decry promiscuity, I always put it to them that if there were a park in their city where knockout ladies like yourselves [referring to Lemus and the interviewer, Anne Stockwell]...hung out and were willing to drop down into the bushes with a gentleman, do you think heterosexual gentlemen wouldn’t be making that park very, very popular? The fact that women would not want this [keeps it off-limits]. But for us, gay men, it is available” (67). This last part of Rechy’s statement begs the question: Is part of the fear of homosexual men actually based in envidia, envy? Are heterosexual men secretly jealous of the sexual freedom gay men exercise capriciously and regularly without the subterfuge of the first date and the pretense of seeking a committed relationship?

²⁸ According to Miller, the German government passed Paragraph 175 into its penal code in 1871 and did not repeal it until 1969, twenty-five years after the defeat of the Nazi regime. The West German Supreme Court even upheld the more insidious version of the law modified by the Nazis. Moreover, according to Miller, the men with the pink triangle suffered multiple layers of oppression and indignation. Once “freed,” formerly imprisoned gay men experienced discrimination by Allied forces and the subsequent West German government. Even while imprisoned, gay men encountered derision by fellow detainees. Tragically, during the historical moment preceding the rise of the Nazi regime, the gay and lesbian community, under the direction of the pioneering Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, had made great strides in creating an inclusive community for themselves yet with the rise of the Nazi regime, they became objects of derision by every faction on both sides of World War II.

²⁹ Rechy’s historical memory is why he rejects terms, such as “queer” and “dyke,” even when others present the counterargument of reclaiming the words in order to diffuse them of homophobic hate and infuse them with post-modern pride. In the aforementioned co-interview with Felicia Luna Lemus, who describes herself as a “Chicana dyke,” Rechy declares, “I hear a lot of words being uttered that I cannot stand. ‘Queer.’ ‘Dyke.’...There’s enough alienation between generations in the gay world. The word *queer* in my time belonged to raids, assaults, cops, bashers, and all that...Of course, I understand [the intention of reappropriation]. But you’ll never defuse that word for us.

³⁰ The arrest of two men having consensual sexual relations *inside* of one of the participant’s apartment is what led to the *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) Supreme Court decision, the case that invalidated all remaining sodomy laws. As Rechy urges us to remember, historically, the right to privacy is tenuous for gay men.

³¹ According to Robert Lindsey's article in *The New York Times*, "Los Angeles Police Subject of Inquiry," (1983), a police commission ordered the PDID to disband after twelve years of monitoring peaceful progressive groups and even city officials and was "[a] descendant of the department's now disbanded 'Red Squad,' which pursued leftists from the 1920s through the 1950s...[and] the evidence showed that undercover policemen infiltrated nonmilitant citizens' groups formed to oppose nuclear power and to monitor allegation of brutality and harassment of [B]lacks by members of the department." As Rechy illustrates by including this seemingly inconsequential budget item in this "Mixed Media," the PDID represented a McCarthy-type arm of the LAPD and siphoned resources from actual crimes.

³² According to the article, "Serial Killer John Floyd Thomas, Jr., dubbed the Westside Rapist, is Sentenced to Life," Victoria Kim, Andrew Blankstein, and Jack Leonard report on the trial and sentencing of the man who terrorized Los Angeles-area women in the 1970s. The article, published April 2, 2011, details his misogynist crimes and begs the question: How many of Thomas' crimes could have been prevented had the LAPD diverted resources to actual crimes instead of focusing on non-violent drugs crimes, citizens organizing for progressive causes, and gay men meeting in clandestine sites for consensual sex?

³³ In an outstanding example of investigative journalism, I recommend Johann Hari's text, *Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs* (2016). Hari's well-documented tome examines the patriarch responsible for the racialization of drug usage and the subsequent law enforcement actions against communities of color, Harry J. Anslinger. Hari examines the "War on Drugs" from a global perspective and documents the lives whom authorities victimized. Hari also cites evidence linking substance abuse to childhood trauma and the outcomes of Portugal's policy of the decriminalization of possession of any drug for personal use.

³⁴ Nicole E. Roberts argues in her article, "The Plight of Gay Visibility: Intolerance in San Francisco, 1970-1979," (2013) that painting San Francisco as a queer mecca free from violence is erroneous. The mainstream press described San Francisco as a gay beacon, yet gay publications reported the increasing violence against the increasing visibility of the LGBTQ+ community, threatening those harboring a status quo cognitive bias. The Lavender Panthers, a "gay vigilante group," (112) formed to protect queer people in public spaces, usually leaving gay bars where harassment was routine.

³⁵ In this article published by LGBT news magazine, *The Advocate*, dated December 20, 1972, L.A.P.D officers arrested at least nine drag queens attending a drag ball. The officers charged them with lewd conduct; their only "crime" was dressing in drag. According to the article, one officer, an undercover vice cop, flirted with one of the drag queens and when she reciprocated, the officer arrested her and charged her with prostitution. This occurred less than fifty years ago, yet younger LGBTQ+ persons, particularly members of Generation X and the millennial generation, may be unaware of the entrenched homophobic practices of law enforcement. Allocating law enforcement resources to entrap and arrest drag queens may seem like an anachronism considering the mainstream popularity of the artform, particularly *RuPaul's Drag Race*, currently in its tenth fabulous season, yet the bravery of drag queens and transgender persons who openly challenged and transgressed the heteronormativity of such laws should be lauded and commended. When a segment of the gay male population donned hypermasculine "macho drag," partly out of protection from anti-gay violence but primarily out of a strain of virulent internalized homophobia and externalized *and* internalized misogyny.

³⁶ Rechy includes excerpts from three different articles, both from the *Los Angeles Times*, under this headline. The first article discusses the lack of professionalism of the L.A.P.D. when it addressed major crimes, as they received "no more than superficial attention from investigators" (Rechy 144). Not only did the L.A.P.D. manufacture crimes by entrapping gay men and arresting drag queens but they engaged in corrupt behaviors and displayed incompetence when confronted by actual crimes. The second excerpt discusses the arrest of two young men for lewd behavior; L.A.P.D officers observed them kissing for nearly two hours. A California appellate court upheld the mens' conviction and required them to register as sex offenders—for kissing. Two young lives (both men were in their early 20s) ruined because of the internalized homophobia of the officers. The sexual outlaw does not abide by these laws and becomes more defiant when injustices like these occur, even when he knows it could be him next. The third excerpt is a short quote from a San Francisco vice squad officer decrying the fecklessness of

laws prohibiting solicitation, ““At some points during the night, it’s absolutely ludicrous. . . They only people on the streets are them and us” (Rechy 145). The vice squad officer recognizes the futility of his division of law enforcement—who *exactly* is he serving and protecting by arresting sex workers?

³⁷ Performing a stereotypical gay identity may actually *help* in acquiring asylum in some cases. According to Fadi Hanna in the legal commentary article, “Punishing Masculinity in Gay Asylum Claims,” (2005) published in the *Yale Law Journal*, the author answers the question, “Does a homosexual asylum seeker need to prove he is ‘gay enough’ to win protection from a U.S. court? Increasingly, and troublingly, the answer is yes. In *In re Soto Vega* (2004), the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) denied a gay man’s application for asylum because he appeared too stereotypically heterosexual. The decision is representative of a trend in immigration law to equate visibility with the potential for antihomosexual persecution” (913). The case involved thirty-three-year-old Jorge Soto Vega, who was seeking asylum from Mexico, where he had been the object of homophobic abuse. According to Hanna, “While accepting that Soto Vega was homosexual, the IJ [immigration judge] reasoned that he was not stereotypically gay enough to objectively fear identification as such, remarking that “I didn’t see anything in his appearance, his dress, his manner, his demeanor, his gestures, his voice, or anything of that nature that remotely approached some of the stereotypical things that society assesses to gays” (914). The immigration judge, presumably heterosexual, believed the myth that all gay men possess a set of shared characteristics—physical traits, mannerisms, or dress. Because Soto Vega was not “flamboyantly” or “obviously” gay, the IJ reasoned he could not possess the requisite level of fear for his safety necessary to be granted asylum. Hanna remarks that immigration judges who denied asylum to other “straight-acting” gay men used the same reasoning as the IJ in the *Soto Vega* case. Furthermore, Hanna argues that “covering motivated by fear—what [he calls] ‘reactionary covering’ is, in fact, more than mere evidence of fear of persecution. It constitutes persecution” (918). What *Soto Vega* illustrates is the complicated terrain of the intersection of sexuality, gender performance, and immigration/asylum. An immigration agent denied entry to Quiroz, a permanent resident, *because* of her “lesbian” or “masculine” appearance, yet an immigration in the *Soto Vega* case denied asylum to the plaintiff because he appeared to not be “gay enough.” Luibhéid’s and Hanna’s work illustrate the historic institutional homophobia of U.S. immigration policy and the complicated terrain of sexuality, gender performance, human rights, and the legal system. One last comment critiquing Hanna’s otherwise eloquent defense of “straight-acting” gay men seeking asylum in the U.S. originates from his use of the past participle, “admitted,” in the article. Hanna writes when explaining the circumstances of the case, “Jorge Soto Vega freely admitted his homosexuality in both the United States and his native Mexico but, in the eyes of the IJ, skillfully concealed his orientation on a day-to-day basis—in essence, by acting ‘normal’ rather than ‘queer’” (915). The use of the action verb “admit,” particularly in a legal commentary article, exposes the institutional homophobia embedded within our *language*. Hanna could have used the synonyms “revealed” or “disclosed” in this statement, yet when an LGBTQ+ person “comes out,” heteronormative society considers this as an admission of guilt, which continues the discourse of criminalization for the LGBTQ+ community. Hanna is not the only person at fault, though. Certainly, the editors of the *Yale Law Journal* who reviewed this article concluded that “admitting his homosexuality” was a suitable phrase for publication in such a highly regarded publication. The linguistic homophobia of casual remarks between youthful peers such as, “That’s so gay,” to a phrase in an esteemed law journal not only lends credence to the institutional homophobia ingrained in every facet of U.S. society, it illustrates how embedded homophobia is.

³⁸ In his first term, President Obama takes the courageous step to end the discriminatory travel ban against visitors to the U.S. living with HIV (<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/31/us/politics/31travel.html>).

³⁹ By 1972, Rechy’s publications included *City of Night* (1963), *Numbers* (1967), *This Day’s Death* (1969), *The Vampires* (1971), and *The Fourth Angel* (1972). The writers of *El Plan de Santa Barbara* (1968), the founding document of the discipline of Chicana/o Studies, include one of Rechy’s early articles published in *The Nation*, “El Paso del Norte” (1958), in a list of recommended readings yet for some reason overlook Rechy’s first two novels.

⁴⁰ A song on the Pet Shop Boys’ album, *Very* (1993), makes this observation of the gay men’s reticence in gay bars, “To speak is a sin/You look first, then stare/and once in a while/a smile if you dare/We’ll stand around forever/regardless of time or weather/ordering drinks at the bar/Looking for love and getting/Nothing that’s worth

regretting/but wondering why we travelled so far.” This fear of gay men “posing” and not speaking is a theme of Rechy’s novel, *Rushes* (1979), which is a focus of the next chapter.

⁴¹ In the Youtube.com video, “Fuera del Closet: Gay Latino Immigrants in Dallas,” a queer Xicanx activist named Fernie Sanchez, president of Valiente, an LGBT Latinx organization, explains the categories of LGBT Latinx in the Cedar Springs District, the “gay ghetto” of Dallas. Sanchez describes the discriminatory practices of the clubs in Cedar Springs, echoing Reyes’ experiences. Clubs would demand two or three picture IDs from men of color. Sanchez also explains the different experiences of LGBT Latinx immigrants versus those who are, in Sanchez’s words, “more assimilated.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv5qDlzRmE>). In a conservative city in a conservative state, queer Latinx manage to negotiate spaces to express the wholeness of their identities.

⁴² Xicanx educational activism predates the East Los Angeles Blowouts. In the article, “‘Mexican Americans Don’t Value Education!’—On the Basis of the Myth, Mythmaking, and Debunking,” (2002) Richard R. Valencia and Mary S. Black provide a detailed historical account of the legal cases and other factors illustrating the Xicanx commitment to education began decades before the 1968 Blowouts in East L.A. Valencia and Black state, “Since the 1930s, Mexican Americans have brought forth lawsuits of various types in their efforts to improve the educational lot of their children and youths... One of the more common forms of political demonstrations has been the strategy of a “blowout” (school walkout). It appears that the first such blowout occurred in 1910 in San Angelo, Texas, lasting through 1915 (93-94). Thus, Xicanx educational activists have been engaging institutional racism for over a century, another history often overlooked.

⁴³ Cesar Chávez was one of the first major Chicana/o Movement figures to speak on behalf of LGBTQ+ rights, even speaking at the 1987 Gay and Lesbian March on Washington. According to Luis D. León in his text, *The Political Spirituality of César Chávez: Crossing Religious Borders* (2014), Chavez’s commitment to LGBTQ+ rights can be traced back to the 1960s, long before supporting queer rights became fashionable, “On October 11, 1987, Chávez was one of the leaders of the Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. In addition to a federal law protecting the gay community, protestors sought to raise consciousness and money to combat AIDS. Following the demonstration, Chavez also spoke at the rally on the National Mall in Washington. There, before an estimated gathering of two hundred thousand people, he declared, ‘Our movement [the United Farm Workers (UFW)] has been supporting lesbian and gay rights for over 20 years. We supported lesbian and gay rights when it was just a crown of 10 people.’ The leader sometimes wore a UFW button with the black eagle over a pink triangle. He was a pioneer in struggling for the civil rights of all people and challenging negative macho attitudes about lesbians and gays” (172). In the text, *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism* (2015), one of the contributors, Laura M. Esquivel, recounts conversing with Chávez at the 1987 March on Washington, “He was the first major civil rights leader to publicly speak out in support of gay rights. I have always been so proud of that... I wore my UFW sweatshirt for the March on Washington and was wearing it when I spoke to Cesar. I spoke with Cesar about the pressure we often felt as LGBT Latina/o activists to be one or the other—Latina/o or LGBT. We were committed to both but faced so much resistance from both Latina/o and LGBT communities when raising the issues. At the time, gay issues were not perceived to affect Latinas/os, and the gay community was as resistant to addressing issues of race as the larger society was and is... He was so incredibly sweet... [B]ut he told me that we deserved to be all of who we were and that we should have our own organizations. I started crying. It made a huge difference to me” (93). Chavez’s intersectional politics and understanding further cement his legacy as a civil rights leader.

⁴⁴ Dolores Huerta, a longtime champion of LGBTQ+ equality, includes on her foundation’s website, <http://doloreshuerta.org/>, an “Equality Program,” which includes programming for Latinx LGBTQ+ youth and community members. Like her compadre, Chávez, Huerta’s vision is both of the serpent (the grassroots) and the eagle (the macro), as Marian Wright Edelman reports in her article, “Empowering Farm Workers,” published in the *Washington Informer* on October 11, 2012, “When Huerta spoke to community and youth leaders at the Children’s Defense Fund’s recent national conference, she shared some of her wisdom from her long legacy of working for justice—starting with the point that the people who need change most are the best ones to make it happen. ‘The thing we have to remember is that change comes from the bottom, okay? All of the changes that have been made, whether it’s the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the women’s movement, the LGBT movement, the

immigrants' movement... we can make the change, but it's got to start with us." Huerta's message of positive change from social justice activism is even more salient in the political climate fostered by the white supremacist patriarchy of the Trump administration; intersectional, coalitional grassroots organizing that complements electoral political participation.

⁴⁵ Once housing the city's Latinx population, the Mission District of San Francisco underwent radical changes and efforts of displacement during the 1990s and beyond. According to Nancy Raquel Mirabal in her article, "Geographies of Displacement: Latina/os, Oral History, and The Politics of Gentrification in San Francisco's Mission District" (2009), she describes the demographic changes in the neighborhood, as a confluence of municipal, legal, and economic forces resulted in the displacement of thousands of Latinx families from the Mission District. Mirabal cites the following statistics and trends unique to San Francisco, "According to the 2000 Census Bureau and the 2005 Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 10 percent of San Francisco's Latina/o community moved out of the city. In a city of close to 719,077 residents, the Latina/o population decreased from 109,504 to 98,891 residents. What makes the numbers for Latina/os even more remarkable is that, according the same census, San Francisco was the only major city in the United States to experience loss in its Latina/o population" (14). The 2009 film, *La Mission*, one of the few films to feature prominently a gay Chicano male character, incorporates the topic of gentrification to advance the plot and create dramatic tension. Published in *The Public Historian*, v. 31, no. 2, (Spring 2009), pp. 7-31.

⁴⁶ Dr. Maylei Blackwell's text "respins," as a DJ remixes a song, the master narrative of the Chicana/o Movement by providing the voices and stories of Chicana feminists who challenged the patriarchal nationalism of the early years. This "respinning" utilizes Emma Pérez's framework of the "decolonial imaginary." Pérez's "decolonial imaginary" allows historians to challenge the "official" or "master" narrative in order to include the voices of women and queers, who are often overlooked in the phallogocentric telling of the Chicana/o Movement. As Blackwell documents Chicana resistance against Chicano patriarchy. Later in this chapter, I offer evidence of another example of organizational resistance. The organization, ALLGO, challenged the patriarchy and racism of two different movements— heteronormative Chicana/o rights groups and the mainstream (White) LGBT movement—in order to create an inclusive organization that would respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis in a culturally sensitive manner. ¡*Chicana Power!* allows for other historians to disrupt the linearity of traditional history; the ruptures that occur are the locations where the marginal voices reside.

⁴⁷ Día de la Raza, or Day of the People, is celebrated to counter the imperialist, white supremacist genocidal history of Christopher Columbus and Columbus Day. Día de la Raza acknowledges the history of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the subsequent enslavement of African people.

⁴⁸ An analogous example is found north of the border in the study undertaken by Sulaimon Giwa and Cameron Greensmith in their article, "Race Relations and Racism in the LGBTQ Community of Toronto: Perceptions of Gay and Queer Social Service Providers of Color" (2012). Giwa and Greensmith argue, "The competitive nature of funding schemes is an additional barrier, as ethnospecific organizations are expected to compete with large, well-funded, mainstream, White-dominant HIV/AIDS agencies (e.g., AIDS Committee of Toronto) for the limited funding available. Furthermore, because many health-based funding bodies operate from a Western biomedical framework, ethnospecific organizations that depend on them for financial support are siloed into providing epidemiologically based services and research that primarily focus on HIV/AIDS. This situation has had the unfortunate consequence of reprioritizing the issues to which such organizations attend, such as the compromising effects of racism on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ people of color" (150-151). Using Critical Race Theory as their theoretical framework, Giwa and Greensmith interviewed several gay men, white and men of color, to ascertain the issue of racism in the community at-large and specifically among social service providers. They found that LGTBQ PoC negotiated the intersection of homophobia and white supremacy in Toronto, not surprisingly. This article published in 2012 illustrates the pervasive and persistent violence of white supremacy within LGBTQ communities. To ALLGO's credit, its founders recognized and tackled such issues and thus employed a politics of intersectional resistance since 1985.

⁴⁹ Commonly known as the “cocktail,” current HIV treatment consists of three or more different medications which impede the progression of the virus in multiple dimensions. Before the release of the “cocktail,” AZT was the main drug used to treat HIV. However, AZT, which is still in use today, was prescribed at toxic levels and was cost prohibitive for many. The “cocktail” which the CDC labels Antiretroviral therapy (ART) remains inaccessible for many because of the cost, particularly those without health insurance. The cost per month for ART treatment can range from the hundreds to the thousands for those with no health insurance. Medicaid covers treatment for low-income people but only if they have developed one of the markers of an AIDS diagnosis, either a low CD4 (white blood cell) count or a high viral load (the aggregate of copies of the virus measured in a blood draw). Without universal healthcare, the most vulnerable remain without life-saving treatment and are able to pass the virus to others, thus exacerbating a public health crisis. According to Sarah Childress in her article, “Why Some with HIV Still Can’t Get Treatment,” many people who test positive do not have access to anti-retroviral drugs. Childress reports that approximately one-third of HIV-positive people fall into this category. Childress writes, only “17 percent of Americans living with HIV have private insurance. Nearly 30 percent have no coverage at all. They don’t have coverage through a job, can’t afford private insurance and make just enough to disqualify them from Medicaid” (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/why-some-with-hiv-still-cant-get-treatment/>).

⁵⁰ In the 1970s, some gay bars routinely excluded lesbians and other women, men over 35, men of color, overweight men and those who did not possess the ideal gym physique, and men with effeminate characteristics.

⁵¹ According to the website, <http://www.latinoglbthistory.org/>, “The Latino GLBT History Project (LHP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit volunteer-led organization founded in April 2000 to respond to the critical need to preserve and educate about our history. LHP creates educational exhibits from our historical archives collection showcased at cultural events such as, a Women’s History Month Reception, a Hispanic LGBTQ Heritage Reception and DC Latino Pride, educational presentations at local and national conferences and through our online virtual museum.” Gutiérrez ambition to document Latina/o LGBTQ+ history is being fully realized, but this is collective labor needing to be undertaken by others.

⁵² Anita Bryant, a forgettable entertainer from the 1960s with a few minor hits, became one of the most virulent faces of the anti-gay movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The national spokesperson for orange juice, the LGBTQ+ community quickly mobilized and boycotted screwdrivers from gay bars and started selling a drink named after her. The “Anita Bryant” consisted of vodka and apple juice. Gay bars donated the proceeds of the sale of “Anita Bryants” to combat her activism. Bryant is part of LGBTQ+ activist history, as a gay activist by the name of Tom Higgins hit Bryant in the face with a cream pie in the middle of a press conference (<https://www.out.com/today-gay-history/2016/10/14/today-gay-history-gay-activist-pies-anita-bryant-face>). A tragic outcome of Anita Bryant’s homophobic activism is the brutal gay-bashing of 33-year-old Robert Hillsborough in San Francisco on June 21, 1977. Hillsborough and a friend were eating after a night out when they accosted by four youths. Outside of Hillsborough’s home, one of the gay bashers stabbed him numerous times while shouting gay slurs and, “This one’s for Anita!” Hillsborough’s friend survived with critical injuries. Of the four gay bashers, the court convicted only one and sentenced him to ten years. Authorities dropped charges against another of the attackers. The district attorney failed to charge the other two. Hillsborough’s murder mobilized the LGBTQ+ community of San Francisco, and Mayor George Moscone ordered city buildings to lower their flags to half-staff, as he worked as a gardener for the city, according to Will Kohler in his article, “The Forgotten Lost—June 21, 1977: The Brutal Murder of Robert Hillsborough Rocks San Francisco and the Nation” (<http://www.back2stonewall.com/2018/06/brutal-murder-of-robert-hillsborough.html>).

⁵³ One of the tragic cases Medina references is the murder of a 23-year-old Chicano and Vietnam veteran, José Campos Torres, whom the Houston police threw into the bayou and drowned while he was in custody in 1977. The Houston police claimed he was trying to escape and fell into the bayou accidentally. However, according to Marialuisa Rincon in her article published in the *Houston Chronicle*, “Forty Years Ago Police Killed Joe Campos Torres Sparking Massive Moody Park Riots,” (2017), “Campos Torres was beaten by six police officers for hours before they took him to the city jail. Once there, officials refused to book him because of the extent of his injuries and ordered that he be admitted to a hospital. The six arresting officers instead took him, once again, to The Hole, [an isolated area behind a warehouse along Buffalo Bayou]. Following another beating, Campos Torres was pushed

off the raised platform and fell twenty feet into the Bayou, where his body was found three days later.” A jury found the officers responsible for Campos Torres’ murder guilty of a misdemeanor and ordered \$1 in damages. Riots protesting the verdict ensued.

⁵⁴ D’Emilio documents a harrowing period of LGBTQ history, a time when the federal government originally sought to identify members of the Communist Party but expanded its scope to locate known homosexuals and their friends and acquaintances, “Friendship with a known homosexual or lesbian subjected anyone to investigation. The Post Office, exploiting its authority to prevent the dissemination of obscene material through the mail, joined the antihomosexual campaign. The department established a watch on the recipients of physique magazines and other forms of gay male erotica. Postal inspectors subscribed to pen pal clubs, initiated corresponded with men whom they believed might be homosexual, and, if their suspicions were confirmed, placed tracers on victims’ mail in order to locate other homosexuals. Federal investigators engaged in more than fact finding; they also exhibited considerable zeal in using the information they collected. A professor in Maryland and an employee of the Pennsylvania department of highways, for example, lost their jobs after the Post Office revealed to their employers that the men received mail implicating them in homosexual activity. Neither of the victims ever met his accusers” (47). Just as Rechy protests such police entrapment and other forms of institutional homophobia in *Sexual Outlaw*, D’Emilio provides earlier accounts of such abuses of power.

⁵⁵ Discrimination against AIDS patients in hospitals. In the 2018 FX series, *Pose*, the episode, “Giving and Receiving,” two of the peripheral characters who do not know each other are seen entering a hospital elevator. They exit on the same floor and sign their names. They walk in opposite directions. As each walks the corridor, each notices the filth on the floor, piles of food trays, soiled hospital gowns, and other debris. The camera pans to the open doors to reveal living skeletons of emaciated men with eyes bulging, lungs gasping, mouths gaping. This scene is representative of the discrimination against AIDS patients in many hospitals. Staff could ignore AIDS patients, often leaving their food trays at the door and never changing their IVs or soiled sheets and gowns. Each of the characters is visiting a friend suffering from an AIDS-related illness.

⁵⁶ The Blood Sisters represents an amazing act of kindness and activism enacted by lesbians when their queer brothers needed it most. In 1983, AIDS continued to run rampant through the gay male community with little progress made by scientists or doctors. After health officials banned blood donations from gay men, members of the women’s caucus of the San Diego Democratic Club organized to form Blood Sisters, a group collecting blood donations for gay men living with HIV. Pat Sherman writes in the article, “Moments in Time: Blood Sisters,” “The group organized regular blood drives to assure there was enough blood on hand when gay men needed a transfusion... The Blood Sisters organized their first drive on July 16, 1983, at the San Diego Blood Bank on Upas Street in Hillcrest [and] close to 200 women showed up, resulting in at least 130 donations” (<https://gay-sd.com/moments-in-time-the-blood-sisters/>). This act of heroism is yet further evidence of the debt gay men, both HIV-positive and HIV-negative, owe to our lesbian sisters.

⁵⁷ According to Riker Pasterkiewicz in the article, “Latent Homophobia Looms Over Blood Donation Waiting Periods,” (2017) published in the online publication, *Pacific Standard*, the ban on MSM blood donations changed to a twelve-month waiting period in 2015. Thus, MSM can only give blood if they have not had any sexual contact with another man in the previous twelve months. Some consider this move from a complete ban to a twelve-month waiting period as progress but as Pasterkiewicz argues, “Yet the limits of this apparent political about-face soon became crystal clear. In June of 2016, a mass shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, left 50 people dead and dozens of others wounded. There was a need for blood donations. Yet because of the FDA’s rules, most MSM, even those in committed, long-term relationships, were turned away from donating blood. While the FDA contends that its policy is based on behavior and nothing to do with sexual orientation, this justification, it seems, ignores science: Due to significant advances in medical technology and our collective understanding of the virus, most cases of HIV can be detected in as few as nine days after contraction and, at most, in just over one month. Though the policy change is a step in the right direction, the current waiting period is as arbitrary as a lifetime ban.” Heterosexuals engaging in unprotected sex with multiple partners are not restricted, yet monogamous gay male couples are still restricted, which is a policy still based in homophobia. (<https://psmag.com/social-justice/equal-rights-for-blood-donations>).

⁵⁸ Voters rejected Proposition 64 by a margin of 71% to 29% ([https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_64_Mandatory_Reporting_of_AIDS_\(1986\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_64_Mandatory_Reporting_of_AIDS_(1986))). Ken Yeager, Santa Clara County Supervisor, recalls the activism to combat Proposition 64 (<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/d4/lgbtq/Pages/Prop-64.aspx>).

⁵⁹ According to Rodolfo Acuña, author of *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (2004), Operation Wetback was an operation designed by the federal government to curb the influx of undocumented immigrants during the 1950s. Acuña explains, “Official U.S. policy was to exclude ‘illegals,’ but during the 1950s hundreds of thousands of Mexicans crossed the border in search of work. Newspapers reacted by calling for their exclusion and arousing anti-alien sentiments: Undocumented workers were portrayed as dangerous, malicious, and subversive. It is ironic that while the press condemned the migration from Mexico, the bracero program drew large numbers of workers to the border, and the border patrol looked the other way when growers asked them. Even liberal Democrats supported the border patrol, calling for fines on employers who hired undocumented workers. The Mexican government, as well as most Chicano organizations, called for fining U.S. employers who hired undocumented workers. The excesses that followed offended these associations, however. In 1953 Lieutenant General Joseph M. Swing, sometimes called a “professional, long-time Mexican hater,” was appointed commissioner of the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]. Swing had been a classmate of President Dwight Eisenhower at West Point in 1911 and had been on General John Pershing’s punitive expedition against Pancho Villa in 1916. Swing’s response to nativist demands to stop undocumented Mexican migration to the United States was a military campaign that he called ‘Operation Wetback.’ He conducted his operations in a military style, regarding his objective to be flushing out Mexicans. Swing even requested \$10 million to build a 150-mile-long fence to keep Mexicans out, and he set a deportation quota for each target area. Local police actively supported the INS. During the raids U.S.-born citizens became entangled in the web. Every brown person was suspect. The INS agents searched homes illegally, and they seized and detained U.S. citizens illegally” (288). Immigration policies throughout the twentieth century continue to target Mexican and Latin American immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican and Latin American descent. Swing’s request to build a fence is the pre-cursor to Trump’s border wall. Thus, Rechy’s early essays, “El Paso del Norte” and “Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero,” are critical, which predate *Occupied America* by two decades, when contextualized with the ongoing xenophobia and racism towards Mexican and Latinx immigrants. Unfortunately, the field of Chicana/o Studies continues to ignore these two critical works of Rechy.

⁶⁰ The Pew Research Center published an important study regarding the digital divide and PoC. John B. Horrigan’s article, “Digital Readiness Gaps,” (2016) contains a graph illustrating how prepared U.S. adults are regarding computer literacy. The study classifies PoC in the half of U.S. adults who are “relatively hesitant.” Specifically, PoC fall into the 5% the study categorizes as “traditional learners.” Horrigan writes, “They are active learners and have technology, but are not as likely to use the Internet for pursuing learning and have concerns about whether to trust online information” (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/20/digital-readiness-gaps/>). ALLGO may have jumpstarted tech careers for LGBTQ+ PoC or at the very minimum provided marketable job skill training to those attending the monthly meetings. Moreover, this notice is further evidence of ALLGO’s intersectional politics and its recognition and commitment to issues of class.

⁶¹ In the text, *Thinking en Español: Interviews with Critics of Chicana/o Literature* (2014), Tomás Ybarra-Frausto explains the concept of “rasquachismo” as a sensibility born out of necessity and poverty, “Well, the genesis of ‘rasquachismo,’ or the idea of ‘lo rasquache,’ started when I read ‘Notes on Camp,’ the wonderful essay written by Susan Sontag. In that essay she talks about the homosexual community and its internal value systems and secret set of codes. Some of these value systems dealt with the way they dressed and behaved. When I read the article, I immediately connected it with Chicanos, for we also had a particular set of systems that only we could understand. One of them dealt with the idea of survival. The base or core of lo rasquache has to do with the saying, ‘hay que hacer de tripas corazón.’ In other words, one must take advantage of what small or meager thing one has and make something useful out of it. It’s a way of seeing the world, a particular type of existence. Since most Chicanos belong to the working class and are poor, this survival value system has to do with how we act and how we practice the ‘hacer de tripas corazón.’ To survive one uses what personal qualities one possesses, and humor is one of them. One uses what we call ‘las movidas,’ or strategies to move ahead in life. The Teatro Campesino’s construction of the curtains used for the presentation of their ‘actos’ out of material from sacks used to pack agricultural products

exemplifies this concept. Members of the Teatro Campesino would sew these sacks together and use them for curtains. To me that was a clear example of how one uses what one has in hand to produce something useful or ‘hacer de tripas corazón.’ The rasquachismo concept falls between these lines. It’s a result of knowing how to survive through the use of everyday ‘movidas.’ I thought of this concept as a particular type of sensibility, not a style because a style is something that is frozen, but a sensibility of something that is always changing, like culture itself; a sensibility that is understood especially among the working class. And what is that sensibility? I remembered as a kid growing up in Texas people said, ‘mira esa casita que se está cayendo, es una casita rasquache’ [Look at that small house that is falling apart; it is run down]...Rasquachismo was an aesthetic representation that belonged to the barrio...It’s an aesthetic form born from envisioning a surplus where there is only the emptiness of poverty” (220-221). Rasquachismo embodies the cliché, “More is more,” but also represents an acknowledgement and protestation against the material conditions of poverty and a working-class existence.

⁶² According to the website for the group, the history of Venceremos Brigade is as follows, “In 1969, a coalition of young people formed the Venceremos (We Shall Overcome) Brigade, as a means of showing solidarity with the Cuban Revolution by working side by side with Cuban workers and challenging U.S. policies towards Cuba, including the economic blockade and our government’s ban on travel to the island. The first Brigades participated in sugar harvests and subsequent Brigades have done agricultural and construction work in many parts of the island. Now, in 2004, the VB is celebrating its 35th Anniversary. Over the last 35 years, the VB has given over 8,000 people from U.S. the opportunity for a life-changing experience. While the trip has evolved over time, the Venceremos Brigade has always kept its format of work, educational activities, and travel. In addition, we remain committed to organizing the most diverse contingents possible. Brigadistas are young and older, of many races, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, and sexual orientations. The oldest Cuba solidarity organization in the world, the VB has never requested permission from the U.S. government to go to Cuba—and we never will! We believe it is our right as U.S. citizens to travel free of U.S. government obstacles. We also believe that we have much to learn from Cuba and the best way to do that is to travel there and see for ourselves (www.vb4cuba.com/about-the-venceremos-brigade/). LGBTQ+ have participated in the Venceremos Brigade, thus continuing the intersection of coalitional politics, evidenced by ALLGO. According to the text, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (2016), Emily K. Hobson chronicles the history of LGBTQ+ participation within leftist movements. Hobson argues, “The gay and lesbian left did not simply pursue alliance between distinct political causes, but also, more aspirationally, worked to forge an integrated and nonbifurcated politics. Its participants saw sexual liberation and radical solidarity as constituted within each other rather than as wholly separate. They defined gay and lesbian identities not only as forms of desire but also as political affiliations that could create the conditions of possibility to set desire free. And, by pursuing their politics across bodily, local, and global as well as national scales, gay and lesbian leftists crafted a vision for change that moved beyond liberal and nonliberal inclusion in the United States or other capitalist states” (2). The founders and members of ALLGO understood not only the advantages of such coalitional and intersectional politics, this perspective was crucial and necessary to overcoming the linked oppressive forces of hooks’, “imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy” (ibid). ALLGO, like the activists of San Francisco Hobson chronicles, understood that attaching gay and lesbian “rights” to a neoliberal ideology only continues to serve wealthy elites and a fascist state at the expense of impoverishing and oppressing greater numbers of people of color globally. What makes gay and lesbian leftists’ activism is their constant navigation of homophobia from other social liberation movements, be it the Communist Party under Stalin, the Castro regime in Cuba, or the mainstream Chicana/o political organizations. Thus, gay and lesbian leftists fought a multi-prong approach against the fascism of the right and the heteronormative discrimination on the left.

⁶³ According to Bettina M. Fernandez in her article, “HIV Exclusion of Immigrants under the Immigration Reform & Control Act of 1986” (1992), published in the *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal*, circumstances occurred forcing eligible applicants for amnesty to submit to an HIV test, which would preclude them from approval. Due to an eleventh-hour amendment to the Immigration Reform and Control (IRCA) of 1986, included by the notoriously homophobic senator, Jesse Helms, the law included mandatory HIV testing for potential immigrants to the United States (as well as those applying for marriage licenses). The Helms Amendment also initiated the twenty-three-year HIV travel ban which excluded tourists, refugees, and immigrants living with HIV from entering the United States. President Obama rescinded the travel ban in 2010. Helms resurrected the trope of the “diseased immigrant,” as

justification for this amendment, which if not added, would have eliminated funding for AZT treatment in the amount of thirty million dollars. Fernandez also mentions the discourse of criminalization regarding people living with HIV, particularly the suggestions of quarantining individuals living with HIV in camps and tattooing HIV-positive people. Fernandez's article is a sobering reminder of the dehumanization of people living with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, the era when political pundits suggested the tattooing and quarantining people living with HIV.

⁶⁴ David Dorado Romo chronicles this racist and xenophobic treatment of Mexican immigrants in his cultural history of the Mexican Revolution on both sides of the United States-Mexican border, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez: 1893-1923* (2005). According to Dorado Romo, "My interest in the El Paso-Juárez Bath Riots didn't start with something I read in any history book. Most historians have forgotten about this obscure incident that took place on the border in 1917. I first heard of the U.S. government's policy that provoked these riots while I was still in high school. One evening, during a family dinner, my great-aunt Adela Dorado shared her memories with us about her experiences as a young woman during the Mexican Revolution. She recalled that American authorities regularly forced her and all other working-class Mexicans to take a bath and be sprayed with pesticides at the Santa Fe Bridge whenever they needed to cross into the United States. My great-aunt, who worked as a maid in El Paso during the revolution, told us she felt humiliated for being treated as a 'dirty Mexican.' She related how on one occasion the U.S. customs officials put her clothes and shoes through a large secadora (dryer) and her shoes melted...I also unexpectedly uncovered other information at the National Archives in the Washington, D.C. area, I came upon some photographs taken in 1917 in El Paso. The pictures, which were part of the U.S. Public Health records, showed large steam dryers used to disinfect the clothes of border crossers at the Santa Fe Bridge. Here it was. My great-aunt's memory hadn't failed her after all. But I also unexpectedly uncovered other information at the National Archives that took my great-aunt's personal recollections beyond family lore or microhistory. These records point to the connection between the U.S. Customs disinfection facilities in El Paso-Juárez in the 20s and the *Desinfektionskammern* (disinfection chambers) in Nazi Germany. The documents show that beginning in the 1920s, U.S. officials at the Santa Fe Bridge deloused and sprayed the clothes of Mexicans crossing into the U.S. with Zyklon B" (223). Zyklon B, a type of hydrocyanic acid, is the same chemical used by the Nazis to exterminate "undesirables" during World War II.

⁶⁵ According to Anzaldúa, to see through serpent and eagle eyes evokes the duality of male and female energies represented by the deities of Mesoamerica before the Mexica instituted a patriarchal culture, "*Coatl*. In pre-Columbian America the most notable symbol was the serpent. The Olmecs associated womanhood with the Serpent's mouth which was guarded by rows of dangerous teeth, a sort of *vagina dentate*. They considered it the most sacred place on earth, a place of refuge, the creative womb from which all things were born and to which all things returned. Snake people had holes, entrances to the body of the Earth Serpent; they followed the Serpent's way, identified with the Serpent deity, with the mouth, both the eater and the eaten. The destiny of humankind is to be devoured by the Serpent...After each of my four bouts with death I'd catch glimpses of an otherworld Serpent. Once, in my bedroom, I saw a cobra the size of the room, her hood expanding over me. When I blinked, she was gone. I realized she was, in my psyche, the mental picture and symbol of the instinctual in its collective impersonal, pre-human. She, the symbol of the dark sexual drive, the chthonic (underworld), the feminine, the serpentine movement of sexuality, of creativity, the basis of all energy and life" (34-35). Later in the following chapter, Anzaldúa explains the duality of the Aztec deity, Coatlicue, as possessing both male and female traits, "She has no hands. In their place are two more serpents in the form of eagle-like claws, which are repeated at her feet: claws which symbolize the digging of graves into the earth as well as the sky-bound eagle, the masculine force" (47).

⁶⁶ Furthermore, the review of Richard Howard's career includes the following, "With his tenth book of poetry, *Like Most Revelations* (1994), Howard inhabits the voices of Edith Wharton and Walt Whitman, but he also offers elegies for friends who have died from AIDS and cancer. 'AIDS is everywhere in this book, as it is everywhere in the communities—artist and intellectual, urban, gay—to which this book most commonly refers and addresses itself,' remarked Linda Gregerson in *Poetry*" (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/richard-howard>).

Chapter Three

From *Rushes*' Meat Trucks to *tumblr*'s Bug Chasers:

Heeding Rechy's Warnings of Toxic Masculinity and Violence-Based Sexual Practices

“I strongly believe that the general despisement of homosexuals has at its roots the hatred of women by the heterosexual structure... Many heterosexual men—not all, of course, but many—distrust and dislike women even as they desire them. When heterosexual men find one of their own club desiring men, they look at that as choosing to be lesser, choosing to be like a woman. And the reason behind it all is that they are threatened by women.”—John Rechy¹

Gabriel Fernandez's body expired five years before Anthony Avalos' mother and her boyfriend subjected him to a similar house of horrors. Living in a neighboring community in the Antelope Valley of Los Angeles County, Anthony Avalos, all of ten years old, did not understand why they treated him so badly. They did not treat his siblings this way. They even encouraged them to participate in the abuse lest they receive similar treatment. Only Anthony was dangled over a balcony. Only Anthony was starved and locked in a cupboard. Only Anthony had to eat from the trash. Only Anthony was forbidden to use the restroom until he soiled his pants. Only Anthony had to kneel on uncooked rice until his knees bled. “What did I do wrong?” was all Anthony could ponder as he endured this treatment for weeks. Like Gabriel, Anthony transgressed his gendered expectations as a boy. The reason his mother and her boyfriend subjected Anthony to such torture is because he had recently returned from school and declared, “I like boys.” Because Anthony made this naïve declaration in a house where

hypermasculinity ruled, he suffered unimaginable abuse until he fell into a coma and died at the hospital. Anthony Avalos, a ten-year-old from Lancaster, California, committed the crime of liking boys. And because of this, he suffered and died.

“Masc 4 Masc”/Mask 4 Mask/Mascara 4 Mascara² (English & Spanish)

In this chapter, I tackle the toxicity of patriarchal masculinity stemming from internalized homophobia, which Rechy argues originates from internalized misogyny, and the violent sexual practices perpetrated out of a sense of self-hatred rather than erotic desire, which Rechy also documents in his decades of observing the homosexual erotic underground. External forces, such as the Catholic Church’s institutional misogyny and homophobia, compound the societal misogyny into internalized toxic masculinity resulting in internalized “fem/cide.”³ I utilize the spelling, “fem,” as the term is used in the current discourse of online dating apps, usually accompanied by a litany of other restrictions, usually based on age, body size, and race, e.g., “No fats or fems. DDF [disease and drug free], UB2. No over 35s. No Blacks or Asians.” I define “fem/cide” as the murder of the internal femininity by acts of femme-shaming, bottom-shaming, transwoman phobia, and a panoply of other behaviors perpetrated by insecure gay cisgender men to perform, or more accurately, to don a mask of toxic hypermasculinity—to hide one’s mascara (make-up) with a mascara (Spanish for mask). The killing of the woman inside conforms to society’s narrow view of masculinity, particularly for gay and bisexual cisgender men of color. Unfortunately, some gay men internalize the same hatred of the feminine that murdered Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos. The two methods of my theory of hom(e)erotics of recognizing and deconstructing toxic masculinity, based in patriarchal violence, and unearthing the motivation behind the fatalistic sexual practices a percentage of gay cisgender men engage are themes found throughout Rechy’s works, several I offer an analysis of here.

An integral aspect of these two methods of hom(e)erotics is a moment of reckoning regarding the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The field of Chicana/o Studies continues to neglect the epidemic, despite rising seroconversion rates amongst gay and bisexual Xicanx and Latinx cisgender men and transgender women. Perhaps, we are not the “right” segment of the Xicanx community at-large meriting serious scholarly examination? Whatever the reason, like Chicana lesbian feminist scholars have done for nearly four decades, I make a place at the table for gay and bisexual Xicanx cisgender men, especially those of us living with HIV and a place on the altar for those who succumbed to the disease. Previous generations of gay men participated in radical grassroots organizing, coming together to confront the grim specter of AIDS in such revolutionary organizations as ALLGO and ACT UP!, and now the AIDS crisis is merely an endnote lost amongst the digital rubble of amateur pornography featuring the acts of “slamming,”⁴ “breeding,”⁵ and “stealth breeding.”⁶ Sadly, the halls of academia conveniently turn its gaze away from the mounting AIDS crisis, in effect, replicating the murderous silence of the Reagan administration.

Rechy, along with documenting the gay male underground of pre-Stonewall America, provides an undercurrent of gender analysis akin to Anzaldúa’s in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. As the Chicano Movement struggled and disintegrated because of its devotion to cultural patriarchy and writers like Rudolfo Anaya produced texts like *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) consisting of tired tropes of women, the curandera, Ultima (saint), Rosie’s girls (prostitutes/whores), and Tenorio’s daughters (witches/lesbians), Rechy was creating texts challenging the status quo regarding gender and sexuality. Three such texts, *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez* (1991), *The Fourth Angel* (1972), and *Rushes* (1979), allow me to frame the third and fourth methods of hom(e)erotics: adopting and practicing a feminist masculinity and a sexuality rooted in true

erotics, desire, and pleasure rather than power, violence, and humiliation. Throughout his corpus, Rechy lauds the feminine—regardless of the body it inhabits—femme queens, whether they are in drag or effeminate men, and ridicules the hypermasculinity of a subculture of gay cisgender men. To reiterate, Anzaldúa does not favor lesbian liberation if it means leaving her gay brothers behind.

The section heading refers to the intersection of toxic masculinity and sexuality within a gay cisgender male context. The gay dating world is immersed in app culture, yet even before the era of the smart phone, on-line personal ads, and ones in print periodicals the same cliché remained present—“MASC 4 MASC” (a hypermasculine-performing gay cisgender man proclaims he is only attracted to other hypermasculine-performing men). “Straight-acting” is another descriptor of gay men who distance themselves from any feminine traits. Thus, I adhere more meanings to the “MASC 4 MASC” moniker—“Mask 4 Mask,” “MASC(ARA) 4 MASC(ARA),” as in the make-up these men apply metaphorically and in Spanish, “mascara” meaning “mask,” as both men are wearing masks to obscure their true selves.

My third and fourth methods are difficult propositions as they involve cisgender gay Xicanx men examining and relinquishing our male privilege, thus making amends to the women whom we have hurt and ostracized. This privileging of men, particularly cisgender, heterosexual men, is rooted in the patriarchy of multiple institutions, but for gay Xicanx men, the Catholic Church⁷ is what shackles us to traditional gender roles, firstly. The excerpt above from Rechy’s essay, “Holy Drag!” details how the Catholic Church, the world’s first “old boys’ club,” relegated women to a second-class status and continued the condemnation of homoerotic desire. In this brief but passionate essay, Rechy exposes the hypocrisy of the institutional misogyny and homophobia of the Catholic Church, the same institution where the majority of young gay

Xicanx boys begin to negotiate their homoerotic desires amidst the decontextualized verses from the bible condemning homosexuality.⁸

According to Rechy in the epigraph above from the interview with Debra Castillo, the gay Xicanx boy is born behind enemy lines. Even within the womb, the hope for a macho son to emulate his virile father rather than a submissive daughter pervades the fetal development. In the home, the gay Xicanx boy in his innocence does not realize his transgression when he plays dolls with his sister. The gay Xicanx boy bears witness to the silent subservience of his grandmother, mother, and sisters as they toil in the kitchen and serve the men, never protesting that they must eat after the men, a fitting symbol of their gendered positionality in the family. The gay Xicanx boy witnesses their mothers' policing of his sister's femininity as it relates to the comforts of men—cooking, cleaning, and child rearing—as his older brothers enjoy complete sexual freedom. Innocuously, the gay Xicanx boy steals glances at his older male relatives' genitalia in the bathroom, in the locker room after swimming, on camping trips, subconsciously realizing this is the root of his unexplained desires. While his parents gift age-appropriate items—sports equipment and video game consoles—to their son, the girls do not receive toys as much as they are training aids for future lives of domesticity in the forms of Easy Bake Ovens, Betsy Wetsy dolls, and Disney princesses. As the gay Xicanx boy witnesses the material advantages for hypermasculinity and possessing the “right” biology, how does he cognitively process this misogynistic treatment of his sister—the blatant unfairness of the situation? Even if the gay Xicanx brother prefers to play Barbie Dream House with his sister over Hot Wheels with his older brother, his fearfully observant mother forbids it, lest it awaken the patriarch's wrath. Thus, she commands he go outside and roughhouse with his brothers, not realizing the homoeroticism of such physical contact. Growing up, the gay Xicanx boy consumes the

available popular culture—everything from compliant Disney princesses to bloody UFC cage matches to his mother’s casta-system telenovelas—reinforcing a heteronormative reality he subconsciously knows he must adopt, even if the price is donning a permanent mascara (mask).

The gay Xicanx boy winces internally at his culture’s homophobia as his father, uncles, and older brothers join the “Puto!” chant during the World Cup and as they casually use terms like “maricon” and “fag,” thrown like daggers at men who do not meet the standards of hypermasculinity. The result of these observations is an internal wall built around his budding homoerotic desires and his emotional sensitivity. He learns to suppress the creativity bubbling within him. He feigns interest in girls and joins the choral patriarchy as he participates in the marginalization of his sisters and other women and effeminate boys. He elevates his mother to the straight-jacket positionality of sainted mother, similar to the Virgen de Guadalupe, thus stripping her of desire, pleasure, agency, and humanity. He learns to treat other women as second-class citizens, even if he relates to them more than to his father and brothers. The gay Xicanx boy retreats further into the closet, remaining in stasis as if he were frozen traveling to a far corner of the galaxy. His growth remains stunted, and he will remain a scared little boy, terrified someone will discover his secret; so, he learns to lie, to hide behind an act of hypermasculinity, never grasping that such performativity alerts any astute observer to his homosexuality as much as if he were in drag lip-synching to Eartha Kitt’s gay anthem, “I Love Men” (1984). For some gay Xicanx boys, like Gabriel Fernandez, and the more recent case of Anthony Avalos,⁹ both of whom did not realize the transgression of their respective effeminacy, the alternative could be a violent and cruel death at the hands of the people charged to protect them.

Masculinity for traditional Latinx families is a precious and fragile commodity. Boys like Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos who did not meet their respective family's threshold of masculinity are victims of patriarchal violence.¹⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues the medical establishment is complicit in such violence in its privileging of traditional masculinity in boys and gay men in her essay, "How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay: The War on Effeminate Boys," published in the anthology, *Tendencies* (1993). Sedgwick connects the APA's decision to de-pathologize homosexuality with its move to establish the phenomenon of transgressive gender identity expression as a "disorder":

"For example," "extremely and chronically effeminate boys"—this is the abject that haunts revisionist psychoanalysis. The same DSM-III that, published in 1980, was the first that did not contain an entry for "homosexuality," was also the first that *did* contain a new diagnosis, numbered (for insurance purposes) 302.60: "Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood." Nominally gender-neutral, this diagnosis is actually highly differential between boys and girls: a girl gets this pathologizing label only in the rare case of asserting that she actually is anatomically male (e.g., "that she has, or will grow, a penis"); while a boy can be treated for Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood if he merely asserts "that it would be better not to have a penis"—*or* alternatively, if he displays a "preoccupation with female stereotypical activities as manifested by a preference for either cross-dressing or simulating female attire, or by a compelling desire to participate in the games and pastimes of girls." While the decision to remove "homosexuality" from DSM-III was a highly polemicized and public one, accomplished only under intense pressure from gay activists outside the profession, the addition to DSM-III of 'Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood' appears to have attracted no outside

attention at all—nor even to have been perceived as part of the same conceptual shift. (156-157).

As a boy, I veered towards the feminine, as I fully “participate[d] in the games and pastimes of girls,” to use the violently constricting language of so-called mental health professionals. Twirling to Wonder Woman, playing with paper dolls, lip-synching to Donna Summer, dressing in my mother’s jewelry, and learning to cook from my grandmother were all activities I *enthusiastically* engaged in my prepubescence. Was I pathological? Should my parents have admitted me to some sort of gender identity disorder clinic? Should I have undergone electroshock therapy, or perhaps a lobotomy? Fortunately, my parents and grandmother did not police my gender performance until after my parents’ divorce. My mother, perhaps anticipating my *jotería*, monitored my gender when she remarried, as my then-stepfather exhibited the stereotypical traits of a hypermasculine (and closeted) man.

Apparently, under patriarchy, even “progressive” fields like psychology and psychiatry privilege traditional (re: toxic) masculinity. When a male body expresses what our society categorizes as feminine is a “disorder,” then LGBTQ+ scholars and activists must protest. The lack of protestation is why as Sedgwick and I wonder and question, “It’s always open season on gay kids. But where, in all this, are psychoanalysis and psychiatry? Where are the ‘helping professions’?...What is likely to be the fate of children brought under the influence of psychoanalysis and psychiatry today, post-DSM-III, on account of parents’ or teachers’ anxieties about their sexuality?” (155). Unfortunately, neither profession, though they succumbed to activist pressure to declassify homosexuality as pathological, possessed the intellectual rigor or courage to protest the creation of gender non-conformity as a disorder, particularly for effeminate boys, which is an argument cloaked in misogyny.

Popular Culture Examples of Non-normative Gender Expressions in Cisgender Boys

Fortunately, the media of film and television continue to offer a swath of examples of nonconformist masculinity. The animated series, *King of the Hill*, which the Fox network aired from 1997-2010, showcases an interesting case study of gender non-conforming cisgender masculinity. The relationship between Hank Hill, the patriarch and protagonist of the series, and his gender non-conforming son, Bobby, examines the antagonism created when a cisgender son, and the only child, does not meet the masculine expectations of his father. Hank, a former high school running back who constantly reminds his circle of family and friends he led Arlen High School to the state championship game, represents the archetype of small-town Texas masculinity. Conversely, Bobby displays no interest in sports and shows little aptitude for academics; one of his career ambitions during the series is to be a comedian. In one episode, Bobby sells a joke to the comic, Yakov Smirnoff, during a trip to Branson, Missouri.¹¹ Although Bobby never shows any erotic interest in other boys (he is twelve/thirteen years old throughout the series), Hank constantly polices his gender performance, exhaling relief during one episode when he discovers his son's dating interest is the daughter of their next-door neighbor with whom he constantly feuds. Bobby is an embarrassment to Hank and envies his friend and neighbor, Dale Gribble, because of the athletic prowess of his son, Joseph. Though not gay, Bobby represents atypical masculine gender performativity in an unsupportive, hostile environment.

To complement the free-spirited Bobby Hill is one of the rare examples of a gender non-conforming *Latino* character is Justin Suarez from one of the few primetime series on network television to feature a cast of comprised primarily of Latinx actors, *Ugly Betty*. The network, ABC, aired the series, based on a Colombian telenovela, *Yo soy Betty, la fea*, and featured an

ambitious yet gawky young working-class Chicana aspiring to be a professional writer; however, she can only find employment as an assistant to a shallow, high-powered executive at a fashion magazine. Set in New York, the impish and lovable Betty lives with her widowed father, sister, and adolescent nephew, Justin. A recurring character, Justin represented a breakthrough for PoC LGBTQ+ representation on network television. Not since the character of the femme-presenting, eyeliner-wearing Ricky Vasquez, portrayed by Wilson Cruz, featured on the short-lived ABC series, *My So-Called Life*, has a major network featured a gender non-conforming Latino male. Unfortunately, *My So-Called Life* aired for one season, but *Ugly Betty* lasted four seasons, allowing the audience to witness Justin, portrayed by Mark Indelicato, blossom into a confident queer youth. Like Bobby Hill, Justin's father is hypermasculine and expresses disappointment at Justin's fey ways. In an episode titled, "Four Thanksgivings and a Funeral" (2006), aired during the show's first season, Justin's absentee father, Santos, gives him a present reflecting his masculinist expectations for his son. Justin opens the package and exclaims when he sees the New York Jets uniform, "Hey, cool, a costume!" Santos attempts to explain its intended utility when Justin grabs the protective cup and places it over one eye squealing through the house, "Cool! Mom, look, I'm the Phantom of the Opera!" Although Justin's mother often gave him disapproving looks at his effeminate behavior, Ignacio, Betty's father, the sole male elder never polices Justin's gender performance, even supporting his grandson's theatrical endeavors. The portrayal of Justin Suárez, portrayed by Mark Indelicato, provides a healthy representation of a femme gay youth of color, not harassed by homophobic family or tormented with self-loathing.

Alternately, two examples featuring young Xicanx men are films I discuss in the first chapter, *Quinceañera* (2006) and *La Mission* (2009). These two films feature heteronormative teen-aged cisgender Xicanx men who are physically assaulted by their fathers because of the

discovery of their respective homoerotic desires. Neither character chose to “come out,” and in both films the fathers banished their sons from the family home. The scene of assault in *La Mission* is particularly brutal, as Che, played by Benjamin Bratt, beats *and* outs his son, Jess, in public as the neighborhood watches incredulous. Subsequently, a presumably heterosexual gang members shoots Jess when he and his boyfriend are walking in the Mission District neighborhood. Towards the climax of the film, Che stumbles upon a danza ceremony mourning the death of the same gang member in what is meant to be an act of forgiveness and healing. However, Che can empathize with the violence of the gang member who was responsible for assaulting his son yet cannot extend the same compassion for his own son, who chooses to leave his father’s home (the mother is deceased) rather than live a closeted life, or as the Pet Shop Boys would say, “being boring.” Although both Carlos and Jess continue with their lives at the conclusion of each film, neither community hold the fathers accountable for their physical violence, as if these tragedies are not only expected but condoned. Did the parents of Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos watch either film, reaching similar conclusions? How would Gabriel and Anthony have reacted to the portrayal of Justin Suárez? Rechy would laud characters such as Bobby Hill from *King of the Hill*, Justin Suárez from *Ugly Betty*, Ricky Vasquez from *My So-Called Life*, Carlos from *Quinceañera*, and Jess from *La Mission* for transgressing traditional strictures of gender performativity and sexual identity. Throughout his corpus, Rechy identifies and decries patriarchal masculinity, as he recognizes its roots as the hatred of women.

Rechy’s corpus, including his sharply written essays, particularly the following address he read at an LGBTQ Pride festival in 2006 (when he was in his seventies), includes a progressive view on gender performativity, as well as other political topics. In the following speech, the reader not only discovers Rechy’s politics on gender but a radically intersectional

perspective on gay and leftist politics and the ahistorical practice of establishing the Stonewall Rebellion as the start of the modern LGBTQ rights movement. I focus on his examples of lesbians and queer men who transgress gender, as well as sexual, norms and his recognition of the valuable work of the lesbian community when AIDS devastated gay men:

Then came AIDS, and we discovered that our battles, not only with illness but with deadly prejudice, were not over. Our horizon turned into a graveyard of often-young dying men. Illness was redefined as just punishment for sinfulness. Silence became a killer. Walking along the blocks of panels that formed the quilt of death, we would halt in shock and sorrow to discover the names of friends among intimate strangers.

Still, through daily acts of bravery, those who were dying often taught us how to live. Those who stood by them taught us about true caring as they nurtured beloved partners right up to death, even while they themselves saw the mirror of their own deaths in declining bodies. We discovered great strength in ourselves and in the solidarity between gay men and Lesbians, whose support was awe-inspiring and must not be forgotten...

I prefer to end my talk by recalling a few instances of courage and pride exhibited by individuals here in El Paso long, long before Stonewall or the Black Cat riot, decades ago. Barely a teen-ager, I used to cross San Jacinto Plaza on my way home from the public library. There, almost nightly, a bleached blond queen held court, brash, assertive, unashamed, unfazed by heckling and routine harassment by cops. She sat proudly on the stone ledge like the queen of the alligators that lazed then in a pond. She was a symbol of bleached defiance, a revolutionary *tromp l'oeil*. With her boldness, others less identifiable to shed their shame, an act that required much less courage than hers.

I remember two women who ate regularly at Luby's Cafeteria. They wore their hair smartly short, they wore suits. When they entered, there were often sniggers. They walked in—sometimes they marched—with squared shoulders and a steady pace, undaunted. That was individual courage equivalent to that shown collectively at Stonewall.

I remember two men, always together, slightly effeminate, in the same cafeteria—and none of this is to imply that Luby's is the center of coming-out activity. The two could not have escaped the overt and covert looks of disdain, the leering smiles, and, not infrequently, a not-too-whispered reference to “queers.” They never lost their dignity as they invaded—yes, at times with an added arrogant swish—what must have seemed to them a minefield of derision. That manifestation of courage matched that of those who defied the cops in riots. Rather than brand those men, those women as stereotypes, as they now so often and so sadly are, I would call them stalwart pioneers who proclaimed their difference: “I am not what you want me to be” (johnrechy.com).

I cite the portions of the speech where Rechy affirms the actions of lesbians and gender non-conforming cisgender men as further evidence of Rechy's progressive and intersectional vision regarding gender and the veneration of transgressive gender performativity, thus paying homage to the lesbians who cared for gay men stricken with AIDS, and problematizing the accepted premise of the Stonewall Rebellion as the inception of queer resistance against state and societal homophobia.

The examples of gender transgression Rechy cites in his address are historical and personal observations. As a young queer Xicanx in the same border city several decades later, I was starved for images reflecting my femme gender identity. The only images of

unconventional masculinity I could glean originated in popular and underground music—from disco to post-punk. One of the greatest yet oft marginalized singers of the disco era was Sylvester, of whom I am still in awe. To be Black and out about his homosexuality and his HIV-positive status speaks to the same vein of courage to which Rechy refers regarding the femme men and butch women in Luby's, the bleached blond queen of San Jacinto Plaza, and the drag queens and transgender women at the Stonewall Inn, notably Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who rioted against police violence, thus widening visibility for an already-burgeoning movement. The butch women and femme men Rechy recalls, the legacy of Sylvester, and the few popular culture images of gay Latinx/Chicanx boys are critical for femme boys of color who reject the toxic masculinity of their fathers, uncles, and brothers. Personas like Sylvester are oxygen for boys like Gabriel Fernandez, Anthony Avalos, and the rest of us who twirled to Lynda Carter's Wonder Woman in the 1970s, rolled around "Like a Virgin" (1984) to Madonna in the 1980s, shook our "Bidi Bidi Bom Bom" (1994) with Selena in the 1990s, entered the millennium "Waiting for Tonight" (1999) with Jennifer Lopez, and who now watch with bated breaths every week Queen RuPaul summons two heirs to her throne to lip synch for their lives.

Xicana Feminism and Native North American Considerations of Gender

The Chicana feminist writer, Ana Castillo, in her brilliant essay, "The Ancient Roots of Machismo," published in her updated foundational anthology of essays, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (2014), provides support for Rechy's argument. Castillo argues Xicanx men and women have inherited multiple systems of gender-based oppression—the misogyny of the Mexica, the religious patriarchy of the Catholic Church imported by the Spaniards *and* that of Islam,¹² and the property-based perspective of gender practiced by the Moorish tribes of southern Spain and North Africa. All three converged on the bodies of

indigenous women in Mexico, and Xicanx women continue to negotiate the multiple layers of colonial servitude. Furthermore, Xicanx boys who exhibit traits not deemed as masculine or macho also bear the weight of this colonial legacy. Castillo does not argue which system of patriarchy is worse; instead, she delves deeply into the collusion of the three.

Furthermore, Castillo provides further evidence supporting Rechy's critique of gender within the context of organized religion, namely the Catholic Church. Misogyny is rooted in the fear of women, and I extend the same logic to those born in biological male bodies who renounce gender roles based in toxic masculinity, instead embracing and nurturing their inner feminine selves. Earlier in the essay, Castillo acknowledges the existence of indigenous societies granting agency to women, such as the Toltec, the Zapotec, and in "matrilineal societies throughout the indigenous Americas" (66). What makes Castillo's essay intriguing is that she continues the brave lineage of Xicanx feminists who challenge the patriarchy of Chicano cultural nationalists who idealize the Mexica over other aspects of our mestizaje. The Conquest indeed was horrible and rooted in European white supremacy and resulted in a genocidal campaign, yet as Castillo highlights, Mexica women occupied a secondary status in pre-Conquest society.

In some North American tribes, the feminine boy did not transgress society's strictures, rather the tribe accepted and celebrated such individuals. In his text, *Queer Spirits: A Gay Men's Myth Book* (1995), Will Roscoe describes a North American indigenous ritual fortunately not crushed under the boot of colonial homophobia in the passage, "The Basket and the Bow":

For many of us, our sense of being different first emerges in the games and toys we like as children. When I was in the first grade, I decided to bring a jump rope to school to use at recess because that was the activity that looked like the most fun to me [for me, it was the tetherball]. Only later did I discover that jumping rope was a "girl thing." Until then

it had never occurred to me that there were limits to the games I could play because of my sex. I had chosen the activity that felt right to me, that appeared most enjoyable and rewarding.

If I had been lucky enough to be born into a traditional Native American family, my choice of a girl's toy would not have been greeted with horror and punishment [Gabriel Fernandez played with dolls]. Such an inclination would be taken as a sign of my true nature, of the life path I was going to follow, and of the kind of training and guidance I would need. Among Plains Indians, such an inclination was often confirmed by a dream or vision. It was not for humans to second-guess matters of the spirit.

While some tribes simply observed children to see what their gender and sexual orientation might be, others performed a specific rite to determine whether a boy was a two-spirit. This passage describes a procedure common among Southwest and Great Basin tribes. The results of the test were considered final. It revealed the boy's true nature not only to his family but to the whole community. Today, contemporary lesbian and gay Indians have proudly reclaimed the tradition of "basket and the bow." One of the first conferences for gay Indians in North America was called "The Basket and the Bow: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Native Americans." (31)

The young boy, indeed, all children of certain Native American tribes, underwent a rite of passage that determined their gendered role in their respective communities. These tribes did not exclude girls from the ritual—every person could fulfill her/his destined role. I can only surmise that Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos would have thrived in such cultures; thus, over five hundred years after the Conquest, the homophobia imported by western colonialism is still claiming lives.

Roscoe elaborates his study of the Native North American perspective on gender in another of his texts, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (2000). In this revelatory text, Roscoe reveals the allegedly post-modern concepts of gender fluidity and gender non-binary in an indigenous, material worldview. Countering the claims based in Judeo-Christian beliefs of LGBTQ+ beings and relationships are detrimental to society, Roscoe argues:

In truth, the ground American society occupies once may have been the queerest continent on the planet. The original people of North America, whose principles are just as ancient as those of Judeo-Christian culture, saw no threat in homosexuality or gender variance. Indeed, they believe individuals with these traits made unique contributions to their communities. As a Crow tribal elder said in 1982, “We don’t waste people the way white society does. Every person has their gift.” In this land, the original America, men who wore women’s clothes and did women’s work became artists, innovators, ambassadors, and religious leaders, and women sometimes became warriors, hunters, and chiefs. Same-sex marriages flourished, and no tribe was the worse for it—until the Europeans arrived. In this “strange country,” people who were different in terms of gender identity or sexuality were respected, integrated, and sometimes revered. (4)

Thus, for Native American tribes, gender fluidity, gender non-binary, and queer identity are not post-modern—they are *pre-modern*. The individuals who inhabited third and fourth genders were integral members of their respective societies until western colonialism imported religious-based homophobia and stringent gender roles tied to biology. Third and fourth genders represent the transgression of non-normative gender expression Rechy lauds in his public address and throughout his corpus. The effeminate man and the butch woman are symbols of courage and

strength. The man hiding behind a mask of hypermasculinity cowers as a sheep awaiting slaughter.

Examples of Violent Toxic Masculinity in Rechy's Corpus—The Fourth Angel (1972) and The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez (1991)

Familial violence is another critical topic broached by Rechy's expansive literary corpus. One of his lesser known novels, *The Fourth Angel* (1972), is a powerful story of familial violence (in this text, one of the protagonists, Shel, is being molested by her wealthy father who silences her with material rewards) and the character's reaction to such acts. Shel is the ringleader of a foursome, all teenagers in El Paso, Texas, and manipulates the other three (all boys) into playing harmless pranks that eventually morph into acts of psychological and physical cruelty. As the plot progresses, the games become darker, twisted. Shel manipulates her three underlings into an act of devastating humiliation and degradation. Only after this horrific act of cruelty does the reader learn of Shel's ongoing trauma. As the text concludes, Shel sits isolated in a desolate area of desert city, an island in the Rio Grande. Isolated unto herself, Shel is surrounded by the pain of the violence inflicted upon her by her father and that she inflicts upon her friends. As Dr. Omi Osun Joni L. Jones¹³, professor of Performance Studies at the University of Texas illuminated to me in a late-night conversation in August 2018, "Damaged people damage people."

The theme of familial violence is illustrated more vividly in another text of Rechy's—*The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez* (1991). In this novel, Rechy presents three generations of such violence within a Xicanx family, one scarred by poverty and patriarchal violence. The protagonist, a struggling young Chicana from El Paso, Texas, attempts to raise her three children in a crime-ridden section of decaying Hollywood. Often reduced to his "Chicano" novel, Rechy

constructs a portrait of a Xicana unlike any other created by a cisgender Chicano male author, a character of depth, desire, and demons. Amalia, like much of Rechy's work, is (auto)ethnographic; he writes what he observes and inserts his own positionality to advance the plot and to add to the dramatic tension. The younger son, Juan, and the daughter, Gloria, reflect the secondary positions within the traditional Xicanx family Rechy explores throughout *Amalia Gómez*. Manny, the eldest son, a violent criminal, yet presumably heterosexual occupies the vaunted position of favored child by Amalia, even as she recalls the sexual and emotional abuse she endured by her own parents.

Amalia Gómez transpires over the course of a heat-ridden day in Los Angeles—the City of Angels! the devoutly Catholic Amalia observes—interspersed with flashbacks of memories from her own traumatic childhood in the historic neighborhood of El Paso, Texas, El Segundo Barrio, to more recent memories of abusive husbands, exploitative jobs, and elusive miracles. Amalia's journey begins in a hangover haze, as she drank three beers instead of her usual two the night before, yet as she insists throughout the text, she is a *good* Catholic, despite her shortcomings against the impossible standards for women set by Chicano cultural Catholicism.

The violence of the home reveals itself early in Amalia's flashbacks throughout her miraculous day. Before Rechy confronts the patriarchal violence of the home, he focuses on Amalia's present by highlighting graffiti shouting, "AZTLÁN ES UNA FÁBULA" [Aztlán is a fable]. By tearing down the ancestral home of the Aztecs and the reclaimed home of the Chicano Movement, Rechy challenges the patriarchy and homophobia that relegated women to second-class status and prevented LGBTQ+ Xicanx from affirming their sexual identities. If Aztlán is a fantasy, then LGBTQ+ Xicanx writers like Rechy, Anzaldúa, Moraga, and Castillo are the builders of a new home where the patriarchal father does not rule, but rather a collective of

Xicanx representing the spectrum of genders and sexualities. As Anzaldúa directs in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, the *mujer* must empower herself to destroy toxic masculinity to construct a horizontal relation of power, but this cannot be accomplished without the efforts of men, particularly gay and bisexual Xicanx men who owe a great debt to our lesbian sisters who cared for us as we succumbed to AIDS away from the shameful gaze of our biological families. For decades, gay Xicanx men have hidden behind our male privilege and allowed Xicanx lesbians to carry the heavy burden of advancing the cause of deconstructing traditional gender roles and forcing a discursive analysis of Latinx LGBTQ+ realities. Anzaldúa instructs her readers to relinquish the tools of capitalist patriarchy, heeding Lorde's wisdom of not utilizing the master's tools to dismantle the master's house:

She goes through her backpack, keeps her journal and address book, throws the muni-bart metromaps. The coins are heavy and they go next, then the greenbacks flutter through the air. She keeps her knife, can opener and eyebrow pencil. She puts bones, pieces of bark, *hierbas*, eagle feather, snakeskin, tape recorder, the rattle and drum in her pack and she sets out to become the complete *tolteca*. (82)

Anzaldúa, by ridding herself of the weight of Western cartography and capitalism, embarks on a new path, as the facultad of her spirit and that of Lorde's dancing to the pulsing disco beats of Sylvester's soaring falsetto soprano. Rechy, through his own narrative voice, guides the reader to deconstruct the patriarchal, masculinist concept of Aztlán, the homeland envisioned by heterosexist Chicano men where they would rule supreme over women and the queer. The murders of Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos attest to the violent masculinity engendered by Aztlán. We must construct a new home with rooms housing the multiplicity of expressions of gender and LGBTQ+ lives, identities, and experiences accessing a central courtyard so that we

may gather nightly to salute the majesty of the full moon, Coyolxauhqui, as we offer pumpkins by the river for Oshún and watermelon at the beach for Yemayá.

Throughout *Amalia Gómez*, Rechy's protagonist applies her own facultad to navigate a world created by violent masculinity and white supremacy. Rechy paints a stark portrait of a woman struggling against these forces in her familial home and the external world. Born in the Second Ward of El Paso, infamously known as "El Segundo Barrio," Amalia represents a character of faith or delusion, depending on your standing with the Catholic Church. Contextualizing the character of Amalia Gómez with Rechy's essay, "Holy Drag!," she represents the latter but with sensuality, desire, and defiance, unlike the supporting characters of *Bless Me, Ultima*, yet is just as passionate in the religious sense. Agency escapes Amalia, as Rechy explains, "she lived within the boundaries of her existence, and that did not include hope, real hope. She felt that any choice she might have made would have led her to the exact place, the same situation—finally to the decaying neighborhood threatened by gangs in the fringes of Hollywood" (12). From the slums of the Texas/Mexico borderlands to the urban dystopic, pre-*Blade Runner* wasteland of Los Angeles, Amalia negotiates the sexual, physical, and emotional violence exacted upon her and that she reciprocates by inflicting similar violence upon her daughter, Gloria, and gay son, Juan, meanwhile privileging the first-born son, Manny, a drug-addicted criminal yet presumably heterosexual.

Amalia Gómez is set one still, uncomfortably warm day in Los Angeles in the early 1990s. Saddled with three children from two men, Amalia journeys from her parents' violent clutches to the labyrinthian complexity of Los Angeles, where she marvels at the Catholic place-names yet finds no respite from her misery. Believing she witnessed a heavenly sign in the morning, Amalia alternates between her unwavering faith and the day-to-day means of survival

for her and her children. In El Segundo Barrio, Amalia, the only daughter, copes with the alcoholic fury of her father and her mother's increasing resentment. Rechy establishes poverty as Amalia's first enemy, however, invading the community, "Only Mexicans lived in those tenements, infested two-room units cluttered with religious pictures, effigies of Christ and of the Holy Virgin. Up to ten people—of different generations and always including a grandmother—occupied dark room without running water; the bathroom would be outside, frigid in winter like the rooms themselves, which were rancid with unbudging heat in summer" (15). The description of poverty is similar to that of the opening scenes of *City of Night*, leading the reader to reflect on the lasting effect of class issues on the development of a person's worldview.

Amalia's parents represent different aspects of the violence unleashed upon Amalia. A decorated World War II veteran, her father was responsible for the family's slide into a precarious economic existence. Postwar, the family's poverty increased as did the father's alcoholic rage and frustration with the broken promises of the U.S. government regarding the G.I. bill.¹⁴ Her father showed some moments of love towards her mother, Teresa, yet he represented a tormented failure of a man who coped with alcohol and physically abusing every member of the family. Her brothers exerted their male privilege and fled the home, thus leaving Amalia as the object of the parents' scorn. Even in such poverty and violence, Teresa expressed gratitude her family did not comprise of the truly destitute across the Rio Grande in Ciudad Juárez, México.

The Church and public school were no places of refuge for Amalia, as she would discover from the white supremacist nuns and teachers. Nuns berated her for not attending Catholic School because of her family's poverty and her Mexican accent, "'And God doesn't want you to speak with a Mexican accent'" (Rechy 16). When she attended public school,

Amalia's teacher asked to see her hair. Thinking the teacher wanted to admire her thick black lustrous hair, the teacher accused, "I have to make sure you don't have any lice" (ibid). Stunned at such an insult, Amalia's resilience allows her to provide a stinging retort to her white supremacist teacher the following day. Rechy evokes the institutional racism experienced by Xicanx children in the U.S. educational system with this passage. David Dorado Romo provides the historical evidence of such humiliating treatment of Mexicans crossing the bridge into El Paso from Ciudad Juárez for day labor in his text, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923* (2005).¹⁵

Just as in the previous chapter where I argued Rechy's work can be viewed through an historical lens, he evokes Xicanx history in contextualizing the poverty and institutional violence Amalia's family endures. Here, however, I follow another path of Eleggua's crossroads to the root of toxic masculinity and externalized/internalized misogyny of gay Xicanx men, which leads to fem/cide. Amalia's fortitude, however, could not repel sexual advances from her drunken father as she grew into her teen-age years, and her mother also became her enemy rather than her advocate:

She was fourteen when, one night, her father grabbed her. She smelled the harsh liquor on his breath. When she felt his hands fondling her breasts, and then his sour mouth nuzzling them, she closed her eyes, to become invisible. The prospect of even greater violence paralyzed her. She could not move even when she saw that Teresa had walked in. Her mother did not say anything then—nor ever. She merely put her husband to bed to sleep off his drunkenness.

From that day on she turned cold to Amalia. (Rechy 19)

Not only must Amalia contend with her violence physical and sexual attacks, her own mother resents her because of her husband's incestuous desire. In a patriarchal society, the man is the ultimate prize amongst women—even mother and daughter. The daughter's youth is a threat to the mother and because the latter depends on her husband for her material survival, she targets the only person more vulnerable than she, her daughter

This scene of familial violence harkens to a cultural production of Chicano theater, Luis Valdez's tale of incest, "Delgadina." In this production, a wealthy hacendado (landowner) lusts after his beautiful daughter as the impotent family, including the wife/mother, observes, serving as the chorus. The daughter's only respite is suicide. Besides being violently misogynistic, the production also features a servant with an indigenous phenotype exhibiting obviously feminine mannerisms and characteristics, thus equating the native with the queer, both emasculated and subordinate. Everyone revolves around the virile heterosexual Spanish-identified male. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano argues in her article, "The Female Subject in Chicano Theatre: Sexuality, 'Race,' and Class" (1986), "[T]he Chicana proves her fidelity to her people by means of a sexual commitment to the Chicano male, 'putting the male first' within the heterosexual structures of the family and the culture. This in turn affects the ways in which Chicanas relate to each other. The cultural practice of putting the males first leads Chicanas to fear rejection and betrayal from other Chicanas" (393). As white supremacy allows PoC to discriminate and exploit other PoC, patriarchy, our patriarchal system of familial relations places the highest value on the heterosexual male, forces women to compete for the man's attention and affection.

Another example from Xicanx popular culture is the 1994 film, *Mi Vida Loca*, which pretends to focus on the friendship of two young Chicanas in the not-yet-gentrified neighborhood of Echo Park in Los Angeles. The best friends join their neighborhood gang together and are

known by the monikers, La Sad Girl, portrayed by Angel Aviles, and Mousy, played by Seidy Lopez. The film disguises itself to be one of Chicana empowerment but instead retreads the misogynist trope of women as best friends yet fight over a man who impregnates them both. Ernesto, played by Jacob Vargas, shows interest in Mousy, and the two have a baby together. Mousy spends all her time with her son, and Ernesto strays—with her best friend, La Sad Girl, who also gives birth to a child. Instead of directing their anger towards Ernesto, La Sad Girl and the female contingent of the gang make a pact to kill Mousy. An unhappy customer of Ernesto (he deals drugs) kills him soon thereafter, yet the film shows the two young women continuing their feud. Eventually, they reestablish their friendship, yet the film never treads new territory—women are merely satellites orbiting celestial male bodies.

Rechy's text examines and critiques such cultural patriarchy by describing the bleakness of Amalia's home life through multiple acts of violence, not uncommon for those sharing her identity—youth of color, woman, impoverished, little formal education. Throughout the text, Rechy illustrates the material realities of Xicanx women who must rely on men for their survival and that of their children; capitalism is inextricably linked with patriarchy. Amalia begins a flirtation with the ironically named Salvador (savior), the son of one of her father's drinking companions and upon a chance meeting in the tenement building's alley, he asks for a kiss. Amalia acquiesces, yet he becomes aggressive and violent. Immobile in the face of sexual assault again, Amalia limps home declaring she had just been raped by Salvador. Neither parent believes her and when Salvador's parents confront him alongside Amalia's parents, he and his mother slut-shame Amalia, forcing them to marry. Amalia's mother adds to the slut-shaming of her daughter when a truant officer inquires as to her daughter's absence, "Because she got

herself pregnant” (Rechy 22) and forbids her from wearing a white blouse to the rushed courthouse wedding and church services.

Rechy then provides a critique of the absurdity of such a statement, even if the sexual act had been consensual, by having Amalia recount a previous memory regarding a local woman, allegedly a former nun, who provided free daycare to the working mothers of the community. The nun, Mother Mercedes, provided free catechism to the children whose parents could not afford Catholic school tuition. In this section, Rechy gives a detailed explanation of the difference between the “Immaculate Conception” and the “Virgin Birth.” Juxtaposed against the violence of Salvador’s rape of Amalia, the explanation of Mary and the “Immaculate Conception” and the “Virgin Birth” are analogous—neither woman consented. Thus, Amalia’s rape by Salvador, which means “savior,” is explained and justified biblically. The rape of Mary is the rape of Amalia. The rape of Mary is the rape of all women. Continuing the earlier story of Eve, the rape of Mary reinforces the trope of the origin of the hatred of women discussed by Rechy during an interview regarding his revisionist historical novel, *Our Lady of Babylon* (1996), in the epigraph above.

Merlin Stone grapples with the origin of misogyny from a spiritual and material level. The origin of historical and modern misogyny is the proliferation of the three Judeo-Christian religions—Judaism, Catholicism/Christianity, and Islam. In her text, *When God was a Woman* (1976), Stone explores the patriarchy of the religious belief systems establishing and regulating our current view of gender, particularly the subservience of women to men:

How did it actually happen? How did men initially gain the control that now allows them to regulate the world in matters as vastly diverse as deciding which wars will be fought when to what time dinner should be served... What else might we expect in a society that

for centuries has taught young children, both female and male, that a MALE deity created the universe and all that is in it, produced MAN in his own divine image—and then, as an afterthought, created woman, to obediently help man in his endeavors? The image of Eve, created for her husband, from her husband, the woman who was supposed to have brought about the downfall of humankind, has in many ways become the image of all women. How did this idea ever come into being? (xi)

Throughout the text, Stone provides historical evidence of the erasure of the memory of Goddess worship, which according to her research, dates to an astonishing 25,000 B.C.E. Conversely, historians date the life of Abraham, the first prophet of the androcentric Judeo-Christian religion, to roughly 1,800 B.C.E.

As if a female Christ-figure, Amalia bears several crosses of oppression as she navigates throughout her miraculous day, analogous to the biblical forty days wandering the desert. Amalia's life pinballs between bouts of domesticity with men who replicate her father's violence. Amalia gives birth to one son, Manny, son of Salvador, then to two more children, Gloria and Juan, children of Gabriel, a soldier from New Mexico who endured the horrors of Vietnam. Tormented by men and her financially demanding parents, Amalia escapes to Los Angeles to live with Gabriel, who had moved to solicit employment in the burgeoning aerospace industry of southern California. Unable to find Gabriel, Amalia relocates her brood to East Los Angeles where she creates some semblance of home. Finding employment as a housekeeper, Amalia encounters Gabriel in East Los Angeles yet he does not provide stability to her family and ultimately leaves her again. As she ponders her life, she stumbles upon a Chicano mural. An elderly Chicano explains the androcentric theme of the bronzed Aztec warriors fighting the Spanish conquistadores, fighting for Aztlan, to Amalia as “our promised land of justice”

(Rechy 45). Respectfully listening to the elder, Amalia wonders where the women were, if they had survived the conquista, and would they have any part in a possible re-conquista? Even with little formal education, Amalia recognizes the marginalization of women depicted in the mural.

For decades, Rechy's novels have offered readers, particularly gay Xicanx men, glimpses of the homosexual underground in the years before Stonewall when gay sex was stigmatized and criminalized and in the years after when gay sex remained anonymous yet morphed into a system of sexual accumulation and a subculture of humiliation and degradation. The violent isolation of those assuming a hypermasculine stance, or what Jackson Katz calls a "tough guise," is offset by feminine gay men who offer a Lacanian mirror for the former; those who transgress heteronormative gender roles are heroic in Rechy's novels. Katz's body of work is to be lauded in recognizing, examining, critiquing, and dismantling toxic, violent masculinity. His two video documentaries, *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity* (2000), and *Tough Guise 2: Violence, Manhood, and American Culture* (2013), examine the link between the toxic masculinity reinforced in boys and young men by violent images pervasive in popular culture. Katz makes a similar argument as Anzaldúa; our violent patriarchy constricts boys and young men to wearing straightjackets of destructive behaviors, actions directed towards themselves and others.

For over three decades gay Xicanx men have yet to heed the plea from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* to construct a new masculinity based on feminist of color principles, particularly peace and restorative justice. The juxtaposition of the ideas emanating from Rechy and Anzaldúa create the tools to construct a new path for a gay Xicanx masculinity not rife with internalized and externalized misogyny but one where we pay homage to the Xicanx lesbians who cared for our dead brethren and take heed of their community's health crises, especially

breast cancer. Both are prophetic in that they are warning us of the dangers of perpetuating a patriarchal, toxic masculinity. The petty tyrant positionality of cisgender gay men who exert their male privilege over cisgender women, especially lesbians, transgender women, and effeminate gay men stem from internalized and externalized misogyny and homophobia.

Rechy's text provides further insight into the complicated and violent world of patriarchy women must negotiate, often at odds with each other, to survive. Throughout *Amalia Gómez*, Rechy constructs scenes where women must compete with other women. For example, a white woman who dismisses Amalia from her housekeeping position admits her husband favors women like Amalia, thus denying her needed income:

The woman let her go after one week:

“Amalia, I really can't afford—” she began. “My husband likes women like you,” she blurted.

“What kind?” Amalia tried to keep anger out of her voice so the woman would get her another job.

“Oh, you know,” the woman stumbled, “Spanish, and—” She waved her hands, outlining ample breasts. “But, look, I have a dress for you, I've outgrown it.” She tried to laugh.

“I'm Mexican-American, not Spanish,” Amalia told her, “and I don't care if your husband likes women like me, I don't like men like him, and I don't like your dress, it would look like a sack on me.” (42)

This scene begs the questions: Had Amalia kept working at this home, would the husband have acted inappropriately towards her? Would the wife have acted more cruelly towards Amalia out

of fear of losing her husband? Rechy's scene exposes another insidious aspect of the intersection of white supremacy and patriarchy—white women exacting power over women of color.

Examining Violent Sexual Practices—The Proliferation of “Bug Chasers”: The Birth of a Death Cult or an Understandable Yet Sad Reaction to Four Decades of Queer Genocide? The Path Towards Ikú—Toxic Masculine Sexuality as a Response to HIV/AIDS Stigma

Eleggua, the trickster of the pantheon of Yoruba orishas, mediates all communication between the realms of the divine and the material. If angered or disrespected, Eleggua can block any petition from humans and even open the path towards Ikú, Death. The crossroads, one of the many signifiers of Eleggua, is the most accurate trope for the gay cisgender Latinx community as we enter the fifth decade of HIV/AIDS consciousness. Even though the gay Latinx community possesses the knowledge to lessen the risk of seroconversion, especially with the recent advent of the prophylaxis, PreP, a majority of this population does not engage in safer-sex practices. As Rafael M. Díaz asserts in his important text, *Latino Gay Men and HIV: Culture, Sexuality, and Risk Behavior* (1998), the lack of cognitive awareness of high-risk and safer-sex practices is not the problem. HIV seroconversion continues to rise among gay Latinx men because of a complex set of sociological and cultural factors, including the racialized form of toxic masculinity, more commonly known as machismo, coupled with internalized homophobic shame (57-58).

In *Rushes*, Rechy writes of a subculture of the gay male community mimicking the white supremacist patriarchy of the larger heterosexual culture. The subculture's participants bifurcate the community into roles of dominant and submissive represented by the code of colored handkerchiefs. Rechy exposes the toxic cruelty upon which this world is constructed in *Rushes* and other texts in his corpus—the participants engage in acts of degradation and humiliation based on power rather than desire and pleasure. The following online profiles and blogs are

evidence of the (d)evolution of subcommunities akin to that found in *Rushes*. Rechy provides a critique of extreme sadomasochistic sexual practices as a portent for the horrific violence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic soon to pass.

The current iteration of such violent sexual practices is a product of four decades of HIV confusion, hysteria, fear, apathy, and stigma. The last of these outcomes—the historical and current stigmatization of gay men living with HIV—helped to create the conditions for the growth of a subculture engaging in the fetishization of HIV and the taboo acts of exchanging bodily fluids, including those that do not transmit the virus causing AIDS. For gay men who came of age during the initial years of the epidemic, the healthcare community pathologized our bodies, our desires, and the sexual acts in which we engage. Gay men feared their bodily fluids and those of other men, particularly their own blood. The film, *Jeffrey* (1995), contains a poignant and revealing scene of the fear overtaking sexually active gay men during the pre-cocktail era of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The protagonist, Jeffrey, is a sexually active gay man living in Manhattan and in the opening scene, we bear witness to the sexual paranoia gripping Jeffrey's sexual partners interspersed with sexualized advertisements and the mainstream news media's sensational coverage of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Over the opening credits, fireworks a la the 1970s sitcom, *Love American Style*, add to the romantic strobe light-effects as we hear the moaning ecstasy of man-on-man sex. Jeffrey halts the sex as he alerts his partner of the condom breakage, who panics. Then a montage of Jeffrey's sexual experiences reveals the state of sexual relations in an urban gay community during this historical period. Jeffrey's next tryst suggests another activity instead of intercourse; he just wants to cuddle—like “bunnies.” The subsequent man demands current bloodwork results, the name of his healthcare provider, and a list of Jeffrey's sexual partners. In the following scene, a naked man cowers in a chair wrapped in

saranwrap and wearing a hospital mask and latex gloves. Then comes the crux of the film: Jeffrey decides to eschew future sexual activity in a monologue, “Sex is too sacred to be treated this way. Sex was never meant to be safe or negotiated or fatal.” He then refers to his most recent sexual encounter, a situation where the man weeps and confesses, “I’m sorry. It’s just, this used to be so much fun.” The implication of his fear and his statement reflect the PTSD of witnessing the horrific deaths of thousands of gay men the previous decade and a half.

Surprisingly (or perhaps not), stigma against gay men living with HIV continues and is reinforced by gay men who are HIV-negative. Gay men have created and perpetuated a discourse of cleanliness not unlike that broached about Mexican immigrants. The proliferation of online dating applications with references to being “clean” (possessing an HIV-negative status) and a demand for no “bugs” (a reference to HIV and other sexually-transmitted infections) is coupled with the date of their most recent HIV-negative test result date (often more than a year old which begs the question, “Am I supposed to believe this guy has not engaged in anal intercourse since then?”) are routine in the area for self-description. The HIV-negative test result date is usually displayed last and serves as a sort of badge of honor and privilege. Additionally, many of the dating applications contain a section listing for what qualities they are searching. HIV-negative men seeking other HIV-negative men is not a surprise yet excludes the population of men living with the status of “HIV-undetectable.” The HIV-awareness community’s latest campaign’s, “U=U,” standing for “Undetectable equals Untransmittable,” purpose is to defeat such stigma. Campaign strategies like these notwithstanding, the digital dating applications allow for HIV-negative men to “serosort,” or to only search for men who *identify* as HIV-negative, which may or may not be accurate. Advertising an inaccurate HIV-negative status is problematic and dangerous in this era of increasing criminalization of persons

living with HIV accused of withholding or misrepresenting their status to a sexual partner, as the rates of prosecution of such cases are becoming more common.¹⁶

These social conditions foment the current phenomenon of high-risk sexual activities, including “barebacking,” “slamming,” “blood slamming,” and “pozzing parties,” which include a subculture of men who are “bug chasers” (HIV-negative men who actively seek to acquire HIV and other STIs) and “Gift givers” (HIV-positive men with an active viral load who wish to transmit their particular strain. “Bug chasers” are not a new subpopulation of gay men yet are becoming increasingly more visible in the world of dating apps and social media platforms.

Intersecting with Rechy’s critique of toxic masculinity, which I call fem/cide, is an examination of violent sexual practices. In certain passages of *City of Night*, *The Sexual Outlaw*, and one of his more recent texts, *After the Blue Hour* (2016), Rechy demarcates a line between acts motivated by true erotic desire in the search for carnal pleasure and sexual excesses approaching a rote biological function based on power and humiliation. No other text does Rechy illustrate the path more starkly or meaningfully than in his text, *Rushes* (1979), a narrative set in a “western and leather” gay bar that discriminated its clientele, who had to meet certain phenotypic, masculinity, and age restrictions. Signs with the warning, “No Fats, No Fems, No Over 35s,” were common in these types of gay bars in the decade following the Stonewall Rebellion. I cannot help to compare these restrictions to those my indigenous grandfather encountered as a migrant farmworker throughout the Southwest, “No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed.” Set in a fictional bar called *Rushes*, which according to the auteur is based on a now-defunct gay bar in New York City, the narrative follows a group of friends one sultry Saturday night at the bar and for after hours at the adjoining sex club.

Like his earlier works, Rechy takes the reader on an ethnographic time machine to forgotten eras of gay male life. In *City of Night*, Rechy exposes the twilight world of hustlers and scores in the urban metropolises of the U.S. during the historical period of post-McCarthyism, an era that persecuted and exposed gay and lesbian government workers than it ferreted any members of the Communist Party, and the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969, the uprising in the West Village of New York City started by transgender women of color, most notably Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary* chronicles three days of a “sex hunter” who defies the heteronormativity and homophobia of the legal system by openly cruising public locales such as the Santa Monica pier, the corridor-like streets of Hollywood, and frequenting bathhouses and sex clubs. Interspersed between the sex hunter’s adventures are newspaper articles and voice overs of imaginary speeches protesting the institutional homophobia of the criminal justice system and the heterosexual public’s tacit approval of such gestapo tactics. *Rushes* documents a decade of alleged LGBTQ+ “freedom,” yet after ten years of sexual excesses, Rechy exposes the fractious state of the LGBTQ+ “community.”

Nowhere are the fissures of the LGBTQ+ “community” more violent and destructive than the increasing movement of “bug chasers” and “Gift givers,” cisgender men who have sex with other men for the purposes of transmitting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and infections. “Bug chasers” are men who are HIV-negative and are actively seeking to be “pozzed,” a slang term constructed from the term, “poz,” a shortening of HIV-positive. “Bug chasers” seek the “Gift” [in blog posts, the term is almost always capitalized to denote its importance], the human immunodeficiency virus, from “gift givers,” men with high viral load and do not use condoms and have eschewed further medicinal treatment. Men with high viral

load are known in this “community” as “toxic” and often have tattoos of the symbol denoting a biohazard.

“Bug chasing” is not a new phenomenon but other destructive behaviors and identities have emerged from this practice. Intersecting with the practice of “bug chasing” and “Gift givers” are men who engage in “slamming,” or shooting up crystal meth, known as T, “slam sharing”, or the act of injecting T (short for “Tina”) and then immediately sharing the needle with another person with the expressed intent of seroconverting the recipient with HIV, hepatitis C, and other blood-borne viruses, high-risk sadomasochistic activities, such as the use of a “cruel condom,” as a method to break the delicate anal tissue and facilitate direct semen to blood contact, “pozzing” parties where groups of HIV-negative men are the receptive partners for men who are not only HIV-positive but have an active viral load, Satan worship, white supremacy in the form of embracing Nazi ideology, and other taboo sexual practices, such as zoophilia, scat, and “rosebudding,” the act of fisting an anus so violently it causes rectal prolapse and often involves another person coming into oral contact with the colon. These high-risk sexual activities are not new but because of the proliferation of social media, amateur pornography, and the availability of professional adult film entertainment on the Internet, are easily accessed by curious voyeurs. What I plan to investigate in the latter of the chapter is how Rechy described the origin of such violent practices in his work in the era before the HIV/AIDS epidemic decimated the gay male community.

Just prior to the pivotal historical moment when HIV moved into the gay community in the United States, the 1970s represented a decade of unapologetic sexual freedom in the first years after the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969. In the documentary, *Gay Sex in the '70s* (2005), the filmmaker comments to one of the first interview subjects regarding the bacchanalian era of the

twelve-year period between June 28, 1969, the recognized beginning of the LGBT rights movement, and June 5, 1981, the publication date of the report in the CDC-supported, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, in which five cases of gay men stricken with *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, of which two died. The narrator comments to the interview subject, “So, Alvin, the period we’re going to talk about is June ‘69, Stonewall, to June ‘81, [the] beginning of AIDS. You know, some people have talked about it as the most libertine period that the western world has ever seen since Rome, basically.” The pulsing synthesizer of Sylvester’s high energy anthem, “Do You Wanna Funk?” (1982) grows louder as the interview subject smiles and responds, “It was.” This twelve-year period represents a sexual “golden age” for the gay male community. However, no one could foresee the horrific scenes of the AIDS epidemic—healthy young men wasting away to living skeletons, their skin spotted with leper lesions and often shunned by their families and even by healthcare professionals. Before the AIDS epidemic, however, sexual excesses led to extreme sexual practices leading to violent sexual practices. The violence of sexual practices amongst gay men is not a new phenomenon, as Rechy writes in another of his brilliant yet overlooked texts, *Rushes* (1977).

In *Rushes*, Rechy places the plot in a “Leather and Levis” gay bar and in an adjoining sex club in the late 1970s. This type of bar prized hypermasculinity amongst its patrons and practiced a Studio 54 type of selection process. Based on an actual bar in New York in the 1970s, *Rushes* personified the hierarchy based on heteronormative ideals—to look and act “straight.” In such a locale, a patron had to adhere to a code of hypermasculinity in both dress and manner. Although now considered part of camp culture¹⁷, the musical group, The Village People, represent the type of masculine ideal for bars such as *Rushes*. The Village People consisted of “macho men” who donned the attire of masculine tropes—the construction worker,

the cop, the cowboy, the Native American, and the leather man. The group's music celebrated gay male culture with such iconic and lesser-known songs, such as, "YMCA"¹⁸ (1978), "Macho Man" (1978), "Fire Island" (1977), "Go West" (1979), and "In the Navy" (1979). Although these songs may sound dated because of their stereotypical disco beats and synthesizers, the Village People's songs celebrate and promote a strain of queer masculinity bordering on toxic, as it rejects any sense of femininity. The bar, Rushes, excises any femininity from between its walls in the form of excluding cisgender women (although one cisgender woman, a local celebrity fascinated by this subculture of gay men, manages to invade the club's inner sanctum) and policing the cisgender men who dare attempt to enter. The men must be not too old ("no over 35s"), in shape ("no fats"), and, most importantly, masculine, ("no fems"). Thus, this type of gay bar practices an early form of fem/cide, in addition to ageism and body-shaming.

An online application titled, *Bareback Real Time* (bbt.com), provided my entrée into the world of "bug chasers," although I had read about this practice in the early 2000s. However, a profile on the bbt.com site piqued my curiosity, which engaged my personal and intellectual research agenda. The bbt.com website is not unlike other dating websites targeting men who have sex with men. What is unique about bbt.com is its specialization in men who are seeking to engage in unprotected sex. The bbt.com website description states, "BarebackRT.com community for men cruising for raw man on man Bareback sex. No condoms." A user must create a profile to view and respond to other users and as a disclaimer, I was a member of the website before I conducted this work. As a sexually active gay man living with HIV, dating is difficult. When I disclose my HIV-undetectable status to a potential dating or sexual partner, I rarely receive a response—most often I am "ghosted." If I am granted the courtesy of a rejection response, he usually couches his explanation in fear. Often, they do not understand the

distinction between a person living with an HIV-positive status versus a person with a status of undetectable. To reinforce Díaz's research findings, most of the men who respond to my disclosure in fear are Latinx men. I find it incomprehensible so many sexually active men living in an urban center with countless gay bars, bathhouses and sex clubs, and LGBTQ+ community centers providing services to the Latinx community would react with such fear and not inform themselves about the advances in HIV science. Several of the men, all Latinx, claimed to not know what the terms, "T-cells," "viral load," and "undetectable" meant. I highly doubt these men are abstaining from sexual activity or get tested after each sexual encounter. This lack of knowledge coupled with the reticence of the field of Chicana/o Studies to incorporate the topic of gay male sexuality and the intersection of the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic borders on the criminal, if not complicit to the crimes of the Reagan administrations homophobic silence.

The aforementioned silence and ignorance notwithstanding, the bbrt.com facilitates more transparency from its users. HIV status is one of the first personal traits listed in a user's profile. The programmers list both "Positive" and "Undetectable" as options, among other statuses. One I find disturbing, problematic, and intriguing is "Do Not Care." Firstly, I wonder who would designate his status under this category. Secondly, why would the programmers of bbrt.com have felt compelled to have included such a category? Did the website designers possess some insight into the gay community that a barebacking site was needed and would be profitable? The owner of the bbrt.com is Wet-Media, Incorporated, a Tucson, Arizona-based company, which describes its vision as, "Wet-Media, Inc. is a motivated world wide [*sic*] social networking website development and hosting company. Our innovative ideas and niche-based websites satisfy our member's [*sic*] demand for a more concentrated effort of bringing people together. By recognizing the social need of individuals interested in less diverse niche-based websites, we

are introducing and providing our websites to the world one niche at a time; [*sic*] customer focused with accuracy and effectiveness” (www.wet-media.com). Nowhere on the website does Wet-Media, Inc. indicate its involvement with online dating applications or does it mention explicitly its connection with the LGBTQ+ community. However, the website designer includes colored tiles representing the Pride flag, an obvious signifier of the LGBTQ+ community. BarebackRT.com represents one of Wet-Media’s “niche-based websites”—the niche of men who have sex with men and choose to participate in the activity of “barebacking.”

The BarebackRT.com website, like other dating websites, allows the user to conduct a profile search based on a myriad of characteristics. HIV status is one of the characteristics a user can search the database of profiles. A user can select the HIV status filter, “Do Not Care,” with no other search criteria, and the site will yield over 500 results in the United States. Five hundred is the maximum number a user may peruse. The status of “Do Not Care” is what intrigues my critical thinking yet frightens my primal survival instincts. Not only was I alarmed at the amount of men who “do not care” about their HIV status, I questioned why the designers of the website, www.barebackrt.com, felt this filter was necessary to add. Another HIV status descriptor is “Don’t Know” which is also troublesome, albeit honest. Like the characters Rechy constructs in *Rushes*, the men who “do not care” about their HIV status occupy an existential category centered on and defined by their next sexual conquest. Coincidentally, Grove Press published *Rushes* in 1979, just when the virus began to infiltrate gay men’s bodies in the major urban centers of the United States. Ever prescient, Rechy’s text describes the violent sexual practices of gay men in the 1970s, similar to the “slamming” and “poz conversion” gatherings increasingly evident on social media.

One profile I stumbled upon as a user of bbrt.com is what motivated me to pursue this line of research as it relates to Rechy's work. The profile picture owned by the username, "Pozchasr," startled and intrigued me. "Pozchasr" lists his residence as Los Angeles and is a 26-year-old Latino gay man who is strapped to a wall with appears yellow police crime tape with the ironic message, "DO NOT ENTER." "Pozchasr" is nude with a black circle strategically placed in front of his phallus and is holding an unidentifiable book or box (perhaps a home HIV-test to ensure his next partner's status?) "Pozchasr" is wearing sunglasses looking angled towards the ground. Centering himself in his profile picture as a "crime scene" speaks to the state of the gay men's community and movement, something Rechy warns of in *Rushes*. "Pozchasr"'s profile contains the headline, "Bug chaser here," with the biohazard symbol before and after the headline. The biohazard symbol has become the main trope, along with a scorpion, to represent the Gift-giving and Bug-chasing community.

Many men sport a biohazard tattoo to flaunt not only their status as HIV+ but their active viral load as opposed to being undetectable, or their "toxicity." "Toxic" is another term specific to the "Bug-chasing" and "Gift-giving" community. Having an active viral load, rather the state of being "toxic," is a crucial distinction as the status of being HIV-positive is stratified between symptomatic, asymptomatic, undetectable, and AIDS. Symptomatic and asymptomatic are terms distinguishing between the state of showing signs of the virus, e.g., your immune system weakening and your body breaking out with survivable illnesses, like thrush (an oral yeast infection), swollen lymph nodes, and weight loss. Asymptomatic is living with the virus showing no signs of any of these types of indicator illnesses. An AIDS diagnosis, according to the University of California at San Francisco, is applied to a person who is HIV+ and exhibits one or more of the following characteristics: "Less than 200 CD4 T cells per cubic millimeter of

blood...CD4 T cells accounting for less than 14 percent of all lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, [and/or] one or more of the illnesses listed below” (<https://www.ucsfhealth.org/conditions/aids/diagnosis.html>). Over twenty illnesses are listed, ranging from pulmonary diseases (pneumocystis jiroveci) to ones of the eye (cytomegalovirus) to the brain (toxoplasmosis). Without treatment, once a person crosses this threshold, she/he/they rarely recover.

“Pozchar,” thus, straddles the border of uncharted territory of the AIDS epidemic. For three decades, the HIV epidemic devastated two generations of gay men—those who were already sexually active in 1981 and those who came of age in its grim specter. The post-death camp generation of gay men, to which “Pozchar” belongs, should, theoretically, possess lower numbers of seroconversion as by the mid to late 1990s, as safer sex practices and the release of the AIDS drug cocktail should have mitigated the rise in the rate of new infections. However, “Pozchar’s” intersectional identity of belonging to the millennial generation and being gay and Latino puts him at greater risk for HIV seroconversion. According to the Centers for Disease Control’s webpage, “HIV Among Youth,” in 2016, 8,451 youth (ages 13 to 24) received an HIV diagnosis in the United States. Of these cases, Latino men who have sex with men accounted for 25% of the new seroconversions, second only to Black men (<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/age/youth/index.html>). Furthermore, “Pozchar’s” ethnicity as a Latino who has sex with men places him at further risk, as the rate of HIV seroconversions increased by 13% over the years 2011-2105, according the CDC’s webpage, “HIV and Hispanic/Latinos” (<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/raciaethnic/hispaniclatinos/index.html>). Even if he were not “chasing” the virus, “Pozchar’s” intersectional location in three high-risk groups—Latino, gay, and youth—places him in a marginal location, far from the agenda of mainstream LGBT politics and identity.

The profile of “Pozchasr” contains five other pictures, X-rated shots of different parts of his genitalia and his posterior, each with a different caption detailing his appetite for HIV-positive sexual partners. As is the case with much of the gay dating apps, men auto-dismember themselves rather than displaying their whole selves; men become body parts as if left over from a laboratory from a sexualized Dr. Frankenstein. The second picture highlights his posterior with nothing but a jockstrap. The camera focuses on the crevice between his smooth cheeks with the caption, “Poz me.” This imperative sentence is for a selective audience—men with active viral load seeking to “share” their “Gift.” Interestingly, in every blog and profile I have perused regarding “bug chasers” and “Gift givers,” the term, “Gift,” is always capitalized. Perhaps this community capitalizes “Gift” in reverence and awe to the transformative nature of the virus, like the Catholic rite of transubstantiation. Not coincidentally, in her supreme series of *Vampire* chronicles, the legendary Anne Rice calls the transformation of a mortal into a vampire as the “Dark Gift,” a dialectical process wherein the vampire gives some of her/his blood to the mortal and the mortal transmits some of her/his blood to the vampire until they are fused into a distinct lineage. Almost prescient, Knopf published the first novel in the series, *Interview with a Vampire* (1976), years before the HIV epidemic, which Rice based on a short story she had written in the late 1960s. In the universe of Rice’s vampires, a sort of parental lineage emerges once a vampire gives her/his “Dark Gift” to another, as the vampires are selective with whom they share this transformative power. With the “poz chasing” community, however, the “POZ Brotherhood,” can only be expanded, as tumblr blog user, “karluso,” wrote on World AIDS Day, which is observed every December 1st, 2018, “For this day... we should all convert a neg hole to celebrate.” After decades of fear, stigma, and revulsion, the virus is now desired, fetishized, and coveted by a subset of the gay men’s community.

“Pozchar’s” other profile photographs offer his profile viewers more close-up shots of his genitalia. The third photograph is the most sexually explicit one of the six. With the caption, “Taking raw poz cock,” the picture highlights a phallus entering the anus of “Pozchar.” The photograph illustrates the act of “raw,” vernacular for unprotected, sex. If the viewer is to believe the caption, the active participant, or “top,” is HIV+, although his status as undetectable or “toxic” is unknown. Given “Pozchar’s” desire to be “converted,” I theorize he is seeking only “toxic tops” or “Gift-givers” as sexual partners. The fourth photograph of “Pozchar’s” profile evokes the erotic photography of Robert Mapplethorpe and the corporeal terranean self-portraiture of Laura Aguilar. Focusing on his posterior and his anus, “Pozchar” is wearing a jockstrap-type of underwear yet the lighting illuminates his orifice, producing a halo-type effect over the bodily opening surrounded by two mounds of flesh and is accompanied by the caption, “Fill up my hungry hole w/poz cum only.” The fifth and sixth photographs illustrate his sexual role as “versatile,” a gay man who desires to be both the active and passive participant in anal sex. Each of these photographs focuses on “Pozchar’s” erect penis. The fifth photograph carries the caption, “Hungry to fuck poz holes only,” and the sixth picture is accompanied by the caption, “For poz holes only.” The rest of “Pozchar’s” profile contains his preferred sexual acts, which a user chooses from a list provided by the website, his personal statistics, and a brief statement articulating his desire, “Young Latin looking for poz cum Looking for Poz Tops that want to infect.” After “infect,” he includes the biohazard and scorpion symbols to reinforce his desire for conversion. Nothing else can be discerned from “Pozchar’s” profile other than the words listed on his profile describing his own HIV status— “Do Not Care.”

The www.barebackRT.com website, like other online dating applications, allows for a variety of search functions. Because of the extreme nature of this particular website’s target user

audience, a user can search by such criteria as, “Gives Loads Anal,” “Takes Loads Anal,” “Gives Loads Oral,” and “Takes Loads Oral.” The website, as indicated by its name, centers around the act of unprotected sex, especially anal intercourse. Based on my reading of Rechy’s *Rushes*, the men are the “sons” or descendants of the characters in the novel. *Rushes* is a snapshot of the era, literally the year, before the entry of the HIV virus into the gay community. Forty years later, after countless deaths, community organizing, stigma, the rise of crystal meth, and medical advances, gay and bisexual men of color, like “Pozchasr,” are carrying the cross of the epidemic into its fifth decade. *Rushes* speaks to a similar despair as Rechy describes the sexual excesses of the late 1970s. Because of the abundance and availability of sex with other men in urban centers, gay men explored potentially physically violent acts of BDSM and psychologically violent acts of degradation. Throughout his corpus, Rechy reveals his disdain for the hardcore S/M and leather scenes as they fetishized hypermasculinity and sexual practices based not on pleasure but humiliation. This distinction must be made; Rechy is not a sexual fascist nor does he critique from a place of internalized homophobia based on Catholic guilt. Rather, Rechy offers a warning about such sexual practices meant to dehumanize each other. Having lived with the colonized mind of internalized homophobia and internalized misogyny, the gay men engaging in BDSM practices are performing a type of auto-flagellation, according to Rechy. Sexual pleasure between two men is not a sin, according to Rechy, but our families, the Church, and the State have all conditioned us to see a sinner in the mirror. When our families refer to our lovers as “roommates,” when the Church condescendingly states they love the sinner but hate the sin, and when the State does not provide for affordable access to the lifesaving drug of PreP, gay men read these signals as methods of dehumanization. Desiring “toxic loads” after using “dirty rigs” and “toxic slams” is the next step of this dehumanization, except we do this to ourselves.

Preceding the violence of the “Bug chasing” community is the hypermasculinity and sexual violence found in gay bars, such as the ones in *Rushes*. The plot of Rechy’s novel continues from the bar named *Rushes* to a sex club next door, *The Rack*, which opens after last call. At first, *Rushes* and *The Rack* are a refuge from the gay-bashers who torment the establishments’ clientele. However, as Endore, the protagonist, moves through the twisted decay of sexual zombies, he realizes the violent acts of BDSM are manifestations of the gay-bashers’ viciousness. Rechy’s prose creates an Inquisition-like atmosphere as Endore maneuvers his body through a gaggle of eager supplicants and who experiences an epiphany:

Whack! the slap of flesh lures.

Why am I here? Thoughts rush to protect him. The sexhunt, endemically ours, its unique joy and opulent profligacy, yes, earned, outlaw defiance against repression, yes, that, converted, full, unique, ours, envied by others attempting imitation, yes. But he knows that that is not here at the *Rack*, and that the *Rack* is the inevitable extension of the *Rushes*—and that what he loves and has vaunted in the sexhunt is not in the nightly deaths of mean bars nor in the charade of filth and pain. No, the *Rack* is permeated by the punishment *for* sex. He sees this clearly and with anger: This is what they have done to us! And he sees this as clearly but with sorrow: And this is what we do now to ourselves in ritual reenactment of *their* hatred, and we masquerade it all as masculine strength.

It is only charade, a part of him argues, only a charade, a willing charade, all willing.

But he knows the psychic bleeding is as real as the rancidity that coats these ugly rooms; and, recognizing with equal clarity his own part in the hateful ritual, he knows that later, oh, yes, later, he will bear reliable witness to it all, and to his contribution to it.

Now he will surrender to the onslaught of the Rack. (218)

The generation of men Rechy portrays as fictional characters in *Rushes* represent the precursor to the generation of men living under the specter of four decades of fear. Endore from *Rushes* and “Pozchasr” from online dating world are connected by what they both seek. Endore’s realization of the “charade” of violent masculinity and his eventual capitulation to the Rack presages the embrace of “Pozchasr” of the “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” community. The Rack welcomes only a select few, as bouncers weed out the undesirables—the “fats, femmes, and the over 35s.” Conversely, the “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” community shuns no one who is willing to drink from the chalice of HIV toxicity.

The website, www.BarebackRT.com, allows for a transnational meeting of “Bug chasers” and “Gift givers.” Conducting a search with the criterion, “Do Not Care,” reveals over five hundred users in the United States with this descriptor of their HIV status. The search results page states, “Search Results limited to the first 500 members found.” The results are sorted by those members who pay a fee for premium access and then those profiles with free memberships by last login. I searched for members using this criterion several times, and the website always replied with the same “Search Results limited...” response. The numbers of men who “do not care” about their HIV status searching to receive or share the “Gift” is *at least* five hundred just in the United States at any moment, although its temporality is fragile depending on users’ membership and login status. Leaving the criterion of “Do Not Care,” I searched for users based on age, with the maximum age of twenty-five. Not as many results surfaced; however,

theoretically, one is too many. Several users under the age of twenty-one, including two members aged eighteen, list their HIV status as “Do Not Care.” One such user, “RawJockBoi,” hails from Albany, New York. He is White, eighteen years old, and titled his profile simply as “Raw Jock.” The brevity of the profile contents, however, are indicative of the worlds of the bar and sex club in Rechy’s *Rushes* and the “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” community; “RawJockBoi” writes in his profile description, “Looking for something.”

The masks of toxic masculinity the men in Rechy’s *Rushes* don are constructed by fear. The fear of being considered feminine or having any traits associated with women. Internalized misogyny is the reason for the dress code enforced at both *Rushes* and the Rack clubs featured in Rechy’s texts. A warped fear of the virus motivates “Bug chasers” as the fear of being perceived feminine drove the previous generation to perform violent masculinity. For four decades, gay men have lived in a stasis of fear—Anzaldúa’s “Coatlicue State.” In her description of this stage of “mestiza consciousness,” Anzaldúa writes of the self-loathing experienced by Chicanos yet can also be applied to this subset of gay men:

As a person, I, as a people, we, Chicanos, blame ourselves, hate ourselves, terrorize ourselves. Most of this goes on unconsciously; we only know that we are hurting, we suspect that there is something “wrong” with us, something fundamentally “wrong.”

In order to escape the threat of shame and fear, one takes on a compulsive, repetitious activity as though to busy oneself, to distract oneself, to keep awareness at bay. One fixates on drinking, smoking, popping pills, acquiring friend after friend who betrays; repeating, repeating, to prevent oneself from “seeing.” (45)

The “seeing” to which Anzaldúa refers to is a critical awareness of one’s situation and trauma, a vision of one’s path towards healing. The fear, however, blinds us and maintains us in a cycle of internalized and projected violence.

I discovered examples of such fear within the “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” community on the popular blog, tumblr. Before the removal of pornographic material from the app¹⁹, many bloggers on tumblr belonged to this community. One such blogger uses the name, “Latino Bug Chaser.” His interactions with other bloggers and his “followers,” over 80,000 users followed “Latino Bug Chaser” at one point, illustrate the fear and resulting outcomes in the decades after the waves of deaths due to HIV complications. “Latino Bug Chaser” elaborates on this fear and his choice to seek the virus:

Starting this blog to journal my thoughts and experiences as I embrace The Gift. Latino guy here. Not crazy, not insane. Just taking a less traditional approach. While many try to fight the odds, I have come to terms with the inevitable conclusion and instead chase the Virus. Through the chase I lose the fear and only by embracing it can I be free.

In a post on his blog, “Latino Bug Chaser” discloses his status of taking PreP and of waiting for the “right man” to from whom to accept the “Gift.” Not only is the term, “Gift,” capitalized, but “Latino Bug Chaser” also capitalizes “Virus.” While the outside observer may conclude these men hold a flippant attitude towards the epidemic, the reverence this community feels approaches religious. In *Rushes*, each chapter begins with a biblical verse, as Rechy analogizes the rituals of the Catholic Church with those of the bar and the sex club and establishes similarity of the spaces within the opening paragraph, “Mixed with the heated odor of the congregated flesh, the rot-tinged scent of ‘poppers’ will hover like cummy incense” (11). “Poppers,” like incense overwhelm one’s olfactory sense and causes an association with a situation or place. For

gay men, the club or the bathhouse becomes a space of congregation with like-minded seekers of solace and strength—it is our ritual mass. “Poppers” are an aid for gay men to acclimate from the heteronormative world of rigid conformity to a queer space of temporal liberation.

“Latino Bug Chaser” is not alone in his mission of choosing to seroconvert. Scrolling through his blog, other tumblr users express their admiration for the intent of his blog. Of course, many users also judge his choice for “chasing” the virus with many men referencing the horrific history of the epidemic in its early years. The “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” community is gaining mainstream, if still located at the margins of LGBTQ identity and politics, perhaps pushing the boundaries of such. Rechy’s *Rushes* creates a discursive moment regarding desire, pleasure, violence, and toxic masculinity at a critical juncture of queer existence—the historical moment before the AIDS epidemic devastated our community. Because of the queer Holocaust occurring in the urban centers of the United States during the 1980s and 1990s, this dialogue never occurred but with the rising HIV seroconversion rates among gay men of color, the (in)accessibility and seeming infallibility of PreP²⁰, and the relative ease of acquiring of crystal meth, we stand at a precipice before another wave of deaths affects our community. Without passing moral or psychiatric judgment or relying on the criminal justice system to strip gay men of their agency, how do we reconcile the motives of “Bug chasers” and “Gift givers”? As in *The Sexual Outlaw*, Rechy condemns the homophobia of the outside world, the divisions created by the alleged gay “community” based on age, gender, phenotype, and gender performance, and the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. Although “Latino Bug Chaser” does not include any references to Catholicism or any vein of spiritual tradition, other tumblr bloggers associate seroconversion as a type of transubstantiation. The tumblr user, “666sodomite” posts a message, “I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SODOMITES. FELCH²¹ DEMONIC SEED

FROM THE RAVAGED TEMPLEHOLE OF ANOTHER MAN AND SPIT IT INTO HIS MOUTH, 'THIS IS MY BODY AND BLOOD.'" "666sodomite" posts a picture of man with an open mouth, with his tongue ready to receive the semen from the anus crouched directly above. This tumblr blog contains hundreds of pictures and drawings of erotic imagery designed to blaspheme traditional images of Christ, the bible, and other iconography. Common posts on "666sodomite's" blog include inverted crucifixes, bibles sprayed with semen, and images of Baphomet with an erect phallus. Even as purported ex-Catholic, I find the images and messages as jarring but realize this is a protest against two millennia of hypocritical attitudes towards sexuality, women, and queer people.

Rechy writes of such hypocrisy with an eloquent rage. Having been raised in a Mexican Catholic environment on the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez border, the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church is one of Rechy's favorite targets, yet he critiques its institutional oppressions in a knowledgeable, humorous, and artistic manner. In an essay published in his anthology, *Beneath the Skin: The Collected Essays of John Rechy* (2004), Rechy writes of such hypocrisy in his essay, "Holy Drag!: Impressions of an Entirely Lapsed Catholic on Attending a Performance of High Mass Presided over by the Cardinal in Rome on a Recent Visit":

After the mass: there they came, the opulent squadron of prelates making their processional way toward the sacristy, past entranced parishioners in the pews, the Cardinal at the helm, followed by high prelates—the young good-looking ones cherishing their coveted place close to the Cardinal, and he clearly cherishing theirs... Then it all turns ugly. These men are the hypocrites who uphold the strictures of the political party they represent—the Church—strictures that have condemned and damned and tortured and persecuted and prosecuted and ostracized countless human beings throughout history:

during the Inquisition, burning and torturing innocent people for blasphemy, sexual transgressions; strictures that today account for a climate of condoned hatred toward all who deviate from their sanctimonious admonitions and prohibitions and accusations about sex, homosexuality, divorce, birth control, and (until recently but the entrenched hatred lingers) the ‘complicity’ of Jews. These are the men, these prelates, who today uphold some of the most corrupt notions about society, resulting in gay-bashings, unchecked births creating poverty and hunger, the lessening of women. These are so-called abstinent men! (Abstinent? Really? Surely the hypocrisy extends beyond their mouthings of abstinence, into their guarded cloisters.) Yet they presume authority over all sexual matters! Why abstinent? In early centuries, popes and cardinals and priests married and had children—and kept mistresses and misters—and amassed staggering wealth. Marriage produced heirs, though, and that contained an explosive threat to the Church’s vast wealth. What if the heir of a prelate laid claim to the Church’s wealth? The demand for celibacy solved that detail. [The updated essay contained an update.]

Postscript: Even greater hypocrisy is revealed daily now, with accounts of rampant child molestation, about the men who uphold strictures for others, men who continue to stigmatize homosexuals in an attempt to exorcise their own desires. During the 2004 presidential campaign, a number of priests apparently took time out from molesting children in order to decry as sinful a vote for candidates who supported a woman’s right to abortion.

Adding to the social and cultural commentary regarding the Church’s stance on U.S. electoral politics, Rechy offers a lesson in Catholic history unbeknownst to many Catholics. The pederasty scandal continues to envelop the Church and damages its credibility. For LGBTQ

Catholics, the Church's position on issues of gender and sexuality continue to be a source of consternation, even with the institution of the "liberal" Pope Francis.

"Latino Bug Chaser's" blog offers more insight into the community of "Bug chasers" and "Gift givers" through interactions with other tumblr users. Forced to negotiate decades of the politics of respectability as mainstream LGBT politics shifts from the radical margin to neoliberal acceptance, "Latino Bug Chaser" and the user, "Verspig17"²², engage in a brief dialogue eliciting provocative responses. "Verspig17" poses the following question on "Latino Bug Chaser's" feed:

I was wondering if anyone else feels the same about this or am I alone...I have mixed thoughts on chasing and converting. In a way I just want it, go on meds and be done. No more worrying or wondering. But I also do [not] want it from just a random stranger. I want to pick who I get it from. Hopefully he understands how special of a bond we will have after that. I have chosen his DNA to merge with mine and have chosen his to become [*sic*] part of me forever.

The user, "Verspig17," speaks of creating a biological bond passed on from the "Gift giver" to the "Bug chaser." In this community, the members often refer to being "impregnated" with their "seed." The virus creates a familial bond between the two men, often framed in paternalism. I have read responses to "Bug chasing" videos where the blogger refers to the virus as the "Gift giver's" "AIDS babies." Most often, the members of this community speak of joining the "POZ Brotherhood" and removing the shackles of fear and the respectability of safer-sex practices.

"Latino Bug Chaser" responds to "Verspig17" with the following entry:

You're not alone man. That's how I started my blog as I started exploring my own mixed feelings about what it meant to be a bugchaser. Just remember whatever your personal

choice is it's yours alone and also not set in stone. I get your feeling of "getting it over with." I was tired of sweating bullets every time I went in for an STD test or I got the flu [in] the middle of summer. I felt like this fear prevented me enjoying bareback lovemaking. Currently, I am on PreP and believe me I got as much flack about being a bugchaser as much as when I got on PreP for not being a true bugchaser. Again, this is a very intimate choice and also not set in stone. I got on PreP because I felt it gave me more control in picking the right guy. For me ideally I'll find a man that I can share more than a bed. Who will want to breed me and make me his. Then I'll know it's time to stop PreP. [In] the meantime I get to have awesome sex with POZ guys that also deserve much loving.

The dialogue between these two tumblr users evokes the conversations of the main characters of *Rushes*, who debate the existential nature of their lives as gay men. Chas cannot fathom another world more desirable than the one they inhabit—one where their masks of constructed masculinity are most desired. Just as Rechy argues the promise of the Church's promise of eternal salvation is a false proposition, he also warns gay men of such a world, not unlike the priesthood, excluding cisgender women and feminine gay men.

Being highly controversial and problematic, the topic of "Bug chasing" and "Gift giving" is a conversation critical to our survival as gay men. Thus, I was not surprised the dialogue between "Verspig17" and "Latino Bug Chaser" elicited passionate responses from a myriad of other tumblr users. Most of the respondents did not answer "Latino Bug Chaser" or "Verspig17" directly; rather, they began dialogues within the comments section. A "Gift giver" named, "rtrey29," writes of the symbolism seroconverting by choice can mean to both parties:

It's definitely an Intimate moment when you are taking the load that converts you. If its by choice on the bottoms part, then that's the way of telling your top that you love him enough to carry a piece of him inside you for the rest of your life. It should definitely be respected by the top as much as it is by the bottom, almost like a second virginity. I get that it's hot [to] be able to fuck and truly enjoy it like a cock slut after you convert, but a true bug chaser is...just after the bug.

The user, "rtrey29," claims to be off of his HIV regimen and is "toxic," which in this community means he has an active viral load and is sought after by "Bug chasers" for his "Gift."

When a person first hears of these subpopulations of gay men, the immediate reactions are revulsion and judgment, as the tumblr user, "Quickbrew," responds, "Or you could just stay on prep. You aren't insane you're cruel. The men who died horrible deaths alone in state run hospitals. You're an asshole. Shame on you for trying to get poz." "Quickbrew" adds to his message, "Just spit on their unmarked graves. It's faster."

Another tumblr user, "Sotampajack," shares his journey with HIV:

I've been pos [HIV-positive] since 1988. I am a long-term survivor of aids. I've had shingles 3 times (most painful opportunistic infection ever!) Try lighting yourself on fire—that way you can experience it without getting it. Hospitalized with Pcp [pneumocystis pneumonia] 4x. All before there was effective treatment. And just 6 months ago I had 10 [vertebrae] replaced with 3 steel rods due to 'MAC.'²³ Another OI that infected my spine. I've had to learn to walk again.

"Sotampajack" writes two addenda to his main post directed to user "askmelaterbitch," "it's not all fun and bareback games," and to "quickbrew," "bugchasers aren't hot. They're stupid."

These two users' responses were the most critical and judgmental. Critique and judgment are

predictable responses to such blog postings yet surprisingly rare. Most responses are supportive and other users echo their own desires for conversion. Many users post their area code and sometimes their actual city pleading for “Bug chasers” to “gift” them.

The other respondents, however, expressed support for “Latino Bug Chaser” and “Verspig17.” Many comments also displayed a sense of camaraderie because of the two users’ choices. Upon first reading the initial blog postings and the responses, I felt overwhelmed with a similar sense of incredulous judgment. Knowing the history of the AIDS epidemic, having worked as a health educator targeting queer men of color to reduce their risk of HIV, and having lost friends to the disease, I could not read any of blogs belonging to “Bug chasers” and “Gift givers” for a few days. However, because of the relative recency of this phenomenon, I gathered my resolve to think critically about this subpopulation of gay men living with HIV and those who desire to seroconvert. As Rechy documented the reality of the violence of gay in the leather/BDSM bars and sex clubs in the late 1970s in *Rushes*, I bear the responsibility of describing the new level of violence as the numbers of gay men of color seroconverting grows without any semblance of emergency from mainstream LGBT political “leaders.”

The act of “barebacking” and that of “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” are taboos, practices not socially acceptable in the era of “safer sex shaming.” Like cisgender women being “slut shamed” for the outrageous act of verbalizing the enjoyment of sensual pleasure, gay men are not supposed to have “too much” sex, certainly always “safer sex.” What is “too” much sex is an unsettled question for our community but the act of using condoms, and now, taking PreP, is non-negotiable. An early publication discussing these taboos is found in the online trove titled, *Queer Rhetoric Project*. The *Queer Rhetoric Project* “is an archive of key texts and speeches dealing with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights.” The site contains a drop-

down list of categories of speeches. Under the category, “AIDS,” is a speech titled, “No Limits: Necessary Danger in Male Porn,” presented by Paul Morris at the World Pornography Conference in Los Angeles, California, during the summer of 1998. In one of the earliest writings about the phenomenon of “barebacking,” “Bug chasing,” and “Gift giving,” Morris contextualizes the acts within the larger framework of the breadth of sexual identity amongst gay men. Morris does not decry the increase in barebacking in gay pornographic videos. Rather, he considers this act as “necessary” for the gay community, as the dichotomy of sexual acts deemed “‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’...inevitably magnifies the allure of danger.” Morris strives for honesty with the world of gay pornographic films—barebacking, the desire for “toxic” tops, “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” are occurring. For nearly four decades, different institutional structures have warned gay men against our own erotic desires and acts, as we may contract a deadly virus. During these past four decades of the AIDS epidemic, gay men have learned to fear their bodies and to fellate the near-religious dogma of safer-sex practices. As with any war, the soldiers eventually fatigue. Instead of fearing their bodies and fluids, some gay men are fetishizing them, regardless of the physiological and social consequences. Ultimately, these men have agency, yet I fear another tsunami of deaths, not unlike that of the late 1980s to mid-1990s.

As a person who has lost friends to the AIDS epidemic, I find myself questioning the motives of the “Bug chasing” community and why a “Gift giver” would willingly choose to eschew his medications to become “toxic.” These men are risking criminalization, public condemnation, and their very lives. From a Rechy perspective, I realize that one could pose similar questions to men who dared venture out in public in drag, to men cruising tea rooms and public parks, and to those individuals who formed groups like the Mattachine Society, ACT UP!, and *allgo*? In *The Sexual Outlaw*, Rechy’s protagonist cruises openly streets with “No

Loitering” signs and with law enforcement ready to entrap men daring to act upon their forbidden desires. As Rechy has illustrated throughout the breadth of his work, many institutions—the Church and the State, particularly—continue to condemn homoerotic desire and acts. Two men can marry but in most of the United States, we have no employment protection. Less than fifty years have passed since the American Psychological and Psychiatric Associations declassified LGB people as pathological. Less than twenty years have passed since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the remaining sodomy laws. The criminalization of HIV+ people who fail to disclose continues to rise. Homelessness amongst LGBT youth is increasing. For every victory we achieve as LGBTQ+ people, the Church, the State, and a portion of heterosexual society push back against these gains and many issues remain. To paraphrase the book title of one of the original members of ACT UP!, Michelangelo Signorile, “It’s not over.” Regardless of one’s judgment of the “Bug chasing” and “Gift giving” community, these men belong to our community and whatever sanctuary they find in their actions is their “substitute for salvation” and a substitute for a cure.

The Path Towards the Light—Creating Community out of Love

The femicides of Ciudad Juárez continue amidst the peaks and valleys of cartel-related violence occurring over the first two decades of the millennium. The abduction, torture, rape, mutilation, and murder of these primarily young, dark-skinned, working-class, Mexican women are interchangeable cogs in the machinery of a global economy where capital, raw materials, and finished goods are not confined to arbitrary borders, yet common people fleeing the spectrum of violence are caged like diseased vermin. In Gaspar de Alba’s novel, *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* (2005), Ivon Villa, the amateur sleuth who stumbles into solving the mystery of the femicides due to the abduction of her sister, concludes that rather than ask the question of *who* is

killing the women of Juárez, the question should be posed as *why* the murders are occurring without accountability. The young maquiladora workers whose fingerprints mark some component of electronics designed to convenience the lives of first-world citizens bear the brunt of the violence of neoliberal capitalism. The femicides of Ciudad Juárez continue as the neoliberal wheels of free trade progress with little to no oversight or regulation. The fem/cides, the killing of the internal femininity in cisgender gay men, are linked to the femicides in that the perpetrators operate under the same principle—the devaluation of women and traits deemed as feminine in patriarchy. Some boys survive their formative years with minimal damage; others like Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos die at the hands of their parents.

The contexts creating the conditions allowing for the murders of these two boys are eerily similar, especially when framed within this cultural and historical moment of increasing LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance, albeit overwhelmingly white and middle-class. Gabriel and Anthony lived in working-class, Xicanx homes with hypermasculine paternal figures and mothers who pledged allegiance to the violence of patriarchy. As Gaspar de Alba's protagonist in *Desert Blood* analyzes the hopelessness of combatting institutional systems of violence such as endemic poverty, centuries of colonial racism, and cultural and religious misogyny, I ponder upon the analogous forces facilitating the murders of Gabriel and Anthony. Such systems continue Sedgwick's "war on effeminate boys" (154), particularly in the context of gay men privileging the traits of hypermasculinity and the trait of "straight-acting," which are forms of internalized misogyny, as I have argued Rechy illustrates in several of his texts. For those of us who manage to escape Rechy's "enemy camp" of homophobia, what is our respite, what is our nourishment in the mirage of some gay men seeking membership in the "POZ brotherhood" I describe in this chapter?

Based upon the writings of the blogs of the “bugchasers” and “Gift givers” and my own experience with ALLGO, I conclude Rechy’s “substitute for salvation” to be what Anzaldúa and Moraga created with the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) and what ALLGO has fostered for over three decades—community based upon love. The men seeking to trade HIV strains and viral loads are starving to be part of something larger, evidenced by the ubiquitous posts of “joining the POZ brotherhood.” Thus, in addition to rebuking the politics of respectability and acceptance, these men long to be part of something greater than their individual selves are. Johann Hari, author of the text, *Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs* (2015) explains one of the causes of the rampant addiction rates to illegal drugs in first-world countries to Amy Goodman and Juan González on *Democracy Now!*. Hari argues:

We have created a society where huge numbers of our fellow citizens can’t bear to be present in their lives and have to medicate themselves to get through the day with these drugs. You know, a hyper-capitalist, hyper-individualist society makes people feel like the rats in that first cage²⁴; they’re cut off...[T]here’s nothing in human evolution that prepares us for being as isolated as the ideal citizen of a hyper-capitalist, hyper-consumerist country like yours and mine [England and the United States].

(https://www.democracynow.org/2015/2/4/johann_hari_everything_we_know_about)

As I described in the previous chapter, many men in the bugchasing/Gift-giving community openly discuss and display their use of the illegal drug, crystal meth. “Slamming” (using a hypodermic needle to inject the drug) is a conduit some of these men use together to pass their particular strain of HIV and other STIs to willing recipients. As Rechy states in the quote above, when we realize the great lie of salvation extolled by the Catholic Church and other hierarchical

religions, we seek some substitute to fill the void, illegal drug use and hypersexual activity increasingly being two common methods utilized by gay men. Consequently, as I argue in the previous chapter the intersection of hypermasculinity, meth use, unprotected and violent sexual practices, and the fetishization of AIDS are resulting in higher rates of HIV seroconversion as we trudge towards the fifth decade of the epidemic.

While I do not judge or condemn the men for their actions—that belongs to the role of religious and governmental institutions—I do recognize and empathize their desires as ones based in a violent, or an absence of love. The men who revel being part of the “POZ brotherhood” are crying out for any type of community, the type Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera imagined when they rioted against the police at the Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969. Love inhabits the type of community I reference, the kind created and fostered by ALLGO and ACT UP! when LGBTQ+ people faced an existential threat. bell hooks provides a definition of love in her text, appropriately titled, *All About Love: New Visions* (2000), as “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth...Love is as love does. Love is an act of will—namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love” (4-5). This work is an act of love for many, but particularly for gay Xicanx men who are living with HIV and those negotiating the fear of the virus with their own fleshly desires. I choose to love the men of the bugchasing/Gift-giving scene, as we are part of the same community. I do not condone the white supremacy or the misogyny or the violence based on self-hatred evident in their blogs; I cannot and do not condemn them. Instead, I weep for these brethren, as they have fallen prey to the schisms of internalized homophobia and misogyny and have been ostracized by the HIV-phobic attitudes held by HIV-negative gay men.

hooks focuses her argument later in her text regarding community-based love. She cites M.Scott Peck's text, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, "'In and through community lies the salvation of the world'" (qtd. in hooks 129). Peck defines community as a group of individuals share in each other's triumphs and traumas, thus building bonds through love rather than violence. This resists the individualism fomented by neoliberal capitalism and rampant consumerism Hari argues is a condition leading to increasing rates of self-medication through prescription and illegal narcotics. hooks advocates for fellowship to create community and heal trauma through service, as it "is another dimension of communal love... Women have been and are the world's great teachers about the meaning of service" (141). The lesbians who cared for their dying queer brothers of whom Rechy and Moraga write, and the efforts uncovered by my archival research of ALLGO's newsletters illustrate the leadership of women in a critical social movement. Gay men owe a major debt to lesbians for their efforts, and now that HIV+ gay men are living longer, we must reciprocate and contribute to the issue of breast cancer in the lesbian community.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic exacerbated the issues found throughout Rechy's texts, as the crisis fomented a culture of fear, paranoia, and confusion. In the 1980s, the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies remained silent on issues of LGBTQ+ sexuality and issues, most glaringly HIV/AIDS. The official journal of the discipline, *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, did not publish one article broaching the topic of HIV/AIDS until 2007 with the publication of the paper by Paul Allatson, "'My Bones Shine in the Dark': AIDS and the De-Description of Chicano Queer in the Work of Gil Cuadros" (2007). As I state earlier, the disease robbed us of several gay Xicanx visual artists and writers, yet the discipline of Chicana and Chicano Studies has made little effort to address the epidemic and its effects. Balcena was one such artist and AIDS

activist, and others like him await discovery in the archive. Despite his bleak prognosis of having seroconverted years before the release of the HIV medicinal cocktail, Balcena remained dedicated to his craft and to his activism. The abstract of the finding aid to his archive on the *Online Archive of California* website states:

Antony Galindo Balcena, a Mexican-American, was born in Lompoc, California in [sic] April 30, 1954[,] and died in Los Angeles, California in [sic] November 23, 1995.

Antony Balcena, (also known as Tony Balcena) was an accomplished dancer, choreographer and Gay [sic] and AIDS activist. He was known for his unique choreographic style and, through his life, he created and performed intimate and controversial performances such as “Dudes” and “Shell of Flesh.”

(<https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt2q2nd81m/>)

Upon a cursory excursion into Balcena’s educational, professional, and activist lives, I discovered an immensely talented individual who challenged propriety with such productions such as, *Dudes* (1989), an all-male, homoerotic performance, and *AIDS! The Musical* (1991), a campy response to the epidemic which included the byline, “You’ve had the disease, you’ve been to the demonstrations, now see the musical!” Underneath the photograph on the flyer contains the slogan, “Even during a plague, there’s a time to sing.”

Not only is there a time to sing during a plague, there is also a time to dance, to fuck, and to build community. Not only a time, but a *need* to do so. The film, *BPM* (2017), illustrates the urgency, intention, and action of such community-based love, as described by hooks. A fictionalized account of the radical, or rather *necessary*, actions undertaken by the Paris chapter of ACT UP! in the early 1990s, *BPM* captures the ethos of the historical period described by Larry Kramer as the gay men’s Holocaust. Examining the political, social, and existential

dimension of the epidemic, the film offers the conditions exacerbating the need for such community in multiple locales—the university classroom the group uses for their weekly meetings, the public spaces where the group uses their bodies in direct actions to create awareness, and, most critically, the dance floor where the activists merge with the metronomic beat of the house music. Throughout the film, the activists, both HIV-positive and HIV-negative, congregate to discuss the inaction of the French government and to plan their next direct action, often resulting in arrest. Besides the direct actions, the film focuses on the community they build with each other as human beings with desire on the dance floor and in the bedroom.

In the penultimate scene, the group decides on their next act of civil disobedience after the love interest, Sean, of the protagonist, Nathan, succumbs to the illness via a painful act of euthanasia by the former. Instead of a maudlin scene with the mother clinging to her deceased son's body, Nathan dresses Sean to have him lie in state. Meanwhile, the members of ACT-UP congregate in the living room to discuss and plan their next direct action. One of the members mentions how Sean wanted a political funeral, and they decide to disrupt a luncheon for a health insurance incorporating his ashes with the consent of his mother. The final scene shows a group of insurance industry bureaucrats chatting over plates of hors d'oeuvre and champagne. The ACT-UP activists storm in blowing whistles and shouting slogans as the protestors grab a handful of Sean's ashes and disperses them onto the attendees and the buffet. Some protestors lie on the floor and continue shouting. The luncheon attendees stand back in shock as the catering waiters vainly attempt to stop the protestors. The camera shot pulls back to witness the protest in its entirety and as one protestor flings Sean's ashes, the lights begin to pulse in time with a strobe light and the beats of house music interspersed with scenes of Nathan and another

member of ACT-UP having sex. After several of the activists throw handfuls of Sean's ashes onto the catered trays of food, the banquet hall transforms into a dance floor—the same site where they recharged after direct action protests and police arrests. The house music instrumental drowns out the whistles and shouts, and the screen alternates between images of naked bodies writhing in a bed to nearly naked bodies writhing on a dance floor. Each act protests linear time as temporal stoppage to the progression of the disease in their bodies and those of their compatriots. As the house music leads their charge, we hear the stomping of their feet as soldiers marching off to war. Each of the activists realize only when they engage in civil disobedience, move their bodies on the dance floor, and feed their erotic desires without hesitation are they truly alive and are “cruising utopia” (Muñoz) and finding some semblance of Rechy's “substitute for salvation.” The organizations ACT-UP! and ALLGO created the type of community that Rechy may deem as a worthy substitute as the individuals banded together as a response to the historical conditions of institutional homophobia, structural racism, and unchecked neoliberalism.

Groups like ACT-UP! and ALLGO follow in the tradition of community-based activism. As a response to a crushing epidemic and intersectional oppressions, these two organizations collectivized their intellect and bodies for common objectives based upon liberation, not a pitiable sense of perpetual victimhood. Moreover, in their respective movements, ACT-UP! and ALLGO challenged the structures of corporate capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy. The collusion of mainstream LGBT activists with these systems is apparent in the championing of marriage equality and military participation while marginalizing such critical queer issues such as queer youth homelessness, the epidemic of murders of transgender women of colors, and the rising rates of HIV seroconversion amongst gay and bisexual men of color. Mainstream LGBT

activists do not prioritize social justice issues such as police violence against the Black community, ICE separation of Latinx children from their parents, and the continuing military aggression in the Middle East. The historian, Dr. Robin D. G. Kelley makes a similar argument in his essay, “Over the Rainbow: Third World Studies Against the Neoliberal Turn” (2017). Kelley describes the increasing neoliberalism of the academy as this doctrine “has placed higher education under the discipline of market fundamentalism, turning the university into a ‘space for producing profits, education a docile labour force and a powerful institution for indoctrinating students into accepting the obedience demanded by the corporate order’” (4). Like the right-leaning political positioning of today’s university, so are mainstream LGBT movements. Once radical spaces for protesting health disparities and government negligence, AIDS WALKs now represent opportunities for corporate employee participation, similar to the (d)evolution of Gay Pride marches.

I provide anecdotal evidence of the neoliberal transformation of Gay Pride marches and AIDS WALKs. During the summer of 2016, I visited Austin and participated in the city’s LGBTQ+ Pride march with ALLGO. Being one of the few LGBTQ+ organizations focusing on the intersection of race and sexuality in Austin, the staff and board members decided to honor the victims of the horrific Pulse massacre, the overwhelming majority being PoC, which occurred earlier in the summer. Each of the marchers held a picture of one of the fallen clubgoers. Instead of placing such a meaningful parade entry created by an historic organization—ALLGO is the longest-surviving Latinx LGBTQ organization in the United States—towards the head of the parade, the parade committee buried ALLGO towards the rear, *after* the major corporate entries, such as Apple, Wells Fargo, and Chase. Nearly *two hours* into the parade, ALLGO received the signal to proceed. Several times, parade revelers walked around the barricades to

thank and hug us. The marginalization of ALLGO's parade entry by the committee organizers did not diminish the impact of the tribute; however, given the recency of the tragedy, the racism was obvious as a community of queer PoC stood in solidarity with another community of queer PoC. Every corporate sponsor with its multitude of LGBT employees proceeded before one of the most historic LGBTQ organizations rooted in Austin committed to social justice. In 2018, after years of non-participation, I decided to raise money and participate in Los Angeles' annual AIDS WALK. Like my experience two years prior in Austin, I bore witness to several dozen "progressive" corporate sponsorships participating in the AIDS fundraiser. Participating as an individual, I felt conflicted as the emcee, Carson Kressley (of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *RuPaul's Drag Race* fame), entertained the crowd with outtakes from *Mommie Dearest* (1981) and introduced the major donors. No salute to AIDS activism of the past or any reference to the intersectional devastation of HIV on queer and transgender PoC. Like the Gay Pride March in Austin, the Los Angeles AIDS WALK morphed into a runway of corporate sponsors, including the major pharmaceutical companies whose products keep people alive simultaneously creating insane wealth for their stockholders, particularly the manufacturer of Truvada, or more widely known as PreP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), the drug preventing the further spread of the HIV virus. According to Gilead's website, in the United States, Truvada accounted for slightly over \$4.6 billion in sales for the years 2016 and 2017.

As gay men of color, especially those who embrace their feminine energy, found no refuge in patriarchal, white supremacist spaces like the fictional *Rushes*, we turn towards the art created by lesbians of color. *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady*, conceived by the lauded, award-winning Black lesbian performance artist, Sharon Bridgforth, is one such example where gay men of color can reconcile their own participation in "fem/cide" and thus find healing.

Performed in multiple locales around the U.S., I attended three of the ceremonies performed at allgo in the summer of 2019. Bridgforth is, according to the website of the performance,

<https://www.datblackmermaidmanlady.com/the-show>:

A child of the Great African-American Migration, Sharon was raised by Black Southerners who moved to Los Angeles/determined to make a better life for themselves and those to come. A Black queer child coming of age during assassinations, riots, the Black Power Movement and Soul Music—Sharon strives to model the unbending dignity, commitment to community, self-determination and Love of Black cultures that was modeled for her. Widely published, Sharon is Artist In-Residence at Thousand Currents (which funds grassroots groups led by women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples in the Global South). A Doris Duke Performing Artist, Sharon is recipient of funding of from The Whitman Institute, Creative Capital, MAP Fund and the National Performance Network. One of the many artists mentored by Laurie Carlos, Sharon has worked in the Twin Cities regularly since 1995 and has proudly called Pillsbury House + Theatre home since 2005.

Bridgforth performed over a two-week period of *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady* in the sanctity of allgo, the organization where the universe allowed me the privilege of crossing paths with her in a critical crossroads of my life, the period after my body and spirit survived a bout of pneumocystis carinii.

I first read her Lambda Literary Award-winning text, *The Bull-Jean Stories* (1998), when I found my “substitute for salvation,” a politically-radical, non-profit organization serving the underserved in Austin, Texas, area and unapologetically focusing on LGBTQ+ PoC in the early 2000s. No longer would I have to disentangle the greñas (strands) of my identity—my jotería,

my Xicanidad, my poz serostatus, my erotic desires. Sharon Bridgforth and a host of other radical LGBTQ+ PoC artists and activists fostered an atmosphere where the experiences of those living at the margins were centered, without losing any of its grassroots ethos.

ALLGO remains a critical part of my identity and my chosen family two decades after leaving for the sunny shores of the golden state. During each visit to Austin, I coincide my trip with an ALLGO event or performance, as the organization “offers a variety of programs to support QPOC...[and whose] programming broadly falls into the following categories: cultural arts, wellness, and social justice” (<http://allgo.org/what-we-do/>). One such performance I attended during the summer of 2018 was Bridgforth’s *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady*. Performed over two weekends in August of 2018 at ALLGO in Austin, Texas, *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady* transcends performance as Bridgforth urged her audience to join her on the journey beneath the surface, to the bottom of the ocean.

The first half of each of the seven performances was unique to that date. The audience members who arrived early enough to find a space inside ALLGO were treated to a performance by a different artist before we were led on a procession to a shared theater space in the building (ALLGO is housed in an office building with other non-profit organizations and a shared theater space is located at the opposite end of the building). Bridgforth’s partner, Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, opened the debut performance with her own words of healing and inspiration until Florinda Bryant, another performance artist, delivered a monologue providing the foundation for *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady*, a genealogy of a fictional Black family, all characters in a previous Bridgforth production. The characters described by Bryant during her monologue are available in an “oracle deck,” a Black queer tarot. The deck is comprised of nine Oracles, and each character is memorialized by the artist, Yasmin Hernández, “Each speaks on four subjects.

The text on the back of the cards is from the *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady: Performance/Novel*. In addition, each Oracle has one blank card, which if pulled means “you know.” In other words, they ain’t responding to your question or the situation at hand because you already know what is in your highest interest/greatest good” (<https://www.datblackmermaidmanlady.com/oracle-deck>).

As Bryant finishes her monologue describing each of the characters, she erupts into a soulful melody hypnotizing the audience calling us as a queer PoC Pied Piper. We follow her and join in her chant on a procession outdoors towards the theater for about 500 feet. Out of the merciless afternoon humidity of central Texas in August, each audience member is greeted by Jones’ smile as she asks us to take a blessing, a 5’ by 7’ cardstock decorated with the colors of the ocean. From the vestibule, we enter a cool, darkened theater with sounds of the ocean, light yet hypnotic music, objects scattered amongst the movable seats. Adjusting our eyes from the bright sunlight to the darkened theater, audience members select their seat with a smiling Sharon Bridgforth seated in front of table inviting us into her space. *Dat Black Mermaid Man Lady* is interactive and is an extension of a series of performances at the Pillsbury House Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in June of 2018. According to Bridgforth, after the first run of shows ended, the characters kept returning to her, as she describes they represent her own genealogical memory. Bridgforth describes the show in an online interview:

To me, more than anything [the show] is a celebration of my own ancestors and the history of resilience of community-making and radical love that has helped us to survive and thrive as people. So, the piece itself is made of songs and stories and prayers and ritual. There will be altar-building and audience engagement as a natural part of it.

There will be processions. Ultimately, the piece lands as it circles in the reality that no matter how tough a time I’ve had, no matter how tough a time we’ve had collectively, we

are always carried by Love. So, beyond the veils where the past, present, future, the living, the dead, where they coexist, right here, right now, in all directions of time, Love is. And, I think for me, this is a celebration and a dancing to the truth of that.

<https://www.datblackmermaidmanlady.com/the-show>)

This is exactly what the audience experiences as each person embarks on her/his/their own cathartic journey beginning at the bottom of the ocean; Bridgforth asks us to summon the courage to go beneath the surface to the depths of our traumas, to rip the scab off past wrongs to heal with community. In a place of radical love by and for LGBTQ+ PoC committed to social justice, gay Xicanx men can let the masks of rigid, toxic masculinity and internalized homophobia fall to reveal our hurt and express our feminine energies with Bridgforth whose work represents the connection between the corporeal and the spiritual.

At one point during the performance, Bridgforth pauses to request participation from the audience. The cards, or “blessings,” Jones handed to each audience member are what Bridgforth calls “dem Blessings,” a collection of forty offerings to invoke the Divine Love she speaks of in her online interview. Bridgforth asks if anyone in the audience would like to share their unique blessing with the group. After five or six people share the nuggets of wisdom, Bridgforth and the audience commune in silence with the energies summoned by intentionality of each word. After the first performance, I purchased a set of “dem Blessings,” and the set of cards comes with a burlap carrying case, which I carry with me as a talisman. The set of forty blessings contains an introductory blessing on which Bridgforth writes:

After running with rage and blame and loneliness/and feeling wrong in my gender complex body and my lesbian Heart...after 37 years of drinking and 23 years of being sober...after seeking **Home** [bold-type added] with the Baptists/the Catholics/the

Buddhists/the Yoruba...after thriving after cancer...after clearing/releasing and re-claiming Joy as my Spiritual practice...after writing my way through the histories in my bones and blood memories...after finding myself at the bottom of the Ocean/and Sky...after doing the Work

I could Love.

I could See that my biggest Life Lesson...which is to Know that I am Loved and that I will have what I need...

had Shifted.

I could See It in the answered prayers that Fill my Life

I Knew It in my daughter's forgiveness

I felt It in my wife's unconditional Love

I danced with It in the unending Field of the Presence of

Support every Flowing in and around me

and my heart broke.

I realized that if my child self could have Known what I now Know our road would have been so much sweeter.

And my child self would have been free to rest and play

long ago

instead of continuously feeling like they needed to show up to protect me.

So I started writing these Blessings...these things that I want my eight-year old self to Know. I came to feel that maybe these are things that my eight-year old child self is saying to me...or perhaps these are things my daughter's Spirit wants me to Know...or maybe these are the things that my Mom's Soul wishes she could say to me...

anyways

dem Blessings have come to Feel to Be part of the Cosmic Collective Knowings

and so we Offer them to you.

Bridgforth, as am I, is trained in the Yoruba tradition of spirituality. The Yoruba tradition harkens to the kingdom of Ile-Ife from what is now Nigeria. From this ancient cradle of civilization comes the belief system of Ifá. People from this region of Africa enslaved by the Spanish brought to the Caribbean were forced to adopt the colonizer religion of Catholicism but utilized their numerous survival strategies to safekeep their spirituality. Noticing a similar structure between Ifá and Catholicism (one supreme being with a “secondary” tier of saints or orisha), the enslaved people pretended to be venerating the Catholic statues when they had aligned each one with an African deity to satiate the priests. After five hundred years of syncretism, the belief systems of Santería, Candomblé, and Voodoo continue to thrive as a legacy of the survival of colonialism. Although usually associated with Caribbean Latinx

peoples, I belong to a “house” (a Santería clan) founded by two Mexican immigrants and which includes several other Xicanx members. Bridgforth invokes the orisha, Yemaya, the Yoruba maternal goddess of creation, a name which means “mother whose children of the fishes,” to transport her audiences to the bottom of the ocean, to our origins.

The “Blessings,” rooted in the ancient wisdom of Ifá, are tools of healing by providing messages of forgiveness—others and ourselves. I have used these blessings in my own classes in a similar way to the *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady* performances. I have each student select one of the blessings and ask them to place the card face down and then ask each person to read her/his own blessing. Each time I conduct this exercise, a communal sense of calm and mutual understanding envelops the space, and I often select a blessing when I am feeling spiritually lost. During the writing of the conclusion to this work, the *dem blessing #22* chose me:

Remember

You are loved.

You have all that you need.

You are not alone.

You are enough.

You deserve to be happy.

And when you cannot find

Evidence of the Truth of this

remember

to breathe

Bridgforth speaks of a “knowing,” an epistemological foundation of the Divine Love of the universe fostered through the acknowledgement and sharing of trauma. The impact of Bridgforth’s performances lingers and commands an introspective examination; the hurt hurled upon us and that we project upon others is an endless loop, as if an emotional ouroboros. The blessings are reminders that the universal concept of Love and Healing exist in collective acts of resistance against the historical oppressions which created the divisions between communities of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, and other marginalized groups. The set of *dem Blessings* is essential to the decolonial project of Xicanx Studies yet surpasses that goal in it demands a communal exchange with LGBTQ+ PoC. Beginning with the Rechyian awakening of the “substitute for salvation,” we emerge in the Anzaldúan crossroads on a Bridgforthian journey to the bottom of the ocean, the healing and forgiveness processes of *conocimiento* and *dem Blessings* offer respite from the intersectional oppressions we negotiate daily. The community we create out of love with others by sharing our traumas *is* the journey home—the ultimate praxis of Rechy’s “substitute for salvation.”

Notes

¹ From the article, “Beyond the Night,” published in *The Advocate*, October 15, 1996, pp. 58-64, interviewed by Christopher Isherwood.

² During a class discussion of gay hypermasculinity, my student, Joseph Jess Rey, made the comment, “I prefer mascara for mascara” (meaning cosmetic). I responded, “Or, in Spanish, mascara for mascara” (meaning mask).

³ Related to but differing from the term, “femicide,” the murder of women because they are women, illustrated by continuing murders of women of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, I apply “fem/cide” to the rigid gendered position negotiated by queer cisgender men, especially in the arena of erotic desire, e.g., the tired phrase and descriptor of “masc 4 masc,” which I equate with “*mask 4 mask*” and “straight-acting” are still prevalent among gay men’s profiles on the dating apps.

⁴ “Slamming” is a term describing the act of injecting meth via a syringe.

⁵ “Breeding” or “barebacking” or “raw” all describe the act of engaging in unprotected consensual anal intercourse.

⁶ “Stealth breeding” is the act of a “top” pretending to wear a condom during anal intercourse but damaging it, often by puncturing it with a needle, for the desired outcome of “breeding.”

⁷ The percentage of U.S. Latinas/os who are Catholic is 48%, according to the Pew Research Center. Overall, 77% of U.S. Latinas/os identify fall under the umbrella of Christianity, with evangelical Protestantism the second highest faith-based system to which Latinas/os adhere.

⁸ In the revealing text, *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality* (2000), Daniel A. Helminiak provides the actual interpretations of the passages of the bible allegedly condemning same-sex acts. The bible, according to Helminiak, never mentions lesbian sex, let alone condemns it. The other passages condemning sex between men have been misinterpreted. For example, the sin of Sodom was not sex between men but inhospitality. Helminiak concludes, “For the fact of the matter is simple enough. The Bible never address that question [of homosexuality]. More than that, the Bible seems deliberately unconcerned about it” (133).

⁹ The tragic case of Anthony Avalos, 10, recalls that of Gabriel Fernandez, of whom I wrote in the first chapter. Avalos lived nearby Fernandez in the Antelope Valley in the neighboring city of Lancaster. Like Fernandez, Avalos lived with his mother and her live-in boyfriend and siblings. Avalos, according to *The Los Angeles Times*’ article dated June 26, 2018, “Before His Death, 10-year-old Anthony Avalos Came Out as Gay, Official Says,” by Garrett Therolf, “said he liked boys” and may have been a victim of the homophobia of his mother and her boyfriend. Avalos’ aunt reported abuse towards the children since 2015 to the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). However, of sixteen calls placed to DCFS since 2013 regarding Avalos’ mother and her boyfriend, thirteen “specifically mentioned Anthony as the alleged victim” (<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-boy-death-gay-20180626-story.html>). A subsequent *Times* article by Therolf dated July 3, 2018, “Anthony Avalos Was Extensively Tortured Over Days Before Dying, Prosecutors Allege,” details more of Avalos’ case. Another parallel to the case of Fernandez is the alleged oversight by DCFS to investigate the child’s abuse fully or to recommend temporary removal. The abuse inflicted upon Avalos was no less severe than that exacted upon Fernandez. According to Therolf, “Anthony’s mother, Heather Barron, and her boyfriend, Kareem Leiva, poured hot sauce on Anthony’s face and mouth, whipped the boy with a looped cord and belt, held him upside-down and dropped him on his head repeatedly. Prosecutors also alleged that the couple alternately withheld food and force-fed him, slammed him into furniture and the floor, denied access to the bathroom and enlisted other children in the home to inflict pain.” Therolf reports other incidents of abuse upon Anthony’s siblings, but only he received additional venom when he disclosed that he “liked boys.” (<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-athony-avalos-torture-20180703-story.html>). Although the

investigation is ongoing at the moment I write this, September 1, 2018, the similarities are too similar to that of Gabriel Fernandez, two Xicanx boys who suffered greatly for the crime of not adhering to traditional masculinity. I can only hope the spirits of Anthony and Gabriel have found each other in the next world.

¹⁰ Another recent victim of familial violence due to not meeting his mother's standard of masculinity is four-year-old Zachary Dutro-Bogges. According to Everton Bailey, Jr., of *The Oregonian*, in the article, "Appeal Denied for Mom Sentenced to Life in Prison in 2014 for Death of 4-year-old Son," "Attorneys for Jessica Dutro claimed in an appeal brief that a Washington County judge shouldn't have admitted 'highly inflammatory' Facebook messages from Dutro to her boyfriend. She used a gay slur to refer to the child, said the perception made her angry and directed the boyfriend to 'work on' the 'big time'" (https://www.oregonlive.com/tigard/index.ssf/2016/12/appeal_denied_for_mom_sentence.html). Two of Zachary's siblings also exhibited signs of physical abuse at the hands of their mother and her boyfriend as they navigated a precarious living situation in a homeless shelter. Only Zachary, however, received the severe beatings to his abdominal region, resulting in bowels to rupture, according to Emily E. Smith in her article, "Jessica Dutro Murder Trial: Motive for Tigard Killing was 4-Year-Old's Perceived Homosexuality, Prosecutors Say" (https://www.oregonlive.com/tigard/index.ssf/2014/03/jessica_dutro_murder_trial_mot.html). Details of the abuse came from Zachary's older sister's session with a therapist, according to *The Daily Mail* article, "Oregon Mom, 25, Sentenced to Life in Prison for Savagely Beating Her Four-Year-Old Son to Death Because He 'Walked and Talked Gay.'" The article also cited the conclusions of the medical examiner, "Dr. Danny Leonhardt... testified that by the time his parents sought medical help for the toddler, he 'essentially was dead.' Leonhardt said that the contents of his torn intestines had leaked out into his body for at least two days, resulting in a deadly infection. Besides the injuries to Zachary's abdomen similar to those seen in car crash victims, the child's body was covered in bruises suggesting prolonged, repeated abuse" (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2608174/Oregon-mom-25-sentenced-life-prison-savagely-beating-four-year-old-son-death-walked-talked-gay.html>). Only the youngest child of the couple escaped abuse. Another man had fathered the elder three children. I wonder what mannerisms Zachary exhibited to make his mother believe the little boy was gay. Did his effeminacy threaten her in some way, as did that of Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos?

¹¹ In the episode, *The Bluegrass is Always Greener* (2002), Hank and the gang recruit Connie to join their bluegrass band as its fiddle player. Instead of attending a junior orchestra camp, Connie convinces Hank to enter a bluegrass competition in Branson, Missouri. While in Branson, they attend a performance by the Russian-origin comedian, Yakov Smirnoff. Bobby sells him a "In Russia"-style joke, for which Smirnoff pays the rights.

¹² In her essay, Castillo argues for Xicanx to recognize our Arabic and Islamic roots. In the beginning of her essay, Castillo offers an historical linguistic factoid that may shock most Xicanx, "By the same token, many would also feel unconvinced that the Islamic faith of North Africa has any more to do with us than the theology of the Mexica. We must acknowledge a certain degree of Arab influence in Mexican culture. For instance, traces of Arabic are found in our Spanish language. When we put our hands up in desperate hope, for instance, and utter, ¡Ojala!, we are reiterating an Arab expression used in the same context: Oh, Allah! Our connection with our ancient cousins is much deeper than many of us in the Americas imagine" (65). Castillo continues to argue how Xicanx must recognize our Arabic roots vis-à-vis Spain, especially regarding the subjugation of Xicanx women.

¹³ From the University of Texas website, "Omi Osun Joni L. Jones (Ph.D. New York University) is a professor of performance studies in the African and African Diaspora Studies Department and holds a courtesy appointment in the Department of Theatre and Dance. She is an artist/scholar whose work focuses on performance ethnography, theatrical jazz, Yoruba-based aesthetics, Black feminisms and activist theatre." Dr. Jones is one of the many inspirational artists/activists I have had the honor of knowing through my work at ALLGO (of which I wrote extensively in the previous chapter). During a week I spent in Austin I happened to stay at the home of ALLGO's current executive director, Priscilla Hale, and Dr. Jones and her partner, the outstanding performance artist, Sharon Bridgforth, were also visiting while they were hosting a series of performances over the following week. During one late night conversation, as I was making my grandmother's fourteen-hour pozole, I absorbed as much wisdom as I could from her. When I asked her why PoC replicate violence upon other PoC, she shook her head and proclaimed words that have imprinted themselves onto my being, "Damaged people damage people." I looked at Priscilla who

could only give me a knowing look. This wisdom, coupled with the transformative experience of Sharon Bridgforth's performances (of which I write in the conclusion), have enabled me to gather the strength and courage to finish this dissertation and make it as impactful for the reader as it has been for me to write.

¹⁴ The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill, provided housing at discounted mortgage rates for veterans. However, the federal government actively denied benefits from the G.I. Bill, which also provided funding for college tuition, to Latino veterans, prompting a group in Texas to organize and create the American G.I. Forum. Acuña writes in *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (2004) of the formation of the American G.I. Forum as a response to racism, the denial of benefits, and the outrageous case of Félix Longoria, a World War II soldier killed in the Philippines. A funeral home in Corpus Christi, Texas, refused to hold services for Longoria because he was of Mexican origin. Acuña documents the American G.I. as "one of the premier Chicano Civil Rights organizations...in the postwar period" (261). Hector Pérez García, another veteran, founded the group with the tragic case of Longoria offering a cause for expansion of the group. The Longoria caused such an outrage, Texas Senator Lyndon B. Johnson intervened and arranged for the body to be interred at Arlington National Cemetery with full honors.

¹⁵ Romo's text provides the story of seventeen-year-old Carmelita Torres, a Mexican woman who crossed daily into El Paso to work. One day in 1917, immigration officials ordered her and the other passengers, all women laborers, to disembark and bathe in kerosene. Officials also inspected them for lice and other pathogens. Worse, border authorities planned to spray them with Zykon-B, a harsh chemical later used by the Nazi regime against "undesirables." Torres and the other women revolted and fought successfully against several layers of law enforcement, including the United States Army.

¹⁶ In his text, *Punishing Disease: HIV and the Criminalization of Sickness* (2018), Trevor Hoppe links the racialized "War on Drugs" and the homophobic (non)response to the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Hoppe reveals the government's motives move beyond mere social control; "the criminalization of HIV is but one of the more recent examples in public health history of an effort to control disease by coercion and punishment—what this book terms *punitive disease control*" (5). Indeed, those in their 40s and older may remember the calls for sequestration of people living with HIV and even tattooing as a means of easy identification. The criminalization of HIV, as Hoppe argues, does nothing to decrease the rise in seroconversions. Rather, this social policy adds to the stigma and continues the legacy of criminalization of homoerotic desire and gay men's bodies, exactly what Rechy documents in *The Sexual Outlaw* and other texts.

¹⁷ According to the celebrated cultural critic, Susan Sontag, in her iconic essay, "Notes on Camp," (1964), provides a list of criteria of camp aesthetic. One criterion regarding sexuality states, "As a taste in persons, Camp responds particularly to the markedly attenuated and to the strongly exaggerated. The androgyne is certainly one of the great images of Camp sensibility. Examples: the swooning, slim, sinuous figures of pre-Raphaelite painting and poetry' the thin, flowing sexless bodies in Art Nouveau prints and posters, presented in relief on lamps and ashtrays; the haunting androgynous vacancy behind the perfect beauty of Greta Garbo. Here, Camp taste draws on a mostly unacknowledged truth of taste: the most refined form of sexual attractiveness (as well as the most refined form of sexual pleasure) consists in going against the grain of one's sex. What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine...Allied to the Camp taste for the androgynous is something that seems quite different but isn't: a relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms. For obvious reasons, the best examples that can be cited are movie stars. The corny flamboyant female-ness of Jayne Mansfield, Gina Lollobrigida, Jane Russell, Virginia Mayo; the exaggerated he-man-ness of Steve Reeves, Victor Mature. The great stylists of temperament and mannerism, like Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck, Tallulah Bankhead, Edwige Feuillire" (Sontag 4). Sontag explains the purpose of Camp in the following criterion, "41. The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. More precisely, Camp involves a new, more complex relation to 'the serious.' One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious" (10). In an episode of *The Simpsons* titled "Homer-phobia" and guest starring the master of Camp, the film director, John Waters, the aesthetic of Camp is explained to Homer by the character voiced by Waters (campily named John), as "the ludicrously tragic, the tragically ludicrous." John attempts to further explain Camp to Homer by providing examples, such as, Last Supper TV trays or inflatable furniture. In

contemporary popular culture, drag queens, with their exaggerated aesthetic of femininity to the point of absurdity. Conversely, the exaggerated hypermasculinity of cisgender men who take steroids to achieve muscular gains of ridiculous proportion. John Rechy recalls the comments of a passing drag queen when he was once cruising in Hollywood shirtless, “Your muscles are as gay as my drag, honey.” Ever the well of knowledge, the drag queen understood how she and Rechy occupied opposite ends of the spectrum of gender performance.

¹⁸ John Donald Gustav-Wrathall’s text, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand: Same-Sex Relations and the YMCA* (1998), details the history of the Young Men’s Christian Association and its transformation from a Protestant organization designed to mold young white boys into the future business and civic leaders of the United States to a signifier of gay male sex and the precursor to the modern bathhouse.

¹⁹ Tumblr removed “objectionable” material, including pornographic content, on December 17, 2018.

²⁰ To date, two men who have sex with men have contracted rare strains of HIV while adhering to PrEP (<https://www.poz.com/article/second-man-contracts-rare-hiv-strain-apparently-adhering-prep>). Another man who has sex with men contracted HIV while on PrEP, but researchers believe his frequency of unprotected sex contributed to his seroconversion (<https://www.poz.com/article/prep-fails-third-man-time-hiv-drug-resistance-blame>).

²¹ “Felching” is the act of eating semen after a man deposits it in an anus.

²² In gay men’s vernacular, a “pig” is a broad term for a man who will engage in high-risk, taboo fetishes, such as barebacking, felching, water sports (urine play), BDSM, fisting, scat, and other activities. Men do not have to engage in all of the acts listed to be a “pig.” However, “pigs” often advertise that they have few or no “limits.”

²³ According to the webpage, “AIDSinfo,” operated by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, the opportunistic infection, “MAC,” is an abbreviation for *Mycobacterium avium* complex, and the organisms carrying this pathogen are “ubiquitous in the environment.” Moreover, this bacterium, innocuous to a person with a fully functioning immune system. “MAC” can cause symptoms, such as, “fever, night sweats, weight loss, fatigue, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.” Although not one of the most lethal opportunistic infections, like *pneumocystis pneumonia*, this pathogen develops in people with less than fifty T-cells, meaning this is not the only condition they are battling.

²⁴ In his text, *Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs* (2015), Johann Hari describes an experiment illustrating the cause of drug addiction and the analogy of addiction as a “cage.”

Conclusion

Hom(e)erotics—The First Search:

Deciphering the Rechy Enigma of the “Substitute for Salvation”

“Yes, that phrase recurs; and I’m referring to one of religion’s greatest betrayals: the promise of redemption based on various reactionary codes that invoke judgment. But, in early years, one may believe that spurious promise. As life unwinds with its panorama of horrors--and, yes, times of beauty and joy--but because of the former (horrors) the promise is violated. The perfect “salvation” is not available. We do search for substitutes, though, psychoanalysis, cults, exotic religions, sex, etc.—none fills the longing for the promised, impossible “salvation,” complete, unassailable.”
—John Rechy¹

In 1985, when I was twelve, the school administrators at Desert View Middle School in El Paso ushered the entire seventh grade into the auditorium for an emergency presentation. No one—not even the teachers—knew why the principal decided to interrupt the class schedule. To the school’s credit, the topic of the assembly was this mysterious new disease called “AIDS” that made national news with the announcement of Rock Hudson’s contraction of the illness. Even though this was Texas in the 1980s, my school was progressive enough to broach the topic causing hysteria across the country. As I had already recognized my homoerotic feelings, the presentation struck fear within me, even though the speaker did not broach sex between men, only mentioning sexual activity within the context of abstinence. My fears notwithstanding, I

consumed any news article, television program, or film about the epidemic. I followed the tragic story of Ryan White, the Midwestern high school student whose community shunned him and forbade him from attending class, after the high-profile death of Hudson. I recall the hushed conversations of my mother with her cousins regarding the matinee idol's death, "Que lastima que murió el Rock Hudson. Era tan guapo." [What a shame Rock Hudson died. He was so handsome.] "Que lastima que era joto," [What a shame he was a faggot] would be the typical response. Just entering my adolescence, I absorbed the homophobia and the stigma of shame of carrying an HIV-positive status. Nevertheless, the fear of HIV could not contain my budding eroticism.

An 80s Border Queer Indo-Xicanx Phenomenology of AIDS

Several years later, I managed to escape the heteronormative clutches of the border city of El Paso, and I, like Rechy's nameless protagonist in *City of Night*, began searching for a "substitute for salvation." During my first year at the University of Texas at Austin, The Names Project Foundation displayed a portion of the AIDS Quilt in one of the university's libraries. How I cried for these people I did not know and would never know. When I stared at the names sewn into the panels, I realized how fortunate these people were to have been loved, to be forever memorialized and remembered. Somehow, I knew I would suffer the same fate, yet my memory would fade into obscurity.

The next year I would test positive at nineteen and thought I would not live to see the age of twenty-one. Nearly thirty years later, my spirit persists even when my body protests, yet I continue constructing my own discursive quilt panel through my work. I refuse to let the AIDS epidemic become a footnote buried under heteronormative rubble and the historical amnesia of the LGBTQ+ and Chicana/o communities. In my mind and heart, as well as my work, I canonize

all of the activists of ACT-UP!, ALLGO, and every other grassroots HIV/AIDS organization founded in the 1980s, just as I memorialize the Chicana and Chicano activists who paved the way for working-class people to access institutions of higher learning. I canonize not to strip them of humanity but to pay homage to their efforts and to honor them as I do when I invoke the eggun, the ancestors. As much as my meds continue to debilitate me, I take them as communion. I perform my own act of transubstantiation, ingesting the pills as the body and blood of every person who died of AIDS before 1996, when the “AIDS cocktail” became available to people living with HIV en masse, sometimes even allowing myself occasional stolen fantastical thoughts of a “cure.”

As a long-term survivor of the AIDS epidemic, I negotiate a precarious existence. My spirit guides prod me to take my meds even when I contemplate not ingesting them because of the debilitating side effects. And, as much as I do not want to endure the physical consequences of an exploding viral load and a decimated immune system throughout the three stages of post-HIV seroconversion, Acute HIV infection (the initial weeks), Chronic HIV infection, and AIDS. During Acute HIV infection, the person experiences fever, headaches, sore throat, fatigue, chills, muscular pain, swollen glands, maculopapular truncal rash (characterized a flat, red area of skin with small bumps), and, in some, no symptoms appear which can delude the person from taking precautionary measures during sexual intercourse and intravenous drug use. During the Chronic HIV stage, a person may experience coughing and breathing difficulties, weight loss, diarrhea, fatigue, and high fevers. During AIDS, a person may suffer constant fevers above 100 degrees, severe chills and night sweats, oral white spots, genital and anal sores, severe fatigue, multicolored rashes, persistent coughing and respiratory issues, extreme weight loss, known as “AIDS wasting,” headaches, memory loss, and a plethora of opportunistic infections, such as,

pneumocystis pneumonia, toxoplasmosis, Kaposi's Sarcoma, and AIDS Dementia. Having experienced some of these conditions, I am aware of the possibility that my regimen may fail me. As a person living with an "undetectable" viral load yet also negotiating an AIDS diagnosis, my physical health is possible only because of the fearless activists of ACT UP!, ALLGO, and other organizations, and individuals like Ruth Coker Burks and others who refused to remain silent amidst the stigma of a disease. Susan Sontag analogizes the stigma of HIV in her text, *AIDS and its Metaphors* (1989), as possessing "a dual metaphoric genealogy. As a microprocess, it is described as cancer is: an invasion. When the focus is transmission of the disease, an older metaphor, reminiscent of syphilis, is invoked: pollution" (17). Only the physical horrors of AIDS complications surpass the social stigma.

To reiterate, gay Xicanx arts has lost an unknowable number of talented creators. Mundo Meza, Carlos Almaraz, Gerardo Velazquez, visual artists, Arturo Islas and Gil Cuadros, two writers, and Antony Balcena, a dancer and choreographer, are six men who succumbed to the lack of urgency from the wider Xicanx community, particularly the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies. Arturo Islas is the most recognized person from the list because of the impactful legacy of his novels, *The Rain God* (1984) and *Migrant Souls* (1990). Others, like the visual artist, Mundo Meza, are emerging from the homophobic rubble because of important exhibits, such as *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.* (2017), showcasing his work at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and groundbreaking scholarship, such as the article, "Drawn from the Scraps: The Finding AIDS of Mundo Meza" (2015) by Robb Hernández. Balcena is a focus of future work as he participated in AIDS activism in Los Angeles as part of ACT-UP! Simultaneously dedicated to his craft as a dancer and choreographer, even writing a camp reaction to the epidemic, *AIDS! The Musical!* (1989). Meza and Balcena are only two examples

of the larger task at hand for the field of Chicana/o Studies if it is to remain interesting and relevant—applying Pérez’s invaluable concept of the decolonial imaginary to uncover other organizations, like ALLGO, and activists/artists, such as, Meza and Balcena. Scholars have left ALLGO, an extraordinary example of intersectional, grassroots LGBTQ+ PoC activism, largely untouched, perhaps for a swath of reasons. As scholars unafraid of venturing into the relatively untouched intellectual terrain where race, homoerotic desire, and HIV/AIDS intersect, what documentation of other Latinx/Xicanx activists and artists will be excavated from underneath the rubble of homophobia and AIDS stigma?

Hom(e)erotics in a Queer Xicanx/Latinx Genealogy

Gay Xicanx men need theoretical tools and models to discuss, deconstruct, and analyze our histories, lives, and deaths. Rechy’s corpus provides with the historical and literary grounding for such an analysis. The themes in Rechy’s works, from his earliest essays to his latest novel, offer gay Xicanx men a theoretical and literary home, as they did for me in the mid-1980s. I knew I was not alone in my desire for other men as a Xicanx teen-ager. Rechy, the founders of *allgo*, Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and others have all forged the path for those of us following in their giant footsteps.

The four methods of *hom(e)erotics*—building a queer Xicanx literary genealogy, documenting the histories of our activism, recognizing the toxic cultural and societal patriarchy we experience, and if we survive, and internalize, and recognize violent sexual practices contextualized within a discourse of HIV/AIDS. The risk of seroconverting for gay Latinx men is second only to gay Black men. However, because of the fragility of our collective masculinity, we internalize the fear of HIV and either shun or fetishize those living with the disease. Gay Xicanx men continue to marginalize the external and internal feminine qualities

mirrored in femme gay men and cisgender and transgender women, resulting in tragedies, such as the deaths of Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos.

Hom(e)erotics pays homage to Rechy, Anzaldúa, Castillo, Lorde, and other courageous LGBTQ+ scholars and artists who suffered intersectional traumas to deliver a simple message to heterosexual PoC and to white LGBTQ persons—we exist. From Rechy’s first essays in *The Nation* and *Evergreen Review* in the 1950s to his most “recent” publication, *Pablo!* (2018) a novel he wrote as a teen-ager yet remained unpublished and languished in his archive, this breadth of work serves as the foundation for a genealogical categorization of gay Xicanx literary writings, not unlike Gaspar de Alba’s article, “Thirty Years” (2012), in which she demarcates three distinct generations of Chicana/Latina Lesbian literary and scholarly production.²

Such a generational model does not work for the writings by gay Xicanx men as AIDS erased nearly two generations of gay men. The dearth of work lamented by Gaspar de Alba, Almaguer, and Moraga is itself a category—one of silence, one of stigma, one of death. Along with the category of “coming out” stories, I can only categorize works as 1) pre-genocide, which includes works before and after the Stonewall Rebellion 2) the Patient Zero-era from 1979 to the mid-1990s when AIDS deaths peaked, 3) a post-traumatic stress disorder period after 1996, the year pharmaceutical companies released the effective yet prohibitively expensive AIDS cocktail, and 4) the current world of come of PreP, stigma, bugchasers, Gift-givers, and poz-conversion parties. To ignore the impact of the AIDS epidemic upon gay Xicanx literary production is to participate in the genocide itself. Some of these categories may be absent of work, as novels and other writings may be languishing in library archives waiting to be excavated.

Theoretically, *hom(e)erotics* is indebted to the pioneering work of Chicana and Black lesbian feminists and pays homage to the brave gay Xicanx and Latinx scholars who surveyed

and began to map the terrain of a gay Xicanidad and Latinidad. Scholars such as Tomás Almaguer with his cartography of queer men’s identities and behaviors, Juan Bruce-Novoa’s analysis of queer Chicano literature, David Román’s urging of Ethnic Studies disciplines to turn their collective gaze to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and his examination of Teatro Viva!, Horacio Roque Ramírez’s bravery to analyze the obituaries of gay men who had succumbed to AIDS, Daniel Enrique Pérez’s reimagining of queer Chicano and Latino identities with his proposal of a mariposa consciousness, Michael Hames Garcia’s and Ernesto Javier Martinez’s editing of *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader* (2011), and emerging scholars, such as Gibran Guido, co-editor, with Adelaida del Castillo, of *Queer in Aztlán: Queer Chicano Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* (2013). However, I could not have conceived of *hom(e)erotics* without the breadth of Rechy’s corpus coupled with the depth of Anzladúa conceptual realities. I offer the framework of *hom(e)erotics* to past, present, and future generations of gay Xicanx and Latinx men, particularly those who succumbed to the AIDS epidemic and who currently struggle with the stigma and medicinal side effects and to victims of intersectional violence perpetuated by the State, the Church, or our biological families, like Gabriel Fernandez and Anthony Avalos. Ultimately, *hom(e)erotics* is the first step towards building the community necessary as gay Xicanx me to survive the external and internal oppressions Rechy’s corpus has detailed for the past seven decades—our respite, our home, our “substitute for salvation.”

Notes

¹ From my interview of John Rechy over email, April 10, 2017.

² In her article, Gaspar de Alba theorizes “three generations of third wave Chicana feminism: Generation A, Generation X, and Generation Q...The word ‘generation’ implies a chronology of time, but I am using it here to signify the constellation of ideas and concerns about gender and sexuality that have informed Chicano/a studies from the 1980s to the present” (463).

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