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Border Mariposas: The Phantasmatic Archive and the Space of Gay Chicano/Latino Literature

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Border Mariposas: The Phantasmatic Archive and the Space of Gay Chicano/Latino Literature

by

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Committee in Charge:

Professor Marcial González, Chair
Professor Nadia Ellis
Professor Juana María Rodríguez

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Abstract

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"Border Mariposas: The Phantasmatic Archive and the Space of Gay Chicano/Latino Literature" argues that materials in gay Chicano special collections and the "archiving" of materials within the world of some Chicanx literary productions resist a disciplinary model of ideal gay Chicano identity and emergence of that identity in narrative form. In these objects that obliterate a desired for clarity in ethnoracial and sexual identity for gay Chicanos, the experiences that exist in the object through narrative or memory offer instead fragments of experience that can be shared across identitarian groups who become "insiders" to the texts and secondary holders of the objects. These objects hold forth a hope for an expansion of queer community in their potential for sharing a simultaneity in memory and experience with their holder across time. In this queer potential the material offers, the dissertation shows that the hope that is *of* the archive may be positively and negatively augmented by researchers' contact with it to produce what I refer to as the phantasmatic.

My chapters draw from the archival holdings of fiction writers Arturo Islas and Gil Cuadros and the personal papers of Latina/o/x, LGBTQ, and HIV/AIDS activist, archivist, and teatrista Hank Tavera, and interviews with Kevin Martin, the owner of the uncollected Gil Cuadros Papers and executor of Gil Cuadros's estate. These locations of inspiration present to us a type of hope for a visibility, recognition, and place in history alongside the current scene and canon of Chicanx/Latinx Queer study. Regarding the phantasmatic, researchers can bring with them an anxiety-driven hope inspired by a discourse of paucity in Chicano/Latino cultural work that is often framed as gay Chicano failure in identity, politics, belonging, and narrative quality. The objects in the archive resist the pull of the ideal gay Chicano identity that emerges in discourse and, when bent to conform to the discourse that does not *belong* to it, produce strange-ifying, phantasmatic effects that are seen in the more textual objects' direct, text-based data that radically misalign with researcher report. To some extent, this misalignment demonstrates that the discourse of gay Chicano paucity and its production of an ideal gay Chicano identity and prescription for its emergence in narrative is, itself, a phantasmatic.

The hope that exists "naturally" in the archives themselves changes when researchers graft their activating "hope" to them. These activating hopes may produce a desire for the fantastic, a following of the hope *in* the archive to its beautiful and impossible dream; the kind of readings I strive for in my work with the Tavera Papers. These may also produce an archive

whose "natural" hope is made to twist in relation to a negative activating hope such that it may seem to overcome the anxiety of paucity that belongs to the researcher and to the discourse that the papers know nothing of. I call both of these transformations of the materials a production of the phantasmatic archive. Hope is used to *rescue* maligned authors like Arturo Islas, whose archive I investigate in my first chapter and in which I offer a new manuscript history for his novel *The Rain God,* to *recover* under-read authors such as Gil Cuadros, whose archive recommends we read the text in a specific order that makes HIV/AIDS care and the archival imperative of the book as crucial a component to queer cultural production as the writing, or to *experience* the hope of the archive, a hope that follows me through my work in the Tavera Papers and offers to me new and more generous ways to read the texts that have spoken of gay Chicano paucity without erasing the impact of those words completely.

The dissertations' focus on the material in gay Chicano/Latino special collections and the archiving of objects in gay Chicano literary works demonstrates the promise of these objects in drawing our attentions to a broader, newer, and more fitting potential for queer sociality, community. They prompt us to be wary of the phantasmatic construction of the ideal gay Chicano identity and its emergence in narrative—an ideality that, because it is phantasmatic, does not offer potential for the queer community longed for—and to be observant of the ways the phantasmatic of this discourse can make the archive speak a language not *native* to it. In doing so, my dissertation's showing the hope for expansion of queer potential for community and identity suggests that we can grow our study in more egalitarian ways that can recast the discourse of paucity as an historically situated discourse and performance and not as the wide pronouncement that we continue to carry and reproduce, rethink the role of gay Latino/Chicano cultural work as part of a connective history with canonical works in Chicanx/Latinx queer Studies, and begin to critically embrace and investigate the efficacy of "queer" as concept as it relates to LGBT Chicana/o/x-Latina/o/x history, literary study, and politics. This study prepares a path to greater attention to and intervention in the discourse of paucity that it reads out of.

Dedication

For my Mother,
whose every *I love you* showed
the power of words to warm a heart,
make sting my eyes that well rivers.
In her every movement, an expression of love,
a smile in mambo time at a cousin's wedding
I carry in my soul. Her voice
I never have to recall sings
me to sleep each night, as hers did when
I was but a small thing learning
the words that would make me,
a storyteller.

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So many people have contributed to my life and scholarship on the road to this accomplishment. Some remain in my life to this day. Some come in and out as our time and spaces intersect. Some came at crucial times and went on to other climes as they followed their paths. I share this joy with all of them.

I offer thanks to Steve Badrich, my English teacher at San Antonio Community College, for believing in me enough to inspire my path to an undergraduate degree and Jesse Swan, my professor of Early Modern lit at the University of Northern Iowa, for being a constant friend and mentor, a voice of comfort, a coach for interviews, and one of my first letter writers. Thank you to Norma Cantú who, during my Master's program at the University of Texas at San Antonio, introduced me to the work of Arturo Islas, which then led me to write this dissertation. Many thanks to Mark Allen, who fostered my love of medieval literature and saw strength in my scholarship such that I began to envision myself on an academic path. I thank the people I met at the University of Texas at San Antonio: Bridget Drinka, Jeanne Reesman, Catherine Kasper, David Vance, Wendy Barker, Kinitra Brooks, Reyna Vargas, Christine Caver, and so many more who made academic work feel like a home.

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This accomplishment would not be possible without my dissertation committee. I am grateful to have such kind, generous, and brilliant scholar's and friends by my side throughout this process. Their hard work over the years, reading drafts and offering feedback and challenging discussions, and writing letters for fellowship and job applications, hold a prominent place in these pages and in my heart.

Thank you to Marcial González, my dissertation Chair, for his honest feedback and compelling questions, for his urging a clarity and simplicity in writing that I continue to aspire to, for giving me the tools that have made me a better writer and deeper thinker, and for his warmth and the friendship that has grown between us. My thanks to Nadia Ellis for many conversations about archives and matter, her words of encouragement that drew from my work and inspired my finding a broader array of possibility in it. I thank Juana María Rodríguez for encouraging me to think practically about scholarship and my place in it, making the fantasy of the end goal more tangible as we talked over the drama of queer archives that circulates in this work. Thanks to Juana's candid feedback, my "tired" old CV turned into a marketing tool, and I began to nurture more generous readings of archives and scholarship. Eternal thanks to you all. Your belief in my writing and my project spurred me on when things seemed impossible.

Last but not least are the people closest to me, my beloveds, the family to which I am born and the people become part of my family. Thanks to my Mom, for listening to my worries, my triumphs, and my drafts to help me spot places that needed clarity. To Sean Campos, my best friend, dead six years now, who gave me writing assignments to keep me on track and helped me be the savage editor I can't seem to emulate quite as well without him checking my work. And to Steve O'Brien, who became family during pandemic times, and who, with the bass vibration of his voice and his palm's stroke to my sore, writing shoulder, calmed me when all seemed dark, and helped me see the brightness of this day through his eyes—A vantage that I now possess.

Introduction

Archives, Absence, and Queer Potentiality

One of the central aims of this dissertation is to resituate gay Chicano cultural works within the history of queer Chicanx cultural production from which they and their works are traditionally seen to be absent or, at best, only marginally attentive to or grounded in a "true" queer Chicanx identity and subjectivity. Eschewing a conception of solid identity constructed from without the subject, character, or world of the text my work in gay Chicano literature and archives thinks of them and the objects they contain on their own terms or, as Gloria Anzaldúa suggests, as "acts encapsulated in time, 'enacted' every time they are spoken aloud or read silently."[1] For Anzaldúa and for this project, the objects, these "acts," hold "the presences of persons," ideas, and communities—they have something *like* an "identity" that resonates from its own time into ours.[2] My readings of scholarship, literature, and archival objects reflect on the capacity for contemporary researcher's and writer's modes of thinking about identity, their own and identity generally inhibit close relationship with the object as "encapsulated in time." These ideas that accompany them into the reading room may be informed by their individual life stories and the stories about identity they have learned through study in their disciplines. Through this I mean to say that a reading and writing practice that involves the researcher/writer bringing *their own* identity to bear on the objects they observe brings us further away from the *identity* the object contains even as the process of identifying with the "presence" in the object makes us, the researcher/writer, feel closer to it. It is this relationship between researcher and object that creates the phantasmatic of the archive. Through its attention to Arturo Islas's manuscript history of his novel *The Rain God*, Gil Cuadros's book *City of God* and his privately held papers, and the Hank Tavera Papers, my dissertation demonstrates what shape the phantasmatic archive and phantasmatic relationship between researcher/writer and special collections may take, my work practicing a distanced form of connecting with the materials that have elements that resonate across time with my own conceptions of identity with the intent to avoid producing the archive as phantasmatic, and how, despite the difficulty to practice this distanced form of archival work and the disappointments that came with it, that my practice barred me from finding *myself* in these papers, the practice offered a deeper connection with the materials that seemed a more fitting relationship to them. This practice offered a way of seeing elements and fragments of the archive in me, to see parts of myself composed of the moments of joy the containers hold, parts composed by the nightlife, the dancing, the marches, and die-ins. To some extent, this distanced practice of working with queer archival material encouraged me to see more clearly the hereness of queer collectivity and potentiality José Esteban Muñoz gestures to on our horizon that lives inside of us contemporary queer folk borne out of the dreams of the future for us that emanate from the objects studied and shows us to be parts of their queer horizons.[3] Lastly, because my dissertation chapters were inspired by my noting a reoccurring expression that gay Chicano material is absent, the dissertation, informed by the material in special collections, offers alternatives to this traditional notion of absence and the discourse of it encourages reading gay

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[1] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 89.

[2] Ibid., 89.

[3] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009).

Chicanx literary, cultural work as apolitical or deficient in some aspect of queer or Chicano identity that deprives it of meaningful presence.

In his 1999 article, "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature in Chicana/o Cultural Work," Antonio Viego notices that it "has become a fairly rote observation to make in Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies of gay male Chicano, Latino literary work that there is not enough of it being produced" and that this notion is routed through a simultaneous, comparative observation that measures Gay Chicano, Latino literary work against "the plenitude of lesbian Chicana literary work."[4] In his observation, Viego argues that this comparative mode of valuation and review requires the Chicano subject to "emerge in cultural, literary work according to the same grid of experiential categories through which lesbian Chicana, Latina cultural, literary work instantiates a lesbian Chicana, Latina subject in narrativity."[5] Viego ties contemporary repetitions of this discourse of absence and value between Gay and Lesbian Chicanx cultural works to key canonical writings by Tomás Almaguer and Cherríe Moraga that place Chicana lesbians and their works as tangibly enunciative *as* queer and Chicana while gay Chicano writers and writings are seen to be deficient in one or both of these identitarian categories.

Tomás Almaguer's 1991 article, *Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior*, seeks to discover how and to what extent gay Chicanos identify *as* gay. Drawing from scholarship in sexological anthropology of the 1970s, Almaguer suggests that Chicanos identify as gay along a "Mexican/Latin American" sexual system that, he says, defines gayness along an axis of masculinity/femininity based in sexual position where the penetrator/*ativo* is not identified as "gay" while the penetrated/*pasivo* is resolutely "gay."[6] This is in opposition to what he terms a "U.S./European" system in which gay identity is assigned in relation to sexual object choice—this is Almaguer's definition of the "modern 'gay man.'"[7] Notwithstanding issues with these claims that invoke concepts of white modernity against what can only be brown not-modernity or, possibly, "primitivity," peculiar to Almaguer's study of gay Chicano sexual practice and identity, and made relevant to the study of queer Chicanx literature, is his drawing from the work of Cherríe Moraga to make sociological claims about gay Chicanos, their works, and queer Chicanx literature more generally.

In Almaguer's turn to Moraga because he finds current research insufficient to make solid claims about gay Chicano identity, he relies on her "candid discussion of her sexual development," reading *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* as "ethnographic evidence," in his seeking "clues about the social world of gay Chicano men."[8] Almaguer's reading of Moraga's fictionalized narrative of sexual and racial awakening told through prose and poetry means to establish a homosexual "experience" that may be shared by queer folk and that will help him to "read" into a gay Chicano experience. But in Almaguer's attempts to make this comparative model a baseline for his thinking about homosexual Chicanx

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[4] Antonio Viego, "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature in Queer Chicano Cultural Work," *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader,* ed. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), 91; Previously published in *Discourse* 21, no. 3 (1999), 111-31.

[5] Ibid., 92.

[6] See Tomás Almaguer, "Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Aberlove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York, New York: Routledge, 1993) 255-73; Previously published in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (1991), 75-100.

[7] Ibid., 255.

[8] Ibid., 256; 265.

experience, his comparative language consistently moves toward a valuation of Moraga's expression of experience—with Moraga and her work standing in for a generality of Chicana lesbian experience and expression—against a devaluation of a generalized gay Chicano expression of experience through narrative that, for Almaguer, does not exist in 1991 because, in his estimation, the work that does exist is insufficient.[9] Almaguer claims there is a "paucity of writings on Chicano gay men" through comparative language that notes this paucity as being "unlike the rich literature on the Chicana/Latina lesbian experience."[10] Also "unlike the writings on Chicana lesbianism," Almaguer suggests that works by "John Rechy, Arturo Islas, and Richard Rodríguez," who are the writers of what he considers to be the "extant literature" *on* gay Chicano men, "offer little to our understanding" about gay Chicano experience and sexual practice.[11] This failing that is "unlike" Chicana lesbian work stems from what he believes is a necessary quality in queer Chicanx texts, garnered through a prescription he develops through his reading of Moraga, that is missing from gay Chicano texts: namely that they "fail to discuss directly the cultural dissonance" gay Chicanos experience in "reconciling" what he assumes to be a "primary socialization into Chicano family life" with the "sexual norms of the dominant culture."[12] While this may be due to a belief that shapes Almaguer's scholarship as a sociologist, attached to his reading of Moraga's work is the importance he appears to grant in his view of her work as a "first." Seeing Moraga's material as finely written and speaking of the information that he seeks, Almaguer makes some reasonable assumptions regarding a possibly shared homosexual Chicanx experience of the times that might have seen greater possibility for sexual expression within a white framework.[13] However seeing her text as a "first" and as an autobiography, which leaves his reading of her work bereft of analysis of the constructedness of the narrative and has him ignore the poetry completely, places too much and, I would suggest, undue pressure on Moraga's text to offer sufficient, salient material for "reading" queer populations generally or for the text to demonstrate a prescription for *any* queer Chicanx identitarian emergence through narrative, let alone gay Chicano expressions of identity in narrative.

Almaguer's desire for a specific textual mode of "outing" the same-sex desiring Chicano hinges on the creation of a baseline for all queer Chicanos routed through the "perceptive writings of Chicana lesbians" that Almaguer grants place as "the first to shatter the silence on the homosexual experience of the Chicano population."[14] What seems essential to Almaguer for effective Chicanx queer enunciation, garnered through his evaluation of Moraga as ethnography, is that the writing must center Chicanidad *as* "primary" to identity with sexuality having to undergo a reconciliatory process between home culture and queer culture. For Almaguer, this sort of stagnant and prescriptive model and form for texts of queer enunciation seems to result from his own appreciation for a literary text that he reads *as* ethnography. His appreciation is in-time with the changes in popularity of works among Chicano writers and readers. Indeed, Marcial González notes of the 1980s that "personal narratives, autobiographies, and mixed-genre texts became popular" with Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* and Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La*

[9] Ibid., 256.
[10] Ibid., 256.
[11] Ibid., 256.
[12] Ibid., 256.
[13] Ibid., 266.
[14] Ibid., 265.

Frontera setting "a standard for the multigenre text in Chicana literature."[15] It is of note that this "standard" is what is deployed to devalue gay Chicano writings in Almaguer's essay and, for Antonio Viego and the editors who reprinted his essay in *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, this "standard" persists today in the valuation and evaluation of queer Chicanx texts and the formal requirements for them the "standard" keeps alive. The "standard" can be seen, as Hames-García and Martínez note, in the questions inspired by Almaguer and Moraga's texts that devalue gay Chicano literary, cultural works "assume[ing] gay male apathy" or absence in questions like "Where is the gay male version of *This Bridge Called my Back*?."[16] In short, this mode of thinking about gay Chicano texts as apolitical, insufficient, or absent appears to be very much still present with us.

Moraga's texts, especially those in *Loving in the War Years*, capture a fear of being outcasted from home, home culture, and family and a fear of being beaten, killed, or worse at the hands of heterosexual men that may be shared by queer Chicanas/os/xs or queer folks more generally. I also think that her writing about the devaluation of self in relation to one's same-sex desire would be felt in the bone of many a queer person. However, like the too muchness of pressure I suggest Almaguer places on the text when he calls it a "first" and regards it as an exposition of a generalizable Chicanx homosexual experience and as a prescription for *the* way a queer Chicanx text should address same-sex desire and racial-ethnic identity, his attention to the text has added consequences. Almaguer's extended attention to Moraga's book makes not only it's personal witnessing a truth unbound from the intentional constructedness of its narrative form and its expression of Chicana lesbian identity, but also makes Moraga's statements that do not fall into her writings only informed by, she says, "[her] own consciousness" true as well.[17]

This becomes of particular issue when Almaguer cites a portion of Moraga's prose that claims "male homosexuality has always been a 'tolerated aspect of Mexican/Chicano society as long as it remains 'fringe'. . . . But lesbianism, in any form, and male homosexuality which openly avows both the sexual and the emotional elements of the bond, challenge the very foundation of la familia."[18] Almaguer reads Moraga's quotation as demonstrating the "truth" of his claim for sexual-position (ativo/pasivo) based models of "Mexican/Latin American" homosexual identity influencing Chicano modes of identifying as gay because Moraga's quotation suggests that male same-sex sex is "tolerated" as long as it is invisible and rejects any possibility for emotional pairing. For Almaguer, this allows for an expansion of his earlier claims about sexual position to include outward behaviors seen as gendered. But, at least in this particular text by Moraga, gay men's outward behavior as "passing" or "effeminate" is left unmentioned. It seems that Almaguer interprets the men Moraga ties to "open avowals" of the "emotional elements of the bond" as having to be "openly effeminate."[19] These men that Almaguer imagines avowing emotional attachment to each other through what he earlier called a "European/U.S." system of homosexual identification based in sexual object choice are, he claims, "viewed as non-men, as the cultural equivalents of women" in accordance with "Chicano

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[15] Marcial González, *Chicano Novels and the Politics of Form: Race, Class, and Reification*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 3.

[16] Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, eds., "Re-membering Gay Latino Studies," introduction to *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 1-2.

[17] Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in The War Years*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1983), ix.

[18] Ibid., 102, quoted in Almaguer, "Chicano Men," 266.

[19] Almaguer, "Chicano Men," 266.

patriarchal cultural norms."[20] This appears to have the effect of grafting the effeminate figure of the "queen" and "maricon," figures that appear prominently in Moraga's later work "Queer Aztlán," onto what seems the not-clearly-marked, gendered-behavior-wise, figure of the gay Chicano in a love-bond who is "the object of the Chicano/mexicano's (sic) contempt because he is consciously choosing a role his culture tells him to despise, that of a woman."[21]

In my reading of *this* portion of Moraga's text and Almaguer's reading of it, the subject who has contempt for openly gay Chicanos does not base his disgust in those men's outward seeming gender expression but in the homophobic assumption that gendered heterosexual marriage roles *must* graft onto "marriage." Here, it seems, that both Moraga and Almaguer make the same assumption as the subject who carries contempt and assumes a clear answer in the imagined question, "Which of you is the man and which of you is the woman?" The notion of an "always" historical acceptance of "male homosexuality" in Chicana/o culture as long as it is only sexual that is compared to an "always" open hostility toward a lesbianism seen as having a natural affinity for the "emotional elements" of a loving relationship alien to gay men such that recognizing "emotional elements" marks them *as* women is a striking claim for both authors to make. But it is especially striking to me that Almaguer cites this passage, which makes an historical claim without citation, in order to bolster his argument about Chicano gay men about whom he has found there to be insufficient research to make a solid claim. In this small passage is an early version of the failure and absence of Chicano gay men we see today. Both of these texts' claims are but an assumption without citational weight. But through Almaguer's citation of Moraga's historical claim about Chicano homosexuality, this claim seems to becomes true as does Almaguer's claim through his use of it. Almaguer's "verifying" Moraga's historical claim as true carries with it potential to discourage readers from critically reading Moraga and his claims about men, gay Chicano men specifically.

In a critical reading of these texts, the reader can notice that Almaguer's citation of Moraga's claim that "male homosexuality has always been a 'tolerated aspect of Mexican/Chicano society as long as it remains 'fringe'. . . . But lesbianism, in any form, and male homosexuality which openly avows both the sexual and the emotional elements of the bond, challenge the very foundation of la familia" deletes across the ellipsis an orientation of time that is central to Moraga's meaning of temporality in her use of the word "always."[22] For Moraga, the "always" stretches quite a bit back such that it "stems from [Chicano] indigenous Aztec Roots."[23] Moraga's footnote to this statement names the chronicler of the conquest of Nuevo España, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, as her source. But chronicles of the Spanish conquest of indigenous peoples are always political and, therefore, questionable as truth. It would be unsurprising for del Castillo to note an acceptance of sodomy among the native peoples of New Spain as further justification for Spain's violent conquest of them in the name of God. Amongst historians of this period, the notion of "acceptance" of same-sex sex amongst the Aztecs of Mexico is well-documented as untrue. Indeed same-sex desire was even less acceptable in Aztec culture than male same-sex was in Spain's periods of conquest when sodomy at sea inspired many court cases, laws, and levels of punishment or punitive payment to individual complainants

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[20] Ibid., 266.

[21] Moraga, *Loving*, 102.

[22] Moraga, Loving, 102, quoted in Almaguer, "Chicano Men," 266.

[23] Ibid., 102.

and their families.[24] In truth, it appears that the Aztecs were little different than the Spanish conquistadors in their thinking about gender traitors and sexual outlaws need for punishment, both cultures, essentially, were monarchic theocracies with their own brands of conservative moralism. However, the Aztecs do appear to have had more severe punishments for folks whom we might read as queer today. *Cuiloni,* men who engaged in buggery, "brought contempt, indignation, and ultimately, the severest punishment: death by burning" mandated by the state.[25] There does not appear to be documentation of an equivalent state-sanctioned punishment for lesbians, *patlache.* However, one story Caroline Pencock details, shows the lesbian sexual traitor being "opened down the left side with a sharp flint" and, as the wound is not mortal, she flees while citizens throw rocks as they chase her away.[26] Contempt for people engaging in same-sex sex or having same sex desire does not appear to have the specific cultural and historical valences Moraga and Almaguer might wish so as to lend credence to their claims that comparatively measure levels of acceptance and oppression that become mapped onto the paucity and plenitude, failure and success of the formal arrangements of enunciation of Chicanx gay and lesbian identity in narrative. More problematic, perhaps, is that the failure to define Moraga's text as a formal, constructed narrative and instead cite it as truth to support Almaguer's want for a specific argument about gay Chicano men, maps this success and failure onto the identitarian groups named, not just the texts out of which homosexual Chicanx identity narratives emerge.

My dissertation does not seek to provide a genealogical literary history of this comparative discourse of paucity and plenitude, failure and success in Chicanx literary studies, nor does it attempt to directly intervene in the discourse without the extended work to trace its antecedents and inspirations that would strengthen such an intervention. Rather, my project begins a materialist study of objects, texts, and scholarly works through which I practice a gradual disengagement from a pre-conceived and homophobic framework for identitarian sexual and textual belonging that I read as being influenced by the truth effects of this discourse of paucity and absence. At times, my approaches to identity shuttle between a familiar notion of Chicanx identity and the archival objects I read as expanding it such that familiarity fragments to increase queer community and queer potential that might have a shattering effect to that identity that does not result in its decay. Identifying a feature to steel myself against, this discourse of paucity, helped me practice the mode of distanced reading of archival material I touch on earlier that led me to see the discourse's potential to touch us, researchers, writers, and scholars, in such a way as to prompt a belief in and experience of gay Chicano absence and failure. This claim of absence and failure, a phantasmatic mode of history making, appears to prompt our making of a phantasmatic archive that might combat its negative claims or our drawing from it to read gay Chicano texts, our communities, and ourselves. Identifying this feature led to my approach that resists practicing scholarly and archival work as a form of individualized self-care. Through this resistance to and identifying of a discourse that harms Chicanx literary study, writers, and communities, my approach to text and objects wants to imagine an expansion of the queer communities and identities in which Chicanx folk may find strength and, through them, defang the discourse from continuing its harm. My dissertation's focus on gay Chicano archives and its

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[24] See, Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies Will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico,* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003).

[25] Caroline Dodds Pencock, *Bonds of Blood: Gender, Lifecycle, and Sacrifice in Aztec Culture,* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), 142.

[26] Ibid. 148-149.

potential to produce phantasmatic effects is timely. The 2011 publication of *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader* and the 2015 publication *Queer in Aztlan: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* contain a measure of anxiety in relation to a disciplinary tradition of thinking Gay Chicano work as absent or failed. This discourse is wounding again. Indeed, I see the discourse's doubling of failure and absence mapped onto gay Chicanx texts *and* identities accompanying the researcher into gay Chicano archives and prompting a hope to find something different than gay Chicano absence and failure even through the phantasmatic archive that hope may provide. I see the preconceived notion of a gay Chicano apathy, absence, or failure in text and identity informing some scholarly approaches to Gil Cuadros's work that can shape the arguments they make. This notion also appears to have an anxious bearing in gay Chicano anthologies and the work of early career gay Chicano scholars as they seek themselves in past texts they wish to redeem, finding themselves in those texts such that it seems that this quest for redemption or correction to the narrative of absence is personal.

This dissertation, "Border Mariposas: The Phantasmatic Archive and the Space of Gay Chicano/Latino Literature," includes three chapters and an epilogue. My first chapter, "Archival (Mis)Interventions: Frederick Luis Aldama, Arturo Islas, and the Phantasmatic Archive" captures and mobilizes the sensory, even if disappointing, quality of a living alternative to the phantasmatic archive and accurately dates the publication history of Islas's *The Rain God*. This new dating requires Islas Studies to shift in its regarding the published novel as a "closeted" text toward a regarding of the work as growing alongside the advent of queer Chicanx Studies and its early writings. Drawing from my own past as a funeral director and embalmer to theorize the stultifying and mutilating effects the discourse of paucity can influence, I reread Arturo Islas's archive and open it up to interpretations that resist the inevitability of the negative phantasmatic pull researchers can bring with them to the archive in their desire to "save" the author, the text, and themselves from it. I read Frederick Luis Aldama's work in the Islas archive as emerging from a desire for a recovery that is not in service of showing a rich truth about Islas' life and work and instead about recovering Islas from the discourse of paucity that shapes the view of his work *as* "closeted" and thus representative of gay Chicano literatures' and authors' failing to live up to the standard that the discourse carries with it. Aldama's work simultaneously adheres to and counters the phantasmatic appeal of the discourse of paucity. It uses the failure attached to paucity to insert Islas into a history of LGBT Chicanx struggle, making his work a "new" triumph that was never noticed before he went into the archive and saved it. Where Aldama is an embalmer who produces a phantasmatic archive shaped through an anxiety regarding the discourses perpetual claim of paucity and failure in the present, bringing Chicano/Latino queer archives explicitly into queer movement-making and queer enunciation, I argue—through scholarly and exegetical attention to the archive itself and through my new manuscript history of *The Rain God*—for a more nuanced reading that exalts in queer potential despite the absence of explicitness of the text, and despite the charges concerning queer failure that the discourse of absence or paucity would have us accept. In the process, I argue that we must gain an increased familiarity with and sympathy for a particular kind of archival recovery, the phantasmatic, that brings the Chicano/Latino queer into history and into view even as I resist its logics of closure, erasure, and recovery.

My second chapter "Radiant Material: Gil Cuadros's Queer Archival Histories and Cotemporalities" encourages a reading of Cuadros's *City of God* that begins with "The Quilt Series." This is a suggestion culled from some of the papers in the privately held archive of the executor of Cuadros's estate, Kevin Martin, whose comments in our interview help to fill out

some questions regarding Cuadros relationship to racial and ethnic positioning in himself and in his book. Cuadros's personal lack of a solid connection to a Chicano identity and his decision to explicitly use the language of Chicano studies as a marketing tool to sell *City of God* disappoints and disrupts phantasmatic scholarly hopes to declare the author's comfortableness with a familiar and solidly "queer" and "Chicano" identitarian filiation. I mention the "author's" awareness of his own identity, an identity Cuadros aligned more with a typical white middle-class identity, because traditional readings of Cuadros tend to read the entirety of the works published as autobiography and as centralizing a distinctly Chicano gay identity across the multiple characters often seen as singular. Starting with "The Quilt Series," as Cuadros's papers suggest we should, squashes our hope for solid identity as this text shatters identity through its objects that open identity outward to any person who shares similar experience and can pick up the shard familiar to them and to so many others. We are asked to stop looking for a "person" in the text and cease the violence our touch might effect. stop trying to do the violence of touching them. It invites us to begin looking more readily for comfort in the objects the text continual lays before us to make the objects in the archive of the book *our* objects and *our* archive. Through them is the potential for queer connection and collective action. I read Cuadros's 1994 *City of God* following the objects spread across the work as a repository, an archive, where the body, the quilt, AIDS and HIV care, memory, and memorial all have a material relation to time and to the material archive. Through my focus on the object, which reorients the reader from the logocentric and phantasmatic archive of missing Chicano gay men, I instead give another archive, one not so easy as has been suggested and continues to be suggested, where a different set of pasts, presents and futures live and act materially, rendering HIV care as important a form of cultural work as writing.

My third chapter, "The Tavera Papers' Timeliness and Timelessness: Making Queer Family Esta Noche," practices a "tradition" of textual scholarship that describes, locates, and contextualizes materials in this relatively new archive that is not widely making rounds in current publications. Inspired by queer and feminist work in archives *and* in documenting, assembling, and producing their own sets of archives I think about the transformative potential *of* the archive and the reciprocal relationship of respect it can evoke as we change each other. I see this as a type of story making and follow Suzzanne Bost's suggestion that the story of tension and resolution between researcher and material is potentially a most useful scholarship literary studies has to offer. The Tavera papers not only offer a good story, but they offer a unique sense of activism, LGBT history, archivization, and a quest to make queer familia by transforming deformed aspects of cultura filtered through Tavera's deep faith and adoption of a type of religious prolepticism. The papers also offer a history of Latina/o/x organizing that shapes parts of Cherríe Moraga's "Queer Aztlán." Reading Moraga's text, which expands and strengthens the discourse of paucity my dissertation encounters in each chapter, as informed by the Tavera papers and the history of the Latina Latino Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGÓ) it contains permits more generous and nuanced readings than possible without that historical and material. Through the archive and LLEGO's Chicanx/Latinx history of LGBT organizing, I am prompted to read Moraga's text anew and suggest that historizing the text and the performance it captures can assist us in halting the perpetuation of the discourse of paucity in the now, keeping it one feature that is, and should be, stuck in a specific time and not part of the hope in Tavera's proleptic thinking. That thinking is what I return to as I embrace the concept of familia the Tavera papers imagine parts of which appear closer to the type of Queer Utopia Moraga desires but does not make of a Queer Aztlán. And yet, at the end, I am unsure whether I embrace this

concept of familia in the papers or if I am just realizing that the papers and this concept, this love that they hold, were already embracing me.

Keeping in line with the trajectory of the dissertation's movement away from a divisive discourse of the past that harms in the present toward a broadened collectivity that might make it meaningless, my epilogue reflects on future directions my study of the phantasmatic and the archive may take or inspire. My epilogue notes the promise of gay Chicano anthologies in combatting this harm and in demonstrating a surplus of text even as some of the mission statements of contemporary anthologies invoke an ambivalence in thinking relative to the discourse of gay absence which is central to their productions even as they deny its having that sort of power or truth.

This study represents an effort to contribute to ongoing work on methodology and critical reading practices in the study of queer Chicanx/Latinx archives and literature. Given the increasing interest in reexamining "canonical" gay Chicano texts, like those by Islas and some of the works of John Rechy, and underread and understudied gay Chicano texts, like those by Cuadros and some of Rechy's more explicit works, by scholar's helping to grow Jotería studies, I see this project as contributing to this growth of it through a hopeful practice that is, yet, cautious of the phantasmatic that lurks in the hopes we share for this area of study. I hope that this project may be helpful to Jotería studies' grappling with reading, seeing, and practicing a gay Chicano identity that is often routed through a discourse of absence. The project's reading the material archive of special collections and the figurative archive contained in gay Chicanx texts sees possibility in reading a way out of the "absence" that attaches to that identity and those texts and, through the reading of the objects it centers, finds promise in those fragments of a queer *and* Chicanx identity that may offer an escape from its negative and overdetermined aspects. I hope that this may inspire a reading practice from a less wounded place such that we may see in our literatures and in our scholarship the ever presence and continuing growth of the queer potential inside of us that he queer objects we touch and study dreamed to life in us.

Chapter 1

Archival (Mis)Interventions: Frederick Luis Aldama, Arturo Islas, and the Phantasmatic Archive

"You must express your grief at the death of a loved one, and then you must go on. The eyes of the dead must be gently closed, and the eyes of the living must be gently opened"

–Jan Brugler, *Embalming: History, Theory and Practice*[27]

embalm, *v.*
1. To impregnate (a dead body) with spices, to preserve it from decay.
2. *transf.* To preserve (a corpse) from decay by other means, as by cold, etc. *rare*.
3. *fig*
a. To preserve from oblivion; chiefly in good sense, to keep in sweet and honoured remembrance.
4.
a. To salve or anoint with aromatic spices, oil, etc. *Obs.*
b. To endue with balmy fragrance.
5. To steep (e.g. in poison). *Obs. Rare*

–Oxford English Dictionary

I have been long-entangled with the practice of embalming. As a licensed funeral director and embalmer, I find the preceding entries from the *OED* startling and all too familiar. Most of the *OED* definitions suggest the imbuing of the body with a scent not born to it, a covering over of the scent or appearance of death, via cooling or freezing, and an urging to remember the dead in ways attentive only to that which makes the memory "sweet and honoured."[28] The unifying feature of the term's use is the imbuing of the body and, in this chapter, the body of work, with features that are not "natural" to it. Even in the sense of memory, that which is unvarnished is erased. It, whatever "it" is, must be transformed in order to be "sweet and honoured," "chiefly in a good sense."

These are not entries written by embalmers. Not ones like me. Not ones like those who trained me. This sweetness is the ghost—the phantasm, if you will—that attaches to the feeling of preservation invoked in the word—the pervasive notion of embalming in its preservative and memorializing sense that the history of U.S. funerary practices have lent it. The desire that promotes only a positive hue to the word and its preservative and recuperative concept does not reflect the science of the embalming process but connects, instead, to the psychology and sociology of grief, of death, and of dying. As an embalmer and funeral director, I realize that embalming is a mutilation of the body and the memories that inhere in it. And this consequence, the consequence of mutilation *through* preservation with positive intent, can follow the researcher into the archive.

Archives, for many a researcher or archivist, offer the possibility for conjuring bodies—

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[27] I am unable to find the original source of this quotation from Jan Brugler. It is, surprising, and perhaps fitting for this chapter, that her second sentence is a slight variation of words attributed to Jean Cocteau.

[28] "embalm, v.", OED Online, September 2016, Oxford University Press, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60758?rskey=LDfGSW&result=2 (accessed October 14, 2016).

bodies that an archival worker can sweetly embalm in the interest of cultural or community memory, or lovingly dissect, as an anatomist, for preservation, pedagogy, and posterity.[29] This production of a subject from the archive is morbidly, and also hopefully, attached to promise of the archive and the archival hermeneutic that invites researchers to "dig" into it in order to "find" that which is supposed to be lost. For queer archives, this practice of reviving a subject feeds into the "recuperative hermeneutics" sexuality studies seems to embrace.[30] Yet, like the mutilations that occur during the processes of embalming, the mutilations of archival material through that hopeful "digging" can be overlooked in contemporary scholars' approaches to archives. For the field of gay Latino/Chicano literary studies, a field in thrall with the hermeneutic of recovery and the archival hermeneutic of the found text that can assist in promoting a collective community, it is necessary that we ask ourselves to take care that our work to recover and preserve remains open to critique and the development of renewed relationships—we do not want to kill a text's future possibilities through our archival practices. In this chapter, following Anjali Arondekar's urging that archival workers "imagine a practice of archival reading that incites relationships between the seductions of recovery and the occlusions such retrieval mandate," I highlight the archival imperative to *read* material for it is and what it says. This is in opposition to making the hoped for finding or recovering of material the primary goal of contemporary archival scholarship. That hope may be dashed by what the material says. But adjusting to a feeling of disappointment may be more fitting than attaching to the material a hope external to it, a hope that belongs to the researcher and the discipline they may feel bound to serve. Embracing the higher odds for disappointment may help researchers practice a heightened critical stance in their approaches to archival holdings.[31] This critical entry into the archive may also carry with it a productive advantage that obviates the seductive aspects of the archive and its hermeneutic that inspires in us the drive to discover and find—this desire to empty out and exhaust archival possibilities. Privileging a reading that may more likely lead us to disappointment may have the positive effect of "preserving" the archive from this exhaustion and emptying, may preserve the archive for future scholar's play with it. Without this critical stance, researchers may produce an artificial subject that emerges in correspondence with the disciplinary desires that promote our research, as in the case of Frederick Aldama's work on Arturo Islas. The production of this hopeful subject can limit the interpretive scope that disappointment might expand as that hopeful subject may be bound to the disciplinary desires of our respective fields or a personal desire to put the archive to a metaphoric "rest" through its plundering. In this chapter, recovering gay Chicano author's from a discourse of failure that circulates in queer Chicano Studies, inspires a desire for anything but disappointment and, consequently, appears to have shaped scholarly approaches to Arturo Islas's work, life, and the collection of his papers at Stanford.

A discourse that circulates in Chicana/o queer studies contains a charge that gay Chicano published texts fail to participate in queer Chicana/o movement making because their texts do not explicitly stage a mode of queer enunciation from within Chicano cultural politics. I suggest

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[29] David Squires, "Pornography in the Library," in *Porn Archives*, ed. Tim Dean, Steven Ruszczycky, and David Squires (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014), 84. Squires notes the common practices of likening archives to dead bodies and underlines a connection between the process of cataloguing sexual materials and the invocation of the anatomist as archivist and archival researcher that can divest sexual material from its spirit of licentiousness and transform it into an "appropriate" object of study. The anatomist, in Squires case, then, does a fair bit of embalming.

[30] Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2009), 1.

[31] Ibid., 1.

that this charge agitates for the hopeful approaches to the queer archive that distort it. This argument about gay Chicano texts is often made in a comparative mode that declares the successes of queer enunciation in queer Chicana texts, such as those by Cherríe Moraga. With the exception of Antonio Viego's essay "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature and Queer Chicana/o Cultural Work," there is no published extended exploration of this conversation that occurs in our halls and at our conferences. [32] In his essay, Viego asks us to consider the problems introduced to our studies by a comparative analysis that measures gay Chicano cultural productions' success in relation to queer Chicana texts. While Viego focuses on a discourse of Chicana Lesbian plenitude of publications that is at odds with a Chicano gay male paucity of publication, I see his text as showing that this discourse has potentially silenced a more replete reading of gay Chicano texts because we are trained, through this discourse, to regard these texts as failures due to these texts and authors not explicitly tying Chicano identity and queer sexual performance together in order to make them trackable and combinable in the same ways that early Chicana queer writings of the 80s and 90s are thought to do. I argue that this suggestion of failure results in the construction of a melancholic gay Chicano/Latino gay subject that continues to repeat his own inability to participate adequately according to the constructed "norms" of queer Chicana/o/Latina/o lived experience, identity, and cultural work. As a result, gay Chicano/Latino historical and archival work can function as apologia, as rescue, and as a recovery project mediated through the dominant discourse of gay Chicano/Latino failure from which gay Chicanos/Latinos must emerge in order to be part of queer Chicana/o/Latina/o history and pedagogy. The discourse of gay Chicano failure signaled from within the discipline and history of queer Chicanx/Latinx studies that precedes the researcher's entry into the archive has created some rather interesting interpretations of the Arturo Islas archive that embalm the archive, the works, and the author with the aim to enliven the corpse and rescue it from queer failure and Chicano cultural death.

Frederick Luis Aldama's work on the Islas archive asks us to (re)consider the ways in which we approach queer archival holdings and to be critical of the disciplinary narratives our research is subject to that may chape our engagement with archival materials. Aldama and I share a similar aim—we both wish to fire increased interest in Arturo Islas's work and draw attention to his archive in positive ways. In culling an *appropriate* subject from the archive, one that doesn't disappoint, Aldama embalms Islas and enlivens the corpse he manifests on the table. His archival practice, which draws from the archival imperatives and promises of recovery and a personal desire to find or discover material, produces a fictive subject of Islas that is a recovery project mediated through the discourse of gay failure—his project attempts to counter those charges. But the emphasis on the promise of recovery through archival work in Aldama's books on Islas, in reviews of his work, and in Chicana/o studies more generally is tricky business and requires us to question what we mean when we mean to recover.

The *Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Project* has recovered an impressive number of texts in the forms of manuscripts and pamphlets, and has published a number of scholarly editions of those recovered works. In introductions and forwards to its publications, the project defines the primary aims and promises of recovery. Director Nicolás Kanellos describes the recovery project as "locating, rescuing from perishing, evaluating, disseminating and publishing collections of primary literary sources written by Hispanics in the geographic area that is now the

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[32] Antonio Viego, "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature in Queer Chicano Cultural Work," *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader,* ed. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), 88; Previously published in *Discourse* 21, no. 3 (1999), 111-31.

United States from the Colonial period to 1960."[33] Working alongside this aim, the project has also published several volumes of scholarly engagement with this pre-1960 material that is "imagined and designed to provide both the expert and the neophyte with the most current and comprehensive assessment of Hispanic literature in the United States, illustrating its ethnic and national diversity, its regional variations, the scope of its genres, its canonic texts and its untapped potentials."[34] This project continues to achieve its mission to expand the corpus and archive of Chicana/o and U.S. Latina/o literatures through the material it newly catalogues for contemporary and future scholars. But the editorial interventions that recommend these newly published works to readers and scholars have been met with criticism. Indeed, critiques of some of the project's works suggest that the promise of recovery can be arrested when the recovered material undergoes interpretation and editor's recommend specific modes of reading practices that can be ahistorical and too much engaged with the finding of the present and the future in the past—the proto-Chicana/o that not only speaks to us today but speaks with us.[35] This practice of justifying and suggesting new works, or new readings of works, to contemporary scholars appears to align recovery's interpretive modes with the notion of embalming with which I engage. Indeed, while the "life" of archival material is of interest here, I am equally interested in how the interpretative aspects of recovery can reveal less about the materiality of texts than the power dynamics of the disciplines out of which we promote their emergence and the desires it may instill in, especially, the queer archival researcher.

Aldama's aim of recovery produces distorting effects of the archive, transforming it into a phantasmatic archive, out of which the material is forced to produce a subject that responds asynchronously to a range of Chicanx/Latinx scholarly and disciplinary interests.[36] Instead of *reading* the archive and potentially being disappointed, Aldama drives a hope that is not natural to it into his narration of it. Aldama has a desire and hope to recover Islas from charges of gay male failure and, consequently, produces an historical personage in Islas culled through a massaging of his papers. His hope, then, is not only to *rescue* Islas from charges of failure, but to also make gay Chicano/Latino failure itself the mode of recovery for Islas. Aldama's work is part of the melancholic departures in queer studies that retrospectively ascribe a certain type of triumph to the so-called failures of LGBTQ authors and their works. For whatever reason, Aldama misses activating an archival hermeneutic of reading that, through disappointment, can temper the archival hermeneutic to find and discover and help him resist the pull of the anxious

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[33] Nicolás Kanellos, Forward to *Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage*, ed. Erlinda Gonzalez-Berry and Chuck Tatum, vol. 2 (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 13.

[34] Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Genaro Padilla, eds., Introduction to *Recovering the U.S.-Hispanic Literary Heritage*, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 17.

[35] See Allison E. Fagan's, "My Book has Seen the Light of Day," *From The Edge: Chicana/o Border Literature and the Politics of Print*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers U P, 2016), 97-128, for a thorough engagement of the promises and problems of the recovery of Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* and Margarita Cota-Cárdenas's *Puppet*.

[36] Recovery projects hold potential to produce distorting effects due to our presentist and disciplinary modes of interpreting archival material. Aldama's emphasis on interpretation simultaneously draws attention to the archive, a positive effect of recovery projects, and closes the archive to further reading and interpretation through its meandering archival work and eventually singular interpretation of the archive. An emphasis on reading material as is might disappoint, but it would allow the archive to remain open to further exploration and interpretation. This could help our approaches to contemporary archives engage more fully with the established practice of critique of archival workers interpretations that lead to further archival review; a practice that has kept literary studies of earlier periods lively, socially engaging, and inspiring and has also kept the archives that inspire these lively scholarly engagements open to new interpretation and further reading.

hope that strokes the edges of his approach that shapes his phantasmatic archive. Though archives are composed of material left behind by authors with "real" bodies, desires, and histories, Aldama's mode of "recovery," his interpretation of the archive, conjures a version of that body, its desires, and a history unbound from the histories and desires the archive holds forth beyond its contemporary disciplinary crystallization through discourse. But the Islas archive remains bound to its physicality, enchained by history, and authorial desire and intent. These materials are not *his* body, not *his* subject, nor a general subject. These are paper. And at that, paper that might disappoint. Should we fall into the scheme of materializing subjects from objects, we find ourselves embalmers who mutilate material in the interest of something quite beyond ourselves and the objects we have at hand. This discourse of failure is not "natural" to us nor to the archive and the archive for we which long. Aldama's efforts in the archive inspire us now to rethink Islas's work and our relationship to the queer archive of Chicana/o Studies.

Embalming as Archival Aim and the Phantasmatic Archive

In my approach to the Islas archive and the manuscript history of his novel, *The Rain God: A Desert Tale*, I invoke the notion of embalming as an aim or consequence of archival work in contemporary archives. Embalming and its attachment to preservation and memorialization in a positive sense—one that insists on a posthumous liveliness to works, materials, and the decedent—seems an apt description of the aims of the archival work I encounter in relation to Arturo Islas due to archival workers' desires to find or manifest a subject from the objects laid out on research tables that encourage them to treat those materials as corpses that must be retrieved and enlivened. The hermeneutic of finding often asks the researcher "to dig" into the archive; and the success of this "excavation" is predicated on a primary disinterment of materials, the actual paging of the boxes or cartons. This disinterment is then followed by animation of the subject through a researcher's interpretative power. But interpretive animation of the material through the researcher's desire for an authorial and authoritative subject is a type of embalming with varying levels of truth effects. Most difficult in this process is the fact that inserting archival information that has not come to light into the historical record requires a revisionist history that must take into account the disciplinary constraints that have shaped the present understanding of the received history. The archives of the past can always offer more. They are indeed deep wells that continue to offer more to and sustain studies of the Classical, Medieval, and Early Modern periods, among others. But the archival imperative to discover can often prompt the researcher to over-state archival findings to the extent that presentist receptions of the material become paramount. This practice can leave the drama of historical revision ignored, especially in relation to the desire to fill the void of the queer archive, through its emphasis on the "discovery's" promise in the "now" without consideration of the historical forces that have kept the "discovery" from being regarded before. Essentially, the archival imperative prompts archival embalming because it inspires researchers to desire that the archive become emptied of its promise of perpetual overflowing and be restfully reinterred. But the archive must remain a site of potentiality or this kind of reinterment is the robbing of a grave that can prompt, or even require, extensive criticism of the type of restorative hagiography it may support or promote. While the contemporary humanities and social sciences seem to have begun to counter the possibility for archival exhaustion and stagnation by turning to oral histories as a mode of producing a living archive, there is still the

conundrum of those oral histories' temporalities. [37] While oral histories provide the figure of a living witness—there is a voice, there is interaction with a human being—they, too, are subject to decay. [38] This is to say that physical decay is inevitable for the informant, the researcher, and for the recorded event and whatever technology is used to record it. Oral histories, then, undergo a similar temporal transfiguration as archives of paper. Indeed, the "now" of the interview can never be sustained. Upon interpretation and report the materials are embalmed for posterity, transfigured into authoritative corpses that lend credence to the archive's paradoxical status as stable witness to truth—the stagnate corpse or revenant on the table ready for dissection and embalming—and its status as necessarily incomplete—as always lacking and needing to be filled.[39] We have then an archive that announces itself simultaneously as stagnate or dead, and, yet, as an authority of knowledge and holder of power that laments its own emptiness and frantically gestures to that which is "missing" from it. Indeed, those oral histories may find their way into an archive as repository, fulfilling both the need for expansion and, through their incorporation among a compendium of texts, point to an ever-growing absence. The archive is seductive in the very hermeneutic that declares that the researcher must search for that which is missing in order to help it approach wholeness. But if that which is sought is not found, we are left with the impossible task of restoring that which is "missing" to itself or, worse, fashioning a version of that which is missing into a plausible attachment that is akin to a phantom limb.

It is somewhere between the archival hermeneutic of *finding* and the practice of *reading*—this potential for hope on the one side and for potential disappointment on the other—that I find myself. My desire to visit the Arturo Islas archive at Stanford was not prompted by the want to be an archival worker in the typical sense. I did not go to the archive in order to *find* something. Instead, I followed my juvenile desire. The boy in me wanted to read pornographic material, to be titillated, even turned on. I desired to have before me the body, and body of work, Aldama had produced in his book *Dancing with Ghosts: A Critical Biography of Arturo Islas*. I

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[37] See Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 2011); Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003); Robb Hernandez, "Straight Talk, Queer Haunt: The Paranormal Activity of the Chicano Art Movement," in *Out of the Closet Into the Archives*, ed. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany, New York: SUNY P, 2015), 175-204; José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1999) and *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, New York: NY UP, 2009); Horacio N. Roque-Ramirez, "A Living Archive of Desire: Teresita la Campesina and the Embodiment of Queer Latino Community Histories," in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005), 111-31; and Yuriy Sikratyy, "Interviewing Hustlers: Cross-Class Relations, Sexual Self-Documentation, and the Erotics of Queer Archives" in *Out of the Closet Into the Archives*, ed. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany, New York: SUNY P, 2015), 175-204.

[38] It goes without saying that archives themselves are often considered a type of witness animated through researchers' interpretive powers as they, and their work, take on the habit of expert. The book then becomes a site at which both place (the book and the archive) and the holder of knowledge (the author and researcher) interlace and hold power.

[39] See Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012) for discussion of the work of history in producing a "now" that is in a state of perpetual deferment that lends a queerness to time through that deferment's production of asynchronous temporalities; and Arondekar, *For the Record* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2009) on the vexed relationship between the recuperative hermeneutic and the absences in the archive that give rise to an anxiety that attempts to fill the "empty" archive and the proliferation of sexual and queer materials in narrative form that can give rise to a notion of fullness, with regard to queer content. When authoritative documents indicate that appearance of proliferation is misleading, the archive is "most empty when it is most full" (12).

wanted to read the radically queer pornographic text that Aldama claimed was severely pruned, censored, due to homophobic and racist publishing and agent advice that resulted in a sanitized published version of *The Rain God*. I followed the hope Aldama *found* there. But, it wasn't there. Or rather, it was, but not as Aldama claimed it would be. My teenage want for porn dissolved and I found myself disappointed yet still hopeful—an archival worker in the intermediary space between reading and finding. As I revised my juvenile desire into a newer intellectual subject position, I learned that being in this intermediary space required that I emphasize reading and that my interpretation of whatever I should find in the process had to be routed through the material at hand—here were my primary texts. I had to temper my interpretive desires and become ever more cognizant of how my desires for the texts were influenced by the fields, by history, and by the published texts that had come to shape my budding relationship with Islas's work and archive. I had to privilege what the text says before I could even begin to consider what the text means so that the archival materials could more clearly sing their songs. As a result, my relationship to and interpretation of the texts enrich me far more than I do them, leaving these texts open to the hoped-for future investigations I imagine as a result of this disappointment. I inadvertently *found* something interesting, even if that something was disappointing, contrary to what one anonymous reader of a paper I submitted to the National Association of Chicana Chicano Studies (NACCS) Cervantes student premio competition claimed, that there was nothing new to discover about Arturo Islas, that my interest in Islas was evidence of my amateur scholar status, and that I'd better train my eye to more contemporary gay Chicano/Latino authors if I wanted to be a "good" scholar. I'm glad I didn't take this advice as it relates to Islas studies. And yet I am glad for those comments, as they have led me to question contemporary archival work and the archival hermeneutics that light our desires and can prompt us to become embalmers.

With all of these corpses lying around on archival research tables, the notion of the phantasmatic and its invocation of the ghostly and other worldly guides my thought about our vexed relationships, or even our lack of relationships, with Chicana/o queer archives. The phantasmatic corresponds to the seduction of the archive's materiality and hermeneutic—the efforts to "dig" into the archive and the experience of the archive that creates a longing for "queer touches across time, where materials become imminent (and perhaps immanent) in a way that they ordinarily are not."[40] The phantasmatic also highlights the revenantial (and often reverential) rendering of those materials into subjects. For Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, the archival experience is "phantasmally" touched due to the nature of the archives they discuss—namely archives in queer collections. This is the notion that the archive can provide legibility to that which was formerly illegible or hidden, despite the fact that the appearance of organization has been crafted by "subjective determinations" at " different moments and without precise standards" by a bevy of folk that produce the imperfect patchwork we encounter at the archive.[41] In Stone and Cantrell's introduction to queer archives, the very enunciation of the archive as queer appears to excite "queer touches across time."[42] But the notion of transtemporal queer affinity is not restricted to archives in which the secret of queer sex is somehow assumed to be more out in the open due to the cataloguing and arrangement of an archive noted or advertised as a queer archive. Indeed, Carolyn Dinshaw's work in gay and lesbian history and medieval

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[40] Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, "Introduction: Something Queer at the Archive," *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (Albany: SUNY P, 2015), 10.

[41] Ibid., 5.

[42] Ibid., 5.

literature announces the queer play of touch between Geoffrey Chaucer and herself as the grasping of hands across time that love of a subject or author can create.[43] But the manifestation of a queer subject does not result in the identification with a seeming queer of the past. Moreover, it seems that Dinshaw opens up a space for a criticism of the homogeneity that too often accompanies the examination of the pre-modern. She looks for characters and texts that seem to be queer, not to rally contemporary queer folk around transtemporal identification with pre-modern queers and texts, although that does happen, but to agitate for an understanding of the political function of the queer. That is, the queer makes heterosexuality and the attendant powers that promote heterosexuality as normative visible. Transtemporal affinity can occur outside of identitarian modes. The bridge between the past and the present is due to the observation of queers' similar relationships across time to power and not through a renaming of an historical subject or object as queer in relation to contemporary queer lives and politics.

Like many medieval archival holdings, the Islas archive is not marked as legibly queer, but the citational weight of its queer potential *and* its queer failure are part of a discourse in queer Latinx/Chicanx studies that, as mentioned in my introduction, may come into the archive with the researcher.[44] This is the case with the Islas archive. Therefore, the Islas archive is structured from without the methodology of its cataloguing, the institution that holds the boxes of material, and even the researcher. For this contemporary archive, a disciplinary discourse is grafted onto the archival hermeneutic of "finding." Through these discourses of gay Latino/Chicano potential and failure, the practice of reading in archival work can shape the kind of subject we manifest. This grafting of disciplinary discourse onto archival work is what transforms the archive and its materials into a phantasmatic archive. It is the shaping of the material through the desire to participate in current disciplinary discourse and the demands of the field for reconciliations in relation to that discourse that serves as the spirit, the phantasm, that can animate the archive as subject. Further, the phantasmatic archive is upheld through imminent faith in the researcher and citational accretion, or ignoring citations. This is not to say that succumbing to the appeal of the phantasmatic can only result in the negative. Indeed it seems that each of the entries I mention above, those reactions to the discourse of failure that can catapult a researcher into the phantasmatic, is imbued with an immeasurable investment in the hope that a reprieve from wholesale queer Chicano/Latino men's failure might be achieved.

What follows is an exploration in two parts of the Arturo Islas archive. The first part

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[43] Carolyn Dinshaw, "Chaucer's Queer Touches/A Queer Touches Chaucer," *Exemplaria* 7 no. 1 (1995): 75-92, doi: 10.1179/exm.1995.7.1.75.

[44] See Tomás Almaguer, "Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (1991), 75-100 reprinted in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Aberlove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York, New York: Routledge, 1993) 255-73; Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel, "Our Queer Kin," in *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011) 105-12; Hector Carbajal, "Nacido en un Puente/Born on a Bridge," in *This Bridge we Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformations*, ed. Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2002), 50-52; Deena J. González, "Speaking Secrets," in *Living Chicana Theory*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1998), 46-77; Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*, (Boston, MA: South End P, 1983) and "Queer Aztlán: The Reformation of Chicano Tribe," in *The Last Generation* (Boston, MA: South End P, 1993) 145-74; and Antonio Viego, "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature in Queer Chicana/o Cultural Work," *Discourse*, 21, no. 3 (1999), 71-79 reprinted in *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011) 86-104 as contributing to the discourse of gay Chicano/Latino men's failure to produce work, contribute meaningful work, or participate as meaningful subjects in queer Chicanx/Latinx queer movements.

considers Frederick Luis Aldama's critical biography of Islas, *Dancing with Ghosts,* which sought to renew interest in Islas and gay Chicano/Latino studies through extended work with the Islas archive. In my discussion of Aldama's books, I focus on his work on the manuscript history of Islas's first published book, *The Rain God*, and I suggest that Aldama's reading of the archive is informed by disciplinary desires for an appropriate object of study that can conform to and repeat the story of queer failure and it's recovery from failure. Despite the biography's new attention to the archive, it transforms the archive into one phantasmatic and closes it to further exploration. In articulating a triumph out of queer failure for Islas's texts, the phantasmatic renders the archive emptied and, ironically, mirrors the notion of gay Chicano paucity that attends the discourse of gay Chicano failure. While *Dancing with Ghosts* conveys advances a triumphant narrative, it continues to highlight gay Chicanos' and gay Chicano texts' shortcomings as they pertain to queer Chicana/o studies and movement making.

Following Aldama's work on Islas, I provide a running commentary that works, at times, as a corrective or explanation of the material he holds forth, due, in part, to my own normative compulsion as an archival worker participating in exegetical commentary of contemporary and "outsider" literatures. I choose to embed many of these corrections in the footnotes so as not to lose sight of the published works' promise, and, because archival work often manifests in footnotes, this choice of formatting requires a type of reading practice that may evoke the kind of attention to sourcing I had to practice when Aldama's text ceased guiding me through the Islas archive. This construction of text helps me to show when Aldama succumbs to the allure of an archival hermeneutic of finding that makes the archive phantasmatic while not fully leaving behind the promise and hope his work holds for Islas studies. Further, my footnotes and in-text comments are meant to offer a guide to reading the Islas archive. Through them I hope to provide researchers with a more replete and corrected finding aid than the one found for this Stanford archive. I also provide these with the hope that future scholars may be inspired to offer more stories that will enrich our archive of Islas scholarship. But this work also has a political aim as I address the silences that Aldama's work on Islas magnifies that function alongside the disciplinary erasures that contain gay Chicano texts within a narrative of paucity and failure. Where Aldama finds silences, I read the archive to fill out those silences so that the archive may open outward and resist being silenced itself. We must take care that the recuperative hermeneutic of archival work not cause us to rescue Islas, and perhaps ourselves, from the narrative of queer failure that is coupled with his, and our, unrealized promise in participating fully in queer Chicanx/Latinx politics. We must not craft the fiction of a radically queer work and author before taking account of the archival material in hand. Nor must we embalm Islas with the animating subject position of radically queer author that can satisfy the imperatives of recovery and reconciliation that Aldama seeks, and that we, queer researchers, in our interest to promote Queer Chicanx/Latinx studies and Islas, crave.

In the second part, I wade through the phantasmatic archive—the embalming of Islas and the manuscript history of *The Rain God*—and temper it by emphasizing reading as a practice that can counter its engagement with disciplinary discourses that ask queers to be redeemed and for author's to emerge as revenantial artifacts that have been made into *appropriate* objects of study. Here, I walk the line between reading and finding in order to regulate my own desire in relation to the seduction of the archival hermeneutic that would ask me to produce a newly phantasmatic archive. I also emphasize the accident of my finding, which allows me to emphasizes the material without losing sight of its dual role in revisionist history—namely the interplay between the past, the material's context in history and its pre-history, and the present revision of that

history, a post-history informed by the history and discipline of queer Chicano/Latino studies. Essentially, I show that archival materials recommend to us a range of revelatory possibilities from within them. My experience of the archive and archival practice as amateur[45] helps me to emphasize the care of reading before interpretation and remain critical of the external desires attached to disciplinary cadres of Chicanx/Latinx queer studies. This position allows a narration of my findings that not only accurately dates the manuscripts but also elides an investment in recovery and rescue animated from without myself. This allows me to remain critical of the notion of queer and Chicanx notions of scholarly community.[46] In these sections, I show the productive aims, both negative and positive, of the phantasmatic archive and offer a mode of reading that can help us to continue the work of queer Latinx/Chicanx archival research in ways both critical and always longing for the ideality of queer community in the here and now, and in the future implicit in the now.

Embalming Islas: Frederick Luis Aldama and Islas Studies

Frederick Luis Aldama fits *the* definition of a prolifically published scholar.[47] His work holds a vast array of interests, including Chicanx literatures, world literatures, Latin@ comics, film and media studies, cognitive theory, pedagogy, and popular culture, to name some. But his early career offers three ground-breaking books on Arturo Islas to us of which the first two hold prominence in this chapter. These texts now invite us to rethink Islas Studies and our work with the Islas archive.

Aldama's foray into publishing on Islas corresponds with the release in 2004 of two volumes. The first, *Arturo Islas: The Uncollected Works*, saw Aldama as editor and arranger of a number of texts held in the Islas archive that had been, heretofore, unpublished. The second, *Dancing with Ghosts: A Critical Biography of Arturo Islas*, intends to fill out the editorial responsibilities relegated to the introduction in *The Uncollected Works*, allowing for a more thorough exploration of the archival conditions that shape the works newly published in it.

For one reviewer, Ricardo L. Ortiz, the close release of these texts in 2004 mark a "banner year in the posthumous literary life of the heretofore criminally under-appreciated queer Chicano novelist and poet Arturo Islas" that will "reinforce Islas' already secure position in the canon of Chicano and Latino literary production," and should, in turn, "spark additional scholarly work about this talented, visionary writer in the context of those fields of study." Ortiz adds that he hopes "these publications will also spark the long-overdue interest of readers and scholars of U.S. queer literature as well."[48] Further, Ortíz suggests that due to Islas's "closety" treatment of gay themes in the published works, which he considers potentially off-putting to the "evolved queer reader" and therefore a contributing factor to "only passing interest in Islas on the part of especially non-Latino contemporary queer readers," Aldama's text offers a vaccine to this sickness of neglect.[49] It is Aldama's unearthing of sexually explicit material and his

[45] From the Latin, "amator," nominative, m., lover.

[46] See Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis, MN: U of MN Press, 2002).

[47] From 2003 to the present (2016) Aldama has eleven single author attributions, nine single editor attributions, five co-author attributions, and one co-editor attribution, and four forthcoming publications.

[48] Ricardo L. Ortíz, "Desert Angel," review of *Arturo Islas: The Uncollected Works*, by Frederick Luis Aldama, ed., *Lambda Book Report* 12, no. 7 (February 2004): 33-34.

[49] Ibid., 33.

suggestion of the published novel's censorship in *The Uncollected Works*' that announces Islas as the radically queer author we never got to know and that lends new avenues for reconsidering our pasts as Chicanxs/Latinxs and queer or same-sex desiring folk.[50] The hope imbedded in Ortiz's review is that Aldama's work will allow for a "significant and positive reassessment of Islas' place in American queer writing" and serve to "complete the picture of the evolution of an extraordinary queer Chicano subjectivity and sensibility" at which Islas's published writings could only hint.[51] Setting the queer contributions aside, or in relation to them, Ortíz also avers that this "volume will certainly also contribute to an equally significant and positive reassessment of Islas' place in the canon of Chicano writing" and that the earlier versions which contain more explicit explorations of the intersections between Chicano/Latino subjectivity and gay/queer subjectivity can, in effect, expand our review and participation within the field of Chicanx queer studies.[52] But why is a reassessment of the author and his work required? Is it that the published material discounts charges of queer failure and "closety" representation of queer characters in Islas's work and that, by extension, those charges lend themselves to a more general overturning of the charge of queer Chicano men's failures? Is *rescuing* Islas really about rescuing ourselves? For Ortíz, Aldama's texts offer up a new Islas that shows that there is still work to do to *reconcile* Islas's work with the discourses of failure that inform readings of his and all queer Chicano/Latino men's cultural work. Through this recovery as reconciliatory act, a future unity may be imagined through the reshaping of received history from both Chicanx and queer studies.

The review by Ortíz, undertaken with the auspice of recovery and reconciliation to Chicanx and queer readerships accrues around Aldama's own claims in his introduction to *The Uncollected Works* which announce his dedication to the archival hermeneutic of finding, as if the archive were an archaeological site. Aldama declares that he "sifts" through the archive and makes "discoveries" of a "trove" of materials, with the help of Stanford Special Collections of course, in his "excavating" the materials from fifty-two boxes.[53] Aldama works to recover Islas and makes Islas a co-partner to this recovery when he declares that the work ought to function as a "revision" of Islas's participation in border crossing through a central motif in his work—namely, that of "recovery."[54] Through the recuperative hermeneutic, Aldama states that "the uncovering of [Islas's] works make visible other bodies and voices that make up his literary imagination in toto and also recontour our sense of a formation of contemporary Chicano/a letters and add strength and health to the struggle against dis-ease felt by Chicanas/os (queer and straight) in a homophobic and racist world."[55] Through his recovery project, Aldama holds forth Islas as a subject much like the subjects he imagines that queer Chicanos share collectively in his book's present—a collectivity that is in a state of "dis-ease." Aldama, through a radical

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[50] Ibid., 34.

[51] Ibid., 34.

[52] Ibid., 34.

[53] Frederick Luis Aldama, introduction to *Arturo Islas: The Uncollected Works* by Arturo Islas, xiii-xli (Houston, TX: Arte Público, 2003), xi. While the archive itself is comprised of 18.5 linear feet housed in 52 boxes, the material from which *The Uncollected Works* is culled appear to be limited to five boxes including box 55, 15, 12, 9, and 17.

[54] Ibid., xiv. I would argue that the central motif, if there is one in Islas's works, is attached to the collation of memory in the interest of forming archives through material objects. In each of his works, Islas's characters assemble memory through the archiving of physical objects like letters and the rendering of dreams in written form (*The Rain God)*, statues and postcards (*Migrant Souls*), and the tape recorder that records the pachuco's voice (*La Mollie)*.

[55] Ibid., xiv-xv.

disinterment, retrospectively inters Islas and the imagined queer collective subjectivity Islas comes to represent within the history of queer and Chicanx letters, embalming him as an overlooked *antepasado* in queer Chicanx theory and literature. He goes so far as to retrospectively consider him a literary and theoretical forebear to Gloria Anzaldúa's border theories as they relate to the geopolitical spaces and border identities that Chicanxs/Latinxs carry on their backs.

Indeed Aldama, in his invocation of Gloria Anzaldúa and Islas's poetic craft, shows Islas's poetics to be in-line with efforts to queer Chicano nationalist politics in similar ways to Chicana feminist efforts that *"stretched* the limits of a traditionally macho Chicano poetics seen in, for example, Rodolfo Gonzáles's *Yo Soy Joaquin/I am Joaquin.*"[56] For Aldama, the revelations that emerge from his retrospective insertion of a radically queer Islas into the canon of queer Chicanx/Latinx history point to some kind of misconception regarding his work that Aldama leaves unnamed yet in need of correction. Is it the ghost of queer failure in the discourse of Chicanx/Latinx queer studies that this retrospective insertion into Chicanx queer history is meant to correct? I would say so. To some extent, I view this as an antagonistic stance because it declares Islas's work as a forebear to these feminist efforts even though these works were unpublished. It also seems that the extent to which Chicana lesbian feminists turned their efforts to found publishing forums for feminist and lesbian works occurs alongside Islas's more theoretical writings and his efforts to publish those writings that explore gay Chicano sexuality, sex, identity, and subjectivity. This is a crucial element for further study so as to consider Islas's unpublished works as relational with the history of the Chicana lesbian feminist works that make Aldama's publication of Islas's more suggestive materials possible. But, with respect to the poetry newly published in *The Uncollected Works,* there is a problem about the choice to publish them that remains unaddressed.

Aldama's attention to and publication of Islas's poetry seems to lack a consideration of the reasons why much of the poetry was never published. To a large extent, the poems are intensely personal and demonstrate that the genre of poetry for Islas was an experiment in forms, heavily leaning toward a purgative reaction to psychological and physical trauma. It seems odd, then, that Aldama chooses to consider them as speaking for a collective queer and Chicanx/Latinx subject when even Islas claimed that he might be "embarrassed reading them."[57] In a broad stroke, Aldama attempts to declare that Islas's unpublished poetry contributes to an undermining of a Chicano nationalist *movimiento* at odds with the writer, Islas, who composes most of his lyric with a singular attachment as a subject writing his pain with no audience but himself. To remark briefly on my own experience of reading the poetry: I feel, personally, that its publication is a violation of the personal. Reading it in the Green Reading Room at Stanford feels a violation enough. To consider its publication brings a sadness that questions the ethics, or lack of them, in choosing to publish this material, especially in relation to the uses the poems may be put. If there is such a thing as post-mortem pain, this might be it. Indeed, in viewing myself as queer kin to this author and his work, I felt it in the bone.

In the closing remarks to his introduction, Aldama declares another purpose of the text, that it is a "moveable frame" that "aims to enliven and enrich our understanding of Islas vis-à-vis

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[56] Ibid. xxix. Italics added for emphasis. For clarity, the subject of the verb "stretched" is Islas's writings. Notice the perfected aspect of the past tense verb "stretch," which suggests that the unpublished material could have such an impact in its own temporality, though it had no chance to do so because it was unpublished.

[57] Arturo Islas, interviewed by Hector A. Torres, *Conversations with Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Writers* (Albuquerque, NM: U of NM Press, 2007) 73.

the works collected [in *The Uncollected Works]*" and those that are already published through its attempts to "recover a complex gay Chicano author who spent a lifetime engaged in physical and textual acts of recovering and discovering in order to clear a space for the articulation of a complex Chicano/a identity and literature and thereby make healthy a contemporary American literary and social corpus."[58] The text then is meant to further contemporary queer Chicanxs'/Latinxs' gazing backward for a more replete instantiation of the subjectivity he imagines we all share. Through this assumption, contemporary gay Chicano/Latino writings seem more apt to participate in current races toward a queer politics that, when adhered to Chicanx/Latinx political imperatives, can, as discussed in the introduction, continue the marginalization of gay Chicanos/Latinos within the discourses that gesture toward gay men's failure as political subjects and in producing legible material in the interest of communitarian queer of color politics. But one would think that lingering upon gay Chicano/Latino archives and using archival material as the primary base for the biography would also produce an account of the too early acceptance of "queer" as a totem for queer of color action and politics instead of the phantasmatic hope it makes emerge. Indeed resisting the contemporary pull of the queer could help leave the archive open to further research as would an emphasis on the fact that the race toward the queer is not something the field is quite ready for as we may not know and have not yet reconciled our histories as they relate to the discipline that highlights gay Chicano absence and need for rescue. Clearly, gay Latinos/Chicanos, among many others who might choose queer identification, have been systematically denied entry to the production of the queer politics that signal the utopic turn in the now through the move to the queer. Indeed, theorizing queer utopia and ideal queer contemporary communitarian relations that can move toward futurity requires an accounting of histories and presents to arrive at a utopic experience that may be further reached on the horizon. As archival work requires one to take on the role of historian, theorist, *and* archivist simultaneously, *reading* becomes paramount as the interpretive mode, the *finding* mode, allows us to miss too much and reject our responsibility to the archive and the archive in, and part of, history. Aldama does not consider himself an archivist, though, and, therefore, does not assume this responsibility, a role I regard as the paramount responsibility he assumes in his work *Dancing with Ghosts: A Critical Biography of Arturo Islas.*

In his introduction to *Dancing with Ghosts,* Aldama declares he "came to the archive mostly as a theorist and not an archivist" and that, post-visit he *now* "appreciate[s] the importance of archival collections and all the work that [archivists] do to smooth the way for research projects."[59] Rather than emphasizing recovery as the imperative for him and for Islas, as he does in *The Uncollected Works*, the introduction to *Dancing with Ghosts* begins by highlighting the imperative of "preservation" as it relates not only to his own archival research but also to the central motif of Islas's works.[60] This could be an archival hermeneutic I could get behind, except for the fact that Aldama proves, post-introduction, that he is still not inhabiting the role of archivist, but that of theorist and interpreter because the archival researcher does not,

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[58] Aldama, introduction to *Arturo Islas: The Uncollected Works*, xxxvii. Islas, then, not only is enlivened by us, but also enlivens us. The subject of Islas, and our own, is formed from the objects, the writing.

[59] Frederick Luis Aldama, *Dancing with Ghosts: A Critical Biography of Arturo Islas*, (Berkeley, CA: U of C P, 2005), viii. While I am pleased with Aldama's appreciation for archivists such as Roberto Trujillo, the special collections librarian who acquired Islas's work, and others who helped with printing, scanning, and whatnot, I am astounded that Aldama does not consider his projects on Islas as ones that do not, by necessity, demand the fulfillment of his texts' promise as works of an archivist.

[60] Ibid., xii.

and would not be able to, track his claims through replete footnoting and citation of archival material as one should expect from a project so reliant on and densely populated by the archive.[61] It is also needful to note that Aldama *is* an archivist. Indeed, Aldama helped catalogue these papers and gave name and date to the folder "Early version of *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* 1975 (?)," and this is the folder that gives life to his argument that *this* text is *the* earliest version of the text that contains sexually explicit material for which it was barred from publication.[62] I will show, later, that this folder is a xeroxed copy of a manuscript from 1980 that was only shopped to two publishing houses in 1982.

The preservationist aim that Aldama initially claims for his text and for Islas is one of the strengths of the book as it helps Aldama to produce a dynamic biography that works outside "biographical teleologies" and grants memories the asynchronous power we know them to hold. The details found in Aldama's description of Islas's early life resonate across time and in a variety of sources. One prime example of this dynamism as it relates to biography and time, and of which Islas readers and scholars may be well aware, is the documentary nature of some of Islas's novels that, on the surface, can appear as autobiographical fiction. Indeed, the shiftiness of time in Islas's novel, *The Rain God*, is another example of the promise of preservation as an aim that is queer and resists what José Esteban Muńoz identifies as "straight time."[63] When Aldama notes that many of the instances that appear in *The Rain God* are reworked from journal entries and physical copies of letters Islas held onto, the importance of archivization to the gay/queer Islas is realized as a focus in his novels.

The preservationist aim, though, is redefined rather quickly as Aldama reflects on the primacy of the archive as a site of interpretation instead of preserving writing for *reading*. As Aldama draws his introduction to *Dancing with Ghosts* to a close, he holds the Stanford archive up as a type of "property" belonging to "the larger Chicano and American public record."[64] Aldama then takes his role as a biographer out of the realm of preservation and into the realm of reconciliatory recovery through the seduction of the archive and the "subjective and objective performance" of biography.[65] The reader of Aldama's biography of Islas then discovers that the aim of the biography is not preservation but instead an act of reconciliation through interpretive recovery that "makes visible the participation of those at the margins—gay and Chicano/a—in the continued formation of American History and Culture."[66] Reconciliatory recovery massages Islas, without the problematic of failure, into the history of Queer Chicanx/Latinx studies. But, not only is Islas implicated in this recovery of subjects from the past, but so is the biographer, Aldama, as he follows a preconceived version of Islas's life as the story of a "sexually and racially outlawed subject's struggles to succeed on an everyday level and far beyond."[67] It is this story Aldama produces that he then follows as his biography "retraces the trajectory" of Islas's

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[61] This is to say that the material in the archive does not allow these claims to be trackable as the material, when read, is incapable of supporting the interpretations of the researcher.

[62] Conversation with Frederick Luis Aldama, Berkeley June 2018.

[63] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 162.

[64] Aldama, *Dancing with Ghosts*, xix. While Stanford makes its archival reading room open to the public, it is beyond idealistic to consider this material as being owned by anyone other than Stanford Special Collections. Not only that, but Aldama seems to have mistaken open access to material with the ability to access material.

[65] Ibid., xix. In his final sentences, Aldama highlights Islas's investment in the act of recovery just as he does in his introduction to *The Uncollected Works*.

[66] Ibid., xix.

[67] Ibid., xix.

publishing and produces the outlaw subject, the radically queer author that Aldama imagines as holding promise for a reinvention of the author that can *save* gay Chicanos and enliven Islas studies.[68]

The production of a fictional subject that Islas can occupy, alongside some of the efforts mentioned above that transform unpublished materials into ones that make Islas a forebear of queer Chicanx writings such as Gloria Anzaldúa, do the reconciliatory work that counters charges against Islas, and gay Chicano cultural workers more generally, for being apolitical, closeted, and unwilling to fight the fight that others have taken on. Aldama produces an astoundingly attractive author in Islas that merits, even demands, revisitation in Chicanx/Latinx and queer letters and a revision of Islas's place within them. But the author in Islas that Aldama pursues and enlivens, in relation to his report on the manuscript history of *The Rain God,* happens through a series of archival interpretations that disavow the necessity of *reading* the source material repletely. His interpretations, which have discrepancies between one another, demonstrate that the radically queer author Aldama finds in Islas is due to the fashioning of a type of phantasmatic archive that can satisfy the desires of the researcher seduced by the archive and the expectations of the discipline of Chicanx/Latinx queer studies. The book reproduces the story of the maligned queer person of color and their recovery and normalizes the discourse of Chicano/Latino gay failure. But because of Aldama's engagement with the manuscript history, his story's reliance on the narrative and discourse of gay failure becomes a triumph through the unpublished works in which he has conjured Islas as a radically queer *antepasado*. Perhaps this aim is most clear when readers notice that the first subheading they encounter announces Aldama's necromantic investment in the biography. Aldama, in fact, is "Bringing the Dead Back to Life."[69]

Aldama's biography of Islas is not only beautifully written but also attentive to showing a heretofore-unknown hint, through archival holdings, at Islas's more explicitly queer writings. However, Aldama's interpretations of the archive's manuscript history of *The Rain God* undermine the strengths of his work. His privileging interpretation and the hermeneutic of *finding*—the pull of its queerness that can undermine its own continued place in the realm of secret through its appearance as openness, and the desire of the queer archivist who may wish to find communion and personal and communal reconciliation with the past—places the archive in the realm of the phantasmatic. As he contends with disciplinary pressures that inspire the desire gay Chicanos/Latinos to recover from failure he also upholds the disciplinary desire for the "queer" as holding utopic communitarian possibilities. In his book, Aldama finds an author with compositions that mark him as before-his-time, and therefore closer to our time, and conjures a subject he notes as radically queer and, therefore, far ahead of the allure of the "queer's" communitarian and utopic potentialities. These forces and subjects combined allow the archive to further accrue the aspect of the phantasmatic.

The Uncollected Works and *Dancing with Ghosts*'s differing forms of engagement with the materials that form the manuscript history of *The Rain God* make for a conflicting dateline. Each embalms Islas in varying ways, but when taken together they highlight the phantasmatic appeal of the archive. Because the books' were released so close to one another, it is difficult for me to trace the history of their production. However, I hope to show that it seems most plausible to consider them in the following order: the introduction to *Dancing with Ghosts,* the sections in

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[68] Ibid., xix.

[69] Ibid., xi.

Dancing with Ghosts that pertain to the manuscript history of *The Rain God,* and then, the introduction and cataloguing of material in *The Uncollected Works*. In following the texts in this way, I show the transformation of the Arturo Islas archive from object of study to subject manifested, the move from the material archive to the phantasmatic archive. This order most accurately traces the transformation of Aldama's treatment of the manuscript history, which initially holds the archive as primary to his historically based assertions before the interpretative thrust of his work falls into the phantasmatic hope that feeds a generality of gay Chicano writer's desire to be loosened from the charge of their presupposed failures.

In the Trenches of the Archive: Pinning down Arturo Islas's *The Rain God*

In the introduction to *Dancing with Ghosts* the archive is held up as a repository of material gifted to Chicanx and American studies. It is an archive that, as mentioned earlier, helps Aldama in his role as preservationist through his archival research. His first mention of the manuscript history of *The Rain God* notes a 1976 draft of *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*[70] that "splinters into" a manuscript entitled *American Dreams and Fantasies*,[71] for which he provides no dating, which eventually becomes the 1984 published work *The Rain God: A Desert Tale*.[72] The movement of the texts from one into the other that culminates in the publication of *The Rain God* is a near accurate description of the manuscript history. But Aldama's description of *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* as containing an "overtly gay" narrator-protagonist is a misreading, mis-citing, or wishful thinking. It speaks to his move from preservation to reconciliatory recovery through the transformation of the material archive to the phantasmatic archive—an archive that is no longer the material as gifted but, rather, an archive of material gifted with a hope that is alien to it—as aim or consequence of Aldama's literary embalming of Islas and his papers.[73] Aldama's description of the papers imbues Islas and the archive with a subjectivity that fits the radically queer sexual and racial outlaw that can resist, posthumously in its changed and hoped-for form, charges of queer Chicano/Latino failure. The reader can see a conflicted relationship with discourses of queer Chicano failure in his biography, when, in the introduction to *Dancing with Ghosts,* he ascribes the first appearance of this form of sexual and racial outlaw to John Rechy's narrator-protagonist in *City of Night.* In the introduction to *The Uncollected Works*, however, Aldama downplays Rechy's contribution by underlining the failure of Rechy's narrator-protagonist's to identify as Chicano/Latino, reversing his earlier position to now claim that Islas was the first Chicano author to create an instantiation of a character that stands explicitly at the border of race and queer sexuality. This move is similar to Aldama's

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[70] Arturo Islas, *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript, an early version 1975 (?), box 5, folder 5; *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript, box 5, folder 6; *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript (1980), box 5, folder 7; *Day of the Dead* (Fall 1975), box 13, Folder 1; *Day of the Dead* (1980) box 13, folder 2, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[71] Arturo Islas, *American Dreams and Fantasies*, box 12, folder 1; *American Dreams and Fantasies*, box 12, folder 2, *American Dreams and Fantasies* sections I-X, box 12, folder 3; *American Dreams and Fantasies* I-V, box 12, folders 4-8, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. I note briefly that it is only in box 12, folders 4-8 that *American Dreams and Fantasies* is presented in non-fragmentary form. This is the form, it seems, Islas intended it to take. I will also note that the ordering is out of sequence. For the complete text from beginning to end the folders to pull would be as follows: 7, 8, 6, 5, 4.

[72] Aldama, *Dancing with Ghosts*, xiii.

[73] Ibid., xiii.

inserting Islas into the history of the criticism of machismo and the advancement of border thinking, often attributed to third world women's movement authors and texts.[74]

Through Aldama's pursuit of the sexual and racial outlaw in Islas, one that seems guided by the allure of the archive and the phantasmatic appeals for recovery and reconciliation that encroach upon it, his story of the manuscript history begins to settle more thoroughly on declaring a manuscript history that allows his radically queer subject to emerge—a different history from the one asserted in *Dancing with Ghosts*. As Aldama begins his discussion of the manuscript history of *The Rain God* in *The Uncollected Works* he highlights a chapter, "Tía Chucha," which appears in *The Rain God* in the section "Ants," as a short story that "[Islas] would later develop into *The Rain God*."[75] This, it appears, is one example of the beginning of what I called mis-reading, mis-citation, or wishful thinking earlier. It is the beginning of Aldama reshaping the manuscript history of *The Rain God* into one that allows his radical subject to emerge. Through it, Aldama reorders his first account of the manuscript history. Here, a work that is part of *American Dreams and Fantasies,* initially the second in the transformation of the text according to *Dancing with Ghosts*, becomes the first version of *The Rain God*. It is regarded as so in *The Uncollected Works* and the later work *Critical Mappings of Arturo Islas.*[76] As he continues his pursuit of the outlaw author and text, he begins to ascribe and cite work that is in *American Dreams and Fantasies* as work that is in *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*. This move, which I suggest is due to his succumbing to the promise of the queer archive and the phantasmatic appeal of reconciliation that transforms it from repository to subject, reverberates throughout his published texts on Islas and begin to surface as *the* history of Islas in other scholars' works, especially those published in *Critical Mappings*. Through several readings of rejection letters that are informed by this series of missteps or misreadings that cause Aldama to find the specter of queer victimization in them, it becomes clear that he has, mistakenly, attributed queer content to the manuscripts Islas submitted for publisher review. Thus, the radically queer Islas is able to emerge. In the biography, *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* becomes the source text that holds forth explicit gay sex. It functions, for Aldama, as the archival witness to Islas's radical subjectivity not only as author, but also as person, the outlaw subject Aldama first sought to discover, through its repeated citation beyond the report of the manuscript history.[77] By the time that *The Uncollected Works* and *Critical Mappings* is published, a citational weight to Aldama's story accrues. And yet the story is changed. No longer is *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* the radically queer novel that never saw light, but rather it is *American Dreams and Fantasies* that emerges as the "original" document from which *The Rain God* is severely pruned. Even the dating changes. No longer is *Día de los Muertos*/*Day of the Dead*, a text Aldama originally dated at 1976, the precursor to *American Dreams and Fantasies*, but instead stories from *American Dreams and Fantasies*, almost all of

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[74] Ibid., xiii. and Aldama, *The Uncollected Works*, xi. In *The Uncollected Works*, Aldama asserts that Rechy, in *City of Night* erases the "'Chicano' cultural element in his novel" and then centralizes Islas's contribution of a queer and Chicano protagonist that "radically complicated the literary terrain" of Chicanx letters (xi).

[75] Aldama, *Dancing with Ghosts*, 37; the story appears in Arturo Islas, *American Dreams and Fantasies*, box 12, folder 2; and, as "Tía Cuca" in *American Dreams and Fantasies*, box 12, folder 5.

[76] See Frederick Luis Aldama, introduction to *Critical Mappings of Arturo Islas's Fictions* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press, 2008) ix-xxi.

[77] Aldama, *Dancing with Ghosts*, 32, 38, 39, 40,42, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 97, 98, and 112. Except for the citation on page 112, Aldama does not cite the archive but instead cites a manuscript "Día." All of these quotes are, in fact from *American Dreams and Fantasies*. See note 71 as a guide to the MS *American Dreams and Fantasies.*

which Aldama dates in *Dancing with Ghosts* as short stories that are written in the 1980s, are given new dates of completion that show their provenance over *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead.* The dates change dramatically from the 1980s, in *Dancing with Ghosts*, to dating that gives them invention between 1970 and Summer/Fall 1975, in *The Uncollected Works*.[78] There is something queer about the archive (and this archive) indeed.

Unpinning the Butterfly: *Reading* the Arturo Islas Archive, Dancing with Myself

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I went to the archive with a mission to read rather than to find material in the Islas archive. In my early graduate work at the University of Texas at San Antonio (and, now, at the University of California at Berkeley), I was aroused by the prospect of visiting the Islas archive and being further aroused by the unvarnished depictions of gay Chicano life. I wanted to read the pornographic work of one of my favorite authors Arturo Islas—works that Frederick Luis Aldama's biography of Islas promised. Following Aldama's steps, I paged the boxes that would allow me the titillation I was craving. That day, in the fall of 2012, I poured over the boxes containing all of the manuscripts of *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*, those containing *American Dreams and Fantasies*, the rejection letters for the manuscript, and the final printings of *The Rain God*.[79] I was quick to disappointment upon opening the first box that held the *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscripts. They contained nothing of pornography, nothing to titillate, nothing I had desired, nothing that Aldama had invited me to hope for. This felt like a great loss. I had not only lost what I now know was my naïve hope in communing with an Islas that Aldama had painted as radically queer, fulfilling many of my early interests in queer Chicanx subjectivity and his belatedly discovered participation in queer Chicanx politics and studies, but also my faith in contemporary scholarship in queer Chicano studies and archival work more generally. I was disappointed because I had cited Aldama and some contemporary scholarship that had held his biography up as a standard through their citational weight. I was disappointed because I wondered if that respondent to my submission to the NACCS student premio was relying on Aldama's story of Islas—a story that I now realized could not be fulfilled through reading the archive—to offer his suggestion that I leave off studies of Islas.

Instead of enjoying the changing of the light in the Green reading room, hearing the bing of its clock while fulfilling my desire to read erotic material, that experience was undermined by a new pressure to read in order to understand what had gone wrong. In the years since my first introduction to the Islas archive, I have found strength in disappointment through continued study of the seductive force of the archive and the phantasmatic appeals that *all* disciplines may form, as a web, around their subjects, especially in queer archives and for queer researchers. What follows, then, is a compilation of my work in the Islas archive that offers a different story from the one Aldama provides across his three publications on Islas. But before I continue, I must give credit to my training in archival work as a medievalist for without it I might have missed the kind of codicological, typological, and paleographic evidences that have helped me to date the manuscript and, no doubt, helped me temper that first energy given to anger to a

[78] Ibid., xiii; 38; Aldama, *The Uncollected Works*, see introduction and dating 41-96.

[79] Arturo Islas, boxes 5, 6, 7, 9 and 12, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

renewed commitment to read more.[80] And read more I have. Indeed, it is the practice of reading that I underline as a mode of tempering the allure of the queer archive as it intersects with the queer researcher and the phantasmatic appeals of reconciliation with disciplinary discourse. In the end, through the practice of reading, I argue that Islas remains able to be regarded as radically queer, even a literary *antepasado*. He does not need to be transformed into a different subject; he does not need to be turned into a subject at all, and neither does the archive. The works themselves attest to a continued redefinition of the texts that come before and in relation to the text's present and they emphasize not recovery, but preservation. I am dealing with paper, after all, and paper holds far more than just its texts. As Maryanne Dever declares, citing Honor Sachs:

> The overwhelming tendency . . . is for researchers to experience paper as something that ultimately disappears before our eyes or slips from our conscious apprehension. This is perhaps not entirely surprising given that the dominant practices for literary and historical research conducted within archival collections still posit archives as places where we 'dig' to 'revive elusive evidence,' and such evidence is imagined to be exclusively textual in nature."[81]

This reliance upon text as story, instead of all the markings that are textual but may not be regarding as "text," the paper, may be what introduces the problem of dating that Aldama's works show. In keeping with the metaphor of embalming, I view my following intervention in Islas studies as enacting a type of restorative art that seeks to inter the subject Aldama manifests in his book series in order to provide fresh objects of study that continue to hold archival possibilities for researchers. Indeed, I realized that the phantasmatic archive he had produced before my entrance to it required a great measure of resisting its seductive pull. While I first began pursuing the same author Aldama had imagined, the emphasis of my work in the archive shifted. Rather than trying to find the radical subject through a hermeneutic of finding and recovery, I began to appreciate the facts of dates, the editorial process Islas used, those marks and shifts of the paper. I found an appreciation for the material that tempered my desire for the author and increased my interest in the fragment. Still my work in the archive became a type of mourning for the loss of the subject Aldama had named. But through reading the material Islas left behind, I now have a better picture of the author in Islas—and it is a picture I continue to admire. The gift of his texts does allow for a reviewing of his contributions and attempted contributions to the field of Chicanx/Latinx and queer literary studies.

Dating the Manuscript History: New, Old Dates for *The Rain God*

The body pre-formed before me in the boxes on the table come from the Arturo Islas archive held at Stanford Special Collections. The Islas archive measures 18.5 linear feet held in 52 boxes and consists mostly of correspondences, manuscripts, journals, and teaching and

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[80] This is to show that "traditional" training in archival work has, and needs, a place in archival work on contemporary and outsider literatures.

[81] Maryanne Dever, "Papered Over, or Some Observations on Materiality and Archival Method," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* edited by Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, (Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2015) 65-95.

subject materials Arturo Islas kept on file in his years as student and professor at Stanford. [82] The material that holds most sway in my discussion comes from Series 3, which comprise the bulk of Islas's written works, published and unpublished, and the review of such works by various public media outlets, his various agents, publisher responses, and letters to close friends regarding the intent to send out material for review. This description of the corpus of material complete, I turn now to the constituent parts.

Following Aldama, in order to find the pornographic material he uses to construct the image of Islas as a radically queer Chicano author, I pulled the boxes that hold the manuscripts *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead.*[83] Instead of finding unvarnished portrayals of gay S/M sex and the first-person narrator, who theorizes his subject position as gay Chicano border dweller existing between the familial home and geopolitical space of the Texas borderlands and the pre-AIDS San Francisco white gay bar, bathhouse, and sex-club world, I found, instead, work that was almost exactly that which appears in the published novel, *The Rain God*. The window screens in the Green Reading Room buzzed as they lowered, protecting us from the afternoon glare, and the ding of the clock, which, for three hours, had been the beat to which I danced around the table with Islas's materials, felt a more somber tone in this newly shaded light. I had little time and found myself, now, without the dancing partner I'd been promised. Found myself unsure of the steps of the dance.

I worked frantically, searching for that subject I had expected to emerge. And as I searched, I felt he was there, but not in the way I had been asked to imagine him. I thought, at first, that I'd found him in box 12, in those folders that hold the manuscript *American Dreams and Fantasies,* right before the library closed and I made my way home to Oakland.[84] But I also realized that I was trying to dance with two partners: Arturo Islas and Frederick Luis Aldama. On this day, I realized I might only have to dance with one, Arturo Islas. And I held on to that promise that this radically queer subject in Islas was there but that something had happened between Aldama and Islas at the archive. I tried to turn my mind off to the whispers of betrayal I felt. Indeed, my mother and my friend Sean, both long familiar with my interest in Islas and my engagement with Aldama's work, have described, in retrospect, our conversations on my ride home as filled with a sense of disappointment and a loss akin to a break-up or the death of friend.

I have gone back to the Islas archive many times since that first day, drove over stinking waters, dared five-o-clock traffic, and have been astounded each time at what the material of the archive allows to emerge. Over time, as well, I realized that I was dancing with no one but myself, that it was not the dinging clock, nor Aldama, nor the phantasmatic subject he paints of Islas that guided my steps. It was, instead, the materiality of the archive itself. And I opened myself up to what Islas's writings wanted to show me.

But, before this realization, I had a need to trim the effects and affects of the phantasmatic archive from my engagement with it. So I looked at the rejection letters, evidence

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[82] See http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf2f59n5w4/dsc/#c01-1.8.6.8 for access to the Arturo Islas finding aid.

[83] Arturo Islas, Novel, n.d., with chapters: I. Felix, II. Compadres Y Comadres, III. Mama Chona, box 5, folder 4; *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript, an early version 1975 (?), box 5, folder 5; *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript, box 5, folder 6; *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript (1980), box 5, folder 7; *Day of the Dead* (Fall 1975), box 13, Folder 1; *Day of the Dead* (1980) box 13, Folder 2, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. See note 50 for page numbers that correspond to Aldama's noting the presence of pornographic material in *Día*, in his *Dancing with Ghosts*.

[84] See note 71 for a guide to the manuscripts that comprise *American Dreams and Fantasies*.

Aldama uses to support his *finding* of the radical Islas. While there are many rejection letters, only a few help to sever my exploration's tie to Aldama's and the subject he finds in Islas. The first is a rejection letter from Roger W. Straus, Jr. sent in relation to the receipt of some fifty pages of *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* in October of 1974[85] and Islas's following up with fifty-two pages more of the work and a sketch of his plan for the trilogy of the Ángel family.[86] Roger Straus, Jr.'s reply states "I don't think it is right for us on the basis of this 'taste.'"[87] Aldama declares that the invocation of "taste" in the letter underscores the homophobia and racism of North Eastern editors.[88] But Strauss doesn't stop there. In fact, he isn't being homophobic or racist in his rejection letter at all. We learn that Islas's manuscript contains nothing of explicit sex—that it is rejected because it is unfinished. Strauss continues on and says, in relation to the some fifty-two pages he has received, that "it is terribly hard to make an intelligent judgment on this much material," and he suggests that Islas see if another publisher will sponsor an incomplete work. He also invites Islas to submit it again when it is complete, noting that "we shall be glad to read you again further along the way when there is more to judge," more than a *taste*.[89] Islas is clear in what "taste" means here. In a later letter to Straus, Jr. accompanying Islas's April 1975 submission of a completed manuscript of *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*, Islas writes "I wanted to finish a final draft of the first book so that you and others might have more than a 'taste.'" He goes on to describe this newly finished work with pride through metaphors of gluttonous fulfillment as he exclaims, "Here's a full meal."[90] In the end, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux reject Islas's work for publication. There is no letter in the archive that sheds more light on this rejection. But while the notion of "taste" could still be speculatively, and only speculatively, attributed to a racist mode of publisher review, "taste" can no longer be assigned to homophobic publisher censorship as Aldama suggests because there was no queer content in the material Islas submitted. Islas, then, does not fit the story of the maligned queer victimized by homophobic publishing houses as Aldama, the discipline of Queer Chicana/o studies, the phantasmatic archive, and the fictive subject culled from that archive would have. Rather this letter demonstrates Islas's youth and unfamiliarity with publishing literary fiction, a world different from the academic publishing world with which Islas may have been more familiar. He did not yet understand that publishers of fiction, unlike some academic publishers, will not sponsor unfinished works by new authors—that new authors must usually supply completed manuscripts for publishers to take a chance on them. We see here the naiveté of an academic attempting to work in the world of popular fiction. From these letters we also know that *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*, which, with very few exceptions, is identical to the 1984 published version of *The Rain God* was completed by, at least, April of 1975.

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[85] Arturo Islas, "Letter to Roger Straus, Jr., Oct 19, 1974," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[86] Arturo Islas, "Letter to Roger Straus, Jr., January 3, 1975," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[87] Arturo Islas, "Letter to Arturo Islas from R. Straus, Jr., January 29, 1975," Arturo Islas Papers, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[88] Aldama, *Dancing with Ghosts*, 39.

[89] Arturo Islas, **"**Letter to Arturo Islas from R. Straus, Jr., January 29, 1975," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[90] Arturo Islas, **"**Letter to R. Straus, Jr., April 14, 1975," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

The next thing to contend with was Aldama's declarations in *The Uncollected Works* and *Critical Mappings* that the manuscript *American Dreams and Fantasies* is the precursor to the material we find in *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*, both of which uphold, albeit through a different manuscript history, the phantasmatic archive and the radically queer subject in Islas. So, again, I pulled the material that makes up the manuscript history of *American Dreams and Fantasies* and, just to be sure, the material that shows the revisions to *Día de los muertos/ Day of the Dead* coupled with rejection letters of the late 1970s. My goal was to trace mention of pornographic text, S/M material, and the first-person narration through which this is told that might help date the manuscripts that Aldama's texts argue lead into *The Rain God*. The first mention of any kind of first-person narrative, not to mention its S/M connections, emerges in a letter from his late 1970s agent Robert Cornfield. In this 1978 letter, Cornfield expresses concern about Islas's construction of the WASP bashing that occurs as a result of the first-person narrative's representation of difference in racialized notions of queer sexuality through S/M. The comparative thrust in this representation places the narrator within the revelatory position of a willing S/M victim as nearly omniscient, as critic of the generality of whiteness, and, more specifically, as critic of white queer personhood as it relates to the queer of color body.[91] The next letter that alludes to material in *American Dreams and Fantasies* is a letter from Frances McCullough to Robert Cornfield in April 1979. In this letter, McCullough appears aware of a version that precedes *American Dreams and Fantasies*, most likely *Día de los Muertos*, through her noting that "some of the real intensity of the early family life is gone now, and I miss that."[92] Though she declares that his frank treatments of sexuality are beautiful and necessary, and that she wishes that Islas "would just write an autobiographical book in his own voice." She finds that the sexual content and theorization when combined with the family narrative she has read before make it such that the work cannot come to any kind of cathartic end as the two narrative forms are "more or less insoluble"—in other words, McCollough sees two different texts.[93] Another feature that helps in the dating is that there is only one 1980 rejection letter that specifically names the manuscript *American Dreams and Fantasies* as the manuscript under review. This letter rejects the manuscript on terms similar to McCullough's. The letter declares that the problem is that "the novel does not work as a *fiction*" and, as a result to the author's being "reluctant to let the story speak for itself," the "narrative becomes more of an essay than a novel."[94] It is helpful to the archival researcher to note that Islas declares, in 1975, *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* has been completed. This declaration is in a letter to the reader of the completed manuscript that gained Islas tenure at Stanford.[95] At the close of this manuscript, a preview of the next book, *Reason's Mirror: The Education of Miguel Ángel*, appears. This preview is the familiar dream of the monster Miguel Chico embraces as he jumps from the precipice and awakes with fervor to tell his story in the published version of *The Rain God.* Later, this story becomes part of *American Dreams and Fantasies.* This declaration of

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[91] Arturo Islas, **"**Letter to Arturo Islas from Bob Cornfield, December 31, 1978," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[92] Arturo Islas, **"**Letter to Bob Cornfield from Francis McCullough, April 18, 1979," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Arturo Islas, **"**Letter to Bob Cornfield from E.., Morgan Entrekin, Jr., Delacourt Press, February 13, 1980," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, italics my own.

[95] Arturo Islas, **"**Letter to the Reader, fall 1975," Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

completion and sampling of text occurs five years before the above-mentioned rejection letter of a manuscript titled *American Dreams and Fantasies* and its submission for review to Delacourt press. This short story, then, cannot be considered part of an "original" document called *American Dreams and Fantasies* that was stripped of its overtly sexual scenes, as Aldama, in *The Uncollected Works*, suggests. The last possibility for *American Dreams and Fantasies* to be considered anterior to *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* and, therefore, the first instantiation of the later published *The Rain God* is squelched through reading both the opening page to the manuscript *American Dreams and Fantasies,* which declares it as "Formerly: *Day of the Dead/Día de los Muertos,"* and a 1980 letter to one, Pat, coupled with the 1980 version of *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*. The letter to Pat declares that the result of his experimenting with combining the already completed *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* with the second, newer, novel, *Reason's Mirror,* resulted in a new work Islas titled *American Dreams and Fantasies*.[96] It is too neat, though, to declare that it is only through aforementioned content of the archival material that I was able to arrive at the conclusion that *American Dreams and Fantasies* is a late invention. The work to date the manuscript from the overwhelming contents of the archive was first prompted, and then later verified, by Islas's own editorial hand.

On Page Numbers and Islas's Editorial Hand: The "Voice" of Paper

For the series of manuscripts that would eventually become *The Rain God*, comprised of several manuscripts of an originary work titled *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* to which some elements from *American Dreams and Fantasies* were later added, Islas's pagination and editorial interventions were paramount in my correcting the date traditionally given to the works in Islas scholarship. In these works, Islas has three main modes of pagination. In the earliest manuscript, Islas handwrites the page number in Arabic numerals centered at the top of each page.[97] This mode of pagination is not seen in any of the later manuscripts. The 1975 completed and edited, but not revised, manuscript has handwritten pagination in a combination of Roman numerals and Arabic numerals in the top right corner. The Roman numerals indicate chapter number and the Arabic numerals indicate consecutive page order.[98] This mode of pagination appears in a number of later drafts with variation, most notably in the later *American Dreams and Fantasies* manuscripts. Lastly, the *American Dreams and Fantasies* manuscripts employ a typed Roman numeral to indicate chapter and a typed Arabic numeral to indicate page range.[99] In the final versions of this manuscript, it is possible to see the incorporation of the 1975 handwritten Roman numeral/Arabic numeral mode incorporated into the typed Roman numeral/Arabic numeral mode right after the asterisks that indicate a break between the newer first-person point of view and highly sexual material and the original material from the

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[96] Arturo Islas, "Front page to *American Dreams and Fantasies,"* box 12, folder 1*; "*Letter to Pat that accompanies the 1980 MS of Día, September 3, 1980," box 13, folder 2, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[97] Arturo Islas, Novel, n.d., with chapters: I. Felix, II. Compadres Y Comadres, III. Mama Chona, box 5, folder 4, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. This folder contains the stories he first sent to Roger Straus, Jr in October of 1974.

[98] Arturo Islas, *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript, box 5, folder 6, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[99] Arturo Islas, *American Dreams and Fantasies* I-V, box 12, folders 4-8, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

completed 1975 version of *Día de Los Muertos/Day of the Dead*. The mode of pagination itself gives the sign that *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* is anterior to *American Dreams and Fantasies* through the blended form of pagination that clearly shows that Xeroxed pages from the 1975 *Día de los Muertos* are used to fill out the fragments of *American Dreams and Fantasies.* But there was still the conundrum of the folder that contained what it describes as ***Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead*** manuscript, an early version 1975 (?) in box 5, folder 5.

The text contained in this folder incorporates the photograph of Mama Chona that is part of the published version. This work is not located in any of the early material. Indeed, it is borrowed from sections of *American Dreams and Fantasies*, as several parts of the published version are. In this version, there are large swaths of blank space on the page, as if parts of the text were covered over. These white glares of paper corresponded with a later editorial method Islas employed in a 1980 revision and also shows a combination of printed and hand written Roman numerals and Arabic numerals.[100] In this manuscript, Islas pastes onion skin paper over the first-person sections of *American Dreams and Fantasies* and revises some of the material into the third person by hand. A comparison showed that the glaring swaths of paper in the 1975 (?) version was, in fact, a Xeroxed copy of the 1980 revision that used this method of editing. I alerted Stanford librarians to this mistake in cataloguing that could lead many an archival worker astray. But, I cannot say whether or not they followed through with this as the guide to the Islas papers still shows this folder as it has traditionally been advertised. I will also remind the reader that I learned through a conversation with Aldama in 2017 that *he* had been part of the cataloguing of the material and that he recalled giving this manuscript the name that misdates it. In any case, Islas's modes of pagination and editorial emendation further show that *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* is the original document and that *American Dreams and Fantasies* is a later invention.[101]

I have arrived. But it is no celebration for me. I have lost the radically queer subject Aldama manifests across his texts. I have shown that *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*, as early as 1975, was already almost in the same from that it takes in *The Rain God*. I have shown that *American Dreams and Fantasies* may have begun as early as summer 1975 but was not completed or shopped to publishers and agents until 1979-1980. I have shown that a revision to our engagement with the archive that had become quite central to Islas studies needs review. In fact a good range of published material on Islas no longer stands up because there is a lot of work in literary criticism on Islas that depends on Aldama's presentation of the archive to make its arguments.

To be clear, the manuscript history is as follows. Islas completes the first draft of *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* in spring of 1975. By fall 1975, he has begun to work on his second novel *Reason's Mirror*, a chapter of which he includes as an appendix in the then completed manuscript *Día* dated 1975.[102] Islas shifts the original opening of *Día*, which began

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[100] Arturo Islas, *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead* manuscript (1980), box 5, folder 7, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[101] See Arturo Islas, Box 2, Folder 1 "Yellow Legal Pad 'Two Dreams, the Second told First,' 'The Island Summer 1975,'" Box 2, Folder 1, and "Yellow Page 1976 'The Sucking and Fucking Noises'" box 9, folder 1, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. Not only do the editorial aspects of the paper demonstrate the correct MS history but so do Islas's journals which show, in several cases, the start of material post-1975 that would feature in *American Dreams and Fantasies*.

[102] Aldama's claims that "Tia Chucha," "The Dead," "Reason's Mirror or The Education of Miguel Angel," "Nina," "María," "Compadres and Comadres," "La familia feliz," and "Kokkomaa" as part of the manuscript *American Dreams and Fantasies* completed by 1975 fades away as this manuscript was not assembled as such until 1978-79.

with Felix's death, to the central part of it in 1975-76. The next few years comprise Islas's attempts to publish *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* with no successes. By 1978 Islas has experimented with combining the fragments that contain the first-person narrator and sexually explicit material in *Reason's Mirror* with the tale of family in *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead*. He titles the new combined manuscript *American Dreams and Fantasies* and suggests the possibility for the title of this combination of works as *The Rain God.*[103] Islas continues to shop *Día de los muertos/Day of the Dead* and *American Dreams* concurrently from 1978-1980. Sometime between 1980 and 1983, for which there is very little information in the archive, parts of *American Dreams and Fantasies* become part of *Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead*. The sections that are taken up include the opening ileostomy scene,[104] the chapter on Tía Cuca that give way to new additions on JoEl,[105] and the section of the dream of the monster and the murder-suicide that ensues.[106] Combined, these insertions help to inspire the later invention of the mise-en-abyme role of the narrator who speaks from within but never actually speaks, the highlighting of JoEl, Miguel, and Felix as the Rain God as Mama Chona dies, and the disembodied voice (is it actually spoken?) that provides the imperative "-Let go of my hand, Mama Chona. I don't want to die" that haunts the close of the novel.[107] I am now left picking up the pieces, now more replete, but pieces nonetheless, that shine as brightly as, or perhaps even brighter than, that radically queer subject in Islas I once hoped to dance with.

But all is not sadness. There is reason to delight. Aldama sought to encourage interest in Islas by constructing an ahistorical and radically queer literary *antepasado*, like Rechy, for contemporary queers and for Islas's published novel *The Rain God.* But his hopeful arrangement of texts gives us new hope. Aldama's work on the Islas archive led me to it with a wish to read the texts I had mistakenly considered "settled." But we can now understand that they are anything but settled. Inspired by Aldama's work, which asked us to think further on Islas, queer Chicana/o texts, and archival practice, I want folks to realize, as I have come to realize, that there is so much more to this archive. I find inspiration in the phantasmatic archive—in the hope that may yet exist for us. Indeed, my work shows that there is an unpublished Islas novel that awaits our consideration and publishing. This later work of Islas, *American Dreams and Fantasies,* asks us now to consider it in relation to published texts of the eighties that initiated queer Chicana/o movements and the areas of study, including Jotería studies, we now have before us and of which we are a part. On this path of desire for a radically queer personage in Islas, I have, instead, read of its continual deferment and misinterpretation that has become routine. Whether we work in archives or not, we *do* have a relationship to it. It calls and we heed it, we listen to others' interpretations of it and take it as truth, or we don't see it, in which case it is absent, as

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[103] Arturo Islas, **"**Letter to Bob Cornfield from Arturo Islas, December 22, 1978" Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. It is actually unclear which manuscript Islas addresses in this letter. However, because the letter coincides with a few letters pertaining to *American Dreams and Fantasies* around the same time, I think it reasonable to suggest that he is considering the title *The Rain God* in place of *American Dreams and Fantasies*. Indeed, the tentativeness that comes through in the letter in his declaration that the book is not only "a brave one" but one that he asks his agent of potential publishers "are they ready for this?"

[104] Arturo Islas, "*American Dreams and Fantasies,"* box 12, folder 7, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[105] Arturo Islas, "*American Dreams and Fantasies,"* box 12, folder 5, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[106] Arturo Islas, "*American Dreams and Fantasies,"* box 12, folder 7, Arturo Islas Papers, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

[107] Arturo Islas, *The Rain God*, (New York, New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 3-8; 141-56; 180.

many a scholar says of gay Chicano archives and texts. The archive shapes our studies, our possibilities, and us. Archives are not just these boxes at universities. We give permission for them to hold sway within us. Let us approach the wide range of queer Chicana/o archival materials yet to be featured in scholarly papers and monographs and be drawn to the archive, as I was, to read, and critique, and engage. In doing so we will broaden our studies and our hopes for a horizon of queer scholarship we have not yet dreamed.

That Which Remains

I began this chapter with a discussion of embalming and its interrelationship with queer archival work and the propping up of the archive as phantasmatic. I had thought, when I first began, that the negative aspects of embalming might fade away as I explored the archive alongside and apart from Aldama. But, rather I find that the propensity to embalm as a mode of recovery, rather than preservation have rippling effects I hadn't fully considered and may stem from issues in our disciplines and funding structures that shift from campus to campus. Ultimately, I am a bit disturbed that Islas studies has so readily and uncritically accepted for so long this version of Islas as radically queer antepasado, but only through his unpublished work and archival papers it is clear they have not seen themselves. So I wonder how that version of Islas has come to be so attractive that it covers over the material that tells a different story that, when we have the papers before us, is right before our eyes. It's puzzling because, when using the biography as a guide to the Islas papers, it guides the researcher to papers that clearly show that something is off in its story of publishing *The Rain God.* But, while it was clear that there was something wrong, it *was* difficult to see *what* was wrong. I still wanted that attractive form of Islas. That phantasm, that thing I yearned for, kept getting in the way more so than the biography's mistakes that led me astray. My desire, Aldama's desire, maybe a lot gay and queer Chicano/Latino scholars' desires kept getting in the way, passing through me over and again each one beautiful and disappointing because of their impossibilities. This made the archive immeasurably difficult to read. I want my archival work to offer a guide to these materials that can inspire and enhance further exploration of Islas's contributions to Chicanx/Latinx and queer letters and theory. I hope new scholars will come to this archive ready to read. There is so much in it, and I am eager to learn from the newer hands that will caress these papers.

My work in the Islas archive also inspires my hope that contemporary archives, where available, become more central to contemporary literary criticism. I also hope that archival work becomes more available and possible to scholars who wish to do so through university and department support, especially for PhD students and other early career scholars. When I think about these barriers to archival research, funding especially, my questions about this archive seem to be questions best posed to disciplines and universities, instead of scholars, about what they value as research such that this crucial element to Islas scholarship, and perhaps any scholarship requiring travel to an archive, seems undervalued and the people underfunded who should or need to be taking this travel in order to engage with an area of study shaped by work in an archives. These are serious questions: Why are we citing other's archival work as if it were our own? Why has there been no follow-up publication on the issues of this archive? Has there been no one else who has seen these issues? Why does it seem so few people have gone to this archive? Is this about funding? I can't say. But I can say that the archive is central to Islas studies and *needs* more visitors. The manuscript history I advance holds potential to let us consider the

inclusion of the mise-en-abyme narrator and sections from *American Dreams and Fantasies* in *The Rain God* as speaking not to a closeting of his gay/queer identified characters, but, rather, highlighting the queer themes of his text and even expanding the scope of the character's we might treat as queer. There is, rather than an erasure of queerness, an accretion of queerness in the novel. *And,* there are innumerable possibilities for that unread novel, *American Dreams and Fantasies*. Go. Go to the archive. In the archive, through the rasp of paper, the ceramic shard, the prick to finger from a box of pins, we may continue to grow our fields of study. When you get back, tell me a story.

Chapter Two

Radiant Material: Gil Cuadros's Queer Archival Histories and Cotemporalities

> I crack open the old black diary I found; pages slip off the spine and onto the floor, as if forgettable.- Gil Cuadros "Reynaldo," *City of God*.

Gil Cuadros's book *City of God* asks readers to confront the gay Latino/Chicano body living with HIV. This work is not "safe" unlike the now-canonized work of Arturo Islas which, despite his death from AIDS complications, is often thought to protect the reader from finding an explicitly queer character, or at least a character suspected of being queerly sick, in the text. Finding characters so beleaguered disrupts our desire for the triumphant narrative that Chicano/Latino Studies seeks and promotes. As Nicole Guidotti-Hernandez notes, Chicana/o Studies has tended to have a particular preference for stories that "neatly fit the narrative of resistance to Anglo Hegemony."[108]

As a result, despite the widespread expression of surprise that Gil Cuadros has not received due attention in scholarly works, the dearth of publications on Gil Cuadros's *City of God* is not so shocking because it defies the promise of a recuperative narrative. But the book also represents a trauma to queer Chicana/o studies that we have not sufficiently experienced nor pushed back against. The publication of *City of God* in 1994 comes just after Cherríe Moraga's formal publication of her essay "Queer Aztlán" in 1993, which repeats her iteration of the question, "Where are the [Gay Chicano] Men?" and grafts a distinctively unsympathetic tone toward HIV/AIDS's effects on those populations, noting that gay men's willingness to enter the field of a politics in hopes to effect a "political change that will ensure their survival" is not enough.[109] For Moraga, gay Chicano men's fear of "rejection" or violence due to their HIV positivity or queerness that may have some choose to remain private or closeted will "only make their dying more secret."[110] Of note is that it is not only in life practice as out gay Chicanos that gay Chicano men fail to live up to the standard Moraga imagines and demands, but so also do their texts not live up to the same political demands—she reads Arturo Islas's novels and Richard Rodríguez's *Hunger of Memory* as thematically non-complex enough about Chicano sexuality and also "closeted," making them apolitical, in the case of Islas, or political in insufficient or inappropriate ways, for Rodríguez.[111] This not-enoughness of gay Chicano men's activism in the face of HIV/AIDS may not only lend an increased sense of trauma to Cuadros's work but also may compromise our possibilities for encountering Cuadros's text, or any gay Chicano texts pre-supposed to be apolitical, within queer Chicana/o studies classrooms. This

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[108] Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 24.

[109] Cherríe Moraga, "Queer Aztlán: The Re-formation of Chicano Tribe," in *The Last Generation: Prose and* Poetry, (New Boston, MA: South End Press, 1993), 162. This aspect of Cherríe Moraga's work in her essay "Queer Aztlán" will be explored in greater detail and with additional nuance in Chapter 3.

[110] Ibid., 163.

[111] Ibid., 163.

would potentially suggest that the claims Moraga suggests not only proliferate widely, but may also be believed. This oppositional question, "Where are the men?," that constructs multiple binaries that extend from gender to presence/absence or political/apolitical does not seem often to be questioned. When it has been critiqued, the discourse has appeared to emerge as a taboo subject.[112] But in attending to and resisting the production of this binary, we may retain a mode of reading that preserves HIV/AIDS stigma and, as Horacio N. Roque Ramirez notes:

> "preve[nts] an accurate appreciation of the ongoing seriousness of AIDS among queer, Latino, *and* queer Latino populations. Specifically, since the closing of the last century, a distinct historical and discursive roadblock emerged: because HIV treatment via protease inhibitors curtailed the rates of death from AIDS for particular demographic sectors (the middle and upper classes, typically white and male but not exclusively), HIV and AIDS were no longer seen as important political and cultural struggles."[113]

I hold no part in David Román's celebratorily declaring a new mode of LGBT community thought that is "not-about-AIDS." This suggested move in mind, brought about by the advent of effective anti-retroviral HIV treatments in 1996 is part of the proliferation of "end of AIDS" rhetoric in popular media, and the post-AIDS identities that white gay commentators have put forth.[114] But even today, despite the fact that, for the first time, gay men's HIV infection rates are lower than heterosexual people's infection rates in 2022, HIV infection rates amongst young Latinos and Black men continue, as they have been, to be higher than those of white gay men. Perhaps Cuadros's work has been ignored because to write about him is "unsafe," or at least feels so. It reminds or presents newly to the reader the devastation of HIV/AIDS the U.S. seems to have forgotten or wants us to forget. To read this text is to undo the fetters that link gay Chicanos/Latinos to an apolitical positionality. To study Cuadros's work advances the productive capabilities for *all* queer Chicanx/Latinx cultural work to explode out from the disciplinary logic of queer Chicano emergence that can only provide us with the horizon in queer futurity and collectivism that queer utopia can provide.

This chapter argues, through close attention to *City of God*, that Gil Cuadros's art and archival holdings necessitate our remembering of a queer past that is intimately attached to HIV/AIDS care and is oriented toward an intimate relationship to objects that bolster memory and defy the possibility of succumbing to a national project of unremembering HIV/AIDS. Inspired by Anne Cvetokovich and Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, I argue that Cuadros's book advances a mode of object collection that orients characters—and by-proxy, readers—around objects of trauma. The inherence of trauma within the object, to some extent, protects us from it and allows a deeper exploration of our reciprocal "belonging," the trauma to

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[112] See for example Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel, "Our Queer Kin," in *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011) 105-12 and Antonio Viego, "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature in Queer Chicana/o Cultural Work," *Discourse*, 21, no. 3 (1999), 71-79 reprinted in *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011) 86-104.

[113] Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, "Gay Latino Histories/Dying to be Remembered: AIDS Obituaries, Public Memory, and the Queer Latino Archive" in *Beyond El Barrio*: *Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, edited by Gina M. Pérez, Frank A. Guridy, and Adrian Burgos, Jr. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010), 106.

[114] David Román, "Not-About AIDS," in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, no 1 (2000), 6.

us and us to it. In the book, this expands identificatory practice, meaning, and possibility by not requiring a wholeness of or in identity to emerge. In Cuadros, we see the continual deferral of solid identity and instead a subject always in process through something like a meta-cognitive consciousness as essential to queer emergence within and of a grounded history. For the reader of Cuadros's work, and potentially especially for the gay Chicano reader, the case is a bit different. Cuadros's text emphasizes material objects as harbingers of identitarian possibilities that can, when following the textual matter, construct a character or subject that is a desubjectivized constellation of objects. By contrast, recent work in gay Chicano anthologies has read him in the same way they are encouraged to, potentially through traumatic attachment to Moraga's claims in "Queer Aztlán." They see Cuadros' work, as the majority of scholarly work on Cuadros sees it—as testimonio and, often, as a failed political project. But *City of God* is no testimonio. This mistaken reading forms a phantasmatic literary work that "settles" the text into a readable and recognizable form, even though the text itself plays some with form. It also transforms the fragmented identities the book delights in into a phantasmatic wholeness through a hopeful imagining of a "settled" author identity—a Gil Cuadros who is decidedly and recognizably Chicano, queer, and HIV positive—a character out of his time and fashioned as a contemporary through scholar's seeing, instead of Cuadros, a representation of someone closer to themselves. This is a mark of Cuadros's literary excellence—that we see characters that seem like ourselves in his works. But they, his characters, are not ourselves. And the idea of Cuadros as settled in an identitarian wholeness is not him either. We do a disservice to Cuadros and his text, and potentially queer Chicano/Latino literary study when we misrecognize the complexity of Cuadros and his book as some recent work has, including selections in the anthology *Queer in* Aztlán. [115] Instead of relying upon our phantasmatic construction of this author and his text to tell our own stories, stories not *of* Cuadros's time, I ask that we see the work as it is—a work of a specific time with its own complexities and a work that is compendium of fragments by an author who is complex and conflicted with regard to his identity. The remains of one of his characters who, similar to Cuadros's thinking on his identity, feels an outsider to all identity scripts, are described as "bones shin[ing] in the dark."[116] It is a character whose body is being dismembered in the bites of Angels who reminds us that "some people leave trails of light" even as that character's body disintegrates into little more than "a small glow and even that begins to perish."[117] In these quotes we see that *City of God* encourages our primary attention to the objects—those scattered bones fragmented like his text and that spark of light that shrinks toward nothingness. It is the objects in his text that offer a broken path that holds past and present in tandem. As we attend to the book's gathering of paper (its journals, letters, and porno pages), its curiosities (a scarecrow, a jar of mouse's heads, a phantom scarf), and its ephemera (the scent of an armpit or of lotion, the erection, and the body itself) we can become wary of finding a sense of community and cohesion in this text through our primary attention to the identitarian politics and theories that are urgent to many of us, our disciplines, and in this world. By attending to these objects we may see the text as an archive of queer histories that transcend time, and some may feel very close to reader's experiences. But many of these mostly identity-less objects carry

[115] See Pablo Alvarez, "Toxicity within the Body of Chicana/o Studies? (sic) Exploring our Queer Bodies and the Toxic within our Sacred Sites," (April 1, 2010), NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings, Paper 4, Adelaida R. del Castillo and Gibrán Güido, eds., *Queer in Aztlán: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out*, (San Diego, CA: Cognella, 2015), and Gibrán Güido, "Thanks for Submitting a Session," Facebook, September 28, 2017.

[116] Gil Cuadros, "My Aztlán: White Place," *City of God* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1994), 58.

[117] Gil Cuadros, "Sight," *City of God*, 96; 99.

with them a history of HIV/AIDS in a sometimes specific place and time. Like Roque-Ramirez's and Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed's concerns about a "not-about-AIDS" U.S. project of Amnesia that is successfully urging citizens to forget this past, so too does this text appear to know in its time, in the early 1990s, that the flashes of memory these objects may inspire of this HIV/AIDS history are already "begin[ing] to perish."[118]

Gil Cuadros: An Overview

Gil Cuadros's book *City of God* was published in 1994 with the modest help of the Brody Literature Fellowship in 1991 and with one of the first PEN USA/West grants to writers with HIV. But Cuadros was not always a writer. Before his lover John Milosch died due to complications from AIDS in 1987 (and before his learning of his HIV positive serostatus shortly after John's death) he had expressed interest in ceramic art. After Milosch's death, his childhood friend, photographer Laura Aguilar, prompted him to hone his writerly craft with poet Terry Wolverton, a Los Angeles transplant who, at that time, in the late 1980s, formed workshops for LA writers living with HIV. Though he had been told, in 1988, that his prognosis would give him a mere six months of life, Gil Cuadros lived another 8 years before his death due to complications due to AIDS in 1996.

His only published book, *City of God*, is the first literary work to tackle the intersectionality of AIDS, gay life, and Chicano culture. His book is divided into two parts. The first part contains nine prose fiction pieces that detail a range of lives of eight men and one woman that accrete around the combined aspects of gender non-conformity, queer childhood, AIDS, the body as a potentially collected and collective object, and Chicano identity. The second part is comprised of eighteen works of poetry that have a more consistent speaker and hold to these themes. The main speaker in the poetry section is a gay man negotiating, retrospectively and in-time, his tenuous hold on Gay, HIV+, and L.A. life. The majority of the poems, and especially the poem cycle "The Quilt Series," function as an homage to the speaker's dying lover from AIDS and as a meditation on the objects that allow the dead to remain culturally and politically active through those objects. As a result, Cuadros's text highlights the possibilities for archiving and archives to be an antidote to fleshy death—a place where that body and the memories it holds expand outward from the objects they haunt—objects that already haunt us—and invite us to haunt that object with them. What I mean is that, if there is anything that is about community and cohesion in this text, it is in the objects. The objects of the text in which a specific body and its memories inhere and become metonymic representations of that body permit some readers to regard those objects as already circulating among us. The text's objects have a specific context and story of their own, and yet they mirror certain reader's actual or potential life experiences and multiply as objects connected to queer sociality and desire. As a result the objects and the experiences they hold attach to a range of queer objects and queer histories we must not forget and not let others forget. Cuadros's book is its own ever-expanding version of the Names Project Quilt. John Milosch has his square, and each of the objects the text offers to our caress multiplies into the myriad patchwork that tell the stories of our queer lives. Like the Quilt and the many pieces that combine to make it appear whole, *City of God* has a history, a present perseverance, and an afterlife.

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[118] Ibid., 99.

The Gil Cuadros archive at the Chicano Resource Center at UCLA measures a mere 1.5 linear feet. Despite its slimness, Gil Cuadros's archive, which was donated to the UCLA Chicano Resource Library by Laura Aguilar, shares with the Islas and Tavera collections the type of "overflowing" I have come to see as a queer "methodology" of archivization and collection. I'm not speaking of the elements a researcher hopes for or expects from a special collection, those documents related to the cultural workers' work and output (manuscripts, by-laws, drafts, grant proposals, that sort of thing). This queer "methodology" of archivization and collection are like to the objects collected and to which our eye is guided in *City of God*. At times in this project I've thought, "What is Queer collection but saving everything?" More numerous, or seemingly so, than those works in the archives attached to the name of that special collection are the objects they share with us and that we already share with it—objects of queer sociality and desire. A happy hour at a gay bar, a White Party, an old *FagRag*, a number written on the back of flyer, a day planner's every Friday night entry for a still existent bathhouse. In paging through these boxes that feel like a drawer or two back at my apartment, one comes across other types of queer sociality. In them we see events frozen in time of queer political and artistic identitarian participation and orientation, much like those archival objects that Horacio Roque-Ramirez underlines in his work on gay San Francisco and AIDS obituaries and the memories attached to the object and the word.[119] The documents that correspond to Cuadros's literary work are either published documents or announcements of the author's readings, which gives the appearance of an absence of "useful" material. Anjali Arondekar might caution that the "empty" archive is often found to be most full, leading the researcher to make arguments of substitution when confronted with seeming absence. This slim archive produces anxieties similar to those of Arondekar but, like the book, it rejects our attempts at giving it a subjective becoming. This is important to remember about the book and Cuadros's play with identity in it. There isn't a single or singular subject between its covers. The speakers in the first part of his book cannot be considered to be singular, or the same person, despite the propensity for scholarly work to declare them so. Like these overflowings of objects potent with queer desire and queer sociality, Cuadros's art depicts the archive as staging a moment of fracture that is both textual and bodily. The goal is not to reassemble the pieces or the self, but rather to regard the queer divinity of the fragment, the object halfway known, the subject left unwhole, not wholly known after that one hot night; his only presence the smeared number on your hand and the sock that isn't yours found under the bed at the end of the week. The holy fragment that resists our making triumph exclusive to a sense of wholeness through a representation made to seem "authentic," that gay Chicano representation that is seen to be absent or failed through its fragmentation. The joy and ache of the fragment in *City of God* that can be more fully shared *because* it is not whole encourages scholars to become increasingly critical of our engagements with queer triumph, queer failure, and its sometimes entwinement.

It would be instructive and crucial, once these papers find a home, to consider another archive held by Kevin Martin, Cuadros's former lover, the executor of the estate, and several times over his works' dedicatee. The slim archive at UCLA, by virtue of the absences it may be considered to highlight, allows certain aspects of scholarship on Cuadros that routinely regard his work as failing to function politically within a framework of Chicana/o literary study. The

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[119] Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, "Gay Latino Histories/Dying to be Remembered: AIDS Obituaries, Public Memory, and the Queer Latino Archive" in *Beyond El Barrio*: *Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, edited by Gina M. Pérez, Frank A. Guridy, and Adrian Burgos, Jr. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010).

Cuadros archive privately held by Martin, an archive to which scholars' have little or no access, offers us new possibilities for reading *City of God* in ways that trouble the phantasmatic rendering of him and his archive in relation to other queer and identitarian projects.

The two-foot-deep filing cabinet that holds the Martin-curated archive, which occupies three drawers, contains hundreds of unpublished poetry, tens of prose fiction pieces, at least one unfinished novel, seven journals, three that are writing journals and the rest are personal journals, and a range of personal items including letters, bills, legal documents, and some material related to his readings and events he attended or was interested in. In addition to this material there are three ceramic art objects that Cuadros made.

These literary works in Martin's possession stress the struggle to form queer, Chicano, and HIV+ identity, mirroring some of the modes of fashioning queer Chicano identity about which Cuadros seems to have been aware. But Cuadros's writings and archival materials trouble recent scholar's attempts, such as those by Pablo Alvarez and Gibrán Güido, to make Cuadros into a recognizably and solidly queer and Chicano beacon for their own and other queer Chicanos' enunciation and emergence. Through their work, I love knowing that Gil Cuadros is beginning to be read more widely and that his work speaks to many gay Chicanos. But I cannot help but regard their reading the text as testimonio and their suggestion that others do as well as troubling to Cuadros's text and the burgeoning area of Cuadros scholarship.[120] Cuadros does not want to be centralized in the reading of his texts. He doesn't regard himself as in them. Rather, he points to the objects left behind by his characters, characters who often turn into objects themselves, and passes them on to us. Cuadros's text(s) support a mode of individuated becoming through the reader's interaction with his art. [121] But the texts do not register a cogent wholeness and stability to any identity, let alone a singular identity, *within* the text as most scholarship on Cuadros seems to force onto it.

To appreciate Cuadros, one must, to some extent, move away from identity, our own and his, and focus upon the objects that help us to move, often uncomfortably, between such markers as age, sero-status, gender identity, racial identity, and physical and mental ability. We must take these all on and not embalm the author or the work as an embodiment of them all. What follows is an exploration of the archive and the published book *City of God* that argues that Cuadros's art gestures to the pieces of his writer's life that help compose the more generalizable communitarian aim he attaches to his imagined reader—a reader whose potential for queer Chicana/o HIV+ communitarian identity emerges, and only partially, through the fragmentary nature of the work.

In the City of God: The Phantasm and the Archive

The Phantasm: The title of Gil Cuadros's book is a riff on Augustine of Hippo's *De cuitate Dei contra paganos*, finished and disseminated around 496 CE. Augustine's book,

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[120] See Pablo Alvarez, "Toxicity within the Body of Chicana/o Studies? (sic) Exploring our Queer Bodies and the Toxic within our Sacred Sites," (April 1, 2010). NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings. Paper 4; Gibrán Güido, "It's Time to Wake Up the Dead," Facebook, September 28, 2017; and Adelaida R. del Castillo and Gibrán Güido, eds., *Queer in Aztlán: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out*, (San Diego, CA: Cognella, 2015).

[121] I use the"(s)" to show that previous engagements with the text have not deployed the material in the privately held archive.

divided into two parts, examines the interrelationships between the terrestrial world and the celestial world and declares that, in the war between the City of God and the City of Man, the celestial shall triumph against the terrestrial world's attention to the worldly body and worldly politics. Augustine, though a member of the City of Man, turns his eye to the promise of celestial cohesion in bodiless perfection in the heavenly—the New Jerusalem that will supplant the evils of terrestrial life. Gil Cuadros's book, instead, casts his gaze to the object-oriented and fleshy realities of the terrestrial city and shows the production of its own brand of divinity. Cuadros's attention to the terrestrial finds a secularized divinity in the material objects that grant memory an increased sense of permanence. Like Thomas Becket's Chaucerian dirty pants, the divine object inspires a pilgrimage in the reading of the book that lays the histories of, in this case, queer fellowship side by side. Here, there is no sleazy pardoner selling one of hundreds of Jesus's prepuces. False relics do not abound. Instead, the relic is made real as it retains semblance of an originary subject that, made into a range of objects through human decay, become increasingly functional through their insistence on our viewing history, especially queer history, as contiguous and eternally lively through the subjects' fragmentation—perhaps a type of desubjectivization, that is beyond immortality to the extent that it conquers it.[122] But Cuadros's speakers must first place us within the realm of memory in order to demonstrate its deficiency and its need for a correlation with an object in which memory may become divine and allow the object to become a relic with the ability to prophesy.

The Archive: While Cuadros's title has afforded at least one scholar, Paul Allatson, reason to consider Augustine's influence in part, though not nearly as full as *could* be argued, it is important to note that Augustine was not part of Cuadros's repertoire of textual contact. Rather, Cuadros's title hinges upon queer sociality. His title, indeed, holds less intertextual meaning than we may want. It was, rather, inspired after a date to see Fellini's *Roma*, and a resultant associative preoccupation with a translation in the film about the "City of God" that he thought was awesome, and a fitting title for the work.[123]

The Phantasm: The correlation between Anzaldúa's formal arrangement of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, arranged between prose auto-history and theory, preceding a section of poetry that permits a delving into the theoretical practices described in the former, demonstrates Gil Cuadros's participation within a distinctively Chicana/o queer borderlands theorization. Indeed, when viewed together, Cuadros's volume of prose describes a mode of queer enunciation that is, to some extent, cautiously elucidated through the poetry, declaring all that comes before part of the task of crafting a quilt that represents the historical underpinnings of a work dedicated to offering testimony to folks living with HIV/AIDS during the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Archive: The choice to separate the poetry from the prose writing was suggested by Cuadros's editor at City Lights, Amy Scholder, and was a condition for its publication. Neither parties were aware of Anzaldúa's works nor how this arrangement might germinate interest for queer Chicano folks interested in Cuadros at a later date.[124]

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[122] While it could be argued that false relics function similarly in the Middle Ages, we must remember that those objects hocked, and the hockers themselves, were promising objects that exceeded, not positively, the faith purchasers could have in them. They were phantasms. They were symbolic, yes, but they were, nevertheless considered fake and spawned an industry that was reviled by the Christian Church—an industry that preyed upon many a pilgrim and, due to the ease of faking papal bulls for relic sales, compromised the Church and its teachings. Such is the possibility for the phantasmatic.

[123] Conversation with Kevin Martin, August 2017.

[124] Conversation with Kevin Martin, August 2017.

I offer these opposing stories—the Phantasm and the Archive—in order to show how the absence of the archive conjures modes of thinking in-line with the scholar's attempts to escape the traditional bounds of Chicana/o literary study in the first case, and to subscribe to them, in the second. What this is meant to show is how, to a large extent, the tools to which we have access are, in the case of the former, already inadequate, but in the case of the latter, too ready for consolidation. While the arguments that emerge in the section I describe as phantasms remain valid modes for the textual study of Cuadros's work, the intertextuality that each reading demands must both be revered as elements that reach out to reader's attachment to the reading and the discipline, and countered with the material history the archive holds forth. This, to some extent, demonstrates the limits of interaction with texts such as this one if we take Guidotti-Hernandez's comment about "resistance to Anglo hegemony" to heart. The following, then, draws from the archive and walks with the "reality" of the textual objects that can reconfigure our ways of interacting with its unmoored identities attached to a specific textual past. In doing so, we may imagine a future that can accept the texts unsettled-ness, its moments that are unsettling, and craft a futurity in relation to its insistence on HIV/AIDS history and its conceptualization of material as central its dream of a future community that will not forget the underpinnings of its past.

"What I Wanted to See Most Were Flowers": A Quilt with "Edges Sharp as Blades"

Scholarly writing on Cuadros most often examines the prose sections of his book, especially the story "My Aztlan (sic): White Place" due to its signaling its interaction with a topic, Aztlán, in Chicano studies. With few exceptions, his poetry is left unexplored.[125] But it is through his poetic craft that the book comes to us. Indeed as Terry Wolverton, Cuadros's writing mentor states, "Gil was a member of a weekly creative writing workshop for people with HIV/AIDS from 1988 through 1996" and "most of the work in *City of God* [were] created in the context of that workshop."[126] Cuadros's writing journals, which provide a draft in prose form of the "The Quilt Series," shows that it is this series of poems that gave flight to the other poetry and prose pieces in the published book.[127]

My reading of Cuadros's work begins with a reading of his long poem cycle, "The Quilt Series," for two main reasons. First, this work is the burn that gives fire to the rest of the work and sets up a mode of thinking about objects and archival materials as central to the book's preoccupation and exploration of the collective intimacy and history that touch can provide and how it can give way to individuated modes of queer, Chicano, and HIV-positive enunciation. Second, Cuadros considered this piece his "most significant achievement" in his life as a writer in his application for the PEN Center USA/West fellowship for writers with HIV—a fellowship that would help him to complete *City of God*.[128] Cuadros goes on to say that "The Quilt Series" came out of his "need to mourn the loss of [his] first lover," John Milosch, the dedicatee of the book. As a result of Milosch's parents' insistence that Cuadros not create a quilt for him as part

[125] Exceptions include Julie Avril Minich, "Aztlán Unprotected: Reading Gil Cuadros in the Aftermath of HIV/AIDS," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23, no. 2 (2017):167-193 and Paul Allatson, "'My Bones Shine in the Dark': AIDS and the De-scription of Chicano Queer in the Work of Gil Cuadros," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 32, no. 1 (2007): 23-52.
[126] Correspondence with Terry Wolverton March 2019
[127] Gil Cuadros, Journal 1988, Private archive.
[128] Gil Cuadros, Application for Pen Center USA/West fellowship for writers with HIV, 1994, Private Archive.

of the Names Project Quilt because it would be embarrassing to the family, Cuadros undertook to make this series of poems, and indeed the book *City of God*, as a literary remembrance of his lover's death "as if sewn with thread and fabric" that would add to "the already too large tapestry" of HIV/AIDS losses and history.[129] Through this work, Cuadros was able to defy the wishes of Milosch's parents, name his lover and make him a central character of his fiction, and create a tangible object in the book that not only speaks of his personal pain, but also participates communally and becomes a communal object of pain in relation to and remembrance of the losses of queer folk. This is its political function and register that most of the few scholars consider absent from his work. But, no. *City of God* is a site of remembrance, a quilt with potential to spread more widely than The Quilt on the D.C. ellipse. It is a quilt with "edges sharp as blades."[130]

"The Quilt Series," divided into six parts, tells the story of a man experiencing his lover's dying of AIDS complications. The first section, "911," depicts the beginning of this struggle and relies upon a range of objects to dramatize the potential for and deferral of touch alongside the transformation of the queer body from agent to object and from commonplace to spectacle. As if jumping from the pages of a John Preston erotic novel, the EMS agents, "two swarthy men in open shirts," emerge from the ambulance and enter the home, and, as they initially suspect drug overdose is the cause of their call, they tussle the home and "saw the Honcho magazine / pages of cocksuckers in body chains." [131] With this revelation of the sexuality of the patient(s), it is only then that they fit themselves in personal protective equipment, gloves and face gear.[132] The removal of the patient, John, is described in shocking detail. It is described as an exposure as the muscled men raise him by the arms and his robe falls apart, his "balls swinging violently," his "toenails [dragging] on the cement" while neighbors stare at this private need made public, staged as a forced and violently erotic uncloseting.[133]

In this first entry to the sequence, a feature that pervades the work, an explicit combination of the erotic, the horrifying, and the violent is relayed through the objects that promote the EMS agents' fear and resultant garbing of full face personal protective equipment. As Anne Cvetkovich notes "the 'explicit' is always a convention, and in part a convention for collapsing the distinction between representation and reality" that prompts our understanding that the explicit text of trauma carries the burden *not* simply of elucidating a personal "network of psychic wounds," but rather of finding ourselves parallel to and capable of growth through them.[134] While viewing the gay porn magazine, Honcho, serves to activate a reality of homophobic fear in the EMS workers, the reader is not only drawn to judge the workers for this homophobia but also to notice that Honcho, with its explicit depictions of gay S/M sex, those queer bodies in chains, serves to inject erotic potential and fantasy to the scene. These swarthy men with open shirts don their own gear and, with the help of the lover/speaker, play out the beginning of a kidnapping and hospital scene. Instead of chains, there is the tightening of the "last restraints on the stretcher" that is described as a Judas kiss from the lover/speaker. While queer erotic sociality is disavowed here, it is also shown to be coconstitutive as the scene mirrors

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[129] Ibid.
[130] Gil Cuadros, "The Quilt Series: ICU," *City of God* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1994), 128.
[131] Ibid., 125.
[132] Ibid., 125.
[133] Ibid., 125-26.
[134] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*, (Durham, NC: Duke, University Press, 2003), 87; 94.

the assumedly light BDSM restraints of Honcho.[135] Here, attachment to the object that sets the scene, the Honcho magazine, evokes queer and straight attachments to a history of HIV/AIDS, erotic touch, and the Names Project, the quilt the poem now weaves. We are put on alert to observe and experience object attachment as crucial to our own survival and pleasure *and* our connection to each other through the queer histories and variable experiences that inhabit those objects and become centralized.

As the quilt series progresses, the lover/speaker, now part of the scene, "dressed in a gown" when he is with John, becomes "an actor for friends, a tissue paper mask."[136] Clothed in a type of burial shroud, the survivor, the speaker, becomes a totem of hope for his friends, a symbol that might speak of triumph or survival, not unlike Cuadros's work seems for some in queer Chicano studies. Indeed, the speaker's description of his friends' interaction with him is similar to the phantasmatic experience with special collections that I describe in chapter on, where the object becomes a metonym for the author we might wish to touch so that it might give *us* comfort. The speaker notes that "everyone wanted to touch me," but as the touch can never be fulfilled as "their hands" are "talc-lined gloves," we see their "voices deadpan" speak of an interest to touch the untouchable—their reach is not about a rich interest in him, but rather oriented around their own continued survival, the need for a body to declare something hopeful that is not about HIV/AIDS.[137] The speaker states, almost as if to himself, that "what [he] wanted to see most were flowers, / get-well cards, a heart filled / with foil-wrapped chocolates, / their edges sharp as blades." [138] While the suicidal ideation in the personalized request is not to be missed, Cuadros's speaker here asks us to attend less to the body in pain and more to the objects that can provide stable markers of this HIV/AIDS history. The speaker encourages a hope that prompts us to participate in the trauma of the event, to live with it and see that we are not experiencing Freudian melancholia as psychosis, a holding onto and repetition of the trauma undergirded by a "fixed notion of the past, but rather a continuous engagement with loss and its remains" that can, ultimately, "be a resource."[139] Cvetkovich, inspired by David Eng and David Kaznajian's conception of loss and melancholia, suggests that this recourse occurs through an act of "holding onto the past that keeps the dead with us."[140] But it is not the dead we keep with us, otherwise we would be participating in negatively productive modes that promote post-mortem pain through our continued attempt to touch the author. Instead, Cuadros asks us to be inspired by our experiences with what the dead leave behind. Thereby, the dead may sing with us and through us in the fragmented ways that objects correspond to both individual and communal registers.

With the erotic potential for the story having been circumvented, the speaker finds himself without the flowers he hopes to see and instead begins to see his dying lover's body as unsettling and his "dying" as something that could be catching. There is an ambivalence in in his feelings for that dying body and the objects that somehow carry him. Shame, becomes centralized as the speaker, still gloved, "would forget that [he] covered [his] mouth / from breathing [John's] air" and "ran into the other rooms for one clean glass" from which to drink.[141]

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[135] Gil Cuadros, "The Quilt Series: ICU," *City of God*, 125-26.
[136] Ibid., 128.
[137] Ibid., 128.
[138] Ibid., 128.
[139] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*, (Durham, NC: Duke, University Press, 2003), 164; 208.
[140] Ibid., 208.
[141] Gil Cuadros, "The Quilt Series: REM," *City of God*, 129.

Indeed, as John burns with fever, tearing at the straps which hold him down, his body begins to fade through the substitution of a pillow that, for the speaker, becomes a more solid representational object than the dying and constantly moved John.

The description of John shuttling daily to new room numbers triggers communal anxiety as the worried speaker seeks his lover. Again his friends, lining the hallway, reach their hands out to him and he feels forced to say, for their benefit, "He looks great / You should have seen him yesterday" as they wipe their brows in relieved disbelief and their fingers "wrenched the flowers" as if holding onto their own lives—lives that the speaker begins to view with contempt partly due to the performance of hope that they demand from him and partly because he wishes them to replace the body of his lover.[142] But the speaker is not absent of this reliance upon the living body as emblematic of his own hope for life. While the poem increasingly requires our attention to the plastic tubes, sunken faces, bloodied lips, and taped mouths that are publicly advanced, and widely celebrated in galleries, as *the* portrait of People with AIDS (PWAs), that for us, as it might for the speaker, "give 'him' peace," the veneer of that image is displayed and critiqued as the body under view attempts its puncture.[143] John does not provide peace, instead, "he picks at [the speaker's] palm / pull[s] at the false skin of latex" unwilling or unable to meet his lover's eyes and prompts the speaker to rip through the veneer and rely instead on the dream of John's scent as the speaker attempts to sleep and pulls John's pillow to his face.[144] On the next day, John dies and the speaker spends "what seemed like a day / chasing him down, out of breath, / his room unlisted, his name erased."[145] Already prompted to look in other places for peace, rather than relying on the body, the speaker understands the futility of this chasing and eventually crafts a renewed reliance on the object for connection.

As he sweats into the bedsheets that he vows not to change until John returns home, the phone rings to announce John's impending death. A flurry of action ensues that collapses time, makes it queer, as the speaker readies himself to go to the hospital and the lovers' exchange of rings is highlighted. Perhaps too sweetly, we learn of their engagement; how the offering of a ring, after five years, emerged from a box enclosed in five boxes. It is not the action of opening the boxes, but the object itself that hums loudly enough to "make [his] parents silver marriage / feel wooden."[146] The five smooth years of their involvement disrupt the reliance upon what José Esteban Muñoz calls "straight time," forcing us to regard this time as strong because of its smoothness despite its happenings.[147] But John is dead, and now the speaker, along with the reader, is increasingly oriented to the objects left behind.

As the speaker views John's dead body, there are no more gloves. The body is not quite John, instead it is "more meat than flesh" and yet the speaker, wants to "drag [it] home" like a Christmas tree to show him "where the ornaments were / and his grandfather's watch, / the one his family wants back."[148] The speaker, investing himself, and us, with a hope for ghostly return, expects John "to be in the front room, on the couch, / book in his lap" before ultimately regarding this the "fantasy" that it is.[149] We are asked again to return to the tangible object as the

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[142] Gil Cuadros, "The Quilt Series: RM#," *City of* God, 131.
[143] Ibid., 132.
[144] Ibid., 132.
[145] Ibid., 132.
[146] Gil Cuadros, "The Quilt Series: 4AM," 134.
[147] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, New York: NY UP, 2009), 162.
[148] Gil Cuadros, "The Quilt Series: DOA," 136.
[149] Ibid., 136.

speaker gathers John's pillow between his legs, "his gold ring pulse / at the bottom of a drawer."[150] But like the slippage between regarding the body as a "him" and then an "it," the speaker, upon trying to touch the pulsing ring finds that "It died when I got up to touch it."[151] The pulse, so connected to the viewing of the body as central to ways of knowing falters, just like the speaker falters when his friends reach out to touch him. The dying of the ring's pulse at the speaker's touch denies the possibility for the dead to live alongside us. Instead, the memory of the dead launches the object into other life. It allows the body to be mortal and not have claims to immortality. But the object, the it/him, is allowed to die, to stop humming as if living and take on a new countenance for the speaker and, if this promotion of attention to material objects is to be followed, for the audience. In the objects left behind we may stop our wanton grasp of the body, recognize the value of mortality, and sing of the histories the object holds forth that recommend to us that we not forget this history, and our connections to it—that the pain that objects may invoke are not always our own, but ones which, if we are ready, can assist our striving for more breath for us and for the communion we find in our shifting and varied attachments to a multitude of communities with variant histories of struggle.

Gil Cuadros's privately held archive recommends a mode of considering *City of God*'s political interventions for Chicanx/Latinx studies. As we understand that the works in the book are inspired by this poem cycle, we are encouraged to rethink the poem's "form" in ways similar to Marcial González's notion of "form" as "roughly synonymous with the ideological 'world' of the [work] and its totality" that prompts our attention to "the social relations [that] become ingrained in the various levels of significance in a particular literary work."[152] For this work, understanding the archive's insistence that we acknowledge the origin of the book's birth, "The Quilt Series," disrupts the disciplinary logics that would demand our reading the work in sequential order that ties into other aspects of the texts that disrupt a reading *City of God as* a distinctly "Chicano" novel or text. To some extent, the act of reading the book from left to right inspires the mistaken view of the text as testimony or as structurally similar to Chicana/o queer texts like Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*. This mode of reading the text as testimony or as likened to *Borderlands* seeks to verify the book's importance through a specificity of Chicana/o and queer Chicana/o accepted modes of ethnic and sexual signaling. It is, therefore, unsurprising that early scholarly work, two of the four explorations of his work that have been published, finds a fault in the characters' Chicano subjectivity that is marked as transgressive and therefore alienated from Chicano subjectivity as both Rafael Pérez-Torres and Raúl Homero Villa seem to suggest in their readings of Cuadros, some of which will be discussed more thoroughly in my reading of Cuadros's "My Aztlan: White Place."[153] But Cuadros's text resists the apolitical and identitarian rendering of his queer text and queer characters as emerging from within a positionality as a "'native' but 'aberrant' presence/absence in the barrio" that is often deployed in Chicano Studies' approaches to gay texts.[154] Cuadros's work absents a concept of irreconcilability of Chicano and queer culture and identity. While

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[150] Ibid., 136.

[151] Ibid., 136.

[152] Marcial González, *Chicano Novels and the Politics of Form*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), 14; 26.

[153] Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); and Raúl H. Villa, *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2000), 139-40.

[154] Raúl H. Villa, *Barrio Logos*, 140.

protagonists in the text can never, and never do, sever themselves from racial mappings of identity when they move into white-dominated queer spaces, they also resist being clearly identified in relation to a national or ethnic filiation due to a primary attention to skin color that often deemphasizes identity or scrambles readers' attempts to clearly identify characters *except* through skin color. To some extent this aspect of the text, the way in which it attends to color more so than solid ethnic or national identity, further shows the value his works place on fragmented and unpinnable subjectivity. This is an aspect that brings forth the political function of the book that opens character's outwards to *our* identities, experiences, and subjectivities. To miss this is to read his text according to a disciplinary logic and culture that determines testimony-based philosophies as true and politically efficacious that can cause readers to miss the linguistic stylizations that undermine approaches that would already define gay Chicano production as emerging from a state of failure not only due to a felt absence but also because of the "aberrance" attached to the figure of the gay Chicano. Indeed, learning how to read Cuadros's material, a gift from the archive, reorients our understanding of the autobiographical imperative that is so over-determined in the reading of texts by queers or about queers. The text insists upon a cross-pollination of histories, transtemporal in their import, that fragmentarily arrange its characters at the border of a multitude of possibilities, possibilities that become our own, to some extent albeit with some limitations. These histories are fragmented to the extent that they defy our reading the text as autobiography, and they assemble a range of possibilities for us to observe the book's form that guides us to the signifying object. This is most evident in Cuadros's works that feature child characters.

"Now It Is My Turn, Let Me Do You": Archives and Cuadros' Queer Children

The first section of Gil Cuadros's book *City of God* is comprised of nine short fiction pieces that invoke the fictional autobiographical narrative form but defy the singular subjectivity of autobiography by holding forth a range of speakers. Though Cuadros admits that much of his work is inspired by his life,[155] the first section of the book makes it impossible to assume that Cuadros is *the* speaker of or even a character in his own book. The assemblage of queer characters that tell their stories, which *do* hold some similarity between each other, encourage readers to be self-critical in their practice and hyper-aware of a tradition of reading testimonio as truth. Rejecting a testimony-based approach grants the narrative its full reach on a far larger scale through its emphasis on color even as this fuller reach may limit our solidly identifying a specific identity to the characters we encounter. Through the archive's recommended strategy of reading—to draw our attention to "The Quilt Series" first—we become attuned to the formal aspects of the novel that demand our attention to the variety of objects that serve to ground the characters within a history that is both each character's own and shared collectively—an HIV/AIDS history that curiously stretches into the pre-AIDS pasts of the book and into the reader's future. Of the nine prose pieces, four feature children as main or co-occurring protagonists. In this section, I will discuss three of the pieces: "Indulgences," "Reynaldo," and "Chivalry" in order to demonstrate how *City of God* requires these characters to cathect onto an object for often positive avenues of queer enunciation, rather than the experiential mode that prompts the reader to grasp for the fantastical and phantasmatic body in the testimonio we might desire.

[155] Conversation with Kevin Martin, August 2017.

The first short piece in Cuadros's book, "Indulgences," introduces the only narrator who may cause the reader to mistake him as the author or author surrogate. The speaker's name is Gilberto, after all. But the archive's recommendation to consider the history of the book and to read "The Quilt Series" first with its anonymized speaker quells the potential for us to read *City of God* as autobiography. Instead, it encourages us to emphasize the social and political "world" of the book that emphasizes object relationship as crucial to queer enunciation in its world surrounded by a history of HIV/AIDS. This story details Gilberto's family's travel to the San Joaquin Valley for the funeral of his maternal grandfather. This travel, told from the view of a fourteen-year-old boy, emphasizes memory as a mode of collective affiliation, which he tries to attach to objects in his visual field, such as road signs and buildings, crafting a specificity of geographic space. But it becomes clear that this reliance on sight demonstrates the failure of memory and that his "memory" is not his own but that of his family.[156] Indeed, his father states that the city has "gone to pot," dashing the positive memories he has received about it from his parents. But the circumstances of his grandfather's death also live in the realm of crafted memories (those of others) unhinged from object or evidence. His death, which appears to be the result of a fall in the bathroom, lives in a world of suspicion and hearsay as the family blames Gilberto' cousin who was the grandfather's caretaker, Evelyn, for his death due to her unknowability, her mystery, all of which seem quite queer to the family.[157] The delegitimizing of memory and the crime, alleged due only to a biased suspicion and memory of his caretaker, makes objects necessary binding agents to memory in order that it survive, for its own sake and for ours, beyond the singular, unreliable, continuously reshaped and degraded memory unbound from an object that could grant greater permanence.

Gilberto's grandfather, in the story, dies, as an inordinate amount of people do, in the bathroom surrounded by his own bodily effluvia. But Gilberto's cousin, Evelyn, in the hushed whispers of the family, is suspected of causing his death. The story makes it clear that the primary reason that she is a suspect, not to law enforcement but to family, is due to the family's suspicion that she is a woman of compromised values—she is both or either a slut or a lesbian.[158] The reader sees something askew with Evelyn as she French kisses young Gilberto and grabs his erection upon meeting him. But as she does so, the reader begins to understand that the violence of this experience, for Gilberto, prompts him to consider the erotic feelings he holds toward boys of his own age who threaten him with homophobic violence.[159] In the acrid taste of her mouth as she grabs his dick, Gilberto thinks about how his "whole family was always asking when [he was going to get a girlfriend]" so that his brother could look up to him and so that he could honor the family.[160] But while in her grip, Gilberto also realizes that his friendship with girls at school is based on their mutual attraction to other boys. As Evelyn molests him, he thinks about how "[his] body would grow warm and [his] heart would pound" as those boys beat him, touched him violently, and how he would become astonished at "the strength they possessed" as he became lost in their eyes.[161] In some respects, Evelyn's inappropriate touching of him causes him to realize his queer desire and connect with her as a queer outsider. It is unclear whether Evelyn's inappropriate ministrations are geared toward the child's queer discovery, predatory, or based in

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[156] Gil Cuadros, "Indulgences," *City of God*, 3-14.
[157] Ibid., 3; 3-14.
[158] Ibid., 7.
[159] Ibid., 8-9; 7.
[160] Ibid., 7.
[161] Ibid., 7.

the general assumption that every child is straight. Nevertheless, the experience of sexual violation for Gilberto sidesteps what Kathryn Bond Stockton calls the queer child's inability "to present itself according to the category 'gay' or 'homosexual'" and is instead inspired by the sexual nature of the violent touches he experiences daily.[162] But this is still in the realm of memory. As the story comes to its close, memory becomes a source of failure and violence when the family seeks its justice after the funeral. For Gilberto, all that remains is an intangible fear and a hope in the object of the scarecrow on the horizon—a hope that signals both the death of the potentially straight child, the retrospective birthing of the gay child, and the increased reliance upon object-relation for queer emergence, perseverance, and preservation.[163]

The family waits for Evelyn to exit the funeral home, their high beams on. As she exits, the lights from the cars "bore through [her dress] to the flesh" denuding her as they declaim her a murderess and as their fists, nails, and boots connect with her "stomach, ass, and breast," all the while screaming "Sick, sick, sick!"[164] Young Gilberto wonders why no one stops this even as he and his younger brother jump "up and down in the backseat" acting as if they "could feel the blows or were giving them."[165] As his mother is escorted back to the car and they drive off, Gilberto gazes out the window, and becomes queerly introspective, wonders if his "family would ever turn on [him]" and, if such were the case, "where would [he] go and, who would [he] love."[166] Before him, the "rows of grapevines, tomato furrows, [and] cotton" in the high beams not yet deignited trace "parallel paths ending on the horizon," a horizon that, in the form of a scarecrow, "stretch[es] open [its arms] as if ready for embrace."[167] Here, then, is a first object in which memory may be more adequately housed—in the scarecrow, erotically and violently beckoning, impaled upon a "stake skewered through the body."[168] But it is yet on the horizon. As youth is left behind, though, his narrators increasingly discover modes of memorialization that maintain this trajectory toward the objects that can mark the parallel roads forward and make history a wider expanse and permanence and identity multiplied—fractured through the gift of objects that complicate individual affiliation in the communitarian and trouble the routine obsession with wholeness. Youth is never fully left behind in *City of God* as two later stories which feature child protagonists demonstrate a revision of the notion of memory as these children increasingly find objects to which their memories may be tethered. Childhood and adulthood are yet another example of the parallel paths and contemporaneous history upon which Cuadros's book insists are in relation to the objects his characters assemble for queer enunciation.

The story "Reynaldo" more explicitly places archival material at the center of queer emergence. The story is divided into four separate entries indicated by type-face and tense: (1) the childhood protagonist in serif type and third-person past tense; (2) the adult protagonist's journal entries in large bold serif type in first-person present tense; (3) entries from a discovered journal (July-September 1923) in small bold serif type and first-person present tense; and (4) a letter from the protagonist's grandmother in small bold serif type in first-person present tense (July 1962). Julie Avril Minich, in her reading of *City of* God that advocates a reading of

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[162] Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or: Growing Up Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 6.
[163] Ibid., 7.
[164] Gil Cuadros, "Indulgences," *City of God*, 13.
[165] Ibid., 13-14.
[166] Ibid., 14.
[167] Ibid., 14.
[168] Ibid., 14.

Cuadros in the context of contemporary queer health needs for Latinos/Chicanos in relation to the historical and political underpinnings of Cuadros's work, underlines the supernatural framework of the text as being capable of allowing it to intersperse "different temporal frames" that "allow Cuadros to contrast the reality of his protagonist (facing death as his family denies him emotional support) with an imagined lineage offering affective protection of queer kinship bonds."[169] It is these same queer bonds that, as mentioned earlier, prompt scholars to see a problematic to the Chicano identity when queer touches and sociality disrupt that identity they may read as testimonio and exclusively concerned with racial and ethnic identity. This Chicano identity, then, is severed by these queer bonds through the narrator's HIV-positivity and queer sexuality. I am in agreement with Minich in her reading of this story, but I view these different temporal frames in "Reynaldo" as evoking the idea that archival material is crucial to queer enunciation on an individual level *and* on a communitarian level. As a ghost story, "Reynaldo" exemplifies the anxiety of archival workers finding absence in the archive alongside the potential for folks to read queer archival overflow.

The child protagonist, Reynaldo, initially wishes for a pause in time so that he can bask in the summer and retain childhood under "the large avocado tree in the backyard" and "[chase] his shadow around the trunk."[170] But in the shift to the adult Reynaldo's journal entries of his care for his grandmother, dying of cancer, we learn of a different set of shadows as the journal represents "something to go back to when this is all over."[171] The purposefully ambiguous "this" of the journal's emergence—is it for the author after the grandmother dies or for a range of readers after he dies?—highlights the preternatural scope of the story. Reynaldo has been given charge of his grandmother *because* of his experience with illness and death—his personally felt knowledge that "we don't get tired of living, we get tired of the pain" and how, as a result, one must then "make death a friend."[172] With this ambiguity, readers must discover how tolerable they are to it and interact either with Reynaldo's recollection of the ghost, now in object form, with the ghost itself, as the child does, or a combination of both.

Either way, or both, we begin to understand that the adult Reynaldo who discovers a decrepit journal in the attic "with postcards from Europe inside" has uncovered an object as crucial to queer enunciation as the coins the child Reynaldo collects, a gift from the ghost who would sing to him of his love for him and the family.[173] The mirroring of the journal entries, not in content but in purpose, to provide a path for future readers, is not in danger of vanishing, as is the voice of the ghost, the coins he spills down the stairs, and the invisible, yet tangibly effective, scarf he gifts the young Reynaldo.[174] But Reynaldo has a concern to know the ghost. He learns from the ghost, through the ghost's revealing to him a folded photo in a frame, folded so as to blot out the ghost's former body and his name, that they have the same name, Reynaldo Jesús. He also learns that his grandfather took Reynaldo's name and became Jesús Reynaldo. But,

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[169] Julie Avril Minich, "Aztlán Unprotected: Reading Gil Cuadros in the Aftermath of HIV/AIDS," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23, no. 2 (2017):170.
[170] Gil Cuadros, "Reynaldo," *City of God*, (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1994), 15.
[171] Ibid., 16.
[172] Ibid., 17.
[173] Ibid., 18; 24. It must be noted that the "Spanish" the young Reynaldo hears is not entirely Spanish nor conjugated correctly. The ghost sings, "*Mi amore, desvanecer"* (24). But the young Reynaldo can only hear, "my love," indicating either the narrator's non-Spanish speaking positionality, the author's limited knowledge of Spanish, or the ghost's remixing of Latinate languages to the extent that the song becomes a hybrid text, a transnational, and potentially ungrammatical hymn for sleep.
[174] Ibid., 18; 28.

despite his wishes for the ghost to tell him about his grandfather and about himself, the young Reynaldo is left with this photo and a tale of best friends who dreamed of more. But as they matured and with Jesús's betrothal to Rosario, "who recognized [Reynaldo] as one of Jesus' [sic] old friends she hadn't liked," the dream was shattered.[175] The coins, indeed, are what the ghost, Reynaldo, saved up to bring Jesús to him in Europe.[176] But there is no touching of the dead despite the wishes at this sad story that Reynaldo has to "put his arms around the ghost's neck and squeeze."[177] As in "The Quilt Series," we are harkened to think about our impossible desire to touch the body, but instead we are directed to find resolve in the tangible yet less sentimental "hug" provided through the fragments of writing left behind.

In the end though, the adult protagonist receives a hug in the form of his grandmother's letter to his queer namesake, the friend/ghost and lover to his grandfather Jesús. In it, his grandmother, now dead and buried in the time of the narrative, writes a love letter to the ghost Reynaldo, telling him of Jesús's death, her jealousy of him, and her pain at not bringing him into her house. She invites him to stay and notes that "there will always be a room for you at our home" and, further, that she has preserved his memory, and the queer memory he invokes, in their grandson, the adult journal writer and child protagonist of the story whom she named after her husband's lover/friend.[178] The effect of the letter retrospectively inserts a queer genealogy for Chicano family that extends beyond the scope of received histories of queer Chicanx emergence. And it is crucial to see that it is capable of this through our reading of the artifacts assembled. In effect, the revelation does not happen in the time of the journal that the adult Reynaldo writes. Rather, it is through the combination of written materials the story holds forth. It is then most plausible that even our understanding of this queer genealogy and possibility for queer Chicano *familia* is achieved through our reading of the protagonist's archive, just as his understanding only comes after his grandmother's death and his reading of her letter. We are denied the loving stroke of the body and directed instead to the archival material the body leaves behind.

Where "Reynaldo" demands our attention to archival material, the story "Chivalry" confounds our ability to regard childhood innocence as sacred, or even as possible, except through sensation in relation to physical material and bodily ephemera. While Stockton would have us understand the gay child as only capable of emerging in retrospective fashion, "Chivalry" introduces the reader to the child who has died twice and emerges from these baptisms of water and blood as a type of queer prophet that, unlike the earlier child characters, more solidly hinges his queer revelations upon the objects to which he is introduced, providing the reader with a character that emphasizes object-oriented sensation as crucial to queer enunciation.

The protagonist reveals that, upon his ninth birthday, his "relatives thought there must be something genetically wrong with him," something that, unlike his cousin's "crib death" or his cousin David's seeming Down's Syndrome, "they couldn't put their finger on" and "then one day [he] cut [his] wrists."[179] Slightly parallel to Stockton's straight child that retrospectively allows for the gay child's enunciation through the notion of death, Cuadros's child character

[175] Ibid., 31.
[176] Ibid., 32
[177] Ibid., 34
[178] Ibid., 36.
[179] Gil Cuadros, "Chivalry," 37.

seems to recognize his queerness in the time of the story and, due to his emphasis on his family's suspicions of him as keeping "things hidden," represents a fear of the "gay" child.[180]

The story allows for the emergence of the gay child during a period that he is sent to stay with his cousin, David. During his time with his extended family, a stay prompted by his attempted suicide, the narrator recounts a series of erotic encounters with his cousin, and a prophetic vision of AIDS complications that hinge upon his cousin David's introducing him to an archive of pornographic magazines, jars of mouse and bird's heads and rattlesnake tails, and the pleasure of crushing wild strawberries against his skin. Through these experiences by the queer child, a mode of identitarian emergence evolves in such a way that the experiential is guided through the sensation and desire elicited in beholding and holding the objects. These objects become paramount in similar ways to the "The Quilt Series" in that they insist on the material object for expanded modes of queer fellowship. This story, then, even more so than the explicit archival register in "Reynaldo," announces the "world" of the novel that pairs the subject and the object as inescapably tied together through its productive "desecration" of the figure of the child as innocent *and* how this "desecration" provides yet another ghost story through the child's prophetic sight.

Immediately, upon arrival at a farmstead near Delano, CA, the protagonist is directed to the power of touch and queer filiation. His cousin, David, "jumped up and down" and, as the protagonist exits the cab of the truck, he swoops him up in his arms "kiss[es] [him] on the cheek" and "sp[ins] [him] in his embrace."[181] All the while, David's father attempts to "shoo David away" while "suck[ing] in his breath" with a "tinge of disgust that his fourteen-year-old would act like this."[182] As the protagonist rejoices in this embrace, we understand that this close connection between the boys, a connection that the protagonist declares is reserved just for David, is potentially allowed through a type of queer childhood filiation. This is not to claim that David is a "gay" child, as is the protagonist. It is to demonstrate that the unspeakable and unknowable queerness of the boys that defies their parents' understanding and suspicions of their biological deficiencies that promote the touches between them are, for them, unbound from regulated registers of sexuality, desire, and gender performance. We have then, in David, a character who appears to live without the social confines the hyper-aware protagonist possesses. To some extent, David is the Virgil (guide) and Beatrice (lover/guide) in the protagonist's journey to the vantage point where he may gaze upon the world below and discover his mission.

The function of prayer with David's grandmother combines the spiritual with the erotic and demonstrates the protagonist's queer, dilating growth. As they pray the rosary, the candle and silence "create more space" so that the room "swelled to a cathedral."[183] But as the protagonist prays and the rotating fan showers his body with cooling air, the fan's blades, as they turn on David, bring the scent of his sweat to the protagonist and draws him toward the source of this bodily ephemera.[184] The fan's action, which makes the protagonist want "to move closer to David, to inhale deeply next to him, to place [his] head against his shoulder, to rub [his] nose in his armpit," combines the spiritual with the sensual and mirrors the attachment to sensation the protagonist has to the archival material, the magazines, strawberries and jars of decaying animals

[180] Ibid., 37.
[181] Ibid., 39.
[182] Ibid., 39.
[183] Ibid., 41.
[184] Ibid., 41.

he will be presented with later.[185] For now, this queer spiritual awakening is an announcement of the guide that David represents. But it also asks the reader to index sensation as a material object that, here, has erotic value and potential. David, his scent, perfumes the "cathedral" his body, or a version of it, becomes sacred. As they leave the house to discover David's secrets, "secrets he never told anyone but [the protagonist]," it becomes clearer that David is a guide to the protagonist who "was always David's little shadow."[186]

One of the things that David wants to show the protagonist is his collection of nudist and porn magazines. As the protagonist views them, he "pretend[s] to be studious of the women's figures" not realizing that he has no need to put on this performance.[187] Ultimately, he confesses that he is most intrigued by the men "the abundance of hair around their dicks and asses, how many different shapes they came in, the strange musty odor off the pages themselves" that makes him want to "hold their crotches to [his] nose, let [his] tongue taste the magazines."[188] This physical manifestation of desire in the story echoes John Preston's consideration of the place of porn in the lives of gay men and gay youth. Preston, citing Michael Bronski's 1990 essay in *Gay Community News*, "Art and Evidence," notes that "porn has a real function in gay men's lives."[189] Bronski notes (quoted in Preston 1993):

> By making the desire flesh, the representation immediately brings the desire in the world of the physically possible: out of the mind and into the realm of potential interaction. Desire becomes a physical object. [Then] once this sexual object has been acknowledged, the sexual identity of the viewer is reinforced.[190]

As the protagonist simultaneously suppresses and announces his queer desire in relation to the material, David guides him to a clearer understanding of queer desire as physical object when he asks, "Do you have a boner?"[191] Upon hearing this question, the protagonist is perplexed and thinks of this word as if it were "something [his] grandmother had taught him . . . part of some ritual."[192] In doing so, the protagonist begins to tie this sensation-become-object, the boner he is experiencing and the porn he delights in, as part of a sacred cultural genealogy. The holiness and spiritual underpinnings of his experience are emphasized due to the feelings he experiences in that moment that are compared to his near-death experiences. Like his glimpses of the beyond, the protagonist experiences a similar ecstasy, "the same buoyancy inside as if [he] were held underwater, a similar dizziness to losing blood."[193] In boyish glee, David grabs the protagonists dick and lets him feel his own, though the protagonist isn't "sure if [he] should" and David explains that "this was a boner," further emphasizing the bodies dimensions as both subject and object *and* granting increased sensation to the material, the porn, and the desire that extends beyond the page that becomes a living object of desire.[194]

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[185] Ibid., 41.
[186] Ibid., 42.
[187] Ibid., 42.
[188] Ibid., 42.
[189] John Preston, *My Life as a Pornographer and other Indecent Acts*, (New York, NY: Masquerade Books, 1993), 29.
[190] Ibid., 29
[191] Ibid., 42.
[192] Ibid., 42.
[193] Ibid., 42.
[194] Ibid., 42.

The protagonist moves closer to a more replete finding of queer identification in relation to material objects and the queer haptics of the scene. The boys continue their quest to the farmhouse that holds yet another of David's secrets. But as they move closer to the farmhouse and the protagonist's "dick press[es] against his zipper," thrilled at the prospect of seeing "more dirty pictures" that will further his queer identificatory possibilities, we find that this is a very different archive.

Unlike the porn, so important to the protagonist's queer enunciation, David places greater emphasis on the jars that hold what he seems to consider his life's work: jars of mouse's and bird's heads, rattler tails, and some full snake skins. Afraid that they will be deemed unworthy of saving by his parents, David commands "you can't tell anyone or they'll make me bury them."[195] The fear of burial of the objects lovingly curated emphasize the book's requiring our attention to archival material and, perhaps, even its own anxiety about the material it holds forth. This is an archive of dead things, fragments of dead things. Is the anxiety that these dead things, the fragments that could represent the whole or many different types of that whole, be forgotten like the people lost to the AIDS pandemic, that history that circulates throughout the text? Indeed, while the protagonist proclaims that he isn't sure "if he shouldn't bury them" as he wrinkles his nose at the smell of decay, David proclaims them the "coolest" things.[196] We are given no answer to David's twice repeated question, "Aren't they cool?"[197] But it becomes clear, as the protagonist reaches into a jar and pulls out a snake's rattler, and as David holds out the skins of the snakes from which they came, that there is something special here in the smile David flashes that "meant he had pride in [the protagonist], that he taught him something."[198] The protagonist registers that he is being taught to revere objects, to not forget them, and save them in a similar fashion to David, who replaces the pots "almost as sacred as [his] grandmother's table of religious statues and family photographs" back on the shelf that then fractures under their weight.[199]

In the final pages of the story, after David has been belted and made to clean the mess in the farmhouse when his shelves of objects fall, David takes an unusual posture in relation to the porno magazines the protagonist reads to him. Perhaps understanding the importance of this erotic material to the protagonist, David, having lost his archive of the dead things, sees the magazines as more closely aligned with the protagonist such that the protagonist must counter David's threat to tell on the protagonist for looking at the pornos. The protagonist has to remind David that the pornos are, in fact, part of David's collections. Sensation then overtakes the scene as David "pounced on" the protagonist who, "afraid that he was going to beat [him] up," begins to cry.[200] But David doesn't beat him up. He just sets his weight atop him and "somehow [the protagonist] wanted him to go farther, do something more to [him]" as he "began to get hard" before "[David] then rolled off."[201] The pornographic material has been thrust into the realm of the physical and the protagonist now seems eager to participate in the reinforcement of his own sexuality. And he gets his chance during a late-night adventure that acts as a type of prophecy for the book and its readers—a proleptic vision for future potentials emerge coded by the freedom of the nudist magazines recently seen.

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[195] Ibid., 43.
[196] Ibid., 44.
[197] Ibid., 44.
[198] Ibid., 44.
[199] Ibid., 45.
[200] Ibid., 47.
[201] Ibid., 47.

As the Milky Way beams down from the sky onto their bodies, David "put his arm around [the protagonist's] waist, as he pulled him close."[202] Freeing their body to the night air, they wear only their briefs, they climb the fence into the neighbor's strawberry patch. Commanded to lie down, the protagonist does as David does—plucks strawberries from the bushes and crushes them all over his body.[203] The action makes strange marks and the protagonist observes that, as David rose from the ground, "small skins fell off his stomach and his arms, leaving discolored patches on his flesh, dark and unnatural. His face was nearly shadowed."[204] This description, supplied by the protagonist, is key to my viewing him as a type of child prophet. The child protagonist conjures an image of David that seems representative of the bodies of PWAs (People With AIDS), who are, in artwork of this kind, often described as being just like you or me. Yet the bodies chosen as subject are depicted as representationally extraordinary in artwork through their gaunt faces (David's shadowed face) and Kaposi's Sarcoma lesions (the dark and unnatural patches on David's flesh).[205] Through this detail, another object, portraits of PWAs, emerges for the queer reader. If the child is not himself a prophet, he inspires gay readers to transform him into one. The signaling of this portrait resonates with Cuadros's activating his queer readership's anxiety in relation to HIV/AIDS in his final poem "Conquering Immortality" when the first-person speaker, thinking about the decay of the Egyptian Theatre in Los Angeles, and its relation to his own body begins to speak in the second person as follows, which I quote at length:

> I can see its demise
> like the progression of a disease,
> how without warning
> simple things
> like white cells
> are no longer enough.
> Or you rub your neck muscles
> and feel a knot of flesh
> and it hurts
> and it makes you tired
> and you notice your tongue isn't as red as it should be
> and you can't tell if you sweat in bed
> because you have too many blankets
> and you don't want to panic
> but you've seen it before
> with other people
> and you call them
> ask them
> but they don't know
> and you can tell they're annoyed

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[202] Ibid., 47.
[203] Ibid., 49.
[204] Ibid., 49.
[205] See Douglas Crimp, "Portraits of People with AIDS, " *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 84-107.

> because this is like the hundredth time
> someone has called them
> trying to get information
> telling them their symptoms
> instead of going to doctors
> and finding out that way.
> The clues fly around
> like letters blown from the marquee,
> only decayed hieroglyphs,
> words that make no sense.[206]

Like the images invoked in the excerpt from Cuadros's poem, the image of David in "Chivalry" pivots on a portrait of PWAs that Cuadros constructs, a portrait that, as the poem suggests, "we've seen before / with other people" and are anxious about seeing that portrait manifest in our own bodies.[207] Combined, Cuadros's texts insist upon *our* remembering HIV/AIDS instead of allowing the "AIDS crisis [to] bec[o]me an . . . agent of amnesia, wiping out memories not only of everything that came before but of the remarkably vibrant and imaginative ways that gay communities responded to the catastrophe of illness and death and sought [and, I add, seek] to memorialize our losses."[208] Cuadros's book takes on the political project of reconciling experience and identity with the objects of queer history and, as the protagonist does with David, transforms those objects into a portrait of PWAs representative of HIV/AIDS history so that readers may be "pulled into his[/its] embrace," rub our bodies together, and be reassured through his/its laughter and reciprocated embrace that "now we're brothers."[209] This move, in the poem, to second person point of view, quashes the ability for us to consider the book as testimony, the characters' as Cuadros. The second-person transfers the site of ownership for the anxiety the Cuadros's story's reveal. They become part of a collective experience for a readership with varying levels of experience. None of these works are Cuadros's story. But they could be ours.

The protagonist, now imbricated within a queer filiation with David, and with his readers, no longer needs to be told what to do. Together, David and the protagonist walk to a faucet and bucket to wash off. As the protagonist steps into the basin and is washed by David's ministrations, the queer child dilates. Far from simply growing sideways from the point of enunciation, the protagonist connects his past, his first near-death experience by drowning, to the present washing. As David "pressed his hand against [the protagonist's] chest]" he relates it to the rhythmic pressing of "a boy [his] own age] to bring him back to life.[210] For the protagonist, David also brings him to new life as "his touch seemed to burn somewhere deep inside [him]" as "strawberry skins filled the drain."[211] The protagonist, cleaned and dried, feels as if he has been "called to a mission" as he gazes at the strength of David's hands and the veins that course up his arms in relation to his own recently cut wrists "[H]e knows where weakness ran" and perhaps still understands that queer survival is a community effort that can falter when the singular is

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[206] Gil Cuadros, "Conquering Immortality," *City of God*, 143-44.
[207] Ibid., 143.
[208] Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Queer Past*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 3.
[209] Gil Cuadros, "Chivalry," *City of God*, 49.
[210] Ibid., 51-2.
[211] Ibid., 52.

paramount.[212] He offers a mode of exchange that is erotic and filled with care as he thinks, but does not say, "as if called for a mission, . . . 'Now it is my turn, let me do you.'"[213]

Cuadros's stories which feature queer children engage with a communitarian mission. The "birth" of the text that extends from "The Quilt Series" make possible a mode of reading that resituates the world of the book as gazing outward through the objects it renders and its characters' reliance upon them for their own queer birth. Because many of the character's throughout the text are anonymized to varying extents through the objects to which they become associated or part of, the reader is part of this mission as the objects upon which we gaze encourage our stories to inhere in those objects as well such that a composite character exists, fictional and non-fictional, within the objects collected in the archive we hold in our hands. Are the objects looking at us or we at them? Which of us is the scarecrow awaiting on the horizon for that queer embrace?

"I Used to Think Mexicans Were Greasy": Gil Cuadros's Aztlan (sic)

All published scholarly work on Cuadros examines his story "My Aztlan (sic): White Place," which appears to center the protagonist's growing into a queer Chicano identity. Attention to this work by scholars of Chicanx literature makes sense due to its seeming invocation of the mythic nation of Aztlán and its partly being set in a specific Los Angeles geography that highlights the displacement of Chicanas/os living in neighborhoods that were leveled to make way for the Golden State Freeway (each of which are central points of scholarly departure in many Chicana/o fictions and in scholarly work). In my close reading of the story, I draw from a published interview with Cuadros, one of his early journal entries, and pay special attention to the grammatical tenses at the close of the story to continue demonstrating that the book disrupts our reading the text as the testimony of a singular character who stands in for the author. I also suggest that, though I read this story as showing us a character undergoing some type of Chicanx becoming in the narrator's solo-sexual ejaculation, the narrator's notion of Chicanidad seems more attached to his own desire for it when he sees it through others' desiring eyes and holds value for the queer sexual sociality it has brought to him. This identity that appears to be a Chicanx identity is the narrator's own special fashioning and is broad to the extent that it may not be the kind of Chicanx identity we search for, but it can certainly hold our own *as* our own. Reading Cuadros demands our attention to the objects which allow a connection to identities and histories, and I claim that the text, rather than underscoring what scholars deem a failure through their finding of an irreconcilability between gay and Chicana/o identity and the narrator's attraction to white men, expresses a central component of coming into an individualized Chicanx consciousness birthed from desire. The narrator does not express himself as natively Chicano (How could he?), but rather, chooses to become a new version of Chicano right before our very eyes in the arc of his ejaculate that signals his homecoming.

The title of the work employs what Gil Cuadros describes as a riff on a "Chicano-Studies feel" that captures a fictionalized representation of his own life.[214] Employing what he calls an

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[212] Ibid., 52.
[213] Ibid., 52.
[214] Kevin Martin, "Writer Gil Cuadros: Creating in the Face of AIDS," *Positive Living*, 3, no. 4 (1994): 3; 11; 23(?), privately held archive.

in-joke, Cuadros highlights a dimension of Nahuatl linguistic levels of meaning to indicate the whiteness of the heron's plumage, showing that one translation of the word Aztlán is "The Place of Whiteness."[215] For the scholar who would have Cuadros be a beacon for contemporary gay Chicano identity, this author-made marketing strategy meant to inspire sales in Chicano Studies departments, and its content achieved through research, diminishes our possibility for so easy an autobiographical and essentialist reading. It demands that we remind ourselves that Chicano-ness is not native to us but acquired, learned, and formed through us. One can see an outsider, or even individualized, approach to Chicanidad in the title that leaves out the "á" con un acento: Aztlan, not Aztlán. To some extent Aztlán has been deprived of its mark of identity and is left to float as some new suggestion not-weighed by its accent. More interestingly, the text demonstrates this forming of being through its uses of tenses that, as with the child narrators discussed earlier, initiates a queer *and* individuated Chicano enunciation that dilates and demands our reconciliation of both Chicano and queer political projects as not mutually exclusive.

As the narrator races, drunk down the freeway, not to his current home but to his childhood home, he encounters a litany of West Hollywood gay bars and remembers the fingers "pale compared to [his darker skin]" that prompt this traversal.[216] Pondering how these men with white fingers ask "where [he's] from . . . as if *they* are the natives," the reader is clued into the conflict the narrator feels in the marriage of racial and queer identity and to the desires he so firmly attaches to it.

As the narrator parks under the freeway near his leveled home, he imagines himself in a graveyard—"parked cars are tombstones" and the house is a funeralized object.[217] But he also imagines himself *inside* the house as his mother, "not wanting to think about the white man who infected [him]," says, "He might as well have shot you."[218] Rafael Pérez-Torres views the mother's statement the his lover "may as well have shot [him]" as a declaration that the "white lover breaks" family bonds and "disrupts the mother's view of familial reproduction and perpetuation" extending from a heterosexist point of view that has Pérez-Torres see the "queer body rending" the Chicano cultural and "social fabric that his mother imagines represents reality."[219] Somewhat similarly, Raúl Homero Villa reads the location in which the mother's expression occurs, the narrator's memory of the mother that attaches to or is inspired by the family home, as emphasizing "ethnic cultural identification" with the Chicano home space, a space in which the narrator's queerness cancels out his potential for cultural nativity due to the aberrance of his queerness in the Chicano Barrio.[220] It is unsurprising in there readings, then, that his home is in a seeming graveyard and the queer, who does not participate in the Chicano heterosexuality deemed, however forcedly, essential, must be eliminated.

However, Pérez's reading of the mother's statement as a racial and homosexual breaking of Chicano family bonds, and Villa's reading that joins her statement to the family home emblematic of a "normative" Chicano heterosexual and heterosexist culture, that the protagonist's white lover "may as well have shot him," is troubled in the narrator's remembering

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[215] Ibid., 3.
[216] Gil Cuadros, "My Aztlan: White Place," *City of God*, 53.
[217] Ibid., 54.
[218] Ibid., 54.
[219] Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 165-166.
[220] Raúl Homero Villa, *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000), 139-140.

himself as native to this "Dog City" and his welcoming a quick end that he deems better than "watch[ing] [his] lover and friends melt away."[221] Rather than see the mother's statement as a wish to eliminate the aberrant queer who is also tainted by whiteness, I suggest that the narrator's "welcome[ing] a quick end" elaborates on his mother's meaning and shows it to be more aligned with his own wish for that quick end. Despite the reader's knowledge that the narrator's mother abused him when he was a child and that their relationship was one of conflict, her knowledge of his serostatus, her "questions [to him] about what [his] doctor has said," and her sleep disturbances when she thinks of her son's having sex with the lover she comes to think of as his killer place her in the rather expected role of a mother grieving for and worried about her child.[222] Something has changed between them, perhaps through his seroconversion and the emotional and physical pain of his experiences and his friends and lover's experiences with HIV/AIDS that he has shared with her. Because she sees the lover as already having killed her child, the shot to the head is not a dream of visiting more violence upon her son, but sparing him the physical and emotional pain that she understands, because of her son, will come more often and with increase of intensity. While the possibility for reproductive futurity has symbolically come to an end, there is no separation from the family and the home due to the narrator's queerness and HIV-positivity, as both Villa and Pérez-Torres suggest the text shows. Instead of "rending" apart, there is a coming together as something new as a "milky white fluid floats" in the narrator's "body space, breaks into the secret bonding of [his mother's] sex, [his] father's sex, and the marriage of their cells."[223] We can see that this fluid, this viral ejaculate, "breaks into" each member of this family individually and collectivity and does not break them apart.[224] Rather this fluid emblematic of HIV/AIDS has transformed them all and draws them together when once they were broken. It brings change to identity through this "trouble" and pain that is an individual, social, cultural, and family issue. The narrator is not "in flight from" a West Hollywood gay scene that is predominately white as Villa suggests.[225] He is not attempting a return to a mythic Aztlán existing in the Chicano family home he longs to enter but is always denied entry to due to his queerness. No. The narrator is bringing his desires home and it is through his desire that he will make it new. In that white fluid and in the white hands of dying friends the narrator holds perpetually is an amalgamation to the broadened communities and histories, Chicano and queer, that must be held onto. "The last of their bodies heat" that gives "fuel to move" the protagonist forward also moves us forward with him toward a productive transformation, even if that transformation is through the narrators "own impending death" and his handing off the last of his own body's heat to fuel our journeys.[226]

But these white hands and the ambivalence his mother has toward them generates new knowledge about the narrator. Similar to Cuadros's early journal entry of 1987, in which he confesses that he viewed himself as a "twinkie, brown on the outside, white on the inside,"[227] the narrator, like the over-forty daddy crowd he hangs out with in West Hollywood, "became white too" and yet can never be.[228] To keep the peace amongst this crowd, he "kept Sleepy Lagoon,

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[221] Gil Cuadros, "My Aztlan: White Place," *City of God,* 55.
[222] Ibid., 54.
[223] Ibid., 54.
[224] Ibid., 54.
[225] Villa, 140.
[226] Gil Cuadros, "My Aztlan: White Place," *City of God,* 55.
[227] Gil Cuadros, Writing Journal, "Marriage," Private Archive.
[228] Gil Cuadros, "My Aztlan: White Place," *City of God,* 56.

Indian massacres, and insecticides taboo subjects to avoid arguments and misunderstandings," keeping the past "under a heavy lid, burnished pottery."[229] The inclusion of the adjective "burnished," deploys a specific mode of understanding from Cuadros the ceramicist. Burnishing, a feature used in the ancient world and today, though contemporary ceramicists often glaze pottery instead, involves hours of concerted effort with bone dry pottery. This means that it must be rubbed continuously, with the hope that this object will not break. Cuadros, then, via the narrator, "burnishes" his writing in a manner that preserves the potential for new revolutionary identities.

To call into question examinations of Cuadros that focus on a singular protagonist or a clearly identifiable Chicano identity, consider the following from Cuadros's journal that details his relationship to what he calls his heritage:

> I learned about my heritage, about the Zoot Suit riots in LA, about the meaning of wetback, about Posada and tiatiwacan (sic), La Milinche (sic) and Cortez (sic). I started photographing abandoned houses on Brooklyn Street, I started visiting El Mercado and tasting it. But I felt apart, sometimes I hid it by being arrogant, but I knew I wasn't apart wholly. I spoke no Spanish which amused John since he had worked in a popular Mexican restaurant at one time, he knew more than I did in Spanish. . . . he made me realize that my identity was larger than my heritage."[230]

Knowing that the author himself values identity unbound from prescriptions, this knowledge from the archive discloses a more grounded place from which to consider the text and the struggles in identarian readings of Cuadros *and* his work. We learn from this journal entry that we cannot *read* Cuadros according to a codified version of "heritage" or identity, at least not fully. This also troubles our want to read the text as containing a protagonist that stretches across the chapters. Instead, through this journal entry that shows a retrospective fashioning of self through its past tenses, the verbal variances in Cuadros's text are laid bare. When the narrator remembers his dying lover asking him, "When are you going to grow up?," Cuadros's story turns both inward and outward in its verbs tenses as it seeks to make that end goal his own. I'm not sure if he grows up or grows into something pre-existent. While I read his transformation as tying to the kind of second-hand knowledge of Chicanidad his journal suggests, I see his text as complicating an easy understanding of what Chicano identity means as he grafts onto it a queer world and HIV/AIDS politics he experiences through gay whiteness. I call the narrator's transformation a type of Chicanx enunciation. But even as I know that strain of identity to be there and can read it there, like the narrator gazing at his dying lover "at the end," it is, yet, "unfamiliar" and resists our "recognizing" it.[231]

The character vomits into the toilet, streaming foam and "an empty AZT shell," tying his version of Aztlán to AZT. There is then an insistent and quick moving present-tense narrative, "I run to the toilet," "skip another set of pills," "all I can hear is water," "it sprays down my throat," "I taste the metal in the pipes."[232] But then things slow down. Under the water, we learn that the narrator "used to think that Mexicans were greasy because of the foods they ate, heavy in

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[229] Ibid., 56.
[230] Gil Cuadros, Writing Journal, "Marriage," Private Archive.
[231] Ibid., 57.
[232] Gil Cuadros, "My Aztlan: White Place," *City of God,* 56-7.

lard."[233] After eating the greasy food his mother prepared, he "would wash as if to peel skin, to leave nothing but dry flesh, to get the oil out."[234] But as the character remembers this, he is seeking oiliness in the present, it is "[his love]," scrubbing his body "with a stiff washcloth and glycerine soap."[235] Rather than shying away from oil, his choice of soap demonstrates the value of humectants and indicates a reversal of his early devaluation of ethnic Mexican identity that he ties to the practice of oiling up. But it also demonstrates a type of burnishing of the body, as oil is a vehicle used to burnish pottery. The character is burnishing his own body, making it stronger.

To further slake his skin, the narrator lubes his dick and begins to masturbate. He idolizes himself as "the little Mexican boy" desired by older white men at the "doctor's condo, the lawyer's palace, the high above valleys," increasing his rhythmic pull as they "said stuff like 'Hot latin, brown-skinned, warm, exotic, dark, dark, dark.'"[236] But while the narrator finds a semblance of agentic power in this remembered exchange, he undergoes a transformation in relation to their economic and racial power as his body becomes a productive object, "buried under their bodies' weight, dirt and asphalt, moist skin, muscle and blood."[237] Yet his desire for these white bodies in relation to his, also makes them objects of pleasure *and anonymized* subjects in community as his body is also anonymized. Desire becomes launched out of the mind and into the world in this desire between brown bodies becoming more brown through oil and white bodies become instrumentalized, joined to his body and to that of his family. He creates his world through desire believing that "when [his] skin has been oiled up . . .[he] won't be in so much pain afterward," that he won't be lonely.[238] The narrator literally "comes home," makes his Aztlan de-accented through desire, a place that holds the brown, the white, and certainly the queer. With oil being a metaphor for Chicano enunciation and burnishment—the preservation of the Chicano body in relation to whiteness—the character hinges himself as a pivotal bridge between gay and Chicano identity. Julie Avril Minich[239] considers the close of the story as ambiguous, denouncing Rafael Pérez-Torres's reading of the final masturbation scene as occurring indulgently and at the "expense of social change or queer political agency,"[240] a notion that sounds a lot like Antonio Viego's noting that "gay Chicano and Latino men are often figured as the weak links in political movements for Chicana/o Latina/o racial empowerment."[241] But I ague that it is not so ambiguous, it's just not "familiar." The close of the chapter asks us to go to the archive and see and circulate the bones left behind. It announces this character and this body of work as burnished, strong, hardened, and responsive to the social, political and health pressures of its time.

As the narrator orgasms, the "pressure of their thighs, the crush against [his] mouth" abate and instead we are left with a body transformed into an object—an object different from the exoticization at the hands of gay white men, and yet birthed through white fluid that become,

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[233] Ibid., 57.
[234] Ibid., 57.
[235] Ibid., 57.
[236] Ibid., 58.
[237] Ibid., 58.
[238] Ibid., 58.
[239] Julie Avril Minich, "Aztlán Unprotected," 180.
[240] Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 192-3
[241] Antonio Viego, "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature in Queer Chicano Cultural Work," *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), 93; Previously published in *Discourse* 21, no. 3 (1999), 120.

assumedly, gleaming, white bones.[242] The narrator's description of his body "becoming tar, limbs divided, north and south" suggests the narrator becomes a link, a highway, as if he has become an object subject to state control. But if this is so, is not this highway, north to south, linking his "home" to his queer West Hollywood community? I think this being defies state control. Defies any control. After the narrator's flesh spreads north and south we are quickly returned to the house that "smells of earth" as it "rumbles from the traffic above," with the remains of the body, its bones, buried within it.[243] "White clay sifts from the ceiling," transforming this home into one more ancient, as clay is not part of contemporary homes' constructions. We see in the end, the value of burnishing the body as it leaves behind not a body, but the bones that "shine in the dark," the remains of the birth of this new identity that speaks to queers and Chicanos.[244] We are left with an incorruptible, burnished, ceramic object that disrupts our desire for a distinctly Chicano or gay narrative of emergence. Instead, we must look to the archive, the objects, the bones left behind, to discover this incomplete connection between the queer and the Chicano and see its potential to suture the wounds they share between them. As Minich notes, the text demonstrates that "those who have died of AIDS-related causes . . . persist in the cultural artifacts they have produced (like *City of God*)."[245] But the text not only highlights that which persists in what is produced. Indeed Cuadros notes that, while it was "very important to [him] that his status be known when he read" his work, he does not want to be "'shown off' on Day Without Art," a World AIDS Day action, inaugurated in 1989 in response to the AIDS pandemic. The Day Without Art sometimes coincides with museum closures or removal of displays by artists who died from complications due to HIV/AIDS, and often features special content by HIV+ artists and artists living with HIV/AIDS.[246] Even as Cuadros believed that "identity is a very critical component for survival,"[247] it is crucial that we think about the text separately from Cuadros's life. Indeed, part of his prompting to write these works was because Cuadros realized that he could not aspire to be like his boyfriend's friends:

> A white boy who went to brunch every Sunday . . . .And it was HIV and AIDS that caused him to realize that he couldn't be that person. And that he had to find a different identity because he . . . he couldn't be that blithe, easy-going, superficial guy who went to brunch every Sunday with his gay friends."[248]

Fiction allowed him to produce multiple speakers with varying narratives and identificatory possibilities. Fiction helped him play with new identities that exceeded the bounds of heritage. As a person who thought of himself at first as a "twinkie" and later as a "proud pocho," he garnered from his suburban childhood that which he was taught to identify by his parents: as working-class white folk. Like Islas, Cuadros too did not hold confessional work in high regard and, if the complications do not prompt our dismissal of an autobiographical reading of *City of God*, perhaps, because we are so intent on finding him, we may cease doing so at Cuadros's

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[242] Ibid., 58.
[243] Ibid., 58
[244] Ibid., 58.
[245] Julie Avril Minich, "Aztlán Unprotected:," 184.
[246] Kevin Martin, "Writer Gil Cuadros: Creating in the Face of AIDS," *Positive Living*, 3, no. 4 (1994): 11, privately held archive.
[247] Ibid., 11.
[248] Conversation with Kevin Martin, August 2017.

request.[249] Instead, we must attend to the world the book produces, a world that sees the value of spiritual growth toward identity that pales in comparison to the material objects that cannot fade in the same way as the body. Those materials show the way while the body leaves "but a small glow and even that begins to perish."[250]

"My Bones Shine in the Dark": Finger my Materials, Not My Hair

Over the course of this chapter, I have drawn sparingly from the privately held archive, despite its deep wells of unpublished material. I have resisted this for two reasons. The first is due to the fact that, as the archive has yet to find a permanent home, the materials occupy no definitive position within the world of Chicana/o letters, similar to Cuadros's work more generally in that field, due to its uncatalogued and non-archived status. I will say that the Berkeley Ethnic Studies library and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, both since 2016, have interest in caring for the papers so that they may be more accessible to researchers. The second reason I have resisted incorporating the unpublished material is because I wish to reach the most replete audience I can. To do so, I have focused on *City of God,* a work that has received such little scholarly attention that to introduce new material to the already slim explorations of his work, material that is untrackable to most every scholar, might place this work in the same embalmer's position I wish to avoid.

I will note that there is much more to Cuadros's writing than *City of God*. Indeed, the story "Birth" has, attached to it in Cuadros's hand, a sticky-note that declares that it is meant to be part of a novel that was in progress in 1995 about "two grown men both with full blown AIDS."[251] The documents bundled with this note demonstrate that Cuadros's work increasingly dealt with the material object as paramount to any kind of enunciation in relation to the spiritual and surrealist qualities the works employ. As the privately held archive begins to find its home, it is crucial that we remember Cuadros's emphasis on the material object as being capable of expanding, not limiting, our connections to his work and each other.

[249] Ibid.
[250] Gil Cuadros, "Sight," *City of God,* 99.
[251] Gil Cuadros, note concerning "Birth," 1995, private archive.

Chapter 3

The Tavera Papers' Timeliness and Timelessness: Making Queer Family Esta Noche

The Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000,[252] acquired in 2002 by the Ethnic Studies Library at UC Berkeley and made available after its cataloguing in 2004, is a relatively "new" collection and has yet to feature prominently in published works. Of all the special collections and archives I have encountered in this study, the Hank M. Tavera Papers constitute the convention to textual scholarship in writing and reporting on early literary and historical archival holdings that are newly discovered or not widely written about. This convention is a puzzling methodology. It illuminates and locates the material the boxes contain and, while it does so, the reader accompanies the researcher's processing and descriptively identifying the data *and* their puzzling over them and proposing possibilities for future research using the archives they detail. These scholarly works on early holdings are often paleographical and philological in their scope and reflect the historically and linguistically sound potential for intertextual and comparative approaches to the data they hold. This sort of textual scholarship is not restricted to early material. Textual scholarship's use in establishing a control text through combining texts that are assumed to have authorial intent alongside more eclectic texts that show variation or anomaly were central to publishing the most often taught and "authoritative" Gabler edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.[253] In contemporary archival work, there are some similar approaches in scholarly writing on Chicanx special collections and archives that that stand out.

Scholarly work on Gloria Anzaldúa's collection in the Benson Library at the University of Texas at Austin corresponds with some of the comparative, intertextual, contemplative, and descriptive components of textual scholarship some may be familiar with in readings of, especially, early literary and historical archives. For Anzaldúistas, AnaLouise Keating may be one of the more familiar scholars publishing work on the Anzaldúa archive.[254] Keating is familiar for a number of reasons in Anzaldúan scholarship, not least of which is her collaboration

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[252] The papers studied in this chapter come from The Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000. To shorten this and deliver some variation in report and sentence construction, the container for these papers may be variably named as "The Hank Tavera Papers," "The Tavera Papers," or "The Hank M. Tavera Papers" in addition to the formal name of the citation. All of these refer to the papers at the Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library—The Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000.

[253] David C. Greetham, "Textual Scholarship," *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. Joseph Gibaldi, (New York: Modern Language Association, 1992), 103-137.

[254] See Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Ana Louise Keating, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2000); Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); AnaLouise Keating, "Speculative Realism, Visionary Pragmatism, and Poet-Shamanic Aesthetics in Gloria Anzaldúa—and Beyond," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 40.3 (Fall/Winter 2012); Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

on several projects with Anzaldúa. Keating's work in the Anzaldúa archive tends toward the comparative and intertextual components that are part of the tradition of archival report. Her archival assemblage in *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro* describes and contextualizes the newly printed material and places those works thematically in relation to previously published materials. In her introduction to the work, Keating, unlike some archival workers I've encountered previously in this study, places the process of "excavation" in the hands of Anzaldúa herself. Keating is able to resist the role of archaeologist due to her close familiarity with the works contained in the archive and through her knowledge of the author's thinking arrived at through her friendship with Anzaldúa. For Keating, Anzaldúa's writing process is characterized by an "excavation" of "her [own] creative processes" that contributed to her "develop[ment] [of] an aesthetics of transformation, grounded in her metaphysics of interconnectedness."[255] In this observation we see, despite Anzaldúa's death, a continuation of their collaborations. Because Keating knows this aspect of theorization due to her familiarity with the writer, many of her approaches to Anzaldúa's work are based in the knowledge she possesses through her many conversations with the author. This filiation helps to shape Keating's interpretive mode.

Outside of this familiar mode, Keating, to her credit, fills this work, *Light in the Dark*, with appendices that act as a guide to the archive. In the appendices, Keating provides the science of categorization and location in similar ways as textual scholars engaged in philological and paleographical work on newly discovered or rarely consulted Pre-modern and Early Modern collections. Keating's appendices offer a more replete description than those typically offered to researchers of special collections through their online overviews of extent, scope, and content. It goes beyond topical matters and provides locational description. These appendices provide step-by-step instructions to accessing archival material held on computer disk that Keating suggests may be hard-found, but are needful of future eyes, research, and writing.[256] Here, Keating enacts a "traditional" methodology of textual scholarship in her appendices, treating these digital origins as a new sort of queer, digital incunabulum. She also enacts a type of paleographic notation in her describing Anzaldua's "hand"—the special ways that Anzaldúa names her work and files on the hard disk she consults and invites us to consult. She offers a guide. But even these appendices are sometimes informed by her friendship with the author.

The emotional dimension to archival work is central to my thinking through the hopes and desires that shape our relationship to the materiality of the archive and the fictions we make of them. Emotion, the materiality of paper and the flesh that paper cuts as we thumb through pages coproduce the phantasmatic archive that exists in us and that we write to life. This is messy work. Emotion, disciplinary and political filiation, desire—all messy. The archive is already messy, and to it we add our own share of messiness. To remind and make clear, our productions of the archives and papers we encounter are always touched by this messiness, this hope, desire, and political and disciplinary filiation. Our writing produces the phantasmatic archives that then circulate as altar. There is this hope for the archive to be made "whole" or "settled." When I have spoken of the phantasmatic in the negative, it is this about which I refer, this "wholeness" and "settling" that can discourage more work. I also refer to the transformation and potential misshaping of the materials, whatever they may be, when we choose to "speak for" the archive, or the dead who collected it. It's easy to do, processing exciting information through

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[255] Keating, introduction to *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, by Gloria E. Anzaldúa, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), ix.

[256] See Keating "Appendices 1-6" in *Light in the Dark*, 165-200.

our messy and ahistorical filters and "speaking for."[257] It is my intention to let these materials in the archive "speak" through me in a voice as close to theirs as I can muster. And this, too, is a messy task.

In Keating's work, I do not find phantasms that misshape the texts. Keating's inspiration to scholarship as a result of her personal relationship with Anzaldúa makes her approach nuanced and more focused. Far from "settling" the materials, she gestures to multiple paths, to new voices. And on some of these paths she goes so far as to give *us* the gift of focus by detailing her connection to the author, clearly guiding us to the locations of the material, and contextualizing that material as potentially inspiring us to future comparative and theoretical approaches. But most archival researchers are not blessed enough to know the person who collected the works we page through. Some who do not have this kind of close connection adhere more closely to the tradition of archival report and, in their approaches to contemporary Chicanx papers, adds a seasoning that makes it new.

Suzanne Bost's work in the Anzaldúa papers closely follows the tradition of archival report in textual scholarship on Pre-Modern and Early Modern studies and makes it new in relation to this new-ish archive. Indeed Bost, no doubt inspired by well-established queer and feminist literary and scholarly traditions, situates the researcher and her positionality as central to the academic work, the interpretation, theorization, and story-telling she produces. That position, for Bost, becomes as important as the material she pours over. It is this positionality that gives life and strength to her thinking about the cross-temporal relation that occurs at the site of researcher and archival contact.[258] This is the "newness" about which I refer that evolves the tradition of archival report and enlivens textual scholarship. The story of researcher contact, their joys and frustrations that foment thought and theorization, are the queer touches that make archival work new and newly relevant to a field of queer Chicanx/Latinx study.[259]

In my work with the Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, I join to this tradition, old and new, and, inspired by Bost when she found herself "unsure" about "what [she] should be looking at or what [she] should be doing with the material found," I turn to my experience with the material at hand.[260] Like Bost, a self-proclaimed "literary scholar who loves to historicize" and yet felt lost in the Anzaldúa papers, I too felt confounded by the Tavera Papers so voluminous that they could, as AnaLouise Keating writes of Anzaldúa's papers, "generate a

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[257] I point here to a specific range of editorial and historical work in archives, some of which I perform in my work on Islas. Yet, I must say, that it does not pass my thinking that any contemporary notion advanced about a text out of our time, or really any text, misshapes that text as the condition or consequence of that notion's writing or utterance.

[258] Suzanne Bost, "Messy Archives and Materials That Matter: Making Knowledge with the Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers," *PMLA*, 130.3 (May 2012), 615-630.

[259] Bost shares in a tradition of scholars who (re)define what the very nature of the contemporary archive is and means. Some of the scholar's mentioned below collect, record as live experience, or generate their archives of study as participants. Some in this tradition center the experiences of the observer/researcher in theorizing, describing, locating, and generating their archives of study. See, for example, José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Juana María Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 114-151; Lee Edelman, "The Future is Kid Stuff," *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-32; Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*, (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

[260] Bost, 616.

small academic industry."[261] I came to the Tavera Papers with an idea to think about his work with the California chapter of the Latina/o Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGÓ). And I will. But then I realized that this was not an archive devoted to California LLEGÓ. It was messy. It was messy because it is an archive of a life. These are the *Hank M. Tavera* Papers, 1952-2000. There is a story here. Actually, there are too many stories here to hold in these pages. Taking a page from Bost, I will celebrate the story I *can* tell, and hope you will too. As Bost says of archival work, "perhaps" the most consequential thing that "literary scholars have to offer [to] archival studies" is "a good story."[262]

The Shape of This Story

This chapter aligns with traditional archival report alongside the contemporary imperative to narrativize that scholarship through researcher experience. This text will offer an overview of some of the Hank Tavera Papers and detail most closely his efforts as an activist intent to advance LGBTQ and BIPOC rights and human livelihood. I will also offer some historical background on California LLEGÓ inspired by the Tavera Papers and some published personal narratives in the book *Queer Brown Voices*. All the while, I will resist the phantasmatic perfection of personhood, the hagiographic rendering of queer antepasados that, for good and not-so-good, continues to be common.[263] Because of the turn to experience that contemporary work in queer Chicanx archives advances, I am invited to be self-critical of my own participation with the archive, my developing relationship to it, and the knowledge and assumptions I brought with me that are now changed. I found that my practice of textual scholarship in the Hank Tavera Papers inspired my thinking about new configurations to my readings of Cherríe Moraga's text and notion of "Queer Aztlán." The papers, alongside Tavera's seeming religious proleptic approach to time, multiplied "Queer Aztlán" for me and split it into a historical document, a performance in time, and as a chapter in *Loving in the War Years* and printed elsewhere made to feel verifiable and persistent through its continued printing and being published. This multiplication of the text has widened my approaches to it. I will offer some readings of Cherríe Moraga's text(s) and the notion of "Queer Aztlán" toward the end of this essay.

I find my first experiences with the Tavera Papers to come at an auspicious moment when Chicana/o/x Studies turns to a notion of the queer. The National Association of Chicana Chicano Studies (NACCS) announced this in their 2018 Conference's call for Papers. They called this conference "The Queer Turn," and situated it as a response to being on that "turn's" precipice. Meanwhile, longtime and new constituents of queer Chicanx and Jotería studies were left wondering what we were turning from as we felt we had never had to "turn" toward it. It preceded us. Was already and always there. And we shared in its following and continued its production. In short, many of the participants at the conference saw the Association as being in a different time. So here, in the Hank Tavera Papers, is a new companion on our path from a past already and always queer that can help us continue to extend this timeless timeliness into our queer present and a queer future for us all. This is *our* time.

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[261] Bost, 615; AnaLouise Keating, "Archival Alchemy and Allure: The Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers as Case Study," *Aztlán* 35.2 (2010), 164.

[262] Bost, 616.

[263] Hank Tavera's papers, due to the many materials he saved that do not cast him in "good" light, allows us to be as honest as his collection invites and this story requires.

Notes on "Queer" words and a Queer Notion of Size in Textual Studies

Archival work is one of the queerer scholarly tasks I have undertaken. My work with archives and with other scholars' work in them has shown that, beyond expectation, archival work both exists in and exceeds language's possibilities to pronounce clearly. How can they when our utterances begin to change the works we encounter? When I write "queerer," I'm not certain that there is a clear comparative aspect in my adjective's "-er" inflection. There is something about "animacy" here. Mel Chen's writing on the word "queer" thinks about the possibility to animate this word and, potentially, it's referents. [264] Chen asks, "how might a term cast off its dehumanization?"[265] My work does not intend, yet, to engage fully with the cognitive linguistic components that Chen explores. But Chen's question inspires me to think about the word in relation to archival work. Indeed, some archival workers about whom I have written appear to work alongside a belief, as the book of Genesis suggests, that the word speaks life into the world, and so too does their word speak life into the author of the papers. This is in opposition to what Chen inspires me to consider: That the word's utterance makes its referents into appropriate and disciplined objects. I think that both have merit and my work in archives thus far shows this. Archival workers often construct an imaginary that has the object speak or appear to speak. I wonder then if the "subject" Chen invokes that will have "capacity to galvanize" and "damage" and have "power to do such a speaking-back-to," may not come from a subject at all.[266] Perhaps it is not even a sound, but comes from the word unspoken and distributed, and redistributed time and again, through an acting hand of course, that testifies. Do *we* speak when we "speak for"? Do we testify when we interpret? I think about the many unspoken and unwritten parts of an archive unseen that we must leave out or the parts that can't even be spoken of with supreme clarity without *being* there, like a shaking hand or a pagination method that constantly changes. Our modes of interpretation leave so much out and our modes of description can fail to testify. Consistency is our unreachable dream. Using the language of life and death, subject and object, animated and de-animated is to use the language based in change and transformation—not consistency, but constant inconsistency. This is what we live and die with and for. I am not devoid of hope. And I hope that my writing does not make revenants. In works that want to, there is a confounding combination between the archival workers' feelings that they speak the dead to life and their simultaneous insistence that these are, in fact, not speaking subjects, but objects that are the property of an institution and discipline.[267] But *this* archive, the Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, has not yet been made to "speak" so fully.

So I return to the expression that "archival work is one of the queerer scholarly tasks I have undertaken," and it is not only because of the desire it evokes, its unruliness, and its playful resistance. It's also because speaking of archives requires that I play the part of *size-queen*. Indeed, scholars who work with special collections have one main commonality. Due to the conventions attached to archival work, we can't help but suggest, through our description of the archive itself, it's materiality, the space it takes up, that size matters. And it often does. Consider,

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[264] Mel Chen, "Queer Animation," *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2012), 57-85.

[265] Ibid., 57.

[266] Ibid. 195.

[267] See Aldama, *Dancing with Ghosts*, xix

for example, Anjali Arondekar's noting the argument between the desire for a queer archive and the "occlusions such retrieval mandate" in less theoretical and more material and physical ways.[268] Consider the sheer size of the State held Indian Colonial Archive Arondekar encounters. How does a large archive and the myriad of ways that it is categorized, often unclear and sometimes faulty, *be* the physical occlusion to the retrieval about which Arondekar speaks? I am not working with State archives. But these holdings I examine are on the larger side for literary and personal papers as they may hold some unique issues to them that are similar, due to their largeness and the cataloguing of them by a range of folk with various levels of training and interest.

This punning joke on size is a way of moving beyond the bounds of objecthood and specific disciplinary ownership the "queer" might entail for us at times. The joke plays on a conventional truth about archival report and shows my work as connected to the queer sociality that inspires it. Size-Queen is a delightful epithet to take on as I relate the impressive dimensions of the Hank Tavera Papers.

So…., How Big Is It?

The Hank M. Tavera Papers, held at the Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library, is the largest holding of papers I've encountered in this project. The extent of the archive measures 67 linear feet composed of 52 cartons, 4 boxes, 6 tubes, and 8 oversize folders.[269] The papers are comprised of a variety of material that include correspondences, materials related to various organizations with whom Hank Tavera was involved, business records (personal and organizational), personal papers on Hank Tavera's family (marriage records, divorce decrees), teaching materials, proposals for events and funding, programs for LLEGÓ Encuentros and other Theatre initiatives, newsletters, personal and organizational copy photographs, audiocassettes, event posters, newspaper clippings, and other ephemera. This is an archive of a life. Hank Tavera's life. And it takes up a fair amount of space.

Imagine, if you will, a three-bedroom apartment in San Francisco that is occupied by three people: Hank Tavera, and his partners Kehau Wessel and Vladimir Maldonado. Imagine those 67 linear feet, the cartons and the boxes, and the tubes, which hold posters, and the oversized folders, which hold more posters and artwork, not contained so tightly as they are at the Ethnic Studies library, not rolled up but strewn about. Think about whatever table it is in your home that you drop your mail upon. What if you kept dropping mail on it to equal 67 linear feet. I ask you to imagine this. But, having seen these papers rolled into the library on what seemed like Costco pallets, one after another, *I* can't even imagine that room or rooms, the spread of this paper throughout that home. I don't even know if it *was* a three bedroom apartment. This is imagination after all. But what this tells me is that these papers were so important to Tavera, and he was so important to his partners, that he and his loved ones lived with them, with this, in their home, for many years together and then his partners maintained them after Tavera died in 2000 for two years until they donated the collection to the Ethnic Studies Library at Berkeley, and to us. More than the size of the archive, larger than it, is the

[268] Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2009), 1.

[269] For reference and comparison to the other large archive I mention here, the Anzaldúa papers measure 128 linear feet in 238 boxes that are not consistently clear in their report of what they contain.

importance the collector attached to it and the love the keepers of it gave to him and those papers. This love is an intangible part of the archive I have yet to know how to place. As is customary of archival work, I don't know how to place a lot of the materials in this story of the archive. And yet I have a story with some of them: like the jar of pins and buttons I reached into whose points pierced my fingers, drew blood, made this red ghost of me forever housed, but destined never known to be, in the jar to which I returned them. I don't know how to place them. But they mean something personal to me now that they have drawn my blood, accepted my offering.

Hank Tavera: A Portion of Life Measured in Paper

I knew as much about Hank Tavera as Wikipedia can give when I first paged the materials that shape this work. I knew that he was an HIV/AIDS activist, a founder of National and California LLEGÓ, and that he was very much involved in the arts, especially theatre. Most works that name him highlight his work with LLEGÓ. Indeed, in these papers, his work with LLEGÓ are of the larger components of the papers at hand. But Tavera is much more than his work with LLEGÓ. As I've said before, these are *The Hank M. Tavera Papers*. They are the papers of a life lived. And so Tavera needs here some story beyond LLEGÓ before this chapter gets to it. Here is some of that story his papers can tell.

Enrique Tavera, that is his birth name, "was shortened to Henry and later Hank" in his early youth at Catholic school near Boyle Heights in Los Angeles "because the teachers found it easier to pronounce" than his given name.[270] Like many narratives of Chicanos in school from the 1950s and before to the mid 1980's, and even today, speaking Spanish in school was punishable with, at the least, "a hit on the knuckles."[271] In this context, Tavera found that there "was no cultural reinforcement" for Chicanidad/Latinidad as he was growing up. However, Tavera simultaneously considered Catholic school a place where some semblance of cultural solidarity came to the fore. In Catholic School, there were "lots of Chicano kids," and they were all friends.[272] But without a stronger cultural component at the school, Tavera associated and identified most closely "with the [Roman Catholic] church" and that religious attachment to the concept of proleptic time.[273]

In his childhood and teenage years, Tavera came to see holy rituals as expansive, connected to, and informing life events that marked time such that he developed a personal attachment to the regularity of time through ritual. In Tavera's thinking of time and ritual, not only did Christmas, Easter, or the feast of Guadalupe hold religious fervor, but so also did birthdays come to occupy a similarly sanctified occasion because, like religious holidays, they all share the "basic concept of rituals and symbols which are an important part of our lives,"[274] and play over and over again without end and without need of a celebrant. Tavera would carry this importance of ritual into his work to address the need for multi-ethnic representation in his later work as a counselor and activist. This "basic concept of ritual" helped to form new modes, where

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[270] Hank Tavera, "Hank Tavera Interview n/d," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 47, folder 1, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.

they were absent, of ethnic representation in the schools and organizations he dedicated his time and work to.

When Tavera became a counselor at Santa Barbara City College in the 1980s, he found a void in culturally responsive and inclusive programming, similar to the void he experienced in Catholic school. With fellow Chicana/o/x teachers and counselors, he developed coursework and programming for Chicana/o/x students that would also satisfy their own experience of a dearth in ethnic representation and valuation on the campus. To do this, they "had to teach" from their own experiences and so they "made up courses to teach [their] experience[s]." As time went on and these courses went beyond an early tacit acceptance of them by administration to an increased regularity in offerings, Tavera and his colleagues found that they were "creating new areas of [study through their] Mexican experience."[275] These early exercises in curriculum development sought to establish lived experience as an art of living, as a ritual of ethnic representation. Tavera's experiences and faith in the Catholic Church not only inspired him to see ritual as an ordering event but also as an aesthetically pleasing and theatrical event that spurs belief and action. His teaching according to experience brought that theatricality and ritual into a secular zone that could make for a blend of the human(e) *and* the otherworldly.

This blend would bring with it a proleptic orientation to Tavera's work. His emphasis on the theatrical and the arts and humanities, areas that often share similarly timeless and time-shifting qualities as proleptic time, would become major components to Tavera's work in HIV/AIDS and BIPOC activism. Proleptic time, in the case of religious celebration and liturgy, does more than commemorate an event relegated to a past. The days, Christmas and Easter, are brought into the present through their celebration. But these are also part of a future. The stories of the bible and those events that are celebrated in Roman Catholic liturgy are timeless, before us and after us and always present because they are continually happening within us. It is no surprise then, that Tavera figures an already-here and eternal aspect to his conception of the activist work he practiced. Indeed, when Ed Morales phoned Tavera in 1987 and asked him what he thought of the acronym LLEGÓ for the association in progress of development—an organization that was, at the time, called the National Association of Gay Activists (NALGA),[276] "nalga, "which translates to "butt"—Tavera loved it. His papers declare his moving the tense of the word into a type of proleptic time. When Tavera herd *llegó*, "arrived," the third-person simple past tense form of the verb *llegar*, "to arrive," he shifted it in his head, and in his writing of this memory he notes that he expressed to Morales, -*Ya llegamos*, "we already arrived," in the collective preterite given a perfected aspect through the adverbial *ya*.[277] Just like this slip into an already there-ness here in this ritual of naming, a baptism, even, if we take the shower into account, it was natural that theatre and the arts corresponded with the timeless and always present quality that shaped Tavera's approaches to education and social justice work through a humanistic mode of care.

Theatre and the Arts: Acting out Activism

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[275] Ibid.

[276] This is an interesting history I'm unable to close. Tavera suggests the name above. Later in this essay, Letitia Gomez advances that the organization was called the National Latina/o Lesbian and Gay Activists (NLLGA). They both agree on the acronyms' pronunciation and the story of the name change.

[277] Hank Tavera, "Hand Written History (Purple Ink) of Founding of LLEGÓ," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 4, folder 3, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

The earliest materials on theatre and its role in activism that emerge from Tavera's own hand, or in most cases, his typewriter, begin in 1981 when Tavera, at the age of 29, was on the Board of Directors for Teatros Nacionales de Aztlán (TENAZ) and served as their festival coordinator. At the 11th international Chicano Latino Teatro Festival held in San Francisco in September 1981 and "after a decade of experience and a year-long discussion," the TENAZ board adopted a new manifesto rooted in the tradition of the Chicano movement. Their manifesto declared intent to usher this past, this history of resistance attached to the Chicano movement, into a future that could hold space for all Latinos/as/xs and for all Latinxs/Chicanxs of all genders and sexualities and those close to them through a language that would unite all people in struggle, all "underdogs," as *always* being tied together.[278]

The early version of the manifesto frames Chicano theatre as powerful and mobile stages of activism and care central to the resistance to oppression by the "underdogs," laborers, and folks at the margins who created it. This theatre that emerged "out of the social struggle of La Raza and given birth [to] by farmworkers who remain workers" was conceived of as tied to the "sheer necessity to communicate."[279] In the early manifesto, this form of theatre *is* the voice of the people who have no voice and the TENAZ board became committed to creating theatre as a "human rainbow," a theatre for *all* people that grows out of the people.[280] But for Tavera and the board, there were some issues with the manifesto as written.

Issues with the manifesto were its specific use of imagery of a 1960s Chicano movement that reflected on the "cultural and religious ties to Aztec past," in its invocation of Aztec Gods, and its lack of "universal images" of "teatro springing from the people" who, as written, are defined exclusively as Chicano farmworkers. Their concern was that a wider Latinx audience may not fully understand or feel part of this description and that the political messaging may "fuel argument between the advocates of the 'message' and those for aesthetics."[281] According to Tavera's notes on the amendments, the board left those specific issues aside for later consideration and focused on some present concrete resolutions that could "provide an eloquent statement on our times and the global struggles of the decade."[282] One of these included a more specific declaration of solidarity with Latin American theatre groups through direct condemnations of "physical attacks" against Latin American theatre group members that are violations of "freedom of speech."[283] Named especially is violence toward members of the University of Veracruz theatre Company, due to their production of their play *Cucara y Macara* by Oscar Leira, that was a "strong indictment on the abuses of ecclesiastical authority and manipulation of religiosity by the church" and that, as the document is pleased to announce, was showcased by popular demand twice and "received standing ovations from both audiences."[284] In their commitment to a pan-Latinx theater community, TENAZ also identified themselves as

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[278] Hank Tavera, "TENAZ Manifesto, 1981," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 11, folder 13, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[279] Ibid.

[280] Ibid.

[281] Ibid.

[282] Ibid.

[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid.

having solidarity with the struggle of the people of "El Salvador, Guatemala," and other countries fighting for liberation.[285]

In their final resolution, TENAZ turned to the "adoption of concrete measures against all forms of repression and discrimination of sexual origin."[286] This was seen as a "leap forward" that "struck at the heart of the last two oppressions of the 1970s: sexism and homophobia."[287] The language of the board indicate this to be a great struggle that required a special "urging" of its own members and all other "progressive" theatres to view the fight based on sex, gender, or sexual orientation "as part of a class struggle."[288] There is a wariness and weariness evident in the words that follow this triumphant declaration imbedded in the worry, and knowledge, that it must be strongly urged, even of its own members. There is a type of apologetic language that follows its noting that this "resolution is long overdue."[289] It goes to lengths to assuage any fault or judgment that the declaration may imply. The document states that this long-overdue resolution "should not imply that teatros will now only deal with gay or feminist issues" even as it notes that these "themes" are "finally beginning to be explored in the Chicano Latino theatre movement."[290] It goes further to suggest that readers and theatre goers should not feel concerned about relinquishing their attachment to these topics, topics regarding sexuality especially, as "taboo" because "the subject of sexuality need not take our focus away from other equally important global issues."[291] Further, these struggles are presented as always already arrived, always present, past, and now more readily seen as a future. Through that proleptic time Tavera invests in, these issues are "part of the struggle" if "teatro is to be the voice of the underdogs, the oppressed; if teatro is to build a liberating consciousness; if teatro is to be a human rainbow with all its different shades and colors."[292] That "if" carries a lot of weight as the text presses the already there-ness of sexism and sexuality into the mold of readers' minds and into the past struggle out of which Chicanx/Latinx theatre emerges. Knowing as we do now, in retrospect, the coming HIV crises that would affect, and continues to affect, queer POC populations hardest, is there any doubt that there would soon be an issue in this aligning sexual marginalization with racial and ethnic marginalization? Indeed, just one year later, in 1982, Tavera would have to respond to homophobia in publications proposed to San Francisco Latinx/Chicanx biweekly newspaper *El Tecolote*, a publication for which he wrote as an advocate for the underdog in theatre, explicitly against homophobia, and as a reviewer of new theatrical works.

Homophobia in Chicano Theatre

Following the adoption of these resolutions by the TENAZ board, Tavera wrote about this need to align queer struggle with POC struggle in Chicanx/Latinx theatre in his role as a regular contributor to *El Tecolote*. In Spring 1982, Tavera found himself needing to respond to a

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[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.

homophobic piece by Guillermo Loo submitted to *El Tecolote*. It is not clear, but it seems probable that, in relation to the homophobia in his article, Loo was asked by *El Tecolote* to reduce his response "from 11 to 4 pages."[293] Tavera's response to the article by Loo informs us that Loo is a member of TENAZ. Indeed, the letter that shows Tavera's discontent is addressed to TENAZ staff and the Board of Directors. His multi-part critique of Loo's text specifies issues in Chicanx/Latinx theatre and his commitment to sexuality as being a necessary component that has always already been part of Latinx/Chicanx social justice work and art. The carefulness and generality of his writing that Tavera performed in his report of the "Tenaz Manifesto" that sought to appease detractors from the mission to algin sexual and gender discrimination with racial discrimination is absent in this document. Here Tavera offers a more specific argument for queer, women, and BIPOC alignment in the political thrust of Chicanx/Latinx theatre. His argument appeals to logic, emotion, and his own character and the imagined character shared with his audience who are teatristas and activists like himself.

Tavera declares that he met with Guillermo, who he names as "Chino," an epithet that demonstrates their closeness and familiarity, for "hours . . . discussing his article" and the parts that Tavera found "offensive."[294] Tavera finds offense in Loo's suggestion that sexism and homophobia is an "inherent reality" and that to raise women and homosexual folk's struggles with regard to "sexual liberation" and otherwise alongside class and historical struggle is "quite ridiculous."[295] Tavera goes on to demonstrate that Loo's notion of homosexuality, which is divided into an active and latent mode of expression, is itself flawed in its expression that "all homosexual societies are doomed to self-destruction" through the "law of nature" and not that of "man."[296] Loo attempts to bolster this argument by stating that the resolutions taken up by TENAZ were opposed by members because they are, rightly so, "not concerned with the struggle of homosexuals," that it was enough for them to include, as an exception, "one play that dealt with the issues theatrically," and that the TENAZ resolutions are invalid because "the majority of the voters were homosexuals and bisexuals." This prompts Loo to declare that the resolutions themselves were a form of "manipulation" of the TENAZ board upon its members.[297]

Tavera makes his proleptic thinking about gay/queer alignment with class and historical struggle real through his attempts to educate Loo and the board to whom he writes about a queer history based in "medicine," history and precedent, and logic and reason. Tavera begins by countering the conceptualization that queers are aberrant and unnatural to nature through an appeal to recent "science." He cites the American Psychiatric Association's 1973 amendment to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual that removed homosexuality as a mental disorder. Tavera argues that this dissolves "Loo's opinion . . . that homosexuality is not natural" and declares that this decision demonstrates that homosexuality is not "unhealthy, psychologically."[298] This "science" aggregates history and logic through precedent. Tavera appeals to history, logic, and education in relation to Loo's declaration that homosexual societies are doomed. Tavera suggests Loo get himself to a "gay history course" where he may learn of the "significant contributions

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[293] Hank Tavera, "Letter Against Homophobia from Hank Tavera to TENAZ Board," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 11, folder 13, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Ibid.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Ibid.

[298] Ibid.

[of gay men and women] throughout history."[299] Further, Tavera suggests that this course of education would also provide Loo with the understanding that "homosexuality is present in all cultures and ethnic groups" throughout the history of humans and that homosexual figures and some forms of what may be called homosexuality itself "[have] even been revered [in some cultures]."[300] Finally, Tavera takes issue with the present, noting that Loo, as "National Artistic Coordinator of TENAZ," fails to respond to the official TENAZ manifesto that has the objective that members be "actively concerned about [gender and homosexual violence and liberation alongside] all other forms of oppression."[301] He slyly suggests that Loo resign if his use of the TENAZ title is not accompanied by a "disclaimer indicating that [his opinion piece] is contrary to the TENAZ position" and that his obvious homophobia, in suggesting that votes by TENAZ members who are "homosexual or bisexual" discount the validity of their votes, warrants a concerted effort by the TENAZ board to "phone Chino immediately with [their] own reactions to his article while he is in the process of re-writing it."[302] Throughout this letter to the TENAZ board, Tavera highlights a reality of an always queer presence, sociality, and history through his education that garners his belief in the reality of a queer past as preceding us, developing us, and sharing our contemporary spaces. In the papers that focus on theatre and art, Tavera is seen to regard the stage, page, and canvas as the most vibrant places for seducing audiences into sharing his cross-temporal connection and political alliance of queer folk as part of *all* "underdogs" across time. It is no wonder then, that theatre-based initiatives were steeped in the HIV/AIDS programming he co-sponsored or developed.

AIDS Theatre/Street Theatre: Corporeal and Spatial Consecrations

Part of Tavera's life's work was to "introduce theatre as a powerful tool and medium for education and behavioral change" in relation to fostering more civil cross-cultural interaction and in advocating for sexual awareness with regard to its practice as a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.[303] In 1986, during his work with Instituto Familiar De La Raza, Inc., they sought to develop a "community based AIDS health education project" to meet the needs of the SF Latino community.[304] Theatre was meant to address literacy levels of the community, provide "culturally relevant visual information and oral communication" on HIV "AIDS transmission," and to encourage a new practice of risk-analysis amongst vulnerable communities who were experiencing varying levels of "denial . . . around sexuality in general and homosexuality, bisexuality, and intravenous drug use specifically."[305] The group conceived of a "fotonovela," "a novel that uses a series of photographs, comic-strip style, with dialogue bubbles," that would be about AIDS transmission, groups at risk" and modes of prevention.[306] They chose this genre

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[299] Ibid.

[300] Ibid.

[301] Ibid.

[302] Ibid.

[303] Hank Tavera, "AIDS and Theatre Festival Proposal 1989," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 17, folder 9, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[304] Hank Tavera, "Application for funding AIDS Theatre Latino Coalition 1986," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 15, folder 16, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Ibid.

because they observed that, in their Latinx community, popular love stories "read by both men and women" took this form.[307] Through this genre familiar to their audiences, the Instituto hoped that it would lead to increased emotive connection that could inspire in audiences awareness and the adoption of prevention strategies. But the possibilities for the "fotonovelas" to garner such a response in audiences is deemed to require a "strong emotional theatre production" to "help make people more open and susceptible to the AIDS prevention and educational materials" the "fotonovela" held.[308] The theatrical production through which "people will be able to react to the play" and through it learn about HIV/AIDS "and calm their fears," is conceived of as a type of pastoral care that offers a ritual of cleansing—a catharsis that leads to new dedication to and renewal of the community and the self.[309]

At the 13th International AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization event in March 1996, Tavera presented a poem that offered an answer to the question: "What is AIDS Theatre?" His poem focused on the emotional and political registers that AIDS theatre taps into. AIDS theatre, Tavera notes, reflects the lives and bodies of those it represents, the lives and bodies of people "infected and affected by HIV" that prompts a devotional practice of inclusion and action through the body's movements in the everyday.[310] These practices of living and moving are forms of collective art that announce the ever-presence of queer folk and defy any possibility for a final curtain call. AIDS theatre emphasizes queer life and future through a type of doxology that insists on a remembrance that queer folk, queer lives, queer experiences were "in the beginning, [are] now, and ever shall be." AIDS theatre is not about "hopelessness and despair" and is not about a "faceless disease that only affects 'Gay men,' for to do so would be to arrest AIDS theatre's great "purpose."[311] It *is* about "all [of] our human expressions," emotional and physical, our "drama / and art. and music and dance and poetry and song," our "not so pretty bed pans" and "lovers dying in [our] arms," and "the shock of your HIV" positivity and the fear to talk about being HIV negative.[312] It addresses this day-to-day and makes it sacred. This day-to-day, the "rage" and the "hope" is a ritual. It is "a practiced art form. created by people / who must do it," who must respond to this world, to "discrimination because of sexual orientation / and race / and gender" with a "passion and politics" that is a "festival of inclusion."[313] It is a theatre of life and a literal genre of theatre warring "against an epidemic," but always about hope and the celebration of the lives we have.[314] This hope *and* this war is expressed through the corporeal politics in our bodily movements—these instruments through which our politics are sounded. We make hope and protest through our bodies' relentless move to art.[315]

Perhaps nowhere in these papers is the consecration of people, of time, and of the ground through collective performance more intentional, more obvious, than in Tavera's "AIDS Candlelight Manifesto." In the "Manifesto," the responsorial, "We gather. We remember. We

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[307] Ibid.

[308] Ibid.

[309] Ibid.

[310] Hank Tavera, "The Genre of AIDS theatre: From Street Theatre to Broadway," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 49, folder 3, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Ibid.

[313] Ibid.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid.

mobilize," is offered as a prayer that makes holy "the names of lovers and loved ones upon our lips," and transforms the asphalt into the "main artery" that feeds the life's blood of San Francisco.[316] This is "holy ground," a "hallowed spot" that globalizes the "world events" that transpire to "mark the longitude and latitude" of not just "a disease," but also a place of "daring . . . civil disobedience."[317] San Francisco becomes a holy site for "pilgrimage," a place where pilgrims "perform this ritual" of gathering, remembering, and mobilizing to "heal each other and ourselves."[318] At this site where the old churches, the "bath house[es]" now closed, new sites of worship are erected in the "sex clubs" their closures "spawned" and new religion emerges as "a new generation rehabilitates the word 'queer.'"[319] Far from being an exclusive ritual of remembrance for pilgrims, this is a pilgrimage within a pilgrimage where pilgrims become the life blood that flows, from the Castro, down Market St., that artery, to the United Nations Plaza where it enfleshes the "giant headlines / on the front pages of our newspapers," and gives HIV/AIDS a collective body that has no borders.[320] This body leaks "into the consciousness of the American Psyche" and shares with it a close attention to time, a time beyond time that sits on the "edge of life" and "on the edge of the planet."[321] This march is every march, every revolt, every act of resistance. "Stonewall, the Marches on Washington," the "Gay Pride Celebration / and the candlelight March for Harvey Milk and George Moscone" march with these pilgrims "bringing light along the way."[322] "We gather! We Remember! We Mobilize!"[323] This is the "street theatre" component of the AIDS theatre about which Tavera spoke. The possibilities for theatre, for this performance as ritual, bear a striking resemblance to the story in a poem Tavera held as a favorite, Dick Lourie's "Forgiving Our Fathers." In it, the speaker witnesses a person drowning and notices that it is a person:

> I must pull from the water but I never
> knew it or wouldn't have done it until
> I saw the street-theatre play so close up
> I was moved to actions I'd never before taken."[324]

This is the power of theatre, according to Tavera. It moves folk to action. It is a ritual that begets a ritual of mobilization. It is a ritual that disorders a prescribed order, scrambling time and memory such that it can be shared throughout all places that will become sacred as each name "upon our lips" drops to the ground, the arteries of our cities, and begins to germinate.

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[316] Hank Tavera, "AIDS Candlelight Manifesto," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 49, folder 3, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Dick Lourie, "Forgiving Our Fathers," *Ghost Radio*, (New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1998), 48-49, quoted in Hank Tavera, "Poem copy 4 Marked for Performance: 'Forgiving Our Fathers,'" CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 8, folder 45, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Dancing with the Archive: Queer Sociality and Permanence

Across many of the printed self-bios in the papers, Tavera describes himself as a "Chicano Gay activist, cultural worker, and archivist."[325] A historian as well, Tavera recorded detailed histories of LLEGÓ and the Latino Coalition on AIDS/SIDA and did not shy away from offering comments to help increase the "accuracy in preserving the facts around" the history of Queer Raza.[326] Indeed, in his letter to Luis de la Garza, he reveals what any person who works with the Tavera papers will come to find: that Tavera had been "maintaining archives for several organizations" over the years. But, as can be seen from the previous sections that focus on theatre and ritual, Tavera saved much more than organizational histories and papers. For Tavera, archiving was part of his activism as it gave a type of permanence to his experiences, those experiences shared with many around him, experiences that, through the papers saved, offer glimpses into corners of queer sociality in his time, across our times, and beyond it. It is this queer sociality that carries with it the possibilities for that mode of ritualized performance to be encoded, experienced, and shared time and again through the items Tavera saved and transformed into relics.

When one thumbs through the Hank Tavera papers, they will be struck by the variety of items they sort through. Tavera's newspaper clippings, so numerous that they are not in any one place but spread throughout the folders, show shifting responses and suspicions in relation to HIV/AIDS from the suspicion that transmission could be through mosquito to the development of highly active anti-retroviral medications. In the folders that highlight the many "encuentros" and theatre festivals, the papers record a wide range of cultural workers and performers names, some of whom published some not, that could give many a researcher new contacts, friends, and materials yet to be explored, read, and written on. There are even copies of unpublished works here. The obituaries and death notices Tavera saved, some published in the *Bay Area Reporter*, and some communicated at-length through personal letters to friends challenges us, as Horacio N. Roque Ramírez suggests, "not to fall into the enticing everyday practice of forgetting, of not looking back."[327] Especially in the case of the personalized letters, readers are unable to practice this forgetting in relation to HIV/AIDS as those missives explicitly detail the messiness and pain *and* the loss and the love.[328] Alongside the announcements of sponsorships of free condoms, the researcher is transported to a vibrant club, Esta Noche, and through the detail in the archive is invited to imagine Proyecto ContraSIDA Por Vida's "La Mejor Nalga de San Francisco/The Best Ass in San Francisco" contest that required participants to demonstrate "knowledge on HIV Transmission/Prevention" in addition to the requirement that they "have ass."[329] We are invited to join our Latinx communities at 3079 16th Street, San Francisco, to Esta Noche before it closed

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[325] Hank Tavera, "H. Tavera Short Bio," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 47, folder 7, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[326] Hank Tavera, "Letter to Luis de la Garza," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 1, folder 6, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[327] Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, "Gay Latino Histories/Dying to be Remembered: AIDS Obituaries, Public Memory, and the Queer Latino Archive," in *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, ed. Gina M. Pérez, Frank A. Guridy, and Adrian Burgos, Jr., (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 123.

[328] Ron Zuckerman, "Letter on the Death of Nicholas Vance Zuckerman,1994," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 48, folder 1, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[329] Proyecto ContraSIDA Por Vida, "Best Ass Contest at Esta Noche," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 48, folder 1, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

in 2014, to see Lola Lust perform "We Will Survive," condom/safer sex demonstrations, and the "erotic striptease dance numbers by gorgeous Leo Robles and hunky Angel Cortes."[330] The dance goes on, has gone on, and we, already, dance to its beat.

Near the beginning of this chapter, I said I didn't know how to place the buttons and pins, how to think of them. I've learned I didn't have to. Because they already thought of me. Like the buttons and pins' points that pierced my fingers and took my blood, making me part of this archive, I had no need to spill an offering to be part of it. I was already part of this chosen family; already an actor in this community history that extends behind me and reaches forward from me and beyond me and you. This archive and its contents embody the pastoral care Tavera practiced in his activism and that was a component of the "Sixth Area" added to the California LLEGÓ by-laws. This "Sixth Area" was intent to "support the expanded definition of 'la familia' within the context of 'la cultura'" so that new and "different alternative" models of family could form and "foster positive growth, nurturing, and love."[331] This family across time is one of the things these items offer to us; these items, inexplicably, announce that they *believe in us*. ¡Ya llegamos!

LLEGÓ: A History

In her preface to *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism*, the first anthology of its kind to offer a wealth of oral histories from this field, Letitia Gomez shares her realization of the kind of limitations to knowledge I had had, with regard to LLEGÓ, as a primary inspiration that lent urgency to this much needed book project. In a 2008 "workshop on creating a national agenda of LGBT Latina/o issues," Gomez came to see that "the majority of participants had no idea that there had once been a national Latina/o LGBT organization (LLEGÓ).[332] This came as a surprise to Gomez after her many years as an activist and because most of the people she knew and invited to offer their stories to the collection "were somehow connected to LLEGÓ."[333] In the early stages of forming the book *Queer Brown Voices*, the editors began "contacting" activists" in order to interview them and "corroborate the information."[334] But as the interviewers began to find that this was not always possible, they turned to "alternative sources, such as archived materials" in the Latino GLBT History Project in D.C. and found "one learned benefit and value of archiving materials" in verifying memory.[335] The stories and the archives consulted in the project reflect "the interconnectedness of Latina/o activists" and the shared struggles they and their organizations faced. Drawing from *Queer Brown Voices* and from the Hank Tavera Papers, I demonstrate my own move into increased awareness of LLEGÓ California through this small corner of the story that is part of LLEGÓ and LGBT Latinx history.

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[330] Hank Tavera, "Report on Safe Sex Performance at Esta Noche, 1992," CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 17, folder 26, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[331] Hank Tavera, "LLEGÓ By-Laws" CS/ARC 2002/4, carton 1, folder 1, Hank M. Tavera Papers, 1952-2000, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

[332] Letitia Gomez, preface to *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism*, ed. Uriel Quesada, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), xiii.

[333] Ibid., xii.

[334] Ibid., xi.

[335] Ibid., xi. It is worth mentioning that even the archives seem to resist complete "corroboration." See note 25.

LLEGÓ was founded in 1987 during a meeting at the second National March for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Washington, D.C. meant to continue the conversation about and to form a "national gay and lesbian Latina/o network" that would come to be called the National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Activists (NLLGA)[336] pronounced *nalga* (butt).[337] The groups that gathered achieved consensus on five areas that the national network, NLLGA, would focus on. These included the following:

> One goal was [first] 'to build a national organization of lesbian and gay Latinas/os in order to effectively address the concerns of our communities locally, state-wide, nationally, and internationally.' The second area was 'to create a forum for awareness, understanding, and recognition of our lesbian and gay Latina/o identities, legal rights, relationships, and roles *en nuestra comunidad*.' The third was 'to formulate and sustain a national health agenda for the impact of AIDS, AIDS-related complex, HIV+, and other health concerns in our community.' The fourth area was 'to develop a supportive network that facilitates the sharing of information and resources nationwide.' And the fifth, 'to educate and sensitize ourselves as well as our Latina/o and non-Latina/o communities on sexism, racism, homophobia, discrimination, and other issues.'"[338]

At that meeting, they also worried about the name of the organization and a phone exchange between Hank Tavera and Ed Morales, detailed in an earlier section of this chapter, helped the organization arrive at the name LLEGÓ.[339] As the organization worked to fulfill their commitment to the five areas mentioned above, they ran into funding troubles. In the 1980s, funding possibilities for LGBT organizations began to shift as a direct result of the impact of AIDS such that "sources of AIDS-related funds" became "instrumental in funding LGBT Latina/o groups."[340] As government organizations and corporate enterprises began to show interest in funding HIV/AIDS activist groups, organizations often had to prioritize HIV/AIDS education and prevention in order to qualify for these types of funding. Gomez recalls hearing the frustration from LGBT Latina/o organizations as their funds dwindled: "Who wants to fund Latino lesbians and gays? People want to fund HIV/AIDS!"[341] LLEGÓ, at the national and local levels, shifted its primary attention to the HIV/AIDS pandemic as the times and funding opportunities required.

To this end, in 1989, the first executive director of LLEGÓ, Mizzete Fuenzalida, recruited Mario Solís Marich to help LLEGÓ with their fundraising efforts. Marich, who later was elected to the board of directors, had been working for the AIDS Project Los Angeles and was "passionate about raising awareness and figuring out how to get money to help Latino gay

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[336] See note 25 for some confusion about the name of the organization.

[337] Letitia Gomez, "No te rajes—Don't Back Down!: Daring to Be Out and Visible," in *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism*, ed. Uriel Quesada, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 128.

[338] Ibid.

[339] See page fourteen for the more detailed story of the name change.

[340] Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, "Brown Writing Queer: A Composite of Latina/o LGBT Activism," in *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism*, ed. Uriel Quesada, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 9.

[341] Gomez, "No te rajes," 133.

men fight HIV/AIDS," and had a record in doing so successfully.[342] As the AIDS crisis progressed, board members began to die from AIDS related illnesses and the organization was in struggle for money and its identity. LLEGÓ would try to strike a balance as it eventually turned much of its grant writing efforts and services toward HIV/AIDS programming with the hope of securing funds from government donors.

Between 1989 and 1993, Marich, along with representatives of queer Asian, African American, and Native American gay male contingencies "became part of the Campaign for Fairness" and "lobbied Congress" and other federal agencies connected to public health "for resources to be designated for gay men of color" with the aim to retain their organization's identities and cultural components and to establish a funding pool just for these organizations.[343] They were successful in this endeavor and as a result of this work, "LLEGÓ got the opportunity to apply for a grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to work with HIV prevention in the Latina/o gay community."[344] But as they began to craft their grant proposal to the CDC, the questions arose: What is a Latina/o gay community? Who are its constituents? These questions tore at the fabric of LLEGÓ and became sources of internal struggle regarding the identity of the organization and its commitments to *all* of its constituents and its cultural and political engagements, no matter the funding scarcity.

Marich secured a successful grant writer from his contacts to write LLEGÓ's grant proposal to the CDC. The CDC was one of the largest donors for HIV/AIDS education and prevention, "but not everyone [felt they] benefited" from their dispensation of funds.[345] There was a "politics around funding for HIV/AIDS" that focused "only or mostly" on those thought to be most affected: cisgender gay men.[346] This posed a problem for organizations with broader interests, like LLEGÓ. It also increased tension amongst activists when thinking about dispensation in broader terms, for men who have sex with men (MSM) for example. Adela Vásquez, the first trans woman hired at Proyecto Contra Sida por Vida, notes that these funds, often "allocated for 'men who have sex with men' (MSM)" created conflict between activists thinking broadly about HIV/AIDS programing and activists "who believed such funding needed to only go to gay men's services."[347] Indeed the first version of LLEGÓ's grant proposal that was written in relation to the CDC's narrow HIV/AIDS funding guidelines "did not mention anything about lesbians and HIV."[348] Members understood that "lesbians weren't dying in the numbers that gay men were," but there were some, so members began to wonder how the organization could fulfill its promise to *all* of its members under these narrow descriptions of their organizations membership and goals. Nena Trujillo, a board member, insisted lesbians be mentioned because LLEGÓ was a lesbian *and* gay organization.[349] There was a "heated discussion" and Gomez and Trujillo argued about the necessity to have lesbians included in the language of the grant proposal to reflect the organization because "that's who we are," who

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[342] Ibid., 132.

[343] Gomez, "No te rajes," 134.

[344] Ibid., 134.

[345] Vidal-Ortiz, "Brown Writing Queer," 10.

[346] Ibid., 10.

[347] Ibid., 10.

[348] Gomez, "No te rajes," 134.

[349] Ibid., 134.

LLEGÓ is.[350]

While this goal, the goal of the grant proposal to address HIV/AIDS, fit into one of the organization's goals, it carried with it the possibility to undermine other areas to which LLEGÓ had committed. Despite LLEGÓ's funding crisis, members like Trujillo and Gomez saw that this restrictive funding threatened to shift the organization's identity. They did not want and did not allow the organization's dedication to *nuestra comunidad* to be controlled by outsiders. In the end, it was agreed that the proposal would be rewritten, but the grant writer confessed to Marich that he feared the proposal "would be unsuccessful" as a result of this shift.[351] Thankfully, the gamble paid off and LLEGÓ received the 1993 grant and was able to expand their HIV/AIDS education and prevention strategies across Latinx communities and to constituents of varied genders, sexes, and sexualities. LLEGÓ was continuously funded by the CDC until 2004 when the organization dissolved.

The story offered here of LLEGÓ is very limited, as was warned early on. But one of the things that I became aware of as I turned the pages of the archive and of *Queer Brown Voices* was that this history held new ways for me to read "Queer Aztlán." Afterall, Cherríe Moraga's initial performance of the work occurred during these crucial years of funding identity crises of in LGBT Latinx organizations. What follows is a working with this history to expand readings of "Queer Aztlán."

An Archive of a Queer Aztlán

The history of Latina/o/x LGBT organizations of the late 1980s play a significant role in shaping parts of Cherríe Moraga's text "Queer Aztlán: The Re-formation of Chicano Tribe." Upon entering the Tavera Papers, I had only a footnote from Moraga's text to inform me that "an earlier version of ["Queer Aztlán"] was first presented at the First National LLEGO [sic] Conference in Houston, Texas, on May 22, 1992."[352] Having only read the text as a published work as part of a canon of queer Chicanx studies, I had mostly thought of the text as remaining powerful with regard to thinking about queer Chicanidad and queering Chicano Nationalism. I also thought of it as a text that is under-critiqued for its colorist approaches to Chicana/o/x identity and its homophobic approaches to gender identity and expression and to gay men. But I had only read the text as the way most of us do: As a type of "living" object of ideas that are perpetual and perpetuated—a text that has come to gain a type of status and a type of sainting of the author and the text that may protect it from the critiques it earns or deserves.

But this text is so much more to me now in that it warrants critique from my desire for a queer futurity of a then and there, "a utopia in the present."[353] But it is also a performance of frustration in relation to LLEGÓ *and* a historical document that captures the feelings of precarity that many folks part of LGBT organizations were experiencing as possibilities for funding shifted and so too did their focus and their goals in relation to that funding. What follows is a reading of "Queer Aztlán," and some of its impacts that strives to hold these three aspects of it in

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[350] Ibid., 134.

[351] Ibid., 134.

[352] See Footnote, Cherríe Moraga, "Queer Aztlan: The Reformation of Chicano Tribe," *The Last Generation: Prose and Poetry*, (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 146.

[353] José Esteban Muñoz, "Ghosts of Public Sex: Utopian Longings, Queer Memories," *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 37.

mind—the performance, the history, and the present, "living" text. Two of these readings would not have come to mind as fully as they could without the Tavera Papers' intervention.

Queer Aztlán: A Performance, a Past, and its Perpetuity

Moraga's "Queer Aztlan" was originally performed at the inaugural LLEGÓ conference in 1992 and later published in 1994. It invites multiple readings of the document as performance, historical document, and "living" text. It is all of these things. As mentioned before, it is a performance in relation to the specific struggles of a LLEGÓ in search of funding from large donors for HIV/AIDS programming. It is a historical document that emerges out of the frustrations Latina/o/x LGBT activists experienced because of the limitations placed on their organizations due to the requirements for receiving large donations for HIV/AIDS programming. It is also a type of "living" text, a text out of time. And through the reading and teaching of it, most of this in academia, its performance and its specific past become some type of perpetual, unseen shadow, or a ghost, that walks with us.

The intangible performance and its past are easy to obliterate when reading the published document because the text ties to things tangible, things in the now, things readers can relate to. Many readers, teachers, and students can relate to the narrator's expressing a fear of non-belonging to the group of which they desire to be a part. Moraga shows us what we know: that colorism, homophobia, and language can shut us out of the places for which we long. For Moraga that was the Chicano movement, or the dream of it that might accept this "closeted, light-skinned, mixed-blood Mexican-American, disguised in [her] father's English last name."[354] The text also makes gesture to another thing tangible: paper. I don't mean just the paper on which it is printed. The text invokes a realm of paper, an archive to which "Queer Aztlán" breathes life, and invites us to do so as well. The text places before us the theatrical performances of the past, the movement-making, the actual movements of the "last generation," the Chicano movement to which the book's title refers. The other papers it gestures to in the speaker's thinking about her racial and ethnic identity are the papers of the state, the vital statistics records that record name and ascribe racial and ethnic filiation to our bodies.

Ricardo Bracho's question that serves as an epigraph to the text, "How will our lands be free if our bodies aren't?," complicates the tangibility of some forms of paper like vital statistics records or even papers related to property rights.[355] Even the land and the body begin to fantastically shimmer into something beyond the tangible when seen through Bracho's question, like a well-loved fictional character resting in that idyll. To be free, the body and the land cannot be defined by the papers of the state. The tension between the collective possessive "our" that spreads across land and body turns them into fantasy and makes it quite appropriate that a Chicano version of Utopia, Aztlán, a no place of fantasy, comes into focus with new possibility. Aztlán may serve as a key to freedom and collective unity if it can be made free[er]—queerly fantastical and phantasmatic.[356] But the bodies in this text are insistent reminders that our bodies do not shimmer and that we are not special but instead, more often than not, *even with* our refusal of state definition, we are reluctant to be more than and see more than the dull matte in ourselves

[354] Cherrie Moraga, "Queer Aztlán: The Reformation of Chicano Tribe," *The Last Generation*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1993), 145.
[355] Ibid., 145.
[356] Ibid., 145.

and others.

The intangible notion of "politicization" emerges from a category of identity not part of, at least not so explicitly yet, state papers. It emerges through Moraga's speaker's "bold recognition of [her] lesbianism."[357] Through this, the narrator *is* able to see the possibility of that shimmering body and she does the things it can do in its shine. She "re-structure[s] everything [she] thought [she] held sacred" and acts on "desire and against anything that stood in [her] way."[358] The speaker rejects and transforms church and country, things related to "the word," and the ethnic and gender cultures, unwritten but written about and still always writing, that shaped her life and belief previous to her recognition of her lesbianism and politics and her resultant attempts at transforming herself and those beliefs.[359] She finds power in her desire and in announcing who she desires.

As the performance, this power in queer identity appears to speak directly to the strife at LLEGÓ that is occurring from 1989-1993 as they write the first draft of their grant proposal for CDC moneys and do not include lesbians in it. This announcement on the stage at the 1992 National LLEGÓ Conference, the power of desire, of queer desire, of lesbian desire would carry with it the weight of that powerful rejection of the first draft of the proposal that mentions only gay men. It would invoke Trujillo and Gomez's argument for a revision that reflected LLEGÓ's mission as "a Latino lesbian and gay organization" and therefore needing "to mention lesbians . . . or we're not submitting the proposal, because lesbians have to be included. That's who we are."[360] The speaker's emphasis on this identity, as the performance, invokes the subjectively collective power of women, of lesbians part of LLEGÓ, and advocates listeners remember the broadly, politically, and queerly communitarian mission in the "we" of the organization that must value queer togetherness in order to be politically efficacious in *all* its interest areas and to all its constituents. For Moraga, that exists in the imaginary fantastic of a Queer Aztlán, "a Chicano homeland that could embrace *all* of its people, including its jotería."[361]

This dream is short-lived as the speaker returns to the body and, like the state papers it rejects, ascribes meaning to it and for it in relation to ability and appearance. Desire, which had so much possibility to shine and breach the bonds of flesh, is overridden. The text begins making its own record of vital statistics and uses color to include and exclude. Despite the speaker's early acknowledgement of her own feelings of isolation due to her light skin and lack of Spanish and a Spanish surname, she finds her own family a threat to "brown" politics.[362] The possibility for community cohesion in an inter-generational queer Chicanidad in a Queer Aztlán made for us all is gone. That shimmering is replaced by a voice that clings more strongly to the features of a Chicano movement of the "last generation" her book seeks to critique, those features she imagined would cause her rejection from it. The notion of a "Chicano" that Moraga holds forth is troubling and impossibly exclusive and excluding. In this Queer Aztlán, it seems, Chicanos must have Spanish, they must only marry and have children with other Chicanos (and only those that might ensure darker skin in their offspring at that), they must all practice community in the same

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[357] Ibid., 146.

[358] Ibid., 146.

[359] Ibid., 146.

[360] Gomez, "No te rajes," 134.

[361] Moraga, "Queer Aztlán," 147.

[362] Ibid., 145; 148.

ways, and they must not be "White."[363] The speaker's own nieces and nephews are explicitly denied access to Chicanidad and Queer Aztlán and they are not permitted to choose that identity for themselves. Instead, they are "living testimony" of the degradation of a "true" Chicano identity for which the speaker mourns, a lost identity that "haunts [her] daily in the blond hair of [her] sister's children."[364]

While the text, later on, moves toward an articulation of a Queer[er] Aztlán, this rigidity to inclusion sticks with me and to the text. Further, this disrupts the productive power of collective engagement through queer Latinx/Chicanx identity the performance previously seemed to cite. Indeed, these limitations to access are counter to the LLEGÓ's mission to suppress racial, sexual, and gendered forms of oppression and abjection and to encourage rerouting of familial connections through queer kinship and queer change to cultural structures that undergird familia. Breaking from LLEGÓ's mission and the mission Moraga, by way of Bracho, held, her early description of the desired for Chicanas/os/xs who will inhabit a Queer Aztlán deploys what Ricky Rodríguez, speaking of *la familia,* notes as being tied to a "fixity of gender roles" and a "continuum between male authority and heterosexual presumption."[365] Indeed, the speaker of the text herself passes judgment on Chicano Nationalism when she notes that some of the things that were wrong with it were "its institutionalized heterosexism and its inbred machismo" and that the dangers of nationalism are "its tendency toward separatism [that] can run dangerously close to biological determinism."[366] But these things "wrong" with Chicano nationalism shape the speaker's intent to exercise control over partnerships that are primarily tied to a breeding strategy that itself, if not presuming heterosexuality, demands that bodies conform to their sex through a reproductive imperative tied to a type of biological determinism. While Sandra Soto might recommend that we re-read the contradictions in Moraga's work as a "rich and contradictory set of ambiguous, even shame-prone, representations," I do not see a lot of ambiguity in my reading of "Queer Aztlán" here, and, as this text is not generically a confessional, my reading does not find shame, productive or not, in the speaker's contradictions between who gets to be in the Queer Aztlán that maps onto what is "bad" about Chicano Nationalism.[367] It had seemed, at first, that this Queer Aztlán had a similar mission as LLEGÒ, but as these rules for inclusion multiply, I'm no longer sure what is Queer about this Queer Aztlán. But, I am encouraged to remember that "desire" started this trip toward Queer Aztlán and "desire is never politically correct."[368]

It is something about desire that brings back the promise of the queer, the shimmering vitality the text initially reaches for. It is in desire, homosexual desire, that the speaker who holds power over reproduction, inclusion, and exclusion fades a bit and the collective "we" in the queer, "lesbians and gay men who were not envisioned as members" of a Chicano nation of Aztlán can be cocreators of a queer Aztlán.[369] Through our same-sex desire and through the

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[363] Ibid., 148.

[364] Ibid., 148.

[365] Richard T. Rodríguez, "Introduction: Staking Family Claims," *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicana/o Cultural Politics*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 2.

[366] Moraga, "Queer Aztlán," 148-149.

[367] Sandra Soto, "Making *Familia* from Racialized Sexuality: Cherríe Moraga's Memoirs, Manifestos, and Motherhood," *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer: The De-Mastery of Desire*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 17.

[368] Moraga, "Queer Aztlán," 160.

[369] Ibid., 159.

potential traumas that lesbians and gay men can share because "our love and desire are not housed within the traditional family" we, together, "are in a critical position to address those areas within our cultural family that need to change."[370] But we must do the work. We must strive to understand that culture, that code unwritten on pages but written in our minds by other's hands and traced again and again by us. We must, the speaker says, "come to terms with how homophobia, gender roles, and sexuality are learned and expressed in Chicano culture" specifically, and "heterosexist culture and society" more generally.[371] Together, as a community armed with a shared aim, we can make that dream of a Queer Aztlán come closer to our focus.

The promise of queer community in serving each other and the community more broadly repeats the emphasis on that strength through a shared desire and goal that, as mentioned earlier, would recall to the LLEGÓ audience's minds the commitment to the established goals of the organization in including *all* of its constituents. This queer collective effort is part of the sixth area of California LLEGÓ, to transform familia. Indeed, queer individual and collective processing of the ramifications of heterosexist assumptions on queer life is imagined as allowing queer folk to teach "heterosexuals about themselves" and, in the process, begin the transformation of traditional family. The ensuing dissolution of connectedness between some gay men and women, lesbians, may be read through the historical lens. As an historical document, this area of "Queer Aztlán" appears to reflect some of the anxieties arising across Latina/o/x organizations as programming and expressed purpose shifted in relation to requirements for use of funds marked by donors for HIV/AIDS programming to target populations.

As the text continues, men, gay men, receive a pointed critique from the speaker. I suggest that this, in part, emerges from the frustration that large donations for HIV/AIDS made commitments squarely centered on them, on gay men, at the expense of some of the women-centered programming that had been expressed as central to the cultural and political components of LLEGÓ alongside many Latina/o/x organizations. It is too generous to apply David Acosta's experiences of positive and unproblematic communal dedication as "the AIDS epidemic" began to "play a key role in Latina/o LGBT organizing" to all organizations. And it is impossible to suggest that all Latina/o/x activists were satisfied with a shift in programming that "made [gay men's] survival their priority," or even that many thought that gay men's survival was connected to queer and Latinx "collective survival."[372]

It appears, at least in the text as historical document, that it is fair to see the speaker's critique of gay men as accompanying or even emerging from dissatisfaction with Latina/o/x LGBT organizations. I read this as explicitly presented in the text. It is in the asterisked semi-footnote that lauds "the overwhelming response by lesbians to the AIDS crisis" in relation to a less-than-enthusiastic response by the "gay men's community" to breast cancer as a crisis that "disproportionately affect[s] the lesbian community."[373] This statement is not about people, groups of people, nor their actions. It is about feeling precarity, betrayal, and feeling left-behind due to Latina/o/x LGBT organizations' constraints on their programming in relation to funding and the overwhelming daily human cost paid to HIV/AIDS. It is also about the arguments between activists who, as Adela Vásquez remembers, "believed that [HIV/AIDS] funding

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[370] Ibid., 159.

[371] Ibid., 159.

[372] David Acosta, "The Boy in Fear Who Became a Latino/a LGBT Advocate in Philadelphia," in *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism*, ed. Uriel Quesada, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 9.

[373] See asterisked footnote, Moraga, "Queer Aztlán," 163.

needed to only go to gay men's services" and those who felt that HIV/AIDS funds could be used for a wider programming geared to "men who have sex with men" and those potentially at risk in relation to them.[374] This is not about people. It is about how HIV/AIDS could become and, in some cases, did become a gender-based agenda with polarizing aspects. The organizations themselves could be seen to continue the historical tradition of prioritizing men and men's needs over women and women's needs. It is no wonder then that Moraga wonders what it would be like, and even makes it imperative that "on some level, our brothers—gay and straight—have got to give up being 'men'" and discontinue their "subscription to male superiority."[375]

Reading these parts of the text as a historical document of frustration with Latinx LGBT organizations pulled in every way, but having to center men due to HIV/AIDS and in order to survive financially, dulls the sharpness and seeming cruelty of the speaker's critique of gay men performed, lest we forget, at the LLEGÓ conference in 1992 when HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death for U.S. adult men of working age; and it burned through the gay Latino community hotly. We can read a tiredness of always attending to men, of always centering men, despite the need HIV/AIDS presented to that population and became a primary source of funding. In the imperative to "give up being 'men,'" we can also read a tiredness of the death and loss and wasting of friends and loved ones. We can see a hopeful imaginative in the speaker's wanting men to give up being "men," an imaginative that is too hopeful, but more beautiful because of its impossibility in relation to what it wishes to erase. With the category of "men" tied to HIV/AIDS and death and violence and "naturalized" inequality, this imaginative has men's categories change without their being disappeared. To see a world where men give up being men conjures a space in which there is no deformation of experience, inequality, and threat of violence due to one's gender. To imagine this world is to see a world without the pain and loss and death; a world we could all want without an HIV/AIDS so exclusive to a population. Unfortunately, though, this "Queer Aztlán" is not read in this way. We need *Queer Brown Voices*, Tavera's papers, and a wider knowledge of LGBT Latinx organizing history to get there. Instead, "Queer Aztlán" is most often read as that "living" text of permanent thought, and so the insecurity and blaming and anger of the text-as-historical-document circulates among us out of its time and is perpetuated by the insecurity, blaming, and anger with which we can empathize because those feelings are natural to us and in us as humans. But the emotions in "Queer Aztlán" do not belong to us and do not belong to our time, and yet we have watered them as if they were, not realizing that we have only watered these feelings in ourselves.

Reading Moraga's "Queer Aztlán" alongside information gained from the Tavera Papers and the research it inspired offers me an escape from the close readings it permits and invites without that knowledge. While I prefer the reading above to the ones I have practiced more frequently, it would be remiss of me to skip the reading of the text as present "living" document I promised. Not showing some of these readings would also fail to highlighting some of the negative effects and emotions "Queer Aztlán" has helped to produce. Indeed, its critiques of Latinx gay men and authors, which on their own are homophobic and inspire that homophobia's continuation in the present, have inspired numerous scholars, thinkers, and writers to regard gay Chicanx/Latinx men as apolitical, their literature as politically and aesthetically deficient, their identity practices as queer *and* as Chicano inauthentic or insufficient, and, generally speaking, not present to the point of being thought absent. This emerges in the "Queer Aztlán" unbound

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[374] Vidal-Ortiz, "Brown Writing Queer," 10.

[375] Moraga, "Queer Aztlán," 161.

from its specific history and, indeed, the negative effects and feelings it produces shaped and inspired parts of this project.

In this reading, a reading that divorces the text from the specificity of its history, the world in which men cease being "men" is not part of the hopeful imaginary I was inspired to fantasize earlier. In this reading, men, and the text specifically addresses gay men, are only politically viable as bodies if those bodies are deemed "inferior" by other men because they are unable to "pass" as masculine.[376] Essentially these "men," who the speaker refers to as "queens" and "maricones, " are not able to be "men" because they are effeminate and, as a result, are nearer that comparatively abject category of "woman" the speaker proffers in the text—they are categories of "men" the speaker can empathize with due to their inability to fulfill "the traditional role of men" and because they are "especially vulnerable to male violence."[377] More specifically, the speaker means sexual violence such that these "men" are "like women" in their ability to see the "macho's desire to dominate the feminine."[378] But the connection stops here and we find that these effeminate men were merely tolerated, and only partially, for those aspects with which the speaker can empathize, those aspects the speaker suggests all women can empathize with. But these connections are not enough—"They may be Jotos, but they are still men" who, despite their "shared experiences of homophobia" with lesbians, the speaker says, "the majority of gay men still cling to what privileges they can."[379] For the speaker, gay men are a group that "severely disappoints" when it comes to practicing misogyny. Afterall, the speaker notes, "sexism goes with the (male) territory."[380] We are once again back at the velvet rope, the exclusive power to exclude folk from that "Queer Aztlán" that is supposed to "embrace *all* people, including its jotería."[381]

The speaker moves from reading gendered behaviors in men, the effeminacy that prevents certain "jotos," the "queens" and the "maricones" as she calls them, from "passing" not as "straight" but as "men" it seems, to a more direct critique of gay Chicanos and gay Chicano writers. This is one of the "popular" sections of the text that are cited in published scholarship that contributes to perpetuating the notion of gay Chicano absence and failure to adequately participate in queer Chicanx letters and politics. "Chicano gay men," the speaker says, "have been reluctant to recognize" the tightly bound relationship between their freedom and women's freedom.[382] I'll remind the reader that this may extend from the frustrations with LLEGÓ's first draft of their grant proposal and the feeling of precarity in relation to shifts in programming. However, reading without that history, it is difficult to find a generous way to read this particular section. The issue is not clearly stemming from a desire for queer Latinx togetherness. Gay Chicano men, instead, are guilty of not "doing their own part" in "confronting Chicano sexuality and sexism."[383] They are not doing their part because they "insist on remaining 'men.'"[384] Even, understanding that the speaker means "men" in a "socially and culturally constructed sense of the

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[376] Ibid., 160.
[377] Ibid., 160.
[378] Ibid., 161.
[379] Ibid., 161.
[380] Ibid., 161.
[381] Ibid,. 147.
[382] Ibid., 162.
[383] Ibid., 162.
[384] Ibid., 162.

word," I think the reader should feel a little lost here.[385] The concept of giving up being "men" was intriguing and desirable, especially in that blithe fantasy of the previous reading. But that was a fantasy that gave that notion, that desire, immediacy. I can't think how this could be immediate. Not only that, but the speaker has just discussed that Chicano "men" who are not considered men are subject to violence in much the same way that the speaker sees women in relation to men. So there appears a disconnect between the ideal immediacy imagined earlier and the reality of that immediacy that could, and the speaker suggests earlier that it would, have the consequence of extreme homophobic violence. I'm not certain how the potential for martyrdom fits into this productive change that could heal "those fissures that have divided [all people]" due to racism, misogyny, religion, homophobia, and so many other ills. But despite this seeming apolitical identity the speaker attaches to gay Chicano men, the speaker acknowledges that "the AIDS epidemic has seriously shaken the foundation of the Chicano gay community" and prompted many to engage in activism. But as the speaker's critique continues, one is left to wonder if this is not enough. But then we understand that it isn't. After all, this "willing[ness] . . . to explore those areas of political change" are, the speaker suggests, only prompted because those changes may "ensure their survival."[386] Survival, for gay men, is an insufficient reason to be politically engaged. But what about the community this organizing could afford and grow?

AIDS, the speaker notes, has increased Chicano gay men's being "rejected and neglected" by white LGBT establishment activists and "the Latino heterosexual health-care community."[387] The speaker then, in the manner of a sleight-of-hand trick so that we may forget that this portion of the writing too is a rejection of gay Chicano men, reminds the reader that "[Chicano gay men] have also witnessed direct support by Latina lesbians."[388] I do not doubt the veracity of this truth statement, but this is a rejection and an admonishment of that group.

To some extent, the speaker suggests that gay Chicano men are co-author's to their own suffering, noting that:

> unlike the 'queens' who have always been open about their sexuality, 'passing' gay men have learned in a visceral way that being in 'the closet' and preserving their 'manly' image will not protect them, it will only make their dying more secret.[389]

There is a lot going on in this passage. The passage assumes that the "queens," however the speaker imagines them, are in fact *choosing* to be "open about their sexuality" and it assumes, I'd add, that effeminate behavior in men is exclusive to same-sex-desiring men. As the passage progresses, the "passing" gay man, unlike the "queen," is seen to have a "choice" about their "closeting" and that the choice to remain in "the closet" is aimed at preserving their "'manly' image." The suggestion that "passing" gay men learn in a bodily way that their image can only "make their dying more secret" appears to make gay men at fault for their HIV infection and the resultant pain it will bring. It seems to suggest that being out would drastically change their risk percentages and sexual practices. It misses the visualization of HIV/AIDS in art, the news, and

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[385] Ibid., 162.
[386] Ibid., 162.
[387] Ibid., 162-163.
[388] Ibid., 163.
[389] Ibid., 163.

popular media that circulates and makes certain symptoms known to the public: like wasting, Kaposi's sarcoma, or sudden blindness, all things that will not keep a secret but tell it to a public that knows the signs. Lastly, could it not be that some folks remain in the closet because of the fear of all of the rejection from family, job, friends, etc. and fear of the homophobic violence that the text has mentioned time and again? As this section of the text progresses, the critique doesn't let up and the speaker begins to find fault in gay Chicano writers.

For the speaker, queer Chicano writers must explicitly enunciate an "out" sexuality *and* a clear connection to Chicanidad, most likely in the form of the prescriptive notions of it shared earlier in the essay. This desire for clarity as it relates to literature, to "read" sexuality and ethnicity, seems to have the potential to be seen as asking for a hegemony of gay Chicano presentation or an assumption of a hegemony of gay Chicano experience with the narrow possibilities of being either "queens" or "closeted." Does it need to be in literature to be real or read? The speaker has already demonstrated herself as adept in "reading" queerness through her descriptions of the "jotos," the "queens" and "maricones," what seems an easy read for the speaker. But she also expresses the non-strenuous ability to "read" the queerness of those in the "closet" not only through their dying, but also through some aspect that gives them away, an aspect not mentioned but noticeable to the speaker and to the reader of the text through the quotation marks surrounding the word "passing" and the charge that the "manl[iness]" she argues closeted Chicanos wish to preserve is but an "image." Essentially the speaker is announcing a developed sense of what would be called "gaydar" in contemporary parlance. But gaydar is not unique to the singular queer speaker of "Queer Aztlán." Whether an easy read or one slightly more challenging, queer folk reach out to queer characters or vice versa. What seems a demand for clarity seems out of place generally. Across *Loving in the War Years*, Moraga demonstrates that she has experienced clarity with the less than clear when she rifles through the pages of *The Well of Loneliness* "for some remote acknowledgment of what could be defined as lesbian desire" and has found her own "'otherness'" in the works of Carson McCullers and, like her friend Arturo Islas did in the *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, found kinship in the queerness of "hunch-backed" characters. For some reason, in "Queer Aztlán," it has been forgotten, that this was enough, that this gave feelings of queer family even though Moraga "did not know at that time, that [McCullers], too, was a lesbian."[390]

Arturo Islas's and Richard Rodríguez's work come under fire in Moraga's text for a deficiency in expressed "gayness." It would appear, then, that the speaker views these works by gay Chicanos as incapable of achieving the same sort of queer connections that Radclyffe Hall and Carson McCullers offer to queer folk in other chapters in Moraga's book. For Moraga, these works by gay men seem to fit into a "closeted" mode, if we are to ascribe identities to these texts. But like the speaker's ability to "read" queerness through the veneer of the closet, so too does she read queerness in these "closeted" texts despite her framing queerness as absent from them or closeted in them. For Islas, the Moraga notes that we can see queerness in his novels *The Rain God* and *Migrant Souls* in the "vague references about 'sinners' and tortured alcoholic characters who want nothing more than to 'die dancing' beneath a lightening-charged sky just before a thunderstorm."[391] This is the closeted text that has insufficient gayness. First, what is not queer about that? Dying dancing? More importantly, this demonstrates that these aspects mentioned are anything but "vague." Indeed, she has picked exactly what Islas put down—that the

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[390] Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*, Expanded Edition, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 172.
[391] Ibid., 163.

conceptualization of "sinners" mark those family members deemed queer or sexual outlaws in other senses, that dancing is not only the primary way that Félix is granted the aspect of queer child, but also that dancing itself is heralded as a mark of the queer in the young Miguel's dancing in a makeshift skirt and Miguel Grande's heavy-handed, "All good dancers are queer and you know it."[392] For Rodríguez, referred to as "Mr. Secrets" by the speaker in relation to his character's reading and writing *in the closet* in his book *Hunger of Memory*, Moraga demonstrates that there was never any secret, "we all knew," she says.[393]

In both cases, the author's sexuality seems to be known, perhaps referred to as an open secret, at least in the case of Rodríguez, but still known. In Islas the explicit reference to dancing *as* queer and in Rodríguez the rather generic closet metaphor that is home to the almost stock queer smart boy child character who likes to read and write make both of these texts fairly upfront in their presentation of queer characters. The problem does not seem to be with the literature. Instead, it seems that the problem is that they are writing literature and insisting on their works' literariness instead of writing what Moraga might call a "truer" autobiography. I'm unsure? The problem may be genre. That's what Moraga's essay seems to inspire in Tomas Almaguer when he draws from her texts to claim the same as she does, that gay Chicano men and works are apolitical, not sufficiently gay or Chicano, not aesthetically pleasing, and seen as absent. But what he adds is that they are deficient in relation to works by Chicana lesbian writers like Moraga. I'm not sure that Moraga is saying this explicitly, but it is close to it. What seems most plausible here? I don't think that the problem is the genre or the literariness. It seems that, for her, the problem is the people, Islas and Rodríguez who, to her, are not enunciating queerness and Chicano-ness loudly enough for the speaker who feels that *she* is and considers them deficient because they are not writing or being more like her. Yet still, in the argument set up, that gay Chicano writing should be bold and out, not in the closet and not a secret, I am left with at least one thought I will share: A secret untold but known to many is no secret.

Dancing to the Dream

This reading of Moraga and "Queer Aztlán" is a reading I do not like. But it is a reading that is there *even with* the text as performance and as history alongside it. This text that says these awful things sandwiched between queer possibility and acceptance is puzzling. To move from the passages I read above to the texts assertion that "lesbians and gays can make a significant contribution to the creation of a new Chicano movement" that is "strong enough to embrace a full range of racial diversities, human sexualities, and expressions of gender" that are our "natural" expressions, and a place where there will be no one to "point one's finger at" is hard to swallow now, after all of that negativity, from this text.[394] It is hard to believe in when a whole group of people has just undergone an extended admonishment at the point of a finger. More unfortunate is the way that these passages, in part or in full, have been absorbed into various scholarship such that various works make reference to this notion of absence as if it were natural or they are impelled to produce scholarship that has to argue against gay Chicano absence and devaluation, the work of anthologies, scholarly and literary, in order to work counter to it. I

[392] Arturo Islas, *The Rain God*, (New York, NY: Avon Books,1984), 16; 87; 70.
[393] Moraga, "Queer Aztlán," 163.
[394] Ibid., 163.

will pick up again on this "Queer Aztlan's" effects in scholarship and anthologies in my epilogue. But I want familia. So I will return to Tavera and remember his dream for us.

Despite LLEGÓ's need to target queer health in order to continue receiving funding, the Tavera papers show California LLEGÓ's continued dedication to all parts of the original plan. Tavera's efforts to maintain LLEGÓ's active support of all its constituencies and target audiences was, according to Dennis Medina, a model for activism that stemmed from Tavera's desire "to give people the tools to organize in Chicago or Denver or wherever they were."[395] In his dedication to strengthening LGBT Latinx networks, Tavera offered a wide range of support in the construction of by-laws for several Bay Area, and beyond, gay and lesbian groups. Tavera helped to adjoin California LLEGÓ's mission to numerous organizations throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and further.[396] Throughout Tavera's tenure with LLEGÓ, the California chapter continued to advance representation of Latina/o racial and queer sexual communities through its aim to garner and exhibit the advancement of inclusiveness, care, and political agitation for its community's needs. At its core, this work was intent on making a queer familia that would be waiting for us when we reached it, tools back in their places in those boxes, blueprints in their folders awaiting *our* touch, and the world behind us, rapidly catching up, ready to see our additions, when we return them to their places, tools still warm with our hands, waiting to warm theirs, waiting for their turn to make additions, put the tools back for the next, and meet us, where we met those before us, for a drink and a dance at Esta Noche where we will all, if we didn't before, "have ass!"

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[395] Dennis Medina, "The History of Texas You Must Not Exclude," in *Queer Brown Voices*, ed. Uriel Quesada, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 59.

[396] Some of these organizations not previously mentioned include the following: Lesbianas Unidas, La Red, LIFE, SF/Dignity, the Community Alternative Social Organization (CASA), Teatro Nacional de Aztlán (TENAZ), Asemblea Gay Unida Impactandos a Superarse (AGUILAS), the Austin Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization (ALLGO), Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU), the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA), Gente Latina de Ambiente (GELAAM), Instituto Familiar de la Raza, Inc., the National Task Force in AIDS Prevention (NTFAP), the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), Ellas en Acción, The California Alliance for Gay Equality (CAPE), and the Shanti group.

Epilogue: Implications for Future Work

Juliana Delgado Lopera, in her introduction to her book *¡Cuéntamelo!: Oral Histories by LGBT Latino Immigrants*, shares that "the queer world that has emerged in front of [her] every day through story feels invisible to the public eye. . . . hidden inside one bedroom apartments."[397] Lopera ties this invisibility to the public eye specifically to the rooms in which she grows in queer familia and where the oral histories are told to her, after *Caso Cerrado* ends of course, that she records and shares in her book. But accompanying this invisibility is a knowledge and potential source of anxiety that my dissertation acknowledges and studies. Lopera notices of a discipline of queer history that these stories of queer life, "of our humanity woven together" can only find the light of day should those stories be "lifted high," which often results in others being "ignored."[398] The chapters of my dissertation suggest that a phantasmatic attends scholarly approaches to gay Chicano archives and literature and that it emerges, in part, from researcher and writer relationships to a discourse that declares a paucity, a not-enoughness in gay and Chicano identity and in the representation of these identities narrative by gay Chicano authors, or an absence of gay Chicano texts and political bodies that inspire feelings of loss similar to that feeling of being "ignored."

At various points throughout the dissertation, I identify the phantasmatic effects this discourse can inspire and then draw from the material of the archives and the texts to make my arguments about the alternatives we may miss or may have missed as a result of this phantasmatic through which we may read and transform texts away from the hopes they wish us to see. The alternatives to a phantasmatic rendering of gay Chicano literary and cultural productions and identity that the chapters explore are a beginning to a more direct intervention and study of the discourse seen to inspire the phantasmatic my work in archives wants to dissolve. While the discourse is not fully sourced, traced, or directly critiqued it surrounds the edges of the scholarship the dissertation presents.

In my "Introduction," I read Tomás Almaguer's "Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior" alongside Cherríe Moraga's "A Long Line of Vendidas," the work he turns to support his claims, to not only show an early iteration of the discourse of gay Chicano paucity and absence as ungrounded from a sourced study in ways that might bring it out of the world of opinion, but also to show that Almaguer's "sourcing" of Moraga has potential to grant the appearance of truth to their claims about gay Chicano men's deficiencies in writing, identity, and politics that accompany the discourse of gay Chicano paucity and absence.

In "Chapter One," I read Frederick Aldama's books on Islas and the Islas archive, particularly his manuscript history for *The Rain God*, as stemming from an anxiety about gay Chicano deficiencies in identity and narrative representation of identity. This is evident in Aldama's word choice that suggests his projects on Islas are meant to rescue Islas from charges of failure in his identity and in his representations of queer characters. This notion of gay Chicano failure shapes a significant sample of early scholarship on Islas's work that consistently regard the work as "closeted." In future developments of this work, I would suggest that this feature in early scholarship is directly related to the emergent discourse of gay Chicano paucity

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[397] Juliana Delgado Lopera, introduction to *¡Cuéntamelo!: Oral Histories by LGBT Latino Immigrants*, (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2014), 14.
[398] Ibid., 14.

and absence to which failure is more explicitly affixed in Moraga's critique of Islas's identity and work in her essay "Queer Aztlán."

"Chapter Two" explores readerly and scholarly desires for an identifiable Chicano gay identity in Gil Cuadros and in his characters that are often read *as* Gil Cuadros. Through my reading of *City of God,* I demonstrate the potential influences of the discourse of gay Chicano paucity, absence, and failure in Rafael Pérez Torres and Raúl Homero Villa's approaches to his story "My Aztlan (sic): White Place" that mirror an aspect of gay Chicano failure in the discourse that sees gay Chicanos and their works as insufficiently political. Additionally, their approaches to the text which, similar to Almaguer, expect Chicano identity to be primary in relation to a queer identity emerging through a secondary socialization to a "dominant," White gay identity and subjectivity assumes a failure for either aspect of identity to have coherence well-before their close readings begin. But unlike Pérez-Torrez and Villa, who miss the fragmenting effects that intentionally resist identarian classification and see them, instead, as verification of the failure in identity they expect, recent work on Cuadros by Pablo Alvarez, Gibran Güido, and numerous writers in *Queer in Aztlan: Chicano Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out* miss reading that fragmentation and resistance to solid identity and create a phantasmatic, decidedly queer and Chicano identity and text for Cuadros, fashioning him a contemporary through seeing, instead of Cuadros, a representation of themselves. The dedication to *Queer in Aztlán*, which centers Cuadros and his work as examples of identities and writers who are missing in Chicanx studies, makes it clear that the project is intent on producing the phantasmatic through its self-conscious use value for "the [queer Chicano] youth . . .who seek a reflection of self."[399]

In "Chapter Three," the dissertation offers its most direct intervention in the further iteration of the discourse of gay Chicano paucity and absence through several readings of Cherríe Moraga's "Queer Aztlán." Seeing the essay emerging out of Moraga's work with the Latino Latina Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGÓ), I show that we may read the text's charging gay Chicano men with failure through a sympathetic lens garnered through the changes to lesbian and gay organization funding and programming as a result of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Namely, I read the text's negatively aggressive stance toward gay Chicano men that sees them and their texts as absent or insufficient in Chicano and queer identity and politics as stemming from a disappointment and anger with Latina/o organizations that shifted their programming and organizing almost exclusively around gay men and HIV/AIDS thereby diminishing their commitments to women and lesbian constituents. I also offer a reading of the text without this sympathetic lens to highlight the potential for contemporary readers to see its claims as true through the affective power that it holds forth. I trace the comparative language Moraga uses to praise Chicana lesbian cultural work and politics in relation to her observing a failure in those categories in gay Chicano men. The language she uses is strikingly similar to Almaguer's word choice in his essay that draws from "A Long Line of Vendidas" to make similar comparisons between lesbian clarity and success and gay Chicano ambiguity and failure. In "Queer Aztlán," we see Moraga making, essentially, the same claim about the deficiencies in gay Chicano men's texts as Almaguer, and using the same comparative language as him to do it. This may further inspire our regarding these claims as "true" and continue to inspire our potential to turn a blind eye instead of train a critical upon those claims.

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[399] Adelaida R. del Castillo and Gibrán Güido, eds., *Queer in Aztlán: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out,* (San Diego, CA: Cognella, 2015), vii.

Reflecting on the recurrence of this discourse in shaping a number of the features of the phantasmatics my dissertation explores, I see the potential for a more direct intervention in it. In the development of this work and in future work, it will be productive to provide a more extensive literary history of the discourse so that the work in gay Chicano archives can more directly intervene. Additionally, attending more thoroughly to queer Latinx/Chicanx anthologies may demonstrate their imbrications, both positive and negative, with the discourse of paucity/plenitude and success/failure in their function as a special collection and archive in their own right that circulates more freely among us.

In my preliminary work, queer Chicanx/Latinx anthologies potentially demonstrate more fully the frequently unsourced but known or felt nature of the discourse of paucity and plenitude that often needs no sourcing because it is become a truth and *common knowledge*. They often show a simultaneous joy in publication alongside a past and present anxiety from which, through the birth of the text, may be released. José Esteban Muñoz suggests, in his forward to *Virgins, Guerillas, and Locas: Gay Latinos Writing about Love*, that anthologies are like bricks that can be used to build a world or thrown with force.[400] The possibility for this brick, this anthology, calls us to see the text as filling a need felt to be missing from gay Latino experience—a text that doesn't need the translation to gay Latino experience that Muñoz must perform with woman of color feminist texts and literary anthologies of gay Black men's writing. The anthology about which he writes *is* that text that needs no translation because it speaks "directly" to the gay Latino experience of Latinx youth and "give[s] important snapshots of bold queer brown worlds where men love each other and live outside the law."[401] The forward delights in the text it brings forth even while it reminds the reader that these character, these men who figure in the stories are missing still and, through the book, are having to be "called out and into reality."[402] Indeed, in the reality of the forming of the book this feeling of things "missing" gives the editor, Jaime Cortez, "crippling panic attacks" in relation to doubts about "find[ing] enough authors" and the anthologies achieving a success and visibility that, he says, is yet to come to the world of "queer Latino stories."[403]

This feeling of being absent, of "missing" gay Latino men, is invoked in not exclusively literary anthologies as well in more explicit ways. *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, begins with an extended quote in untranslated Spanish from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* that reflects on the potential for lesbian separatist politics to have an isolating effect for gay Chicano men and she wants that separation to be seen as a loss to a stronger queer movement that would include gay men because they experience similar forms of marginalization and violence. The editors are quick to note that the text does not seek to assign any sort of blame for this isolation to feminists, what they *do* suggest, though, is that the production of the text is needful *because* Anzaldúa's edict, "listen to what your jotería is saying" has gone unheeded.[404] Indeed, as the text celebrates the "comfort" it finds in Anzaldúa's making space for gay Latino/Chicano voices, the editors' note that a purpose of the book is to "highlight relationships"

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[400] José Esteban Muñoz, Forward to *Virgins, Guerillas, and Locas*, ed. Jaime Cortez, (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 1999), x.

[401] Ibid., x.

[402] Ibid., xi.

[403] Jaime Cortez, introduction to *Virgins, Guerillas, and Locas*, ed. Jaime Cortez, (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 1999), xiii.

[404] Gloria Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza / Toward a New Consciousness," *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 1099.

in projects on gay Latino men because these relationships have been "as yet, unnamed and dis-membered."[405] This text also charts some scholarship of the discourse that runs through my work in its attempt to present some scholarship regarding "contestations over the significance of gay Latino scholarly and cultural production within Chicano and Latino Studies more broadly including their relationship to hegemonic masculinities and to Latina feminisms."[406]

More explicit in its naming the feeling of absence as giving birth to a text that should bring joy is *Queer Aztlán: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out.* The text names its primary purpose as presenting a "consciousness among a largely younger generation of queer Chicanos" that is "absent from the plans, political agendas, and literature of Aztlán."[407] The book is meant to "resist silence, erasure, innuendo" and the features often linked to gay Chicano failure in identity and textual emergence such as "patriarchy, heterosexuality, and homophobia."[408] These negative features are then linked to the discipline of Chicana/o Studies' approaches to Chicano masculinity that make definitive the "traditional confines of male sexuality and masculinities" for queer men such that, the text suggests, "male queer content in course curricula and discourse" is, also traditionally, absent as a result.[409] The form of this book is quite intriguing because it seems intent to capitulate to the homophobia embedded in questions that find lack in gay Chicano identity and writing—questions like, "Where is the gay male version of *Borderlands?*" Here, the text follows the prescription for queer Chicanx texts that emerge in Almaguer's and Moraga's writing. This isn't producing a version of *Borderlands*. But the book *does* seems intentionally organized into six sections that make it similar in structure and content to the six sections in the first publication of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. This book, despite its desire for a queer collectivity, may be seen to emerge as a rallying cry for a "true coming of age as committed, competent, and principled combatants" against "false awakenings" that require a politics of accommodation.[410] The editors and author's works that carry a consistent feeling of absence, exclusion, and resistance to silencing would make sense if this formal feature of the text is meant to convey a similar political stance as the book it appears to model itself after. The intentionality of this formal arrangement suggests, at the very least, that the text is a response to the felt requirements for queer Chicanx textual enunciation.

The above is but a small sample of anthologies' demonstrating, if not through citation then at least through a common knowing that appears existent to the writers and editors of the books, knowledge of this discourse of paucity and absence, an anxiety in relation to it, and a considering the publication of the texts as being in response to something that is related to the feeling of gay absence, failure, or erasure. While it is not unusual for the genre of anthology to have as its mission a want to fill a gap to offer something that is missing, the intent to overcome the notion of gay Chicanos and texts *as* missing when it is named, as in *Queer in Aztlán*, or, as is

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[405] Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, "Re-membering Gay Latino Studies," in *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 4.

[406] Ibid., 14.

[407] Adelaida R. del Castillo and Gibrán Güido, eds., preface to *Queer in Aztlán: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out*, (San Diego, CA: Cognella, 2015), ix.

[408] Ibid., x.

[409] Ibid., x.

[410] Toni Cade Bambara, forward to *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 1st ed, edited by Cherríe L. Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981), reprinted in 3rd edition, (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 2002), xli.

the case with *Gay Latino Studies*, when it is cited but then glossed over in language that expresses desire for solidarity that contains a level of trepidation demonstrates a level of stress about its production and its reception that seems unusual. These features, both the variability in openness of expressing the feeling of absence and the stress that enters language through that direct or indirect expression are not exclusive to gay Chicano/Latino anthologies. This also appears in single-authored monographs like Rigoberto González's book *Red-Inked Retablos*, Richard T. Rodríguez's book *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics*, Jesus Ramirez-Valles's book *Compañeros: Latino Activists in the Face of AIDS*, and many others making the project of tracing the import of this discourse of absence, paucity, and what have you in Chicanx/Latinx studies a time-consuming process that seems necessary for an effective and honest intervention that approaches this topic and wounding discourse directly. A reader can see a strong effort to enable open discussion about the problem of this discourse to Chicanx/Latinx literary, cultural work in Antonio Viego's essay "The Place of Gay Male Chicano Literature and Cultural Work" that engages parts of Almaguer's essay "Chicano Men" and Moraga's "Queer Aztlán" to suggest that the notion of gay Chicano absence and Chicana lesbian hyper-presence, neither of which Viego assigns truth claims to, are automatic and ingrained. His attempts to closely read these texts in order to find a way out of the discourse is, ultimately, complicated by the fact that he only draws from those two texts. Additionally, Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel's response to his essay suggest a certain level of surprise at his claim to the extent that it reads like a feigned ignorance of the discourse. I call it feigned ignorance because the text in which their response is printed, *Gay Latino Studies*, explicitly acknowledges that this discourse is a component of the discipline that seems to have an uncharted beginning that prevents it from having an end. Perhaps this sort of response provides an example of a reason for the trepidation in noticing, commenting, and approaching this topic of concern directly. This is what leads me to suggest that a thoroughly sourced study of the discourse and its effects may be more effective in the work to achieve the closure and reconciliation that may be at the heart of the phantasmatic touches my dissertation encounters and the attempts to shift away from the objects that may disappoint it inspires so as to give us new ways of thinking about gay Chicano and queer Chicanx identities in the world and in narrative.

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