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Textual and Visual Rhetorics of the Generative Wound: A Historical Genealogy from Medieval Iberia to Contemporary Chicanx Self-Representation Strategies and Pedagogies

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Ramirez, Loretta

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE

Textual and Visual Rhetorics of the Generative Wound:  
A Historical Genealogy from Medieval Iberia to Contemporary Chicanx  
Self-Representation Strategies and Pedagogies

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in English

by

Loretta Victoria Ramirez

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Daniel M. Gross, Chair  
Associate Professor Jerry Won Lee  
Professor Jonathan Alexander  
Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black

2020



## DEDICATION

To

those who diagnose the wounds

those who resist being “fixed”

those who bare their wounds, so others might heal

*we are not the only ones to walk this road*

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I have never been one to count my blessings. This may be an odd match with my studies on devotional rhetorics. Still, blessings, luck, karma are concepts I appreciate and genuinely feel but rarely factored into my active considerations. It is not that I am not grateful, but the work ethics that I was raised to follow enforced a dependence solely on hard labor. To get us where we wanted to be, my family had no room to trust blessings, luck, karma.

Interestingly, when I entered the UCI Ph.D. program, the most labor-intensive challenge of my life, I began to count my blessings. Predominately, I most often contemplated four blessings, the four members of my dissertation committee—Daniel M. Gross, Jerry Won Lee, Jonathan Alexander, and Charlene Villaseñor-Black. These four generous and splendid individuals shaped not only my writing but my outlook on scholarship and teaching. More important, they revealed aspects of myself that I never even knew existed.

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To my family, who saw me running and were worried because the destination was so unfamiliar. You never knew where I was going and, frustrated, couldn't tell me the best path to travel; but you always trusted that I would, indeed, arrive. I did—with the very best of guides who stepped up, trusted, and helped us when we could only count our blessings.

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

### **Loretta Victoria Ramirez**

|           |                                                                                             |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1994      | B.A. in Anthropology, Stanford University                                                   |
| 2000      | M.A. in English, Loyola Marymount University                                                |
| 2000-2011 | English Instructor, El Camino Community College                                             |
| 2007-2020 | Lecturer, Chicano & Latino Studies, California State University, Long Beach                 |
| 2009-2011 | Program Coordinator, Puente Program, El Camino Community College                            |
| 2010-2015 | English Instructor, Marymount California University                                         |
| 2016      | M.A. in Art History, California State University, Long Beach                                |
| 2016-2020 | Andrew. W. Mellon Humanities Fellows                                                        |
| 2017      | M.A. in English, University of California, Irvine                                           |
| 2019-2020 | Lecturer, Art History Department, California State University, Long Beach                   |
| 2020      | Scholars for the Dream Award Recipient, Conference on College Composition & Communication   |
| 2020      | Ph.D. in English with Visual Studies Graduate Emphasis, University of California, Irvine    |
| 2020-     | Assistant Professor, Latinx Rhetoric & Composition, California State University, Long Beach |

### **FIELD OF STUDY**

Rhetoric, Chicana History of Rhetoric, Medieval Iberian and Early Modern Ibero-American Cultural Rhetorics, Christian Devotional and Conversion Rhetorics, Visual Rhetorics and Art History, Chicana Identity and Body Theory, Chicana 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Literature, Composition Critical Pedagogy, Decolonial Studies, Trans-/Multilingualism, and Multimodality

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Textual and Visual Rhetorics of the Generative Wound: A Historical Genealogy from Medieval Iberia to Contemporary Chicanx Self-Representation Strategies and Pedagogies

By

Loretta Victoria Ramirez

Doctor of English

University of California, Irvine, 2020

Professor Daniel M. Gross, Chair

Developing insights from decolonial theory, trauma theory, and critical pedagogy, my project offers a historical genealogy of the rhetoric of the body by focusing on the phenomenon of wounds and the condition of semi-ness. I link late-medieval and Early Modern female Iberian Christian devotional rhetorics to a larger exploration of self-representation of fragmented bodies in contemporary Chicana textual, cultural, and visual rhetorics. More exactly, I examine an Iberian and Ibero-American rhetorical strategy of entering the wound in representations of the Virgin Mary's abstracted body and its impact on Ibero-American female perceptions of body and identity. I trace connections between this Iberian genealogy and Mesoamerican concepts of securing stability during metaphorical earthquakes of lived turmoil and sacrifice as these connections interweave in the construction of Chicana rhetorics of woundedness. I propose that a ubiquitous form of Chicana self-representation strategies, notably manifested in later-twentieth-century Californian print media and art, positions wounds and fragments in such a way as to generatively confront and transform the self. To conclude, I consider feelings of academic woundedness in Californian Chicana students and tactics whereby university composition instructors might stimulate more inclusive classrooms.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1803, Marcelo de la Cruz, an indigenous Nochistlán man, defied the bishop of Oaxaca, Mexico, by disregarding the condemnation of the dilapidated parish church of San Juan Chapultepec. In an act of rebellious devotion, Marcelo advanced, and eventually prevailed, in his mission to secure in San Juan Chapultepec a sanctuary for a seventeenth-century *virgen abridera* or shrine Madonna, a small polychromed wooden sculpture of the Virgin Mary that had been entrusted to him by his aunt, Maria Manuel Aguilar. Maria had inherited the *virgen abridera* from a maid at the Franciscan convent of Santa Catarina de Sena in Oaxaca, who had received the sculpture from one of the convent's nuns, the first known owner of the sculpture (Sánchez Reyes and González Hernando 22-23; Fig. 1.1). Measured 6.3 inches tall and 2.4 inches wide, this sculpture was designed with movable joints, allowing for the Virgin's arms to extend from folded prayer position to reveal the Virgin's chest cavity. Rather than anatomy, inside is an inner cabinet that features carved bas-relief narrative scenes of Christ's Passion (Fig. 1.2).



FIGURE 1.1. *Virgen Abridera* of San Juan Chapultepec. Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Mario Sarmiento Zúñiga, (Image courtesy @sarmientomario, 9 June 2015, Instagram/Public Domain)



FIGURE 1.2. *Virgen Abridera* of San Juan Chapultepec, detail, opened chest, Passion of Christ narrative scenes: (from left) Agony in the Garden, Encounter with Mary on the Way to Calvary, Crucifixion surrounded by Mary and John, and Descent from the Cross as a *Pietà* with Mary holding the body of Christ. Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Mario Sarmiento Zúñiga, (Image courtesy @sarmientomario, 9 June 2015, Instagram/Public Domain)

Marcelo de la Cruz established this *virgen abridera* as a local devotional object, thus raising the profile and support of the previously doomed San Juan Chapultepec. However, the *virgen abridera* belongs to a longer medieval tradition of devotional sculptures featuring the Virgin Mary who opens to expose an inner body cavity. Traditionally established by distinctive visual rhetorics of female Iberian Christian patrons and custodians, this type of sculpture proliferated throughout Western Europe and later into the Americas during colonization. While significant study on the impact of these sculptures in Europe has been performed by scholars, largely in the art history field, there has yet to be a study of the specific thread of female Iberian rhetorical tradition that crossed into the Americas. Only recently were the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* and a second Mexican sculpture in Gama de la Paz located by Gabriela Sánchez Reyes and Irene González Hernando. In 2009 Sánchez Reyes and González Hernando reported their initial art historical analysis of the pieces for the *Boletín de Monumentos Históricos*, a publication sponsored by the Mexican council on national monuments. Although the sculptures have yet to be examined outside this context, I observe that the provenance patterns of the two Mexican pieces fit closely to that which has been previously published on earlier European counterparts, largely surveyed by Melissa Katz and Irene Gertsman.<sup>1</sup> Katz and Gertsman

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<sup>1</sup> See Katz's studies of European *Virgenes Abrideras* in "Behind Closed Doors: Distributed Bodies, Hidden Interiors, and Corporeal Erasure in *Vierge Ouvrante* Sculpture," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetic*, 55/56 (2009): 194-221; "Marian Motion: Opening the Body of the *Vierge Ouvrante*," in *Meaning in Motion: The Semantics of Movement in Medieval Art*, ed. Nino Zchomelidse and Giovanni Freni (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 63-91; "The Non-Gendered Appeal of *Vierge Ouvrante* Sculpture: Audience, Patronage, and Purpose in Medieval Iberia," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as "Makers" of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 37-91. Elina Gertsman views *Virgenes Abrideras* as part of the interactivity of Christendom's medieval visual cultural; see *Worlds Within: Opening the Medieval Shrine Madonna* (University Park: Pennsylvania State

examine the European sculptures in a larger context of material and visual cultures of medieval Christendom, yet I would like to localize the Iberian and Ibero-American sculptures into conversion-oriented contexts. By focusing on the sculptures' site-specific rhetorical engagements, I hope to begin to understand a particular Iberian female devotional rhetoric of body that enters the Mexican regions.<sup>2</sup> While Katz asserts that these opening sculptures of the Virgin Mary are not necessarily cultivated exclusively by female patrons for female devotional practices, there is a tremendous pattern of such provenance for the Iberian and Ibero-American pieces even if male custodians enter the *virgenes abrideras* chronicles.<sup>3</sup> Just as Marcelo de la Cruz inherited the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* after a series of female owners, the majority of Iberian *virgenes abrideras* are

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University Press, 2015). In Spanish-language journals, Irene González Hernando has published location-specific scholarship on Iberian sculptures; see *El Arte Bajomedieval y su Proyección: Temas, Funciones y Contexto de las Vírgenes Abrideras Tríptico* (Madrid: Editorial Académica Española, 2011) and "Las Vírgenes Abrideras," *Revista Digital de Iconografía Medieval* 1.2 (2009): 55-66.

<sup>2</sup> In "Behind Closed Doors," Katz lists seventy-two *Virgenes Abrideras* from 1250-1700, spanning Europe and the Americas, yet she does not examine the American pieces. In her list, Katz does not list the San Juan Chapultepec piece, which was located the year of her article's publication. However, Katz does list an ivory-carved *virgen abridera* from a workshop in Dieppe, France whose travels can be traced to Mexico City where it was sold but vanishes from historical records. I suggest that the Gama de la Paz *Virgen Abridera* might be that lost ivory sculpture, which fits the features and styling of French sculptures of this kind; while the San Juan Chapultepec sculpture, a polychromed wood piece, aligns with Iberian models in both exterior styling and inner narrative content. It is therefore the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* that serves my study of female Iberian visual and devotional rhetorics rather than the Gama de la Paz piece.

<sup>3</sup> Melissa Katz, in "The Non-Gendered Appeal of *Vierge Ouvrante* Sculpture: Audience, Patronage, and Purpose in Medieval Iberia" (Brill, 2012) resists reading the *virgenes abrideras* as targeting female audiences, referencing the provenance of multiple European objects. However, when we look only at the Iberian provenance, there is greater concentration of objects that either received female patronage or were placed into female custody, such as in convents. Since my focus is on Iberia and Ibero-America, I examine the prominence of female engagement with these objects, particularly since custodianship of the Mexican sculptures are also predominately associated with females.

identified with female sponsorship and/or guardians, beginning with the first known piece that in circa 1270 was commissioned by Queen Violante of Castile for a Franciscan convent of nuns, the Poor Clares in Allariz, Spain.

It is this female contribution, or at the very least extensive female participation, in the development of a particular rhetoric—the rhetoric of body as abstracted conduit into insight—that is chief aim of my exploration. I intend this brief consideration of the *virgenes abrideras* to launch a larger exploration of self-representation of fragmented bodies in the cultural and textual rhetorics of Chicanx inheritors of such Ibero-American iconography and *topos*.<sup>4</sup> More exactly, I examine an Iberian and Ibero-American rhetorical strategy of entering generative wounds of fragmented bodies and fragmented identities. While devotion and meditation on the generative wounds of Christ were common practices throughout medieval and Early Modern Christendom, my scholarship traces the impact of the Virgin Mary's fragmented and abstracted body on potential Ibero-American female perceptions of body and identity. I examine ways that wounds and fragments are positioned by modern Chicana artists and writers and their Iberian antecedents to generatively confront and transform female selves. While the scope of this project is accordingly vast, I concentrate my rhetors predominately in a Californian context, writers and artists who are currently in their fifties and sixties, sharing urban, cultural, and social

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<sup>4</sup> I elect the identifier of *Chicanx* and *Latinx* as referent to United States citizens of Mexican and Latin-American descent. Although the interpretation, reception, and utilization of the “x” varies widely in scholarly and popular thought, I view the “x” in Chicanx and Latinx as minimizing binary-thinking of gender identities, making more prominent a move towards expansive inclusivity, and marking both the unresolved inheritance of colonized identities and the potentials that arise from such lack of resolve. In short, the “x” aligns with my concepts of woundedness, a mark that obliterates specificity yet concurrently places no limits on generative potential. For varied discussions on Latinx, see Claudia Milian's "Extremely Latin, XOXO: Notes on LatinX" *Cultural Dynamics* 29. 3 (2017): 121-140.

commonalities; this provides more definition to the lineage that I draw rather than an abstracted essentializing. Perhaps more crucially, the generative wounds can be examined as a more targeted site-specific rhetorical engagement to confront forces, both past and present, that impart violence against a Chicana sense of physical and emotional self.

Accordingly, in this project I critically investigate a medieval Iberian historical genealogy as expressed in modern Chicana self-representation strategies through the construction of visual, cultural, and textual rhetorics. While the legacy of indigenous rhetorics has been obscured through colonization and Western epistemological frameworks, I also include in my genealogy threads of indigenous rhetorical traditions of the wound.<sup>5</sup> However, I reject hybrid or binary models as employed in many *mestiza/o* identity theories. I additionally hope to avoid interpretations of indigenous philosophical and linguistic traditions as colonial constructs, namely in the use of the term *nepantla*. Rather, I aim to acknowledge indigenous etymologies and usages. I will further detail my understanding of *mestiza/o* and *nepantla* later in this introduction since both concepts shape my definition of the generative wound.

### **Entering the Wound: Chapter Overview**

Although I conduct a historical genealogy, I do not map a linear chronology but begin with modern Chicana rhetorics of the wound. In chapter one, I define my interpretation of the generative wound in contemporary writings by examining themes of fragmentations and emotions of semi-ness. This study employs a cultural rhetorics

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term *colonization* much like Iris Ruiz and Raúl Sánchez define the term in their introduction to *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies: New Latinx Keywords for Theory and Pedagogy* (Merced and Gainesville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Ruiz and Sánchez understand *colonization* “to include not only the taking of land but also the taking of culture and the defining of knowledge (of which language is a crucial part)” (xiii)

methodology to examine strategies for Chicana self-expression. Writings by Los Angeles native, Cherríe Moraga, provide vehicles for my project. Moraga raises issues that often seem disconnected—yet not if we consider her discourse through a cultural rhetorics of fragmentations, semi-ness, or wounds. In the span of her publications, from “La Güera” (1979) to *Native Country of the Heart* (2019), Moraga struggles with disjointed existence and split loyalties. These splits are so extensive that she often writes of startling moments in which she discovers that she is her own oppressor. These moments occur as she prioritizes certain pieces of her identity at the erasure of others. For Moraga, her fragmentation impacts not only inner but physical identity. Her father’s whiteness, now the color of her skin, conceals that which Moraga claims as her mother’s indigenous blood that flows beneath. The outer does not match the inner. This is a source of Moraga’s wound.

Her solution is to undo her desire for wholeness, to tear apart her white exterior to make public the many aspects of her inner self. Like a *virgen abridera*, Moraga breaks open to reveal that which cannot be imagined from the white shell. Within, Moraga contains the persecution, pain, and sacrifice of a brown lesbian identity—but also salvation through the sharing of her hidden truths. Ultimately Moraga finds her wounds to be constructive. It is by entering wounds that Moraga learns to embrace her fragmented identity, never finished and never complete but always transforming. Such a concept of self recalls Gloria Anzaldúa’s conceptualization of the borderland experience as an *herida abierta*, an open wound afflicted by a colonial legacy that maintains fractured identities. Specifically, Anzaldúa considers the forked tongue that Chicanas may utilize to constructively negotiate border spaces between their cultural heritages and United States socio-economic realities. Anzaldúa observes possibilities that emerge from woundedness, potentials rooted in

Chicana rhetorics. Yet while she examines both the harmful and generative forces that emerge from this *herida abierta*, Anzaldúa ultimately aims to heal the wound. Moraga's strategy is to maintain the wound. She discovers in woundedness a keener insight of the tensions and splits that inform postcolonial identities and realities. The wound also serves to remind Chicanas that we should not feel obligated to fit a narrative of "correct" seamlessness of language, identity, or culture. Indeed, such narratives of wholeness are suspect, a point of examination that invites discussion of Trinh T. Minh-ha's decolonial theory of the "not-I" and Karen Barad's diffraction and patchwork models. For Moraga, Trinh, and Barad, splintered oneness becomes essential for decolonial understandings.

After defining the generative wound through my analysis of Moraga, I contrast in chapter two the generative wound with the afflicted wound, specifically the type of wound that impairs lives through biopolitical frameworks in the United States. Chapter two applies decolonial methodologies and critical race theory that aim to make apparent the non-generative wound. Here the wound is produced and controlled by forces that regard Chicana bodies as sites for violence and border patrol. To help me contrast the afflicted wound with the generative wound, I turn to Black Studies theorist Christina Sharpe, anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo, and cultural studies scholar Abraham Acosta for their writings on Black, Arabic, and Mexican-American in-betweenness (living in the wake, living in the wound, those who never arrive). In this chapter, wounds dismantle and limit Chicana communities as Chicana narratives either meet non-receptive audiences or are repurposed to suit a dominant group's agenda. I explore this concept as it applies to the control of Chicana bodies in *No Más Bebés*, a documentary directed by Renee Tajima-Peña on the

sterilizations of Chicanas during the 1960s and 1970s at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center and the subsequent *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case.

*No Más Bebés*, released in 2015, has yet to be extensively examined by the scholarly community, yet the film serves two important purposes for my studies: first, to demonstrate the afflicted wound as a form of institutionalized border patrol; and, second, to critically engage with the film's potential erasure of racial identities. The film gives voice to Chicana plaintiffs but does so to pursue ongoing protections of female reproductive rights, including but not specifically the rights of Chicanas. The wound, in other words, is not opened and inhabited for solely the generative benefit of Chicanas. Rather, Chicana wounds are repurposed to serve others beyond the Chicana community. Indeed, in chapter two, my consideration of Jessica Enoch's "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse" (2007) illustrates this point. While Enoch endeavors to recover the rhetorics of the Chicana plaintiffs from their 1970s pre-trial and court testimony recordings and transcripts, Enoch identifies these testimonies as representing a wider feminist rhetoric, albeit situated in a specific historical context but, nonetheless, repurposed in her thesis for the elucidation of feminist rhetorical scholarship. The consequence is the voice that speaks from the wound is recontextualized to heal another rather than address one's own woundedness.

I end chapter two by considering Cathy Caruth's theories on the generative potential of the "the crying wound" when the aggrieved maintain possession of and attention to one's own woundedness. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth argues that trauma of the past *is* the present and can propagate greater understanding of the dynamic self. Caruth imagines sustained recall of wounds as electing to make

prominent “a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language” (4). Accordingly, Caruth discovers potential in the wound when one examines history’s ripple effects. By observing yesterday’s wound as today’s reality, one might also advocate continued need for redress to a community—while celebrating perseverance and resistance in that wound.

By contrasting the generative wound with the afflicted wound, chapters one and two set the foundation for chapter three which at last focuses on the medieval to modern historical genealogy. In chapter three, I return to the generative wound to claim that a dominant form of Chicana visual and textual rhetoric inherits a distinctive Iberian female strategy that positions wounds and fragments in ways that confront and transform the self. I begin this chapter by first applying visual studies methodologies to examine Chicana art that deploy rhetorics of the wound. In this analysis, I focus on two prevailing threads in Chicana art that make productive the wounds of colonial realities: reverse-colonization via reclamation of genres and imagery of Aztec/Mexica visual arts and appropriation of imagery of the Virgin Mary into the lived realities of Chicana artists.<sup>6</sup> I accordingly bring into my genealogy a consideration of indigenous heritages that shape Chicana art together, in parallel, and in discord with medieval Iberian influences. Yet it is also crucial to consider this history in conversation with contemporary studies and strategies of autopathography,

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<sup>6</sup> While the dominant scholarly name is *Aztec* for the peoples inhabiting Mesoamerica during conquest and colonization, I employ the name *Mexica*. This is the name that these peoples, specifically of the Tenochtitlán region (modern Mexico City) and their territories called themselves. The term *Aztec* was popularized in the early-nineteenth century by Alexander Von Humboldt. *Aztec* derives from a European misunderstanding of the Mexica who identified themselves as peoples of Aztlán, the mythical home of the Mexica peoples.

a genre of autobiography that centers on the first-person account of one's own disease or wounded experiences.

In this way, Tamar Tembeck's "Exposed Wounds: The Photographic Autopathographies of Hannah Wilke and Jo Spence" (2008) and "Selfies of Ill Health: Online Autopathographic Photography and the Dramaturgy of the Everyday" (2016) link my historical studies of woundedness to modern visual rhetorics. While autopathographies are traditionally expressed and studied in textual representations, during the last quarter-century a surge in visual autopathography has contested social erasure of the ill, particularly to advocate attention to specific urgent medical needs that impact stigmatized and/or marginalized demographics. Most prominent in these efforts are visual autopathographies of the AIDS crisis and female health risks of breast and ovarian cancers. Although Tembeck studies photography in strictly contemporary contexts, I share with her an interpretation of woundedness as a rhetorical strategy that prompts advocacy. Autopathographies aim to make visible both the physical and emotional afflictions to maintain the still-living self, the still-inventing self, the still-relevant self while forcing society to witness a dying flesh.

The impact is not unlike Chicana rhetoric of woundedness in its insistence of asserting the fragmented self as constructive even if society tends to gaze from Chicana displays of grievances. Illustrating this sentiment is art by northern Californian Amalia Mesa-Bains and southern Californian Maya Gonzalez, whose works feature prominently in my third chapter. While my attention is drawn to female rhetorics as a focal point for my historical studies, the generative wound is deeply rooted in broader Chicanx visual rhetorics. Therefore, works by the Los Angeles-based collaborative art group Asco and

Mexico-born but Stanford-based Enrique Chagoya also help me bridge the modern with medieval. Particularly, I detail the process of recognizing cultural rhetorics of woundedness through the opportunities that Chagoya in collaboration with Guillermo Gómez-Peña offers in the *Codex Espangliensis*. Indeed, the *Codex Espangliensis* returns our discussion to the *virgenes abrideras*. In short, chapter three explores visual depictions of Chicana fractures in modern Chicanx art—a motif repurposed from female Iberian devotional rhetorics, informed by Mesoamerican visual cultures, and deployed to advance modern campaigns.

My project concludes with a brief pedagogical examination that puts into application my scholarship of Chicanx historical and cultural rhetorics. After twenty years of teaching college composition in Southern California, thirteen of which have been as an instructor in a Chicano and Latino Studies department, I believe that I can fill a void in composition research and critical pedagogy from an ethnic studies perspective that focuses on Chicanx history, cultural rhetorics (both visual and textual), translingual studies, and decolonial theory. My goal is for my scholarship to raise greater attention to students' varied journeys to reclaim forms of rhetorics that meaningfully validate their own self-representational strategies as modern cultural writers.

### **Decolonial Methodologies in Chicanx Studies and Rhetorics**

Such a project that covers the aforementioned spans of eras, spaces, and topics necessitates the application of various methodologies to help navigate this long and complicated historical genealogy in its various textual and visual rhetorical manifestations. Chicanx Studies and Education scholar Daniel Solórzano suggests a critical race theory that employs scholarship of an interdisciplinary nature and engages a variety of methodologies

in the study of relevant historical, cultural, and social contexts (Torres 66).<sup>7</sup> In accordance with Solórzano, I apply in my historical genealogy, as outlined in the chapter overview, cultural rhetorics, decolonial studies, critical race and biopolitical theory, trauma studies, visual rhetorics, and critical pedagogy to explore the legacies of female medieval Iberian rhetorics of the wound in modern Chicanx textual and visual self-representation strategies. By applying a variety of methodologies, I hope to illustrate that the interweaving of numerous modes is crucial to recover fragments of cultural inheritances.<sup>8</sup>

In this way I also align with methodologies utilized by prominent Latin American scholars such as Walter Mignolo. In the foreword of *Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge* (2018), edited by Bernd Reiter, Mignolo develops his concept of *pluriversality* as a renouncement of the “conviction that the world must be conceived as a unified totality [...] in order for it to make sense”; rather Mignolo calls for a worldview that interconnects diversity, thereby setting “us free to inhabit the pluriverse rather than the universe” (“Foreword. On Pluriversality and Multipolarity” x). Raúl Sánchez, scholar of decolonizing rhetorics, adds in his study of Mignolo’s works that the delinking of writing to one form of semiotic and epistemological system, allows for greater understanding of the Americas’ rhetorical traditions that do not entirely arrive from colonial impositions (88, 85,

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<sup>7</sup> Theresa Torres cites Solórzano’s 1998 “Critical race theory, racial and gender microaggressions, and experiences of Chicana and Chicano scholars” *Qualitative Studies of Education* 11.1: 121-136.

<sup>8</sup> In the foreword of *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies: New Latinx Keywords for Theory and Pedagogy*, edited by Iris D. Ruiz and Raúl Sánchez (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Victor Villanueva differentiates *decolonial* from *postcolonial*. As I understand the terms, *postcolonial* is a political signal of a post-World War II Western atmosphere that cultivates sovereignty. Yet, the use of *post* indicates that violences committed against lands, cultures, languages, and identities have concluded. In my project, I advocate a *decolonial* process that continues to address still-extant wounds from colonial violences.

80). In consideration of Solórzano and Mignolo's methodologies, my research utilizes a pluralistic methodology to foster pluralistic and multimodal pedagogy that I hope to reach by the end of my project. I argue that a multimodal and multi-methodological approach to understanding the rhetorics of postcolonial peoples is essential when we consider that in the Mexican regions that concern my project, cultures were first approached through visual and corporal gestures to overcome verbal and textual obstacles. This first approach launched the colonization of cultures.

Thus, for my project to recover the Iberian crossover of the rhetorics of the generative wound, it is crucial that I employ overlapping studies of visual, corporal, and cultural rhetorics. In other words, when a people's modes of communication become jumbled into a colonizing system that attempts to obliterate or transform those modes, it is difficult to recover a rhetorical genealogy without considering a methodological framework that allows for multimodal analysis. While I hope to trace a European historical genealogy in my project, I do so with an awareness of the various modes of early transmission and the complicated and often incomplete reception of such European traditions by indigenous interpretations—based on an indigenous understanding of the world. In this way, I also join Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, who analyze beyond the alphabetic and uni-methodological.

*Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (2012) offers a model for recovering historical Andean rhetorics by applying multiple methodologies and multimodal analysis to the culture's literacy traditions. The authors, anthropologist Rappaport and art historian Cummins, respond to Uruguayan scholar Ángel Rama who, in *La ciudad letrada* (*The Lettered City*, 1984), asserted that the Ibero-American world was structured by an

ideology that privileged the written word. While certainly hierarchical structures in the Americas were impacted by Spanish emphasis on alphabetical literacy, Rappaport and Cummins suggest a broadening of discussions on literacy: “When the word *literacy* is used, one normally thinks of reading and writing. We have stressed here that the literate world is constituted by intersecting literacies that individually cannot stand alone. The literate world is thus multifaceted and often recursive” (255, authors’ emphasis). It is in this expansion of *literacy* that I find Rappaport and Cummins’s multimodal methodology instructive, in that my historical genealogy moves from medieval and to colonial, leaving behind linear narratives to intermingle with differing ontological and rhetorical systems. To recognize the intermingling in its complexity, we must examine beyond alphabetic literacy and consider visual and embodied forms of discourse.

In this way, *Beyond the Lettered City* and my own methodologies recall Mignolo’s 1995 *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*. Mignolo similarly utilizes as evidence various cultural artifacts, analyzed through multiple disciplines. Mignolo explicitly rejects standard comparative studies that, for example, pair products of art with art, literature with literature, rhetoric with rhetoric. Noting his debt to Jacques Derrida’s move to collapse distinctions between speech and writing, Mignolo repurposes for cultural studies this breaking of disciplines. He offers transdisciplinary methodologies that include linguistics, postcolonial studies, philosophy, literature, semiotics, and history. His goal is to salvage potential rhetorical choices that cultural producers may have considered prior to their ultimate selection. Thereby, Mignolo emphasizes *how* products were formulated, making end products irrelevant as objects of cultural examination. Specifically, it is the adoption—the selection—of rhetorical strategy in representations of self, location, and society that is

important for cultural studies. Additionally, such strategies avoid hierarchal tendencies of comparative studies concerning cultural productions. Mignolo explains, as follows:

“If one looks at representations instead of at enactments, one can say—as colonizers from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, from Spain to Britain said—that certain representations or lifestyles are inferior or barbarous. If one looks at enactments instead of representations, and cognition as enactment, one can not only escape the hierarchical description of culture but, more important, look at *activities* across cultures in a different light” (333-334).

With this argument, the *Florentine Codex*, for example, is not a literary nor art object, so much as a tool by which one may examine artistic and narrative rhetorical options that the producers elected from among various contextual *topoi*. A product, in and of itself, does not narrate a story. Instead, per Mignolo, its story resides in the production process. This manner of freezing a moment of choice during cultural production greatly appeals to my strategy to examine in Chicana writers and artists the moment that the wound transforms from adversity to generative. My analysis of rhetoric will largely focus on this moment of election, particularly as it concerns moments of adaptation after rhetorical disruption. I will further discuss the transformative potential of these moments in my upcoming discussion of *nepantla*. In my understanding, *nepantla* is a moment of “earthquake,” unsettlement, or upset during which generative transformation occurs.

For Rappaport and Cummins, unsettlement occurs when indigenous semiotics enter the cultural formations of the colonial Americas. To understand these moments of transcultural productions, Rappaport and Cummins cite W. E. B. Du Bois’s double-consciousness theory in which the Other is internalized into a double-view of inner self, Richard White’s middle ground theory in which interactions among cultural identities lead to a morphing into new cultural forms with the peripheries being less affected, and Mary

Louise Pratt's contact zone theory that builds on Fernando Ortiz's trans-culturation theory in which transference of cultural influences operates in multiple directions and unfolds in continuous fashion across time, creating new cultural representations (34, 45). Rappaport and Cummins prefer Pratt's model which best aligns with their metaphor of colonial culture as a tapestry—threads spreading from and into multiple directions to intertangle, thus transforming the physical plane with diverse colors that serve one function; this tapestry concept again foreshadows my discussion on *nepantla* and will provide a conceptual framework for my project. What I find additionally useful in Rappaport and Cummins's tapestry metaphor is its avoidance of binaries or hybridity. The tapestry does not recover indigeneity at exclusion of colonial realities and does not impose European structures on indigenous subjects. This model compliments my historical genealogy, in my attempt to not isolate Chicana inheritors into solely indigenous or solely Iberian narratives but rather to consider Iberian rhetorical traditions alongside indigenous. My intention is to study fragments or wounds as part of Chicana rhetorical inheritances, but not to position those fragments as binaries of a hybrid *mestiza* state.

### **Cultural Identities as Fragmented but not Binary, as Wounded but not Healed**

*Mestiza* is the female form of *mestizo*, a colonial term that denotes the offspring between a pure indigenous American mate and a pure Spanish mate. *Mestizo* as a social and racial category is often studied visually in *casta* paintings. As depicted in Ignacio María Barreda's *Las Castas Mexicanas*, the genre typically consists of a painting that is divided into 12 to 16 panels that each depicts a family: mother, father, and one or two children (Fig. 1.3). Each panel represents a racial caste. Children depicted in the panels bear the caste name. Thus, the *mestiza/o* panel would feature a pure indigenous parent and a pure

Spanish parent with their *mestiza/o* child(ren).

Regularly placed as the top left image in the *casta* series, the *mestiza/o* caste was ranked highest in a mixed-race hierarchical system based on the believed ability for each race to breed-out Othered features into an eventual return to Spanish state.<sup>9</sup>

Another feature of this genre is that the castes were often depicted alongside distinctive regional landscape, local fruits and vegetables, or before a landmark, such as prominent sites in and near Mexico City; the Paseo de Ixtacalco, a village built around canal systems, designated Mexico City as an American Venice and is featured prominently in *casta* paintings, as seen in the Barreda painting's lower register (Katzew 180). In this

way, *mestizos*, along with other castes, are offered alongside the products and resources of the Americas.

Historian and Art Historian Daniela Bleichmar studies the *casta* genre as demonstrative of imperialistic global collecting strategies, informed by European Enlightenment ideologies. Bleichmar observes that *casta* paintings ordered nature and society "into an idealized taxonomy, attempting to minimize one of the great social fears of

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<sup>9</sup> For more nuanced studies of the racial categorization system in *casta* paintings, see *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican American*, edited by Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).



FIGURE 1.3. Ignacio María Barreda. *Las Castas Mexicanas*. 1777. Oil on canvas. 30.3" x 19.2". Real Academia Español. Madrid. (Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

the higher classes in viceregal societies by suggesting that ethnicity was not uncertain, fluid, and hard to pin down but rather mathematically fixed, rigid, and readily identified through visual inspection” (169). As a counternarrative to Bleichmar’s analysis of the imperialistic nature of *castas*, Crista Olson, historian of rhetoric, argues that the genre reflects a growing proto-nationalistic pride and self-representation in the Americas. Olson focuses on rhetorical choices that producers may have elected for immediate purposes in Mexico. Olson perceives agency in the actions of specifically the *criollos*—the descendants of solely Spanish parentage but born in the Americas. Olson claims that *casta* paintings represent *Criollo* efforts to construct a vision of Mexico as uniquely populated and therefore capable of exceptional offerings. She argues that *criollos* identified “simultaneously with European authority and American rebellion” and therefore presented the “racial mixture [of the Americas] as a distinctive trait” in order to heighten the uniqueness of their own Spanish identity outside the Iberian peninsula (322). While restricting this rhetorical agency to the *criollos*, Olson is explicit in distancing from scholars like Bleichmar who consider *casta* paintings as purely imposed representations that were manufactured predominately for European markets—like an extravagant postcard that features the peoples, foods, and terrains of the Americas. Even so, Olson still argues that the “distinctive trait” of American miscegenation was a point of pride for the *criollos* to transmit to Europeans. In this way, Olson arrives at a similar conclusion as Bleichmar, that the peoples represented in *casta* paintings are commodified to advance a privileged class’s purposes—in which case, the term *mestiza/o* is still part of a history of packaging and selling the identities of people of Spanish and Indigenous descent.

Ilona Katzew and María Elena Martínez complicate Bleichmar and Olson's debate as Katzew and Martínez move the timeline of *casta* discussions to pre-Enlightenment considerations and extend the focus beyond commodification and collection to a wider social spectrum that includes religious purity, gender-role structures, and more nuanced race systems that support socioeconomic hierarchies. In *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-century Mexico* (2004), Katzew links *casta* structures to classical and medieval classification methods (7). She observes that the term *mestizo* while surely indicating an introduction of Spaniard racial lineage—and thereby civility—into indigenous bodies also functioned as a reinforcement of Spanish hierarchies. Katzew argues that *mestizo* indicated illegitimacy and lack of stable cultural affiliation; thereby, *mestizos* were often banned from holding positions of power (40). Therefore, while the introduction of Spanish blood was perceived in one sense as a raising or civilizing of indigenous peoples, the blood concurrently highlighted one's inadequacies and inabilities. Katzew summarizes that *casta* systems demarcated “*gente de razón* (people with reason) versus Indians; *gente decente* (respectable people) versus the pleb” (43). In essence, the system created both a joining of peoples through the potential to “breed out” the “uncivilized” while also actualizing a “divide-and-conquer” method to control reproductive choices based on socioeconomic and privilege systems (51).

Martínez similarly argues in *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (2008) that the caste system stems from a need both to recognize potential mobility within a single system and to demarcate levels within that system. Martínez focuses on medieval Castilian hierarchical concepts of Christian spiritual purity, in contrast with Iberian Muslims or Jews. Martínez claims that, when extended to the Americas, purity begins to be applied within an embodied racial categorizing system, thus correlating purity of soul with

whiteness of skin. Markers of impurity—based on faith, lineage, cultural practice, and eventually race—led to classifications that shaped colonial *casta* systems (56). The *mestizo/mestiza*, a hybrid person of Spanish and indigenous American descent, was classified lower than “pure” Spaniards of the Iberian Peninsula and “pure” Creoles of strictly Iberian heritage but born in the Americas; yet *mestizos/mestizas* were placed above hybrids of African descent whose blood was deemed, per Martínez, “apparently too potent to be completely assimilated” into a Christian colonial culture (159). Thereby, the idea of *mestiza* is grounded not only on European religious purity systems and colonial racialized *casta* systems, but also on an ability to fully merge fragmented selves into an eventually completely assimilated oneness.

In Barreda’s *Las Castas Mexicanas* the bottom central image consequently depicts indigenous Americans in their “raw” state, untouched by the “civilizing” genes of European colonizers. In this way, the *mestizo* at the top of the painting is depicted as a new and improved indigenous American yet one that, as Katzew cautions, is still marked as culturally illegitimate for power roles in society. According to cultural studies scholar Andrea Smith, this positioning of *mestizos* demotes indigenous identity as incapable of addressing modern complexities of Eurocentric life or as “a premodern precursor to *mestizo* identity” (63). The indigenous body becomes merely abstracted container of the potentially “civilizing” impact of European genes and ideologies in the Americas.

Given this historical context of the use of *mestiza/o*, it is not surprising that scholarly inquiries have gathered to complicate the term, including as it was envisioned by Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa’s view on the *mestiza consciousness*, as laid out in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, is of an innate sense of female Latinidad or *mestiza consciousness* that fluidly crosses geographical, social, cultural, racial, and linguistic

borders.<sup>10</sup> This privileged hybridity ironically recalls Olson's views of colonial-era *Criollo* strategies to assert a "distinctive trait" unique to the Americas. Critical of the idealization of this hybrid state, Sandra K. Soto in *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer* (2010) writes that the application of *mestiza* dangerously "glosses over the violent history of colonial miscegenation" (68). American Studies scholar Carmen Lugo-Lugo echoes this sentiment in her 2008 "'So you are a *mestiza*': Exploring the consequences of ethnic and racial clumping in the US academy." Lugo-Lugo examines *mestiza* as part of a racial categorizing system that relates to the conquest of the Americas and virtual obliteration of indigenous peoples (618). In "Latinx Rhetoric and Intersectionality in Racial Rhetorical Criticism" (2018), rhetorical critics and feminist scholars, Karma Chavez and Karrieann Soto Vega interrogate the manner in which racial formations negate or erase others—particularly African and indigenous races within the Latinx cultures through umbrella terms that derive from *mestiza/o* (320-321). Chavez and Soto Vega question the colonial system that initiated the negation of blackness as not part of the "brownness" of Latinx communities and the breeding-out of indigeneity (323). Rather than employ *mestiza/o* as a unifying cultural heritage, Chavez and Soto Vega focus on the exclusions created by the colonizing term. Finally, rhetorician, José Cortez views the use of *mestiza/o* as reproducing colonial hybridity structures and thereby damaging Latinx scholarship. Cortez asks Latinx scholars to reconsider the function of the term in order to truly decolonize Latinx rhetorical strategies of self-representation (53).

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<sup>10</sup> See also Damián Baca's application of *mestiz@* in his *Mestiz@ Scripts, Digital Migrations, and the Territories of Writing* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Yet the appeal of *mestiza/o* is deeply rooted, particularly in early ideologies of the Chicano Movement which pulled heavily from the nation-building textual and visual rhetorics of early-twentieth-century post-Revolution Mexico.<sup>11</sup> These government-sponsored rhetorics celebrated indigeneity as a starting point for modern Mexicans while marginalizing indigenous populations and physically relocating them to reservations—all for the advancement of Mexico’s new face of mixed-heritage. Scholar of Indigenous Rhetorics, Gabriela Raquel Ríos explains: “José Vasconcelos’s *raza cosmica* and Manuel Gamio’s ‘integrationist’ politics were two of the more prominent logics used to justify the forced removal of *Indigenas* into *ejidos* (or reserves) while simultaneously justifying *mestizos*’ claim to land, based not only on their ‘Indian blood’ but also on their racial superiority as ‘mixed-bloods’” (110).<sup>12</sup> In the late 1910s and 1920s government-sponsored projects urged artists to reassess tradition, reclaim native landscapes in art, cast indigenous subjects in these settings, and utilize allegory to mark distinct national and racial life in Mexico.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis on indigeneity was also inspired by Mexico’s Archaeological Inspection Department’s excavations of Teotihuacán, a city revered by and predating the Mexica or Aztec. Fifty years later, 1960s U.S. Chicano protest art and textual rhetoric were informed by Mexico’s nationalistic strategies to emphasize indigenous purity

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<sup>11</sup> See Dylan A. T. Miner’s *Creating Aztlán: Chicano Art, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Lowriding Across Turtle Island* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion on “Half-breed Theory,” see Dylan A. T. Miner’s essay, “‘When They Awaken’: Indigeneity, Miscegenation, and Anticolonial Visuality” in *Rhetorics of the Americas: 3114 BCE to 2012 CE*, eds. Damián Baca and Víctor Villanueva (Palgrave 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See David Craven’s “The Multiple Identities of Modernisms from Mexico in the Early Twentieth Century” in *Mexico Modern: Masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2006); Alan Knight’s “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham, 71-113 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Jacqueline Barnitz’s *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas, 2001).

and Aztec heritage as securing modern mixed-heritage descendants their rights to land. Chicana feminists of the 1980s and 1990s like Anzaldúa and initially Moraga adopted and adapted similar strategies in their use of *mestiza* theory and *Aztlán* utopian visions.<sup>14</sup>

Cultural studies scholar Abraham Acosta extensively criticizes the use of indigenous states to promote *mestiza/o* identities. In *Thresholds of Illiteracy*, Acosta expresses concern about hybridity studies that separate the indigenous and European into categories that imagine original purity for each binary source. He criticizes, or rather disparages, anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena for her argument in “Are *Mestizos* Hybrids?” De la Cadena claims that *mestizo* is not strictly about physical hybrid states but rather is applicable to social confrontations in which pure Indigenous peoples experience *mestizo* encounters with Europeans; in other words, *mestizo*, per de la Cadena, denotes the hybrid state of cultural exchange (de la Cadena 259). Acosta criticizes such a championing of hybridity as contradictory to de la Cadena’s asserted counter-hegemonic line of thought:

If by categorically distinguishing between indigenous and Western forms of hybridity, based exclusively on their requirement for pure categories, has she not just reproduced the conditions of purity/impurity that “indigenous hybridity” claims to be able to do without? In other words, despite the still arguable assertion that indigenous hybridities can indeed ignore purified categories, isn’t indigenous hybridity itself already a purified category? (42).

Acosta laments de la Cadena’s claim as illustrating that which he sees as a dominant *mestiza/o* hybridity narrative in Latin American and Latinx studies, which even with the

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<sup>14</sup> Aztlán is the spiritual homeland of the Mexica peoples and the source of the European identifier of the Mexica as Aztecs. In Chicana discourse, Aztlán is often described as a conceptual space that reclaims the Mexica mythical home, untouched by European imperialism and thereby still pure and utopian. Chicano Movement academic activist groups that propagated Aztlán as a third-space included the Brown Berets, United Mexican American Students (UMAS), El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), and La Raza Unida Party. See Fernando Pedro Delgado’s “Chicano Movement Rhetoric: An Ideographic Interpretation,” *Communication Quarterly*, 43.4 (Fall 1995): 446-455.

“innumerable contradictions and critiques adhering to this family of concepts, it is hard to understand the continuing vitality of such narratives” (36).

Art historians Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn align with Acosta’s position as they criticize trends towards hybrid studies that aim to recover “pure” Indian art in opposition to indigeneity that is in contact with Europeans. Dean and Leibsohn argue that such endeavors appeal to “our needs to see not cultural decimation but survival” (24). This argument suggests that modern perspective selectively impedes upon history, resulting in historical genealogies that reassert divisions between Mesoamerican and Iberian for the sake of advancing modern narratives of recovery or decolonization to the extent of resurrecting an imagined utopian past.<sup>15</sup>

In part, this “purity” division between Iberian influences and indigeneity will inform my studies of the fragmentation of Chicanx cultural identities, but these sorts of binary divisions are not the source of generative wounds. Instead, the wounds that I examine are the splitting of cultural and/or corporal selves between one’s personal—rather than categorical—conflicting loyalties to diverse inheritances. I reflect on conversations about the hybrid *mestiza* state now to differentiate my ideas of the wound. It is the framing of the Chicanx identity as stemming from two binaries that I reject—not the sense of fragmentation. I take to heart Dean and Leibsohn’s assertion, as well, that there appears a metaphorical recolonization of pre-Contact reality when we separate the indigenous from post-Contact interchange. Dean and Leibsohn claim that this separation denies “the radical

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<sup>15</sup> This division recalls the work of Nestor García Canclini in his *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). See especially chapter five, “The Staging of the Popular,” which criticizes historical divisions between popular culture (traditional folkloric) and modern culture (the hegemonic).

transformation of the lives of indigenous people brought about as a result of colonization. Such interests also betray desires to freeze indigenous people in the past, turning them (or aspects of their lives) into artifacts or relics of a bygone romanticized era” (15). Accordingly, when I speak of fragmented Chicana inheritances, I do not chase an imagined indigenous pure state that is constructed at odds with a binary component—the contaminating Iberian contact. I additionally do not consider indigeneity as a utopian past but rather a still-active present that participates in the rhetoric of wounds.

Yet, I also do not aim to assert a framework of cohesiveness as Anzaldúa originally suggested in response to binaries. In “Acts of Healing,” Anzaldúa’s 1983 preface to *This Bridge Called My Back*, Anzaldúa calls for the healing of divisions and binaries in the feminist movement and even admonishes her fellow feminists of color who inhabit an angry “land of thorns” that offers no solutions (xxviii). Anzaldúa asks for a oneness in feminist efforts and later in individual *mestiza consciousness* to heal and make whole the advocates of change. As I have been indicating throughout this introduction, I differ from Anzaldúa in my concepts of wounds and the *mestiza* state, and now regarding wholeness. My interests focus on the lack of wholeness and cohesiveness in order to highlight that the colonial is not *post*—that wounds of the colonial remain open through legacies of colonization that include the United States’ academic system which still separates, categorizes, and prioritizes ways of knowing and being. To keep open the wound and to highlight fractures in identity make evident that the post-colonial is not yet achieved and that we have yet to gainfully implement decolonial methodologies and pedagogies. Thus, for now, I wish to extend the wound, which I envision as a state of *nepantla*.

## A Critical Examination of the Application of “Nepantla”

Since *nepantla* is crucial to the development of my historical genealogy, I would like to clarify my understanding of the term by considering its indigenous etymology and placing the term in dialogue with my concept of the generative wound. I begin with what is believed to be a Mexica understanding of *nepantla* so that I might examine a potential indigenous rhetoric that accommodates European *topos* and the rhetoric of woundedness. My intention in this historical genealogy is to not represent passive indigenous rhetorics that are conquered and therefore not relevant to modern Chicana rhetorical legacies of the wound. Rather, I aim to argue that the syncretic nature of a specific Iberian and Mexica metaphysical and spiritual understanding complements an incorporated rhetoric of woundedness, a jointed inheritance that the Chicana writers and artists that I study utilize in their rhetorical strategies.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore important that I begin my studies by examining *nepantla* in its indigenous usage since it develops a corresponding foundation with Iberian female devotional rhetorics. My understanding of *nepantla* often deviates from prevailing applications of the term in Chicanx studies that are largely based on frameworks

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<sup>16</sup> I use *syncretic* as a descriptor rather than a category since I recognize the derogatory nature in which syncretism has been applied in the fields of religious studies and anthropology regarding the absorption of “primitive” faiths into Christianity—and the political consequences of such application. Still, I find useful the descriptor of syncretism as a reinterpretation of a dominant culture’s religion in order to integrate that dominant religion into the faith of another culture. Accordingly, the colonized culture remains an active agent that must be accommodated for successful conversion—while the colonizing system must reinterpret itself. Classical historian, Petra Pakkanen similarly criticizes syncretism as a categorizing system but suggests that the concept of syncretism is helpful as a heuristic tool for locating otherwise “hidden antecedents of historical facts and to interpret them” (86, as cited in the introduction to *Syncretism in Religion* by Anita M. Leopold and Jeppe S. Jensen, 6). This is exactly the tool that I hope to employ in my historical genealogy. (See also Gustavo Benavides’s “Syncretism and Legitimacy in Latin American Religion,” in *Syncretism in Religion*, 194-216, for a critical examination of power systems and political impacts connected to conceptions of syncretism in Latin America).

that privilege colonial contact. To illustrate my point, I offer a brief examination of the use of *nepantla* in the context of its colonial and postcolonial understanding as opposed to the Náhuatl application of the word.<sup>17</sup>

The first known Castilian definition of *nepantla* is located in Franciscan friar Andrés de Olmos's 1547 dictionary, *Arte de la lengua mexicana*. De Olmos defines *nepantla* as "en medio" o "entre." Franciscan friar Alonso de Molina's 1571 *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana* defines the word similarly as "en el medio," "en medio," o "por el medio" (Troncoso Pérez 143-144). These sixteenth-century Castilian definitions of *nepantla*, "in the middle," "through the middle" "in-between," "inside" continue to resonate in modern applications of the word. In "Spirit Glyphs: Reimagining Art and Artist in the Work of Chicana Tlamatinime" (2010), Laura E. Pérez defines *nepantla* as an in-between state, "the postconquest condition of cultural fragmentation and social indeterminacy" (200). She traces this understanding of *nepantla* to that which is believed to be its first published appearance in a sixteenth-century narrative that details a Castilian-Nahuatl exchange. Pérez accordingly privileges above the aforementioned Castilian dictionaries the spoken context of the indigenous word by an indigenous speaker. Still, the report of the interchange is made by a Spanish Dominican friar, Diego Durán in his circa 1581 *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*. In this publication Durán describes an encounter between himself and an indigenous man during which Durán reprimanded the man for practicing indigenous customs. The man responded, "Father, don't be afraid, for we are still '*nepantla*'" (220n7). In accord with an earlier interpretation of this quote by Miguel León-

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<sup>17</sup> *Náhuatl* is the language of the Nahua peoples of Mesoamerica. Nahua includes the Aztec/Mexica.

Portilla in *Endangered Cultures* (1976), Pérez explains *nepantla* as a neutral in-between state, signaling that the indigenous man is still in the process of being converted both in faith and customs. Following a similar interpretation, Anzaldúa fine-tunes her borderlands theory in her 2000 *Interviews/Entrevistas* by applying concepts of *nepantla* as a more advanced descriptor of cultural collisions:

I found that people were using “Borderlands” in a more limited sense than I had meant it. So to elaborate on the psychic and emotional borderlands I’m now using “nepantla.” [...] With the *nepantla* paradigm I try to theorize unarticulated dimensions of the experience of *mestizas* living in between overlapping and layered spaces of different cultures and social and geographic locations, of events and realities (176)

In 2002, Anzaldúa continues to define *nepantla* as, “the overlapping space between different perceptions and belief systems” (“Now Let Us Shift” 541). Acknowledging that she builds on Anzaldúan *nepantla* theory, Chicana scholar-activist Maylei Blackwell defines *nepantla* as a state of cultural conversion. In “Líderes Campesinas: Nepantla Strategies and Grassroots Organizing at the Intersection of Gender and Globalization,” Blackwell writes that *nepantla* is a word “used by Náhuatl speakers during the colonization of Mexico to name a place or space between two colliding cultures” (13). She argues that female farmworker activists in California might discover in this space strategies of resistance and negotiation. This understanding and utilization of *nepantla* is of a location which forms as site of marginalization and violation but then transforms into a space in which to discover advantage—an in-between space in which Chicana individuals might understand their cross-cultural existence and formulate strategies in the pursuit of social justice.

While aligned with the above cultural and social theory application of *nepantla*, Damián Baca’s concern is focused on academic methodologies. In “Rhetoric, Interrupted,” Baca reimagines the figure of Malintzin (also known as Doña Marina or more famously and

derogatorily referenced as Malinche), the Nahua woman who translated for Hernán Cortés and is therefore charged as an indigenous American Eve figure for the perceived original sin of assimilation. Baca attempts to salvage Malinche's status by considering her legacy, not as a sin but as a "plurality of languages" and modes of knowing that defy and complicate Eurocentric frameworks—or that which Baca calls strategies of *nepantlisma* or a "decolonial rhetoric" (150, 145). Baca views *nepantlisma* as a space in which the "descendents of Malinche" might adapt the colonizer's rhetoric in order to "interrupt colonizing macro-narratives" (145).

This idea of finding a space in which to interrupt dominant narratives has pervaded Chicana studies, even when the word *nepantla* is not applied. In his study of critical pedagogy, "Putting Literacy in Its Place: Nomadic Consciousness and the Practice of Transcultural Repositioning," Juan Guerra does not reference *nepantla*, yet he does extend the concept of in-betweenness as a state of empowerment. Guerra writes that "transcultural repositioning is a rhetorical ability that members of our [Chicana] community often enact intuitively," and these members are advantageously positioned between cultures in such a way as to "develop a rhetorical practice that mainstream dwellers who rarely venture outside the matrices of their own safe houses are not likely to cultivate" (34). Guerra applies this "nomadic consciousness" to classroom composition pedagogy, asking that instructors foster spaces of in-betweenness wherein students might compose reflections on their travels between languages, modalities, and social identities. In these student reflections, Guerra believes that writers might engage critically with their immediate world. This aligns closely to theories on *nepantla* even if Guerra relates the nomadic experience of moving to multiple spaces; after all, it is the reflection of the

transition, the in-betweenness, that he claims will cultivate in student writers the most critical awareness of their lives' shifting dynamics.

My brief review of the dominant and extended understanding of *nepantla* in Chicana academic discourse, theory, rhetoric, methodology, and pedagogy as an in-between space wherein a Chicana person might coexist with various social, language, cultural, and identity intersections in a multicultural United States geography, ironically neglects Nahua usage of the word and its metaphysical concepts. As Marcos de R. Antuna declares, "the divorce of this multidimensional concept from its Aztec philosophical worldview has left us with only the impoverished linguistic legacy on which to recognize and create new knowledge" (159). As previously mentioned, Pérez builds on León-Portilla's study of the first-known published usage of *nepantla* by friar Dúran. In Dúran's account, *nepantla* is specifically applied to a context of conversion and thereby understood as a response to transcultural negotiations.<sup>18</sup> It is accordingly later applied in Anzaldúa's theories, methodologies, and pedagogies as decolonial resistance during postcolonial negotiations. However, the word existed prior to colonization and still exists by Náhuatl speakers. Therefore, to apply the word in its limited manifestation between the friar and the target of his conversion efforts is to lose the fuller Nahua framework of the word. As Antuna writes, this serves to subordinate indigenous philosophical and linguistic legacies (162).

My understanding, and therefore application, of *nepantla* reaches for the Nahua construction of the term, which is largely as a metaphysical concept of securing balance

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<sup>18</sup> Ramon Troncoso Pérez details the original text of this exchange in *Crónica del Nepantla: Estudio, edición y anotación de los Fragmentos sobre la historia general de Anáhuac, de Cristóbal del Castillo* (Ph.D. diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2012); see especially pages 144-146. For an English translation of Dúran's narrative of this exchange, see Doris Heyden's translation, published by University of Oklahoma Press, 1964.

within a fluctuating liminal space. The chief emphasis of *nepantla* is not on sites of in-betweenness but on the action of finding balance while life forces push an individual into various directions. The importance of *nepantla* is in the emergence of the individual from the liminal space—not the inhabitation of that liminal space, not the living inside the metaphorical “borderland.” Finding stability allows one to emerge from liminal spaces and to transform. Linked to the metaphysical concept of *ollin*, which is a Náhuatl term of movement or earthquake, *nepantla* is the entrance into a new state of being once balance is secured in the “earthquake” of lived experiences.

The liminality of the space in *nepantla* is one that is nearly ritualistic in concept. This is not, however, the liminality as defined by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. For Turner, liminality is temporary and exceptional. Rather, *nepantla* is a permanent condition of the cosmos, human existence, and reality—not limited to solely cultural and colonial contacts in which the metaphorical earthquake erases indigenous paradigms. In actuality, *nepantla* cannot represent paradigm-erasing contacts, as there can be no erasure in the Nahua metaphysical concept because all change is possible and allowed for (Antuna 161). In a permanent condition of renewal after the constancy of upset—and at the moment of balance—*nepantla* is reached. In *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (2014), James Maffie visualizes *nepantla* as a “grand weaving in progress” where each thread of being transforms into a stable stitch for just a moment before moving back into motion for the next stitch to be secured as an ongoing eternal cycle of renewal and rebirth.<sup>19</sup> Maffie

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<sup>19</sup> Maffie places *nepantla* into conversation with a cluster of Náhuatl words that share possible etymological roots:

**Weaving cluster**—*tlaxinepanoa*, “to weave something”; *tlaxinepanoliztli*, “the act of weaving”; *xinepanoa*, “to

asserts that this process is ordinary—not extraordinary.<sup>20</sup> In this way, the upsets or wounds of life are generative and necessary for the renewal of each and all. They are, in actuality, the purpose of life.

In my study of the wound, I apply concepts of *nepantla* in its generative, balancing aspect rather than focus on the in-between space in and of itself. While the focus of my research will be on an Iberian genealogy, the Mexica concept of securing stability in a quake serves as an interweaving Mesoamerican genealogy in the construction of later Chicanx rhetoric of woundedness. In the *virgenes abrideras* sculptures, the Virgin Mary presents a steadiness and tranquility although inside her body contains the carved narratives of pain and sacrifice. However, in the Catholic understanding of sacrifice there is victory—redemption. Similarly, in the Mexica understanding of the earthquakes of life, there is generative transformation. These joint concepts of survival after assault by, and

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weave something, like mats, fences, or something similar”; *qualli tlaxinepanoani*, “the accomplished weaver”; *tlaxinepanolli*, “something woven” (359-360).

**Joining cluster**—*nenepanoa*, “to join or mix one thing with another”; *cennepanoa*, “to mix some things with others”; *nepan uiuixoa*, “to shake or swing two things together”; *tlanelpanuiuixoliztli*, “the act of shaking and mixing something together”; *ixnepoa*, “to line or cover something, to fold a blanket, to join one with another” (356-357);

**Social interconnectivity cluster**—*nenepantlazotlalo*, “to love each other”; *nenepantlazotlaliztli*, “the love they have for each other”; *nenepantlazotlaltia*, “to create bonds of friendship between people”; *manepanoa*, “to get married, or to join hands”; *nepanoa*, “to have intercourse with a woman or to push into a group of people”; *nenepanoliztli*, “copulation or carnal intercourse”; *motlatolnepanoa*, “to agree on what is said”; *tlatolnepaniuiliztli*, “agreement or conformity of reasons and opinions”; *nepanotl titotla paloa*, “to greet with one another”; *nenepantlapaloliztli*, “reciprocal greeting”; *nepan tzatzilia*, “to shout to one another or for those who are working to hurry one another”; *tictonepantlatlaxilia*, “to blame each other for something”; *tenepantla moctecani*, “to stir up trouble among others”; *tenepantla moquetzani*, “the one who puts himself between those who are quarreling in order to calm them”; *nepantla quiza titlantli*, “the messenger between two people” (356-357).

<sup>20</sup> See Maffie’s chapter, “Teotle as Nepantla,” notably pages 355, 360, and 363.

eventual defeat of, turmoil form a rhetorical partnership that is important for my studies. In contrast, the application of *nepantla* as a borderland realm that exists between colonizer and colonized blurs the genealogical rhetorics that I aim to examine. To be clear, there is a strong element of in-betweenness in *nepantla*, and certainly my analysis of the rhetoric of woundedness will include speakers that inhabit the wound. The wound is a concept of third space that will absolutely rely on the scholarship and theory of Chicana writers who discuss *nepantla* as a generative space between cultures, between languages, between colonizer and colonized. However, I distance my study from borderlands and move closer to a hemispheric study.

My distance is mindful of four important cautions. To make the borderland metaphor universal to Chicana experience, first, obscures the specific political violence committed at the geographic border and, second, metaphorically relocates the specific issues of urban Chicana populations that are far-removed from the border. Third, the application of borderland theories all too often essentializes Chicana experiences while simultaneously erasing Mexican heritage in the southwest and western United States prior to the creation of any border and even the United States. Finally, to equate postcolonial borderland theories with *nepantla* is to make natural the forces of colonial legacies. In other words, *nepantla* denotes finding balance while turbulent life forces *naturally* rise to destabilize individuals; by equating natural life forces to colonial and post-colonial forces, colonization becomes the true way of the world. I am not interested in this framing of *nepantla* or the colonized borderlands so much as the crossroads which split Chicana loyalties and identities—the intersections that violently crash and the wounds that occur

from such crashes, the quakes which become generative forces towards new self-awareness.

The Mexica rhetorics of crossroads are linked to concepts of *nepantla*. In his etymological study, Maffie draws a correlation between *nepantla* and the words *onepanco* and *onepanolco*, which are commonly translated as “crossroads” (361). Elizabeth Hill Boone interprets the Mexica views on crossroads as tending to denote in calendar symbology systems a portent of “danger, destruction, or conflict” (60). Boone further cites Cecelia Klein’s suggestion that the danger of crossroads derives from an excessive number of paths, thereby leading to a lack of direction and disorder (258n32).<sup>21</sup> It is this excessive number of paths that speaks to my study of the wound that opens from Chicane split loyalties and split identities. Paired with a female Iberian devotional rhetoric of woundedness, the concept of finding balance after upset and reaching *nepantla* becomes the generative aspect of the wound that I trace as part of modern Chicane textual and visual rhetorical inheritances.

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<sup>21</sup> Boone cites Klein’s “Gender Ambiguity in Nahua Ideology” in *Gender in Pre-Hispanic America*, edited by Cecelia F. Klein, 183-253.

## CHAPTER 1

### STITCHING, NOT HEALING: CHERRÍE MORAGA'S RHETORIC OF FRAGMENTATION AND SEMI-NESS AS THE GENERATIVE WOUND



FIGURE 2.1. Coyolxauhqui Stone. Late Postclassic. 1200-1519 C.E. Tenochtitlan, Aztec. Volcanic Stone. Approx. 11-foot diameter. Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City. (Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

In the 2000 foreword to the second edition of *Loving in the War Years*, Cherríe Moraga details her new awareness of the image of Coyolxauhqui, the Mexica or Aztec moon goddess who was torn to pieces by her brother, Huitzilopochtli, chief war-god of the Mexica empire, after she opposed his emergence to power. The colossal Coyolxauhqui Stone from the Late Postclassic Mexica period (1200-1519 C.E.), which is the only remaining depiction of Coyolxauhqui in her full-bodied dismembered state, was rediscovered in 1978 at the base of the Templo Mayor in Mexico City, formerly the Mexica capital city of Tenochtitlan (Fig. 2.1). When Moraga first began to compose *Loving in the War Years* in 1983, she had not yet incorporated this newfound Coyolxauhqui image into her work. By 2000 she claims that the spirit of Coyolxauhqui, all along, was and is her guide. She relates to this fallen warrior sister who defies normativity to reveal injustice. Moraga writes, “Without knowing, I looked for Coyolxauhqui in these dark wartime writings of twenty years ago, the dim reflection of my own pale moonface lighting my way. *I am not the first*, I kept telling myself, *I am not the only one to walk this road*” (iii). Here Moraga evokes Coyolxauhqui as a symbol of ever-present violence committed against female bodies that strive for change.

The powerful revolution that Moraga perceives in the Coyolxauhqui Stone may seem at odds with the actual visuality of the object which presents a deceased woman who has been disrobed, nudeness indicating humiliating defeat in Mexica iconography. This defeat is particular to Coyolxauhqui’s femaleness as her exposed breasts are placed prominently in her disgrace.<sup>22</sup> Of note, she maintains sandals, arm braces, and headdress, but

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<sup>22</sup> Cecelia F. Klein’s various studies on depictions of females in Mexica visual culture are helpful here. See especially Klein’s scholarship surrounding the Coyolxauhqui Stone in

significantly these clothing items are specific to Mexica iconography of male warriors. Although ancient and medieval Mesoamerican iconography often contain male-female dynamics or dualities within single entities to represent balance and dynamism, the centrality of Coyolxauhqui's breasts in death, surrounded by male attire that she bore in life, conspicuously highlights the figure's gender transgressions.<sup>23</sup> Her outer male accoutrements do not match her shielded female body. This parallels narratives of Moraga's own discordant inner and outer selves while Moraga concurrently positions the female body as painful conduit towards insight and solidarity.

Interestingly, Moraga's handling of the Coyolxauhqui Stone shares rhetorical *topoi* with the *virgenes abrideras*. These two cultural artifacts are not commonly joined in Chicana studies since they are both perceived as highly iconic in their own side of a binary spectrum, a spectrum that often deters conversations of syncretic Catholic and Mexica cultural objects. As discussed in my introduction, I intend to avoid binary systems that

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context with the Coatlicue sculpture: "The Devil and the Skirt: An Iconographic Inquiry into the Pre-Hispanic Nature of the Tzitzimime," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 11. 1 (2000): 1-26; "A New Interpretation of the Aztec Statue Called Coatlicue, 'Snakes-Her-Skirt'" *Ethnohistory* 55.2 (2008): 229-250. For a general study of female representation in Mexica art, see Klein and Jeffrey Quilter's *Gender in Pre-Hispanic America* (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> For interpretations of Mexica male-female iconography and gender ideologies, see Pete Sigal's "Imagining Cihuacoatl: Masculine Rituals, Nahua Goddesses and the Texts of the Tlacuilos," *Gender and History* 22.3 (Nov. 2010): 538-563; see also Elizabeth Brumfiel's "Figurines and Aztec State: Testing Effectiveness of Ideological Domination," in *Gender & Archaeology*, ed. Rita P. Wright, 143-166 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996). For ancient Mesoamerican gender iconography and ideologies, see Sharisse D. McCafferty and Geoffrey G. McCafferty's "The Conquered Women of Cacaxtla: Gender Identity or Gender Ideology?" *Ancient Mesoamerica* 5 (1994): 159-172; Janet C. Berlo's "Icons and Ideologies at Teotihuacan: The Great Goddess Reconsidered" in *Art, Ideology, and the City of Teotihuacan*, ed. J.C. Berlo, 129-168 (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1992); and Zoltan Paulinyi's "The 'Great Goddess' of Teotihuacan: Fiction or Reality?" *Ancient Mesoamerica* 17 (2006): 1-15.

discourage together-apart trajectories of our cultural inheritances. This makes my current project novel in its pairing of Coyolxauhqui and the *virgenes abrideras*, a pairing that Moraga does not seem to consciously link since she tends to vocally align with the Mexica side of her cultural inheritances; but this pairing is nonetheless connected through the cultural rhetorics that inform Moraga's analysis of Coyolxauhqui.

In an analogous application of visual rhetorics of woundedness, both the Coyolxauhqui Stone and the *virgenes abrideras* utilize concealing breasts to expose narratives of pain and sacrifice beneath an otherwise steady and assured resolve. Yet, unlike Mary who sustains a female ideal, Coyolxauhqui's disparate engendered parts are exhibited as abominations. Indeed, Coyolxauhqui must be punished, and her incongruous selves exhibited as justly destroyed in graphic detail with bones jutting from her torn body, and her severed tongue falling from a mouth agape. She is stripped, silenced, shattered. Only the serpent belt, wound round her waist with a skull at its rear divulges any former power, the snake being a predator yet symbol of regeneration in Nahua iconography—wherein the movement of blood renews life via both its course through the body and its spilling into generative sacrifice. It is this lingering hint of regeneration amidst bodily and vocal destruction that Moraga's writings participate in Chicana rhetorics of woundedness.

I begin chapter one with consideration of the Coyolxauhqui Stone to initiate my definition of the generative wound as expressed in Moraga's discourses, as related to her identification with Mesoamerican rhetorical traditions of woundedness. Also, the chapter invites Moraga's works to join dialogues on a more expansive, interweaving Ibero-American studies of Chicana historical rhetorics of woundedness. Moraga's strategy is to examine violent fragmentations to stimulate dialogue both on a multitude of constraints

placed on female selves and on delinking self from normative wholeness. Historically, I associate this tearing apart to Mexica perception of bodily sacrifice as gateway to spiritual victory. In the earthquakes of life, there is generative transformation. As well, I realize prominent Christian parallels—as woundedness in the Christian context reveals earthly sin in order to offer a fount of renewal. These joint concepts of survival after turmoil form a rhetorical partnership that is important for my studies. While Moraga tends to distance her discourse from the Virgin Mary, this partnership continues to inform the cultural rhetorics that Moraga employs and her themes of tormented motherhood-daughterhood. In chapter one, I accordingly identify rhetorical traditions of generative woundedness in contemporary writings by examining fragmentations and emotions of semi-ness as expressed in the span of Moraga’s publications, from “La Güera” (1979) to *Native Country of the Heart* (2019).

Particularly helpful for these examinations is the second edition of *Loving in the War Years* (2000), wherein Moraga expresses pain as companion to discovery and construction, a theme initiated in her 2000 foreword on Coyolxauhqui and in her autoethnographic essay, “The Dying Road to a Nation.” Here, emphasis and visibility of Chicanas’ battleground wounds provoke Moraga to retrieve Coyolxauhqui’s fallen-warrior accoutrements and enter still-raging “war years.” In this way, Moraga engages fragmentation to illustrate both agony and power. She maintains the wound as a generative source for negotiating decolonial identities and realities. As Walter Mignolo writes in his 2011 “Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option,” it is in “the colonial wound from where decolonial thinking is weaved” (48). Mignolo’s decolonial option supports Moraga’s sentiment of the potential of inventions inside the wound. At the same time, fragmentations

and emotions of semi-ness become capital in her writing, empowering those with wounds to confront violators with testimony of past and continued wrongs.

In this chapter, I consider how Moraga's adoption of fragmentation illustrates her participation in a rhetorical tradition of generative wounds with the purpose of confronting and transforming self-perception and social constructs of female selves. The wounds also serve to remind Chicanas that we should not feel obligated to fit a narrative of "correct" seamlessness of language, identity, or culture. In fact, such narratives of wholeness are suspect, a point that aligns Moraga's concepts of fragmentation with Trinh T. Minh-ha's "not-I" theories. This sentiment also echoes in Karen Barad's diffraction and patchwork models. Finally, the chapter explores Moraga's autoethnographic writings in the context of advocacy as she extends her personal experience of generative wounds to a wider Chicana and lesbian community that she perceives as under assault. Here, Judith Butler's study on precariousness and mourning add to our conversation since Moraga's focus on fragmentation aims to fortify her specific Chicana community by mourning a colonial wound too large to ever close—while concurrently celebrating perseverance and resistance in that wound.

### **The Retrofitted History of the Generative Wound**

Since this project places Moraga's writing within a historical genealogy of a Mesoamerican-Iberian rhetoric of woundedness, I briefly consider Moraga's approach to history, which can be paralleled to Maylei Blackwell's strategies. In *¡Chicana Power!* (2011), Blackwell discusses a historical methodology that she terms "retrofitted history" or counter-memories that function both as destabilizing forces against entrenched hierarchical histories and as expansions of our understanding of events. Specifically,

Blackwell writes of contemporary narratives on the history of activism in the 1960s Chicano movement and 1970s feminist movement. She examines representations of these particular activist histories and concludes that Chicana participants in these movements are consistently yet inaccurately positioned as add-on players who functioned as neither major catalysts nor gamechangers for transformation (11-12, 29). To interrogate such dominant narratives, Blackwell suggests an approach that stitches together fragments of histories through a “shared authority” which recalls, reinterprets, and even misremembers (2). She posits that *how* people remember is as pertinent as *what* transpired—the *what* being a product of empowered authorities and the *how* being a sharing of often-emotional and obscured informal recall via oral interview.

If we relocate Blackwell’s framework into colonial contexts, the *what* is history that prioritizes the colonizer’s version of contact. Only rarely is the *how* shared; when it is shared, it is predominately restricted to only sanctioned emotions. This marginalization of emotional recall diminishes the unsanctioned emotions of the broken and the shamed, a point of contention for Moraga who aims—not at re-*membering* Coyolxauhqui’s torn body but rather *remembering* the emotions that hold her fragments together, the spirit of regeneration that linger in Coyolxauhqui’s story, and the desire for perseverance that grows from pain. Most relevant to my interpretation of Moraga’s strategy is Blackwell’s focus on “how trauma shapes memory” with the purpose of ending silences associated with such trauma (40). Moraga’s application of this retrofitted memory is to argue that by remembering Coyolxauhqui’s trauma, we remember her life’s purpose. Per Moraga, figures such as Coyolxauhqui are ultimately not overpowered and not abominations of femaleness. They are heroes whose fragmentations signal their own election and agency for renewal

amidst external assault. In this way, Moraga challenges dominant views that Coyolxauhqui's historical significance is of an unequivocally vanquished figure.

The traditional telling of Coyolxauhqui's legend begins with the immaculate impregnation of her mother, Coatlicue, by the appearance of a ball of feathers. Coatlicue's adult children are outraged at hearing of this new, unauthorized, and thereby suspicious pregnancy. One daughter, Coyolxauhqui, gathers her brothers, the Centzonhuitznahua, and leads an attack to the top of Coatepec Mountain to kill her mother and the unborn child. However, during the attack, the unborn child, Huitzilopochtli, emerges from Coatlicue as a full adult to defend his mother. He proceeds to decapitate and dismember Coyolxauhqui, whose body he then tosses from the heights of Coatepec. Huitzilopochtli proceeds to kill his brothers. In the process, however, Coatlicue dies, torn apart from the birth of her godchild. This origin narrative of the Mexica's primary deity, Huitzilopochtli, later assumed iconographic significance. While Coyolxauhqui was not originally a moon deity, the Mexica signified her by the moon and Huitzilopochtli by the sun, paralleling the dominance of the greater heavenly body over the lesser (Miller 225). Art historian Emily Umberger explains, "in this allegory, Huitzilopochtli is the sun rising from the earth in the morning, obliterating the moon (Coyolxauhqui) and stars (the Centzonhuitznahua), and driving them into the Underworld in the west" (14). This iconographic denoting of the legend's figures possibly informed ritual on the Mexica's main temple, the Templo Mayor, as human sacrifices are thought to have been performed on the top of the temple pyramid, symbolizing Coatepec Mountain, and the fallen sacrifices were possibly removed to the bottom of the pyramid where the Coyolxauhqui Stone was later found in 1978 at the base of the Templo Mayor.

It is therefore this later Mexica application of the myth that Moraga references when she calls Coyolxauhqui a moon goddess, suppressed by the patriarchal Huitzilopochtli through violent sacrifice of femaleness. Although Coatlicue remains part of this legend, she is removed from Mexica ritualistic remembrance in regard to celestial iconography. In the removal of Coatlicue, as interpreted by the celestial map and later by Moraga, the legend becomes focused on Coyolxauhqui's victimization. In other words, the origin of this myth is relocated to strategize a later-day retrofitting, not only by Moraga but by many prominent Chicana writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Ana Castillo. Although Coyolxauhqui is the aggressor against her pregnant mother and unborn brother, she is repositioned by these Chicana feminist writers as both heroine and victim, particularly by Moraga and Castillo though less so by Anzaldúa who does extensively consider Coatlicue but primarily outside the Coyolxauhqui narrative. Furthermore, in the narrative, although both mother and daughter die, only the daughter achieves glory in sacrifice. I find, particularly in Moraga's writings, the retrofitted memory of Coyolxauhqui's narrative to be compelling because it is a blatant appropriation that reverses the legend into its complete opposite Mexica purpose as we currently understand it. While this is an extreme case of retrofitted memory, I do believe that such retrofitting is essential in the rhetoric of woundedness.

The concept of retrofitting is important to the historical lineage that I trace because this rhetorical tradition repurposes memories of trauma to redirect them into sacrificial moments that deny defeat. Indeed, they position the sacrificed as victorious in her persistent perseverance of emotional conviction and in her faith that the conviction will become generatively contagious to those who align with her. Although I have focused on Moraga's adoption of the Coyolxauhqui figure to model Moraga's application of rhetorics of

generative wounds in dialogue with Mexica iconography, I believe that her handling of fragmentation and woundedness can also be traced through Christian iconography and themes. As previously noted, Moraga more readily claims Mexica rhetorics in her writings, but I maintain that she actively participates in a cultural rhetoric that is shaped by both Mexica and Christian inheritances. Chapter three will highlight the Christian rhetorical lineage and return to our focus on the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera*. For now, it is important to illustrate the nuances of rhetorics of woundedness, and Moraga's writings provide ideal vehicles to serve that purpose.

### **Moraga's Rhetoric of Woundedness:**

#### **Fragmenting the Language of Home, of God, of Mother, of Love, of Knowing**

In her 1979 "La Güera," published in *This Bridge Called my Back* and later in *Loving in the War Years*, Moraga enters an inherited rhetoric of the generative wound. She addresses her shame at realizing that the solidarity she seeks with her mother's Chicana culture is problematized by her own white skin, inherited by her father's white race. For Moraga, her whiteness prevents her from sharing significant social commonalities with her dark-skinned mother, diminishing her perceived power to advocate her Chicana sisterhood. Moraga's body has alienated her from the people with whom she most cherishes while allying with those of privileged skin. As a result, she views herself as having become the oppressor of the women she values—and ultimately herself (25). No matter the pain of realizing that an enemy resides within, Moraga resolves to "assess the damage." She believes that the only way to minimize even further damage is to realize one's own self-oppression and to observe the ripples of this damage in other areas of life, namely the

feminist movement to which *This Bridge Called my Back* largely responds (27).<sup>24</sup> A refusal to examine the damage is, per Moraga, “the polite timidity [that] is killing us” (29).

She continues to assess the damage in her 1981 *theory in the flesh*, written as a preface for *This Bridge Called My Back*, in which Moraga asserts that it is through voicing the often-violent lived experiences from living in one’s skin color, sexuality, and locality that the “contradictions in our experience” can be understood. She clarifies, “daily, we feel the pull and tug of having to choose between which parts of our mothers’ heritages we want to claim and wear and which parts have served to cloak us from the knowledge of ourselves” (19). In assessing the damage of self-concealment, Moraga realizes the productive potential of exposing her disparate parts. She accordingly reveals and asserts her hidden narratives, no matter the risk of violent confrontation. Specifically, in “La Güera” and her *theory in the flesh* Moraga aims to rhetorically unmake her white body to expose a brown identity-inheritance that has been previously crushed by the flesh. This crushing is a result of colonial epistemologies and value systems that Moraga has internalized. In *The Wounded Heart* (2001), Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano perceives in Moraga’s texts a struggle with the internalization of oppressive teachings regarding sexuality, race, culture, and class (4). Yarbro-Bejarano details the manner in which nearly every poem of the first edition of *Loving in the War Years* centers on the female body which Moraga systematically tears into

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<sup>24</sup> Moraga was vocal about her disappointment in the 1970s feminist movement. Her collaboration with Gloria Anzaldúa in co-editing *This Bridge Called My Back* reacts to fissures in the feminist movement. In their Foreword, Moraga and Anzaldúa assert that white middle-class women continue to resist expanding the definition of what “feminist” means to women of color in the United States, as well as to Third World women (xliii-xliv). In the essay “A Long Line of Vendidas” in the first edition of *Loving in the War*, Moraga further differentiates her ideologies from those of white middle-class feminists, aligning herself with the principles stated in the 1977 Combahee River Collective (123).

semi-human pieces. This violence committed to self, or that which Sidonie Smith refers to as Moraga's "self-censoring body," is an attempt to detach the link between the socially-constructed body and the identity that is formed in relation to body (139-140). Moraga's aim, per Yarbrow-Bejarano, is to expose the historical "appropriation" of the female physique so that women might now reclaim each of their parts (5).

### Fragmenting the Language of Home

As part of this reclamation, voice is central since Moraga's writings tend to equate body with language. The whiteness of her Chicana body is akin to Moraga's betrayal of her mother's Spanish language. We can see this sentiment expressed in the 1982 essay "A Long Line of Vendidas," published in *Loving in the War Years*. Here Moraga writes:

"I have not spoken much of lengua [language] here, possibly because my mutedness in Spanish still shames me. In returning to the love of my raza, I must confront the fact that not only has the mother been taken from me, but her tongue, my mother-tongue. I yearn for the language, feel my own tongue rise to the occasion of feeling at home, in common with other Latinas ... and then suddenly it escapes me. The traitor-voice within me chastises, '¡Quítate de aquí! You don't belong!'" (131)

Again, we see conveyed the oppressor within, the "traitor-voice" within, this time reminding Moraga not of the privilege of whiteness but that she lacks the privilege of Spanish, that she does not belong in a home language. Moraga is a *vendida*, a sell-out, of her language and therefore a traitor against her mother's race. In "Building a Translengua in Latina Lesbian Organizing" (2017), Lourdes Torres views Moraga as experiencing a cultural homelessness that initially stunts her ability to advocate on her own behalf, an issue that Torres observes as epidemic for second-generation Latinas in their efforts to first define and then construct coalitions (281). When there is no language to define self and community, limits arise in belonging and in knowing a sense of home. This perhaps leads to

Sidonie Smith's observation of Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* as detailing a sense of "homelessness in and out of the body" (140). Moraga continues to write of these limits in "A Long Line of Vendidas." She recalls that during the 1960s and 1970s, she did not actively participate in the Chicano movement, and she never marched in protests or attended on-campus MECHA meetings because, "No soy tonta. I would have been murdered in El Movimiento at the time—light-skinned, unable to speak Spanish well enough to hang; miserably attracted to women and fighting it; and constantly questioning all authority, including men's. I felt I did not belong there" (104). Moraga narrates life in a wounded state, rejected from all sides of her white and brown, English and Spanish, and heteronormative and lesbian selves. However, while in this earlier writing Moraga rages against her wounded state, sixteen years later in the 1998 "The Dying Road to a Nation," she reaches a stage in which she can embrace wounds of rejection and strategically employ her rhetoric of generative wounds—exactly because of this initial sense of fragmentation from her community, this homelessness or exile.

Edward Said addresses the concept of the exiled in a manner that I view as akin to an aspect of the generative wound. In "Reflections on Exile," Said observes the exile as exercising a perspective that fosters a dynamic and assorted understanding of reality, contrasted with the single and stationary understanding of non-exiles. Said argues that exile perspective encourages mutability of self. He explains, "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions" (434-435). In my understanding, it is through access of this in-betweenness or semi-ness that the exiled may both discern and select among varied overlapping narratives, achieving that which Said

calls a “nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal” life that is “led outside habitual order”; such an awareness encourages “originality of vision” (435). In chapter two, we will return to this concept of the exile, or more exactly the fractured and wounded, as fostering originality of vision in a more in-depth exploration of trauma theory, particularly as expressed in Cathy Caruth’s research. However, it is important to note now that Moraga cultivates her positionality from a vantage of insider-outsider, both wounded by her exile but also empowered in her decentered experiences. This recalls Gloria Anzaldúa’s *mestiza consciousness* that slips fluidly through the multiple worlds that the *mestiza* navigates. However, while Anzaldúa places the *mestiza* into a grounded state of borderland realms—with one foot in the United States/English and the other in Mexican heritage/Spanish—Moraga inhabits a no-place and a destabilization where her feet find no purchase.

Yet in “The Dying Road to a Nation,” Moraga begins to embrace this destabilization, this earthquake or Náhuatl *ollin* that offers opportunities to achieve momentary *nepantla* or momentary balance with her disparate parts before the next quake hits. As previously noted in the introduction, I apply *nepantla* not as a colonial encounter of in-between borderland space but rather as a Náhuatl metaphysical concept of reaching balance in a permanent condition of renewal after the constancy of upsets. In the practice of reaching balance, one harnesses the generative forces of wounds. Specifically, Moraga intentionally chooses to destabilize her sense of identity and home in order to reach new awareness of selves. This process aligns with theories on insider/outsider exile as well as our later discussion of trauma theory since Moraga’s discoveries are fostered through a perception of fragmentation which is accessed through external division from society. In other words, Moraga distances herself (whether through choice or life confrontations) from home and

loved ones to eventually dismantle the identity that is shaped by those same locations and interactions. We see this most clearly expressed in Moraga's many recollections of her alienation from family in order to realize the reality of her lesbian self but also in her more subtle distancing from her father to tap into her Spanish heritage and later from her mother to tap into an indigenous inheritances. Ultimately, this is a process of undoing identity to purge colonial and heteronormative internalizations. I propose that "The Dying Road to a Nation" addresses the necessary fragmentation into multiple selves in order to piece together a new vision of the future that rejects the colonized home. This is the "dying road" or wound that Moraga navigates in hopes that the painful tearings will emancipate the previously disparate selves to peacefully coexist in fragmented oneness.

Accordingly, in her later writings Moraga's method to free body and home is to abandon both. She is not passively exiled; the exile does not *happen* to her. Rather she *chooses* to delink herself. The "dying road" is thereby the pathway that kills Moraga's prioritization of the physically lived experience as she knows it through Western epistemologies—through which she realizes she has inadvertently stifled her own knowledge of her multiple selves. She evokes the memory of Coyolxauhqui to ultimately serve this purpose. She perceives in Coyolxauhqui a severing of body that allows, at last, both inner and outer, both feminine and warrior to exist as one—despite the violence committed against that fractured oneness. Moraga's new road necessitates that the concepts of body that have been previously formed by colonial constructs as a seamless and whole oneness now die. Accordingly, Coyolxauhqui's split body is productive, not shameful—a retrofitted memory that Moraga inserts into the Mexica narrative. The disparate parts as expressed in society and in self become crucial for Moraga's decolonial

methodology, a concept that I will revisit in my upcoming discussion of writings by Trinh and Barad.

### Fragmenting the Language of God

Still, this way of knowing self is not an easy journey, and Moraga narrates another wound that must be repurposed for generative ends. She notes the extent to which her understanding of self is encroached by the external language of American English and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Moraga seeks that which is akin to philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of the *thinking body*—"to think without knowing anything, without articulating anything, without intuiting anything. It is thinking withdrawn from thinking" (28). Yet Moraga is disturbed by her inability to conceptualize of herself in this way. This is most evident in an early section of "The Dying Road to a Nation," entitled *Susto* or *the fear*.<sup>25</sup> Here, Moraga details the start of her choice to self-fragment when she first confronts the fears of unlearning her socially and bodily-created self. Moraga specifically narrates anxieties about the death of her daughter-mother self as she experiences her mother's illness and then her premature son's medical complications. These loved ones are respectively Moraga's Spanish-Catholic past and her undefined raw future; they are also respectively the one that is meant to protect her, and the one *she* is to protect. In both cases, the protectress falters. As the daughter-mother struggles with the vulnerabilities of her not-protected / non-protector identities, Moraga realizes the Catholic God's control of "body-life," a control that she resents yet must concede. Moraga states, "I call God by the

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<sup>25</sup> For an exploration of the Central and South American use of the term *susto* as related to PTSD, see Michael G. Kenny, "Trauma, Time, Illness, and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Traumatic Memory," in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, ed. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, 151-171 (New York: Routledge, 1996).

name of death because nothing other than death wields such undying power in my life. I am afraid of death, the loss of body-life. I recognize this fear as I sit in mediation, rigidly holding onto the body of what I imagine to be myself" (197). Moraga's body exists at God's whim, as do the bodies of her mother and son.

However, it is her own conception of self, "the body of what I imagine to be myself," that allows the Catholic God's power and therefore her own fear. Moraga realizes that it is her choice to be "rigidly holding" the physical body—the external meaning in her life—even if she is made powerless by this choice. Additionally, this imagining of the powerless self ties directly to language. Moraga writes:

I am so afraid, my mind conjures many images in the vain attempt to secure the parameters of 'self'—delusions of my importance and conversely my own pitifulness. And language, which codifies raw being. But all this is oh so preferable to the promise-threat of the experience of any real 'goodness,' and the radical re-vision of meaning it requires in our lives" (197-198).

In this passage, Moraga assigns language, not God, as the codifier of self. However, if the language that dominates Moraga's understanding of self is constructed by a foreign force that Moraga rejects, then her sense of self is surely invaded. Yet even aware of this invasion, she is afraid to lose "my preciously guarded 'me' ... a world I have known intimately since my earliest remembrance of an internal reflective life" (198). Her inner reflections remain fundamentally linked to external definitions based on her bodily interactions, that which God—through the power of constructed heteronormative language—can attack Moraga for being a lesbian who feels Catholic guilt, for being a daughter who needs a mother that practices this same faith, and for being a mother who humbly prays for God to secure her son's future. Her external definitions, conceived by society's language, have formed that

which inside fosters vulnerability and submission, even when she battles that same source of guilt, shame, and humility.

However, while she knows that “radical re-vision” could release her from the narrowed parameters of language, she is too fearful in this early section of “The Dying Road to a Nation.” Still, this section functions as evidence for the need to dismantle self. Moraga demonstrates immense fears of the finite body and shrinks from the startling awareness that her mother is not the protectress but the dying patient. She struggles with the fact that only the God that she was raised to trust—yet she now resents—can determine her son’s fate. This is not merely a case of Moraga’s confrontation with death but the double incomprehensibility that a mother is not capable, that a mother is finite. This embodied daughter-mother realization shakes Moraga to the point that she addresses in the rest of “The Dying Road to a Nation” the process of recognizing and releasing her fears to build a new sense of self.

#### Fragmenting the Language of Mother

Accordingly, Moraga seeks a generative repurposing of her wounds by rebelling against language. Her poetry and prose become choppy with fragmentary statements of the fragmented self—a purposefully *semilingual* navigation that frequently halts in frustration as Moraga searches for a distinct voice. Unlike Anzaldúa who writes of her metaphorical “forked tongue,” a single unit with multiple end points or modes of languages to navigate different locations of discourse, Moraga’s tongue is not forked. Not only does she demonstrate her lack of code-switching proficiency but, as in her earlier “A Long Line of Vendidas,” she lacks the language to even talk about and with herself. In fact, Moraga’s tongue is metaphorically severed. Similar to her initial fears over loss of body and loss of

loved ones, Moraga attempts to cling to the familiar; she attempts to re-member that which she perceives as the mother tongue. However, she eventually finds the wounded tongue as most constructive in forming her own voice.

Such a move parallels Thomas Paul Bonfiglio's 2013 "Inventing the Native Speaker," in which Bonfiglio argues that the biological metaphors linked to the conceptualization of language is steeped in the strategies of Early Modern European Christian nation-building. He writes:

The present study critiques the folklore surrounding motherese because it contributes to the surplus and surreptitious biologizing of language and the mystification of the native language and its native speaker. It can be seen as contributing to the notion of the native speaker's private ownership of the national language: when the authority of the native speaker becomes retraced to the milieu of the crib and cradle, then to contest the authority of that speaker becomes at once an affront to nation, ethnicity, and motherhood (49).

Bonfiglio argues that the strategies of building national identities lead to the notion of "native speakers" and "mother tongues," thereby producing hierarchies of legitimacies and purities linked to ancestral birthright. The more "pure" and the more "legitimate" to that ancestral right, the greater claim to land one might assert and thereby the greater claim to nationality. This illustrates the sense of illegitimacy and homelessness that Moraga, in her early writings, feels for losing her mother tongue and therefore losing her connections to fellow Chicanas in exchange for English dominance, feelings that Bonfiglio might consider as illustrating the harm of associating language to body—in other words, a non-generative wound. In my conclusion, I will link this discussion of legitimacy to the university composition classroom. For now, to understand Moraga's wounds of identity, it is important to consider the correlations that she relates between her concepts of language and body—and the manner that her emotions of semi-ness in both trigger shame yet

resistance. That is to say, while Moraga continues to idealize her mother tongue and thereby falls into the identity trap that Bonfiglio describes, she concurrently uses her orphaned tongue to accuse English-dominant values.

In the 2000 foreword of *Loving in the War Years*, Moraga writes of a “neogringo theft of the tongue and tierra” (iii) as impeding the telling of a history of ongoing female oppression. It is important to note that while Moraga longs to reclaim the mother tongue and attempts throughout her writing to recapture the words and rhythms that as a child she enjoyed in the storytelling of her mother and aunts, she realizes that she must find a new language that “can more closely describe women’s fear of, and resistance to, one another, words that will not always come out sounding like dogma” (45-46). Again, she does not aim to re-*member* Coyolxauhqui’s tongue but only the memory of the emotions around the assertion of power, defiance, and self-love that lead to the dismemberment of body. *Loving in the War Years*, therefore, continues to be English-dominated, despite Moraga’s brief lapses into Spanish, yet she uses that domination to reveal her resistance to language and eventual dismantling of language’s impact on her identity. In fact, she eventually begins to dismantle the impact of her mother tongue.

#### Fragmenting the Language of Love

In her later writings, Moraga increasingly separates her identity from both her European Spanish and Anglo heritage, a self-inflicted wound of the tongue that she endures in order to access a non-language of indigenous identity as a process of decolonization. We can see this shift in the 1995 “Looking for the Insatiable Woman,” the 1998 “The Dying Road to a Nation,” and the 2019 *Native Country of the Heart*. In these writings Moraga notes, to an even greater degree than Spanish, the lack of her indigenous language;

consequently, she can know indigeneity only through identifying with the aforementioned *thinking body*. To express this *thinking body* in a section of “The Dying Road to a Nation” entitled *The Return*, she uses italicized journal entries to demarcate that which she views as the expression of her indigenous self and to interrupt the straight-prose dominant European narrative. The journal entry is written as a reflection of her “return” to a forgotten indigeneity within, her inner “Beloved” (205). Accordingly, there is awe but also insecurity in this passage. Yet unlike the insecurity that she suffers in “A Long Line of Vendidas” which manifests a sense of homelessness, here Moraga finds acceptance and instruction from her inner Beloved. The wound has shifted from agony to power. Moraga writes: “*I have to ask my Beloved daily many things. I have to ask her what the pain in this desert means, why do the women cry so awkwardly. I have to ask her how to enter the arbor, how to tie a prayer tie, wrap a sage stick, roll a cigarette of prayer tobacco. And I wonder how can she want me, baby that I am*” (205). The “*baby that I am*” is the fragile unlearning-self that Moraga feared in *Susto*, earlier in “The Dying Road to a Nation.” In *Susto* she feared this “radical re-vision of meaning” and consequently clung to that which she already understood. We see in *The Return* the moment that Moraga elects to claim this re-vision.

Her arrival to this moment is preceded by a final wound in the section *A Change of Heart*, which details her romantic breakup. During a final altercation between two lovers, Moraga’s white partner mocks Moraga’s claim of indigeneity. Moraga reflects, “standing speechless and ready to bolt out her front door, the worst accusations regarding my own ‘authenticity,’ ironically, were hurled by the hand of my own self-doubt” (202). Moraga continues to express a “rage and shame against myself. How the whiteness of my skin and my habitual identification with it continues to seduce and betray me with its shifting

disguises" (202). The guises shift from her father's, as we may recall in "La Güera," to now her lover's white skin, both serving as a seduction by external alter egos whose desired companionship betrays the mother's brown culture. Even with twenty years elapsed between the writing of "La Güera" and "The Dying Road to a Nation," Moraga realizes that she has continued to conceal herself, most recently as her lover's partner and equivalent in whiteness. She writes, "some place in me remained convinced I didn't have the right to *feel* so different from this whitewoman I loved because I didn't *look* so different" (202, emphasis original to text). The result of a life of "passing" as white is now painfully evident to Moraga. She continues to rage against and place shame on her own self. Her fragments of identity cannot coexist as a binary white exterior and brown interior. She must expose her interior as a fragmented oneness with the exterior. Her strategy is to destabilize her whiteness and all its social and linguistic links, to unlearn her love for a longtime partner, and to decline her privileges of "passing" as a white body. This breaking up is more about splitting from self than from her partner; yet it is in the disruption of the physicality of that exterior relationship that Moraga begins to balance her own physicality with the interior "Beloved."

In entering the pain of the break-up with her white lover, Moraga writes, "I have to choose. There is no place for ambivalence, no place for immigrant ethnic meanderings, no place for bi-racialized maybes. We part ways, choose different paths" (203). Moraga elects a wound that reduces her to the "*baby that I am.*" Yet that reduction allows a form of redemption in that she unlearns not only her European skin and teachings but even pain: "*I have to ask her what the pain in this desert means*" (205). Through this re-vision of self, she has actualized a momentary lapse of knowing, even, the wound. Ultimately this is the goal

of the generative wound in its Iberian and Ibero-American applications. For the Virgin Mary, as we will study extensively in chapter three, the rejection of her joys of motherhood for the acceptance of sacrifice leads her to the joys of redemption; Mary's pain is gateway to a greater non-bodily joy. For Coyolxauhqui, the rejection of a socially-sanctioned female identity for a socially-abhorrent female warrior role leads her to ascendancy as moon goddess; Coyolxauhqui's pain is gateway to a greater non-bodily power. Although Coyolxauhqui is forever overcome by her brother, the sun, as he rises, her persistence as the moon to be both combative *and* feminine demands and obligates that the sun daily face a new battle. In other words, the rhetoric of the generative wound does not aim to linger in agony or celebrate that which brings harm to women but rather to employ inflicted pain to become the active agency of the injured party. This is the strategy that Moraga uses.

In *The Return*, which culminates in "The Dying Road to a Nation" Moraga's sense of homelessness and speechlessness—herself now infantilized by lack of motor control and basic understanding—the fragmented oneness is actualized and begins generative redefinition of self. Here, Moraga reconfigures her discursive tactics by allowing herself to begin anew as "*the baby that I am*," stepping outside language and outside European frameworks to become an unlearned and dependent child. Only after systematic dismantling of her performative body as informed by European epistemologies, languages, and conceptions of self in relation to others, can she perform a new vision of self, even if only in clumsy pieces. In this way, "The Dying Road to a Nation" narrates the metaphorical death or amputation of body parts that have been infected by negative social, racial, and cultural linkages. The colonized body must be destroyed, piece by piece, to free identity.

## The Wound as Decolonial Rhetoric

While I hope that I have demonstrated my understanding of Moraga's writings as participating in a historical genealogy of rhetorics of generative wounds, Moraga also breaks from her inheritance through an adaptation of the tradition to actualize a language linked to decolonial theory. Moraga repurposes woundedness to formulate decolonial discourses towards advocacy. When Moraga writes of the body as conduit of European teachings and control, she positions the body as harmful determiner of identity. This is a source of her wound. Only when the process of knowing self is painfully confronted and delinked from the colonized body—when *identity* determines a new concept of body—can one begin to embrace body. In short, Moraga rejects phenomenological formations of self via interaction with the exterior world—particularly an exterior world informed by colonial and patriarchal systems.

When I speak of phenomenology, I recall Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Here, Merleau-Ponty states that “the world is not what I think, but what I live” (lxxx). Merleau-Ponty conceives of phenomenology as bound in an embodied perception of the physical world. He states that “truth does not merely ‘dwell’ in the ‘inner man’; or rather, there is no ‘inner man,’ man is in and toward the world, and it is in the world that he knows himself” (lxxiv). Merleau-Ponty references Immanuel Kant who “showed that inner perception is impossible without external perception” (lxxxi). I argue that Moraga views this external formation of self as destructive for marginalized bodies, most specifically colonized lesbian Chicana bodies who have traditionally been instructed by cultures to not be “in and toward the world.” When the world is inaccessible, then there is a particular violence committed against individuals who internalize a sense of semi-ness

or a partial formation of self when denied freer development in a privileged world. There is an additional violence committed when access to the world *is* permitted; the cost accrued is the encounter with a world that teaches that one's outer life is incompatible with one's inner self. In our conclusion, I will return to this notion as Latina college students might be led to dismantle their inner rhetorical identity to construct an exterior new academic-sanctioned language identity. Moraga recognizes these risks of dismantling the interior to suit the exterior. Rather, the exterior—be it body or institute—must be dismantled. This alternate way of knowing self, as previously noted, touches on Mignolo's "epistemic disobedience" and insistence on delinking.

Moraga's methods to know self align with Sidonie Smith's descriptions of the pursuit of selfhood in the genre of autobiography. Smith writes that there are typically two methods to locate selfhood. First is the horizontal method, wherein the self travels "consecutively through stages of growth, expanding the horizons of self and boundaries of experience through accretion" but always carrying a "unified core" that responds to growth (18). The second method towards selfhood, and the method that Moraga elects, is through vertical movement which Smith describes as "delving downward into itself to find the irreducible core, stripping away mask after mask of false selves in search of that hard core at the center, that pure, unique or true self" (18). Smith refers to this second method as a "romantic journey" that seeks "quiet water, pure being of essence" (18). For Moraga, though, this is not a romantic journey, but one filled with pain that confronts the internalization of colonial ideals. Moraga aims to uncover her core self by stripping away that which she views as colonial intrusions that fabricate a false self through external

manipulation of interactivities. This false self is that which Trinh T. Minh-ha might term the “not-I” (415).

In “Not You/Like You: Postcolonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference” (1997), Trinh cautions against a quest towards wholeness or sameness within self via outcasting the “not-I” within identity; the “not-I” is conventionally considered as the colonized or “savage.” She writes that such obliteration of the “not-I” can reinforce values in hegemony that support the colonizer or “civilized” rather than acceptance of difference (416). This hegemony is detrimental to decolonial strategies that emphasize difference and diversity as generative sources of identity and society. While Moraga approaches concepts of wholeness when she imagines a purging of her white or European self, in her later works such as in the second edition of *Loving in the War Years* (2000) and *Native Country of the Heart* (2019), she is particularly careful to navigate binaries without excluding the “not-I.” In other words, Moraga peels away the ideologies that prod her towards self-censoring, not to deny her various selves but to discern conflicting fragments and loyalties that vie for her attention. The rhetoric of woundedness for Moraga is one that does not deny self but rather shuts out exterior dualities in order to examine interior tensions that can productively be harnessed for self-empowerment. As I have argued, Moraga illustrates her alternative way of knowing self through an undoing of body, a delinking of phenomenological knowledge of self, and a metaphorical death of colonial and postcolonial identity in order to tap into the generative wound. These moments of undoing are important to my study of the rhetoric of generative wounds because, as Trinh claims, “the I is not unitary” (418); to observe the fragments and fractures within identity and the performative self, the shame linked to semi-ness can be

refuted and binary thinking can be complicated and challenged. In sum, for my analysis of Moraga's rhetorical strategies and later in my conclusion's consideration of critical pedagogy, I aim to examine how one stitches together fragmented languages and cultures into a cohesive vision of self, yet one with ever-discernable scars—never obligated to fuse into smooth, complacent oneness.

Karan Barad's "Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart" (2014) provides theoretical companionship to these considerations. Akin to rhetorics of generative woundedness, Barad's theory pairs discussions of colonial violences with strategies of generative entanglements; these entanglements denote differing strands in a single entity that from external-infliction begin to conflict within and foster emotions of inadequacy and shame. Barad posits that because colonial binary systems favor homogeneity as fortified against the constructed "other," identities are influenced to obliterate any conflict within, or that which I perceive as semi-ness, for the sake of wholeness and uniformity. Contesting this notion, Barad illustrates through her study of physics that differences within life phenomena are natural and generative. Barad studies light particles that twist, tear, and radiate yet remain consistent in matter albeit with shifting and expanding performative traits. Barad describes light particles as they bend over surfaces and splinter into various directions. Such fragmenting complicates the viscosity of the particles as forming one entity, yet they still comprise an uneven oneness.

Barad similarly describes transmutable matter in her "Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: re-turning, re-membering, and facing the incalculable" (2017). Here Barad analyzes liquid matter as a stone drops into a still lake. Barad depicts a wave that splits simultaneously into multiple spaces, again complicating an understanding of a

wave as located inside a single entity, time, and space (165). In both essays, Barad speculates on differences within an entity, stating that “differences are formed through intra-activity, in the making of ‘this’ and ‘that’ within the phenomenon that is constituted in their inseparability (entanglement)” (“Diffracting Diffraction” 175). Accordingly, Barad’s strategy to transform colonial violence into generative entanglements is to realize that an entity’s unity consists of differences within that can productively bend or ripple around obstacles to continue an adaptive trajectory. A key point is that the trajectory’s adaptive nature is due to the entanglement’s diverse capacities.

Awareness of the potentials for adjustment, and thereby survival via flexibility from the vast interior differences within can lead to the realization that the “I” is multiple and transmuting. Once the dynamic “I” is realized, as with diffracted light or concentric waves, “I” is reconfigured as fragmented yet “together-apart.” Using Barad’s example, “together-apart” is the light beam that travels from one source to pass narrowed openings into altered and varied beam lanes—yet still together as one simultaneous movement that belongs to one original source (“Diffracting Diffraction” 168). Barad elaborates in her “Transmaterialities: Trans\*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings” (2015). She states that if “parts” arise from divisions or cuts, “it does not necessarily follow that cuts sever or break things off, either spatially or temporally, producing absolute differences of this and that, here and there, now and then” (406). Although a light beam splits in color, intensity, and course from its original lane, the source remains spatially and temporally provocation of travel, even if the beams transform into varying temporal and spatial existences.

Relating these ideas to Moraga's application of generative woundedness, I argue that Moraga, spurred by awareness of her colonized body, takes a road that confronts fragmentation—she as white-skinned, Chicana, feminist, lesbian, non-Catholic, culturally-Catholic, in relationships, outside relationships, advocate, and writer—pieces of self that run alongside each other at assorted intensities, velocities, and tensions all while regularly colliding with each other at various levels of injury that alternate with fleeting reconciliations. Even if the fragments are not always at the same level of development or distance along the road, they remain a traveling unity that shares the same incitement from the same source of inquiry. That inquiry is the imagining of a self that passes beyond the narrowness of colonizing languages and epistemologies, much as light beams travel together-apart beyond narrow cloud gaps to realize new manifestations.

To understand how diffraction or fragmentation occurs beyond the metaphorical clouds or impasses of colonizing forces, I return to Trinh T. Minh-ha's "Not You/Like You," which Barad also extensively examines in "Diffracting Diffraction." Barad views "Not You/Like You" as advocating an interior understanding of unifying differences within selfhood to subvert colonial epistemologies and categorization systems based on binary methods of the external "other," which is internalized into an "I" and "not-I." In my conceptualization, such a binary fosters a "breeding out" of difference within, reminiscent of my earlier discussion of *casta* paintings in the introduction. If we recall, Ilona Katzew observes that while the representation of the *mestizo* surely indicated a progressive introduction of Spaniard racial lineage—and thereby civility—into indigenous bodies, the mixed blood within concurrently indicated one's inadequacies and inabilities (*Casta Painting* 40-43). While *casta* paintings are traditionally studied in external social contexts

as an othering of racialized bodies, Trinh focuses on the internal process of this otherness. This internal otherness denotes the “not-I” based on the ingestion of externally sanctioned preferences for the “I” that is instructed by colonial and, as the conclusion will reflect, by later United States academic institutions. Barad explains that Minh-ha’s discussion of the “not-I” confronts notions established by a “colonizing logic” that perceives the “I” as maintaining and stabilizing itself through eliminating or dominating that which it deems to be “the other,” the “not-I” (“Diffracting Diffraction” 169).

Rebecca Earle has studied one root of this colonizing logic as cultivated by Early Modern Spanish colonizers who feared becoming “othered” through contact with the Americas. In her 2012 *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700*, Earle considers the concepts of *becoming* colonial in the body-identities of these conquerors. Earle draws on cultural theorist Stuart Hall who argues that cultural and racial identities are of two types: *identity of being* which is based on a sense of unity and commonality, and *identity of becoming* which is based on a process of “imaginative rediscovery” (D’Alleva 76). In the context of Earle’s study, this “imaginative rediscovery” is the shift into a colonial re-telling of body and identity. Earle references medieval Iberian understanding of body humors as impacted by later colonial interactions with the foods, climates, and geographies of the Americas. Humoral sciences teach that each body possesses a disposition determined by the degree of balance among the body’s four humors; in addition, external forces can influence balance (5). When the body transforms due to humoral (im)balances one’s temperament and thereby spirit is impacted. Since humors are both predetermined and in constant flux, activities are prescribed that might manage the flux created by external forces. In other words, while

one's birth nature is constant, externalities might be studied and manipulated to secure the "I" that is desired in body and spirit. Accordingly, the "not-I," to use Minh-ha's modern term, correlates to the body-identity that is potentially transformed from Spanish Christian into indigenous pagan through contact with external forces in the Americas. It follows that the lines which exist between Spanish and indigeneity are changeable and only temporary.

Earle writes of the colonizers' fears of these blurred lines as a "fear that living in an unfamiliar environment, and among unfamiliar peoples, might alter not only the customs but also the very bodies of settlers" (3). Circa 1570, royal cosmographer Juan López de Velasco explained that "...after many years even Spaniards who have not mixed with the natives will become like them, not simply in their bodies, but also in their spirit, for the spirit is shaped by the temperament of the body" (22). Sixteenth-century Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún also warned of alterations in moral conduct: "the mildness and abundance of this land and the constellations that govern it encourage vice, idleness and sensuality" (89). These spiritual and physical anxieties are important to consider because they indicate an establishment of the feared "other" as an abomination that can corporally enter to transform inner self. A form of resistance to this transformation was to seize control of American soil to cultivate the land, not only for survival of Spanish bodies but for the "saving" of natives, who when introduced to European humoral sciences and foods might establish exterior, and thereby interior, balance (82-83). Thus, colonization was, and is, very much a process of transplanting European crops and livestock to the Americas to maintain the colonizers' own Spanish-ness and transform natives into European bodies, temperaments, and spirits. Not only was this tactic pursued for the sake of humoral balance but for the Christian transplanting of wheat and grape, the only foods that permit the

transmutation of Christ's body and blood—the ultimate nourishment for the balance of bodies and souls in a Christian worldview.

I suggest that this historical fear of mutability of the desired “I” and the subsequent eradication of any trace of the “not-I” within is exactly the colonial wound that Moraga confronts and the non-generative binary that Trinh investigates. Barad addresses this divide between the “I” and “not-I” as “the setting of an absolute boundary, a clear dividing line, a geometry of exclusion that positions the self on one side, and the other—the not-self—on the other side” (“Diffracting Diffractions” 169). In my understanding, this division of selves is based on a positive and negative binary wherein the “not-I” is understood from European assessment as lacking due to its foreignness and/or semi-ness in the pursuit of the desired European (aka, civilized) whole “I.” Accordingly, the “not-I” is rejected from active identity and consequently may be diminished as motivator for external performance of self. This stifles potential resistance against colonial and institutional forces. As Barad summarizes, “this notion of difference premised on binary thinking has been instrumental to the workings of power” (“Diffracting Diffraction” 170).

For Moraga, the “not-I” is that which she wishes to embrace to neutralize colonial hegemony. In fact, the surprising realization that a “not-I” even exists, as discussed in “La Güera,” fills her with enormous regret that as a young adult she had inadvertently neglected this fragment, this “not-I” of her mother's heritage that hides beneath the privileged “I” of her father's white traditions. As a response, her 1981 poem, “The Welder” seeks to fuse these disparate parts of self so she might blend the binaries into a wholeness, a new cohesive structure that “can support us / without fear / of trembling” (ll. 27-29). This fusion is Moraga's vision of her own reality, comprised of fragmentations that only

with “the intensity of heat, the realm of sparks / out of control” can “change the shape of things” (ll. 44-45; 42). With this fusion, all fragmentations of the past blend, melting away discernible existence. Yet, this is a moment when Moraga falls into a discursive trap of wholeness. While it might be argued that the whole depends on the parts and that nothing, therefore, is destroyed, it is the liquification into invisibility of the complexities of the past and its parts that concerns my studies. This invisibility implies that fragments are shameful, something to hide—rather than generative. As already detailed, Moraga’s post-1990s writings eventually recognize both the value of visible and discernible fragmentation and the creative energy of shame, thereby entering the cultural rhetorics of woundedness. Even when she unlearns her colonial self to become “*the baby that I am*” she does so only to access that inner “not-I” but not to entirely and exclusively inhabit that single identity, the baby. She seeks a new way of knowing self, not an eradication of selves within.

Similarly, in “Diffracting Diffraction” Barad asks, “How can we understand this coming together of opposite qualities within, not as flattening out or erasure of difference, but as a relation of difference within?” (175). Barad offers an entanglement of intertwining threads or light beams as a visualizing strategy to understand differences within. By making apparent the generative other within or Minh-ha’s “not-I” as an essential part of the accumulated fragments that actually form the newly realized and more complex “I,” colonial binaries are disrupted and European wholeness made suspect since self is never unitary but rather a multiplicity (“Diffracting Diffraction” 176). In “Transmaterialities” Barad describes her writings and self-knowledge as patchworks that are “[m]ade of disparate parts” (406). She continues, “But why should we understand parts as individually constructed building blocks or disconnected pieces of one or another forms of original

wholeness? After all, to be a part is not to be absolutely apart but to be constituted and threaded through with the entanglements of part-ing” (406). She adds, “[A] patchwork would not be a sewing together of individual bits and pieces but a phenomenon that always already holds together, whose pattern of differentiating entangling may not be recognized but is indeed re-membered” (406).

It is the value of fragments and the stitching of their disparate parts that especially align Barad and Moraga’s later writings. Leaving “The Welder” behind, “The Dying Road to a Nation” adopts a similar strategy of no longer seeking a melding of smooth oneness but a visible stitching—a piecing together of a cohesive vision of self, yet one with ever-discernable scars, never obligated to fuse into smooth, complacent oneness. In this way, Moraga makes apparent still-extant colonial violences and resulting fragmentation of self, fragments that in their conflicting and painful manifestations emphasize daily struggles to resist binaries (mother’s indigeneity or father’s whiteness, Chicana or feminist, culturally Catholic or lesbian). Here, the generative wound reinforces a daily choice to be, as in Barad’s terminology, together-apart, to accept the disparate parts rather than submit to a normalizing conformity of wholeness, to practice balance in the earthquake of daily life—to repurpose woundedness as gateway towards a multiplicity of a dynamic “I” that is daily empowered by new forms of self-awareness.

### **An Epilogue: Daughter-Mothers in Mourning as Advocacy**

Although the next chapter leaves behind Moraga’s writings to turn attention from generative wounds to afflicted wounds, specifically injuries that impair Chicana lives through biopolitical frameworks, I briefly note Moraga’s autoethnographic writings of woundedness as a form of community advocacy that may introduce relevant points of

consideration for chapter two. I have already discussed Moraga's texts as entering a tradition of Mesoamerican-Iberian and Chicanx rhetorics of woundedness wherein the access to personal pain and emotion permits a retrofitting of male-dominant historical narratives. This retrofitting aims to realize and validate identities that are fragmented, "not-I," and together-apart. However, Moraga also applies rhetorical strategies of the generative wound to reconcile and activate Chicanx communities. Her extensive examinations of personal family dynamics is her starting point for a larger diagnosis of wounds of Chicanx demographics.

In an interview with Roberto Lovato about her playwriting, Moraga discusses the importance of examining wounds inflicted by family. She states, "Traditionally, Chicano theater has not dealt with the condition of our families [...]. It tends to romanticize 'la familia.' I feel we need to kind of touch the wounds a little bit, look at the sore spots in us" (Yarbro-Bejarano 50). Moraga accordingly extends her strategies for self-realization via woundedness to the service of discerning fractures in the Chicanx family and larger community. Dating back to her 1981 essay, "La Jornada," which served as the preface for *This Bridge Called my Back*, Moraga has viewed pain as a strategy for community building, a notion that has greatly expanded through her later writings that abound with family betrayal and abandonment by community. This is particularly the case in her dramas such as *The Hungry Woman* (1995), as the Mexican Medea is exiled by the very community that she once served; she is eventually committed to an insane asylum. Moraga's attention to self-afflicted community wounds extends to her editing projects, such as *Bridge* which sponsored some of the most agonizing narratives of family and community fragmentation found in Nellie Wong's "When I Was Growing Up," Mary Hope Whitehead Lee's "on not

bein,” Naomi Littlebear Morena’s “Dreams of Violence,” Merle Woo’s “Letter to Ma,” and Anzaldúa’s “La Prieta”—all raising heart-wrenching accusations against their home culture for prolonged identity trauma.

Coyolxauhqui’s presence in later texts highlights Moraga’s seasoned thematic focus on betrayal and censorship within the Chicana community. In “Looking for the Insatiable Woman,” Moraga again details her understanding of the Coyolxauhqui legend. She writes, “as we feminists have interpreted the myth, Coyolxauhqui hopes to halt, through the murder of her mother, the birth of the War God, Huitzilopochtli. She is convinced that Huitzilopochtli’s birth will also mean the birth of slavery, human sacrifice and imperialism (in short, patriarchy). She fails” (147). Moraga proceeds to posit that this myth reminds Mexican and Chicana cultures that females are excluded from determining life and its future. Moraga more specifically equates Coyolxauhqui to the exterior fragmentation of Chicanas within the Chicana culture—specifically stemming from disloyalties among women and mother-daughter divisions.

Using Coyolxauhqui as her heroine, Moraga metaphorically armors up to confront her mother’s role in patriarchy and her brother’s dominance of her body and self. She writes, that Coyolxauhqui, “like me, was a woman betrayed by her brother. She was an ancient Xicanawarrior deported into darkness. I, a young Xicanadyke, writing in exile” (*Loving* iii). In her latest writing, the memoir *Native Country of the Heart* (2019), Moraga continues to reflect on this betrayal yet refocuses the pain as gateway not only to a greater understanding of self but of relationships between Chicanas, specifically mother and daughter. This might be interpreted as a reconciliation between Coyolxauhqui and Coatlicue after the battle over the betraying brother, Huitzilopochtli, has settled.

In the memoir's chapter, "Body Memory," Moraga features a dramatized exchange between a mother (Madre) and her daughter (Hija) about the brother of the family:

HIJA: "Kneel down and call me God," he'd say. And so I'd whisper, "God." And he'd keep pressing until I'd say it louder and louder. And then—

MADRE: Dígame. [Tell me]

HIJA: He'd have me down to my knees, before I'd submit.

MADRE: You gave in.

HIJA: I had to... And then he'd let me go.

MADRE: I don't remember that.

HIJA: I know

(55-56).

For the mother, now elderly and struggling with dementia, recollection is no longer possible. As a result, the anger that the daughter holds for her brother's unbridled violence and violation similarly dissipates regarding her mother's participation. Yet, she continues to insist that someone *must* remember even if the wounds are too large to heal. She accordingly initiates discussion of the matter with her mother, knowing full well that her mother is powerless to not only act but even remember. They can, however, mourn together and thereby find meaningful ways to perhaps no longer address the past but enrich their present and future. This is largely the purpose of *Native Country of the Heart* as Moraga focuses on a theme of returning home to her mother to bridge differences and forgive so that the time that remains can be fruitful. In this way, Moraga applies woundedness to identify the losses shared within family; concurrently, she utilizes this heightened awareness of loss for community activism.

Such a strategy recalls Judith Butler's 2004 *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* in which Butler observes the political function of mourning to form foundations for community (19). While Butler examines exclusions from public mourning

or those lives not deemed as grievable, Moraga harnesses the wound to identify the loss of her own cultural and racial identities; concurrently, she utilizes this heightened awareness of loss for community activism. With the addition of Coyolxauhqui into her conceptualization of generative woundedness, Moraga locates a legendary narrative to convene Chicana mourning into a consolidation of group identity and potential activism. In chapter two, this strategy raises a consideration of trauma theory and specifically Cathy Caruth's writings on the generative potential of "the crying wound." However, I will also explore the stripping of this same strategy. The subject of chapter two are moments where Chicana communal mourning is silenced and Chicana woundedness is repurposed to serve others beyond the Chicana community.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE AFFLICTED WOUND: BIOPOLITICS AND “THE CRYING WOUND”

In “Toward a Decolonial Feminism” (2010) María Lugones considers the concept of intersectionality an extension of colonial reduction systems. She claims that intersectionality functions in a way that makes it impossible for “brown women” to exist, arguing that the concept asserts that a person’s aspects are separable; only “brown” and “women” individually manifest as categories that sporadically pass at crossroads yet predominately travel prolonged, disconnected pathways. Lugones observes dangers in such isolated fragments of selves. She adds that when interactivity is at last acknowledged in intersectional moments, these moments underestimate the manner that, all along, pieces of identities inform one another in both knowledge of self and in compounded engagements with exterior realities.<sup>26</sup> Yet I do not see Lugones as fundamentally

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<sup>26</sup> Lugones’s view of intersectionality as an extension of colonial categorization is controversial in the context of widespread embrace of discourses of intersections, developed particularly by feminists of color. Accordingly, I include Lugones’s more expansive detailing of her argument: “[I]ntersectionality has become pivotal in U.S. women of color feminisms. As said above, one cannot see, locate, or address women of color (U.S. Latinas, Asians, Chicanas, African Americans, Native American women) in the U.S. legal system and in much of institutionalized U.S. life. As one considers the dominant categories, among them “woman,” “black,” “poor,” they are not articulated in a way that includes people who are women, black, and poor. The intersection of “woman” and “black” reveals the absence of black women rather their presence. That is because the modern categorial logic constructs categories as homogeneous, atomic, separable, and constituted in dichotomous terms. That construction proceeds from the pervasive presence of hierarchical dichotomies in the logic of modernity and modern institutions. The relation between categorial purity and hierarchical dichotomies works as follows. Each homogeneous, separable, atomic category is characterized in terms of the superior member of the dichotomy. Thus “women” stands for white women. “Black” stands for black men. When one is trying to understand women at the intersection of race, class, and gender, non-white black, mestiza, indigenous, and Asian women are impossible beings. They are

disagreeing with intersectionality as conceptualizing the importance of representing the meeting points of identities. At its best, intersectionality performs exactly that for which Lugones calls—to conceptualize distinct identity elements that together construct one’s overlapping and complicated social realities. Yet the idea of the separate pathways prior and after the crossing space is of concern for Lugones.

While I find that the space of intersectionality corresponds with my own studies of considering the open wound as a location of generative discovery and recovery, I am also intrigued by Lugones’s point, a point that prompts my main query in chapter two. While spaces of intersectionality function as location of diagnosing various factors that afflict Chicana identities and realities, can the conceptualization of the separate pathways leading to and from the intersection be derailed and controlled by dominating biopolitical forces—thereby leading to a misdiagnosis of Chicana woundedness? While I do not criticize the meeting points at the intersections, I do attend to Lugones’s caution about the categorizing systems of the individual metaphorical identity-avenues.

As I understand Lugones’s argument, “brown” and “women” are not parts that travel independently; but, rather, to evoke chapter one’s discussion on Karen Barad’s theories, these pieces of selves travel together-apart along the same road. The pieces do not always travel on the same lane or at the same speed, yet they still constantly collaborate to advance, navigate, and collide in one’s journey as “brown women.” So while “brown women” is productively actualized and recognized through a visualization of intersectionality, the notion that the “brown” and the “woman” travel in isolation (in

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impossible since they are neither European bourgeois women, nor indigenous males” (757n9).

contrast to together-apart) is the issue that I explore. What vulnerabilities might arise when “brown women” are redirected beyond the intersections to split their identities separate-apart along isolated identity-avenues? What are the costs and also potential benefits when Chicanas are trafficked from the generative intersection to a quarantining, neatly packaged as “brown” and “women” and distributed down more well-trodden, legitimized roadways such as the Chicano and Feminist avenues? Chapter two accordingly examines biopolitical control of Chicana bodies and identities—and the consequential impact on rhetorics of the wound. Of particular interest are moments when the rhetorical potency of sacrifice is repurposed along isolated identity-avenues rather than at the intersections or at the location of woundedness. This hijacking of Chicana woundedness that steers pain outward for the benefit of others rather than the afflicted is under examination here. Chapter two thereby focuses on three chief areas of concerns: the compartmentalization of Chicana lived experiences, the repurposing of isolated strands of those experiences to suit exterior agents, and the misdiagnosis.

The first of these concerns raises Lugones’s cautions against compartmentalization. Lugones’s argument is that when demographics are reduced into tidy grid-work patterns, there arises corresponding validation of categorization systems that divide and obscure an individual’s (and community’s) specific realities. This is the first problem that I address in chapter two—the limiting of Chicana narratives into quarantined categories that potentially benefit exterior powers to the detriment of Chicana identities, communities, and self-representation. In my study of the historical rhetorics of wounds, this is a particular danger since the rhetorical strategy necessitates that woundedness in its complexity and entirety remain active for generative confrontation of the afflicter(s). In the

*virgenes abrideras* only through engaged and frequent parting of Mary's praying hands can Mary's fragmented state reveal her pain. It is essential that within Mary's body, she carry the entirety of her wounded state, the narrative of her torment. Only with her entire narrative of woundedness can Mary confront the sins that separate mother from son and divine from profane. In other words, the rhetoric of the generative wound is built on a premise that the wounded must control and contain her narrative.

It follows that the second area of concern in this chapter focuses on exterior agents that isolate and repurpose Chicana narratives and rhetorics. When rhetorics of woundedness are compartmentalized rather than addressed in their original entirety, afflictions particular to "brown women" become decentralized or secondary. That is to say, specific wounds that "brown" and "women" experience along isolated pathways become more easily perceived as, for example, solely Chicano matters or solely feminist matters. Although attention to afflictions committed against these categories are surely valuable, precise examination of wounds that impact "brown women" is necessarily neglected in the process. To be clear, I am not advocating that brown women be removed from discussions of specific categories of experiences but that they must also have a discursive space in which their primary concerns are addressed and in which rhetorical strategies can be identified, practiced, and disseminated to address those primary concerns. In chapter two I analyze how a lack of these discursive spaces for, about, and by brown women redirects attention from addressing specific grievances that are central to brown women's various experiences. This point recalls our discussion in chapter one of Maylei Blackwell's *¡Chicana Power!* in which Blackwell observes historical narratives of activist movements that include Chicana participants as merely add-on players who do not function as stimuli for change.

Specifically, Blackwell examines Chicanas as they are split into simplified categories—compartmentalized as “women” to accommodate the 1970s Feminist Movement and “brown” to accommodate the 1960s Chicano Movement. The particular trials and needs of “brown women” are never fully represented in either movement. Rather a fragment of Chicanas is externally repurposed to suit another’s agenda. Although Chicana grievances are repurposed for allied communities, allies whose empowerment can surely benefit Chicanas, the reduction of Chicana narratives is a wound in its own right and will be a second focus of chapter two.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty provides additional content for my exploration of this second area of concern. In her *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003), like Lugones, Talpade Mohanty rejects the idea that selves navigate the world by traveling distinct spaces as women or as brown. She rejects a form of feminism that flattens multiplicity to highlight commonalities across the spectrum of female lives; rather, Talpade Mohanty calls for a practice of “common differences” (225-226). As I understand “common differences,” the multiplicity of brown women is maintained in the space of crossroads, thereby benefiting from concepts of intersectionality; however, the connecting pathways no longer function as isolating units that reduce aspects of selves but rather function as networks of information or pathways that connect a neighborhood of multiplicities that share differences rather than sameness. Talpade Mohanty argues that specifying difference allows better and more accurate development of theories on universal concerns which she prioritizes above universal commonalities. This concept is helpful to my examination of the rhetoric of wounds because it suggests that to address affliction we must, first, observe each wound in its specific complexity and, second, identify pathways

that link particular afflictions to a larger neighborhood that suffers a similar—but not the same—epidemic. Just as I argued in chapter one that the “I” must be maintained in its multiplicity to reject colonial purging of the “not-I,” chapter two argues that the affliction at the root of biopolitical wounds must be examined in its complexity to avoid simplification of its diagnosis, a diagnosis that all too often ministers to the feminist or the Chicano but not specifically to the “brown woman” when discussions move further from the intersection. Away from the intersection, woundedness cannot be generative and associated rhetorical traditions are all too easily exploited.

The third and final problem explored in chapter two centers on the heightened vulnerability that may result from a lack of focus on the entire wounded state of “brown women.” Just as a person’s complexity of identity is obscured by compartmentalizing each self into isolated pathways, similarly obscured are the perpetrators. Naming the assaults as, for example, “patriarchy” or “racism” disconnects the wound from the brown woman. The “woman” travels one road that is obstructed episodically by patriarchal injustices, while the “brown” travels another road impeded by bigotry. These separate pathways of assault do not permit full examination of biopolitical patterns that are specific to the “brown woman.” When the “brown woman” is at last conceptualized at intersections, she arrives with two separate perpetrators at her heels, yet the concept of the two perpetrators conceals racism and patriarchy as often operating in coordination.

To be clear, while chapter one defined the generative wound as a historical rhetorical strategy of employing one’s fractured selves to access an interior strategy of survival and empowerment, chapter two examines non-generative afflictions that create and manage externalized fragmentation to serve purposes only partially relevant,

sometimes minimally so, to the wounded. At cost is a misdiagnosis of grievances and perpetrators. Another purpose of chapter two is to establish that I do not advocate woundedness, but rather rhetorical methods of resistance against any sense of shame and semi-ness in the already-wounded. In short, this chapter focuses on contrasting the rhetorical tradition of the generative wound with a non-generative repurposing of that tradition. This afflicted wound exploits established meanings of woundedness and sacrifice for their impact in Chicana cultures.

As I enter the conversations that Lugones, Blackwell, and Talpade Mohanty develop, I ground my observations into an extended study of *No Más Bebés*, a 2015 documentary directed by Renee Tajima-Peña on the sterilization of Chicanas during the 1960s and 1970s at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center and the subsequent *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case. *No Más Bebés* provides two productive opportunities for my studies: first, to demonstrate the afflicted wound as a form of institutionalized border patrol that violates Chicana bodies; and, second, to critically engage with the film's potential erasure of racial identities to privilege female, and more particularly motherly, roles. Little scholarly analysis and research has been conducted on *No Más Bebés*, thereby challenging me to directly apply methodologies in film studies to investigate how the documentary addresses Chicana representation and rhetoric. Also woven into this discussion are biopolitical theories and wound or trauma theory. My goal for chapter two is to understand how the historical genealogy that I trace of the rhetorical expression of generative wounds also accommodates a destructive repurposing of the very same rhetorics. The value of sacrifice as a Christological and Nahua metaphysical framework can and does find extra- and intra-cultural manipulation to turn the generative into an afflicted wound that silences and

divides Chicana communities. Before I delve deeper in chapter three into generative manifestations of the rhetoric of woundedness in visual traditions, it is important that I discern the flipside—the dangers of such rhetorical practices.

### **Isolated Roads and Sanctioned Crying:**

#### **Narrating Dismembered Chicana Bodies in *No Más Bebés***

The positive aspect of sacrifice is often defined through negative cautionary models. A traditional representation of Chicana cultural roles as sacrificer is framed by such a cautionary model, the *child*-sacrificing mother. *La Llorona*, for example, is the Mexican legend of the crying woman who is trapped between life and the afterlife as she is condemned to forever search for her children that she murdered.<sup>27</sup> She is depicted as a dreadful aberration against the female identity of life-giver. Failing as a mother, *La Llorona* is cursed to mourn for not only her lost children but the lost potential of her future. Her new identity is therefore “the crier” (*la llorona*), an existence trapped in infinite grief. In the telling of the legend, it is significant that the crying, not the infanticide, is used as chief narrative method to strike terror in listeners. We never know why *La Llorona* murders her children and we are never taken to the event of the infanticide. This story is untold since *La*

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<sup>27</sup> The legend of *La Llorona* is often studied as a colonial narrative that becomes linked with the Mexican figure of the historical Doña Marina (also known as Malintzin) and her mythologized construction as the more derogatorily referenced Malinche; yet, *La Llorona*’s narrative spreads throughout Latin American traditions. While no historical evidence locates the origin of *La Llorona*’s narrative, attempts have suggested that she derives from pre-Contact traditions. Denis Tedlock, for example, references *La Llorona* as a figure first recorded as the Wailing Woman (Xpuch) in the *Popol Vuh*: “The temptress Xtah and Xpuch are now Lust Woman and Wailing Woman, and they stand revealed as the predecessors of a dangerous phantom known all the way from Guatemala to northern New Mexico by her Spanish name, *La Llorona*, And Tecum, Keeper of the Mat in the ninth generation of Quiché lords, becomes Black Butterfly,” from Tedlock’s preface, *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life* (New York: Touchstone, 1996): 15.

*Llorona* can vocalize only a primal pain which no human can possibly understand or even bear to hear; she is so removed from humanity and thereby intelligibility. It might then be argued that this vocalization is its own distinct social transgression. *La Llorona* expresses pain where it should not exist and thereby cautions women to maintain traditional gender roles that call for sacrifice of self in the service, not the destruction, of family. Just as crucial, the legend serves to warn women to maintain silence even in pain. After all, the terror of *La Llorona* is rooted in her crying.

In Cherríe Moraga's 1995 essay, "Looking for the Insatiable Woman," Moraga listens to the crying and discovers its true horror—a silencing of Chicana voices. Moraga realizes that no one actually knows the motivation behind *La Llorona's* act of infanticide. No one knows her story. Only half her life is told by horrified exterior forces that have no tolerance for Chicana narratives (145). Moraga writes that *La Llorona* "is the story that has never been told truly, the story of that hungry Mexican woman who is called puta/bruja/jota/loca because she refuses to forget that her half-life is not a natural born fact" (147). *La Llorona* must, therefore, forever search for her lost truths, hidden by society's hijacking of her story. She searches for her voice and consequential lost potentials. Ultimately, Moraga deems *La Llorona's* fate as representative of the dreaded cries for representation and redress by Chicana communities.

Such silenced grief is the subject of *No Más Bebés*, which recounts the class action civil rights lawsuit filed against Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center after a group of ten Chicana plaintiffs alleged to have received non-consensual sterilization procedures between 1971 and 1974. Here, the documentary holds accountable medical and judicial systems for creating a version of the crying wandering woman who inadvertently signed

away the lives of her future children. The filmmakers create a space where the other half of the truth can be voiced. *No Más Bebés* extends work performed by executive producer Virginia Espino from her history dissertation, *Women Sterilized as they Give Birth: Population Control, Eugenics, and Social Protest in the Twentieth-Century United States* (2007). Espino's dissertation challenges notions that eugenics during this period were limited to cases of the criminal and mentally ill whose rights were revoked to allow non-consensual sterilization procedures. Rather, Espino exposes violations against the consensual rights of normative lives. In this way, *No Más Bebés* continues Espino's efforts to humanize and make intelligible hidden narratives that reject half-truths.

However, once this message is performed, the pain is again covered. The crying must stop because the plaintiffs are deemed survivors, heroes who in their private family lives are now rightfully fulfilled by grandchildren and who in their public lives are justly satisfied by procedural changes that have resulted from their honorable sacrifices. While there is certainly positive social and personal validation in the portrayal of these specific women, I do question if this portrayal reinforces a pervasive silencing of Chicana pain—even if the silence is packaged as a positive closure of wounds. Posed another way, are the plaintiffs' wounds opened to generate awareness for their own restitution or to suit a mainstream feminist agenda? While the documentary gives voice to the plaintiffs' grievance and does so to address the silencing of Chicanas by medical and legal institutes, the film concurrently silences the "brown woman" by prioritizing "woman." Of note, Espino's dissertation maintains a focus on the "brown woman" and more tightly links sterilization to racial targeting; yet, the documentary adds a universal feminist agenda as a driving motivation behind the plaintiffs. We see this indicated in the closing credits to *No*

*Más Bebés* as it dedicates itself “to the women of *Madrigal v. Quilligan* and their fight for reproductive justice,” thereby potentially reframing the lawsuit as redressing the wounds against women’s rights rather than a personal woundedness. My critical assessment of the documentary accordingly considers ways that the film categorizes and isolates fragments of identities in order to inform society to support ongoing battles to protect female reproductive rights, including but not specific to the rights of Chicanas.

While *No Más Bebés* clearly directs attention to the painful injustices of sterilization during the 1960s and 70s, there is no claim that the injustices continue except in the silence about this past, which the film proceeds to correct by giving voice. Interestingly, a brief boom of transdisciplinary scholarly attention to *Madrigal v. Quilligan* occurred in the decade preceding the documentary such as Myla Vicenti Carpio’s “The Lost Generation: American Indian Women and Sterilization Abuse” (*Social Justice*, 2004), Alexandra Minna Stern’s “Sterilized in the Name of Public Health: Race, Immigration, and Reproductive Control in Modern California” (*American Journal of Public Health*, 2005), Jessica Enoch’s “Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse” (*Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 2005), Derek H. Suite’s “Beyond Misdiagnosis, Misunderstanding and Mistrust: Relevance of the Historical Perspective in the Medical and Mental Health Treatment of People of Color” (*Journal of National Medical Association*, 2007), and Rebecca M. Kluchin’s “Locating the Voices of the Sterilized” (*The Public Historian*, 2007). These revisits of the case, however, distinctly contrasts the past and present—an important point to make because the wound remains distant, at a specific historical period from which now a message can emerge to benefit a more present agenda.

To reinforce this point, in *No Más Bebés*, as each plaintiff recalls her deepest moments of pain, consistently interjected are predominately joyous family scenes from the women's post-sterilization lives. There results a significant temporal distancing that buffers the audience from the wound, allowing for the plaintiffs' narratives to be extrapolated for more modern and immediate purposes. This distinction between past violations and present needs is initially established in director Tajima-Peña's choice of staging the film's opening images in the vacated rooms of County hospital where the sterilizations had occurred, vacant now as the building failed new California earthquake safety laws. The setting is one of the past where long white hospital corridors and cold examination beds augment an eerie emptiness. The visual choices in this opening scene emphasize spaces void of life. Entering a patient room, the camera zooms towards the ceiling at the rail of a curtain divider, the curtain rings still dangling but without curtains since no patients remain to be concealed. Yet while Tajima-Peña opens with this haunting, lingering emptiness, it is only a painful reminder rather than an active agent of the past.

Remembering this past, the first heroine of the documentary, Maria Hurtado, leads the film crew through the hospital maternity ward. With her adult daughter by her side, Hurtado attempts to locate the rooms she had inhabited during sterilization and in the process encounters an infant infirmity crib. The activity pauses for a full thirteen seconds as Hurtado stands beside the crib, her body cut by the camera frame below the chest as her voice from offscreen testifies to her tragedy (Fig. 3.1). The empty crib is primary focus here. Only Hurtado's hands are shown, resting over the clear plastic edges that surround the crib's head and foot. This poignant moment of reflection is thereby not expressed in Hurtado's face or body language except that her hands are still, perhaps even relaxed. Her



FIGURE 3.1. *No Más Bebés*. Directed by Renee Tajima-Peña. Produced by Virginia Espino. PBS. 2015. [Film still by Loretta Ramirez, 2:22]

fingers—thickly aged but healthy in fullness and elasticity—extend over the crib’s plastic edge, the ring-finger adorned by a chunky tri-band golden wedding ring. These are not the hands of a young mother but those of a life lived with an implied steadiness, healthiness, and family. Still, the empty crib is testament enough to Hurtado’s past pain. The empty crib recalls family members who were never allowed into the life Hurtado has now already lived. Much can be imagined in the positioning of this scene, hands denied the touch of the baby who might have filled the crib’s void. Still, Hurtado’s identity is removed. Her body is fragmented into parts to represent the tragedy but not necessarily to represent herself. Most dominant is her part as a woman, a potential mother.

Also dominant in this scene is a racial negation. During Hurtado’s fragmentation, in Spanish she narrates that she felt targeted for the way she looked, but she does not allude to race or gender. Rather, she speaks of temperament: “They looked at me and must have thought, ‘This one has so many children. We will just sew her up, so she won’t know that we did the operation.’ I’m not one to show a lot of sweetness or tenderness or pain because I look tough.” As the recollection concludes, the camera withdraws from the crib to show

Hurtado standing with her daughter. Hurtado continues, “Inside I feel pain remembering. But apparently it doesn’t show.” Her voice breaks; she begins to cry, which cues the graphics of the documentary title to fill the screen. The story may now begin.

Here we might recall Laura Mulvey’s film theories on the positioning of females in camera frames as objects of investigation, penetration, and consumption.<sup>28</sup> Mulvey argues that the gaze of the camera often functions as an annihilation of female subjects in order to launch a primary purpose advanced by the privileged camera-controller, a surrogate of the male gaze. In this moment of *No Más Bebés*, Hurtado’s exterior is penetrated so that the film’s narrative may launch. Her strength collapses, revealing the secret behind the woman: she can still be moved to emotionally wander the County corridors of her past, searching for her lost children. Her wound opens with a cry, repenetrated by the camera to allow Hurtado to express her memory of trauma. This expression is film-sanctioned to reveal the horrors that the filmmakers choose to place central alongside the empty crib. Crying is permitted now. Hurtado’s past is suddenly present, but functions in this moment not yet to activate audience advocacy so much as to activate audience sympathy. I suggest that this penetration of Hurtado’s persona functions as a humanizing, not exclusively of Hurtado but of a court case that is significant for female reproductive rights.

Here, it is useful to turn to *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary* (2017) to consider Pooja Rangan’s criticism of representations of humanity in documentary. Rangan argues that the genre’s desired effect of persuading audiences to

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<sup>28</sup> See especially Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) and Mulvey’s discussion with Martine Beugnet in “Film, Corporeality, Transgressive Cinema: A Feminist Perspective,” *Feminisms: Diversity, Difference, and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Cultures*, ed. Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

legitimize as human those “othered” due to political or economic conditions may in actuality participate in dehumanization (9). In *No Más Bebés*, we can interpret a demonstration of this dehumanization in the opening scene when Hurtado is redefined from a complete woman who wanders the halls of her past into a fragmented identity when the camera reduces her to solely hands by an empty crib. Hurtado is made non-human in this pivotal moment—the faceless victim of sterilization. Her voice continues but, recalling Rangan’s argument, in the effort to give voice to the silenced, documentary filmmakers often limit the voices under the film’s qualifying conditions. The qualifying condition in this scene is to turn strength (or toughness) into weakness (or weeping), something that is perhaps culturally denied Hurtado. We might recall the lesson conveyed in the *La Llorona* narrative to maintain silence even in pain. Yet, Hurtado is permitted to be a crying woman in search of her lost children to advance the film’s narrative. Hence, Hurtado’s view of herself as a tough individual is reevaluated for the benefit of the audience. It is also important to note that the grieving mother is made central here as a point developed from Espino’s dissertation. The normative mother rather than the deviant criminal or mentally ill is Espino’s gateway to study eugenics. In *No Más Bebés*, however, this mother must still be humanized beside the crib as if her sterilization is not enough reason to empathize.

The camera reconstitutes Hurtado from hands to human only when she breaks down in her daughter’s arms. Crying, she now meets the film’s condition for becoming humanized. No longer a stable figure of strength, Hurtado is relocated to the past to again be that young mother in deep mourning. However, that past has no direct impact on the audience, only the humanization of the woman who recalls that past. As the film progresses, more of the plaintiffs recall their pain and this pain is more directly displayed

without fragmented visuals. However, there continues to be a fragmentation of past and present. There remains for the viewer a distinct safety in the emphasis of time divisions. Yet, there is no safety for the plaintiffs who must continue to re-enter their wounds.

Perhaps the most powerful moment of suffering in *No Más Bebés* is towards the film's end. The now elderly plaintiff Consuelo Hermosillo is asked to listen to a cassette tape of her younger self, testifying during a May 1978 pre-trial recording session. Now sitting in her sunflower-yellow dining room as the cassette plays, Hermosillo transforms with each word of testimony—as she gradually reenters her wound (Fig. 3.2). Unlike the opening scene when Hurtado must fragment into a body part before we can witness her pain, Hermosillo slowly alters in front of the camera, tears deepening the lines on her aged face as her youthful Spanish-speaking voice reaches from the past. Yet the voice of pain, as in Hurtado's scene, continues to be disembodied and reaching from beyond our view. With Hurtado the painful recollection occurs as the camera focuses on the crib, and with

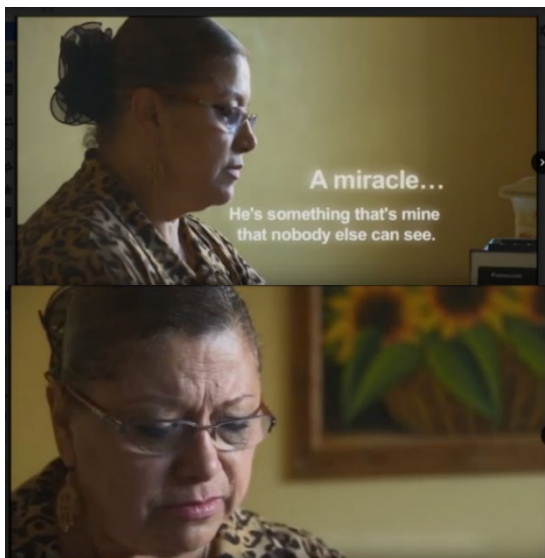


FIGURE 3.2. *No Más Bebés*. Directed by Renee Tajima-Peña. Produced by Virginia Espino. PBS. 2015. [Film still by Loretta Ramirez, 52:03, 52:27].

Hermosillo the pained voice is tinny and tiny in an old cassette visibly spinning its playback. In both cases, we do not see the body, the mouth speaking. We hear only the disembodied pain. Here, the pain says: "I always dream I have my baby. I dream I get to Mexico with the baby. People want to see him. But I won't show them. Because I have a surprise. A miracle. He's something that's mine that nobody else can see. That's what I dream." In this dream, now shared

with the world, Hermosillo wishes to guard her secret miracle, a miracle that never manifests for her but highlights her desire for control over something entirely her own. She speaks of a baby but also of a desire for self-determination, “something that’s mine” and beyond another’s control. The scene is heart-breaking as it summarizes the violation of family, body, and life; additionally, it collapses time between the young devastated voice from a dehumanizing past and the crying elderly woman who is now humanized so the audience may access her secrets and pains.

Yet does this scene call audiences to protect Hermosillo’s rights or the rights of others like her; and how are others like her? What cause or demographic does Hermosillo claim, if any? I am inclined to deem that in this deeply private moment between Hermosillo and her disembodied pain, no one else is present. The wound is specific to this woman. However, again this recalls Rangan, who questions, “what ‘message’ is sent to society’s others when they are asked to document themselves and claim their human rights?” (16). For the women of *No Más Bebés* there is a message that their pain is honored and that their pain led to landmark changes in hospital procedures, but there is also no more action to be

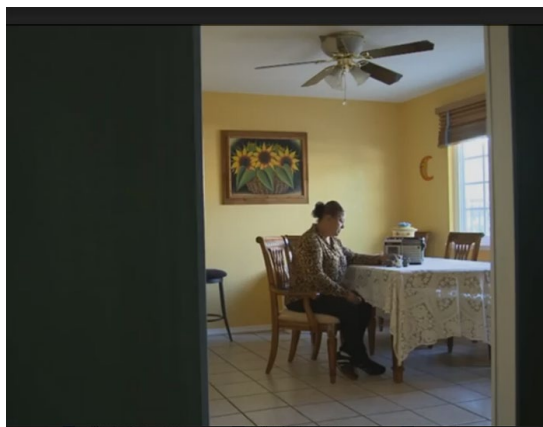


FIGURE 3.3. *No Más Bebés*. Directed by Renee Tajima-Peña. Produced by Virginia Espino. PBS. 2015. [Film still by Loretta Ramirez, 52:52].

taken to address their specific wounds. Their past is not society’s present. No one can recover and actualize Hermosillo’s dream. Thus, the film’s closing images tidy the painful narratives, as the camera withdraws from Hermosillo, still sitting alone in her sunflower dining room, crying beside the cassette player as the voice from the past spins into silence (Fig. 3.3).

The film ends, however, with a sense that these women are too powerful to remain too long in their past wounds. Unlike *La Llorona*, the plaintiffs know when to move on. A quick transition thus occurs at the film's conclusion that finalizes the separation of the past from present, allowing the audience to feel morally soothed by happier footage of the women's current lives. We see plaintiff Dolores Madrigal with an adult son as he tenderly watches his mother, the two very proud and relieved to learn of hospital procedural changes that were perhaps impacted by Madrigal; we see Hermosillo singing to her infant granddaughter, and Hurtado dancing with her husband. Further distancing the pain, the film credits roll beside images of the plaintiffs as young adults in the 1970s, happy even in their past as they hold their children, graduate from school, and exude confidence as young working women. As a result, the film's parting impression is that these women were always brilliant and capable—human. Now, they are even more so—heroes—a claim that the film certainly supports with great care and esteem. And while this positive viewing of the plaintiffs is a productive achievement in providing role models from a largely concealed history, how does it prod audiences towards action or even reflection? For what purpose does the opening of these heroes' wounds serve?

### **Pathways to Diagnosis, Rerouted**

This brings me to the second problem that I wish to explore in chapter two which is the intrusion of alternative narratives that appropriate Chicana rhetorics and histories in order to benefit an exterior agent. The result is a misdiagnosis of the afflictions that “brown women” may face or the impartial treatment of their wounds. Certainly, one intention of director Renee Tajima-Peña is to afford the plaintiffs opportunity to express their distressing experiences, and the plaintiffs are unquestionably positioned as sympathetic

protagonists, both through interviews with the filmmakers and from original court proceedings. However, Tajima-Peña's self-professed objective filming ideology also offers voice and agency to the attorneys, medical staff, physicians, and administrators, many of whom in their own footage complicate the plaintiffs' narratives. Accordingly, Tajima-Peña cautiously balances various arguments, a goal she expressed during a red-carpet interview at the film's 2015 Los Angeles Film Festival world premiere; Tajima-Peña intended to offer fair, journalistic objectivity to allow the audience opportunity to gain an informed take-away (Elias). Although the film does not judge the medical and legal establishments involved in the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case, the narrative is framed in a manner to bring to the forefront a debate on reproductive rights. Yet what is the function of this debate? Does *No Más Bebés* generate audience awareness of woundedness as correlating with Chicana biopolitical targeting—or are Chicana experiences silenced beneath the film's multiple narratives and agendas? More specifically, does *No Más Bebés* move the discussion from female bodies to Chicana bodies, or do Chicana bodies serve primarily to advance a larger narrative of female reproduction rights? This raises the question: why were these specific women deemed a demographic that should be offered sterilization in the first place?

Approximately one-third of the way through the documentary, the film introduces archival 1960s and 1970s news footage of general concerns about population booms. These concerns are directly followed by an NBC news report of a Black mother contesting the sterilization of her two teenage daughters in Alabama. The NBC reporter notes that the mother's illiteracy may have contributed to the undesired sterilizations. Her use of a large "X" in lieu of her consenting signature seems of importance to the news report. The archival report is then addressed by modern interviews conducted by the *No Más Bebés* filmmakers,

first with a physician who recalls the term “Mississippi Appendectomy” being commonly applied in the southern United States as code for systematic sterilization of low-income Black women. Following is another modern interview with Antonia Hernandez, attorney for the plaintiffs, who notes that Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center was only one institute among many nationwide that participated in female sterilization, usually of women from low economic status. Hernandez states, “it happened to white poor people in Appalachia, it happened to poor Black people, it happened to poor Latino people; it was that sense that poor people were having too many babies.” While the documentary argues that perceptions on socio-economic and potentially related English literacy issues impacted medical sterilization practices—regardless of race—*No Más Bebés* chooses to narrate reproductive rights violation through Chicana bodies whose wounds are reopened for the benefit of the audience.

Of particular consideration, although the County medical defendants are historically and legally depicted as victorious since they defeat the plaintiffs of the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case, the *No Más Bebés* filmmakers resist a one-sided portrayal of victory. This further fortifies the notion that the Chicanas need no redress—only perhaps acknowledgement and respect, which is surely valuable but does not address particular Chicana grievances. Recalling the moment of her legal defeat forty years later, Hernández recalls that although she had wanted to cry once the losing verdict had been read, that she instead needed to “project strength” in defeat. Crying is not allowed at that moment; it would be solely self-serving when more work is left to be done for a larger demographic. The film shows some of the results of such work as plaintiff Dolores Madrigal, now an elderly woman, listens to her adult son read aloud the resulting changes in hospital regulatory laws since *Madrigal v.*

*Quilligan*. While the narrative resists defeat and presents honors to the plaintiffs and their lawyer through the assertion of moral and long-term procedural victories, it concurrently lessens an active need for action since the Chicanas stop crying, regain strength, and accomplish private and social success. As a result, the film serves primarily as a warning about the manner in which Chicana bodies might be controlled but not as a call to action.

To raise this warning during promotion of *No Más Bebés*, Espino and Tajima-Peña both emphasized their blind-spots regarding female reproductive rights, which had previously been overshadowed by their attention to abortion rights. Espino states in an interview with *Rewire* that she initially struggled to believe that sterilizations occurred at County; this is even after she admits to growing up with the awareness that County was “never a place that people wanted to go for medical care; it was a place you had to [because you were poor], otherwise you stayed away from it” (Vasquez). Espino also states that she had not heard of *Madrigal v. Quilligan* until she was in graduate school (1995-2007) nor had she considered that reproductive rights extended beyond the issue of abortion. Tajima-Peña likewise admits to this lack of awareness in the same interview, stating that “like a lot of other middle-class women, the question for me when it came to reproductive rights had always been: Do we have access to safe and legal abortion? Reproductive justice was a new idea to me. [...] What we don’t talk about enough is that women also have a constitutional protection to give birth, and that some women have that right taken from them” (Vasquez). Tajima-Peña and Espino’s realization that they had previously perceived a narrow platform on which to discuss rights to body seems shared by the *No Más Bebés* audience who, as the filmmakers note, overwhelmingly respond to the documentary’s new insights into reproduction rights (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center). In the end, the documentary

provides reproductive rights advocates an expanded awareness to serve their platform. Yet to what extent will that expansion be directed to benefit specifically Chicana bodies?

A hopeful note can be detected in the production support obtained from organizations such as California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) and National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH), both organizations aiming to secure Latina rights to reproductive health. The partnership with CLRJ and NLIRH is significant since the film reflects through the voices of politician Gloria Molina and journalist Claudia Dreifus that Chicana rights were often represented as a secondary issue during the 1970s by the Chicano Movement or overlooked by white feminists. The film interviews sociologist Elena Gutierrez who attests that Chicanas have now redefined their own feminist movement—claiming rights for abortion but also rights for as many children as they desire, which is an argument that was not prevalent in white feminist groups. However, the film’s emphasis on the need for Chicana rights advocates seems answered and now advanced to new issues; again, positioning the needs of Chicana bodies strictly in the past. This sense of new issues also relates to the film’s other partnerships with organizations that promote social change through political awareness and cultivation of voice such as Chicken & Egg Pictures that supports female nonfiction filmmakers who provide catalysts for social change and Voto Latino, a media organization that spotlights Latino leadership. Again, that these organizations are present as support for the documentary indicates a change in representation—both in media and in leadership. Accordingly, the film’s primary audiences are female reproductive rights activists and Latina/Latino legal and political organizations who raise awareness of *Madrigal v. Quilligan* to both honor the plaintiffs’ past but also to invite continuation of the spirit of this now-humanized case to address current need. To

achieve this humanized case and, thus, a more compelling invitation towards action, the plaintiffs must lose their gained strength as survivors and return to their youth to relive past pain. They are again afflicted by memories for the audience to realize the humanity of the sufferers and then to use that suffering to redirect attention elsewhere.

In an anecdotal example of audience reception, I have screened *No Más Bebés* twelve times for the college composition classes that I teach. In two of these classes, which were composition courses that I taught in the Chicano and Latino Studies Department at California State University, Long Beach, totaling forty-six students, I informally debriefed the classes after the screenings. The general consensus that I gathered from one class was that the fundamental purpose of the documentary was to first advocate greater awareness of female rights to body and to, second, notice exactly what you are signing away before it is too late. My other class expressed that the film's purpose was singular—to advocate the defense of female bodies. Neither class, both of which were situated in an ethnic studies discipline, considered the primary purpose of *No Más Bebés* to be advocating racial, or specifically Chicana, rights to body. Indeed, the observation from the first class—that the documentary emphasized the need to notice what you are signing away—echoes the film's footage of the 1970s NBC news report that indicated a Black mother's illiteracy as contributing to the problem, in other words, a form of victim-blaming rather than examining institutionalized targeting of demographics. Additionally, my two classes did not express that the problems related in the documentary gave any sense of ongoing need to address the plaintiffs' grievances nor the needs of the Chicana demographic that the plaintiffs specifically represent. My classes observed that the depicted journey in the film was a woman's journey riddled by patriarchal obstacles, not a journey of a "brown woman."

It is interesting to recall that in the opening scene of *No Más Bebés*, Maria Hurtado does not state that her gender, race, or economic status influenced doctors to sterilize her. She says that her “tough” appearance leads to the assumption that she feels no hurt or sadness, thereby implying a lack of ramifications should a perpetrator target her. While *No Más Bebés* emphasizes that other factors, particularly socio-economic biases, may have guided systematic sterilizations, Hurtado’s comments reveal an aspect that marks Chicana biopolitics within a distinct grouping that necessitates its own attention. In Chicana narrative representation, there is a type of essentialized Chicana as a willing sacrifice, a tough woman who can carry burdens silently and who will defy the conditions of victimization through understated perseverance. There are fundamental Marian principles in this willing sacrifice, recalling such Christian traditions as the acquiescent Annunciation Virgin Mary who immediately and graciously assents to all the sacrifice she is to carry, witness, and suffer as Christ’s bearer. Indeed, this sort of tough perseverance with grace and silence under extreme duress is the root of Marianismo as a female cultural ideal in Latin American and Latinx gender role traditions, providing an iconic female counterpart to the male Machismo.<sup>29</sup> This speaks to the historical genealogy of strategic rhetorical responses to woundedness that I trace, yet the Marian rhetorical traditions that concern my studies are those that position Mary as concurrently a testifier against sin—the *virgen abridera* that reveals her wounds to suit her *own* agenda. Traces of this positioning can be perceived in Hurtado’s statement as both a source of identity but also as a source of

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<sup>29</sup> Scholarship on Marianismo abound in Latin American and Latinx studies. A general starting point is Gil Vazquez and Carmen Inoa Vazquez’s. *The Maria Paradox: How Latinas Can Merge Old World Traditions with New World Self-esteem* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1996).

misperception as to what that identity is truly denoting. Hurtado's defiant tone, set jaw, and occasional shrugs of apathy when she relates her memories throughout the documentary hint to a strategy of the wound as transformed into a generative source of counter-strength that she claims as toughness; yet it is also this same projection of toughness that Hurtado believes initially misled physicians to target her as a person who can emotionally cope with sterilization and the later misperceptions that she is unaffected by such violations.

*No Más Bebés* addresses this misperception and pierces Hurtado's emotions to display the human beneath the tough mask. Significantly, however, this mask is traditionally constructed by a segment of Chicana culture to sacrifice one's inner needs so that one might willfully give of self, body, and opportunity to secure one's own agenda which is often focused on obtaining the immediate benefit of *la familia* (usually children). Interestingly, in the narrative framework of *No Más Bebés*, it is society that seizes the role of *la familia*. The Chicanas' pains are opened as heroic sacrifices that lead to progress and opportunity for the extended *familia* of future feminist generations. Hurtado may still emotionally wander the hospital hallways in search of lost children, but she is silent until the film needs her to cry. When the film has made sufficient use of her pain, she may redon the mask of toughness.

It is important for my studies that I point out that this control of Hurtado's wound speaks to the motivations behind Cherríe Moraga's desire to represent Chicana bodies and narratives by making prominent not toughness but pain. Moraga's strategy, as we might recall from chapter one, is for the wounded to maintain the wound so that sacrifice and pain serve only one's own generative purposes and fuel one's own empowering accusations. In this way, one might control one's woundedness to benefit one's own

definition of *la familia*—rather than permit a redefinition of who may benefit from Chicana sacrifices. That is to say, sacrifice should not be rerouted by exterior forces from the self-elected *familia* to benefit the public family.

### **The Obscured Wound: Border-patrolling Chicana Bodies**

To consider a possible method to maintain control of one's own sacrifices, I turn to the rhetoric of the *Madrigal* plaintiffs beyond that portrayed in *No Más Bebés*. The rhetorics employed at site of the wound, rather than at a reframed distance, is more likely to provide greater insight into the affliction and the afflicter for the purpose of reaching a more accurate diagnoses of Chicana grievances. In "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse" (2007), Jessica Enoch endeavors to similarly recover the Chicana plaintiffs' rhetoric from their 1970s pre-trial and court testimony recordings and transcripts. Enoch's study predates *No Más Bebés*, and Espino references the article in her dissertation on eugenics. The aim of Enoch's article is to identify this Chicana rhetoric as feminist rhetoric situated in a specific historical context and accordingly analyze new possible manifestations of the plaintiffs' strategies to the benefit of a larger population. I will later revisit Enoch's methodologies of contextualization and extension, but for now I join her in a study of the plaintiffs' words.

In the 1970s testimony and pre-trial interviews with the plaintiffs, as reprinted in Enoch's essay and located in contemporary archival newspapers, there is a notably heightened rhetorical emphasis on accusation and specificity than that which we see in *No Más Bebés*. In particular, the plaintiffs more heatedly assert and describe as blatant lies and coercive measures that which County physicians and medical staff stated. It is understandable that time might blunt the plaintiffs' recollection of their interactions with

County employees when recounted in the documentary, but the particulars and the vehemence of the plaintiffs' rhetoric is largely missing, replaced predominately with sorrow and hurt. For example, in her original testimony Jovita Rivera who did not participate in *No Más Bebés* testifies: "While I was in advanced labor and under anesthesia with complications in my expected childbirth and in great pain, the doctor told me that I had too many children, that I was poor, and a burden to the government and I should sign a paper not to have more children. [...] The doctors told me that my tubes could be untied" (10). Helena Orozco, also not featured in *No Más Bebés*, states that "[A] doctor said that if I did not consent to the tubal ligation that the doctor repairing my hernia would use an inferior type of stitching material which would break the next time I became pregnant, but that if I consented to the tubal ligation that the stitches would hold as proper string would be used" (11).

Hurtado, who is arguably the most prominent plaintiff in *No Más Bebés*, in original testimony also offers a more vivid version of her interactions with doctors. Rather than assuming that her toughness led doctors to speculate that no questions would ever be asked about a non-disclosed procedure, Hurtado narrates explicit interaction with the medical staff: "I was told by members of the Medical Center's Staff, through a Spanish-speaking nurse as interpreter, that the State of California did not permit a woman to undergo more than three caesarean section operations and that since this was to be my third caesarean section, the doctor would have to do something" (11). All three testimonies indicate overt identity assaults ("I was poor and a burden to the government," bodily threats ("the doctor repairing my hernia would use an inferior type of stitching material which would break the next time I became pregnant"), and coercive manipulation of truths

(“since this was to be my third caesarean section, the doctor would have to do something”)—all symptomatic of biopolitical conditions since the plaintiffs are relegated into states of exceptions.

As I understand states of exceptions, the term alludes to a system of biopolitical control that relies on crisis to justify a move outside regular applications of law and common ethics. As Giorgio Agamben argues in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), states of exception are created when expectations of legal norms are suspended yet the law is still maintained, thereby creating an exceptional “zone” in which application of the law is extended to unusual extremes (31). In other words, the norm is no longer sufficient to protect and serve the law of the land, so in the maintenance of lawfulness, there must be a space of exception where assaults to identity and body as well as coercive manipulation of events are excused for the *greater good* of those in the normative state. Those in the zone of exception are those who, as Michel Foucault argues in “Society Must be Defended” (1976), are let to die—or, I add, let to be unconceived, as in the case of the Chicana sterilization.

Contemporary with the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case, Foucault’s main thesis in “Society Must be Defended” is that modern societies have created hierarchical forms of racism that determine which living beings might be deprived of resources to best serve the collective preservation of the state; the state regularizes life to strengthen itself by segregating bodies that are determined advantageous for specific tasks. This occurs systematically over extended temporal periods. Here, Foucault defines biopolitics as dealing with the population as a “political problem” (66). While Foucault does not offer examples of how populations are managed, he links the concept with inherent racism and ultimately defines

racism as “the break between what must live and what must die” (74). Foucault’s lack of specificity regarding race as related to body color rather than as a series of socioeconomic conditions opens him to criticism, notably from Alexander G. Weheliye in his *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014). However, Foucault’s general theory lends itself to my discussion of the manner that perpetrators can be obscured when we consider discourse around the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case. I assert that medical policies of exception based on racist border patrolling of Chicana wombs fundamentally impacted Chicana sterilization rates. Also informing my discussion is Judith Butler’s examination of *necropower*—a form of biopolitical government processes that places designated demographics onto pathways towards death. Butler exposes discourses that imagine specific demographics as *unreal* lives as exposed to *real* lives. Butler suggests that when *unreal* lives are violated, the violence goes unmarked, and the fact that there was once a life also goes unmarked and unnoticed (*Precarious Life* 35).<sup>30</sup>

This returns me to my criticism of *No Más Bebés* and that which I view as the film’s shortcomings in addressing why this Chicana demographic was considered so *unreal* or so lacking in humanity that sterilization became pervasive and unproblematic for both the medical institute and the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* court system. Why was (and is) it so difficult to see the *real* lives and the potential within these lives? Indeed, why did the *No Más Bebés* filmmakers feel compelled to “humanize” Hurtado in the opening scene before we enter the narrative? Does the audience require proof of a brown woman’s humanity to consider her a *real* life? As previously discussed, *No Más Bebés* opts to utilize this humanization to then

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<sup>30</sup> See also Sara McKinnon’s analysis of Butler’s necropolitics discussion in McKinnon’s 2018 “Necropolitics as Foreign Affairs Rhetoric in Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Relations”

focus on female reproductive rights as a general socio-economic trend across the nation, which is a similar sidestepping of color and race for which Weheliye criticizes Foucault. In fact, the film underplays racial components and replaces the sharpness of the 1970s testimony that detail harsh and blatant biopolitical control with a more soothing heroic narrative of the plaintiffs' experiences.

The diminished precision of the exchanges between the plaintiffs and County personnel results in, as already noted, a separation between the past and present, and thereby a distancing from the specific harms committed against the brown woman as a perceived "political problem." This hinders precise diagnosis of biopolitical control of Chicana bodies, a specific form of racial purging that border patrols the wombs of this demographic for the prevention of future brown children. Such an argument recalls Abraham Acosta's "Hinging on Exclusion and Exception: Bare Life, the US/Mexico Border, and *Los que nunca llegarán*," in which Acosta studies biopolitics as applied to brown bodies who *nunca llegarán*, "never will arrive." While Acosta studies the physical border and immigration, I suggest that the Chicana body is viewed by many United States institutions as a symbolic borderland that are also patrolled to prohibit those who must never arrive.

There have certainly been scholarly attempts to examine the brown woman as a border-patrolled body. Alexandra Minna Stern in "Sterilized in the Name of Public Health: Race, Immigration, and Reproductive Control in Modern California" (2005) studies Californian history linked to biopolitical regulations of racialized bodies and includes *Madrigal v. Quilligan* as part of this examination. In "The Bioethics of Reproductive Technologies: Impacts and Implications for Latinas" (1993), Adaljiza Sosa Riddell focuses more directly on *Madrigal v. Quilligan* and ties the case to a history of work-related health

risks directed specifically at Chicanas such as exposure of female farm workers to chemicals known to contribute to infertility, birth defects, still births, and cancers. Sosa Riddell cautions that Chicanas remain at high-risk for continued “reproductive victimization, increased health risks due to their occupational segregation, and exclusion from access to information, services, and decision-making in the area of reproductive technology policy making” (190). While *No Más Bebés* also points at socioeconomics as a source of reproductive rights violation, Sosa Riddell links the socioeconomic context with racial constructs that, reminiscent of Foucault’s biopolitics argument, segregate bodies that are determined as better suited for specific worksite tasks. For brown bodies, all too often, as Sosa Riddell demonstrates, these tasks are associated with sterilization risks. When these risks are coupled with reproductive violations from the medical community, there becomes a biopolitical condition that must be examined for its particular correlation between race and economics.

Such a correlation is not presented in *No Más Bebés*. In fact, just like Espino positioned the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* plaintiffs in her dissertation to contest beliefs that eugenics were applied to solely criminals and the mentally ill, *No Más Bebés* also makes a distinction between the plaintiffs and less economically stable Chicana mothers. To counter prevalent stereotypes that Chicanas are economically disadvantaged and overburdened with too many children who they cannot afford, the documentary offers plentiful evidence of the plaintiffs as capable mothers in financially responsible households that desire and plan for a larger family. The documentary defies misperceptions of dependency and need. We see footage ranging from the 1970s to the 2010s of the plaintiffs enjoying dinner, music, and dancing in roomy green yards and bustling kitchens where all family members

appear healthy, happy, and loving—beautiful lives that while having experienced their own clear and real challenges are limited only by biopolitical population control. While the documentary's emphasis on the issue of population closely approaches discussions of biopolitics, it is clear that *No Más Bebés* aims to present the plaintiffs as fully capable of making their own reproductive choices. This is undeniably a positive message that I applaud; yet the disservice that I also perceive is in the continued privileging of a heroic tale over an opportunity to tell of an epidemic biopolitical system that denies a wider range of Chicanas the right to not only decide their own reproductive choices but live in general wellness. As a result, the pain that the plaintiffs perform do not give voice to the struggle of ongoing Chicana biopolitics. Rather, the film concludes with the women as healed heroines, covering the still-bleeding wounds so that the audience can withdraw from the documentary soothed and ready to perhaps take action—but not on these seemingly past injustices, only on current ones elsewhere.

#### Heroic Narratives at What Cost?

Jessica Enoch's study of the plaintiffs' rhetoric in the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case concludes on a similar note. While Enoch initially focuses on recovering the plaintiffs' rhetoric as expressed from 1974-1978 trial-associated recordings and transcripts and thereby makes central the plaintiffs' grievances, she then proceeds to identify these grievances as part of a feminist response to chronic discriminatory medical practices and, ultimately, analyzes the rhetoric's survival across time as it manifests through later feminist efforts that address reproductive rights. I propose that Enoch's strategy to both heroize the plaintiffs and reapply their rhetoric to serve a particular feminist narrative sets a precedent for *No Más Bebés* to prematurely close that wound. This heroizing of the

plaintiffs can be illustrated not only in the portrayal of the women as happy and selfless survivors but in the exclusion of particular voices that were part of the original grouping of litigants. For example, Maria Figueroa's testimony is excluded from both Enoch's study and *No Más Bebés*, although Figueroa is one of the ten plaintiffs. In a 1975 *Los Angeles Times* article by Robert Rawitch, the only print that preserves Figueroa's story, Figueroa claims that in June 1971 while she was in the throes of child-delivery labor, and after initially refusing sterilization and repeated solicitations, she finally agreed to the procedure. However, she gave the doctors and medical staff one verbal stipulation. She is quoted by Rawitch as acknowledging to County personnel that she will consent to sterilization only "provided the baby [she was about to deliver] was a boy"; although she gave birth to a girl and signed no consent forms, the tubal ligation was still performed (OC 3). Figueroa has since faded from mention and can be located solely in the archives. While Figueroa's availability after this initial newspaper interview is not disclosed, I can only speculate that her testimony that sterilization might have been acceptable had a son first been born does not fit privileged narratives.

In the predominant narrative constructed around *Madrigal v. Quilligan* there is an assumed motivation placed on the plaintiffs—a desire to give voice to female issues. Enoch writes of this motivation as leading the plaintiffs to initiate the lawsuit "on behalf of themselves and other Chicanas who faced the same situation" (12). This framing of motivation and initiative neglects the historical context that the lawsuit participated in a wider effort organized by Ralph Nader's Health Research Group (HRG). In all the scholarship that I have encountered on *Madrigal v. Quilligan*, this link to the HRG is mentioned only in Rebecca M. Kluchin's "Locating the Voices of the Sterilized" (2007, p.

135) and contemporary newspaper reports.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, a year prior to the 1974 *Madrigal* filing, Dr. Bernard Rosenfeld, a young resident who initiated consideration of the case when he first approached Charles Nabarrette and Antonia Hernandez, the later prosecuting attorneys of *Madrigal v. Quilligan*, had authored a 1973 report on sterilization abuses in hospitals as part of the HRG efforts (Kistler “Women ‘Pushed’” A3).

Rosenfeld had also assisted in the 1973-1974 *Relf v. Weinberge* Alabama lawsuit, filed on behalf of Mary Alice and Linnie Lee Relf for non-consensual sterilization (Kistler “Many U.S. Rules” A3). In spring 1974, County-USC and Quilligan were already responding to new federal regulations resulting from *Relf v. Weinberge* that proposed pathways towards requiring “informed consent” such as consideration of language and educational needs, as well as age of consent and 72-hour waiting period (Kistler “Many U.S. Rules” A3, A26). While Enoch makes no mention of Rosenfeld as a major player in not only the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case but also in nationwide organized advocacy for reproductive rights, *No Más Bebés* features him prominently as a brave and essential whistleblower; yet the larger context of his actions as part of Nader’s HRG is still not established.

*No Más Bebés* executive producer Virginia Espino references in her dissertation Rosenfeld’s role in the Public Citizen organization (209); the HRG is a division of the organization. However, Rosenfeld’s affiliation in this larger advocacy network is omitted in the documentary. Also of note, Enoch lists in her bibliography Rosenfeld’s HRG report published by Nader’s Public Citizen organization but does not contextualize his role as whistle-blower of the County case or his direct contact with the *Madrigal* prosecuting lawyers in the development of the case, the locating of plaintiffs, and the accessing of

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<sup>31</sup> See in particular Robert Kistler’s December 1974 *Los Angeles Times* articles

medical documents.<sup>32</sup> This indicates that both Enoch and the *No Más Bebés* filmmakers were aware of larger contexts of the case but chose for rhetorical purposes to exclude that context. I speculate that omission of the HRG and consequential political associations with Nader might be perceived as elevating a sense of the plaintiffs' own agency, initiative, and thereby heroism.

Additionally, Enoch and *No Más Bebés* briefly allude to the Alabama case but imply that the policy changes initiated by *Relf v. Weinberge* were actually introduced by the *Madrigal* plaintiffs rather than reinforced. The *Madrigal* plaintiffs accordingly are presented as independent of larger networking via HRG support. I call attention to the omission of Maria Figueroa and HRG not to underplay the plaintiffs' brave action of asserting their voices or their specific agency and motivation but to emphasize the reframing of these same actions to serve later agendas.

Enoch's study surely addresses the manipulation of the plaintiffs' voices to serve another agenda yet only in regard to a particular adversary. Enoch's analysis of the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* presiding judge, Jesse Curtis, Jr.'s reception of the plaintiffs' rhetoric is valuable in assessing the rhetorical complications of the Chicanas' strategies. In this analysis, Enoch notes that the testimony which emphasizes the plaintiffs' particular needs in regard to language and "subcultural" perspective inadvertently marks them as an "atypical" demographic that Curtis deems beyond the reach that medical professionals can reasonably be expected to accommodate. Enoch views Curtis's verdict as applying a "rhetoric of normalization" which asserts that regulations and services cannot anticipate

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<sup>32</sup> The report is by Rosenfeld, Sidney Wolfe, and Robert E. McGarrah, "A Health Research Group Study on Surgical Sterilization: Present Abuses and Proposed Regulations," Washington DC: Public Citizen, Inc., 1973.

the experiences of those outside the norm (16). Indeed, the plaintiffs' rhetoric of specific need had been turned against them and ultimately silenced their case.

Enoch remonstrates this reversal tactic by then balancing the case's negative outcome with a more hopeful concluding narrative of the survival of the Chicanas' rhetorics through subsequent extension. Enoch largely focuses on attorney Antonia Hernandez's later advocacy which incorporates the *Madrigal* experience—not solely through Hernandez's lived experiences but through a reassertion of the plaintiffs' words to raise awareness and coalitions about reproduction rights across racial lines (18). Enoch applauds this new life given to the plaintiffs' words and encourages that scholars “pursue the possibility that women's words might gain new and meaningful effects outside their original rhetorical situation” (24).

While there is certainly a validation of one's experiences when one's words continue to impact the future, how does one make peace with the recontextualization of those words for exterior purposes? In essence, Judge Curtis and attorney Hernandez, while on separate sides of the sterilization issue, apply the same methods of appropriating the plaintiffs' words, words that were extremely costly for the plaintiffs to speak, given their personal pain and their family's now-exposed privacy. This prompts me to wonder if framing plaintiffs as heroes rather than defeated litigants gives license to repurpose their pain. Furthermore, does the celebration of the plaintiffs outside their original rhetorical situation heal their wounds? The tendency in *No Más Bebés* and in Enoch's analysis to portray a healing of the plaintiffs and to celebrate the plaintiffs as heroes who have survived in body, spirit, and words sidesteps the Chicanas' specific rhetorical self-determination. Metaphorically, it covers the wound rather than let the wound speak.

### **Healed or Bleeding? A Concluding Consideration of Wound Theory**

A principal motivation behind my examination of rhetorics of woundedness is my belief that it is crucial not only to observe afflictions that impact Chicana wellness but to observe also rhetorical potentials once the wounded realize a cultural strategy that can address pain for generative advantage. I recognize that by focusing on woundedness, we risk sending a message that a segment of Chicanas have and continue to find value in their wounds, as if we are willing participants in our own suffering. As previously discussed, this may mislead perpetrators to purposely target those who can *take it* out of a misinterpreted performance of *toughness*, which is in part informed by Christological cultures of sacrifice and the idealization of Marianismo. My argument throughout, though, has been that when a demographic is consistently targeted by overlapping assailant forces working in coordination to deprive self-determination and wellness, rhetorical mechanisms must be identified and implemented to navigate wounded states. The mechanisms that I study are derived from reaching into the wound and examining the entirety of an affliction, the specificity of the assailant's aim, and the ramifications on those directly wounded. This is not a quick fix. Although, all too often quick fixes ease the consciousness of audiences who investigate such wounds, thus urging a dominant tendency to either diminish the wound's breadth or prematurely bandage the wound with a declaration of the healed hero.

This tendency may, in part, explain the manner in which *No Más Bebés* ends with a sense of the plaintiffs' wellness although no narrative of personal healing had been offered. The plaintiffs' pains are soothed only by a general satisfaction of having served a faceless, abstract sense of future females, which is surely a positive ending but one that also frames the plaintiffs as past sacrifices. Consequently, Chicana wounds are understood as

generative for the larger society. In the documentary, that seems to be enough closure for the plaintiffs although the wounds remain ever sensitive to the slightest provocation. In other words, the personal healing is never allowed to occur for the Chicanas since the social benefit of their pain is productive when needed. Though, if healing must be denied, then that choice should be made only by the wounded, who elects to generate one's own insight from the affliction.

To further explore my argument, I turn to the work of Christina Sharpe whose trauma theory advocates maintaining the wound, or the wake. Sharpe insists that trauma must remain active in the present—rather than as part of a past that is too often repurposed from safe temporal distances to serve the nation's needs; this, Sharpe argues, denies designated bodies equal human status and protection (14). Specifically, Sharpe conceptualizes her experiences as a Black woman who is still metaphorically living in the wake of the slave ship. She imagines the ship's hold that continues to move her and her family towards a biopolitical system that determines a living death based on race. The constant funeral wakes that dominate her family's days and nights actualize the metaphor into her present reality. Sharpe argues that instead of memorializing slavery as a past event within a framework of understanding that is limited by incomplete archives and thereby "reinscribe[s] our own annihilation," that scholars address the disconnect between what is said to be history and what is lived as a still-unfolding experience from slavery (13, 20). To be *awake* to the reality of this still-active cut from humanity and self-determination is to "rupture the structural silences produced and facilitated by, and that produce and facilitate, Black social and physical death" (22). Mindfulness of this rupture highlights discrepancies

between that which we believe and that which we live, thereby fostering new understandings of that which the world truly is and might be.

This concept of maintaining focus on still-active harms—that which we live, rather than the soothing sense of heroism that others wish to believe—recalls Maylei Blackwell's theories on the generative elements of studying Chicana voice of trauma. Although Blackwell writes of the history of the Chicana political movement rather than biopolitics, her concept of allowing trauma to speak offers a productive framework through which to begin to understand choices elected in *No Más Bebés* in the documentary's portrayal of Chicana voices, which I claim opts to reshape and ultimately silence trauma to produce a repurposing of Chicana wounds. It is through Blackwell's framework of allowing trauma to speak from a placement of primary oppression that I similarly examine Chicana rhetoric. I argue that being mindful of the wound necessitates that injustices not be placed neatly into the past or compartmentalized into separate avenues. To present a voice of pain from the past continues the disembodiment of Chicanas in the present as merely symbolic examples of violence committed against female bodies rather than specific individuals who experience still-open woundedness. Maintaining the wound keeps forefront the injustice in the lives harmed. As a result, these lives are less apt to be abstracted into a slice.

Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) perhaps best explains, for my project, the impact of woundedness as a generative theory of engagement. In her trauma theory she contests Freud's view of woundedness as limited to an infliction that leads to inadvertent and undesired emotional recall of the injury. Specifically, she challenges Freud's study of trauma as represented in the figure of the knight Tancred from Torquato Tasso's sixteenth-century epic poem, *Jerusalem Liberated*. In

the poem, Tancred cannot escape the memory of his accidental killing of his own beloved. While Freud observes a traumatized mind that cannot separate his past from present, and thereby reinforces the persistent infliction, Caruth argues that the past *is* the present. The past, as in Sharpe's *wake* analogy, continues to agitate the wound in its present state. In this way, the past produces directly and repeatedly, in tandem with the present, a potential to reveal a greater understanding of self. Caruth views in Tancred's trauma of reliving the death of his beloved a "voice that cries out from the wound, a voice that witnesses a truth that Tancred himself cannot fully know" (3). Caruth continues to speak of "the crying wound" in trauma theory as a wound that "addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (4).

We may recall from *No Más Bebés*, plaintiff Hermosillo in her kitchen, listening to the crying wound of her younger self. In the voice that cries from her wound, we hear of the dreams of a family that Hermosillo was prevented from ever knowing, yet the generative potential of that scene as a moment of healing and of insight for Hermosillo is not realized. Instead, the camera withdraws, leaving Hermosillo alone in her kitchen to become lost in the past rather than apply that past to present revelations. Hermosillo is portrayed as crying over recalling pain but not as engaging with that voice of the wound to access new insight for her own benefit. Caruth's emphasis on the "delayed appearance" and "belated address" of this generative wound is of particular importance. The significance of the wound is not in the past and cannot be reviewed from a safe distance if we wish to learn from trauma. The impact of the wound is delayed because it is difficult to access insight

when one is in pain. Time must be taken to revisit, reconsider, and eventually learn from that which the "crying wound" can tell us. Caruth writes that "The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life" (7).

Ultimately, the historical genealogy that I trace as the rhetoric of generative wounds necessitates that Chicanas, if they elect their own confrontations with trauma, employ inflicted pain to the productive advantage and active agency of the injured party. This entails *not* dwelling in the wound as initially afflicted in the past but in discovering rhetorical strategies in the present wounded state that may prompt audiences—most crucially the audience of self—to adapt what they know for the generative empowerment of the rhetor's future. When the empowerment is appropriated and the rhetor is relegated either to the margins or the past, we enter a potentially harmful manipulation. That is to say, the rhetoric of the generative wound must maintain the wounded as central and as present. In chapter three we will fully explore this strategy in Chicana visual rhetorics as informed by the historical lineages advanced by the *virgenes abrideras*.

In the *virgenes abrideras*, it is important to note that the figure of Mary is not only central as a standalone figure but is also necessarily present since the sculptures are interactive in nature. If we recall, the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* invites audiences through the sculpture's opening chest to rhetorically engage with woundedness. These audiences must interrupt Mary's prayers and her tranquility by dividing Mary's hands. Such intrusive fragmentation of her body activates tragedy—opening a narrative of sacrifice. While this may parallel the reactivated wounds in *No Más Bebés*, the two differ rhetorically in that the wounds of Mary remain the possession of Mary and actively present

for the viewers to contemplate. In other words, the wound remains actualized within the audiences' own time and space, and audiences are exposed as ongoing participants of human sin who re-initiate Mary's suffering constantly, daily through their own sin. This audience is not soothed but rather troubled. Yet while the viewers are located as sinners, they are also part of a progression towards salvation since they continue to meditate on Mary's constant wound. This rhetorical situation positions the audience within a larger dialogue wherein they may opt to consider how current sins—not past sins—must be amended in order to address the wound that still cries in Mary.

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Chapter three now moves to consider the regaining of voice through the crying wound. The chapter studies how artists have reversed this wandering search for lost potential into a productive remembering of the past as impacting and revealing the present—a particularly medieval inheritance of collapsed temporal spaces. Chapter three illustrates the historical genealogy that I have now defined and complicated, in the hopes of examining a distinctive Iberian, Ibero-American, and Mesoamerican rhetorical tradition that positions feelings of woundedness and shame in ways that confront and transform self—from an externally perceived wandering abomination into a Chicana that determines and narrates her own path.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE GENERATIVE WOUND IN THE HISTORICAL GENEALOGY OF MEDIEVAL IBERIAN TO CONTEMPORARY CHICANX VISUAL RHETORICS



FIGURE 4.1. Andrea di Bartolo Cini, *St. Lucy*, altar fragment. Circa fourteenth century. Tempera, gilding on panel. 25" x 8.1." Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Oxford, England. (Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

In a short quiz for one of my recent art history classes, I featured an image of Andrea di Bartolo Cini's late-medieval *St. Lucy* (Fig. 4.1). After having read portions of Jacobus de Voragine's thirteenth-century *Golden Legend*, my students were able to identify Lucy (circa third-century martyr saint), even though her most prominent Christian iconography, a pair of eyes that she carries, is absent here. Interestingly, Lucy's association with eyes does not enter her primary iconography until post-medieval, although the association derives from her name's etymological Latin root as light, *lux*. Yet, in medieval iconography, while Lucy's association with light is surely acknowledged and applied as testament to her spiritual light or faith, she remains more closely bound to woundedness. Therefore, in the Andrea di Bartolo Cini icon, Lucy carries a small flaming oil lamp that functions in a secondary purpose as marker of spiritual light but primarily as marker of martyrdom.

Lucy's narrative, per *The Golden Legend*, relates that an imperial Roman governor ordered Lucy's execution via

public dousing with burning oil. However, since Lucy's association with light immunizes her from burns, the story relates that this first form of punishment does not kill the saint. Astonished by Lucy's display of faith before a witnessing public, her executioners apply a second instrument of execution—a dagger that fatally punctures her throat. Hence a standard medieval icon of Lucy features her haloed, wearing a red martyr cloak, and holding her instruments of sacrifice. It was through noticing the flaming lamp that my students successfully identified Lucy, yet they curiously made little to no mention of the black dagger at her side. Furthermore, students tended to associate the oil lamp with Lucy's clear vision and flame of faith but marginally referenced its role as also instrument of the saint's first wound. They seemed uncertain how to address the medieval *topos* of *ostentatio vulneris*, or the indication of the suffering process as affirmative display of character.<sup>33</sup>

In the rhetorical application of *ostentatio vulneris*, the martyr's humanity and mortality are emphasized as essential links to the viewing audience. Although humanity is a key common ground shared with viewers, a saint's woundedness functions as evidence in support of his or her argument of elevated spiritual credentials—to sacrifice one's link to the world is to prioritize one's spiritual value. In a debriefing with my students about the

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<sup>33</sup> A standard in studies of medieval iconography of individual saints is Louis Réau's *Iconographie De L'art Chrétien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires De France, 1955). For studies in medieval visual culture of woundedness see Judith Perkins's *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995); John R. Decker and Mitzi Kirkland-Ives's *Death, Torture, and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650* (London: Ashgate, 2015); Mitchell B. Merback's *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). For wider, non-visual contexts of medieval perceptions on woundedness, see Sarah McNamer's *Affective Meditation and Invention of the Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) and Esther Cohen's *The Modulated Scream: Pain in Late Medieval Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Lucy quiz, I observed that the students seemed to understand *ostentatio vulneris* as a concept applied to visual rhetorics of Christ and his wounds—and by extension Mary's sacrifice. As Caroline Walker Bynum has notably expressed, pain is an experience that all humans can share. Therefore, pain becomes an effective access point through which Christian iconography addresses the divine. Through Christ's bodily suffering, the human body becomes potential gateway for salvation (*Fragmentation and Redemption* 92). Christ's wounds, the Crucifixion scene, and the standalone Cross accordingly establish empowerment through sacrifice. Nonetheless, while my students appeared to accept Christ's sacrifice as a foundation for medieval Christian iconography, they seemed less comfortable articulating bodily harm as a generative force in the establishment of sainthood. Hence, they opted for a more "modern," as in post-medieval, visual study of Lucy's oil lamp as denoting the saint's light and vision, leaving aside the lamp's double meaning as source of woundedness. More significantly, their omission of any substantial analysis of the dagger—the actual killing object—might testify to a wider mainstream aversion that I have often observed in my scholarship of woundedness. There exists in the United States a deep-rooted repugnance regarding confrontations with mortality as potential source for invention and positive transformation.

Art historian Tamar Tembeck similarly observes and probes such repugnance in her studies of autopathographical photography of contemporary United States and English artists who chronicle their own bodily deteriorations during illness.<sup>34</sup> Tembeck specifically

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<sup>34</sup> See especially Tembeck's "Exposed Wounds: The Photographic Autopathographies of Hannah Wilke and Jo Spence," *RACAR/Canadian Art Review* 33.1/2 (2008): 87-101; "Selfies of Ill Health: Online Autopathographic Photography and the Dramaturgy of the Everyday," *Social Media and Society* (January-March 2016): 1-11. Attention to audience reception of

analyzes self-representational strategies in the photography of Jo Spence, Karolyn Gehrig, and Hannah Wilke as offering first-person perspectives on their own process of physical dying. However, in this dying the artists concurrently discover new self-imaginings and the resolve to make visible that which society often deems unsightly—namely mortality. While autopathographies are traditionally expressed and studied in textual representations, during the last quarter-century a surge in visual autopathography has contested social erasure of the ill, particularly to advocate attention to specific urgent medical needs that impact stigmatized and/or marginalized demographics. Most prominent in these efforts are visual autopathographies of the AIDS crisis and female health risks of breast and ovarian cancers. Although my aim departs in one sense from Tembeck’s study of artists whose physicality is wounded by disease and impending death, in other ways our interpretations of woundedness as a rhetorical strategy that prompts advocacy parallel.

I am well aware, however, that the Chicana rhetorics of woundedness that are central to my focus conjure metaphorical wounds rather than physical illness; they are more often focused on emotional suffering instead of physical pain. Surely medical issues in regard to procedural and policy biases are part of Chicana rhetorics of woundedness, as indicated in the narrative of sterilization in chapter two. As well, living and working conditions disproportionately disfavor the health of low-income Chicana bodies. Hate crime and sexual assault are also prominently addressed in Chicana narratives of physical woundedness. However, I focus on contemporary Chicana writers and artists who tend to construct metaphorical displays of woundedness to manifest emotional pain and social

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visual representations of disability can also be tied to our discussion. See Ann Millett-Gallant and Elizabeth Howie’s *Disability and Art History* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

suffering. It is clear that the rhetoric I analyze differs from the works in Tembeck's study. However, both groups of artists repurpose pain and suffering as expressions in support of their activist efforts. Tembeck's arguments therefore help me launch chapter three's analysis of visual rhetorics of woundedness as advocacy.

Tembeck views autopathography as functioning beyond the medical as the genre assumes a "politicized dramaturgy of the living body" ("Selfies of Ill Health" 3). This dramaturgy relates the premature social deaths experienced by patients who are inflicted with identity wounds that the "medical gaze" is not trained to see; indeed, society at large is predisposed to deliberately fix the gaze away from woundedness ("Selfies of Ill Health" 1; "Exposed Wounds" 95). Autopathographies thus aim to make visible both the physical and emotional afflictions to maintain the still-living self, the still-inventing self, the still-relevant self while forcing society to witness a dying flesh. The impact is not unlike Chicana rhetoric of woundedness in its insistence of asserting the fragmented self as constructive even if society tends to gaze from Chicana displays of grievances. Although exposures of these wounds persist, the prevalence of the averted gaze results in a systematic lack of societal (and by extension academic) training or familiarity with a dominant and enduring strain both of rhetorical history and modern urgency for attention. It follows that I add a historical lineage to the discussion of autopathographies as related to works by contemporary Chicana rhetors.

Similar to rhetorical strategies of medieval devotional iconography, contemporary visuals of affliction or woundedness do not signal the end of a life so much as a generative potential that the best of humanity (saints, in a Catholic context) realize and display, and that the spiritual aspirants commemorate and recall. I consider Chicana strategies of

generative woundedness to be inheritors of medieval *ostentatio vulneris* motifs, which aim to recall the positive potential of woundedness and the concept that dying begins with birth, and glory potentially begins with death. In this Catholic tradition, achieved glory relies on a well-prepared and therefore productive death. Indeed, the martyr saint is relevant specifically because of his or her visible confrontation with mortality as a generative moment for others to witness. Such displays of holy woundedness and their corresponding weapons of affliction are seized and deployed by the wounded to advance one's own campaign (Walker Bynum *Christian Materiality* 64). This strategy of commandeering one's own pain for productive purposes is the connection I draw between medieval Iberia and contemporary Chicana rhetorics.

As I tighten this connection, I note as well a split from rhetorical traditions that dominate United States practices and those that inform Chicana rhetors. This split is partially derived from rhetorical tensions between Reformation and Counter-Reformation strategies. Rhetorics of woundedness became more clearly identifiable with visual cultures that abided by the Council of Trent's emphasis on emotive Catholic devotional engagements.<sup>35</sup> Outside that visual culture, woundedness became increasingly concealed, hence our example of Lucy's eyes as the emerging saint attribute that is removed from a narrated martyrdom and Tembeck's analysis of aversion to woundedness in the United States and England. It is important to recall that this Reformation divergence formed

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<sup>35</sup> See Robert Bireley's *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999) for the profound economic and social changes that impacted Catholic cultural engagement tactics of the period. For a closer look at the codified tactics advocated and debated at the Council of Trent, see John W. O'Malley's *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

rhetorical trajectories that impacted English-United States and Mexican-United States discourses with differing features.<sup>36</sup> At Contact and during the Counter-Reformation, Iberia still largely employed the *ostentatio vulneris* in both its medieval emphasis in martyr narratives and in its later baroque manifestation of the bloodier, fleshier exposure of suffering holy bodies.

My focus in chapter three is the inheritance of this Iberian Catholic visual rhetorics by contemporary Chicana rhetors. This chapter turns away from text and towards visual because when we consider Latinx historical rhetorics, we must recall that Iberians first approached indigenous rhetors through visual and corporal gestures to overcome verbal and textual obstacles. Building on Daniel Solórzano's expansive critical pedagogies, I argue that when a people's communicative modes encounter a colonizing system that obliterates or transforms those modes, recovery of rhetorical genealogies necessitates an interweaving of rhetorical practices. Chapter three therefore considers a visual rhetorical lineage that enters the Americas, engages with extant indigenous rhetorics, and informs contemporary Chicana rhetorics of generative woundedness.

Walker Bynum's groundbreaking studies on body and materiality in Christian medieval culture provides important foundations for my argument as I take general notions of European Christendom and localize them in Iberian visual contexts that cross to the Americas and encounter Mesoamerican rhetorical employment of woundedness.

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<sup>36</sup> Stafford Poole, in *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1791* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995) perceives the Iberian devotional atmosphere that entered Mesoamerica as a distinct Castilian Catholicism "[u]ntouched by the religious upheavals following the revolt of Martin Luther in 1517 [and] molded during the seven-century struggle to drive the Moors (Arab and Berber Muslims from North Africa) from Iberian soil [...]. In the course of this struggle Catholicism and Spanish identity became fused both in reality and in myth" (19).

Recent interest has surged in the study of this transatlantic interchange, as seen in *Visualizing Sensuous Suffering and Affective Pain in Early Modern Europe and the Spanish Americas* (2018), edited by Heather Graham and Lauren G. Kilroy-Ewbank.<sup>37</sup> Graham and Kilroy-Ewbank's project aligns closely to my own with an attention to emotion studies and woundedness in Early Modern Ibero-American contexts. However, the collection largely maintains its art historical discipline in lieu of interweaving rhetorical practices and trans-disciplinarian scholarship, per Solórzano's prescription. The collection also defines its range of study in the Early Modern and thereby does not connect historical concepts of woundedness with contemporary strategies of employing mortality for advocacy, as studied by Tembeck.

My project bridges these gaps between art history and contemporary visual studies, between cultural and visual rhetorics, and between representation and advocacy. I am concerned that without such bridging, the visual *topos* of generative wounds in contemporary Latinx art and discourse will continue to struggle for recognition as part of a

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<sup>37</sup> Graham and Kilroy-Ewbank provide a wealth of resources on representation of pain in Early Modern European art. Most applicable to the discussions in my project are Susan Broomhall's *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2017) and Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen and Karl A. E. Enenkel's *The Sense of Suffering: Construction of Physical Pain in Early Modern Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). For further scholarship on representations of pain and suffering, see Maria Pia Di Bella and James Elkins' (eds.) *Representations of Pain in Art and Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012); Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Duganne's *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); David B. Morris's *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991); Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills's *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music, and Medicine* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Asbjorn Gronstad and Henrik Gustafsson's *Ethics and Images of Pain* (London: Routledge, 2012); Sarah Coakley and Kay Kaufman Shelemay's *Pain and Its Transformations: The Interface of Biology and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2007); Esther Cohen's "The Animated Pain of the Body," *AHR* 105 1 (2000): 36–68. I add to this list James Elkins's foundational emotion-reception theory, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

historical and cultural rhetorical tradition. This *topos* in its textual rhetorical expression I have already detailed in Cherrie Moraga's writings, as well as the risks that such rhetorical traditions may involve as wounds are appropriated to empower exterior forces. I fear that without a greater understanding of the cultural rhetorics that inform Chicana self-representation strategies that this particular form of Chicana rhetorics might be vulnerable to further unreceptive audiences.

Chapter three accordingly places the historical genealogy of the generative wound into conversation with contemporary Chicana art that deploys two prevailing threads: first, reverse-colonization via reclamation of genres and imagery of Mexica (Aztec) visual arts; and, second, appropriation of imagery of the Virgin Mary into the lived realities of Chicana artists. I accordingly bring into my genealogy a consideration of indigenous heritages that shape Chicana art together, in parallel, and in discord with medieval Iberian influences. The works that factor most prominently in my studies are by Chicana artists who work in various mediums: Amalia Mesa-Bains and Maya Gonzalez, and to a lesser extent Christina Fernandez.<sup>38</sup> I have selected these three artists because not only are they Chicanas who utilize generative rhetorics of woundedness, but they are all Californians currently in their fifties and sixties, sharing urban, cultural, and social commonalities with both Cherrie Moraga and the Chicana plaintiffs in the Los Angeles-based *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case, thereby providing more definition to the lineage that I draw rather than an abstracted essentializing. In addition, the various mediums through which these artists manifest

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<sup>38</sup> For the artists' biographies and works, see their following websites: Amalia Mesa-Bains at the MacArthur Fellows Program (<https://www.macfound.org/fellows/474/>); Maya Gonzalez at her artist website (<http://www.mayagonzalez.com/>); Christina Fernandez at her gallery (<https://galleryluisotti.com/artists/christina-fernandez/>)

rhetorics of woundedness, from text to visual, from paint to installation to photography, testify to the dynamic potential of this historical lineage.

While my attention is drawn to specifically the female Californian strand of this rhetoric, the generative wound is deeply rooted in broader Chicanx cultural rhetorics as both a legacy of Christian iconography that advances *ostentatio vulneris* and Mesoamerican visual discourses on sacrifice and renewal. Therefore, works outside the female demographic such as by the collaborative art group Asco (Los Angeles based) and Enrique Chagoya (born in Mexico but Californian resident since the 1980s) also help me bridge the modern with medieval. Most prominently, I detail the process of recognizing cultural rhetorics of woundedness through the opportunities that Chagoya in collaboration with Guillermo Gómez-Peña offers in the *Codex Espangliensis*, wherein the narrative presents time-collapses that juxtaposition medieval and Early Modern devotional iconography with Spanish-colonial wounds and United States pop culture icons. Using the medium of a simulated Mesoamerican accordion-fold codex, Gómez-Peña and Chagoya present a work that can be read left to right as in the European reading direction or right to left in accordance with Mesoamerican tradition. I demonstrate how the reading directions differ in their understanding of woundedness. I interpret the indigenous narrative direction as applying rhetorical strategies of woundedness that are obscured in the European left-to-right reading. Indeed, the *Codex Espangliensis* returns our discussion to my study of *virgenes abrideras*, the mutable devotional sculptures of the Virgin Mary prominent in Iberian wound cultures. In short, this chapter explores visual depictions of Chicana fractures in modern Californian Chicanx art—a motif repurposed from female Iberian devotional rhetorics, informed by Mesoamerican visual cultures, and now deployed to

advance modern campaigns. Like medieval saint art, positions of woundedness and shame continue to confront and transform self while advocating a more receptive world.

### **Defining Chicanx Art**

Before tracing the historical genealogy of the visual rhetoric of woundedness, it is important to contextualize my understanding of Chicanx art. I define Chicanx art as constituted by the artist selecting one or multiple cultural associations within a range of heritage options, contextualized in local and temporal identification that is impacted by one's relationship with experiences inside the United States. While the United States experience is essential to Chicanx art, the art may and does extend beyond borders of geography, body, and linear time. However, Chicanx art is limited by the artist's perspective formed within the United States. This perspective is not necessarily assimilated but can be reactive, counterhegemonic, and participating in a self-determined enclave. In the selection process of purpose and perspective, Chicanx art often observes and comments on the experience of gathering and selecting such fragmented heritages.

From the first major national traveling exhibition of Chicanx art, CARA (Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985, Wight Art Gallery, UCLA, Sept. 1990- Aug. 1993), artists and curators have established a visual culture that deliberately emphasizes a plethora of inherited options from which to select, thereby denying easy categorization systems. As Alicia Gaspar de Alba writes, "CARA signified the presence not of one monolithic identity that calls itself 'Chicano,' but of multifaceted, often contradictory identities signified by the acronym CARA, which means 'face' in Spanish" ("From CARA to

CACA” 212, emphasis original).<sup>39</sup> Yet, while Gaspar de Alba resists a fixed state to codify Chicana art, she proceeds to privilege the indigenous face: “The one face that all these identities have in common is the indigenous brown face of American history” (212). While I join Gaspar de Alba in advocating a fluid definition of Chicana art that defies fixed categories, the “faces” that I observe are not only brown but a more expansive inheritance in addition to indigenous. The face, itself, is potentially in flux—like we saw in chapter one as Moraga rips open her white façade to reveal fragments of brown beneath, yet not necessarily at the erasure of the “I” in privilege solely of the “not-I.”

Ella Maria Diaz adds to this discussion by addressing Chicana art as lacking resolve in the artist identity. She argues in *Flying Under the Radar with the Royal Chicano Air Force: Mapping a Chicano/a Art History* (2017) that Chicana art is “never resolved or finished; rather, it is always absorbing and transforming because it is in dialogue with the history of social reality and the history of its construction” (50; see also Alicia Gaspar de Alba’s 1998 *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master’s House*). The lack of resolve in this dialogue has much to do with erasures of Latinx histories, either diminished by dominant narratives in the United States or obliterated during earlier European contact. Accordingly, a lack of settlement and lack of wholeness resonates in Chicana visual rhetorics. If indeed Chicana art is defined as a selection among various heritages, the partialness of some of these

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<sup>39</sup> For further discussion of resistance against defining Chicana art, see Scott L. Baugh and Víctor A. Sorell’s edited collection, *Born of Resistance: Cara a Cara Encounters with Chicana/o Visual Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), especially the introduction “Resisting Definitions of Chicana/o Visual Culture” (3-36). Significantly, Jennifer A. González, et. al. (eds.) in *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019) devotes an entire section to differing views on defining Chicana art. See “Part I. Definitions and Debates,” pages 13-75.

heritages—particularly the indigenous and feminine—confront artists with blank spaces and shattered cultural artifacts.

One response to the erasure of heritages is to construct one's own imaginings of a past narrative, regardless of historical artefacts surviving. In this context, cultural and historical wounds are utilized as free license to generate legends and histories. This is a myth-based retelling of history that can be observed as a prominent feature in Chicana art. It may be productive here to recall chapter one's discussion of Maylei Blackwell's theory of "retrofitted history" or counter-memories that function both as destabilizing forces against entrenched hierarchical histories and as expansions of our understanding of events. Blackwell suggests an approach to history that stitches together fragments of chronicles through a "shared authority" which recalls, reinterprets, and even misremembers (2). Revisioning history to the point of deliberately misremembering is also the subject of Diaz's study, referenced above. Diaz analyzes visual rhetorics applied by the Sacramento, California muralist collective, the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), which was formed in the late 1960s. Diaz observes the collective as filling gaps in Chicano history through a constructed mythology of a royal air force that never existed yet in which the RCAF claim membership (26). Dislocated, disassociated, and dismissed, the RCAF have no alternative but to fabricate their own histories to establish a sense of belonging in the absence of institutional recognition. Chicana art, as a selection among a range of heritage options, thereby not only includes a range of historical cultural associations but retrofitted inventions that are made legitimate by their visual manifestations and collective acknowledgement of those manifestations as tangible proof of deep-rooted community.

These extended selections exercise rhetorical acuity as Chicana artists opt not only among heritages, histories, and mythmaking but a selection of inherited mediums. A prominent trait in Chicana art is experimentation across multiple mediums and normative modes of production. Christina Fernandez's photography plays a prominent role in chapter three, as do acrylic paintings by Maya Gonzalez. While these Chicana artists experiment in a single medium, Amalia Mesa-Lains produces as an installation artist and painter. Asco, is even more expansive across mediums in the use of murals, installations, performance, paintings, sculptures, textile art, and photography, offered both in single-mode or multi-medium productions. This propensity to switch mediums or to create hybrid or interweaving multi-medium art further alludes to a sense of fragmentation or semi-ness in the manner that artists comment on the continued dislocation and obscuration of Chicana realities and histories.

Projects by performance artist and writer Guillermo Gómez-Peña and his multimedia collaborators epitomize the way that the selection of mediums and historical-political-cultural themes function collectively to critically represent fragmented realities. In Gómez-Peña's 2017 *Doc/Undoc*, produced with book and image-maker Felicia Rice, critical commentator Jennifer A. González, filmmaker Gustavo Vazquez, and sound artist Zachary James Watkins, a small trunk opens to disclose an assortment of objects. Referenced as a cabinet of curiosity, the trunk invites tactile, audio, and visual interactions with its objects to co-construct narratives with the contained assemblage: a pamphlet, film, push-button audio recordings, and seemingly random mundane and uncanny objects. The narrative contained in the cabinet is dependent on the order that the audience individually selects to engage or dismiss each object. This empowers audiences as co-creators. The selection of

the curiosity cabinet as medium is significant in *Doc/Undoc* and serves as a gateway to my analysis of Chicana art that reverse-colonizes through the collecting of fragments.

### The Collected Re-Collecting

In *Doc/Undoc*, the cabinet functions as criticism of European Early Modern and Enlightenment systems of collecting and categorization. Concurrently, it repurposes these systems to self-represent via a box that contains cultural and popular artifacts for the audience to assemble as is best suited to one's own encounter. Attention to audience reception is crucial in the historical context of cabinets of curiosity since the success of the cabinets' objects in imparting value relies on audience interest, meaning-making, and appraisal. The contained objects must therefore be readable to a specific viewer who can culturally recognize pieces in the cabinet for their immediate social value yet also be enthralled by more exotic objects. This exotica must, however, also be readable to a degree that the audience can process it into a new valuing system that suits the immediate social context.<sup>40</sup>

In "Cabinets of Transgression: Renaissance Collections and the New World" anthropologist Anthony Alan Shelton explains that the cabinets express through material symbols a replica in miniature of all that is and should be valued in creation from a European worldview; the juxtaposition of regionally prized and familiar objects with rare

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<sup>40</sup> See art historian Mark A. Meadow's 2002 "Merchants and Marvels: Hans Jacob Fugger and the Origins of the Wunderkammer" for an exploration of valuing systems applied to cabinets of curiosity (Kunstkammers or Wunderkammer). Meadow traces the market life of objects traveling to their final destinations in esteemed collections and the manner in which a particular object's biography transforms as it is handled from person to person, from one geographical and cultural context to the next, and across historic moments. Meadows adds that the object, once in its cabinet, functions in an economy of its own to generate for its collector monetary, societal, intellectual, and identity capital (195).

and exotic objects aimed to express not only an inclusiveness of European knowledge but an ability of the collector to domesticate potentially transgressive customs (179-180). By extension, the cabinet creator and his audience who share common social sensibilities can domesticate the entire world (203). In his renowned "System of Collecting," Jean Baudrillard conceptualizes the collecting of objects as opening the potential of ultimately collecting pieces of self (12). The pieces are selected for a particular purpose that extends the value system of self and thereby perpetuates one's own value and worldview through the collection. In this way, self is transferred into, and signified by, the selected object(s). The collection accordingly denies impositions of reality and even time and death since the collection potentially outlasts the collector yet, if valued by social and cultural guardians, can remain intact indefinitely as ongoing posthumous actions of reality-making. This is, after all, how museums are formed and how names such as J. Paul Getty reach immortality. Per Baudrillard, collected objects function as a mirror of not reality but what is desirable for the collector (11). While Baudrillard theorizes on collecting in an ahistorical approach, I am interested in how the traditional curiosity cabinet, with its brutal history of collecting exotic objects to enrich, empower, and extend the collector, might also be viewed in *Doc/Undoc* not for its grandeur but as evidence of a collector's power to warp reality into maintaining, as central, his concept of European superiority. In the Baudrillard framework, a collection is more about the collector than the cultures pilfered. Cabinets can function then as accusations rather than solely cultural assaults. Such a framework disempowers the mortality of the colonizer-collector and shifts prestige into infamy.

Shelton also notes that in the case of colonizing the Americas, exotic objects were collected by Iberian conquerors based on color, "natural fidelity," and craftsmanship that

would be identifiable based on European valuing systems; yet after initial assessment in Europe, these objects were most often converted to monetary worth, such as gold artifacts that would be melted (203-204). In other words, after initially functioning as curiosities, objects of the Americas were socially appreciated as resources rather than for artistic or cultural value. Furthermore, collectors opted to reject objects from the Americas as pieces through which they would invest their identity and be associated for perpetuity.

Accordingly, *Doc/Undoc* transforms the power dynamics that are traditionally associated with Early Modern cabinets of curiosity and in this way develops a Chicanx response to the collecting and stripping of our history. *Doc/Undoc* contests this melting down of Latinx art into an assimilated valuing system; it also embraces its cultural objects as worthy carriers of identity. I examine *Doc/Undoc* in my brief definition of Chicanx art to emphasize a tendency in this art to reclaim fragmented narratives from disregard and to link the salvaged fragments as valuable identity-markers of afflicted semi-ness that are, nonetheless, still-inventing and still-relevant despite the metaphorical collectors.

Although my interest in *Doc/Undoc* is focused on its ability to illustrate key aspects of Chicanx art, it is important to note that the piece also takes a position in an ongoing thread of art historical inheritances and thereby does not construct solely within Chicanx art traditions. In fact, the cabinet of curiosity as medium to comment on established power hierarchies has a long lineage in twentieth-century art history: André Breton's cabinet of curiosity of the 1920s, Dadaist Marcel Duchamp's *Box in a Valise* (1935-1941), Joseph Cornell's self-contained worlds-in-a-box pieces such as *The Hotel of Eden* (1945), H.C. Westermann's cabinetry art in *Memorial to the Idea of Man, if He Was an Idea* (1958), and the various box art of the 1960s collective art group, Fluxus. *Doc/Undoc* participates in this

art historical tradition yet distinguishes itself through fusing decolonial cultural rhetorics into previous discourses on socio-economic power-struggle that earlier artists largely engaged. In *Doc/Undoc*, the collected has become collector. Yet, the collection is not comprised from pilfering others; it is rather a reassembling of salvaged identities that can only be pieced together through representational fragments.

Returning to Baudrillard's argument, if the collector is made immortal through his reality-making of a microcosm, then the collective of artists behind *Doc/Undoc* and its co-creating audience assert their capacity to construct from selections of fragments and creative imaginings a retrofitted Chicana history. As *Doc/Undoc* collaborator Jennifer A. González writes in the cabinet's booklet, the project creates a potential wherein the audience might "reach into the interior, psychic state of radical unbelonging in order to grasp the intricate, violent workings of the world that have resulted in this uneven, unequal, and unjust conjecture" (19). The purpose is to recognize that this unbelonging within violent machinations is the Chicana artist-audience challenge. Gómez-Peña further explains in the cabinet's "Artists' Book: Instructions" that an artist's task is to complicate assumptions and to challenge "simplistic definitions"; he writes, "My job is also to keep the wound open; make it hurt a bit, not to heal it" (28). The cabinet is accordingly a reminder of a past of violent collecting of peoples from which uneven, unequal, and unjust unbelonging has occurred for the reality-making of immortal mini-gods (the colonial collector and subsequent museum-makers), yet the new collectors of *Doc/Undoc* do not seek to correct that history. *That* history must remain as testimony to the newly-reframed immoral mini-gods. Rather, the collectors of *Doc/Undoc* aim to even out the collection by including their own definitions and complications—to build from the wound rather than close the

wound—because it is in the fragmentation of cultural artifacts that the artist can generate creative assemblages of new cultural identities. Furthermore, these assemblages are never possessed by a grand creator since meaning is renewed into alternative configurations with each new audience member that selects objects from the container. The container is thus not a traditionally organized cabinet but rather a messy single-compartment trunk.

New configurations and unresolved (sometimes messy) definitions from the wide range of heritage options remain defining traits of Chicana art, one that *Doc/Undoc* explores in both theme and medium. Notably, this strategy is also applied in the art of Amalia Mesa-Bains in her room-installations *Curiositas: The Cabinet* (1990) and *New World Wunderkammer* (2013–14). As with *Doc/Undoc*, Mesa-Bains's exploration of cabinets of curiosity exhibit a sense of unfinished states as objects scatter about spaces in seemingly random order for the audience to appraise and construct meaning. However, one point of departure is a correlation Mesa-Bains draws between the cabinet as phenomenological and devotional. In *New World Wunderkammer*, Mesa-Bains's cabinet expands to a room-filled assortment of objects wherein devotional Catholic items intermingle with Mesoamerican and European artefacts. In one corner of this assortment is a private devotional space or shrine. A framed picture of perhaps a deceased loved one sits among a cluster of candles, one candle held as a votive in a glass container that bears the icon of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In this way, a juxtaposition is drawn between the collecting of a microcosm of the world and a microcosm of Catholic spirituality. However, this correlation is merely offered without resolve. The assortment of objects comprise pieces of a narrative: from pre-Contact Mesoamerican artefacts to modern glass art and scientific glass test tubes

alongside an accordion-like codex; however, as in *Doc/Undoc*, the didactic goal, if there is one, remains individualized to each encounter.

This sentiment returns our discussion back to the definition of Chicanx art, as proposed by Ella Maria Diaz, as well as Alicia Gaspar de Alba, who emphasize a lack of resolve and finish. Yet this lack of completion does not equate partialness or semi-ness as a diminished state. Rather it is from this lack of closure that inspiration and activism merge. As Gómez-Peña writes, the artist must aim to “keep the wound open; make it hurt a bit, not to heal it.” The open wound reminds the artist of a vast selection of rhetorical and cultural inheritances, of archived histories and imagined pasts that substitute irretrievable erasures, and of artistic traditions in motifs and mediums. These selections can conflict or cooperate with one another; and they can also form a sense of hybrid oneness or separate but intertangling fragments—or impossible resolutions. The act of keeping the wound open and hurting a little maintains the source of these options and facilitate conscious, deliberate election of rhetorical strategy. In my own study of Chicanx art, I am most interested in strategies that focus on this very same wound. Specifically, I study the ways that artists employ cultural rhetorics for the purpose of reverse-colonization via the reclamation of genres and imagery of Mexica visual arts and via the appropriation of Marian imagery into the lived realities of Chicanx artists. Both patterns merge in their strategies of displaying afflictions of identity, culture, and gender in order to confront and transform one’s reality.

### **Right-to-Left: Reclaiming Mexica Cosmologies by Reading Wounds**

Staying with the work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña, his *Codex Espangliensis*—from

*Columbus to the Border Patrol* (2000) applies reverse-colonization strategies to advance its narrative. I use the term reverse-colonization here rather than decolonization, which has been a prominent keyword throughout my project until this current discussion, because Gómez-Peña and his collaborator-artist Enrique Chagoya are not aiming so much to undo or to *de*-colonize but rather assume a more aggressive assault to reverse the colonization process against opponent forces. This narrative is expressed through a gathering and clashing of fragmented pieces of Chicanx inheritances, predominantly associated here with ancient Mexico, colonial contact, the Mexican revolution, and United States pop-culture. Told in the medium of a simulated Mesoamerican codex, the accordion-styled folds of the narrative can be pulled out into one single, long page. In the Mesoamerican tradition, one reads this page from right to left, but one may elect to unfold this codex from left to right, as in the European reading direction, in which case the narrative begins with a battle involving the comic book hero, Superman.

Damián Baca's 2009 analysis of the *Codex Espangliensis* begins with a description of this battle on page 15/1, a numbering system that Baca assigns since the book includes no system of its own. Per Baca's numbering, page 1 is the Superman battle when read left to right, but it is page 15 when read right to left. Baca privileges the right-to-left indigenous narrative direction by his numbering system (15 superseding 1), but his interpretations of the codex is primarily attentive to the left-to-right European narrative. To establish a consistent reference system, I utilize Baca's numbering, but I offer a reading from right-to-left that applies rhetorical strategies of woundedness that are obscured in the European left-to-right mainstream narrative. While nearly every page of the codex includes texts by Gómez-Peña, I focus my reading primarily on the visual rhetorics employed by Chagoya.

Baca first leads us through his left-to-right analysis that begins on page 15/1, the first page of the European narrative. He describes this page: “a multicolored Superman battles his black-and-white inverted twin” (568). However, it is important to note that there is no such battle between the Superman figures. The image portrays the inverted twin, prone on his side amidst rubble, but there is no clear indication why he is fallen since the left-to-right narrative begins at the sight of his defeated body (Fig. 4.2). All we can observe is that his otherwise black-and-white reality is now bloodied by his loss, and he is either dead or unconscious. Death may be indicated by the detail that his suit has been torn from him—no longer Superman but perhaps his exposed everyman alter ego, Clark Kent. A large piece of the suit has been snagged on debris and waves above him as a ruined flag in tattered defeat. On this makeshift flag, the suit’s distinctive “S” chest emblem is sideways and bloodied. In Baca’s reading, the emergence of the multicolored Superman in the next image-cell implies that it is he who had defeated the fallen inverted twin.



FIGURE 4.2. Enrique Chagoya. *Codex Espangliensis*, page 15/1, detail, 2000. Image permission granted by City Lights Books.

However, Baca neglects to factor the significance of a floating human heart that presides over this scene and an animated, airborne human skull that collides against the multicolored Superman.<sup>41</sup> While Baca makes note of the lettering above the black-and-white Superman, “THREATENED? ENDANGERED? OR EXTINCT?” he assesses the lettering as unanswered rather than speculate a possible impact of the words. Additionally, he leaves unsettled his interpretation of why multicolored Superman would have needed to defeat his black-and-white twin before encountering Mesoamericans on ensuing pages. Why is there a twin in the first place? Baca does attempt to link the twins to ancient Mesoamerican cosmological values on binary oppositions and divine pairs (570). In this effort, he explores Mesoamerican spiritual views of duality as evidenced in prayers recorded in the *Florentine Codex* to dual spirits Tonantzin/ Totahtzin (Our Mother/Our Father), as well as an abundance of visual and material artifacts that represent the divine as possessing dual genders and identities. However, I hesitate to agree with Baca that there is sufficient evidence to declare as a twin the black-and-white Superman or that the figure has battled multicolored Superman. I will shortly return to this twin argument after recapping Baca’s continued left-to-right reading of the codex, which proceeds to follow the narrative trajectory of multicolored Superman as he advances from this opening battle to encounter Mesoamerican and Catholic cultural iconographies throughout the remainder of the codex.

Baca moves on to describe another scene on page 15/1 that, in the left-to-right reading, immediately follows the “twin Supermen battle.” Here, a group of indigenous Mesoamericans consume severed body parts as a figure in ritualistic regalia shakes salt on

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<sup>41</sup> In a 2001 interview with *Smithsonian Archives of American Art*, Chagoya identifies the floating heart as Aztec and credits the skull to José Guadalupe Posada. See Chagoya’s bio and interview: <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/enrique-chagoya-papers-17392>

Mickey Mouse, bound on top of a dinner plate (Fig. 4.3).<sup>42</sup> Baca does not mention that

Chagoya quotes an image found in the circa-1566 *Codex Magliabechiano* (Fig. 4.4).<sup>43</sup>



FIGURE 4.3. Enrique Chagoya. *Codex Espangliensis*, page 15/1, detail, 2000. Image permission granted by City Lights Books.

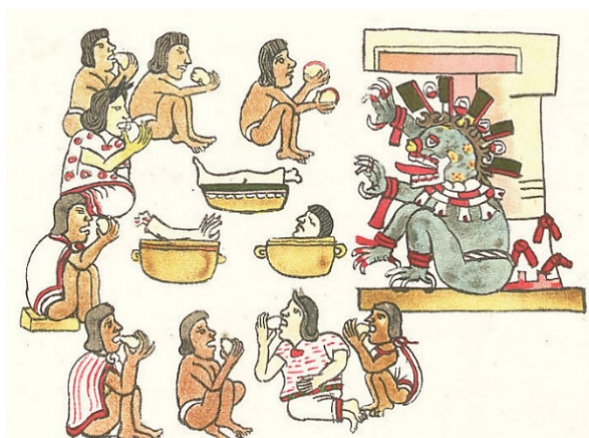


FIGURE 4.4. *Codex Magliabechiano*, detail, folio 73r, c.1566. (Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons/ Public Domain)

<sup>42</sup> With the Disney references throughout the *Codex Espangliensis*, the artists join a prominent thread of media criticism launched in Latin American social theory against Disney products. In 1971, Chilean scholars Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's *Para leer al Pato Donald (How to Read Donald Duck)*, famously examined ways that Disney's ideologies colonize Latin America through cartoons that promote capitalistic societies, imperialism, and infantilization of audiences to the effect that social authority of the United States is staged as limitless and supreme. See Sophia A. McClennen's analysis of the argument and rhetoric of *How to Read Donald Duck* in her "Beyond Death and the Maiden: Ariel Dorfman's Media Criticism and Journalism," *Latin American Research Review* 45.1 (2010): 173-188. As well, in 2018 the J. Paul Getty's *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA* sponsored the exhibit, "How to Read El Pato Pascual," which examined the impact of Disney cartoon pop culture on Latin American visual arts. The exhibit was a collaborative project featuring 150 works of art by forty-eight Latinx artists at the MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House and the Luckman Fine Arts Complex at CSU Los Angeles. See Jesse Lerner, et al. *How to Read El Pato Pascual: Disney's Latin America and Latin America's Disney* (Black Dog Publishing Limited, 2017).

<sup>43</sup> When Chagoya's image is contextualized as a reference to the *Magliabechiano*, the figure that salts Mickey Mouse can be identified as the god, Mictlāntēuctli, the most prominent lord of Mictlān or god of the dead, as identified by Elizabeth Hill Boone (81). See Boone's *The Codex Magliabechiano and the Lost Prototype of the Magliabechiano Group* (issued with *The Book of the Life of the Ancient Mexicans* by Zelia Nuttall [1903], part 2 in two-volume set), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

Significantly, Chagoya previously quoted the *Magliabechiano* in his 1994 protest art, *The Governor's Nightmare*, which criticized then-Californian Governor Pete Wilson for his support for Proposition 187, also known as the "Save Our State" initiative (SOS) that involved heightened anti-immigration measures.<sup>44</sup> Given that Chagoya is quoting both the *Magliabechiano* and his own *The Governor's Nightmare*, the image is politically charged as a comment on American pop culture (signaled by Mickey Mouse), immigration politics (SOS), and colonial collections of Mesoamerican cultural narratives (since the *Magliabechiano* was a post-Contact representation of pre-Contact customs and religions).

After this scene, the left-to-right reading follows Superman through colonial and post-colonial confrontations and violent encounters with Mesoamericans and their descendants, a culture clash that is complicated by the presence of additional religious and pop icons. The book ends on page 1/15 with the image of the marriage of a conquistador and a woman wearing colonial-era bridal attire. The exaggerated abundance of flowers in her headgear may allude to the union of Hernán Cortés and Doña Marina (also known as Malintzin, or more derogatorily referenced as Malinche). The couple's ceremony occurs at a graveyard with a tomb and skeletal remains looming behind the bride. A giant hellmouth emerges from a burst of flames, providing backdrop for the vows. Enthroned in the open hellmouth is Satan, presiding over the unholy union. Flying in the foreground as if launching from the hellmouth is a solid blood-red Superman, no longer multicolored,

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<sup>44</sup> SOS required law enforcement and government employees to investigate and report people suspected of lacking immigration documents. Additionally, it mandated that residents prove immigration status prior to receiving state benefits (Cordova). It is implied in *The Governor's Nightmare* that the human body parts that emerge from the three serving pots, centrally located amid the diners, are Pete Wilson's pieces.

except for a bright white skull that covers his chest instead of his standard “S” logo. Does this indicate a third Superman and thereby further complicate Baca’s twin theory?

Read in this left-to-right order, the narrative trajectory moves from the defeat of black-and-white Superman, then follows multicolored Superman who travels Mesoamerica as part of colonizing forces. The consumption of Mickey Mouse early in the narrative becomes part of the fall of the Mexica legacy as its Chicane descendants proceed to consume various teachings of Catholic and United States pop icons, served to them from dominant cultures. The marriage scene is the pinnacle of the depicted loss since the bride makes a bloodline pact ordained by Satan while blood-red Superman flies victorious. This is a story of colonization and conversion that continues into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries through mass media and pop culture assimilation.

However, Baca detects subversion through Gómez-Peña and Chagoya’s textual and visual rhetorics. Primarily, this subversion manifests in the potential for multiple interpretations of various religious and pop culture icons in Chagoya’s images. Baca observes the theories of Chicano anthropologist David Carrasco who advocates that Christian symbols used in colonial and conversion visual programs be reread for their potentially hidden meaning to the non-dominant audience who might, all along, have found counter rhetorics invested in the symbols (576; Baca references Carrasco’s 1989 *The Imagination of Matter: Religion and Ecology in Mesoamerican Traditions*).<sup>45</sup> To provide an example of rereading icons for subversive meaning, Baca examines one scene on page

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<sup>45</sup> Jeanette Favrot Peterson’s *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco: Utopia and Empire in Sixteenth-century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993) aligns with Carrasco’s argument of multiple interpretations, which Peterson posits as a form of “visual bilingualism” as she examines possible readings of the Malinalco murals from the potential differing perspective of Christian friars and indigenous audiences.

3/13. Here, along the banks of a river, a group of armed Castilian conquistadors gather indigenous peoples. In the foreground both male and female natives, stripped nude, are mutilated either through a gorging of eyes or dismemberment of one or both hands. A mass of severed hands lay wasted on the bloodied ground while the river in the background streams red. At the bottom left edge of the scene, inhabiting the margin space outside the image box, Mickey Mouse gleefully watches. Part of his foot and round belly protrude into the image space, making him complicit to the violence rather than mere observer. One of his yellow shoes lifts in unbridled amusement, exposing a bloodied sole. In the upper right corner, also sharing both the image and margin spaces, Spiderman hovers, similarly bloodied on his feet but also on his closed fists. He is unmasked as George Washington.<sup>46</sup>

Next to this mutilation scene is an image of Christ. He appears in the Man of Sorrows motif, which features Christ bloodied and in misery. Here, Christ kneels in prayer on top of that which appears as a column stump, likely the flagellation column. Along the round base of the column, seven white lambs lift their heads to Christ, perhaps to receive his blood that drips over the column's edge. A white cup, symbolizing a Eucharist chalice, catches a heavy stream of blood from Christ's side spear wound, here represented on the right side rather than the traditional left. Christ's other Crucifixion wounds are detectable in the nail piercings on his visible feet and his hands that are clasped in prayer over bare chest. Crowned with spiky thorns, Christ's head tilts with desolate engagement with the audience. Baca interprets these side-by-side images of bloodshed as subversive in that "Christ literally bleeds along with afflicted Mesoamericans, thereby critiquing methods of Western brutality and regulation over Mexican bodies" (576).

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<sup>46</sup> Collaborator Jennifer González identifies the face as Washington at *Doc/Undoc.com*

However, Baca's left-to-right reading of the Man of Sorrows and the mutilation scene does not consider the United States pop culture references nor two additional images on the page: a drawing of a space satellite and an early-twentieth century type-metal print cut by José Guadalupe Posada in which a church congregation flees in terror as a pulpit priest points directly at the threatening satellite (Fig. 4.5).<sup>47</sup> While I agree with Baca's methodology to recognize possible counter-receptions in visual rhetorics, Baca's emphasis on the colonizing moment and subversion of Catholic iconography underplays the specific relationship that informs this contemporary Chicanx art, regarding United States pop culture and technology, as well as the Posada print as Mexican political art. Baca largely limits the immense scope of the *Codex Espangliensis* to Contact and a linear-time, left-to-right European reading. As Kat Austin and Carlos-Urani Montiel observe in their study of "Neo-Baroque Art of Resistance," the collapsing of eras and cultures is a leading feature of



FIGURE 4.5. Enrique Chagoya. *Codex Espangliensis*, page 3/13, 2000. Image permission granted by City Lights Books.

<sup>47</sup> Jennifer González identifies the Posada cut at *Doc/Undoc.com*

the *Codex Espangliensis*. Aligned with my definition of Chicanx art, Austin and Montiel succinctly summarize the value of this collapse:

The *Codex Espangliensis* presents an inclusive world capable of combining disparate elements, producing a broad vision that brings the reader closer to the cultural reality of the artists. The Chicana/o worldview exists in an intermediate space between various cultures and traditions. By reading the *Codex*, the receiver experiences multiple perspectives and a sense of fragmentation. The artists create spaces of conflict that can be traversed by the reader as desired, and by experiencing this world the reader begins to comprehend the reality lived by border populations and their artistic and political agendas (99)

Taken in its totality, the layering of cultural annihilation across time and involving multiple power systems is immense. Does the Christ image imply empathy for the dismembered indigenous people or is he sorrowful that the contemporary world might no longer need his religion to access the celestial realm—it has science? To arrive at an answer, we must further consider the rhetoric of woundedness at the core of Christ's depicted suffering. Such a consideration will initiate my right-to-left reading of the *Codex Espangliensis*.

According to the traditions of Catholic devotional rhetorics of woundedness, Christ's suffering is a triumph for himself as Savior and for the church that he births. The Man of Sorrows icon, stemming from twelfth-century Byzantine visual rhetorics, aims for audience's emotional responsiveness in regard to this laborious birth. The response elicited is for Christian viewers to reflect on their debt to Christ who bleeds to salvage humanity of Original Sin. Yet through Christ's loss, much is gained not only for the audience who can now secure redemption but also for Christ and the institute that immortalizes his wounds as proof of victory. Originally associated and employed for Easter celebrations, the Man of Sorrows motif signals the death of human Jesus but rebirth of divine Christ. This rebirth is marked by Christ's physical re-manifestation during the sacrament of Eucharist

where the body and blood of Christ is consumed. In Chagoya's *Man of Sorrows*, Christ bleeds into a chalice, the wine for the Eucharist mass, while the lambs tilt their heads to gaze on Christ's sacrifice and drink the blood droplets that fall to each of their lifted muzzles. In this way, the bloodshed generates the empowerment of the lamb as followers of Catholicism—and the empowerment of both the Church which offers the Eucharist service and Christ who is recalled for his *ostentatio vulneris*, his victory in woundedness.

With all these levels of empowerment *from* and *for* the wounded Christ it is difficult to see a corresponding sense of empowerment in the accompanying scene of the mutilated indigenous people. The only empowerment is for the Castilian soldiers. Indeed, the dismemberment of the natives' hands methodically incapacitates the wounded. An entire community void of hands is unlikely to survive. Reinforcing this point, in the image's midground a Castilian soldier unleashes a pack of dogs that overpowers a handless native man, unable to fight off the pack as he flails backwards. Meanwhile, on the further side of the riverbank, bodies fall from a steep hillside. Although the bodies are in the far distance, we can assume that they are also indigenous people since their hands are missing, indicated by dots of blood where hands would otherwise be attempting to grab a handhold to stabilize the falling bodies from crashing to the ground below. Lack of power is emphasized in this scene where nothing can be done to help the indigenous people's condition. Meanwhile, Christ takes action through prayer and faith, clasping his still-intact hands to activate the institutionalized Mass in his own honor and victory.

While it is clear that a subversive correlation can be drawn between the bloodshed in these two images, I ask that we re-read this scene from a right-to-left direction, wherein Christ is in the position to react not to the bloodshed but rather to the chaos at the Posada

church regarding the emergence of the floating space satellite. When following this reading direction, I observe that the assortment of images makes a more cohesive strategy of subversion by offering a different narrative altogether rather than sporadic and limited opportunities to counter-interpret within the framework of a left-to-right European narrative. My goal is to demonstrate that by stepping outside the European framework, Chagoya and Gómez-Peña position wounds as generative.

Accordingly, the indigenous reading removes the native mutilation scene as object of Christ's response to bloodshed. Instead the counter-direction positions Christ as originator for bloodshed—his own bloodshed, his church's nourishment from that bloodshed, and the institutional power that sponsored bloody campaigns to the Americas. The placement of Christ before the mutilation scene might be viewed as functioning as an accusation against the Christian institution behind colonial forces, funded by the Catholic Monarchs of Castile and Aragon and supported by Spanish Pope Alexander VI.<sup>48</sup> Broadening beyond colonial contexts, Christ's placement might concurrently model a notion of generative woundedness in the face of both the conquering forces from colonial Europe and from modern United States culture. There is a series of monumental events that span this entire page, starting with the church congregation that flees at the sight of the space satellite (in horror of science or in abandonment of the church for scientific power). In the right-to-left reading, Christ's response is not to the massacre but the appearance of the satellite and its effect on churchgoers. Thus, does he pray that the devout

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<sup>48</sup> Pope Alexander VI declared Isabel and Ferdinand Reyes Católicos (Catholic Monarchs) on 19 December 1496. Historian John Edwards notes the power of this designation in defense of the political and militaristic righteousness of Spanish actions, all the way to 1936 when General Francisco Franco claimed the Catholic Monarchs' emblems (iix).

stay put and continue to consume the blood that he offers, or does he pray for humanity's mercy at the coming of a new threat in the form of modern science?

Although the marginalia pop icons seem primarily engaged with the mutilation scene to the left of the page, they occupy both the scene and the margin and this makes it possible that they can observe the events to their right and perhaps are reformulating their own power tactics as they study overlapping fragments of both colonial and technological invasions. Supporting this notion, a handless native in the mutilation scene points at the floating George Washington Spiderman, thereby linking Spiderman with the hovering satellite at which the pulpit priest points. Spiderman may be the next big threat, also hinted by the blue hue of his leggings which is alike the satellite's color. Spiderman also mirrors Christ's engagement with the codex audience, both figures looking directly outwards from the text's plane. While Spiderman emulates the looming threat of the satellite and the rhetorical engagement strategies of Christ, his confident George Washington smirk contrasts with Christ's empathetic suffering.

Significantly, the marginalia detail of Mickey Mouse and his bloodied shoe leaves a trail of gory footprints that in collapsed-time move from right to left—from Christ where the bloody prints are deepest, across the edges of the massacre scene, and to the left margin where the prints begin to fade as Mickey presumably continues onto the next page. Mickey's footprints are especially significant in that they signal via an ancient Mesoamerican visual trope the start of a journey and ensuing movement, as famously depicted in the early-sixteenth-century *Boturini Codex* that details the migration of the Mexica people from their mythical home in Aztlán to the founding of their capital in Tenochtitlán (Fig 4.6). In other words, here in the massacre scene, Mickey's first



FIGURE 4.6. *Boturini Codex*, first page, c. early-sixteenth century. (Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons/ Public Domain)

appearance in the codex (if read right-to-left),

the tracks indicate that Mickey begins a

journey in the opposite direction of the

European readings.<sup>49</sup> In this indigenous

direction, Mickey's last appearance is the

cannibal scene where he is eaten, a fate that

implies that the incapacitated natives discover

empowerment after their woundedness.

Following Mickey's right-to-left trail, Superman is also resituated in a narrative that defeats him—not as a twin or a triplet, just a single figure. This solo Superman emerges from the wedding ceremony hellmouth as a blood-red figure, fresh from Catholic Satan's demonic realm and carrying a skull emblem of death as he enters the world of multicolored pop culture where he dons his iconic superhero "S" emblem to conceal the havoc he brings, alongside fellow comic book heroes, to the Mesoamerican, colonial and modern realities. Superman's final scene is his encounter with the Posada skull on page 15/1. The skull here is not emblem of Catholic Satan's power but rather emblem of Mexico's political cartoon pioneer José Guadalupe Posada, an artist that Chagoya credits as building the origin of Mexican modernism (Chagoya, "Oral History Interview").<sup>50</sup> The right-to-left placement of Mickey Mouse as being ritualistically devoured prior to the defeat of Superman empowers the Posada skull. In Mexica tradition, the eating of one's enemy signified the absorption of

<sup>49</sup> The journey's momentous start at the mutilation scene is reinforced by Felicia Rice's decision as *Codex Espangliensis* bookwork designer to select this image as cover design.

<sup>50</sup> In his interview with *Smithsonian Archives of American Art*, Chagoya describes this scene: "Right on the facing page, we see Superman being killed by a skeleton of Posada. This is out of a Posada print. And in front of it a bleeding heart, an Aztec bleeding heart."

that enemy's power, which could then be transferred to advance one's own purpose. An important note to consider is that the Mexica are devouring Mickey Mouse as prepared by their own lord of the underworld, the god Mictlāntēuctli, who now in the right-to-left narrative advances a different framework of the afterlife than that offered in Satan's hell.

Death, according to Mexica belief, is a natural cycle of life; sacrifice assures balance in this cycle since the spilling of blood recalls both death and birth. In Chagoya's rendition of the *Magliabechiano* cannibal scene, he emphasizes blood on both the raw body parts that the Mexica devour and on their stained lips—signaling the nourishing transference of blood from the dead to the living. The severed body parts might also recall the dismembered hands on the page 3/13 mutilation scene. However, rather than discard the body parts to waste, as the conquistadors elected, the Mexica avoid non-generative killing to participate in a life-death sequence. This ritual is ultimately designed to place reality into cosmic balance and prevent the end of time by giving back to the earth and deities. This references the concept of *nepantla*, as discussed in our introduction, a time where balance is regained after the earthquakes of life. Accordingly, sacrifice is understood as a communal and personal obligation. The more powerful the member of society, the more responsible that member is for sacrifice. In this framework, Mickey Mouse, a pop culture superpower, is responsible to return his energy to the world as the Mexica consume him to energize their own role in life. This cannibalistic act may mirror the image of Christ's sacrifice to nourish with blood his seven lamb. Indeed, the act of a transference of power is embedded in the Eucharist rite wherein redemption and salvation are ingested through Christ's body. In this way, a Catholic understanding of sacrifice is similarly linked with victory and generative transformation. These joint concepts of generative wounds form a rhetorical partnership

that is important for my studies. However, the codex's indigenous reading direction departs from the Catholic teachings of bloodletting at the moment where Mickey Mouse's footprint-travel begins. The indigenous massacre scene, where blood-spilling does not give back to the earth or the gods, prompts a movement away from Christ's concepts of sacrifice and towards a Mexica framework of generative wounds. This journey reaches fruition at the cannibal ritual that reestablishes balance after entering *nepantla*.

As detailed in my introduction (see especially pages 31-35), my understanding and application of *nepantla* is largely as a metaphysical concept of securing balance within a fluctuating liminal space. The chief emphasis of *nepantla* is not on sites of in-betweenness but on the action of finding balance while life forces an individual into various directions. The importance of *nepantla* is in the emergence of the individual from the liminal space at which moment generative transformation is optimized. Linked to the metaphysical concept of *ollin*, a Náhuatl term of movement or earthquake, *nepantla* permits entrance into new states of being once balance is secured in the "earthquake" or violence of lived experiences. In this way, wounds are generative and necessary for the renewal of each and all. They are, in actuality, the purpose of life. From the right-to-left reading of the *Codex Espangliensis*, we can therefore interpret the cruel mutilation of indigenous peoples as a departure point from the Christian blood-letting tradition. This departure is instigated by the conquistadores' violation of the generative purpose of Christ's sacrifice and thereby initiates a recollection of Mexica ritual to activate another form of generative blood-letting in order to set reality into balance after the earthquake of colonialism and invasion of United States popular culture.

Thus, to the left of the cannibalistic scene, the skull, a symbol of Posada's political commentaries but also symbol of the god Mictlāntēuctli who is now satisfied from the ritualistic tribute, knocks Superman backwards. The floating heart indicates a new sacrifice—this time Superman. Accordingly, the codex's final image is Superman defeated in a black-and-white realm, possibly the dark death realm of Mictlán. In either case, this is Superman's end space that in the right-to-left narrative replaces Catholic Satan's hell realm. The tattered "S" emblem waves in defeat above Superman, the "S" turned on its side and now resembling a Mexica snake—the snake denoting in Nahua iconography the movement of blood and the renewal that blood-spilling represents. In this way, the Mexica and their descendants fly their victory flag above the defeated symbol of modern popular culture.

The "reverse" reading of the *Codex Espangliensis* is essentially a reverse-colonization narrative that utilizes rhetorical tactics of generative woundedness from Catholic and most explicitly Mexica traditions as re-envisioned by Chagoya. It is important to note that the codex's European reading obscures the potential of wounds as gateway to both death and positive transformation for the wounded. Rather, the left-to-right narrative can offer only Christ's empathy for the natives, thereby voiding indigenous potential as agents who may elect from their various inherited strategies for survival tactics. In this way, the *Codex Espangliensis* illustrates my argument that mainstream aversion to woundedness marginalizes a particular form of rhetoric that is dominant in Chicana visual and textual arts—and that is supported in distinct ways by both Christian and Nahua historical rhetorics. However, the *Codex Espangliensis* does not directly demonstrate the female or Iberian historical lineage that I have determined to highlight. Rather, the codex prioritizes the reclamation of Mexica cultural rhetorics through bloodletting and cannibalism, which

most clearly links with Christological concepts of woundedness. Yet even with the privileging of a male-driven concept of woundedness in the context of battle, bloodshed, and Christ, the codex offers a significant scene that highlights the female rhetorical culture that concerns my studies. My analysis of this scene launches the remainder of chapter three's honed focus on Chicana art.

### Digesting and Repurposing: Confrontations from the Wound

In the *Codex Espangliensis*, if we follow Mickey Mouse's footprints from right to left across the indigenous massacre and into page 4/12, we encounter an image of two dark-haired women rising from flames (Fig. 4.7). They resemble the *Anima Sole* or The Lonely Soul in Purgatory, an image associated with Carmelite nun spiritual exercises that elicit the Virgin Mary for intercession.<sup>51</sup> The two women, in serene gestures of rejoice, reach their right arms to the sky and place their left hands over their chest. This movement breaks the chains of their hand shackles and free the women from restriction, a contrast to the



FIGURE 4.7. Enrique Chagoya. *Codex Espangliensis*, page 4/12, 2000. Image permission granted by City Lights Books.

<sup>51</sup> The Carmelites were prominent in Early Modern Spain and entrenched in colonial conversion rhetorics. Leading influences in Counter-Reformation rhetorics were sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelites Teresa de Ávila and Juan de la Cruz.

previous page's piles of dismembered hands. Wearing the remnants of confinement around their wrists, these broken chains serve much like a martyr saint's attribute by functioning both as celebration of newfound liberation and a caution against past affliction.<sup>52</sup> The larger of the two women lifts her palm to receive further relief from a serpent's spitting mouth. It is possible that the entire inferno is being extinguished by the snake's spray, directed by an angel who holds the snake like a water hose above his body. Helping to support the snake's weight are the angel's feathered-wings, tri-colored green, white, and red like the Mexican flag. The angel can be identified as the cherub that traditionally supports not a snake but the crescent moon on which the Virgin of Guadalupe stands in clasped prayer. Indeed, as the page moves left, the Virgin stands in her iconic pose.

The Virgin recalls the Virgin of Guadalupe, but her image alters slightly in the color and design of her robes and in the crown on her head.<sup>53</sup> She steps on the end of the snake, its tail spiking upwards at the left of her image, echoing the sliver of moon on which the Virgin of Guadalupe traditionally stands. The image also mirrors the late-medieval Immaculate Conception devotional art motif that the Virgin of Guadalupe iconography

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<sup>52</sup> It might be recalled that St. Peter's revered chains is the prized relic around which the Roman basilica San Pietro in Vincoli was constructed. Chains and manacles are also attributes that identify the sixth-century Frankish saint, Leonard of Noblac.

<sup>53</sup> For studies on the construction and understanding of the Virgin of Guadalupe iconography, see Jeanette Favrot Peterson's *Visualizing Guadalupe: From Black Madonna to Queen of the Americas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014). Also helpful are works by Jeanette Rodriguez: *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994) and (co-edited with Ted Fortier) *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007). Also see Donna Pierce's "From New Spain to New Mexico: Art and Culture on the Northern Frontier" in *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1996).

references.<sup>54</sup> If we trace the iconography further into the late-medieval construction of the Immaculate Conception, the crescent moon, stars, and snake or dragon are attributes of the Apocalyptic Woman as described in the *Book of Revelation*. The Woman's iconography is absorbed into the Immaculate Conception motif to further empower Mary as a figure in direct confrontation with Satan—not only through her son but through her own potentials.<sup>55</sup> With these visual clues, one might interpret the *Codex Espangliensis* as positioning Mary and the Catholic institute as quenching the fire of a colonial purgatory or hell-space from which the Chicanas reemerge healed from past wounds. In Immaculate Conception motifs, Mary often steps over the defeated snake; yet here, rather than discard the snake as a non-generative force, Mary's angel repurposes Satan's evil manifestation. Although it is the snake that extinguishes the flames, Mary's control over the serpent permits the Chicanas to rise from the flames with their dismembered hands regained and their chains broken.

However, there might be a more ominous interpretation—that Mary's control of the snake's water aligns her with the dissemination of venomous powers. Additionally, in

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<sup>54</sup> The Immaculate Conception alludes to Catholic doctrine that proposes Mary as exempt from Original Sin since she was conceived through God's design in lieu of human processes. While variations exist to the doctrine's art motifs, dominant traits emphasize Mary isolated from Christ, standing with hands pressed in prayer over her chest, and a designation of her exclusion from Original Sin; this designation often manifests in the figure of God hovering above Mary to extend a rod that marks her purity, a serpent crushed beneath her feet, or a serpent crushed beneath a slivered moon upon which Mary stands. See Suzanne L. Stratton *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art* (New York: University of Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> In the *Book of Revelation*, John of Patmos describes the Apocalyptic Woman as "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." She gives birth to a son whom Satan in the form of a dragon attempts to devour. However, the Woman saves the child, gives him to the custody of angels, and flees alone to the desert where she induces Satan to trail her. In the desert, Satan opens his mouth to flood the Woman with water, but she sprouts eagle wings to free herself from danger. Archangel Michael and his army of angels arrive to battle Satan, signaling the dawn of Judgment Day.

Mesoamerican contexts, the snake's cultural purpose expands. As noted in our previous discussion of the flag that waves above defeated Superman, snakes in Nahua iconography signal the movement of blood towards death and renewal. The angel might be working in unison with the rhetorical powers of the Nahua understanding of rebirth to free the women from the fires of colonial hell. Just as possible, Mary and her angel may have conquered the Mesoamerican serpent to perform their will. These ambiguities recall a defining element of Chicanx art as confronting a lack of resolve among various conflicting fragments of cultural inheritances. Whatever may be the snake's identity, the women rise, and Mary turns her attention left to engage with another female body.

The left-most image on page 4/12 features a woman whose chest and abdominal cavities have been newly bisected, the blood still dripping along the wound's edges. Her opened body reveals organs and the comic book hero, Wonder Woman, who has been hiding in the woman's intestines. Wonder Woman emerges with a high-tech super-gun that she loads with a "KACHIK" and aims at the Virgin Mary. In comic book word bubbles, the Virgin reacts to Wonder Woman's gun: "Oh, dear, is that a neural impacter? Do they still make those? I'd advise you to try the plasm disrupter. It's smaller." She ends with, "I ♥ you" as Wonder Woman answers with, "Go to Hell!" Baca's interpretation of this exchange is one of "evident alliance" that "undermines [Mary's] archetypal image as spiritual mother of purity and protection" (577). Baca additionally places Mary as Wonder Woman's twin to build on his theory that twinning is central to the *Codex Espangliensis*' narrative.

In my reading, Mary and Wonder Woman's dialogue does not indicate alliance when read from either left-to-right or right-to-left. When read specifically from right-to-left it seems that the female bodies released from colonial hell and into the influence of Mary are

now being claimed by a new force, the United States pop culture which battles Catholicism over Chicana bodies and souls. To support my interpretation, I turn to the original context of the comic book word bubbles, which is dialogue lifted from an issue of *Superman* that features a battle between two opponents: Wonder Woman and supervillain Mongul, a deposed ruler of his own alien race (volume 4, special annual edition, number 11, May 1985, page 18; later animated in an episode of the television series *Justice League Unlimited*, "For the Man who has Everything," 7 August 2004). In the original comic book battle, Wonder Woman is repeatedly belittled by Mongul's misogynistic comments. In the codex, Mary delivers Mongul's lines, word-by-word except in her ending: "I ♥ you." The original line is, "I'd advise you to try the plasm disrupter. It's smaller. More of a female's weapon." Wonder Woman originally responds to the misogynist, "Go to Hell!" Her response in the codex presumably begins a battle over the bisected Chicana.

While the bisected Chicana seems mere container for Wonder Woman's surprise attack on the Church and therefore not an active agent in the contest over her body, I invite a closer reading of a narrative of repurposed woundedness. The opened body cavity reveals Wonder Woman rising from the woman's intestines; thereby Wonder Woman was previously ingested. This raises the question: as in the codex's concluding cannibal scene, might the bisected Chicana have devoured her enemy, Wonder Woman, to empower herself against another dominant force? Might the bisected Chicana be repurposing Wonder Woman's anti-misogynist response to Mongul in the comic book to now break her own ties from the Church? If so, we might observe in the codex a tighter framing of the Church's rhetorical teachings wherein both Christ and Mary function dually as models for the wounded to find survival strategies. I have previously noted that Christ's placement in the

right-to-left narrative on page 3/13 before the mutilation models a notion of generative wounds in the face of both colonial and pop culture conquering forces. This placement of Christ's rhetoric of wounds as model for—rather than reaction to—the dismembered natives opens opportunity for indigenous agency. While I argue that the natives in the codex ultimately reject Christian strategies in favor of Nahua tactics, wounds remain their medium for advancement. Similarly, on 4/12, Mary models for the bisected Chicana the repurposing of opponents and afflictions for one's own empowerment. Mary has repurposed the snake, be it Satan as the serpent, the Apocalyptic Woman's flood-spitting dragon, and/or the Mesoamerican snake of rebirth. This repurposing frees souls from the colonial hellfire. The Chicana, in turn, has ingested Wonder Woman's subversion for her own self-empowerment and repurposing, possibly against the Church's misogyny.

The repurposing of woundedness has been a key argument throughout my study as well as Maylei Blackwell's methodologies on retrofitting because the rhetorical tradition that I trace is fundamentally a retrofitted memory of trauma that rhetorically redirects assault into persistent perseverance. In chapter one I detailed Cherríe Moraga's repurposing of her wounds and those of Coyolxauhqui to demonstrate how one might utilize committed violence to transform victimization into accusations and protests. Such a strategy follows not only a Nahua worldview of sacrifice but Christian meditation traditions in which Christ's wounds and Mary's sorrows make ever-present human sin, a tactic that informs the particular historical rhetoric that I trace from the *virgenes abrideras* into a type of Chicana rhetorical strategy. In this strategy, woundedness in its complexity and entirety must remain active for generative confrontation of the afflicter(s). In chapter two, I studied through *No Más Bebés* the dangers of the wound being used to suit another's agenda rather

than applied for the empowerment of the wounded. Here, in the *Codex Espangliensis*, this repurposing of the wound again appears as a prominent facet of my argument. The bisected Chicana uses her latest enemy, the United States pop culture, to defeat a previous dominator, the Church. Yet as the narrative continues, we already know that the wound committed by pop culture will be answered, as well, by a final digestion scene and ultimate defeat of Superman. On the way to that defeat, colonial forces have been overcome as the Chicana is rebirthed by the Church, yet the Church loses its control of Chicanas who consume Wonder Woman's anti-misogynist response and aim it at the patriarchal institute.

To be clear, I am arguing that this strategy of absorbing one's assault in order to subdue the assaulter is a tactic advanced by Marian and Christological art, as well as Mesoamerican, and one that I observe as repurposed into new manifestations by Chicana art—most prominently in Chicana art, a sampling of which now follows. The Chicana art that concerns my examination applies visual rhetorics of woundedness as inherited by Marian rather than Christological imagery in order to confront and transform one's reality through generative woundedness. The end of chapter three examines a historical genealogy of the rhetoric of body as painfully abstracted conduit into insight.

### **Chicana Contemporary Art of the Wound**

While the art of Californian Chicana artist Yolanda M. López does not focus on woundedness, her well-known 1979 *Virgin of Guadalupe* series alludes to Chicana bodies as containers of Catholic ideologies but ones that transform those ideologies into power icons for modern mundane Chicana lives. This absorption of specifically the Virgin Mary's power icons both pays homage to the Church and separates one's future from doctrinal teachings. This is best illustrated in López's self-portrait in the series, where she depicts herself as if

in a marathon race, running with white sneakers to the audience with a victorious grin on her face. She runs from the full-body halo that traditionally emits from Mary as the Immaculate Conception, implying that she either originates from Mary or flees from Mary. In her enthusiastic advancement, she tramples on Mary's angel. Still, she wears a pink gown resembling the Virgin of Guadalupe's robe and retains its gold-thread pattern of the *nagvioli*, the small indigenous American flower that served as a Mexica symbol of sun deities (Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women*, 29). As victory medals, she carries Mary's star cloak and a serpent with all its transcultural potentials. Is the artist running back to the Mesoamerican culture that the snake and *nagvioli* represent? Or is she running towards a future where both the Mexica and Catholic icons have been consumed for her own ambition? Whichever case, López recognizes the enormous cultural power that Mary represents and thereby absorbs and repurposes the Virgin's attributes to endow everyday Chicana lives, turning the mundane into divine.

The collective art group, Asco similarly emphasizes the mundane by contextualizing Chicanx embodied experiences in urban Los Angeles through modern visual subcultures that, from the group's inception in the 1970s, contests popular cultural conventions.<sup>56</sup> In

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<sup>56</sup> Asco's art has largely fallen into the cracks of art historical scholarship, perhaps due to the collective's rejection of categories; the group refused to identify with the 1970s Chicano art movement's emphasis on pre-colonial Mexica and modern Mexican nationalism; as well, the collective's multi-medium art crosses from visual art to theater performance to political protest, which requires trans-disciplinary study. Ella Maria Diaz notes that Asco remained absent from art history until the early-twenty-first century due to enduring institutional beliefs that avant-garde art is meant to "change the art world and not social reality" (42). However, attention is turning to Asco, as in Chon A. Noriega and Dianna Marisol Santillano's insights on Asco's contributions in the 2008 *Phantom Sightings* exhibit catalog (see Rita Gonzalez, Howard N. Fox, and Chon A. Noriega, eds., *Phantom Sightings: Art After*

*Abject Performances: Aesthetic Strategies in Latino Cultural Production* (2018), Leticia Alvarado analyzes the negative affects of shame, disgust, and unbelonging in Asco's art that the collective employs to capture embodied experiences of living in a marginalized urban Los Angeles demographic. Deriving their name from a Spanish word for repugnance, a term colloquially associated with a physicality triggered from disgust, most commonly nausea from extreme emotional repulsion, Asco's art emphasizes the body in reaction to lived experiences. The emotionalized body prevails in Asco's murals, which are not comprised of paint so much as the artists' own bodies as sometimes containers of the toxicity of politics, the inner-city environment, and implosive cultural traditions. Sometimes the bodies are trapped and other times in motion. The 1972 performance/protest art, *Walking Mural*, comments on religion's ineptness in Chicana realities. In response to codifications and stagnations of saints who brandish only past wounds, *Walking Mural* featured Asco walking for the then-present wound of the American-Vietnam War. The performance included a parade to and in front of army recruitment offices on Christmas Day with Patssi Valdez dressed as a black-adorned Virgin of Guadalupe. The repurposing of Marian imagery into black mourning reconnects Mary's woundedness to Chicana communities, suffering a disproportionate number of war casualties. Mary's grief thus modernized in the living and walking body of a Chicana protest artist simultaneously recalls past rhetorics of wounds while maintaining the discourse in immediate contexts of modern Chicana distress.

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*the Chicano Movement*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008.). Asco helps to define Chicana art as a "phantom sighting" in that the collective can be *seen* yet does not *exist* in the art academy or museum (Noriega 21). Also refer to Marci McMahon's *Domestic Negotiations: Gender, Nation, and Self-Fashioning in U.S. Mexicana and Chicana Literature and Art* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013).

In Christina Fernandez's photography, a similar collapsed time underscores a gulf between self and history. Fernandez does not reference the Virgin Mary but rather absorbs family iconography to enter the actual gulf—the space between past and present where she proceeds to seek the location of both woundedness and reassurance. In *María's Great Expedition* (1995-96), the artist offers her body as surrogate container of her great-grandmother María's memories of migration from Mexico to California as a single mother. Yet, Fernandez must remove her own identity and time to occupy her inheritance—and it is only an imagined inheritance, restaged in six images that represent María's life in episodic and often-overly stereotyped visualizations of an early-twentieth-century migrant life. María's portrayal pivots between Fernandez's poignant longing to know her remarkable great-grandmother and a painfully obvious lack of understanding the real María, concealed even from her family under photographic conventions belonging to Hollywood studios. In many ways, such a longing echoes Patssi Valdez as surrogate for Santa María—both artists attempt to embody and make relevant an inheritance that is otherwise failing to resonate in their current needs. Mario Ontiveros observes a similar struggle in Fernandez's attempts to know and *be* her past. Ontiveros argues that the visibility of this struggle defines Fernandez's work as “the act of tending to one's history as a process that occurs in the present” in an ultimate resistance against cultural dissociation (152). However, the Chicana in Fernandez's photography fails to be a modern container of her history due to all the blank spaces and lost fragments that are replaced by imaginings that are shaped by popular culture and Hollywood narratives. Yet this painful lack of understanding María provides confrontation of Fernandez's woundedness. Developing this concept, Fernandez's *Ruin* series features double-exposed overlapping portraits of ancestors and modern Chicanas

that make detectable a dark wound-space where the figures cannot fully consume and absorb the past into oneness with the present. Always together-apart or fragmented in cultural identity due to disruptions in historical inheritances, the Chicana and her ancestors cling to whatever they can share in spite of histories dismembered by colonization, obscured by conversion, and relocated by popular culture.

Maya Gonzalez's *The Love that Stains* (2000, acrylic on masonite) presents a similar motif of this together-apart state yet more directly emphasizes woundedness—specifically through the prominent bleeding heart that is exposed on the front-most figure, a dark-skinned woman with dark almond eyes and jet-black hair piled high on her head, crowned with white roses (Fig. 4.8). The woman wears a deep blue dress with a white apron that contrasts with the deep red of the bleeding heart, no longer contained but vulnerable between the white-aproned bosom. Down the apron, blood flows from the heart into two long streams that continue to fork down to the woman's blue gown and beyond the painting's viewing plane. Although the woman is wounded, she is soothed by the embrace of a ghostly twin who holds her at the waist and loosens the grip of the woman's clenched right fist. The ghostly woman's skin is



FIGURE 4.8. Maya Gonzalez. *The Love that Stains*, acrylic on masonite. 2000. Image permission granted: "The Love that Stains" © 2000 Maya Gonzalez

an ethereal jade that glows softly along her arms and neck. Eyes shut, she is possibly dead, and seems unaffected by the sounds of a hovering hummingbird that speaks into her left ear. Gary Keller writes of the hummingbird as representing Xochiquetzal, Mexica goddess of love, flowers, vegetation, and fire who protects artists (36). Frances Toor, in her canonical 1947 *A Treasury of Mexican Folkways: The Customs, Myths, Folklore, Traditions, Beliefs, Fiestas, Dances, and Songs of the Mexican People*, details an indigenous belief that by wearing the remains of a hummingbird, one will be sought after and loved (142). These cultural associations with the hummingbird resonate in Laura E. Pérez's analysis of the bird as linked to matters of the heart—but more specifically the bleeding heart.

Pérez writes of the hummingbird as embodying and transmitting *yolteotl*, a Nahua word that refers to “a deified heart” (Pérez, *Chicana Art*, 292; “Spirit Glyphs,” 197, citing Miguel León-Portilla). In this interpretation, the dark-skinned woman removes and sacrifices her own material heart as an offering to the hummingbird to access the ethereal woman. Such an offering functions from the belief that, as previously discussed, bloodletting possesses the generative potential to set one's reality back into balance, or to achieve *nepantla*, after life's turmoil. Whether the hummingbird alludes to the Mexica goddess or to the personification of the spiritual heart, it is evident that the living woman waits for the hummingbird's message to be delivered as she expectantly attends to the bird. The wounded heart continues to bleed during this wait, a “love that stains” the living woman with a visible anticipation to engage with the ethereal other, be she an ancestor or spiritual other-self. The revealed wounded heart is her strategy to recover and awaken the

ethereal other through various complicated and interactive meanings that hearts hold in Catholic, Mesoamerican, and Chicana rhetorics.<sup>57</sup>

To further complicate the rhetorical inheritances, Gonzalez also echoes imagery from Frida Kahlo's 1939 *Las Dos Fridas* (*The Two Fridas*), thereby bringing Mexican visual culture into the mix (Fig. 4.9). *The Two Fridas* is a doubled self-portrait of the artist. In *Devouring Frida* (1999) Margaret Lindauer notes that despite their surface distinctions, the Kahlo twins share a circulatory system, making the two a single being through movement of one blood (148). Still, their interaction is less intimate than the Gonzalez twins. The Kahlo twins share a bench but sit at a distance as they hold hands rather than embrace. Their attention is also directed at the audience rather than each other. The stormy gray sky engages the Kahlo twins with their environment and society while the Gonzalez twins are enclosed in a crimson wound realm that seems to benefit from a greater sense of



FIGURE 4.9. Frida Kahlo. *Las Dos Fridas*. 1939. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

<sup>57</sup> See scholarship by Lauren Grace Kilroy-Ewbank on depictions and receptions of the bleeding heart in colonial Mexico: *Holy Organ or Unholy Idol?: The Sacred Heart in the Art, Religion, and Politics of New Spain* (Brill 2018); "Love Hurts: Depictions of Christ Wounded in Love in Colonial Mexican Convents" in *Visualizing Sensuous Suffering and Affective Pain in Early Modern Europe and the Spanish Americas*, eds. Heather Graham and Lauren G. Kilroy-Ewbank, 313-357 (Brill 2018); "Holy Organ or Unholy Idol? Forming a History of the Sacred Heart in New Spain," *Colonial Latin American Review* 23.3 (2014): 320-359.

peace and tighter union, removed from the phenomenological world. Pérez similarly observes the contrast of intimacy between the two sets of twins. She comments:

González, rather than conveying *The Two Fridas's* painful sense of being torn psychologically, the duality of the physical and spiritual sense is conveyed as a resource of strength, as the ghostly spirit embraces and comforts the living self. The bleeding, exposed heart of the one does not affect the spirit self, though it communicates precisely through the heart as the hummingbird which represents it, because it itself is the spiritual lifeblood of the heart (*Chicana Art* 292)

In *The Love that Stains* the bleeding heart potentially recovers the ethereal twin to the expectant formally-attired twin. The Gonzalez twins' journey is to regain each other. In contrast, the formally-attired Frida twin snips her bloodline with scissors, turning her pain outward by asserting her vulnerability in double-expression. The Frida twins' journey is a withdrawal from the world, signaled from the end of the bloodline. The only blood Frida will share is with herself, perhaps a comment on the artist's much-studied family turmoil and painful divorce to Diego Rivera at the time of the painting's conception.<sup>58</sup> In short, Kahlo's wounds testify externally to her emotional suffering and isolation, while Gonzalez's wounds address an internal together-apart or fragmentation in cultural identity due to disruptions in historical inheritances that are more akin to Fernandez's photography.

Amalia Mesa-Bains's *The Twins* combine both strategies as external testimony yet solidarity with one's together-apart selves. In this way, *The Twins* encompasses an expanded range of aspects that mark rhetorical traditions of generative woundedness: the Chicana body as container of past others, an emphasis on together-apart as both a bisecting wound and opportunity to recollect identity fragments, the absorption and repurposing of

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<sup>58</sup> For examinations of emotional and physical suffering expressed in Kahlo's art, see Hayden Herrera's *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991); *Frida, a Biography of Frida Kahlo* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983).



FIGURE 4.10. Amalia Mesa-Bains. *The Twins*, giclée print, 1997. (Image courtesy the Collection of Richard Bains).

exterior strategies to advance one's message, and advocacy for redress. Here, Mesa-Bains presents two women who expose their body cavities: one revealing organs and a fetus and the other containing the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Fig. 4.10). Another source of bisection arises from the

women's split designation as part of a cultural virgin-whore dichotomy. Twins, they are fragmented into polar opposite spaces as they must choose either the corporal and sexualized body or be spiritual container of the virgin mother. Of note, neither woman exposes her lungs or heart; as mere containers for a man's lineage or patriarchal teachings, they have no voice and are not allowed to feel, a sense heightened by their plastic mannequin exteriors. The anatomical woman has an empty darkness where her heart and left lung might be found. Also absent, therefore, is the blood lifeline that potentially unites both the Gonzalez and Kahlo twins. The Mesa-Bains twins cannot be linked except in the touching of the back of their hands where they seem fused as if the mannequin mold that might have formed the figures was flawed.

Interestingly, the women are not as separated as designed. This is a small detail but one that hints at solidarity amidst their differing experiences of object-ness. Indeed, we

might detect a joint confrontation of the virgin-whore dichotomy. The women refuse to hide the internalization of imposed gender roles under a façade of sameness but rather externalize their ingested codes of behavior to confront the harmful dichotomies placed on female identities. In this way, woundedness is exposed as an accusation and inducement, similar to that presented by the Kahlo twins. Like in *The Two Fridas*, Mesa-Bains situates her twins against a cloudy sky that maintains attention outwards to the lived reality as opposed to the intimate wound space wherein the Gonzalez twins seek each other. Also, as with the bisected woman in the *Codex Espangliensis*, the opened body cavity both models itself after and targets devotional rhetorics of the Virgin Mary for ongoing misogyny against the female body as mere containers. Yet it is exactly in her role as container in the genre of *virgenes abrideras* that Mary transforms her own state of object-ness in Iberian and Ibero-American art. In the *virgenes abrideras*, where Mary is a container designed specifically to be bisected, Mary most clearly exhibits the generative wound as a strategy that rhetorically confronts audiences with that which is already uncomfortably known yet must still be addressed.

### **From Container to Co-redemptrix: The *Virgenes Abrideras***

While I have already peppered this entire project with references of the *virgenes abrideras* as providing historical rhetorical models for generative woundedness, I now more directly link the discussion of Chicana art to a lineage of female cultural rhetorics that resonate in the sculptures. If we recall from the introduction, the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* is activated through the audience's opening of Mary's closed arms, the

figure simulates a crucifix form (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2).<sup>59</sup> This insinuation of crucified Mary appears in sixteenth-century Iberian *virgenes abrideras* and also accompanies a shift in the carved narratives that are enclosed in Mary's interior. The first two-hundred-and-fifty years of Iberian *virgenes abrideras*, the earliest being the circa 1270 Allariz sculpture, featured a version of Mary whose entire body cavity would open to reveal carved narratives that celebrate the Joys of Mary (Katz "Behind Closed Doors" 204).<sup>60</sup> However, by circa 1520 the sculpture's body cavity begins to open to reveal the Passion of Christ narrative, as seen in the *Virgen Abridera* of Pie de Concha. During the same generation of *virgenes abrideras*, the sculptures' opening mechanisms become limited to the chest cavity.

Largely sponsored by female patrons for female-specific locations and audiences, these sorrowful and restricted-access sculptures of Mary are the form of *virgenes abrideras* that cross to the Americas. In the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* and its sister *virgen abridera* in Gama de la Paz, Mexico, as well as a sixteenth or seventeenth-century Buenos Aires *virgen abridera*, the interiors feature either the Passion of Christ or the Sorrows of Mary rather than the Joys of Mary. Furthermore, the carvings are contained in small chest

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<sup>59</sup> Also, in this positioning, Mary resonates with the Orans Virgin motif associated with Byzantine tradition. This correlation may be significant because, as Peggy Liss's research indicates, when Constantinople fell to Turkish invasion in 1453, Iberian propaganda claimed Castile, per Liss, "a new sun, or a new star, rising in the west to counterbalance that loss and redress it." See Liss's *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992): 393.

<sup>60</sup> The seven Joys of Mary were especially celebrated in northeastern Spain, particularly in Catalonia and Aragón. As Lorenzo Candelaria notes, "a ballad from the *Llibre Vermell* (Red Book), a collection of music compiled for pilgrims to the famous Black Madonna at the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat (in Catalonia) during the late fourteenth century, presents a good example of a rosary-like prayer that combines seven recitations of the 'Ave Maria' with meditations on her seven joys: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Resurrection of Christ, the Ascension of Christ, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and the Coronation of the Virgin." See Candelaria, 75-78 for song lyrics of "Los Set Goytx" or "The Seven Joys."

compartments that, when opened, position Mary in cruciform stance. I posit that the shifts from joys to sorrows and from full-body access to narrowed admittance emphasize a rhetoric of wounds that specifically empowers Mary as she assumes crucified position. Furthermore, the interior carved narratives of Mary's Sorrows begin to stand in for Christ's Passion scenes. This raises the question, are the Mexican *virgenes abrideras* placing more rhetorical weight on Mary's role as co-redemptrix?

As co-redemptrix Mary's role is equated with Jesus's role in securing human redemption from Original Sin. The chest openings in the Latin American *virgenes abrideras* indicate support of Mary's designation as co-redemptrix, not only in her arm positioning into cruciform, but through the opening of her breasts as gateway into the interior narratives of redemption. Such iconography creates a rhetorical modification, prompting audiences to adapt what they know of redemption as gained not only through Christ but Mary. I propose that this destabilization is premised on Mary's emotions of loss yet acquiescence—forming a retrofitted memory of an otherwise dominant masculine narrative of Christ as sole redeemer through action—body sacrifice; while Christ's narrative most definitely emphasizes emotion, Mary's emotional simulation of the crucifix that is performed exclusively through sentiment provides an alternative way of understanding redemption. Specifically, this retrofitting of Christian history permits as historical authority Mary's emotions to place her in the sacrifice and redemption narrative.

It is important to note that in visual iconography and text, Mary's status as co-redemptrix most definitely predates this specific shift in Iberian *virgenes abrideras*. Medieval thought often linked Mary's milk and Christ's blood, merging the sacrifice of bodily fluids into one unifying effort to intercede on behalf of humans. Medical theories of

the early-medieval period additionally considered blood and milk as interconvertible. Merrall Llewelyn Price notes medieval medical belief that blood channeled from womb to breast via a lacteal duct, the *vasa menstrualis*. Bartolomaeus Anglicus's thirteenth-century *De Proprietatibus Rerum* details this "holough veyne," citing Greek Hippocrates, Roman Galen, Byzantine Constantine, and Iberian Isidore of Seville (146). Connection between these fluids was further enhanced by vision narratives, such as the thirteenth-century Saint Mechtild of Magdeburg who envisioned Christ revealing that "the blood of grace is like the milk that I drank from my Virgin Mother" (Miesel 31). Christ's spilt blood thus extends Mary's spilt milk, exalting Mary as co-redemptrix. Associations between the impact of both forms of sacrifices—blood and milk—were widespread throughout medieval Europe. However, while the sacrifices were popularly equated across Europe, designation of Mary as Co-redemptrix remained overwhelmingly controversial. It is important to note, though, that Iberia was more receptive of the designation and developed visual and textual rhetorics to support this argument.

My insistence that the rhetoric of wounds be considered within Iberian frameworks corresponds with Cynthia Robinson's focus in *Imagining the Passion in a Multiconfessional Castile* (2013) in which Robinson explores inter-religious dialogue in Iberia and the effect of such dialogue on the art of the region. She notes that the Passion of Christ was less frequently disseminated in pre-fifteenth-century multi-faith Iberia due to incompatibility with Jewish and Islamic doctrines on divine incarnates. Robinson argues that this avoidance of Christ's suffering is characteristic of Iberian writings prior to the fifteenth century; and, I note, this is a multifaith tactic that necessarily informed conversion rhetorics in the Americas. Fourteenth-century Franciscan theologian Francesc Eiximenis, a

prominent figure in Aragon under King Martin and Queen Maria de Luna's patronage, is a prime example of Robinson's point. In his *Llibre del Crestià*, he remarkably does not urge readers to meditate on Christ or his Passion. Instead, he provides references, should readers be interested in independently pursuing meditations on the Passion.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore Eiximenis's presentation of Christ is almost exclusively as a divine and all-powerful figure, not the human son of God; concurrently, Mary is elevated more closely as Christ's equal yet still functions as compassionate intercessor, a mother who opens redemption for humanity. In this way, Christ's suffering was often moderated via Mary's human experience of sacrifice and emotional woundedness—thereby developing through Mary's generative wounds a model for redemption through female bodies. Therefore, when we consider generative wounds in Chicana visual and textual rhetorics, it is productive to examine Marian devotional culture rather than a Christological one in the formation of specific Iberian and Ibero-American rhetorics that interchange within multifaith contexts.

I focus my attention here on such distinctive multifaith encounters and a corresponding emphasis on breasts and femaleness as location of sacrifice as possibility. This discussion is surely impacted by Franciscan thoughts on humility and shame as innate to femaleness, the prominence of Mary and Saint Anne cults, and the dominance of Isabelline ideological shifts and rise of female patronage in the late-medieval and Early Modern period.<sup>62</sup> I am particularly interested in drawing a rhetorical lineage through the

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<sup>61</sup> See specifically Eiximenis's *Vida de Cristo* (taken from the *Llibre del Crestià* or Book for Christians) as recorded in Santoral, BNE MS 12688, fol. 386r.

<sup>62</sup> See Charlene Villaseñor Black's "St. Anne Imagery and Maternal Archetypes in Spain and Mexico" in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500-1800*, ed. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003): 3-23. Also, Loretta Ramirez, *Spain's Toledo*

visual cultures sponsored by Franciscan Orders, which is evidenced in the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera*, first documented in the Franciscan convent of Santa Catarina de Sena in Oaxaca. This *virgen abridera* encapsulates an emphasis on female breasts as gateway to both sacrifice and generation, thereby functioning as a starting point in tracing the historical genealogy of the rhetorics of wounds as adapted in the Americas.

Significantly, while *virgenes abrideras* as a genre of sculptures, designed to fragment the Virgin Mary's body parts, can be located throughout medieval Europe, non-Iberian sculptures differ substantially. The *virgenes abrideras* North of Spain contain the Trinity (Fig. 4.11); Mary is symbolic vessel of Christianity as she holds the Trinity in her body; she is an abstracted structure that encloses Christ's teachings. In Iberian tradition, however,



FIGURE 4.11. *Shrine Madonna, Trinity*, opened. Circa 1300. German. (Image courtesy ARTstor IAP, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Mary contains as central her own lived narrative which through the centuries transitions from joys of motherhood to Christ's sacrifice—and then her own sacrifice and sorrows as she assumes crucified position. I am interested in how this Iberian tradition resonated with female patronage of such sculptures and the development of rhetorics of wounds as practiced in trans-Atlantic colonial interchange and contemporary Chicana textual and visual rhetorics.

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*Virgen Abridera: Revelations of Castile's Shift in Marian Iconography from Medieval to Isabelline* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2016.)

Through story, the Iberian sculptures impart teachings but also provide dynamic interactions to extract from viewers knowledge that they also contain and bring into the encounter. Only by approaching the objects as embodying text can viewers identify and exercise Mary's narrative. Accordingly, the *virgenes abrideras* function as both destinations and points of embarkment since they locate viewers as also narrative vessels. This activates awareness of one's location in the realm of devotional knowledge, knowledge one carries just as Mary bares in her carved interior. As a rhetor, the devout locates herself as a person of Catholic faith before opening the sculptures and rhetorically as she converses with the sculpture's exposed narratives.

Elina Gertsman explores this interactivity as part of Western Europe's medieval visual culture, in which viewers enter situations where they are "essentially constituted and reformed by the interaction with the object" (10). There is a process of fragmentation and reconstruction. This parallels with the invention of rhetors who are splintered from a wider context to locate and reform in *topoi* encounters. Gertsman studies *virgenes abrideras* as objects that provoke memory via visuals that anchor the "mind's eye" into contemplation before the eye wanders to the next visual anchor (158). While the *virgenes abrideras* clearly stimulate memory as viewers recall narratives, the pieces also offer an active epistemology that adjusts present self and space, particularly in the Iberian sculptures that concern the rhetorical inheritances that I address.

While Gertsman likens Mary's body in art to a Eucharist monstrance (50) and therefore acknowledges a prominent application of Marian visual rhetorics as associating Mary as a container, the religious instability in the Iberian peninsula historically avoided the application of Mary as mere container, giving rise to a more dynamic and active visual

culture surrounding the Virgin. Gertsman writes of Western European tradition deep in a conceptualized space of Christendom but does not focus on the realities of the southern Christian borderlands where Catholic and Islamic faiths contested control of Iberia for nearly eight-hundred years. In such disputed regions, Mary's body was not just a container, like a monstrance. After all, the monstrance is not site of transfiguration but of adoration for an already-extant mutation. To regard Mary as vessel of completed action suppresses Mary's agency, thereby restricting her icon and, in extension, her intercession. In borderland cultures, a limit of Mary's dynamism would be particularly problematic. This mindset would logically follow Iberian colonizers into Mexico as a new contested space.

Erin Kathleen Rowe provides a helpful view on late-medieval and Early Modern Iberian perceptions of saints whose "job was to protect and serve the nation" (135).<sup>63</sup> Specifically, Rowe discusses obligations of the apostle Santiago to "protect and intercede for Castilians, while Castilians, in return, had to venerate and honor his relics" (25). Rowe credits exposure to Byzantium during the first crusade as stimulus for Castilian reliance on warrior saints, in contrast with dominant Latin faith culture (26-27). Santiago became linked with militaristically reclaiming a golden age prior to Islamic invasion in 711 CE. The success of the iconography of Santiago as *matamoros* or Muslim-slayer would be later applied to Santiago as *mataindios* or indigenous-slayer, particularly in Iberian campaigns in Peru.<sup>64</sup> Between the Muslim invasion and 1492 reconquest, Iberian-Catholic faith in Mary

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<sup>63</sup> Rowe uses *nation* as derived from the Latin *natio*, a term grouping those "from the same region who shared customs, history, and possibly language," 3.

<sup>64</sup> See Irene Silverblatt's "Political Memories and Colonizing Symbols: Santiago and the Mountain Gods of Peru," in *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*, ed. Jonathan David Hill, 174-194 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988). Silverblatt details indigenous strategies to repurpose Santiago as a mountain

as intercessor and co-redemptrix also grew. The Iberian tendency towards more active engagement with Mary fortifies the traditions of the 431 Council of Ephesus that declared Jesus's incarnation dependent on Mary's role, since only a conceiving human mother could validate Jesus's humanity. It follows that Mary is site of transformation, not solely container for that which God conceived outside her body, like a monstrance that Gertsman imagines as akin to the *virgenes abrideras's* function. Perhaps to further advance Mary's status as site of transformation, the doctrine of Mary's own Immaculate Conception was heavily supported by royal campaigns, especially in Aragon which most closely aligned with Franciscan theological advancement of the doctrine.<sup>65</sup> This doctrine raised Mary's status as

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god. Silverblatt argues that "Christian ideology was turned to the service of indigenous resistance" and that "Iberian Catholicism's foremost warrior saint, Santiago, could also be drafted to serve in the defense of native religion" (186). While adopting Santiago is a Hispanicizing of native faith, Silverblatt views this act as resistance-in-acquiescence, leading to a faith-hybridization that resuscitated indigenous gods (191).

<sup>65</sup> In 1333 Alfonso IV established the royal confraternity of the Immaculate Conception in Zaragoza, and in 1414 the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Barcelona began to petition Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to join Aragon in defense of the doctrine, thus launching Spain's international campaign for the Immaculate Conception. In 1469, when Ferdinand II of Aragon married Isabel of Castile, Castile also promoted the Immaculate Conception. Isabel retained her favorite poet and preacher, Ambrosio de Montesino, a Franciscan Immaculist who wrote the *Breviario de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Virgen Nuestra Señora* in 1508 at Toledo. Isabel also requested a copy of the 1497 *Vita Christi* by Sor Isabel de Villena that related Mary's Immaculate Conception, funded celebrations of the Immaculate Conception at the monastery in Guadalupe, founded the Franciscan Order of the Conception in Toledo (run by former lady-in-waiting Beatriz da Silva), and sponsored chaplaincies to the Immaculate Conception in Toledo, Guadalupe, and Seville. In 1508 Isabel's daughter Queen Juana established a convent of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception in Palma de Mallorca. See Loretta Ramirez, *Spain's Toledo Virgen Abridera: Revelations of Castile's Shift in Marian Iconography from Medieval to Isabelline* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2016.): 47-48. Also see Jill Webster's *Els Menorets: The Franciscans in the Realms of Aragon from St. Francis to the Black Death* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993); Suzanne L. Stratton's *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art* (New York: University of Cambridge, 1994); Peggy Liss's "Isabel, Myth and History," in *Isabel la Católica, Queen of Castile: Critical Essays*, ed. David A. Boruchoff, 57-78 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

exempt of Original Sin, implying equivalent purity with Jesus. Fifteenth and sixteenth-century Immaculate Conception motifs further accentuated Mary's redemptrix role.

This prominence of Mary as human redemptrix clearly raises her access as intercessor and correlates with concurrent proliferations of reports on visions, mostly featuring Mary who tended to be reported as appearing in flesh in rural locations, manifesting in images held in urban spaces, and allowing rediscovery of her sculptures and paintings that often have backstories of having been lost during Muslim invasion (Christian 8). Proliferation of saintly activity speaks to Mary's role in Iberia as not passive container. This may explain the contrast between southern and northern *virgenes abrideras* and the later rhetorical tradition of modeling a form of female Catholic meditation on a more active Marian agency one where, for example, Carmelite nuns prayed directly to Mary to release the *anima sole* from hell fires. Mary's body in borderland art emphasizes potentialities at active juncture points to function as a simulation of elected pathways during life's turmoil. This point draws our discussion back to the rhetorical strategy of the Iberian and Ibero-American *virgenes abrideras* in their confrontation with audiences.

In many ways, we might approach this strategy as linked to medieval concept of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is not limited to access of holy spaces. Indeed, pilgrimage was a way of life. V.A. Kolve applies the pilgrim's road as metaphor for liminal spaces, wherein humans encounter path options between fixed Providential points (34).<sup>66</sup> Here, moral choices are tied to location. Pilgrims navigate journeys of trial, guided by internalized faith-texts from which they select the most apt *exempla* to externalize as they progress through

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<sup>66</sup> Kolve quotes Augustine, *De ordine rerum*, book 2: "Man is always in the middle between heaven and hell. [...] This is his place."

physical life. In this way, pilgrims parallel rhetors, recalculating in middling experiences as they recall past knowledge to modify present self—aware of future goals. A collapsing of time is essential in this process in order to more closely understand one's episodic experience of life as fashioned by God-all-seeing who observes existence in instantaneous and simultaneous motion. This middling space is a moment of quiet, meditation, and selection amidst the chaos of the multiple pathways along the metaphoric "pilgrim road" of life. When these principles translate into the Americas, the "pilgrim road" might be understood within the Nahua metaphysical framework of *nepantla*, a space in which to find equilibrium and clarity amidst the earthquakes of life. A prevalent navigation tool in Catholic Iberian borderland practices was through reflection on Mary's life. To emulate her virtues would lead one to the correct path along the pilgrimage to salvation; and along this path, if challenges manifest, Mary's intercession could be best sought if one were living according to her model. Given all this context, the purpose of the Iberian *virgenes abrideras* can be studied as making accessible Mary's human experiences through bas-relief fragments of her life—accessed through a deliberate choice for a "pilgrim" to touch and fracture Mary's body as a gateway to salvation. On meditation of Mary's now-externalized image-narratives, the pilgrim's own interior knowledge to the text-narratives is activated, thereby positioning the pilgrim to act upon that activation.

As previously noted in the introduction of this project, early *virgenes abrideras* such as the circa 1270 Allariz sculpture, commissioned by Queen Violante of Castile for a Franciscan convent of Poor Clares, featured Mary with the Christ Child in her arms. To activate the sculpture, Mary's body is bisected to externalize bas-relief images of the Joys of Mary, providing *exempla* on pure life and accompanying happiness on which the audience

could meditate. Also previously stated, post-*Reconquista* and post-Contact *virgenes abrideras* exhibit many narrative shifts. First, the *virgenes abrideras* begin to feature Mary without the Christ Child, allowing her figure to be the primary and single focal point of the sculptures' exterior design. Specifically, she is portrayed in the stand-alone Immaculate Conception motif. Most significant to our discussion, when these later sculptures are bisected, they externalize the Sorrows of Mary, complicating the *topoi* from which audiences might select rhetorical reactions and introducing a new form of rhetoric of woundedness that informs my project.

The 1520 *Virgen Abridera* at the Toledo Convent of the Concepción de las Madres Agustinas, also known as the Convent of las Gaitanas, an order of barefoot nuns, illustrates this new rhetorical situation.<sup>67</sup> Although the Toledo sculpture functions as a relief-panel cabinet, rather than a sculpture in the round, it serves as a transitional piece from older Joys of Mary *virgenes abrideras* to the Ibero-American pieces that focus on Mary's immaculate conception, co-redemptrix role, woundedness, and female body.<sup>68</sup> The Toledo piece has three states (Fig. 4.12). Closed, it is undecorated, but opened its outer wings feature traditional Joys of Mary narratives that celebrate events of motherhood. Between the winged narratives, Mary stands as the Immaculate Conception *Tota Pulchra* on a

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<sup>67</sup> In my Master of Arts in Art History thesis, I examined the Toledo Convent of the Concepción de las Madres Agustinas *Virgen Abridera* and female patronage in the Immaculate Conception motif represented in the object. See Loretta Ramirez, *Spain's Toledo Virgen Abridera: Revelations of Castile's Shift in Marian Iconography from Medieval to Isabelline* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2016. PDF).

<sup>68</sup> Doña Guiomar de Meneses founded the Convent of las Gaitanas in 1459, as well as San Pedro Mártir and the Hospital de la Misericordia, thereby associating the Toledo *Virgen Abridera* with one of the most prominent female benefactors of Toledo. The sculpture has remained for five centuries in its convent, moved for study once in 2000.

*Tota Pulchra*, featuring Mary standing on a crescent moon, while attributes encircle her: closed gate of Paradise, star of the sea, personified sun and moon, spotless mirror, Tower of David, palm, cypress, lily, rose, sealed fountain, well of life-giving, enclosed garden, City of God.

Joys of Mary  
left panel:  
Annunciation,  
Marriage of  
the Virgin,  
Adoration of  
The Magi.



Joys of Mary  
right panel:  
Nativity,  
Circumcision,  
Christ among  
the Doctors.

Passion of Christ Motif:  
(from left): Agony in the Garden, Kiss  
of Judas, Flagellation, the Crucifixion,  
Christ Carrying the Cross, Crowning  
of Thorns, Resurrection

Apocalyptic dragon and moon

FIGURE 4.12. *Virgen Abridera*. 1520. Convent of the Concepción de las Madres Agustinas, Toledo, Spain. (Photo by Antonio Pareja; annotations by Loretta Ramirez)

crescent moon. Beneath the moon is the defeated dragon. The sculpture's last state is revealed when viewers part Mary's praying hands to reveal in her chest cavity an internalized narrative of sorrows. The breast as gateway to inner pain emphasizes Mary's female body, much as in the *Virgen Abridera* of San Juan Chapultepec (Fig. 1.1 and 1.2), as well as the sculptures from Gama de la Paz, Mexico and Buenos Aires, Argentina. Opening the chest cabinet also relocates Mary's praying hands into cruciform position.

As I previously argued, the destabilization of Christ as sole redeemer and sole possessor of woundedness is premised on Mary's emotions of loss yet acquiescence—forming a retrofitted memory of an otherwise dominant masculine Catholic narrative. That is to say, Mary's emotional simulation of the crucifix provides an alternative way of understanding redemption. Specifically, this retrofitting of Christian history permits as historical authority Mary's emotions to place her in the sacrifice and redemption narrative. In *Visualizing Sensuous Suffering and Affective Pain in Early Modern Europe and the Spanish Americas* (2018), Graham and Kilroy-Ewbank note that Ibero-American art of woundedness accentuates differences in the visualities of pain as a physical affliction and suffering as its emotional counterpart (12). Given this context, it is particularly significant that in the San Juan Chapultepec sculpture, this difference is blurred. Christ's physical pain and Mary's emotional suffering are two sides of a cohesive telling of sacrifice.

The crossover into the Americas of the *virgenes abrideras*, as seen in the San Juan Chapultepec sculpture, retains the standalone focus on Mary as the Immaculate Conception that the Toledo cabinet emphasizes, as well as the breast triptych and narrative of sorrows. The San Juan Chapultepec piece additionally departs from the Joys of Mary and strays from conventional renditions of the *Passion of Christ*, which the Toledo inner triptych features in

a more standardized rendering. As noted in Figure 4.12, the Toledo *Virgen Abridera* features in its *Passion of Christ* narrative (left to right): Agony in the Garden, Kiss of Judas, the Flagellation, the Crucifixion, Christ Carrying the Cross, the Crowning of Thorns, and the Resurrection. If we recall from Figure 1.2, the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* features (left to right): Agony in the Garden, Christ's Encounter with Mary on the Way to Calvary, the Crucifixion surrounded by Mary and John, and the Descent from the Cross in the narrative of a *Pietà* with Mary holding the body of Christ. The *Passion of Christ* motif thereby merges into a *Sorrows of Mary* narrative with the Encounter, an emphasis on Mary's experiences of the Crucifixion, and most significantly the *Pietà*. The *Pietà* places Mary's position as mother central to Christ's death. Mary's iconographic role accordingly transforms in this brief history of the *virgenes abrideras* from the mother-container of God's son in northern-European sculptures to abstracted-container of joyful motherhood in Iberian sculptures that then darken into Christ's sacrifice, and finally to the container and narrator of Mary's own woundedness.

While Mary's emotions still respond to the dominant presence of Christ, it is *her* narrative that she relates and her own woundedness that she unfolds. She gains possession of her body cavity to assert a narrative about herself rather than function as mere container of another's narrative. Like the later-day cabinets of curiosity by Mesa-Bains and Gómez-Peña, Mary contains fragments of her own experiences that do not narrate the identity of the collector (or Creator) so much as display afflictions against her own identity and gender. In her salvaged narrative, she confronts and transforms her reality. I suggest that Iberian sixteenth and seventeenth-century *virgenes abrideras* encapsulate a rhetorical strategy of selecting and presenting episodes of one's own lived trauma in order to

repurpose grievances into a generative assertion of the reality that one aims to conceive. This assertion is actualized by prodding the audience into a liminal reflection space to re-route the metaphorical pilgrim into a more desirable direction. In this way, I conclude that the *virgenes abrideras* function as a vital import of the Iberian historical rhetorics of wounds.

### **The Wound as Engaging Audience Responsibility: A Conclusion**

Unlike northern counterparts, Iberian *virgenes abrideras* do not codify Mary's role as container of God's creation and Christ's actions. Instead, the Iberian sculptures offer a more dynamic Mary that time-collapses past knowledge into present choices. This rhetorical strategy extracts textual memories from viewers who then activate present pathways. Mary's externalized wounds become site of contemplation that obligate audiences to manifest rhetorical responses. In the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera*, viewers rhetorically traverse from Christ's meditation in the garden as he prepares for sacrifice and then move to Mary's human and female experiences of Christ's choices and her own sacrifices as the mother who, all along, knew that this pain would arrive. Even with foreknowledge of the brutal loss of her son, Mary acquiesced to sacrifice, much like her devotees that know that with the opening of the *virgen abridera* they will enter a wound. This woundedness is reactivated each time an audience interrupts Mary's prayer to divide her hands and bisect her chest cavity. Audiences are thereby located in their own time and space as ongoing participants of a Catholic perception of human sin. Identified as sinners in need of redemption, the audience obligates Mary to a life of martyrdom in which the birthing of her son and the milk that nourished his life were all aimed at sustaining him for sacrifice. Mary confronts viewers with the wounds they brought and continue to bring

to her reality both in the past and present. She clings in the *Pietà* to her son's etherealized body to highlight this point. The past pain continues to wound the present. Yet meditation on this accusation places the audience not only in the role of sinner but on a progression towards salvation.

I return here to Cathy Caruth's understanding of trauma theory, as detailed in chapter two, wherein Caruth conceptualizes of "the crying wound." This crying wound is the "belated address" of trauma as a generative pain that is revisited and maintained in the present—rather than at a safe distance—so that the sacrifices of the past might inform decisions of the present. The *virgenes abrideras* place the audience in daily engagement with and as activators of pain and suffering in order to make relevant to today's actions the sacrifices of the past. Mary's woundedness engages audience responsibility to choose a "pilgrim" path to redemption. Advancement on this path relies on a constant traversing across borders of internalized and externalized epistemologies, embodied texts, and performative rituals. This is a coexistence of faith and phenomenology that in Iberia provides shifting rhetorical maneuvers that link body with spiritual empowerment. It is an extension of the *ostentatio vulneris*, or the indication of the suffering process as an affirmative display of devotional attributes.

The presence of this visual rhetorical practice that is transported across the Atlantic and into the Mexican *virgenes abrideras* manifests and adjusts for a new borderland nun culture. The American transformations indicate the value of Mary's dynamic engagement in the empowerment of new female devotional audiences. As with the Allariz and Toledo *virgenes abrideras*, the San Juan Chapultepec sculpture would have engaged convent nuns, specifically the Franciscan nuns of Santa Catarina de Sena. The engagement is through

rhetorical strategies that present the female body as conduit of holy teachings. Yet the greater emphasis on the San Juan Chapultepec *Virgen Abridera* to narrate Mary's experiences and emotions heightens a sense of agency and self-determination for the Mexican Franciscan nuns as a reflection on their own sacrifices as cloistered women. When synced with Nahua concepts of sacrifice and balance, Mary's narrative of the generative wound as contained and employed for her own purposes as co-redemptrix becomes a prominent thread in the fabric from which Chicana rhetorics of woundedness arise.

In the Chicana art that I have presented in this chapter, as well as in Cherríe Moraga's texts, there are clear commonalities with the rhetorics that I have discussed in the iconography of the *virgenes abrideras*: the female body fragmented, time-collapses that link past wounds to present actions, hidden narratives of violence that externalize as confrontations, and repurposed ownership of those wound narratives. However, while the nuns introduced to the *virgenes abrideras* were presumably receptive audiences of Mary's confrontations and accordingly prompted towards acts of redemption, Chicana art often meets unreceptive audiences who are made uncomfortable with reminders of colonial, conversion, and pop culture invasions of body and soul.

Returning to this chapter's opening discussion of Tembeck's studies in contemporary autopathography, rhetorics of generative wounds are predominately marginalized in mainstream United States social discourses, a dis-ease with disease, as Tembeck terms it (adapted from Jo Spence; *Performative Autopathography* 17). Yet Tembeck views disrupted comfort as necessary to provoke audiences to emotionally

transition from passive reception to engaged responsibility.<sup>69</sup> In essence, Tembeck suggests that due to the nature of their subject matter, images of the ill or wounded have the potential to transform disinterested viewers into witnesses. Even if the audience is an unwilling or hostile witness, the act of confrontation with the wound prompts audience action—either to tend to the wound or let the injury continue. This has all along been the strategy of the rhetoric of woundedness in Catholic devotional art. It is also a strategy in Mesoamerican cultures wherein the act of sacrifice opens a space of *nepantla*. In this space, amid earthquakes, balance is secured for a brief moment where crossroads might be assessed and actions chosen in response to and in preparation for the next life disruption.

Like modern autopathographies, the Chicana cultural rhetorics that I study aim to make visible both physical and emotional afflictions to maintain the still-living self as part of a still-dislocated history, the still-inventing self as part of a still-relevant heritage. The impact is an insistence of asserting self as constructive in a society that is often untrained to esteem such value, particularly when delivered in the language of fragmented heritages, mixed media, cultural dislocations, wounds, and bisected bodies. After all, to apply the rhetorics of woundedness and fragmentation is to admit to one's own incompleteness. This is a dangerous strategy since declarations of incompleteness or semi-ness are often misinterpreted as self-contempt or disclosures of inability and defect. This is particularly the case in prominent United States discourses that are inherited from a northern European tradition that, as Dipesh Chakrabarty famously asserts, privileges epistemologies

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<sup>69</sup> Tembeck references Sharon Sliwinski, "A Painful Labour: Responsibility and Photography," *Visual Studies* 19.2 (Oct. 2002): 150-161. Sliwinski examines reception theory based on that which she perceives as the potential in the medium of photography to open the spectator's notions of responsibility from a set of moral duties and towards a questioning of personal ethical relationships between the visual object and self.

which lead learners to believe that “to understand anything, it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development” (6). Yet when one’s historical lineage is fragmented and when one cannot retrieve all those fragments into a cohesive oneness, then that history cannot be “understood” as a unity and wholeness. In other words, there is resistance to epistemologies and discourses of fragmented experiences—thereby extending the original mutilation of an incapacitated people.

Yet if, indeed, rhetorics of woundedness is cultivated as a strand of Chicana cultural rhetorics, then I am concerned of conditions wherein the nonreceptive audience cannot understand the strategies elected by the Chicana rhetor. This is especially troubling when a young adult is negotiating the two worlds of cultural and academic rhetorics. I wonder, for example, when a university composition student deliberately crafts her narrative persona as marginalized, fragmented, and semilingual, is her tactic recognized as a cultural rhetoric of generative wounds? I am inclined to speculate from my own experiences as a Chicana writer who self-identifies as a fragmented and semi-lingual student, and from my twenty years of teaching college composition to a Los Angeles demographic that consists largely of Chicanas, that those of us who speak and write in the cultural rhetorics of fragmentation, semi-ness, and woundedness are often not recognized for our historical rhetorical inheritances. Indeed, I observe a tendency by academic institutes that are not so familiar with Chicanx cultural rhetorics of woundedness to encourage writers to shun fragmentation and semi-ness. Rather, rhetors are often prompted to celebrate self as complete and whole in spite of a history and culture that remains very much detached from many of our daily realities.

Yet what is so shameful about fragmentation and semi-ness? Is the shame indeed that which is possessed by the Chicana rhetor who elects a vocabulary of semi-ness, partialness, and woundedness? Or is the shame a reminder to the audience that the rhetor has lost pieces of the cultural and historical self? Is the shame, in actuality, more about the impact of wound disclosures? Are audiences dis-eased when confronted with the semilingual, semi-American/semi-Other, semi-understood reality of many Chicana narrators? It is my hope that my study of the cultural rhetorics of woundedness can raise awareness not only of the historical lineage that remains active in the art and text of Chicana rhetorics but also that informs self-representation strategies of Chicana students. I thereby conclude my project with a final examination of the rhetorics of woundedness by considering feelings of academic woundedness in Chicana university composition students and the manner in which these emotions might be harnessed to generatively stimulate more inclusive classroom environments.

**CONCLUSION:**

**CRITICAL PEDAGOGY TO RECOVER THE HISTORICAL GENEALOGY  
OF CHICANX CULTURAL RHETORICS OF WOUNDEDNESS**

In 1803, Marcelo de la Cruz, an indigenous Nochistlán man, defied the bishop of Oaxaca, Mexico, by disregarding the condemnation of the dilapidated parish church of San Juan Chapultepec. In an act of rebellious devotion, Marcelo advanced, and eventually prevailed, in his mission to secure in San Juan Chapultepec a sanctuary for the seventeenth-century *virgen abridera* bequeathed to him by his aunt, Maria Manuel Aguilar. I echo in my research this act of employing an inherited object of fragmentation and woundedness to call attention to a dejected and derelict space, abandoned by its own institute. In my studies, this condemned space is the rhetorical home of Latinx students. By identifying Latinx cultural discursive lineages, my research considers ways that Composition might propagate rhetorical homes in which embodied learners can express cultural and gendered voice with no fear of transgressing rhetorical borders that invalidate their traditions.

Before closing my project, I thereby ground my scholarship of Chicanx historical and cultural rhetorics into a pedagogical examination. After twenty years of teaching college composition in Southern California, thirteen of which have been as an instructor in a Chicano and Latino Studies department, I believe that I can fill a void in composition research and critical pedagogy from an ethnic studies perspective that focuses on Chicanx history, cultural rhetorics (both visual and textual), translingual studies, and decolonial theory. My goal is for my scholarship to raise greater attention to students' varied journeys to reclaim forms of rhetorics that meaningfully validate their own self-representational

strategies as modern cultural writers. To reach this goal, we must surpass three primary hurdles: a disjunction between scholarship of historical-cultural rhetorics and writing pedagogy, the still-extant prioritization of a line of rhetorical history that privileges a northwestern European trajectory, and greater need for the development of multimodality or digital humanities to accommodate rhetorical traditions that emphasize visual and gestural rhetorics in addition to alphabetical. I hope to address these pedagogical challenges as they relate to the inclusion of students who participate in cultural rhetorics of woundedness.

### **Linking Rhetorical Histories with Cultural Composition**

The disjunction between scholarship of historical cultural rhetorics and writing pedagogy has been largely unattended to the detriment of our Chicanx students. Like many composition instructors, I locate my teaching strategies within students' needs and interests. I am encouraged in recent experiences to witness a heightened presence of Chicanx students in my Southern California classrooms. Because of this presence, I find myself increasingly striving to cultivate teaching strategies that respond to Chicanx students and a demonstrated want for validation as both members of the undergraduate community yet also as members of a rhetorical lineage isolated from central narratives. Unfortunately, the impact of Iberian and indigenous rhetorical traditions in the United States and even in California with its larger Chicanx student population is predominately neglected outside Spanish-language and ethnic studies scholarship and thus struggles for general application in composition. Additionally, a sampling of Chicanx rhetorical studies courses offered by ethnic studies departments in the California State University and University of California systems emphasize public discourse and socio-political movements

that stem from the 1960s Chicano Movement and post-1970s Chicana feminist rhetorics. This aligns with ethnic studies departments that serve missions to increase knowledge of contemporary realities and current multicultural interchanges and impacts. Such a focus necessarily prioritizes twentieth and twenty-first-century rhetorics; and while studies in Chicanx contemporary public discourses are enormously instructive and empowering to our students and their communities, they do not directly address an expansive rhetorical lineage to challenge northwestern-European domination of historical rhetorics. Concurrently, Chicanx rhetoric courses tend to privilege public speech and performance over composition. Surely, we have room for rhetoric courses that cultivate both civic performative discourse and textual self-expression.

I propose attention to a southwestern European trajectory that enters an Iberian and southwestern American cultural discourse wherein contact with Mesoamerican rhetorical cultures can be examined. It is vital for Latinx students to experience a moment similar to that narrated by Cherríe Moraga in the 2000 foreword to the second edition of *Loving in the War Years*—an epiphany that reveals her cultural inheritance through the figure of Coyolxauhqui. As detailed in chapter one, Moraga recalls this moment: “Without knowing, I looked for Coyolxauhqui in these dark wartime writings of twenty years ago, the dim reflection of my own pale moonface lighting my way. *I am not the first*, I kept telling myself, *I am not the only one to walk this road*” (iii). Here Moraga teaches us the importance to know that we have predecessors in our endeavors to express self. Moraga’s desires for companionship, in essence, are the “war years” during which nonreceptive audiences deny the validity of her rhetorical woundedness—torn amongst her various disparate identities and loyalties.

As an educator, I wonder how Moraga's need for rhetorical forebearers to establish her own sense of validity is a common experience for our students. It is of note that Moraga is still, in those twenty "war years," an established and renowned writer even when her discourse is isolated and/or dismissed. Yet how do our less established students feel when they seem to walk their road alone with no rhetorical ancestor lighting their way? I suspect that for many Chicanx students the metaphorical "war years" are the college years. Without the historical teachings that one's modes of self-expression and thereby identity construction are not isolated but rather participate in a long rhetorical tradition, one may indeed feel like the first and only one to walk this road. It scares me that many of our students daily navigate the university with a sense of fragmentation and split purposes that seem unique to themselves. The relief that Moraga experiences by locating a fragmented hero—a symbol of ever-present violence committed against Chicana bodies that strive for voice—is, I believe, a hero all too often denied to our students due to diminished representation of historical cultural rhetorics of generative woundedness. This situation is especially unjust due to this particular cultural rhetoric's vast proliferation in both Chicana discourse and advocacy writing and arts, as illustrated throughout my dissertation project. By emphasizing historical rhetorics of Ibero-American discursive traditions, I heighten recognition of Chicanx rhetorical forebearers. Only through increased representation of rhetorical legacies can Latinx students gain exposure to increased opportunities of validation, where they might learn that they do not walk alone but rather inherit a multitude of rhetorical traditions that continue to impact their self-representational strategies as modern writers.

Unfortunately, current scholarship of this Ibero-American trajectory suffers from both a lack of cultivation in rhetorical studies and a lack of connection with contemporary composition practices. Rather, when this trajectory is studied it is often done so in isolation from its living inheritors. In my teachings I have accordingly located very few resources that impart historical rhetorics that might connect to my Latinx students. One resource is Damián Baca and Victor Villanueva's *Rhetorics of the Americas 3114 BCE to 2012 CE* (2010), which presents varied essays that introduce students to indigenous and Ibero-American historical rhetorics; yet while this edited collection offers a valuable telling of, per Baca, "the other face" of America's rhetorical traditions, it does not explore the impact of this legacy on modern college composition writers. More recently, Baca's *Rhetorics Elsewhere and Otherwise: Contested Modernities, Decolonial Visions* (2019), co-edited with Romeo García, acknowledges ruptures in writing and rhetoric studies and stresses that decolonial scholarship must tend to that rupture. García and Baca explain that "decoloniality is marked by a shift and break from the storytellers of the past—think white Western male subjectivity—to the anthropoid, the 'others' themselves" (4). Yet while *Rhetorics Elsewhere and Otherwise* emphasizes a need to relink writing and cultural rhetorics, it steps away from the historical roots offered in *Rhetorics of the Americas*. Again, we see a disconnect between conversations on writing and on historical rhetorics.

For example, in one of *Rhetorics Elsewhere's* collected essays, "*La Cultura Nos Cura: Reclaiming Decolonial Epistemologies through Medicinal History and Quilting as Method*" by Iris D. Ruiz and Sonia C. Arellano, the authors explore therapeutic storytelling through quilting as a cultural rhetoric of healing. The essay expands rhetoric into textile expression and chooses quilting as an access point to indigenous narrative arts. However, while tactile

rhetoric enters as a historical medium, scholarship on a specific discursive tradition—for example, *how* a specific tactile rhetorical practice from a specific population produced healing textiles—remains elusive. The history, production, and social context of this tactile rhetoric, in other words, is applied generally across time and space, stemming from an unidentified indigenous practice. Textile as a healing communicative art is largely assumed rather than proven, and the rhetorical inheritances are framed as more intuitive to members of the culture rather than analyzed in the process of invention. This is not to say that Ruiz and Arellano’s observation that such a rhetorical tradition and its potential value in composition does not exist. Indeed, the authors’ expansion of composition’s borders to consider tactile rhetorics is an intriguing contribution. However, the framework of the essay as part of an edited collection that minimizes historical rhetorics to focus on contemporary cultural rhetorics is the issue. Furthermore, Ruiz and Arellano advocate textiles as alternate medium for storytelling yet do not actualize a form of composition pedagogy. I argue that all three aspects—historical rhetorics, modern cultural rhetorics, and composition pedagogy—must be in play as we target the needs of Latinx students in validating their inheritances as living rhetors.

In critical composition pedagogy, Juan Guerra makes strides in linking Ibero-American rhetorical practices with writing theories. Guerra’s “Putting Literacy in Its Place: Nomadic Consciousness and the Practice of Transcultural Repositioning” (2004) references conceptions of in-betweenness or nomadic consciousnesses that empower Chicanx writers. Guerra writes that “transcultural repositioning is a rhetorical ability that members of our [Chicanx] community often enact intuitively,” and these members are advantageously positioned between cultures in such a way as to “develop a rhetorical practice that

mainstream dwellers who rarely venture outside the matrices of their own safe houses are not likely to cultivate” (34). Guerra applies this “nomadic consciousness” to composition pedagogy and asks educators to foster spaces of in-betweenness wherein students might compose reflections on their travels between socio-linguistic identities. In these student reflections, Guerra believes that writers might engage critically with their immediate world. However, he does not link this pedagogy with engagement of historical rhetorical traditions. Indeed, he neglects to develop why, exactly, Chicanx writers might possess this “intuitive” transcultural repositioning ability. Guerra might be recalling Anzaldúa’s forked-tongued borderland-dweller that rises from *mestiza consciousness* theories. Alternatively, he might be drawing on Baca’s *nepantlisma* studies, a reference to Nahua metaphysical liminal states. Still, the link between Guerra’s pedagogy and a particular Latinx inheritance that is based on historical cultural rhetorics is not advanced. The result may be a truly nomadic state for Chicanx writers who can locate no rhetorical home-base, just a wandering experience that might very well heighten strategies in adapting to new rhetorical encounters yet still leaves us homeless.

In my research, I endeavor to explore Chicanx historical rhetorics and link that history with critical pedagogy to offer rhetorical homelands for modern Chicanx writers. If we aim to guide students towards strategies of empowerment through writing, we must contextualize their options in their own rhetorical inheritances. Accordingly, rhetorics of semi-ness, fragmentation, and generative wounds are not shameful in their lack of cohesive wholeness but rather are discursive home-bases that must be recognized for their cultural values. I argue that historical cultural rhetorics must thereby be actively endorsed in composition classrooms. We must endeavor to bridge scholarly conversations in Latinx

historical rhetorics and student composition, so that students can more regularly access their own discursive lineages and select among their inherited rhetorical strategies. This scholarship would best be introduced to incoming university writers in lower division cultural rhetorics writing courses, to provide rhetorical forebears and resist the perception of university life as “war years.” As well, upper division courses on emerging issues in rhetoric and composition might direct graduating majors to extend research to further bridge disjunctions between cultural rhetorical scholarship and pedagogy.

### **Delinking Chicanx Cultural Rhetorics from Dominant Narratives**

While it is important to bridge cultural historical rhetorics to the modern writer, a concurrent delinking is crucial. I speak specifically of delinking from a line of rhetorical history that privileges a northwestern European trajectory; this is the second pedagogical problem to which I apply my research. My concern is the continued academic neglect of rhetorical traditions that entered the western Americas and that still inform Latinx rhetors in United States composition classrooms. Clearly, the issue’s timeliness is pressing as Latinx students are pressured by increasingly hostile popular media conversations to believe that their cultural inheritances stem exclusively south of the U.S.-Mexico border rather than also historically rooted in Amerindian and Ibero-American contexts across southwestern regions. I have observed that composition pedagogy often promotes a similar historical trajectory that tells of a rhetorical framework which travels from Aristotle’s Greece into northwestern Europe and ultimately into the northeastern United States. Such a trajectory reinforces beliefs that Latinx rhetorical practices are foreign and facilitates textual borders between composition and those students who do not share northwestern European

rhetorical inheritances. As we expand inclusivity, I wonder how we might support historical rhetorical genealogies that are not mapped into a single privileged narrative.

This expansion puts into action within composition pedagogy Walter Mignolo's 2007 vision of a *pluriversality* as a focus on linking histories and narratives of decolonization with a new common foundation for meaning-making and therefore self-representation ("Delinking" 497). In the foreword of the 2018 *Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge*, edited by Bernd Reiter, Mignolo further develops and explains *pluriversality* as renouncing the "conviction that the world must be conceived as a unified totality [...] in order for it to make sense, and viewing the world as an interconnected diversity instead, sets us free to inhabit the pluriverse rather than the universe" ("Foreword. On Pluriversality and Multipolarity" x). In the context of composition, Mignolo's argument advocates need for a multitude of textual homes that may accommodate various cultural rhetorics and self-expression strategies. By identifying Latinx cultural discursive lineages, my research considers ways that Composition might propagate such rhetorical homes in which embodied learners can express cultural and gendered voice with no fear of transgressing rhetorical borders that invalidate their traditions.

I am reminded of Peter Elbow's seminal works in composition pedagogy. In "Inviting the Mother Tongue," Elbow shares a similar vision of cultivating a home for each writing student. Elbow offers that "People can't learn to write well unless they write a great deal and with some pleasure, and they can't do that unless they feel writing to be as comfortable as an old shoe—something they can slip into naturally and without pinching" (362). Elbow continues, "Our home language is not just inside us; we are also inside it" (362). However,

when that home is not recognized in academic neighborhoods—not taught as a core language home-base for modern writers—students might feel pressured to dismantle their cultural rhetorical home to construct a new academic-sanctioned language space. Kay Halasek observes in her *Pedagogy of Possibility: Bakhtinian Perspectives on Composition Studies* that such dismantling “remains one of education’s most ironic demands[:] that a student who gains admission to the academy must lose, deny, or neglect her home knowledge in order to acquire the power to defend and argue for the validity of that same alternative world view” (36-37). Halasek and Elbow reflect largely on institutional indoctrination through suppression of home rhetorics in exchange for academic convention, a process poignantly narrated by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiongo, in his postcolonial pedagogy and cultural theory. Ngũgĩ recalls his own experiences as an African student who was taught that his family’s language identity was associated with “negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment.” He continues, “We who went through that school system were meant to graduate with a hatred of the people and the culture and the values of the language of our daily humiliation and punishment” (*Decolonising the Mind* 28). Although Ngũgĩ reflects on his African experiences, similar narratives abound in Latinx writings.

A quick sampling of contemporary Latinx fiction and nonfiction reveals a prevailing theme on intra-cultural conflicts between the modern schooled writer who may prevail in mainstream United States rhetorical spaces yet is confronted by unreceptive cultural-home audiences. In Julia Alvarez’s novels, such as *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1992) and *¡Yo!* (1997), the main protagonist, Yolanda, experiences a constant tug-of-war between moments of alienation and reconciliation with her family—all regarding her career as a

mainstream writer who makes public her private truths. Ana Castillo also reveals family battles over her identity as a writer in both her fictionalized memoir, *Watercolor Women/Opaque Men* (2006) and non-fiction memoir *Black Dove* (2016); Castillo regards the metaphorical borderland that she must cross between her writer-home and culture-home as far from utopian and indeed an additional burden she must carry in order to liberate her voice (Soto *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer* 64). Milcha Sanchez-Scott addresses the struggles to maintain one's culture-home while chasing competitive ambitions. Her plays, *Dog Lady* (1984) and *The Cuban Swimmer* (1984), metaphorically illustrate these issues through framing the protagonists' identities as racers. One a runner and the other a swimmer, they must choose different pathways towards victory: either leave your culture-home behind by transforming into an animal or more specifically a dog-lady, or tow your family along your race course at the risk of drowning, as in *The Cuban Swimmer*. The culture-home here hinders the young protagonists' aspirations to be competitive in United States society. Although their dilemma is fictionalized through race competitions, the theme of the assimilated or academic writer resonates in Sanchez-Scott's plays. They speak to the student experience of facing additional costs when entering competitive spaces, which is most prominently found in classrooms.

The struggle to liberate the writer from the cultural and academic tug-of-war is perhaps most memorably conveyed by Richard Rodriguez in his memoir, *Hunger for Memory* (1982). Even in his early years, he recalls the realization that once indoctrinated in the classroom, he is compelled to quit the nomadic borderlands in order to inhabit a new textual home. He explains:

"Here is a child who cannot forget that his academic success distances him from a life he loved, even from his own memory of himself. [...] Gradually, necessarily, the

balance is lost. The boy needs to spend more and more time studying, each night enclosing himself in the silence permitted and required by intense concentration. He takes his first step toward academic success, away from his family. [...] He cannot afford to admire his parents” (51)

Leslie Ann Locke, Lolita A. Tabron, and Terah T. Venzant Chambers examine the enormous family and cultural losses a student may feel compelled to accrue in order to chase competitive ambitions in the classroom. In the authors’ 2017 “‘If You Show Who You are, Then They are Going to Try to Fix You’: The Capitals and Costs of Schooling for High-Achieving Latina Students,” they argue that students from traditionally marginalized groups enter academic spaces with cultural capital that is not valued by institutes (14). The result is often cultural-identity suppression to avoid assessment of academic ability and/or scrutinization as a “real” student; this suppression necessarily distances the student from her family, culture, and rhetorical traditions (26, 30). The authors conclude that for Latina students it is difficult to bring an authentic sense of self to academic settings since achievement alienates expression of their cultural self (27). I believe this is especially true when a student employs rhetorics of woundedness that involve self-representation as fragmented and incomplete—states of identity that provoke mainstream responses to “fix” the student. Interestingly, this is a point that Locke, Tabron, and Chambers emphasize, inspired by their interview with a Chicana student, Lillie, who observes that if a student conceals her Latinx heritage, then she is less likely to be confronted with corrective measures (26).<sup>70</sup> Such an observation recalls my dissertation’s previous discussion of Trinh

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<sup>70</sup> In her interview with Locke, Tabron, and Chambers, Lillie (age: 20 years; racial self-identification: Latina/Mexican) contextualizes her observations by recalling a bi-racial friend who is repeatedly placed in ESL classes. Although her friend is “half-Black and half-White” per Lillie’s description, Lillie indicates her belief that her friend’s bi-racial features are misidentified as Latinx. For Lillie, this perceived Latinx heritage is the root of her

T. Minh-ha's notion of the "not-I" as an othering of one's cultural self. The "not-I" conceals non-normative selves to pursue social and academic benefits offered to the externally sanctioned "I" which is instructed by colonial and later United States institutes. Karen Barad explains that Minh-ha's "not-I" theory confronts notions established by a "colonizing logic" that perceives the "I" as "maintaining and stabilizing itself through eliminating or dominating that which it deems to be "the other," the "not-I" ("Diffracting Diffraction" 169). Accordingly, the "not-I" is rejected from active identity and consequently may be diminished as motivator for external performance of self. A similar process stifles cultural expression and participation in historical rhetorics in modern Latinx writers.

In " 'The Politics of Location': Text as Opposition" (2002), Renee Moreno proposes a critical composition pedagogy to beckon the previously suppressed "not-I" or cultural identity. Moreno conceptualizes writing as a space of resistance wherein students occupy text with stories of their lives, cultures, and values. Such personal narrative in composition aims to prevent that which Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o famously observes as the "colonization of the mind." Moreno raises concerns about colonization via education: "What happens to you as a result of becoming educated? What parts of an identity remain intact? What parts transform? How do you see yourself?" (225). Moreno's questions motivate my interest in critical pedagogies that assist students to resist academic conformity. However, I wonder if the answer to these questions is more efficiently located not solely in resistance but in

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friend's continued placement in ESL and reveals a language bias against those who appear to be Latinx. Accordingly, Lillie concludes that students who can conceal their Latinx identity may be advantaged to do so. Lillie states: "[P]eople swear to God that she is Mexican and they try to put her in ESL, and it's like if you show who you are then they are going to try and fix you. So if you pretend to not be that person, then they are not going to try and fix you anymore" (26).

facilitation of an academy that makes more accessible cultural rhetorical landscapes on which homes may be built from historical belonging.

I am reminded of Lisa Delpit's "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children" (1988), which memorably asserts that while conformity is not her goal, students are nonetheless lifted when they access the "culture of power" via academic conventions. Delpit suggests that by denying conventional skills, in favor of process-oriented teaching, instructors withhold academic tools of success from students who reside outside power cultures. While I align with Moreno's argument that every student should have a textual home to safely express the cultural self and I accordingly support process-oriented teachings that make mindful one's election of inherited rhetorics, I also align with Delpit's argument that students must acquire tools of the power culture to advance in academia. However, I offer that this is not necessarily an either-or situation; I suggest that every culture is, indeed, a culture of power if only we delink pedagogy from a privileged narrative, and if only we learn to recognize varied cultural rhetorical inheritances and their potential impact on contemporary rhetorical practices in composition.

My research thus makes prominent Ibero-American rhetorical traditions as a "culture of power" in its own right to support Latinx writers with a historical rhetorical landscape in the United States that has existed as long as—indeed, longer than—any other European-contact tradition. By offering an Ibero-American rhetorical genealogy, students in diverse environments might recognize the multitude of rhetorical traditions available to help us build our own textual homes that have, all along, belonged in United States composition textual spaces. For this reason, I again emphasize the importance of teaching

the history of rhetoric as a linked component to composition, and to extend that history to those inherited beyond Northwestern-European and Northeastern-U.S. rhetorical cultures. I advocate increased development of rhetorical histories in upper division and graduate courses that focus on rhetorical lineages from medieval Iberia to colonial impact in order to explore modern manifestations of those traditions in Latinx writings, focusing on textual and visual mediums. Concurrently, I suggest an American-based focus that examines rhetorical lineages from medieval Mesoamerica to colonial impact and subsequent survival of those traditions in modes that include yet move beyond the alphabetic.

### **Expanding Rhetoric Studies and Composition beyond the Alphabetic**

In linking Latinx composition students with their rhetorical inheritances it is important to cultivate studies in multimodality or digital humanities to accommodate traditions that function beyond alphabetic. Emphasis on visual, body, and material rhetorics raises the third proposal that I address in my research. When considering Latinx historical and cultural rhetorics, we must recall that Iberians first approached indigenous peoples through visual and corporal gestures to overcome verbal and textual obstacles. Building on Daniel Solórzano's critical decolonial pedagogies, I argue that when a people's communicative modes encounter a colonizing system that obliterates or transforms those modes, recovery of rhetorical genealogies necessitates interweaving rhetorical genres. My research accordingly recalls innovative theories in rhetorical studies such as Karma Chávez's analysis of rhetorical bodies in "The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept" (2018) and Laura E. Pérez's observations of "picture books" in Chicanx texts in her "Spirit Glyphs: Reimagining Art and Artist in the Work of Chicana Tlaminime" (2010). I also appreciate the study of tactile rhetorics offered in Ruiz and Arellano's

aforementioned “*La Cultura Nos Cura: Reclaiming Decolonial Epistemologies through Medicinal History and Quilting as Method*” for its expansion into multimodal self-expression, even if not historically rooted in a specific rhetorical narrative.

Most significantly, I pull from across disciplines to tap the wealth of decolonial methodology in cultural studies. *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* offers a model for recovering Andean rhetorics by applying multiple methodologies and multimodal analysis. The authors, anthropologist Joanne Rappaport and art historian Tom Cummins, suggest a broadening of discussions on literacy—in this way recalling Walter Mignolo’s 1995 *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*. Mignolo similarly utilizes as evidence various cultural artifacts, analyzed through multiple disciplines. Mignolo explicitly rejects standard comparative studies that, for example, pair products of art with art, literature with literature, rhetoric with rhetoric. Noting his debt to Jacques Derrida’s move to collapse distinctions between speech and writing, Mignolo repurposes for cultural studies this breaking of disciplines. He offers transdisciplinary methodologies that include linguistics, postcolonial studies, philosophy, literature, semiotics, and history. His goal is to salvage potential rhetorical choices that cultural producers may have considered prior to their ultimate selection. Thereby, Mignolo emphasizes *how* products were formulated, making end products irrelevant as objects of cultural examination. Specifically, it is the selection of rhetorical strategy in representations of self, location, and society that is important for cultural studies.

To understand these moments of transcultural productions, Rappaport and Cummins cite W. E. B. Du Bois’s double-consciousness theory in which the Other is internalized into a double-view of self, Richard White’s middle ground theory in which

interactions among cultural identities lead to a morphing into new cultural forms with the peripheries being less affected, and Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone theory that builds on Fernando Ortiz's trans-culturation theory in which transference of cultural influences operates in multiple directions and unfolds in continuous fashion across time, creating new cultural representations (34, 45). Rappaport and Cummins prefer Pratt's model which best aligns with their metaphor of colonial culture as a tapestry—threads spreading from and into multiple directions to intertangle, thus transforming the physical plane with diverse colors that serve one function. What I find additionally useful in Rappaport and Cummins's tapestry metaphor is its avoidance of binaries or hybridity. The tapestry does not recover indigeneity at exclusion of colonial realities and does not impose European structures on indigenous subjects. This model compliments my historical pedagogy, in my attempt to not isolate Chicanx inheritors into solely indigenous or solely Iberian narratives but rather to consider Iberian rhetorical traditions alongside indigenous in the formation of modern rhetorical identities in Latinx student populations. To accomplish this task, we must consider beyond textual words and examine various rhetorical furnishings that may be utilized within the Chicanx cultural rhetoric-home.

I believe from my own class surveys that there is great interest in multimodal literacies and rhetorics. I began to distribute anonymous and voluntary surveys to students in my composition courses in Spring 2017. These surveys were limited to probing student responses to written and oral assessment regarding translingual student populations. With the demographic of composition students that I teach in Southern California, approximately fifty-eight percent of surveyed students considered English as their primary language—although one-hundred percent noted English as their academic language. These statistics

lead me to wonder whether students whose primary language is not their academic language might encounter a personal sense of linguistic in-betweenness or even semilingualism as a routine aspect of their navigations through language spaces. If they do indeed consider themselves semilingual, how does this identification affect their experiences with assessment formats? Furthermore, how might non-alphabetical rhetorical engagements through multimodal pedagogy impact the development of their writing strategies?

In my findings, approximately sixty percent of surveyed composition students felt that oral assessment (in contrast with written assessment) does not disadvantage speakers whose primary language is not English. In comments that students wrote to support their belief that oral assessment is less disadvantageous than written, the common argument was that in written exams many students are pressured to focus on structure and convention rather than in oral exams where they focus on sharing that which they have learned and what they think of that knowledge; students also felt that it is easier to orally elaborate on analytical points rather than when writing since they lose time while struggling with spelling, word choice, and demonstrating English mastery. Students expressed that written exams test language skills while oral exams test knowledge.

While I am not suggesting that composition pedagogy convert to non-textual formats, I do encourage pedagogy that acknowledges and incorporates multimodal rhetorical traditions. I believe that multimodality can and does create pedagogical pathways to both better accommodate students who face complications in translingual repositionings and better accommodate a vast array of cultural traditions that utilize oral, visual, material, and corporal communicative modes in addition to alphabetic. I believe that

expansion of rhetorical expression into the non-alphabetic allows a wider selection of recognized rhetorical furnishings from which students might build their textual homes—including the corporal languages of woundedness and semi-ness.

Interestingly, in my classroom surveys I have noticed that many of my students seek to maintain their primary languages in personal interactions while acquiring a sense of “just enough” English-language writing skills to flourish in a future career. When I interrogate the notion of “just enough,” I find that students identify alphabetic writing as essential to complete their degree and prosper in their careers, while other forms of communication, be it language, dialect, or non-alphabetic, continue to flourish in personal practices without limit. I suggest that many of my students are personally resisting full academic assimilation by holding tightly and proudly to a linguistic *semi*-ness that compartmentalizes the “just enough” required writing skills from the free-forming multimodal and language expressions outside the classroom. I believe that in this choice to maintain the language that they know best—even if this choice exposes them to accusations of a *semilingual* existence—there are strategic advantages.

As Asao Inoue argues in “The Technology of Writing Assessment and Racial Validity” (2009), assessment is “one way society produces social arrangements” (97). To make visible these social arrangements via confrontation of a controversial term that marks “semi-ness,” might discussion of flaws in assessment also become more productive? I believe that some of my students consciously choose to wear their *semilingualism* to encourage recognition of who they are, where they come from, where they are going, and how labels of shame attempt to stop them. Furthermore, by wearing these labels, they confront social arrangements. Thus, my students continue to overwhelmingly switch to

their personal languages outside the classroom, which are often also their maintained primary languages and widely multimodal—distinct from the alphabetical academic language. I find that while it is vital to reflect on the violence that a term like *semilingual* can inflict, particularly in the classroom, I also see potential for action and transformation by direct confrontation and appropriation of the term.

In the 1999 “Textual Identities: The Importance of Being Non-Native,” Claire Kramsch and Wan Shun Eva Lam speak of language-learners who consciously choose to explore the tensions that might occur when they refuse to abide by any single “correct” norm of language usage. In allowing these tensions, writers construct new “textual homes” for their alternative “textual identities” (62). I find this argument especially useful in the manner that the authors address these language users’ avoidance of “correctness” to partially exile themselves into an in-between space yet one that they deliberately build and inhabit to mark their distinction and emphasize critical acuteness from their chosen vantage points. In this way, Kramsch and Lam reverse the hierarchy that places native-English writers at the top of critical writing, arguing instead that the rhetorical homes of non-native-English writers afford a critical insider-outsider stance. This aligns with Edward Said’s discussion on the advantage and potential power of the exile perspective. I appreciate this reversal and wonder how the concept of “textual homes” and “textual identities” might be constructed in classroom dynamics for students who find a strategic advantage—both personal and academic—in maintaining a *semilingual* positionality.

As an insider-outsider, a language user employs that which Victor Villanueva describes as a “relativistic perception of language” (*Bootstraps* 23).<sup>71</sup> Villanueva defines this perception as belonging to code-switchers who know, as they daily navigate various locations and peoples, that language is never fixed. While such a perspective is punished by designers of standardized tests who often assume a fixed meaning of language and prioritize the alphabetical, the “relativistic perception” allows rhetorical power, as the insider-outsider knows how to employ codes in a more astute manner to fit a particular location and audience. I therefore propose that such positionality might serve as a reminder that the *semilingual*, as not master of one language but rather explorer of traversing languages, can refashion her language to advance her own immediate goals while challenging perceptions that language is stagnant and knowledge of language can ever be absolute. Additionally, I wonder how a conscious acceptance and resulting visibility of *semi*-ness might insist that all forms of assessment be reconsidered. I am interested in examining how multimodal literacies might transform the way writing is taught, assessed, and applied in classrooms with diverse rhetoric-homes.

Jason Palmeri, in *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy* (2012), argues that “we must draw upon all the available modes of composition practice and theory in order to reach students to compose in all the available modes of media” (15). While Palmeri is focused primarily on updating writing pedagogy to utilize advanced technological media, he touches on the idea that images, sounds, and words should all be

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<sup>71</sup> Egon Guba and Yvonne S. Lincoln in *Fourth Generation Evaluation* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1989) provide a helpful account of relativistic ontology as asserting that “Truth” is fluid and multiple, constructed on socially-governed realities. Guba and Lincoln, like Villanueva, favor academic pedagogies that nurture relativistic perspectives.

available as modes from which students may select to best suit their rhetorical strategies in writing (2). Applying Ann Berthoff's suggestion that writing pedagogy consider the ways people apply diverse symbol systems for meaning-making, Palmeri challenges instructors to question the confines of composing solely with words (39). Rather, he suggests a "pluralist vision" that engages multimodality to develop strategies for "reseeing, rehearing, and ultimately transforming the world" (158). While Palmeri largely focuses on multimodality as a forward-moving composition pedagogy, I add that it also brings cultural rhetorics from past and current traditions into conversation with digital technologies.

Latinx historical rhetorics are rich in multimodality—from Mesoamerican glyph and textile schemes to Early Modern codex picture-texts, from revolutionary cartoons to Civil Rights murals, from LGBTQ+ body performance to feminist digital *testimonios*. Therefore, studies of multimodality might expand to include not only new technological options for meaning-making but formulate strategies to recognize cultural rhetorics that have always employed beyond the alphabetic. Multimodality must study relationships among multimodal literacies, cultural studies, academic writing, and community engagement. As current challenges and opportunities relocate us to a virtual classroom, multimodality rises as a future of communication—at last, threatening to displace the alphabetic written word from its hierarchical privilege. Yet we might also examine in decolonial contexts how multimodality was historically abandoned, along with particular cultural rhetorics that were sidelined to the fringes of academic spaces.

I end, however, with a caution raised by Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes in their *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition* (2014). The authors envision the application of multimodality in composition as reaching "beyond a genre's expectations in

order to resist discursive regimes” (201). Yet they also remind us of tendencies to colonize multimedia in order to serve alphabetic print-based goals. Rather, they argue, multimedia must be introduced to students as rich in their own rhetorical capabilities (19). Like Palmeri, Alexander and Rhodes focus largely on emerging multimedia technology yet are mindful of media across time and contexts (69). With that sentiment I propose that while Composition consider multimodal pedagogies that draw from modern and cultural rhetorics, that students be afforded the opportunity to learn of various histories behind multimodal literacies and the centuries of violence committed against those histories.

It is my hope that through development of scholarship that links historical-cultural rhetorics with writing pedagogy—beyond the alphabetic—we might curtail student misperceptions that they walk alone.

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