

WAR, GENDER, AND STATE FORMATION IN LATINA WAR STORIES FROM  
THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION TO THE WAR ON TERROR

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By defining war as a form of state violence that naturalizes racial oppression and restrictive gender norms, my dissertation renders an understanding of war's effects on Chicana/o and Mexican culture and gender formation. Whereas most studies of war culture bypass a consideration of women's experiences within militarized societies, I examine how Latina writers disrupt the state's self-legitimizing war discourses with counternarratives of their own. In Chapter 1, I study the relationship between state formations, culture, and war. Focusing on Latina writers, my dissertation asks: How do state formations naturalize war? How do women intervene in war's discursive formations? How are war and gender articulated?

In Chapter 2, I examine Mexican nationalist and Chicano cultural nationalist discourses that feature revenant icons like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. Sabina Berman's *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* (1994), Sandra Cisneros's "Eyes of Zapata" (1991), and Helena María Viramontes's "The Long Reconciliation" (1985) present feminist literary critiques that counter these reiterations. By re-centering female desire in revolutionary historiography, the authors generate critical analyses of patriarchal master narratives.

In Chapter 3, I analyze María Cristina Mena's critique of postrevolutionary nationalism in *The Water-Carrier's Secret* (1942). Drawing on economic development theories, I show how Mena rejects official narratives of revolutionary progress, anticlericalism, and Indian assimilation. Next, I situate Mena's *Boy Heroes of Chapultepec* (1953) within discourses of Good Neighborism and the Cold War. Mena's text repudiates

the historical revisionism during the 1950s that attempted to reframe the US-Mexico War of 1848 within an anti-communist context.

Chapter 4 examines the role of Latinas/os in the modern US military. I analyze the various effects of neoliberalism on military protocol – recruitment methodologies, military advertising, and voluntarism – to examine how the military targets Latina/o recruits. I read Elena Rodriguez's *Peacetime* (1997), a novel about a Chicana soldier, along with published accounts of Latinas in the Iraq War. I further consider the complex role of Latina/o immigrants as non-citizen soldiers. Analyzing Latina war stories of life in boot camp and on the front lines, shows how Latina soldiering has profound implications for conceptions of citizenship, nationalism, and militarized gender norms.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Belinda Linn Rincón earned her B.A. in English and Women's Studies from Vassar College. After graduating, she returned to her hometown to teach English at Fontana High School while earning a teaching credential in secondary education at California State University at San Bernardino. She later received an M.A. in English from Boston College before entering the Ph.D. program in English at Cornell University.

*Para mi esposo Rodrigo Rodríguez quien tiene todo mi corazón*

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In the opening pages of his novel *La Maravilla* (1993), Alfredo Vea Jr. writes: “*Hay gente en esta página conmigo*. There are people with me on this page.” For me, those people include Pablo and Socorro Linn from Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, and Gilberto and Victoria Rincón from El Paso, Texas, and Las Cruces, New Mexico, respectively. Both sets of my *fronterizo* abuelos were born during the waning years of the Mexican Revolution. This study has been a genealogical project that attempts to imagine how their lives and those of my bisabuelos – Pablo and Rosa Linn and Santos and Hipolita Rincón – were shaped by a war that raged in the northern Mexican deserts of Sonora and Chihuahua. Their memories and experiences are inscribed in my heart and in my name where I carry them proudly.

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I also take pleasure in thanking Marti Dense and the Latino Studies Program for providing so much help over the years. Two generous grants from the LSP funded much of my travel and research. Similarly, I would like to thank the English Department and the Graduate School for much needed conference travel grants. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Michele Mannella for helping me in so many ways. Finally, I thank the Provost's Office for providing a one-year Diversity Fellowship which was critical to my academic development.

*Hay familia en estas páginas conmigo.* The subject of this dissertation was inspired by the ways in which militarism has insinuated itself in small and significant ways into my family's life. The military marks my family in the way my father, Sobel, still carries his dog tags in his wallet to this day. He is a proud yet unpretentious man who rarely talks about his years in the war, but when he does, his stories help me imagine the experience of young Chicanos in Viet Nam. As a child, I remember that while his hands were always calloused and cut from working with machinery and greasy moving metal parts, my dad was always happy. After coming home tired from work, he would drive my sister and me to the public library and fall asleep in the parking lot as we spent hours choosing and checking out books. I think about my mother, Rosa, and what her life must have been like during the 1960s and 70s as a recent immigrant living amidst anti-war protests and school blowouts in East L.A. Growing up, I remember how my mother would work all day in stuffy offices, endure torturous commutes on congested freeways, and then do extra chores on the weekends rather than tell me to stop reading from my stack of Agatha Christie mysteries. As the C.E.O. of the Rincón family, she made sure we had what we needed and usually what we wanted. My mother is an intelligent woman who was not given the opportunities that she gave to me and Irene. I also think about my sister Irene's struggle to finish her college education as she shuttled around from base to base as the wife of a Navy seaman. Eventually, my hard-working sister would raise three amazing children virtually single-handedly while working full time as a teacher and going to night school to earn her Masters. Renee, Robert, and Ryan inherited their beauty, charm, humor, and intelligence from Irene. These Chicanitos represent the next generation. I love them deeply. My family taught me how to work hard, and those skills have served me well. Their sacrifices and love are written on the pages you are about to read.

*Hay una persona muy especial en estas páginas conmigo.* There is one person, above all others, who deserves and receives my greatest love, respect, and appreciation. Even though my doctoral degree selfishly displays my name only, it is more accurately a jointly-held degree that I share with Rodrigo. I thank him for putting his needs and goals secondary to mine as we bounced around the country in pursuit of my education. I thank him for all the things he did to help me endure graduate school. He planted a beautiful garden for me to meditate on and made sure I had a warm casita to work in during frigid Ithaca winters. He drove me to conferences, sat in the audience, and attended lectures with me. He fixed stubborn computers and printers that refused to work. He took care of me when I was sick. He did all of this and more while earning his own degree and, in the process, inspiring me with his own thirst for knowledge and his drive for self-improvement. I take great pride in inscribing his name, Rodrigo Rodríguez, within this institution of higher learning because this degree is the cumulative result of the mundane acts and magnanimous sacrifices he has made throughout the years to contribute to my education.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Chapter 1: War, Gender, and State Formation in Latina War Stories	1
Chapter 2: Desiring History in Sabina Berman's, Sandra Cisneros's, and Helena María Viramontes's Narratives of the Mexican Revolution	20
Chapter 3: Heroic Boys and Good Neighbors: U.S.-Mexico Relations in María Cristina Mena's Young Adult Fiction	101
Chapter 4: Representing the Nation: Latinas/os and Neoliberal Militarism	168
Conclusion	239
Works Cited	255

## CHAPTER 1: WAR, GENDER, AND STATE FORMATION IN LATINA WAR STORIES

Reflecting on his military experience, former Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez notes that “the ethics and the value system of the military profession fit almost perfectly with my own heritage” (Mariscal “Homeland” 39). For Sanchez, both his Mexican heritage and his military service complement each other for the purported notions of duty they espouse, the culture of pride they instill, and the normative masculinities they support. In her statement about her Mexican heritage, Brigadier General Angela Salinas describes a similar cultural affinity for military service: “The Marine Corps is much like my Hispanic culture. It’s about family. The family is the core held together by tradition, pride, honor, and commitment” (qtd. in Young and Corvino). While Sanchez and Salinas perceive an almost perfect fit between their ethnic culture and the military, their statements raise questions about how militarism is made to seem congruent to Latino culture and how the state uses culture to naturalize the relationship between military service, ethnic identity, and gender norms.

Their comments and our current military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan attest to the need to understand more fully how war discourse and militarism operate within the realm of culture and how Latinas/os are affected by them. According to Cynthia Enloe, militarization is a process in which “a person or thing is controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas” (*Maneuvers* 3). Societies and individuals are transformed by militarism when they come to “see militaristic presumptions as valuable and normal.” But this normalcy and naturalization obscures the political manipulations that are invested in shaping a society’s views on “violence, soldiering, and gender” (10). For many Latino communities, military service has often been tied to issues of cultural and legal forms

of citizenship. For example, the 1917 Jones Act imposed naturalization onto Puerto Rican men and thereby allowed the US military to immediately draft “20,000 [Puerto Ricans] to fight on the European front” in the First World War (Amaya “Dying American” 13). During the Viet Nam War, Latino soldiers were drafted in numbers disproportionate to their general population which, according to George Marsical, explains why one of the two surnames that appear most often on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is Rodríguez (*Aztlán* 3).

In the following three chapters, I examine different examples of Chicana and Mexicana cultural work that centers on the ways in which war and militarism impact gender constructions and systems of power within the US and Mexico. I analyze the work of Mexican playwright Sabina Berman and Chicana writers Sandra Cisneros and Helena María Viramontes to show how narratives of the Mexican Revolution impact modern gender constructions. My chapter on María Cristina Mena’s young adult fiction examines her views of Good Neighborism and anti-communism as two war discourses that perpetuate unequal U.S.-Mexico power relations. In the final chapter, I use the work of Elena Rodriguez, published interviews with Latina soldiers, and documentary film to analyze the changing status of US Latinas and Latina/o immigrants in the US armed forces.

US Latina/o writers have responded to Latinos’ evolving and conflicted relationship to citizenship, military service, and war through the important yet under examined literary genre of Latina/o war writing. As early as 1858, Latina and Latino writers have narrated the social and political effects of US and Mexican war policy beginning with Juan Seguín’s memoirs of the battle for Texas independence followed by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s historical novels *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872) and *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) which focus on the Civil War and the US-Mexico War of 1848 respectively. In the early 20th-century, Latina/o writers such

as Josefina Niggli, Leonor Villegas de Magnón, Sara Estela Ramírez, and María Cristina Mena responded to the effects of the Mexican Revolution. Writers like Américo Paredes describe the experiences of Mexican American soldiers during WWII, while Rolando Hinojosa and others recount the Mexican American experience during the Korean War. In the years following the Viet Nam War, writers – many of whom were former Viet Nam veterans themselves – interjected the Chicano experience into the US canon of Viet Nam War literature, challenging its dominant perspective while adding to its critique of state policy. The Chicano movement's call for Third World solidarity in Latin America further inspired Helena María Viramontes, Demetria Martínez, and Alejandro Murguía to examine the Central American wars of the 1970s and 80s and to re-assert a literary tradition that links fiction and poetry with transnational social movements. During the 1990s, Jose Zuñiga and Elena Rodríguez challenged militarized masculinity in texts written from their perspective as former military personnel who served during and after the Persian Gulf War. This varied and impressive range of Chicano war writing constitutes a rich and complex site of literary production that shapes and contests larger trends within Chicano and Latino literary canons as well as hegemonic notions of US literature.

War literature, by definition, is a literature concerned with social and political rupture in which societies undergo fundamental change under the context of mobilization, deployment, invasion, and demobilization. Chicana/o studies has paid increasing attention to the effects of war and militarism on Chicano communities and cultural production realizing that without a comprehensive examination of Chicano/a war writing, we lose important analyses of how US Latino/a writers re-imagine social change, political protest, and cultural resistance. In this study, I trace how war shapes Chicana/o and Mexican cultural production and gender identities and the ways Mexicanas, Mexican American women, and Chicanas have responded to the pervasive

yet strategic gendered militarism of their cultures and communities. Throughout this endeavor, I emphasize the mutually constituting and constantly changing nature of war, state formation and gender.

While wars are actual events with devastating material consequences, they are also discursively reproduced in narratives that delineate enemies, battlefields, and victories or losses. Narratives of past wars often provide important symbolic language with which to describe present and future state directives. For example, former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo's (1994-2000) speech on the commemoration of the Niños Héroes exemplifies the ways in which states utilize the narratives of martial history to fortify national identification.<sup>1</sup> At one point in his speech, Zedillo lists the principles of sovereignty, national unity, territorial integrity, the rule of law and equal protection for Mexican men and women. He then enshrines the Niños Héroes as defenders of these political values: "Estos son principios por los que murieron los Niños Héroes y por los que han luchado muchas generaciones de mexicanos. No podemos ceder en esos principios, porque sería deshonestar su memoria y traicionar su sacrificio." ("These are the principles for which the Boy Heroes died and for which many generations of Mexicans have fought. We cannot give up those principles because to do so would be to dishonor their memory and betray their sacrifice.") (Zedillo). His claim that Mexican citizens have a duty to uphold the honor of the Niños Héroes through unquestioning and unwavering allegiance to the state is an effective and affective patriotic injunction. It also underscores how "[w]ars also create defining moments in nation construction as great victories and defeats in battle are

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<sup>1</sup> One of the last battles of the U.S.-Mexican War of 1848 took place in Mexico City at the military academy housed in Chapultepec Castle. On September 13, 1847, U.S. troops led by General Winfield Scott attacked the castle which held six young military cadets, between the ages of 13 and 19, who refused to flee in what they deemed a dishonorable surrender. In the face of an overwhelming U.S. military victory, the six teens committed suicide by jumping from the castle battlements to their deaths. One of the boys was said to have wrapped himself in the Mexican flag. In Mexico, the six young men are revered as patriot martyrs and were immediately dubbed "Los Niños Héroes."

etched into consciousness through monuments, statues, texts, and commemoration” (Vaughn and Lewis 3).

Zedillo did not limit his use of national iconography to the Niños Héroes. Samuel Brunk explains that in 1995, after supporting the dissolution of communal land rights, Zedillo traveled to the site of Emiliano Zapata’s burial and “spoke before a statue of Zapata on a rearing horse” while addressing disaffected Mexicans (480). Brunk characterizes Zedillo’s political theater as a “kind of symbolic damage control” meant to stabilize growing popular opposition to the state’s neoliberal agenda. For Mexican philosopher Roger Bartra, Zedillo’s use of revolutionary iconography is a symptom and mode of political corruption in which the “formalism of political democracy” is supplanted by a “complex mythology” (3). Bartra argues that state mythologies, including war narratives, use history to obscure political oppression. He urges Mexicans to “get rid of this imagery which oppresses our consciences and fortifies the despotic domination of the so-called Mexican Revolutionary State” (4). Bartra rightly critiques deceptive uses of national histories and symbolism to support exploitative statist projects and objectives.

But if states are ideologically invested in war narratives, then individuals and groups can also be invested in war stories that differentially inform their understanding of cultural identity, collective memory, national belonging, and gender constructions. William Roseberry further explains that the hegemonic process in which states engage with popular culture involves the construction of a discursive framework that generates the terms and contexts in which contestation can occur (361). Because the hegemonic process takes place in the realm of discourse, it is both powerful and fragile (363). Chances for ideological misrecognition are maximized or, as Roseberry puts it, “the state, which never stops talking, has no audience; or rather, has a number of audiences who hear different things; and who, in repeating what the

state says to still other audiences, change the words, tones, inflections, and meanings” (365). Most importantly for our purposes here is the idea that the breakdown or rupture in a common discursive framework is a “point of entry into an analysis of the process of domination” (366).

While states mount powerful and convincing versions of nationalist histories, they can never determine how those stories are perceived or recirculated. Rather than view the state as a nefarious, invariant structure that imposes its will onto subjects, I adopt the concept of “state formation” from the work of Mexicanist postrevisionist historians who discern the nuanced relationship between state, popular culture, and war. In their introduction to *Everyday Forms of State Formation* (1994), Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent argue that the state is “not a *thing*” or a “material object that can be studied” (19). Rather, states are in constant formation; they change through time and in relation to popular cultures. They produce “discursive frameworks” and “material social processes” that directly impact individuals who then negotiate the meanings and effects of these processes. Demystifying the state by highlighting its fluctuations helps disabuse us of the notion that states are fixed political structures and institutions that enjoy complete domination of the masses. Such a perception fails to account for the myriad acts of individual and group agency that counteract state policies and practices. For Joseph and Nugent, state formations and popular culture interanimate each other. They define popular culture as the “symbols and meaning embedded in day-to-day practices of subordinated groups” (17). In the past, popular culture was not thoroughly examined for its relation to forms of power nor was it seen as a “problem of politics” (15). However, it not only expresses popular consciousness, but also shapes and is shaped by dominant culture and state formation. For my purposes here, I read Chicana and Mexicana literature as the cultural production of subordinated groups that seek to create alternative war

stories by engaging in a dialectic with multiple state formations. For me, this approach signals the transformative possibilities that counterhegemonic Latina war stories have to produce alternatives to the militarization of individuals and communities. With this in mind, I am careful to assess the changing dynamics of US and Mexican state formations and the fluid relationships between states and popular cultures in the production of militarized citizen-subjects and gendered identities.

Through rituals of commemoration, text books, museums, and other discursive frameworks, state formations propagate war narratives that legitimate policies and power. These war narratives are never simple, gender-neutral rearticulations of objective facts. Rather, war and war narratives rely on particular notions of masculinity and femininity that secure the role of male defenders and female protectees among other kinds of gender performances. Enloe argues that militaries depend heavily on and often attempt to determine social constructions of femininity and masculinity. For example, the forms of femininity that are often the most useful to the state in times of war are the fallen woman, the racially and morally pure woman, the faithful wife or girlfriend, the patriotic mother, and even the liberated woman (*Maneuvers* xiv). The state's implementation of policies and its promotion of certain gender norms during times of war (and even before and after war) are "decisions that are necessary to keep patriarchy alive and to sustain a society's militarization" (33). Militarization relies not on culture and tradition but rather on explicit, deliberate thought (34).

My analysis of war and militarism assigns a high status to the role of culture, particularly Latina literature, in mobilizing against the state's attempt to circumscribe the meaning and narrative construction of particular wars. Official war narratives, Miriam Cooke argues, "give order to wars that are generally experienced as confusion" (15). The dominant or state "War Story" "shapes reality as we would like

it to be or as the government says it was” (29). These narratives generate plots that neatly arrange complicated situations and indeterminate actions into simplified accounts of victory and defeat. In her analysis of war stories, Cooke detects a difference in the structure of men’s and women’s war writing. Men’s war narratives transform “messy war experiences into coherent stories” while “women presented the situation as out of control and urged each individual to assume responsibility for ending the war” (16). While I agree with Cooke that there can be differences between men’s and women’s war stories, I do not set out to prove this distinction because I do not presume that all women disfavor war. On the contrary, Elena Rodriguez’s *Peacetime: Spirit of the Eagle* (1997) shows how many Latinas uphold rather than challenge militarization. Based on Rodriguez’s personal experiences during Army basic training, *Peacetime* offers an important look at the way Latinas identify with military culture even if they seek to challenge its masculinist traditions. Rodriguez’s novel is crucial to my attempt to critically assess militarism’s impact on Latina/o communities and to do so by avoiding sweeping generalizations or broad-based assumptions about Latina opposition to war and militarism. *Peacetime* is a Latina war story that adds complexity to my overall analysis of how Latinas are positioned and position themselves within systems of state power and in relation to national martial histories.

I draw, however, on Cooke’s assertion that women’s war stories provide alternative and critical perspectives on warfare and can emphasize the “strangeness of the unchanging metanarrative” of dominant and official war stories (43). Like Cooke, I believe that women’s narratives, in this case, Latina war stories, have transformative cultural and political possibilities that can challenge state-sanctioned “metanarratives,” highlight the subaltern and gendered experience of warfare, and transform gender norms. By examining the war narratives of specific Latina writers, I outline the way

women of Mexican descent have critiqued US imperialism, Mexican revolutionary and postrevolutionary nationalism, and neoliberal militarism and have challenged the patriarchies that undergird both state and cultural nationalisms through the war stories they tell.

While I focus primarily on Chicana literature, I include the work of Mexican playwright Sabina Berman in order to deepen my analysis of the Mexican revolution's symbolic purchase on contemporary gender constructions and national identity. The revolution as an event transcended national borders impacting Mexican and Mexican American communities and their cultural production. What makes the dominant revolutionary literature from these two distinct cultures similar is their mutual disregard for women's experiences of the war. This disregard provides the occasion for an examination of how Mexican and Chicana writers rewrite stories of the revolution that more fully account for women's perspectives on the revolution's evolving meaning. Combining Mexican drama and Chicana fiction is part of a larger Chicana feminist methodology which refuses to abide by geopolitical boundaries when studying Chicana/o culture and identity. As the editors of *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader* (2003) point out, Chicana feminism is attuned to the "realities of continuous movement within and across social locations" of peoples and ideas which manifests in a "transnational perspective" (4). A Chicana feminist lens will help me examine how Latina writers re-evaluate Mexican and Chicano cultural practices, traditions, and icons such as Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata. Furthermore, placing Mexican artists in conversation with Chicana writers generates culturally- and historically-specific readings of the revolution that broaden monolingual limitations to the study of American literature.

## **History, Desire, and the Mexican Revolution**

Historians of Mexican history have described the cultural work that went into propagating the revolution and the cultural work that the revolution continues to perform. The decades immediately following the end of the war experienced a flurry of activity as “the Mexican government learned how to exhibit, disseminate, and perform the Revolution through festivals, monuments, and official history and thus to educate and inspire its citizens” (Benjamin 13). The revolution is also a key site of collective memory within the Chicano consciousness. In many ways, the revolution became an important factor in determining the shape of Chicano militancy during the Chicano movement. The revolution’s key figures – Villa, Zapata, the Magón brothers, las soldaderas – served as archetypes for Chicano resistance to class oppression and U.S. imperialism. The Chicano interpretation of the revolution authorized cultural practices, iconography, and relations of power within the movement. However, the cultural construction of the movement’s ostensible revolutionary roots served as an imperfect and unsatisfactory model of social action against systemic injustice because it kept in place fundamental internal hierarchies of gender and sexuality.

While the revolution maintains a strong cultural resonance within Mexican and Chicano culture, the historical narratives about the war often obscure the activities and experiences of women. Chicana historian and fiction writer Emma Pérez argues that sexuality and its discourse structure historiography even as historians attempt to negate particular sexualities and women’s experience. While sexuality and its discourse are often under erasure, they “implicitly guide the minds of those writing our histories” because “even when unnamed, sexual power relations are present, often hidden and unspoken yet performed between and among people” (122). I demonstrate how sexuality and desire inform the narratives of revolution and how revolutionary narratives influence gender constructions, sexual relations, and representations of

female subjectivity. The chapter examines the intersection of revolution, historiography, and female desire by focusing on Sabina Berman's play *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* (1994), Sandra Cisneros's "The Eyes of Zapata" (1991), and Helena María Viramontes's "The Long Reconciliation" (1985). These texts emphasize female desire as the narrative lens through which to imagine and rearticulate narratives of the Mexican revolution.

I argue that the Mexican Revolution's love stories are impoverished by disempowering notions of love. Berman's, Cisneros's, and Viramontes's texts, on the other hand, reveal the political and cultural implications of love and women's erotic power by rewriting the historical narratives that sustain nationalism. These writers complicate the revolution's semiotics of violent masculinity and call attention to female desire by redeploying revolutionary iconography to enable different forms of female subjectivity. Sabina Berman's and Sandra Cisneros's work deconstruct the weighty effect of revolutionary iconography on female subjectivity and desire, while Helena María Viramontes's short story confronts the familiar yet brutal narrative of class struggle in which the hacendado and the campesino battle over the possession of the Mexicana's body. Each author takes the most common tropes of the revolution's narratives – Villa's misogyny, Zapata's womanizing, and the hacendado's emasculating sexual rights over campesinas – to resemanticize the stories of violation and violence into stories of love and desire told through the empowering force of female eroticism. My chapter draws on the theoretical formulations of love and desire postulated by Latina feminists including Pérez, Ileana Rodríguez and Chela Sandoval, as well as African American feminist Audre Lorde, in order to examine how Berman, Cisneros, and Viramontes produce what Sandoval would call a "neorhetoric of love" (3).

**From Good Neighbors to Cold Warriors: US-Mexico Relations in the Work of  
María Cristina Mena**

Chapter 3, “Heroic Boys and Good Neighbors: US-Mexico Relations in the Young Adult Fiction of María Cristina Mena,” contributes to a growing body of scholarship by Chicana/o scholars on Mexican-American experiences in the 1940s and 1950s. Chicana/o historians, for example, have unearthed important narratives about Latinas/os during the World War II era that counters the lack of scholarly attention described by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez: “General treatments of World War II, of the Great Depression, and of the postwar years in America generally exclude stories of U.S. Latinos and Latinas. There is, in fact, even today, a lingering and curious dismissal of U.S. Latinos, as if Latinos had not lived here ...[or had been] supporting actors in a drama that purported only to affect them, not to be affected by them” (xvii).<sup>2</sup> But the U.S. was clearly affected by Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American communities as the war provided them with a leverage to assert their rights as citizen-patriots because of the military service of their young men (and women).

Wartime patriotism and service – in the military and the economy – fostered a sense of entitlement and social activism that extended the work done by groups like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). The period marked a critical moment of cultural and ethnic identity formation within Mexican-American communities and their negotiation with U.S. militarism. As young Zoot Suiters in Los

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<sup>2</sup> See George Sánchez’s *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (1993) and Mario T. García’s *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology and Identity, 1930-1960* (1989); On the Zoot Suit riots see Thomas Sanchez’s *Zoot-Suit Murders* (1991); on repatriation and the Bracero Program see Francisco Balderrama’s *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (2006) and Erasmo Gamboa’s *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (2000); for a focus on Mexican-American women’s experience see Vicki Ruiz’s work *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (1987) and *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (1999); on the American G.I. Forum, see Henry A.J. Ramos’s *The American G.I. Forum* (1998).

Angeles were physically attacked by members of the U.S. Navy, Marines, and the local police, the American G.I. Forum was using its members' military service and veteran status to hold the rhetoric of U.S. democracy accountable by challenging de facto and de jure segregation practices against Mexican Americans in public swimming pools, veteran cemeteries, and schools.

The decade of the 1950s is also significant for Chicana/o cultural studies and U.S. Latina/o history. The U.S. involvement in deposing various Latin American governments and supporting dictators may have led to the poor reception Vice President Richard Nixon received on his 1958 trip to South America, a noticeable indicator of a change in U.S.-Latin American relations that would reach a crisis level with the 1959 Cuban Revolution and Fidel Castro's ascendancy.<sup>3</sup> The postwar economy, the anti-Communism of the McCarthy era, the postwar militarization through nuclear testing and proliferation, and anti-imperial struggles in Latin America each affected Latino communities in the U.S. and their relationship to the state in particular ways.

Chapter 3 is located within the tumultuous historical context of the 1940s and 1950s, and will explore other cultural sites of contest between U.S. Latino communities and the U.S. government and between the U.S. government and Mexico. While young Zoot Suiters were being falsely charged, arrested, and maligned in the summer of 1943, other cultural attacks on Latino youth and identity were occurring through the "innocuous" form of young adult (YA) popular culture which depicted

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<sup>3</sup> Alan McPherson explains that "by 1954 several of the democratizing regimes of the mid-1940s had reverted. Now, thirteen of twenty Latin American nations were dictatorships tied closely to Washington" (25). However, this "closeness" did not prevent public protest against U.S. policies. On an ill-advised trip to Peru, Nixon and his group were stoned by students, and in Venezuela, Nixon and his wife were spat upon by protestors who then attacked and smashed the car in which they were riding. As a result of the Caracas riot, the US "accelerated the reconsideration of how Washington helped create instability in Latin America" (42).

Mexico and Latin America as sites of bounty, banditry, and chaos in need of U.S. military and economic intervention. I explore how the Good Neighbor policy and Pan-Americanism extended into the realms of culture. My focus on YA popular culture and María Cristina Mena's YA fiction looks at the cultural relevance of children's entertainment to U.S.-Latin American foreign relations as certain images of Mexico and certain notions of boyhood were propagated by various cultural producers.

With the advent of animation and the shifting U.S. position toward Latin America outlined in Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, Mexico and Latin America took on changing ideological weight within children's entertainment in the 1930s-1950s. Within this evolving cultural and political context, I analyze María Cristina Mena's young adult literature and her representation of Mexican boyhood depicted in *The Water-Carrier's Secrets* (1942) and *Boy Heroes of Chapultepec, A Story of the Mexican War* (1953). Each of these texts focuses on Mexican boys, from indigenous, peasant communities and the upper-class Creoles. In each text, Mena challenges and even parodies common U.S. perceptions of an underdeveloped, backward Mexico. She offers keen yet subtle commentaries on U.S. economic and cultural imperialism in Mexico and is concerned with the impact of modernization and its threat to the preservation of Mexican culture.

Mena's *Boy Heroes* is a particularly strong example of the way state discourses – both U.S. and Mexican – are implicated in the construction of YA literature and entertainment. The book opens with a brief note from the editor of the book, Cecile Matschat, who describes President Harry Truman's historic visit to Mexico in 1947 and the way he paid tribute to the Monument to the Children Heroes in Chapultepec Park. While in Mexico, Truman reiterated the U.S. commitment to Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and the Doctrine of Nonintervention. (Of course, his pledge of good neighborliness was short lived when one year after Mena's book was published, the

C.I.A. helped to overthrow the democratically-elected president of Guatemala.) The Niños Héroes were honored by Truman for giving up their lives in the protection of their land from US military invasion in 1848, meanwhile, in 1947, U.S. cultural and economic imperialism in Latin America continued apace. This irony was not lost on Mena as she attempted to reveal to US readers an elided history of Mexican resistance to U.S. aggression while showing how Mexican boyhood was memorialized through the militarized figures of los Niños Héroes.

### **Latinas/os and the War on Terror**

Mariscal has written about the way Latinos are targeted by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and why it is no accident that Los Angeles and San Antonio are the Army's "top two recruiting battalion areas" ("Homeland" 46). Not only are Latinas/os "being targeted at about twice their rate in the general population," but Latino immigrants are also using military service as a pathway to citizenship as a result of President Bush's 2002 Executive Order which "expedite[s] the naturalization process for non-citizens in the U.S. military." My study on war, militarism, and Latino communities includes a discussion of the current War on Terror and the implications for Latinas/os and Latina/o immigrants. Ultimately, this chapter asks: If the soldier is ostensibly the metonym of the nation, what does it mean that the soldier's body is increasingly becoming Latina/o? In order to figure out the representational capacity of the Latina/o soldier, I look at current military recruitment advertisements that use the rhetoric of heritage, family, and honor to target US Latinas/os and Latina/o immigrants. I show how the military attempts to accommodate itself to particular demographics in order to meet recruitment quotas.

I also chart the changing nature of the military as an assimilative institution that purportedly transforms enlistees-of-color into citizen-soldiers. In order to do this, the military itself becomes transformed into an organization that adopts neoliberal

principles in its operations and recruitment practices. In my examination of the US military manpower policies and programs, I show how current Latina/o soldiers negotiate what I call “neoliberal militarism.” The term is premised on the military’s rationalization and its increasing reliance on labor-market logic. “Neoliberal militarism” also helps to foreground the connection between militarism and capitalism and how both rely on racialized and gendered bodies to function efficiently. I draw on the work of feminist war scholars who demonstrate how the articulation of neoliberal policies and militarism impact women and particularly working-class and women of color. Such scholars make connections between the end of the welfare state and the increase in women’s military enlistment. While I agree with their assertions, my study of the military’s evolution from the 1970s to the present allows me to show how neoliberalism and militarism are imbricated in even more complicated ways.

Because the 1990s was a particularly significant decade for the study of female soldiering, I examine Elena Rodríguez’s *Peacetime: Spirit of the Eagle* (1997), an autobiographically-based fictional account of a Chicana in a U.S. Army boot camp. The text follows the protagonist Private Elisa Medrano and her constant negotiation with racial, economic, and gender oppression within the patriarchal institution as she is trained to become a soldier for the state. As mentioned earlier, Rodríguez’s text does not oppose militarism, but does challenge its misogynist practices. Through the character of Private Medrano, Rodríguez narrates a position more accommodating to state power than the other texts discussed in this dissertation as she attempts to forge a viable subject position within conditions of state subjection. The novel best exemplifies the destabilizing presence of the racialized and gendered soldier in the multiracial military and how particular political and social claims are made from within the military’s limiting purview. It also demystifies the process of military induction from a feminist militarist perspective and continually asserts connections

between race and class oppression as the women in boot camp are transformed into representatives of the state.

I continue my look into Latina soldiering by examining letters written to *Latina Style* magazine by actual Latina soldiers serving in the Iraq War. The letters as well as published interviews and profiles of Latina servicewomen enable a critical analysis of Latina soldiering that is urgently due. As these women speak about their reasons for enlisting and their struggles to overcome stereotypes, they reveal compelling and complex interactions with the military and the state. As Mariscal asserts, the relationship between communities of color, the military and the state defies reductive notions of oppression: “One cannot merely attribute this willingness to heed the call of traditional ideologies to a conspiracy orchestrated from above or even to a simple notion of false consciousness. The force-consent model of domination fails to explain the multiple contradictions that constitute the relationship between ethnic groups and the state in the contemporary United States” (“In the Wake” 110). Although my chapter emphasizes economic disparity as a primary factor in Latina/o enlistment, Latina war stories reveal other motivations such as family, self-improvement, military honor, and patriotism.

The last section of the chapter focuses on the military’s appeal to Latina/o immigrants and the ways in which citizenship is used as an enticement to enlist non-citizens into service. In his study of Latino immigrants and the Iraq War, Hector Amaya writes that the most recent estimates from the armed services identify “42,000 non-citizens (roughly 2 percent of the Armed Forces) [who] currently serve in the different branches of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Civil Guard” (“Dying American” 16).<sup>4</sup> This part of the chapter attempts to illustrate the immigrant’s

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<sup>4</sup> Amaya writes that “Latino/as account for 11 percent of the Armed Forces in general, but compose 13.6 percent of the Marines” (“Dying American” 17).

changing value to a nation that stalls acceptance and national belonging until service (or sometimes death) is rendered. I look specifically at the death of José Antonio Gutierrez, the first US soldier to die in the Iraq War. Gutierrez was also the first Latino immigrant to die as a non-citizen soldier in the US Marines. In order to analyze Gutierrez's role as a "green card soldier," I focus on Heidi Specogna's documentary *The Short Life of José Antonio Gutierrez* (2006) which retraces his roots from Guatemala to Camp Pendleton, San Diego, and eventually to his death in Iraq. The military's growing interest in immigrant soldiers like Gutierrez complicates the meaning of neoliberal militarism by interjecting questions about citizenship and US imperialism.

My analysis then turns to the recent case of Ekatherine Bautista, a Mexican immigrant soldier from East Los Angeles who has served in the US Army for seven years. Despite her record of service and her commitment to US national defense, Bautista was recently discharged and currently faces possible deportation for having enlisted in the service using a false identity. Both Gutierrez and Bautista were undocumented immigrants who fought in the Iraq War as part of its growing number of non-citizen soldiers. While Gutierrez was awarded US citizenship posthumously, Bautista who managed to survive a road side attack has been criminalized as an "illegal alien." Their contrasting situations call into question the notion of US citizenship and the way in which it is granted and withheld. They also compel us to examine the complex figure of the Latina/o un/documented immigrant soldier in the US armed forces.

### **Latina War Stories and Re-envisioning the Past**

Although all wars shape national identity, some wars impact particular communities more profoundly than others. I contend that the US-Mexican War of 1848 and the 1910 Mexican revolution are central to Chicana/o and Mexican identity

and cultural production. However, my analysis of Latina responses to war include and extend beyond these two conflicts in order to emphasize the changing nature of US and Mexican war culture in particular political and social contexts. The first two chapters move from the Mexican revolution to the period of the Good Neighbor Policy, World War II, and the Cold War era in which state officials invoked the War of 1848 to reinterpret US-Mexican relations. The last chapter moves us to the 2003 Iraq War in order to present a broader analysis of Latinas' shifting positions in what US officials call a global war on terror. Within each context, we see how Latinas negotiate the effects of war and militarism on gender norms, racial politics, and economic conditions. I analyze different wars across time and in relation to each other because, as Cooke points out, war narratives are reflective and prescriptive: "To be at war entailed a remembering of what other wars had been so as to understand what was and would be happening and so as to know how to proceed" (29). The fact that wars are narratively reinvoked in different contexts frustrates my attempts to settle on a chronological order for this dissertation. I begin with an analysis of literature written in the 1980s and 1990s then move backward to the 1940s and 50s before returning to the 1990s and the post-9/11 present. However disjointing this organization may be, it perfectly illustrates one of the central claims of this dissertation: wars are never fixed in the past. Rather, wars are constantly rearticulated by multiple groups for diverse ideological purposes and are therefore critical sites of interpretive struggle where national and cultural identities and gender constructions are mobilized.

## CHAPTER 2: DESIRING HISTORY IN SABINA BERMAN'S, SANDRA CISNEROS'S, AND HELENA MARÍA VIRAMONTES'S NARRATIVES OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

In *Plotting Women*, Jean Franco traces the voices of “dissident subjects” that interrupt the master narratives of Mexican history (xii). For Franco, “Religion, nationalism, and finally modernization thus constitute the broad master narratives and symbolic systems that not only cemented society but plotted women differentially into the social text” (xii). Within the dominant narrations of each phase from colonialism to revolution to modernization, women experienced varying forms of repression and freedom as they struggled to “appear in the social text” (xii). While women were plotted into national narratives by patriarchal interpretations of Mexican history, they also plotted to disrupt those interpretations that relegated their experiences to silence: “plotting is an activity that depends on the predictability of the opponent, on secrecy and surprise. [...] Women have long recognized the imaginary nature of the master narrative. Without the power to change the story or to enter into dialogue, they have resorted to subterfuge, digression, disguise, or deathly interruption” (xxiii). By examining the lives and work of women from seventeenth- to twentieth-century Mexico, Franco reveals how various women interrupt the discursive formations that produce Mexican history. In her account, women are both objects of historical manipulation and obfuscation and are subjects of their own stories.

In the same way that Franco identifies the manner in which Mexican national histories insert or delete women's experiences from historical narratives, Chicana historian and fiction writer Emma Pérez re-evaluates the historical erasures of women in Chicano history. From its relatively recent inception in the 1960s and 70s, Pérez argues that Chicano history has, perhaps unwittingly, recapitulated the colonial and

sexist practices of traditional historiography. By taking Chicano historians to task on their blindness to gender and sexuality that warp their historical interpretations, Pérez calls for a self-conscious evaluation of the way histories are written to exclude gender difference:

I am, in a sense, exposing how historians have participated in a politics of historical writing in which erasure – the erasure of race, gender, sexualities, and especially differences – was not intentional, but rather a symptom of the type of narrative emplotment unconsciously chosen by historians. I am wondering what will happen if emplotment becomes a conscious act as we write the events that become our official stories. [...] I, too, am emplotting by choosing specific narrative techniques. I arrange events and make arguments that suit me, arguments that I am pleased to excavate from the text of the documents as I create a Chicana history in which I can believe. (27)

Chicano histories before the 1990s emulated Euroamerican historiography's chronologies and "traditional categories such as the 'West' or the 'frontier'" (5), only to reinterpret the history of colonization by inserting Mexican male heroes and instances of subaltern resistance. In this manner, what Pérez calls "colonialist historiography" is able to maintain its position of prominence by determining which events merit inquiry and by remaining fundamentally unchallenged in shaping the production of historical knowledge.

Pérez's challenge to colonialist historiography – and to the Chicano/a historians who perpetuate it – entails a "conscious act" of "writing Chicanas into history" by focusing on gender and desire. Like Franco, Pérez recognizes that "Chicana, Mexicana, India, mestiza actions, words spoken and unspoken, survive and persist whether acknowledged or not" (7). These "women's voices and actions intervene" to "sex the colonial imaginary" or, as Franco puts it, to "plot" effective modes of disrupting the master narratives that write women out of history.

My chapter is primarily concerned with the tension between women and the historical imagination and with Mexicanas' and Chicanas' relationship to history, its writing, and its ideological uses in modern contexts. In this chapter I examine the work of Mexicana and Chicana writers who challenge the standard Mexican and Chicano emplotments of the Mexican revolution. In my analysis of *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* (1994) by Mexican playwright Sabina Berman and the Chicana fiction of Sandra Cisneros's "Eyes of Zapata" (1991) and Helena María Viramontes's "The Long Reconciliation" (1985), I examine how these contemporary writers engage with the historical imagination through their narratives about the revolution. Their texts are concerned with how revolution is written by the state and popular culture, what discourses inform dominant interpretations (i.e., nationalism, the myth of female sexual treachery embodied in la Malinche), what is left out (female desire), and what voices remain silenced in the interstices.

In many revolutionary narratives, female desire and sexuality are invisible within the historical imagination. For Pérez, while sexuality and its discourse are often under erasure, they "implicitly guide the minds of those writing our histories" because "even when unnamed, sexual power relations are present, often hidden and unspoken yet performed between and among people" (122). Yet, certain sexual power relations are not hidden; rather, they are foregrounded within historical writings, popular culture, and other venues where they become part of nationalist and cultural nationalist narratives. To be more specific, male sexualities and the power relations based on them are part of historical narratives, particularly narratives about the Mexican revolution where virility is often articulated with power, war, and violence.

Conversely, female sexualities remain mostly absent from revolutionary historiography and from most cultural productions that prioritize and glorify the

agency of male historical figures. The goal of this chapter is to examine the effacement of female desire in relation to the revolution through drama and literature which serve as avenues for re-imagining the historical narrative of the war and rearticulating the revolution's meaning for contemporary Mexican and Chicana/o cultural production. The chapter will pursue Pérez's provocative claim that desire can be revolutionary: "the question is not 'whether revolution is desirable,' but rather, Is desire revolutionary? How can desire make a revolution? How is desire already the part of revolution that is repressed?" (157). Pérez views desire as "a medium for social change" and as "love and hope for a different kind of future" (xix). She focuses on female desire in particular which goes unnoticed in Chicano and Mexican historiographies where "women's desires have been like archaeological silences" (125). This chapter will focus on the absent presence of female desire in revolutionary narratives in order to discern desire's transformative potential.

### **Revolution and the Forms of History**

My conception of history is informed by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's description of the "two sides" of historicity. Trouillot writes that "history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts" (2). In the first definition, emphasis is on "the sociohistorical process." In the second, "our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process" takes precedence. My analysis of Latina war stories about the revolution has more to do with the latter meaning than the former, although, as Trouillot argues, "the boundary between the two meanings is often quite fluid" (3). The Latina writers I examine take the historical events of the Mexican revolution as the basis for their theatrical and literary re-presentations, but their representations are as much about the present as the past. That is, the rewriting of the revolution is not

solely an act of constructing collective memory of a past series of events, but is also an exercise in living the present realities that compel one to write about that past.

The crux of the matter is the here and now, the relations between the events described and their public representation in a specific historical context. These relations debunk the myth of the The Past as a fixed reality and the related view of knowledge as a fixed content. They also force us to look at the purpose of this knowledge. (Trouillot 147)

Trouillot's notion of historicity helps explain how the "Revolution" is not a "fixed reality" closed to interpretation and revision. Further, each text's moment of production is crucial to the narration of a revolution that began ninety-eight years ago. In examining why the revolution has never faded from Mexican and Chicano/a collective memory, we need to think about the ideological functions it performs in shaping national identity, cultural nationalist social movements and historiography, gender constructs, and feminist literary interventions.

Pérez argues that certain Chicano historians depict the revolution as an unproblematic model of resistance.

The historical studies of the Chicano movements of the 1960s and 1970s curiously emulate ideological stances prominent during the Mexican Revolution. The social movements of the sixties and seventies wanted to cultivate revolutionary motive and ideology, looking backward to leaders who had helped foment revolution. What appears is a cyclical tracking of the past's intellectuals to re-create the present. Many invoked Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, Ricardo Flores Magón, and las Adelitas as the heroes and heroines who could provide guidance for the Chicano/a movements. Their writings reflect a conscious hero-heroine construction. (9)

Pérez shows how the revolution persists in shaping cultural identity and knowledge. The revolution, as a largely subaltern movement against class and racial oppression, stood as an example of agency that helped fortify Chicano/a cultural identity by fostering cultural pride at a time when Chicanos/as faced their own daunting forms of oppression. However, Pérez shows that many Chicano historians and activists

transferred the “masculinist rhetoric” of organizations such as the Partido Liberal Mexicano into the Chicano movement’s discourse of social justice and into the historical writing of that movement. Pérez writes that “the ‘official’ Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s, like the Mexican Revolution, spoke to women –but only on certain terms, as exemplified in the male rhetoric and in men’s expectations” (71). For Pérez, the revolution’s masculinist rhetoric “also haunts contemporary Chicano/a movements” and is “reiterated by the ‘radicals’ of the 1990s” (72). Thus, the revolution’s meaning has been variously interpreted to fit particular social and historical contexts. But where some Chicano/a activists and scholars might assert a continuity between 1910-20, 1960s-70s, and the 1990s, Chicana feminists and feminist writers complicate such forced congruencies by revising both the revolution’s meaning and the meaning of revolution.

In Cisneros’s and Viramontes’s stories, the revolution is more than background and plot device. Rather, *writing* a story about the revolution also constitutes an *act of* revolution. For example, Viramontes’s 1985 story appears during a decade in which Chicana writers began to gain prominence in the literary sphere. Debra Castillo’s description of Viramontes’s work emphasizes the revolution inherent in Viramontes’s act of writing and publishing:

Viramontes’s deep allegiance to the cause of Hispanic women of color is unquestionable, and the very fact of her (and other women’s) recent but ineluctable presence in a body of writing traditionally identified entirely with male authors (the evolving Chicano canon, up until the 1980s associated nearly exclusively with Rodolfo Anaya, Rolando Hinojosa Smith, Tomás Rivera, José Villarreal, and other male writers) testifies to a literary upheaval and official unsilencing of no mean proportions. (76-77)

Viramontes and Cisneros revise the Chicano/a literary canon by inserting a literature that is feminist in both perspective and in its complex representations of women’s lives. Their work forces us to think about the revolution and its relevance to

contemporary Chicana experience. I argue that their stories reinterpret the revolution to serve a specific feminist purpose, one that places women as subjects (rather than objects) in the center of revolutionary history.

Within the cultural nationalist formulations of Aztlán, especially patriarchal ones, Aztlán signifies a “maternal imaginary” where the Chicano is configured as heroic:

He is many heroes – from Emiliano Zapata to Ruben Salazar. He is not an object; nor is he represented through the ‘land’; nor is he judged for being whore or virgin. He is always already a hero, a leader – a leader who must lead his people to land. And the land is maternal; it is pure, virginal, it is where the family will all be safe in the womb. Hence, nationalism becomes a return to the mother – Aztlán – where woman can be only metaphor and object. (Pérez 122)

Both Viramontes’s and Cisneros’s stories refute the “maternal imaginary” embedded within Chicano/a nationalism by resisting the nationalist practice of hero-construction. Each story deconstructs the male heroics associated with the revolution. For example, in Cisneros’s story, the heroic myth of Zapata is made vulnerable by an empowered female gaze that eroticizes the denuded male body of the revolutionary. Rather than create female heroines to replace patriarchal male heroes, both stories depict women who make difficult choices and lead imperfect, flawed lives. Both writers also question the meaning of heroism within the context of revolution. Is it more heroic to fight in battle, or to keep children fed and alive under conditions of extreme depravity?

Most revolutionary narratives need the presence of heroes in order to make sense or to validate positions of power. Franco calls the kind of hero worship that followed the revolution “postrevolutionary messianism”: “the Revolution with its promise of social transformation encouraged a Messianic spirit that transformed mere human beings into supermen and constituted a discourse that associated virility with

social transformation in a way that marginalized women at the very moment when they were, supposedly, liberated” (102). But Viramontes’s and Cisneros’s stories, as well as Berman’s play, reveal that reality, particularly women’s experience, is too complicated for hero worship. Their rejection of revolutionary “messianism” is one of the feminist revisions of traditional revolutionary historiography.

### **Revolution and Chicana/o Historical Consciousness**

Jorge Mariscal explains that Chicano cultural nationalism formed around a broader, nascent movement throughout the 1960s and 70s that included postcolonial struggles in the Third World and “racialized minorities in the West” (*Brown-eyed Children* 9). The ideological power of Chicano cultural nationalism relied on representational practices that produced and disseminated images of historical and contemporary heroic figures. Mariscal writes that cultural nationalism’s “utopian and transformative possibilities came together most powerfully in the figure of Ernesto Che Guevara but also through Chicano reimaginings of Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Villa, and the women of the Mexican Revolution – las Adelitas” (9). Maylei Blackwell further argues that Chicano movement print culture (re)produced images from Mexican history that were “critical to the formation of a Chicano historical consciousness” (177). The revolution as an historical event and its key figures became part of the visual impetus for group identity and empowerment. Chicana/o cultural workers called forth historical figures to emblemize specific qualities and characteristics and to present Chicanos with culturally-specific examples of resistance. Through such images, viewers were expected to learn about Mexican history but also to further identify with Mexican cultural heritage through that historical knowledge. This pedagogic function of “politicized iconography” (171) was used to form a collective consciousness in order to mobilize and unify a heterogeneous community.

Thus, the process of reproducing images from the revolution was not only an aesthetic practice but “a political practice and collective conversation of reimagining historical subjectivity across temporal and spatial borders” (177).

Cisneros’s *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991) and Viramontes’s *The Moths and Other Stories* (1985) each include stories about the revolution, and in doing so, demonstrate Chicanos’ diachronic relationship to Mexico. Each collection focuses on contemporary Chicano culture, and by including stories about the revolution, both writers reveal the extent to which the revolution is embedded within the collective consciousness. Furthermore, as collections primarily about women, they show how the revolution persists in the contemporary Chicana imaginary. Because Mexican history is a source for cultural and collective identity formation within Chicano communities, it also becomes important to subject formation especially for women as they “begin to understand that they are historical creatures” (Quintana 35). As Alvina Quintana states, “This realization should not be dismissed as insignificant or obvious, for once women examine their historicity in terms of fashioning a specific identity, they are well on the way to confronting the kinds of limitations that have maintained their subordinate status” (35).

In many ways, “Eyes of Zapata” and “The Long Reconciliation” appear anomalous because they are the only stories from each collection located in Mexico and in the historical past. Yet a closer reading of each short story cycle reveals the ways in which each author links historical knowledge, cultural identity, and female sexuality through narratives of the revolution. For example, “Eyes” is included in the section “There Was a Man, There Was a Woman” along with stories about infidelity, betrayal, power struggles within marriage, and violence against sexual transgression. In more than one story, Cisneros examines Malinchismo and its policing function in

relation to female sexuality – a theme that appears in “Eyes.” In Viramontes’s collection, “The Long Reconciliation” takes place in revolutionary Mexico, but its central themes – adultery, abortion, war, and the Catholic Church – recur in the collection’s other stories about contemporary Chicana experience. In both short story cycles, individual stories cohere with each other to form a unified literary representation of Chicana/o community. Rocío Davis writes that “ethnic short story cycles may project a desire to come to terms with a past that is both personal and collective: this type of fiction explores the ethnic character and history of a community as a reflection of a personal odyssey of displacement and as a search for self and community” (7). By including stories of revolution in their cycles, Cisneros and Viramontes assert the status of revolutionary history as a formative element in Chicana/o cultural identity and gender relations as characters explore the dynamic between personal and collective histories or between the “self and community.”

While the revolution forms a constitutive event in Chicano collective identity formation, it also signals women’s difficulty with accepting masculinist interpretations of that history. Blackwell reminds us that “recuperating histories suppressed by colonial institutions and epistemologies has been a critical impulse in decolonizing movements” but that “narratives of the past are also gendered and imbued with silences and power differentials” (178). Like Pérez and Franco, Blackwell recognizes history’s silencing tendencies when it comes to women’s experience and representation. For Blackwell, “gender is emplotted in the structures of remembrance” (174). By recuperating revolutionary history, Cisneros and Viramontes demonstrate how history inflects contemporary gender norms. Their stories further suggest the continuity of women’s negotiations with transcultural patriarchal practices that persist over time. Both stories focus on women’s confrontations with the patriarchal

institution of marriage and on embattled female sexualities in the context of the revolution. They thus rewrite the revolution from a female perspective in a way that reclaims revolutionary history as an empowering force for Chicana historical consciousness.

Cisneros and Viramontes reveal how revolutionary history preoccupies Chicana/o cultural workers. Their stories function as literary markers of historical memory embedded within other stories that take place in the more recent past. The historical event they reference – the Mexican revolution – is not just any casually chosen moment in history, but a formative event in the Chicana/o cultural imaginary. But, as William Worthen explains in his analysis of Chicana/o historical theater, history presents an unstable source of knowledge for cultural identity formation: “Chicano/a history plays dramatize the difficulty of locating an identity politics in history, because the production of history always engages in several acts of mediation, involving not only the ways that history has been transmitted, but also the ways in which history is inflected by the ideological, representational, and material modalities of the present” (118). The constant mediation of historical events through their narrative transmissions and their social and political uses makes history a shifting site of contestation. Trouillot makes this point repeatedly in his examination of history’s fluidity: “For what history is changes with time and place or, better said, history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives” (25). Cisneros and Viramontes show how history is a complicated source of identity formation for the Chicana/o community. Their stories bring into relief the ways in which Chicano nationalism selectively draws from the Mexican national patrimony and its monumentalizing practices in order to conceptualize a political and masculinist genealogy of resistance. The stories I examine here are feminist reinterpretations of

revolution that reflect the extent to which Chicano collectivities shape and are shaped by history and further reveal history's enduring role in constituting cultural and political identities.

In this chapter, I focus on postmodern theater and short stories rather than epic national histories. Revolutionary narratives can be found in various scales such as Frida Kahlo's miniature self-portraits that expose intimate spaces and psychic turmoil which contrast with Diego Rivera's massive murals that pictorially interpret the nation's history. Epics of the revolution attend to battles won and lost that help sustain the grand narratives of the nation-state. The Latina war stories I examine here are condensed stories that re-focalize historical events to narrate women's experiences. Like Franco's work in *Plotting Women*, I focus on drama and short stories in order to examine the "struggles for interpretive power, struggles waged not on the high plane of theory but very often at the margins of canonical genres" (xi). These stories refuse to participate in the construction of national heroes and indicate the existence of other "possible plots" in narratives of the revolution, plots that are "sometimes thwarted, but always recurrent – as they will be, as long as master narratives persist" (xxiv).

Here, I want to briefly address a point that I hope will be clear in the analyses that follow. The genre and formal innovations that each writer utilizes are crucial to understanding how these Latina war stories deconstruct the revolution's standard narratives. That is, Berman, Cisneros, and Viramontes focus on historical events, but destabilize the historical through narrative strategies. Berman's play is experimental in its juxtaposition of the past and the present as well as its use of space that positions the battlefield and the boudoir as simultaneous sites of struggle. Berman highlights the performative aspect of gender and uses parody to critique Mexican historiography and nationalism at the height of neo-liberal reform in Mexico. Cisneros's story is

narrated by Inés Alfaro, the protagonist who is based on one of Emiliano Zapata's actual mistresses. In her account of the troubled love affair between Inés and Zapata, Cisneros endows Inés with the power of outer body travel and with an omniscient vision that allows her to recount the war's devastating effects on women.

Viramontes's story shifts between narrative perspectives almost as swiftly as it moves from past to present. Voices of the deceased communicate with the living while flashbacks reveal the circumstances that shape the story's outcome.

As Berman, Cisneros, and Viramontes rewrite the narratives of the revolution, their dramatic and literary representations of historical events revise the meaning of "History." Trouillot explains that historical knowledge is generated from multiple perspectives that help amplify and enrich the work of the academic historian:

We cannot exclude in advance any of the actors who participate in the production of history or any of the sites where that production may occur. Next to professional historians we discover artisans of different kinds, unpaid or unrecognized field laborers who augment, deflect, or reorganize the work of the professionals as politicians, students, fiction writers, filmmakers, and participatory members of the public. In so doing, we gain a more complex view of academic history itself, since we do not consider professional historians the sole participants in its production. (25)

For Trouillot, diverse interpretations contribute to the production of historical knowledge including the work of "fiction writers" who, I argue, have the potential to help change the kinds of questions that historians are inclined to ask. Trouillot further writes that "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly" (27). I submit that, as it relates to the silencing of female desire, drama and literature represent a way to gain access to silences buried in the historical record and to address such silences in a format other than one labeled as History.

Pérez further argues for revising conceptions of history and the writing processes that produce it: “How do we write history without narrativizing? Why is literature reduced to or expanded by the ‘imaginary’ while history can only be ‘real’? What are the ‘artistic’ elements of a ‘realistic’ historiography?” (xvii). Pérez’s series of questions reflect a historian’s awareness of the tenuous boundaries that separate academic disciplines and the narratives they produce. My purpose here is not to suggest that Berman, Cisneros, and Viramontes consider their texts to be histories of the revolution. Rather, I argue that their texts complicate the writing of histories by focusing on the un/conscious emplotments of revolutionary historiography in order to expand historical knowledge of the revolution and by imagining what the enunciation of silenced women’s voices might sound like.

All three writers privilege the different points of interest that are usually passed over in the historical record. They focus on the silences of female desire that seem inconsequential to the telling of war. As contemporary texts dealing with past events, they each reveal how the revolution continues to hold currency in contemporary culture. In many ways the revolution is an intractable myth that persists in shaping cultural formations and cultural identities on both sides of the border with important consequences for gender relations. “And because Chicana writers continue to run up against the limits imposed on them by this Chicano interpretation of history, they are still writing with desire, still struggling against oppression. Theirs thus remains a literature of passion and rebellion” (Quintana 48). Viramontes makes this point clear in her description of writers as “dangerously revolutionary” in their potential to disrupt cultural practices and historical narratives: “We believe wholeheartedly in the power of the imagination to create the possible, and no one, no one can control that fact. We have breathed new life into social engagement. We are knocking at the door

demanding change. It would behoove you to answer because you can't imagine what rage we mujeres have" ("Praying" 153). The same can be said of Mexicana writers and artists who confront the pervasive and lingering patriarchal interpretations of the revolution within Mexican culture. But the texts examined in this chapter also reveal how the revolution can serve as a space to renegotiate the normative and dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity. Finally, these Latina writers argue that the revolution's heroes can no longer be innocently deployed to represent unproblematic forms of power, masculinity, and nationalist or cultural nationalist forms of resistance. Rather, the heroes of the revolution need to be reimagined.

### **Desiring Malinche: Colonial Desire and the Construction of History and Nation**

In his 1950 critique on Mexican culture, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Mexican Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz wrote an authoritative and infamous analysis of Malinche that established her as La Chingada (the Fucked One).<sup>1</sup> Although Paz labels her as a sexually violated woman, his final conclusion is that she passively endured the violation. Her passivity is regarded as a sign of her collusion with both the violation and the Spanish conquest of indigenous populations. For Paz, Malinche represents one of the paradigmatic Mexican Mother figures whose actions condemned generations of Mexicans to psychological turmoil.

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<sup>1</sup> Malinalli Tenepal, more commonly referred to as La Malinche, was an indigenous woman who lived in 16<sup>th</sup>-century pre-Cortesian Mexico. It is generally believed that she was born in central Mexico and was either sold or given into slavery before the arrival of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, in 1519. Upon his arrival, the Chontal Mayas gave Cortés twenty women (including Malinche), male slaves, and other goods in order to bribe him into leaving their area (Karttunen 301). When it was discovered that Malinche could speak both her native language of Nahuatl, as well as a Mayan dialect, Cortés began to use her as part of a system of interpreters. She accompanied him on all of his encounters with Nahuatl-speaking officials, including Moctezuma, the ruler of the Aztec empire. Cortés eventually had a son by her, Martín, but did not marry her. After her linguistic abilities were no longer useful to Cortés, he gave her in marriage to another Spaniard with whom she bore a daughter, María and died of unknown circumstances shortly after giving birth.

Mexican patriarchal narratives perpetuate the notion that treachery is inherent in Malinche's sex and in all women for that matter. Paz asserts that "every woman – even when she gives herself willingly – is torn open by the man, is the Chingada" (80), and as the Chingada, "her taint is constitutional and resides, as we said earlier, in her sex" (85). Mexican men have also internalized Malinche's fall, according to Paz, as they are "shamed by her rape (conquest) and thus forced to reject the feminine in themselves as the devalued, the passive, the mauled and battered, as *la chingada*, the violated, the one who has been screwed over, fucked, and yet is herself the betrayer" (Franco *Plotting* xix).

The cultural denigration of Malinche serves multiple ideological purposes that condemn her for more than being the passive victim of rape. Franco writes that the "story of female treachery is particularly necessary in the nationalistic epic, especially the epic which has its origin in a conquest and a defeat" (xviii). Mexico's founding as a colonized state makes the project of nationalism difficult to construct because it emphasizes loss, subordination, and disempowerment as characteristics bequeathed to the modern nation-state. By denigrating the figure of Malinche, Mexican writers were able to designate her as a "mythic scapegoat" for "Mexico's dependent status within the modern world," a move that diminishes some of the shame of defeat and that naturalizes or reaffirms the supposed treachery of women. Thus, female sexuality excuses failed resistance to colonial domination and becomes incompatible with nationalism's claims. That is, female sexuality constitutes Mexican nationalism's negative point of departure by serving as the internal evil that gives nationalism its pretext for containing women's roles and an explanation for the state's slow start at nation-building.

Pérez argues that the Oedipal Conquest Complex is also installed within patriarchal forms of Chicano nationalism. Chicana writers and theorists have often described how Malinche's legacy is far reaching and endemic. For example, Chicana playwright and poet, Cherríe Moraga, describes how Chicanas have internalized their role as the daughters of the Oedipal Malinche: "Even if a Chicana knew no Mexican history, the concept of betraying one's race through sex and sexual politics is as common as corn [...]. If the Chicana, like her brother, suspects other women of betrayal, then she must, in the most profound sense, suspect herself" (103). Moraga's statement reveals how many Chicanas have been culturally conditioned to view themselves and all women as treacherous, based on Malinche's example. Chicanas fear being labeled as traitors because of the painful stigmatization and alienation that could result from such designations.

Ana María Alonso writes that in Mexico, "sexual intercourse is a source of tropes and images of domination and subordination" (80). Paz makes this point clear with his extended disquisition on the verb "chingar." Because he denominates Mexicans as "hijos de la Chingada," Paz makes sexual violation a privileged characteristic of Mexican identity. In contrast to la Chingada is the Chingón, a status which allows men to recuperate a position of domination. In this sense, "the masculinization of power and the feminization of powerlessness are seen to be grounded in corporality and in the sexual act" (Alonso 81). Because the sexual act is over determined by social meaning and embedded in systems of power, tracking female desire becomes difficult. If female sexuality is the supposed basis for an inherent vulnerability and the source for patriarchal and national betrayal, one would assume that it serves as a compromised source for women's empowerment and freedom. However, for Viramontes, this is precisely the locus of power that women

must draw from in order to effect change. Because female sexuality generates new modes of empowerment and autonomy, it is “[n]o wonder that throughout all these generations, sexuality has been so suppressed in us, that has been derailed, that has been distorted because it is so powerful” (“Praying” 150). Once one embraces this source of power, “then you are fucking ready to face the world. There is no stopping you.”

### **Disarming Love in Sabina Berman’s *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* (1994)**

Sabina Berman’s play draws on the discourses of violence and virility that underpin the legend of Francisco “Pancho” Villa within popular culture. In this section I demonstrate how the Villa myth is constructed by male desire and violence while female desire is effaced both in the narratives about Villa and in the narratives of the revolution. Women are deemed as obstacles to the male practices of revolutionary struggle and the subsequent process of nation building. In order to challenge the masculinist emplotment of revolution, Berman focuses on female desire’s relationship to historiography.

Set in 1993, Berman’s *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* focuses on Gina and Adrián, a modern couple who live in Mexico City. Both are in their mid-40s, middle-class, and educated. Although each lead independent lives, they are bound by a non-monogamous relationship that Adrián describes as “una hermosa relación de lascivia” (“a beautiful lascivious relationship”) (78), but that leaves Gina perturbed and unfulfilled. As a history professor, Adrián travels out of the country to give lectures on the Mexican revolution, writes articles for the leftist newspaper *La Jornada*, and is writing a book on Pancho Villa. Gina, divorced with a son at Harvard, is an accomplished, financially-independent woman who is part owner of a maquiladora in northern Mexico. Although Gina represents the modern Mexican woman, she also

desires a substantive relationship with Adrián that demands more than intercourse and requires an end to Adrián's frequent absences. Were it not for the fact that she transcribes Adrián's monograph on Villa from the stack of notes that he gives her, she might see him even less.

Their relationship begins to dissolve when Ismael, Gina's employee and one of her son's young friends, convinces her to confront Adrián with her desires for marriage and a child. Gina then goes to Adrián's apartment and unexpectedly learns of his affair with another woman (which should not have been too much of a shock for Gina because she knew that Adrián had never legally divorced his current wife). Ismael's advice proves disastrous, but it also reflects the dual and dueling forms of masculinity represented in the play. While Adrián mimics the womanizing and domineering form of machismo that Villa embodies, Ismael symbolizes a modern masculinity that embraces sentimental attachment and egalitarian heterosexual relationships. In the end, Gina will choose Ismael as a lover and his anti-macho form of masculinity over Adrián's Villa-inspired insolence, but not before Adrián tries to win Gina back. Villa's love advice to Adrián fails to work on Gina and as Adrián tries his own methods of winning Gina back, Villa dies from both Gina's rejection of Adrián and Adrián's rejection of Villa's advice. Alternatively, we can say that Gina's desire kills Villa just as Berman's play "kills" Villa's myth and the machismo it represents.

I contend that Berman's play 1) demonstrates how the history of the revolution impacts gender roles by producing "scripts" of normative behavior and 2) that gender impacts the writing of the revolution's history. In this way, Berman reveals how gender and historiography are mutually constituting categories of analysis open to critique and transformation. Indeed, Berman's play deconstructs the norms of both

gender and historiography by asserting that both are social practices based on repetition and performance. Judith Butler's formulation of performativity informs my reading of Berman's play. While drawing on Sharon Magnarelli's earlier reading of *Entre Villa* which also utilizes Butler's theory of gender performativity, I will place a heavier accent on particular scenes of gender citation and on the citational nature of revolutionary historiography that the play depicts.

Butler argues that gender is based on a "tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete polar genders as cultural fictions" (GT 178). The performance of gender draws on a "sedimentation of gender norms" that "over time has produced a set of corporeal styles" which bodies perform. For Butler, these corporeal styles are "never fully self-styled, for styles have a history, and those histories condition and limit the possibilities" (177). Gender performance is limited by history in the sense that gender is "a constituted *social temporality*" (179). The styles are understood and identified through their constant repetition in a "social temporality."

Repetition is crucial to Butler's theory of performativity because it is "a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation" (178). While repetition usually implies that there is an "original" that is repeated, Butler views gender as a social construction without origin. The "truth" of gender, the idea that an "original" masculinity and femininity exist and are available for emulation, is part of the "myth of originality" that gives gender its stability (176). Rather, gender "is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one *can* embody" (176). Through the repetition of gender norms, bodies project the "illusion of an abiding gendered self" (179). Yet, the maintenance of gender norms requires "compulsory systems" in

which adherence to socially established performances are “punitively regulated” (178). The failure to adhere to gender norms can be harshly sanctioned, but can also reveal the fissures that compromise gender’s construction. For Butler, the “possibilities of gender transformation are to be found [...] in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction” (179).

From the opening lines of Act I, Berman introduces the theme of reenactment and repetition that guides the behavior of the characters. Gina tells her close friend and business partner, Andrea, about “un cierto ritual” (“a certain ritual”) (23) that she and Adrián reenact every time they meet: Adrián stands by the doorway, stares at Gina for several minutes before he approaches, kisses her, and then leads her to bed. Although Gina is familiar with the ritual, it takes her a while to respond and summon up the passion that, by the nature of its predictability, the ritual delays: “Tiene que pasar un momento, o dos, o tres, antes de que algo...algo: el sentimiento, me regrese de la memoria” (“A moment has to pass, or two, or three, before something... something: feeling returns from memory”) (23-24). In the next scene, Gina and Adrián repeat this ritual for the audience, providing visual proof to Gina’s description. In these two scenes that open the play, Berman skillfully reveals the thematic focus on recitation and the citational acts that follow it. Gina’s description of the ritual of encounter serves as a script that is later followed by Gina and Adrián themselves.<sup>2</sup> The “script” itself is a repetition of amorous encounters culled from Hollywood films. David Foster reads the ritual as a modern version of “sexual antics” based on Humphrey Bogart’s romantic movie roles that Adrián’s performance convincingly

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<sup>2</sup> The ritual will be repeated again, this time by Adrián and Andrea who, by the play’s end, will have their own failed romantic encounter after Gina abandons Adrián.

mimics – a performance complete with props such as cigarette and worn-out overcoat (150). Adrián’s repetition of a cinematic performance – itself based on its own script – demonstrates a “sexual theatrics [that] aligns him with the project of modernity” because of its “evocation of sexual narratives as found intertextually in songs, films, advertisements, and the like” (150). Ironically, Adrián’s repetition of Hollywood romance will become its own cinematic performance in the play’s 1995 film version, *Entre Pancho Villa y una mujer desnuda*, co-directed by Berman and Isabelle Tardán.

Returning to the play itself, I want to focus on the metatheatricality that underlies Berman’s work. I use the term “script” for its obvious pun. That is, the actors in the play follow Berman’s script while the characters in the play follow cultural “scripts” that guide their actions, turning them into unwitting performers. But I also view these cultural “scripts” – which primarily have to do with gender – as examples of the recitation and repetition of gender norms that expose the performative nature of gendered identities. Following Butler’s theory of repetition, I submit that the cultural “scripts” that lead to the performance of gender throughout the play, reveal their own “myth of originality” (*GT* 176). That is, Berman’s play, is fully referential and intertextual and would not be understood if it did not draw on familiar Mexican cultural narratives that have proliferated since the time of the revolution. For example, Berman writes that her characterization of Villa is based on “el Villa mítico de las películas mexicanas de los años cincuenta, sesenta, y setenta” (“the mythic Villa from Mexican movies from the 50s, 60s, and 70s”) (20). Thus, a Mexican audience recognizes Berman’s Villa through earlier cinematic Villas. Berman’s script is based on repetitions of previously established social narratives and is also a recitation – repeated in language through the actors’ stage performance – of familiar narratives of

Villa, the Mexican revolution, and both traditional and modern heterosexual relationships.

The term “script” brings together the necessary components of gender performativity that I seek to analyze in the play. It emphasizes the verbal recitation of previously-established codes or norms of behavior which underscores the ways in which language determines subject formation. A “script” presupposes a semi-rigid structure that guides performers/actors by giving them directions and cues in order to reproduce the scenes correctly. In this sense, it has a regulatory function which recalls Butler’s description of gender itself as a compulsory regime that shows little tolerance for deviation. On the other hand, scripts require a repeated performance of what is written on the page, but actors are not always bound by the script’s directives. Each actor interprets the character he or she performs, bringing life to a character through the unique qualities and abilities that each actor possesses. There can never be total congruence between the script and the performance because such congruence does not exist between the character and the actor. An actor can fail to repeat the written word accurately resulting in a flawed performance whose consequence is an unsuccessful play (or the replacement of the actor) or a felicitous performance that exceeds the script’s intentions. Finally, a play’s performance requires not only repetition, but also an audience whose spectatorship helps construct the play’s meaning.

In Berman’s play, both Gina and Adrián produce and repeat the cultural scripts that inform their respective gender roles. After his month-long absence in Toronto, Adrián returns to Gina, initiates their familiar ritual, and attempts to carry her to the bedroom. Gina resists the move and insists that they have tea and conversation. Adrián impatiently goes along with Gina’s attempt to replace their standard ritual with one of her own: drinking tea. For Gina, the tea ritual is a civilizing ritual that also

prolongs and heightens desire. That is, rather than head immediately for the bedroom, Gina tells Adrián that passion can take multiple, indirect forms of expression: “Podemos seguirnos deseando, deseando serenamente... [...] Antes de... [...] De matar el deseo como un animal. [...] Es que ya estamos haciendo el amor. [...] Hablando, mirándonos, deseándonos de lejos, ya estamos haciendo el amor” (“We can continue desiring, desiring serenely... [...] Before... [...] killing desire like an animal. We are already making love. [...] Talking, looking at each other, desiring each other from afar, we’re already making love”) (32). But Gina’s attempt to author her own notion of love and to fulfill as well as extend her own form of desire eventually fails as Adrián’s insistence on physical consummation overpowers her ceremonial tea.

In the carefully choreographed scene that follows, Berman then weaves together revolutionary history and a modern Mexican heterosexual relationship in order to reveal the ways in which the revolution’s history contributes to modern understandings of masculinity and femininity. In the scene, Villa and a woman known only as “Mujer” (“Woman”), prepare to have tea in a space that had represented Gina’s living room, but now serves as the Mujer’s. Meanwhile, after Adrián has gotten his way, both he and Gina watch the ensuing events unfold between Villa and Mujer while lying in Gina’s bed, snacking on cookies and mimicking moviegoers enthralled with events on a screen. More importantly, the scene between Villa and Mujer comes from Adrián’s book-in-progress, making him the author of the script that Villa and Mujer will perform and that Gina and Adrián had previously reenacted.

As the scene they/we witness unfolds, Adrián’s and Gina’s voices intermittently interrupt. At two different moments, Adrián reiterates what Villa has said to Mujer:

Villa: Es usted muy bonita. (You are very pretty.)

Adrián: Era una mujer muy bonita. (She was a very pretty woman.) (35)

As Villa continues to verbalize his desire for Mujer, she attempts to serve him tea in a ritual that mimics Gina's notion of foreplay. In fact, Gina inserts her desire into the performance by saying the words that Mujer will repeat:

Mujer: Tómese el té, mi general. (Drink the tea, my general.)

Gina: Y luego se duerme entre mis brazos. (And then fall asleep in my arms.)

Mujer: Y luego se duerme entre mis brazos. (And then fall asleep in my arms.)  
(36)

Gina tries to write her desire into history, but Adrián's version of history does not admit deviations. The scene ends in a disturbing show of violence as Villa shoots and kills Mujer as she hands him tea. The entire scene, constructed in a double time of past and present and in multiple voices that anticipate and repeat each other, raises several issues about gender performance. The scene suggests how history shapes or conditions the "corporeal styles" available to gendered subjects. As a "social temporality," gender draws on historical precedence and received demonstrations of gender norms that have been accepted and adapted by dominant culture, including representations of Villa's hypermasculinity and misogyny. These cultural scripts authorize Adrián's gender performances as his masculinity comes to rely on repetition for its coherence and apprehension by others. Yet, in this scene, Adrián has nostalgia for a masculinity that he himself creates. Gina and Adrián are not exactly repeating the past because their tea-drinking scene preceded that of Villa's and the Mujer's, a fact that destabilizes the notion of an originary moment of exemplary masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, Gina's voice, which serves as an inserted script, signals the potential for transforming the gender norms upheld in Adrián's book, a transformation that is swiftly cut short by Villa's act of violence. The scene suggests that Gina and Adrián are authorized by cultural/historical scripts to perform a recognizable and

accepted gender identity, that they are also authors of their own performances who have the ability to mis-perform or who can “fail to repeat”, and that they are spectators whose spectatorship perpetuates gender norms.

As the play progresses, Gina becomes increasingly dissatisfied with Adrián. She reveals her desire for marriage and another child to Andrea and Ismael. Ismael, who is secretly enamored with Gina, encourages her to express her feelings to Adrián: “Gina, tienes que enfrentarlo. Decirle: o todo o nada” (“Gina, you have to confront him. tell him: everything or nothing”) (48). But, Gina feels compelled to abide by the “pacto” (“pact”) that she and Adrián have in which she cannot go to his apartment unannounced, especially to make demands that would compromise their noncommittal relationship. Ismael’s notion of love differs drastically from the “pacto entre adultos” (“pact between adults”) (47) that Gina and Adrián have. For him, “El amor quiere todo...quiere ser para siempre, si no, no es amor.” (“Love wants everything...it wants to be forever, if not, it is not love”) (48). His idealistic and romantic conception of love contrasts with Adrián’s and is informed by an alternative masculinity in which he does not want to dominate his lover or deprive her of her desires and needs. Indeed, Ismael argues that men are trapped by the social scripts that require them to put up emotional defenses:

Ismael: Es que...en el fondo eso queremos los hombres: que alguien nos tumbe todas, todas, nuestras idiotas defensas; que alguien nos invada, nos haga suyos; nos libere de nosotros mismos.

Ismael: Its that...deep inside that’s what men want: that someone tumbles down all, all of our idiotic defenses; that someone invades us, makes us theirs; liberates us from ourselves (49)

Ismael’s view of love reverses the power dynamics in Gina and Adrián’s relationship and the culturally dominant expectations of heterosexual desire. For Ismael, men’s tough exterior and claims to power are pretensions that hide their own desire to be

cared for and beholden to another. Men are not liberated (even in a patriarchal society) because they are also trapped by cultural scripts that require the kinds of “*idiotas defensas*” (“*idiotic defenses*”) propagated, in part, by Villa’s legend.

Ismael’s exposition on love and men’s desires inspires Gina to confront Adrián with her demands for monogamy and children, but not before Ismael gives her one last bit of advice: “*Si se enoja, entonces le tiras en la cara las rosas y le dices adiós para siempre. Y te vas. Como toda una señora*” (“*If he gets mad, then throw the roses in his face and tell him goodbye forever. And leave. Like a dignified woman*”) (49). Here, Ismael lays out the script that Gina will follow in her later reenactment as she again takes stage directions from men who describe how female desire should be expressed. When she reaches Adrián’s apartment, he refuses to let her inside because he is entertaining another woman. Gina then recites the words from Ismael’s script out loud, “*...en la cara y le dices adiós...*” (“*...in his face and tell him goodbye...*”) (52). But in her attempt to throw the roses in Adrián’s face, she breaks a heel and falls. She then commands Adrián to stand still while she repeats her throw, this time hitting him in the face with the roses before walking away in the rain with a broken heel. The dramatic and dignified scene that Ismael envisions, a scene perhaps reminiscent of telenovelas, fails in Gina’s delivery. Yet, the scene obviously succeeds in terms of Berman’s use of humor to disarm the deconstruction of gender norms at work. The encounter is humorous because Adrián recognizes his place in the “scene” that Gina is performing and takes his cue from Gina: “*Adrián obedece, se queda quieto bajo su paraguas, mientras Gina se pasea frente a él calculando el golpe*” (“*Adrián obeys, he stays still under his umbrella, while Gina stands in front of him calculating the blow*”) (53). Meanwhile, Gina is taking direction from Ismael’s script which itself comes from popular culture narratives about the appropriate behavior of a woman scorned.

Gina's repetition of gender norms is imperfect, her repetition fails and thus draws attention to gender's cultural construction and its compulsory performance.

By asserting that gender is citational, Berman's play also suggests that historiography recites and repeats certain discourses that shape the writing of revolutionary history. To examine, in particular, how gender impacts historical writing, I will focus on Adrián's emplotment of Villa and the revolution. Following Franco's lead, I will also ask how Adrián plots women into his version of revolutionary history. Adrián produces a distinctly masculinist text because the subject is about war which is typically seen as a male domain of knowledge and because most histories are written by men or from a masculinist perspective. Aside from these generalizations, Adrián's text is masculinist in both its style and content. Adrián imagines himself "cabalgando con el Centauro" ("riding with the Centaur"), who leads an army of starving revolutionaries into Mexico City to demand their rights from "los politiqueros tranzas y perfumados y jijos de la chingada" ("the perfumed politicians and sons of la Chingada") (30). Adrián is caught up in the idea of being in a group of men experiencing the adventure, camaraderie, and satisfaction of fighting for justice against effeminate male politicians, and more importantly, experiencing the freedom from women. He also captures the violence and virility of which he writes through the writing style itself: "No escrito con delicadezas, mariconerías lingüísticas. Quiero hacer sentir toda la violencia del asunto: quiero que mi libro huelga a caballo, a sudores, a pólvora" ("I don't write with delicateness, linguistic faggotries. I want to make readers feel all of the violence of the affair: I want my book to smell of horse, sweat, and gunpowder") (30). Even Andrea sardonically notes Adrián's manly "ortografía": "Impresionante cómo pone los puntos y las comas. Con mucha, mucha

virilidad, ¿no?” (“Impressive how he puts the periods and comas. With so much virility, no?”) (47).

Aside from his use of masculinist rhetoric (and punctuation), Adrián’s focus on the domestic space further sustains the masculinist perspective he employs. That is, the only two scenes that come from his manuscript and which the audience witnesses depict Villa within the domestic space in confrontation with women. The first scene I have already described, involves his encounter with Mujer. The second scene in Act 2 depicts Villa with his mother, Doña Micaela Arango. He gives her earrings (taken from the dead body of Mujer) which she promptly rejects, assuming correctly that her bandit son has resorted to violence or theft to get them. For Doña Micaela, Villa’s life as a bandit (not a revolutionary) concerns her less than his womanizing, his multiple “marriages,” and the abandoned children he fathers throughout the countryside. When Doña Micaela asks Villa how many grandchildren she has, he has difficulty giving her an exact answer: “Pos así, ¿certeramente...? Cien...Ciento...Pos siento mucho no poder sacar las cuentas. Le digo: andamos haciendo patria” (“Well, exactly? One hundred... one hundred and... Well, I’m sorry I can’t come up with the number. I tell you: we’re making the nation”) (45). Taken together, the two scenes in which Villa confronts Mujer and his mother both underscore the way in which sexual conquest is key to revolutionary success in Adrián’s emplotment of history. Earlier in the play when Gina asks Adrián if it was true that Villa had over 300 lovers, Adrián responds, “Las cifras se pierden en lo mítico” (“The numbers are lost in the myth”) (36). For Adrián, Villa’s sexual prowess forms a significant part of his mythic status and becomes an aspect that Adrián emulates in his own life.

Adrián’s relationships with multiple women help explain his views on the women in his life. At one point he tells Gina that her existence as an autonomous

subject frightens him: “cuando te pienso, pienso en tus manos, en tu boca, tus pechos, tus piernas, en alguna parte de ti. No es hasta que te veo de nuevo que todo se reúne en una persona específica, que respire y piense y está viva...Eso me da pavor, saber que aparte de mí, existes” (“when I think of you, I think of your hands, your mouth, your breasts, your legs, every part of you. It is not until I look at you anew that everything reunites into a specific person, who breathes and thinks and is alive...That gives me terror, that apart from me, you exist”) (65). Adrián does not see Gina as a complete individual; she is a body of parts with no autonomy. When Gina demands to know his mistress’s name, he describes her as a non-entity: “No tiene nombre, no existe” (“She doesn’t have a name, she doesn’t exist”) (52). For Adrián, then, women are disembodied figures or *mujeres desnudas* (naked women); their anonymity suggests that they are both interchangeable and insignificant. Hence, women (except for Doña Micaela) are unnamed in his historical text. In addition to *Mujer*, Gina’s name is also effaced despite the fact that her labor helped make publication possible. Although Adrián dedicates his book to Gina, the dedication diminishes her significance to both his life and his work: “A una querida amiga, apasionada como yo de Pancho Villa” (“To a dear friend, passionate like me about Pancho Villa”) (77). The irony of his dedication is that not only does he transform Gina into a woman without a name (like his mistress and *Mujer*), but he displaces his passion for Villa onto her, a passion that got in the way of their own relationship. But the more important point here is that women’s anonymity in the historical text functions as a kind of violence. Women are either silenced by violence (i.e., *Mujer*) or endure the violence of silence. Trouillot writes that historical silencing is “an active and transitive process: one ‘silences’ a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun” (48). Berman captures the violence of historical silencing in Trouillot’s metaphor during the scene in which Villa and Adrián both “shoot” at Gina with their respective

“weapons” of choice: “Villa toma la cache de su pistola. Adrián mete la mano en la bolsa de su impermeable. Adrián desembolsa, como un revólver, su libro. Villa desenfunda y dispara: no hay balas” (“Villa grabs his pistol. Adrián puts his hand inside his raincoat. Adrián takes out of his pocket, like a revolver, his book. Villa shoots: there are no bullets.”) (76). Adrián’s weapon is his book on Villa in which male heroes of the nation are named while women go unidentified in the pages of revolutionary history.

The violence against women – in both Adrián’s life and his book – is framed by the discourse of female treachery embodied in Malinche. Throughout Adrián’s text, women are portrayed as traitors to the revolution and to the patria. *Mujer* is the daughter of a counterrevolutionary general and Doña Micaela, who refuses to give her “bendición” (“blessing”) to Villa, is a Catholic in the midst of a predominantly anti-clerical revolution. In Adrián’s life, Gina’s friend Andrea is tied by blood to Villa’s nemesis Plutarco Elías Calles or, as Adrián describes her, she is the “nieta del máximo traidor a la Revolución” (“the granddaughter of the ultimate traitor of the Revolution”) (31). For Adrián, Gina and Andrea “enslave” Mexicans by their embrace of neoliberalism. He tells Gina, “No me interesa tu trabajo. Especialmente no cuando estás montando una maquiladora, es decir, cuando te afilias al vendaval neoliberal que está desgraciando a este país” (“I’m not interested in your work. Especially not when you are building a maquiladora [assembly factory], that is to say, when you affiliate yourself with the strong wind of neoliberalism that is disgracing this country”) (31). Despite their relationship, Adrián and Gina are on opposite sides of a battle over national history and economic destiny. Adrián imagines himself riding into battle with Villa to take from the rich and give to the poor, while Gina and her business partner

Andrea, granddaughter of Calles, operate a maquiladora to give work to the unemployed.

Berman's use of the Malinchista discourse to frame the way in which women are deemed to be a detriment to both the revolution and the nation draws on an important feature found in Villista popular culture narratives. Berman repeats the violence against women that circulates in earlier depictions of Villa by both Mexican and Mexican American writers. Prominent Mexican writers from the 1930s often produced derogatory depictions of Villa in which he was shown to be impulsive, emotionally unstable, unpredictable, and violent. For example, in Martín Luis Guzmán's *El águila y la serpiente* (*The Eagle and the Snake*), Villa is described as "a jaguar whose back we stroked with trembling hand, fearful that at any moment a paw might strike out at us" (qtd. in Parra 90). Mexican-American playwright Josefina Niggli also depicts Villa as a volatile leader in her 1938 play *This Is Villa!*: "Half child, half cruel savage, quick to cry, quick to anger, no one knows from one moment to the next what the humor of the Chief may be" (292). Berman repeats this standard depiction in her own description of Villa as "Perfectamente viril, con una facilidad portentosa para la violencia o el sentimentalismo" ("Perfectly virile, with a portentous facility for violence or sentimentalism") (20). Each writer then presents scenes of violence against women that serve to underscore Villa's violent nature. In Rafael Muñoz's 1931 novel *¡Vámanos con Pancho Villa!*, Villa's cruelty is heightened for sensational effect. In one particular scene, Villa is reunited with Tiburcio, one of his most faithful soldiers, who had unwillingly left the battlefield two years earlier. Tiburcio is now tied to the domestic space as a farmer who lives with his wife, daughter, and son. When Villa and his men ride by the farm, Tiburcio immediately prepares to join them, but hesitates over leaving his family. Villa seemingly respects

Tiburcio's obligations and asks to be taken to his wife and daughter. After having them prepare a meal for him, Villa tells Tiburcio: "Tienes razón, Tiburcio Maya...¿Cómo podías abandonarlas? Pero me haces falta, necesito todos los hombres que puedan juntarse, y habrás de seguirme hoy mismo. Y para que sepas que ellas no van a pasar hambres, ni van a sufrir por tu ausencia, ¡mira!" ("You're right, Tiburcio Maya...How could you abandon them? But I need you, I need all the men that can join, and you should follow me today. And so that you will know that your wife and daughter will not go hungry nor will they suffer over your absence, look!") (123). Villa quickly takes out his gun and kills both mother and daughter. Tiburcio is stunned, but stoically follows Villa back into battle, now with his son by his side. When Tiburcio is later captured by U.S. troops, he has the chance to tell them where Villa is hiding and thus exact his revenge. However, Tiburcio refuses to assist in Villa's capture, remaining faithful to the end.

Niggli's play also incorporates a similar scene of violence in her work on Villa. In the play, Villa unintentionally kills the fiancé of one of his soldiers during an attempt to kiss her. Antonio, the man whose fiancé Villa killed, has the opportunity to take revenge on Villa, but kills himself instead. Thus, for Niggli, the play's romance lies not in the relationship between the impending nuptials, but in the relationship between Villa and his men.

Berman's play – and Adrián's text – repeats these scenes of violence in their presentation of Mujer's murder. What is also repeated is the way in which male characters in these narratives value their association with Villa over familial bonds to women. This emotional displacement registers a profound contempt for the domestic space, and a preference for the virility, freedom, and action promised by Villa's military campaigns. But the male characters' irrational attachment also exemplifies

the kind of forceful homosocial bonding that Ileana Rodríguez identifies in Central American revolutionary writing. For Rodríguez, love or *tendresse*, moves from “female to male ontologies” (243), from compulsory heterosexuality to the homosocial domain of male bonding. In this shift, love represents sacrifice and discipline for the insurgency and ultimately for the revolutionary state. The space of insurgency requires acts of love among men because “Tenderness is the glue keeping the insurgents together under harsh conditions of guerrilla warfare, [and] clandestinity” (34). Furthermore, Rodríguez writes, “In proving their love to the fatherland, men practice *tendresse* on their companions-in-arms” (33).

While the Mexican revolution and the Central American wars that Rodríguez writes about are obviously distinct events, Rodríguez’s notion of revolutionary *tendresse* helps clarify how “masculine economies of state construction and insurgency building” (244) in the narratives about revolutionary Mexico create spaces of public displays of male love. More importantly, this homosociality results in and depends upon the evacuation of women from the revolution. “And while men practice *tendresse* on other men,” Rodríguez writes, “they withdraw it from women” (34). This withdrawal is precisely what Muñoz’s novel, Niggli’s play, and Berman’s/Adrián’s text use to depict the subordination of the domestic space to the battlefield and the disavowal of female subjectivity from the masculine domain of warfare.

In her analysis of Tiburcio’s irrational bond to Villa, Ilene O’Malley writes that his allegiance represents a form of *villismo* that “is not prompted by anything commonly regarded as self-interest or political belief; therefore it cannot be controlled by appeals to those interests, it cannot be co-opted” (110). While O’Malley does not identify this ambiguous yet forceful attraction to Villa as love, Rodríguez’s

formulation helps us place villismo within a powerful homosocial economy in which desire underwrites the attachment between men. Rodríguez labels such affiliations an “erotic-patriotic” form of love which describes “the homosocial love of men for men and of men for their country” (*Women* 19). This version of love in revolutionary narratives is often accompanied by the “erotic-nonpatriotic” heterosexual relationships in which women remain marginal, metaphorical figures in the background of insurgency. Once again, women and their sexuality are placed in antithetical relation to both the revolution and the nation. Ultimately, the revolutionary process of nation building has little use for women’s presence or participation, foreshadowing the varied consequences of political exclusions that Mexican women would have to contend with in postrevolutionary Mexico. In Berman’s play, women embody both counterrevolutionaries and enemies of the state. Woman/Mujer is a threat to the nation (she is aligned with the wealthy and the neoliberal). Man is the heroic patriot, embodied in both Villa and Adrián, the leftist liberal concerned with the subaltern and election fraud, who uses national interests to justify violence and lack of commitment to women.

Berman’s play further depicts erotic-patriotic love through Adrián’s obsession with Villa. Villa preoccupies Adrián’s mind to the point where he draws “sombrecitos norteños” (“sombrecitos” worn by men in northern Mexico) in his journal and admits to Gina that “Pienso en Villa hasta dormido” (“I think of Villa even in my sleep”) (29). The play’s title further emphasizes Adrián’s predicament as he is the one who is between Villa and una mujer desnuda/Gina. In this way, Berman’s play suggests that historical narrative is also trapped between Villa and Mujer as revolutionary histories and popular culture narratives continuously emplot the two figures in violent conflict with each other.

By repeating the conventional characterization of Villa's violence, Berman calls attention to Villa as a representation whose meaning is socially constructed. Thus, Berman's play not only calls for a critique of machismo, but also suggests a critique of the state's ideological deployment of machismo through figures like Villa in which representations of a violent Villa seek to contain subaltern masculinities that stand in for a more general populist threat to the state's power.

To expose the state's manipulation of revolutionary history, Berman uses parody in her critique of the official master narratives of war. One need only look to the state party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutionalized Revolutionary Party or PRI), and its former dominance for evidence of the Revolution's role in shaping political discourse in Mexico. But as much as the state attempts to repeat the master narratives that legitimate its claim to power, many Mexicans reject official interpretations of the past because of the state's history of corruption. In particular, the 1968 massacre of students and protestors in Mexico City resulted in an intense skepticism of state power and nationalist narratives.<sup>3</sup> Mexican writers like Berman have since consistently challenged official narratives of the revolution by wresting historical interpretation away from the state. Therefore, it is not accidental that her play – and Adrián's book – resurrects the revolution during Mexico's implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) because the Ernesto Zedillo administration itself invoked

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<sup>3</sup> In October 1968, the Mexican police and military opened fire on a crowd of thousands of students and protestors who had gathered in Mexico City's Plaza de Tlatelolco to protest state policies. The attack resulted in hundreds of deaths and the imprisonment and disappearance of countless others. Because the student protestors had strategically planned their rallies just days before Mexico City was to host the 1968 Olympics, the state acted swiftly and decisively. In order to reassure Olympic visitors and tourists that order was maintained, the state denied the extent of chaos and violence and also blamed student agitators for provoking the use of force. The silence and confusion surrounding the full account of state participation continues into the present as new documents are being released and as the Mexican public remains persistent in demanding answers.

revolutionary history in order to foster public support for its neoliberal economic policies.<sup>4</sup> Because the play's plot and its performance take place in the context of NAFTA, Berman ensures that a Mexican public will identify the critique implicit in her parodic repetition of Villa and of revolutionary historiography itself.

Berman's use of parodic repetition undermines historical narrative by calling attention to its status as ideological construct. In her work, the revolution is not treated as a set of objective, empirical events whose facticity forecloses debate about their meaning. Rather, Berman highlights the fictive nature of historical narrative and the way contingent ideological interpretations shape the meanings ascribed to events and people. Villa's proliferation in official and popular culture becomes further removed from its historical referent with each instantiation, making Villa's image a sign used by the state for political expediency or by popular culture for political dissent.

As a passionate voice of the Mexican Left, Adrián's book illustrates how subaltern groups often express their political agency through invocations of the revolution or its key figures.<sup>5</sup> Adrián's infatuation with Villa is, in part, a recognition of current oppressive politics and the need for someone like Villa to challenge corrupt state power. However, Berman's parody of revolutionary historiography and the historians who write

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<sup>4</sup> Samuel Brunk notes that during the 1995 economic recession that resulted from Zedillo's (and his predecessor Carlos Salinas's) policies, Zedillo invoked the memory of Zapata as he "promised that policies [...] through which both he and his predecessor, Salinas, sought to guarantee individual property rights within ejidos, would help make the countryside more productive" (480-81). Brunk further describes how the "Salinas administration frequently employed the figure of Zapata, both visually and verbally, in pushing reforms" (458).

<sup>5</sup> Berman's 1994 play about Villa accompanied the rise of neoZapatismo propagated by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation or EZLN, commonly known as the Zapatistas) which began the same year with an armed insurrection in the state of Chiapas. By operating under the mantle of Emiliano Zapata's legacy of land reform, the Zapatistas challenged the state's symbolic appropriation of Zapata which it had used to legitimate its own agrarian policies (Brunk 457-58).

it emphasizes the ways in which Villa serves as an ineffective model of resistance as long as misogyny and machismo define his legacy. Rather, Berman suggests that the answer to revolutionary change lies not in glorifying regressive narratives of the past, but in reconfiguring the past in more emancipatory ways.

**Petites Histoires and the Mexican Revolution: Anecdotal History in Sandra Cisneros's "Eyes of Zapata"**

Like Berman's use of narrative experimentation to critique masculinist interpretations of history and the ideological motivations behind them, Cisneros employs narrative strategies to de-center dominant historical narratives and to call attention to revolutionary historiography's exclusionary practices. While Berman's play parodies the obsessed Mexican historian, Cisneros's story displaces the voice of the historian with that of an Indian woman, Inés Alfaro, whose memory reorients the historical narrative. Inés narrates the entire story in a monologue that she delivers while gazing on a reposing Zapata. Cisneros's narrative choice underscores her challenge to historiography's disciplinary habit of silencing women. As I will explain momentarily, the character of Inés is based on a historical figure that haunts the margins of Zapatista archives. In order to unsilence Inés's voice, Cisneros uses monologue to imagine what Inés's uninterrupted, unmediated reflection on her status in revolutionary Mexico might sound like. Inés's amatory gaze initiates the monologue as the opening paragraph of the story depicts a nude Zapata – *un hombre desnudo* – sleeping under the inquisitive, desiring gaze of Inés:

I put my nose to your eyelashes. The skin of the eyelids as soft as the skin of the penis, the collarbone with its fluted wings, the purple knot of the nipple, the dark, blue-black color of your sex, the thin legs and long thin feet. For a moment I don't want to think of your past nor your future. For now you are here, you are mine. (85)

Rather than venerate Zapata's virility as a source of power over others, Inés meticulously catalogues his sleeping body so that when he is gone, she can "re-create [him] from memory" (110).

In "Eyes," Inés's voice is subtended by desire, making her a speaking subject of desire rather than a silenced object of desire. Yet, Inés's desiring voice not only displaces the historian's authoritative one, but also challenges what historians choose to include in their histories. Cisneros implicitly critiques historiographical practices that write women out of history by basing the character of Inés Alfaro on a passage from John Womack Jr.'s *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (1968). Womack's study, regarded as one of the most important works on Zapata, ostensibly presents a comprehensive account of Zapata's life. However, his passing reference to one of Zapata's mistresses suggests a lack of historical attention to women's experience of the war that Cisneros attempts to recuperate in literary form. Womack describes the "restful little town" known as Tlaltizapán where "Zapata had made not only a headquarters but also a home" (242). In this town, Zapata spent the evenings relaxing in the plaza with his aides "drinking, arguing about plucky cocks and fast and frisky horses." Womack writes "The nights he spent back in his quarters with a woman from the town; he fathered two children at least in Tlaltizapán." In a footnote to his description of Tlaltizapán, Womack writes "Zapata fathered at least five sons and four daughters. His wife, Josefa, bore him two children, Felipe and María Asunción, both of whom died in infancy. [...] Other children were 'hijos naturales.' Surviving at least to adulthood were Nicolás, born in 1906; Eugenio, probably born in 1913; María Elena, probably born in 1913; Ana María, born in 1914; Diego, born in 1916; María Luisa, probably born in 1918; and Mateo, born in 1918" (242). Womack writes that in Tlaltizapán, Zapata "had found the moral capital of his revolution" (243). Womack fails to mention the woman's

name – if it was indeed recorded somewhere to begin with. But Héctor Calderón writes that this “anonymous woman is the basis for Inés Alfaro, whom Cisneros names after one of Zapata’s lovers, Inés Aguilar” (193). This mysterious woman will become the focus of Cisneros’s story and a fascinating yet neglected subject in revolutionary historiography.

Historian Frank McLynn’s more recent work on Zapata, *Villa and Zapata* (2000), presents a fuller though limited version of Inés’s existence and importance to Zapata’s life.

Zapata had always been known as a ladies’ man. He was said to be a master of seduction [...]. In 1908 Emiliano had been involved in something of a scandal even by lax Morelos standards when he abducted a Cuautla woman, Inés Alfaro, set up house with her and begat three children – a son Nicolás and two daughters. Inés’s mother denounced Zapata to the authorities, who gave him the minor punishment of serving a stint in the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Battalion. He bribed his way out and was back in Anenecuilco early in 1909 to take part in the *leyvista* campaign against Escandón. Yet even if the Anenecuilco villagers had been disposed to think Zapata had gone too far in his behavior with Inés Alfaro, they would have turned a blind eye because they so esteemed Zapata’s skill and reputation as a horseman. (47-48)

In McLynn’s account, the sexual prowess of both Zapata and Villa are included as part of their biographies. For McLynn, Villa and Zapata shared certain qualities including the fact that “both were outstanding horsemen [and] dedicated womanizers” (70).

McLynn notes that Villa “was a compulsive womanizer who raised the idea of serial monogamy to a new power. He liked to humour his women by going through bogus marriage ceremonies: one of his earliest ‘wives’ was Petra Espinosa whom he abducted and with whom he lived for a short time in Parral” (70). While Villa’s and Zapata’s status as “dedicated womanizers” may be fact – or, rather, a detail made into fact by virtue of its existence and persistence in the historical record – the manner in

which this fact is presented reveals as much about both men as the historical writing about them.

Barbara Brinson Curiel notes that it was not uncommon for men “to have relations with women to whom they were not married and even to have children with these women” (413). Yet McLynn’s account leaves unexplored the gender hierarchies that make such social relations possible. For McLynn, womanizing is just the way things were: “In a macho society what might have been regarded as a blemish by later *bien-pensants* – his compulsive womanising – was regarded in Anenecuilco as a badge of honour” (47). This may be, but what interests me is the manner in which such facts are narrated and handled within the construction of revolutionary history. To say that Zapata was a “ladies’ man,” a “master of seduction,” a “dedicated womanizer” is quite different from saying that he benefited from iniquitous power relations in which a patriarchal culture was predicated on women’s subordination. Furthermore, the historical narrative’s use of Inés’s abduction (and Villa’s abduction of Petra Espinosa, for that matter) is a brief yet crucial detail that helps construct the revolutionary mystique of Zapata and Villa. That is, their acts of sexual conquest build upon their virility and prowess in other areas such as horsemanship and military engagement. Their status as revolutionary exemplars cannot exist, or cannot exist as effectively, without an accompanying history of sexual conquest. Similar to the Anenecuilcan villagers’ interest in Zapata’s superb horsemanship, McLynn quickly moves on from the Inés Alfaro incident to spend the next two paragraphs on a detailed account of Zapata’s equestrian skills. Inés Alfaro’s abduction fails to muster further curiosity about her experience or about Zapata’s feeling toward her. Her abduction instead becomes an example of Zapata’s mastery over subordinates, like his facility with

horses which merits more historical attention than female abduction in McLynn's account.

However, McLynn's passing reference to Inés functions as a narrative disruption, an anecdote that Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt would describe as "a vehement and cryptic particularity that would make one pause or even stumble on the threshold of history" (51). In McLynn's text, the anecdote of Inés's abduction represents an internal competing narrative that exposes the frame of the master narrative even as it is embedded within it. The anecdote gestures at what is left out, the fuller account of human experience, a portion of which is condensed into anecdotal form and inserted into a totalizing, teleological narrative structure. Despite McLynn's attempt to quickly move on with his narrative, "at the anecdote's rim, one encounters a difference in the texture of the narrative" (50). That is, McLynn shifts to an almost apologetic tone as he asserts that Zapata's womanizing was culturally condoned: "In a macho society what might have been regarded as a blemish by later *bien-pensants* – his compulsive womanising – was regarded in Anenecuilco as a badge of honour" (47). But McLynn's qualifying statements only conjure up more interest in the subject he is trying to subsume.

If, as Gallagher and Greenblatt argue, anecdotes "provoke their own contextualizations" and "strive for completeness" (50), then Cisneros's story serves as an imaginative reconstruction of Inés's abduction that focuses on female agency and desire. As "counterhistories," anecdotes oppose themselves "not only to dominant narratives, but also to prevailing modes of historical thought and methods of research" (52). By transforming an anecdote into a short story, Cisneros challenges standard "methods of research" by culling available details from the historical record and using literary imagination to give voice to a historical subject whose experience is irreclaimable by any other means. In the process, the anecdote of Inés's abduction becomes a "counterhistory"

to dominant masculinist accounts of the revolution in which descriptions of women's experiences occupy the footnotes of history.

The fact of Inés's abduction bolsters Zapata's status as a figure of masculine power and virility, but as we've seen, not many details are known about the incident. Thus, McLynn's and Womack's lack of interest in her experience may be largely attributed to the lack of recorded information on her life. The paucity of information on Inés speaks to the larger issue of historical silencing that is the focus of this chapter. The lack of information about certain historical subjects, particularly women, reveals history to be a discipline – like all other disciplines – in which power is manifested in the recording, withholding, and divulging of information. As Trouillot asserts, "In history, power begins at the source" (29). The fact that little is known about Inés (because little was recorded to begin with) demonstrates the lasting effects of various decisions that have been made over time by those who construct archives and those who utilize them to create historical narratives of the nation and the revolution. Trouillot writes

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance). (26)

Inés's life enters history as a silence. Her life is data that is left largely unrecorded and thus does not become a source from which narratives can be easily constructed. For example, there are discrepancies over her last name. Brinson Curiel quotes from historian Jesús Sotelo Inclán (an important source for Womack's study of Zapata) who quotes from another historian, Sergio Valverde, that Inés *Aguilar* was the niece of

Remigio Alfaro and that when Zapata abducted her, “Alfaro went to the authorities, who condemned Zapata to five years of military service in Cuernavaca” (412).<sup>6</sup>

What little is known about Inés is then emplotted into historical narrative in particular ways. As I have argued in relation to McLynn’s account of Inés’s abduction, Inés’s story appears as a brief encounter, the result of Zapata’s “master[y] of seduction,” of his sexual prowess that attracted women to him thereby obviating further comment on the patriarchal culture that condoned such practices. Zapata’s abduction of Inés may have caused “something of a scandal even by lax Morelos standards,” but the incident only confirms Zapata’s skillful deployment of his masculine wiles. Brinson Curiel reveals how earlier Mexican historians also excused Zapata’s womanizing in more apologetic ways. Mario Gill writes: “Zapata’s amorous versatility was like that of the patriarchs of antiquity, procreators of nations. His devotion to women was an extension of his love for his people, his love for the land” (qtd. in Brinson Curiel 416).<sup>7</sup> Baltasar Dromundo writes that Zapata “had his sweethearts, his women and his loves among these women,” but “he, an uncommon man, virile, never failed to provide for the economic necessities of a woman who had even once been his” (qtd. in Brinson Curiel 413). Like Villa’s claim in Berman’s play – “andamos haciendo patria” (45) – womanizing is an act of nation-building. For some early Mexican historians, Zapata was helping to “procreate” the nation that he loved through his “amorous versatility” with its women. Thus, the implication is that Zapata cannot be judged harshly by current standards because he was merely following the cultural practices and social mores of his time. Even if one could

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<sup>6</sup> In “Eyes,” Remigio Alfaro is Inés’s father (92). Throughout my analysis, I refer to Inés by her first name only, given the discrepancy over her last name.

<sup>7</sup> Both Mario Gill and Baltazar Dromundo are listed as sources in Womack’s study.

critique his behavior, one must respect his sense of responsibility in providing “for the economic necessities” of his many “sweethearts.”

Such comments remind us of Pérez’s argument that sexuality and its discourse always un/consciously guide the writing of history. In this case, historians identify virility as part of nation building while female sexuality becomes the passive conduit through which men achieve power. In his work on Mexican masculinity, Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba argues that “the male body claims its centrality as the hero figure; this centrality makes his body an object of desire” (65). As an object of desire, the historical subject, such as Zapata, can engender “heroic eroticism” (56). Domínguez-Ruvalcaba focuses on Mexican literature about Pancho Villa, but his conclusions also apply to Zapata. He writes that the “image of the hero” is “a desirable body, a body composed by the gaze that euphorically venerates the great men of the nation. While critics have often spoken of bestowing a pious look on a sacred icon, this gaze, by contrast, exalts the virile attributes of the heroes and therefore eroticizes their veneration” (57). I suggest that a version of this “heroic eroticism” is found in McLynn’s, Gill’s, and Dromundo’s historical narratives about Zapata in which each author “exalts the virile attributes” of Zapata as they write about his sexual prowess and conquests.

Cisneros’s story disrupts the kind of historiography that glorifies male sexual dominance by inserting female decolonial desire into revolutionary historiography. By not focusing on female abduction, historians overlook the forms of power and agency that women negotiate within the institution of marriage. In contrast, Cisneros examines the ways in which female desire disrupts constraining marriage practices and the resultant consequences of embracing an unruly female sexuality. By shifting the focus from the battlefield to marriage, Cisneros reveals how marriage is not divorced

from revolution, but that revolutionary reform fails if it neglects to address patriarchal practices.

Cisneros focuses on two practices that challenge both the social order and the institution of marriage: female abduction and female adultery. Unlike McLynn's fleeting interest in Inés's abduction, Cisneros's text imagines the kind of turmoil it caused and the sacrifices it demanded. Despite the lack of power implied in the word "abduction," the practice of female abduction, bride theft, or *robo*, as it is often called in Mexico, is actually a complicated social practice that endows women with a limited form of agency as women break away from the patriarchal father only to enter marriage under subordination to a husband.

Throughout her monologue to a sleeping Zapata, Inés recalls moments under the avocado tree in her father's yard where she and Zapata expressed their desire:

*Suppose my father won't let me?  
We'll run off, he can't be angry for always.  
Wait until the end of the harvest.  
You pulled me toward you [...]. A kiss tasting of warm beer and whiskers.  
You belong to me now. [...]  
So is it yes? I didn't know what to say, I was still so little, just laughed, and  
you kissed me like that, on my teeth. Yes? And pressed me against the  
avocado tree. No, is it? And I said yes, then I said no, and yes, your kisses  
arriving in between. (107-108)*

In these scenes, we see Zapata as the "master of seduction" that McLynn describes in his account. A suave yet forceful man and dazzling in his charro suit, Zapata captivates a young Inés who imagines a matrimonial life of bliss with Morelos's most famous horseman. Cisneros captures the limited form of power accorded to women in the practice of *robo*. Drawing on her own desire for the debonair Zapata, a confused Inés ("I didn't know what to say, I was still so little") acquiesces to leave her father's house and his rule in order to enter a different patriarchal relationship. In this transfer

from her father's authority to Zapata's possession ("You belong to me now"), Inés challenges one patriarch to uphold the power of another one.

The *robo* breeds resentment between the two men whose relationship is defined by the transfer in control over female sexuality. For Inés, her voluntary transfer of her sexuality comes at great emotional cost. Because her adulterous mother was killed by village men when Inés was a child, Inés and her father had grown even closer bonds of affection.

*Inés, for the love I have for you.* When my father pleaded, you can't imagine how I felt. [...]

*Well then, my father said, God help you. You've turned out just like the perra that bore you.* Then he turned around and I had no father.

I never felt so alone as that night. I gathered my things in my *rebozo* and ran out into the darkness to wait for you by the jacaranda tree. For a moment, all my courage left me. I wanted to turn around, call out, 'apá, beg his forgiveness [...]. (89-90)

In this passage, Cisneros imagines the kind of turmoil that women faced during the practice of *robo*, but she also complicates the patriarchal family through Remigio Alfaro's sentiment. Remigio is depicted as a loving father who is emotionally hurt by the women in his family. His daughter's voluntary abandonment is similar to his wife's adultery. Speaking out of anger, he links Inés and her mother together through their betrayal of his authority and affection: "*Perra*. That word, the way my father spat it, as if in that one word I were betraying all the love he had given me all those years, as if he were closing all the doors to his heart" (90).

Remigio's use of "perra" not only demonstrates his hurt feelings, but more importantly, the regulatory function of language. "Perra" denotes a woman whose sexuality cannot be controlled within the family unit by either a husband or a father. Inés's decision to runaway with Zapata is based on her sexual and emotional desires – desires that are even stronger than paternal affection ("*Inés, for the love I have for*

*you*”). Inés senses the social condemnation embedded in the word: “[...] I could not stop my heart from hearing that word – *perra*. My father, my love, who would have nothing to do with me” (90). Remigio’s reaction foreshadows the social chastisement that awaits Inés as she becomes one of Zapata’s women. Societies produce such derogatory and dehumanizing terms to confine a female sexuality that threatens patriarchal order. The term is both denunciatory and admonitory; it signifies a threat to female dignity, but also, as we will see later, a physical threat to the female body. Thus, Inés’s choice expresses the needs of her female desire, but also puts her in danger as she lives in the forbidden margins of her society.

Cisneros spends a significant amount of narrative space delineating the strained relationship between Inés’s father and Zapata. For Inés, both men’s role as patriarch determines her life’s choices and the extent of her agency. In the following scene, Inés describes her father’s reaction to the *robo* and reveals the ways in which *robo* undermined both familial and social order.

*But suppose he won’t give us his permission.  
That old goat, we’ll be dead by the time he gives his permission. Better  
we just run off. He can’t be angry forever.*

Not even on his deathbed did he forgive you. I suppose you’ve never forgiven him either for calling in the authorities. I’m sure he only meant for them to scare you a little, to remind you of your obligations to me since I was expecting your child. [...]. I can’t make apologies on my father’s behalf, but, well, what were we to think, Miliano? (92-93)

The passage also indicates Zapata’s breach of decorum in his “theft” of Inés. Again, McLynn’s account vaguely alludes to Zapata’s dishonorable conduct in dealing with Inés: “In 1908 Emiliano had been involved in something of a scandal even by lax Morelos standards when he abducted a Cuautla woman” (47). McLynn writes that some Anenecuilcan villagers might have been “disposed to think Zapata had gone too far in his behavior with Inés” (48), but McLynn fails to ask why. If Zapata was a

“dedicated womanizer” and if *robo* was not an uncommon practice in Mexico, why would Zapata’s actions be scandalous? Why would the authorities punish Zapata if bride theft was not really considered theft?

Quoting from Sotelo Inclán, Brinson Curiel writes that the relationship incensed the historical Inés’s family. Zapata’s

love for Inés Alfaro, the niece of Mr. Alfaro, of a prominent family in Villa de Ayala, was opposed by her relatives, therefore it could not be realized in a happy way. In spite of everything, Emiliano *set up housekeeping in Cuautla*, and from that union – which was not secret – one boy and two girls were born. (qtd. in Brinson Curiel 412-413, emphasis in original)

In this account, the historical Inés comes from “a prominent family” who, for indeterminable reasons, rejected Zapata as an adequate suitor. Brinson Curiel notes that Inés’s family was so enraged that they had authorities arrest Zapata “more than two years after the fact: Nicolás was born in 1906, Zapata exiled in 1908” (413). Were their objections based on Zapata’s class status? Perhaps not. Zapata was a small landowner, financially independent and not from the campesino class who supported him. Sotelo Inclán’s account further obscures the possibility of female agency on Inés’s part. His euphemism that “Emiliano *set up housekeeping*” privileges Zapata’s actions. Did Zapata act out of force by abducting an unwilling Inés? Or did Inés acquiesce to the socially unsanctioned union? The passage only raises more questions rather than resolves the mystery of Inés’s abduction.

Brinson Curiel suggests that the source of scandal is that the relationship existed outside of marriage. In Sotelo Inclán’s description, Zapata is portrayed “as a man who lured a woman from her respected family and then, for unknown reasons, would not marry her” (413). Thus, the extra-marital union may have offended even “lax Morelos standards” because it was not socially or culturally sanctioned. The

union exemplified sexual relations unrestrained by the terms of the patriarchal institution of marriage. For a woman of Inés's social status, such behavior was most likely highly unacceptable. The fact that authorities were called in to capture and punish Zapata suggests that laws were already in place to condemn such relationships. Thus, marriage as an institution had extreme social value because it helped maintain order as families operated as recognizable units of gender hierarchy within larger social systems of power.

In Cisneros's story, Inés's father objects to Zapata's failure to provide for his family. Inés tells Zapata that her father called authorities "to remind you of your obligations to me since I was expecting your child" (93). As Brinson Curiel points out, both Cisneros's story and the historical account of Inés's abduction challenge claims by writers such as Dromundo who excused Zapata's sexual conquests by stating that at least he "never failed to provide for the economic necessities of a woman who had even once been his." The abduction of Inés takes off some of the sheen on Zapata's legacy, revealing him to be nothing but a deadbeat father. It reveals his failure to abide by social standards of patriarchal responsibility even in "a macho society" where Zapata's "compulsive womanizing – was regarded in Anenecuilco as a badge of honour" (McLynn 47).

While the historical record remains silent on Inés's view of the situation, Cisneros imagines Inés as a woman distraught over her socially liminal position. In "Eyes," Inés confronts Zapata over his unwillingness to marry her:

You gave me a pair of gold earrings as a wedding gift, remember? *I never said I'd marry you, Inés. Never. [...]*

*Never.* It made me feel a little crazy when you hurled that at me. That word with all its force.

*But, Miliano, I thought...*

*You were foolish to have thought then.*

That was years ago. We're all guilty of saying things we don't mean. *I*

*never said... I know. You don't want to hear it.  
What am I to you now, Miliano? (93-94)*

In this passage, Inés reveals her disappointment in their relationship. Because *robo* is a practice that often leads to marriage, Inés rightfully assumed that running away with Zapata would be a form of elopement. His statement that he “never said” he would marry her suggests duplicity on his part. By never saying his intentions, he is able to redirect Inés’s disappointment back onto her own naïveté: “*You were foolish to have thought then.*” After nine years of living with and raising children within this ambiguous relationship, Inés continues to broach the subject of marriage. The revolution and struggle for land conveniently postpones Inés’s persistent emotional, social, and economic need for a resolution to her status: “If I complain about these woman concerns of mine, I know you’ll tell me – Inés, these aren’t times for that – wait until later. But, Miliano, I’m tired of being told to wait” (94). For Inés, her undefined status has consequences both in their relationship and in society at large. When Zapata is with her, she senses his longing, his desire, and his hesitation in leaving, but he never says what he feels. She is left to surmise her own meaning to his life, reading his body language to determine the value of their relationship.

*What is it I am to you? Sometime wife? Lover? Whore? Which? To be one is not so terrible as being all. I've needed to hear it from you. To verify what I've always thought I knew. (105)*

Inés is never sure of her status in Zapata’s life although she senses that she has an emotional grip on his affections. But her liminal status as “sometime wife,” “lover,” or “whore” has social consequences that transcend Zapata’s feelings. Inés recognizes the social value of marriage and desires the kind of security and status it affords. More than being an affirmation of Zapata’s commitment, marriage is a form of protection from a patriarchal society that tolerates womanizers but castigates free female sexuality. Inés knows from her mother’s gruesome death that the stigma of

being a “loose” woman can lead to physical violence. Marriage would at least protect her from such charges. In this sense, Zapata’s refusal to marry her is not merely inconsiderate, but excessively cruel. Furthermore, marriage demands the kind of financial responsibility to children that Inés desires as she struggles to feed Nicolás and Malenita without receiving support from a perpetually absent Zapata.

But Cisneros shows that women are not necessarily safe inside or outside of marriage. Before the revolution, women faced the sexual predation of caciques. Now, it is the federal army that threatens women throughout the country.

*Desgraciados.* All members of one army against us, no? The *federales*, the *caciques*, one as bad as the other, stealing our hens, stealing the women at night. What long sharp howls the women would let go when they carried them off. The next morning the women would be back, and we would say *Buenos días*, as if nothing had happened. (101)

Inés recounts the way women slept in the sacristy, in corrals, in caves among the scorpions, or ran for the hills when the invading armies were near. In this way, Cisneros brings attention to the way women suffered from sexual terrorism during the revolution. Under these conditions, not even marriage provides protection.

While *robo* is a disruption of traditional marriage practices, female adultery is the ultimate affront to the patriarchal institution of marriage and the social order. Through her gift of clairvoyant vision, Inés is able to describe in graphic detail her mother’s murder. She sees how her mother lies in a field with a man who is not Inés’s father and

How, at a signal from her lover, the others descend. [...] A machete-sharp cane stake greased with lard and driven into the earth. How the men gather my mother like a bundle of corn. Her sharp cry against the infinity of sky when the cane stake pierces her. How each waiting his turn grunts words like hail that splits open the skin, just as before they’d whispered words of love. (111)

The scene is brutal in its depiction of an autonomous female sexuality subjected to torture, gang rape, and death. The scene quickly moves from the space of woman's agency as María Elena voluntarily lays with her lover in an illicit affair, to the village men's attack as they regain control of an errant female sexuality that they had previously enjoyed. The gang rape reveals how communal order is dependent on and maintained by constraining the female body. Pérez writes that the "body is historically and socially constructed" and that it "is written upon by the kind of sex that is practiced upon the body and that the body practices" (108). The "kind of sex" that María Elena practices – an adulterous kind and one that she willingly seeks and participates in – identifies her body as social threat, a body that is open to assault because it defies patriarchal order. The kind of sex that the men practice on her body – gang rape coupled with impalement and torture – writes social condemnation onto the female body's unsanctioned sexual practices. The fact that more than one man assaults her and that Remigio does not seek justice on her behalf indicates patriarchal consensus in the policing of female sexuality. To underscore the dominant gender hierarchy, the men leave visual cues to illustrate the lesson they have made of María Elena's body: "braids undone, a man's sombrero tipped on her head, a cigar in her mouth, as if to say, this is what we do to women who try to act like men" (111).

The violent killing and desecration of María Elena stands as a powerful example of sexual double standards. But the scene also demonstrates Cisneros's feminist historiographical practice of using anecdotes to rewrite revolutionary history. Cisneros's account of María Elena's murder is drawn nearly word for word from Oscar Lewis's *Pedro Martínez* (1964), an anthropological study of a campesino

community in “Azteca” (pseudonym for Tepoztlán), Morelos.<sup>8</sup> Lewis’s text is based on tape-recorded interviews he conducted with Pedro Martínez and his family whom he had met in 1943. Martínez, who was an ardent follower of Zapata during the revolution, recalls what his grandmother used to tell him about how “mistresses” were treated in years past.<sup>9</sup> I quote the passage at length because of the striking similarities between Cisernos’s and Martínez’s accounts:

My grandmother used to say that the people here were more cruel in the past. For example, the way they treated their mistresses, the loose women who went with many men. [...] these same men would get together and say, “Well, how is it that she is going with me and with you and with him? She is just causing trouble. Why should we fight and kill each other while she has a good time? So, now let’s do something to her.”

One of them would take her out and then they would all get together and carry her off into the fields. And the things they would do to her! They drove a sharpened stake into the ground and greased it with a lot of lard. Then they all made use of her and had fun with her. They didn’t kill her first but stuck her onto the point and there she sat until she died. Then they would undo her braids and put a *sombrero* on her head and a red kerchief around her neck, like a man. They would put a cigar in her mouth and cross her shawl on her chest the way a vagabond does, to show that she tried to revel and make merry like a man. (56, 59)

The passage follows from Martínez’s description of how his mother-in-law used to accompany her young son into the fields in order to help him with his work. It was not unusual for women to go into the fields to help their families. However, the practice entailed the risk of sexual assault as Martínez notes that the “men would send the women into the fields and would even play around with them there” (56).

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<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to Debra Castillo for making this connection between “Eyes” and *Pedro Martínez*. The similarities in both accounts make it nearly indisputable that Cisernos drew from Lewis’s text when writing about María Elena’s rape and murder.

<sup>9</sup> In his introduction, Lewis writes of Zapata’s influence in Martínez’s life: “It is significant that it was the Mexican Revolution which gave Pedro the first positive male figure with whom he could identify – Emiliano Zapata. Of Zapata’s murder, Pedro says, ‘It was as if they had killed my own father’” (xxxv).

Although Martínez uses the euphemism of “play around” to substitute for the sexual violence that women endured, his account of his grandmother’s story suggests that “playing around” was cruel, but that “people here were *more cruel* in the past.”

Martínez’s memory of his grandmother’s story functions as an anecdote in the way that it relates information that was not essential to his description of his mother-in-law. After relating the anecdote to Lewis, Martínez moves on to discuss other things. However, Cisneros seizes on the striking passage of mutilation and murder that so blatantly reveals how sexual double standards were violently maintained. The passage suggests that most women – whether married or mistress – faced the threat of sexual assault. While men seemingly had access to women workers in the field and suffered no retribution, “loose women who went with many men” were not tolerated. These women “cause trouble” by having “a good time” and thus their behavior challenges the male privilege of sexual independence. Cisneros’s decision to include a version of Martínez’s story (which is itself based on his grandmother’s memory) in her own story once again rescues the history of sexual violence from the margins of historical and anthropological narratives. She transforms the anecdotes of women’s subordination into larger literary accounts and, in the process, reframes the focus of revolutionary historiography.

Returning to Cisneros’s story, we realize that as a woman who practices illicit sex (i.e. sex outside of marriage), Inés finds herself open to similar assault even though she desires the institution of marriage that her mother violated through adultery. Inés is tied to her mother through her unsanctioned sex with Zapata and by the condemnatory language her father uses. Cisneros reveals how men use language to define and delimit women’s agency. Throughout the story, Zapata is virtually mute, but when he does speak (through Inés’s memory) he uses duplicitous language (“I

*never said I'd marry you, Inés*"). Her mother's rapists-murderers also use language to confuse and to torture as each one "grunts words like hail that splits open the skin, just as before they'd whispered words of love." The physical violence of the rape is compounded by the ontological violence of words grunted in anger and revenge. Inés further interrogates the way language controls and punishes female sexuality by examining the words "mujeriego" and "hombrieriega":

*Mujeriego.* I dislike the word. Why not *hombrieriega*? Why not? The word loses its luster. *Hombrieriega.* Is that what I am? My mother? But in the mouth of men, the word is flint-edged and heavy, makes a drum of the body, something to maim and bruise, and sometimes kill. (105)

Inés immediately recognizes a cultural double standard manifested in a language that has only one term and not two to identify the same social behavior in men and women. As McLynn noted earlier, "compulsive womanizing – was regarded in Anenecuilco as a badge of honour" (47). The same cannot be said for manizing:

"*Hombrieriega*/manizer is as awkward a term in Spanish as it is in English, perhaps because it is so seldom used" (Brinson Curiel 419). Despite its awkwardness, Inés ponders the term *hombrieriega* as a socially acceptable term that could finally resolve her liminal status as a woman who lives outside of marriage. But the word "loses its luster" because no word exists to adequately define an empowered, autonomous heterosexual female sexuality. Or, better put, a word cannot name a practice that is not recognized within a patriarchal social imaginary. With María Elena's rape-murder, Cisneros demonstrates how the word "*hombrieriega*/manizer" and its referent are made to *seem* awkward. By depicting how María Elena was brutalized for asserting the same kind of sexual freedom that Zapata does, Cisneros emphasizes the communal investment in women's bodies and the social policing that communities perform in order to bridle the female sex.

Pérez suggests that the memory of desire constitutes history and history “is often the motive for revolution, for transformation, whether the transformation is of society and its collective memory or of the damaged individual who is part of some collective” (105). At the end of the story, the memory of María Elena haunts Inés’s visions of the future. Inés sees Zapata’s murder, her own funeral, her future granddaughters, her son’s betrayal of Zapata’s cause, and the land titles that will never be found. In this sequence of events yet to come, Inés has a vision of the past in which she “sees” her mother’s murder. It is this memory of her mother’s desire and the consequences she suffered for acting on it, which allows Inés to question a patriarchal lexicon in which *hombrieriega* does not exist. In this sense, female desire has the “potential to transform us, to revolutionize us, and challenge that which is repressive in our society” by prompting individuals to interrogate oppressive institutions and their vernaculars (Pérez 103). Through Inés’s and María Elena’s actions we see how female desire is disruptive to the patriarchal social order where marriage and language allow men to manage female sexuality.

By refusing to forget her mother’s rape and murder, Inés shows how sexual assault is a regulatory practice “that involves a subject and an object in ideological and physical combat and that is necessarily experienced from two totally different perspectives” (Herrera-Sobek 172). The ideological battle implicit in María Elena’s rape-murder pits patriarchy against female sexual autonomy. And it is this ideological conflict that Inés addresses when she challenges a social terminology that reflects and perpetuates gender hierarchies. Her inquiry leads to further insight about the revolution *and* desire as well as the revolution *of* desire: “Ay, Miliano, don’t you see? The wars begin here, in our hearts and in our beds. You have a daughter. How do you want her treated? Like you treated me?” (105). By displacing the war from the

battlefield to “our beds,” Cisneros challenges a revolutionary historiography that is already un/consciously infused with “sexuality and its discourse” (Pérez 125) but that pays insufficient attention to the transformative workings of desire.

While some writers might show a “heroic eroticism” in their historical narratives of Zapata, “Eyes” registers a different kind of eroticism that reflects empowered female subjectivity. For Audre Lorde, the “erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane” (53). It is a “power which arises from our deepest and nonrational knowledge.” Not to be confused with the pornographic which “emphasizes sensation without feeling” (54), the erotic generates “an internal sense of satisfaction”: “Once we know the extent to which we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and completion, we can then observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closest to that fullness” (54-55). Because the erotic can make women demand more from all areas of their lives, it poses a threat to repressive cultural institutions and patriarchy. “Eyes” begins with a description of Zapata that could be considered a kind of “heroic eroticism.” As she examines his body, she reads the status of the war and how things are not going well. She notices a new wrinkle, a deep furrow, a clenched jaw, twitching fingers, and “eyes creased from learning to see in the night” (86). Zapata’s fatigued and aging body comes to represent the war-ravaged landscape of the countryside. His body is tied to the nation the way women are usually made to serve as symbolic figures of the nation.

Through Inés’s scrutinizing descriptions of Zapata’s body, Cisneros provides a reading of Zapata as icon in which sight and vision become the text’s dominant tropes. While Zapata sleeps, Inés examines at her leisure his body and his charro suit through a vision that vests and divests the Zapatista myth of symbolic power. That is, when Zapata dons his charro suit, he represents patriarchal power. As Brinson Curiel notes,

“a man’s pants are the sign of his masculine strength and authority” (407). Without his suit, Zapata’s body loses part of its cultural authority and his “clothing reverts to empty trappings of masculine horse culture” (407). Yet, in a disturbing exchange of clothing, Cisneros shows how male clothing retains its symbolic power when María Elena’s rapists-murderers dress her body with sombrero and cigar.

But Zapata’s nudity leaves him extremely vulnerable. In the position of the sleeping nude figure, Zapata occupies the traditionally female role of object of the gaze. Cisneros reverses the gendered power relations of vision by “arrang[ing] Zapata’s nude body for Inés’s pleasure” while Inés “takes on the traditionally masculine position of spectator/owner” (406). Aside from Inés’s status as subject of the gaze, Zapata is further disempowered by his role as the sensualized male body. Domínguez-Ruvalcaba writes that “Sensualizing of the male body amounts to derationalizing the masculine and derogating one of the main attributes of masculinity in Western culture since the Enlightenment” (3).

Yet, I argue that Inés’s amatory gaze is about more than just a brief reversal of power. Rather, her gaze and the desire that directs it, envisions a possibility for decolonized relationships and liberatory modes of being:

We drag these bodies around with us, these bodies that have nothing at all to do with you, with me, with who we really are, these bodies that give us pleasure and pain. [...] it seems to me we never free ourselves completely until we love, when we lose ourselves inside each other. Then we see a little of what is called heaven. When we can be that close that we no longer are Inés and Emiliano, but something bigger than our lives. And we can forgive, finally. (89)

In this passage, Inés describes the depth of feeling, knowledge, and self-satisfaction that Lorde defines as erotic. Through her relationship with Zapata, Inés experiences a kind of

love, accessed through the erotic, which can be liberatory: “we never free ourselves completely until we love.”

For Zapata, love denotes possession and force. Inés experiences Zapata’s form of love through her own “abduction”: “Love? We don’t say that word. For you it has to do with stroking with your eyes what catches your fancy, then lassoing and harnessing and corralling. Yanking home what is easy to take” (109). Inés’s version of love, on the other hand, resonates with what Chela Sandoval describes as a “process that punctures through traditional, older narratives of love” (142). For Sandoval, love can initiate a political consciousness that seeks to challenge oppression: “To fall in love means that one must submit, however temporarily, [...] to a state of being not subject to control” (142). It is in the “abyss” of love that “subjectivity can become freed from ideology as it binds and ties reality; here is where political weapons of consciousness are available in a constant tumult of possibility.” In contrast to the social institutions and their vocabularies that constrain the physical body and regulate subjectivities, Inés’s female erotic gaze caresses the body but also sees beyond it as she identifies the “links between sexual longing for the other and the ongoing search for and commitment to ‘community’” (Yarbro-Bejarano “Sexuality” 227). The fact that her desire for Zapata exists outside of sanctioned social practices connects Inés to her mother’s desire for a man who was not her husband. In both instances, female desire disrupts the social and matrimonial bonds that bridle female sexuality. By writing a story of female abduction and adultery, Cisneros places female desire at the center of historical inquiry and gives voice to the elided history of a woman whose identity and experience remain lost in the tomes of the revolution’s archives. Because Womack, McLynn, and other historians dismissed Inés’s abduction, we could say they missed the revolution within the Revolution. Or, as Pérez would argue, revolutionary historiography, in general, dismisses the ways in which

female sexuality can disrupt social conventions making desire and the body crucial sites of revolutionary transformation.

### **Decolonizing the Allegories of Desire in Helena María Viramontes's "The Long Reconciliation"**

In the edited version of Sergei Eisenstein's film *Que Viva Mexico!*, one of the film's six original episodes entitled "Maguey" tells the story of Sebastian and María, a campesino couple, who pronounce to the hacendado their intent to get married. When María is raped by one of the hacendado's guests, Sebastian and his group of friends attack the hacienda. They are eventually captured and trampled to death by the hacendado's men. While the plot seems like a hackneyed version of similar stories, Chris Robé argues that Eisenstein's original vision for the episode was quite different. Eisenstein was unable to complete his film for several reasons including "aesthetic disagreements" with its financial backer Upton Sinclair who objected to Eisenstein's use of montage to depict Mexican life. At one point, Sinclair told Eisenstein "You are making the kind of picture that Hollywood does not want" (qtd. in Robé). Eventually, Sinclair hired Sol Lesser to edit and condense the footage which he released as *Thunder over Mexico* in 1933. In Lesser's version, not only does "Maguey" become the central episode of the film, but the entire episode itself focuses on Maria's rape as the event from which all other action stems. This shift in narrative focus differs from Eisenstein's original vision which was "to represent a group of peon's failed revolt against the economic and social injustices fostered under Porfirio Diaz's regime. The rape of Maria would be just one form of social exploitation against the peons among many, such as the exploitation of their labor in extracting pulque and their limited access to the hacienda." By elevating Maria's rape to the primary motive of the

peons' revolt, Lesser minimized the episode's "political symbolism" while creating "a simplistic and cliché action sequence."

*Thunder over Mexico* generated controversy among film critics who supported Eisenstein's more radical montage technique. Many critics further objected to the unimaginative plot sequence that relied on the more traditional story of women's rape as instigator for social action.<sup>10</sup> But it is important to point out that Hollywood executives are not the only ones who attempt to simplify complex social relations into more understandable plots in which men fight over women as sexual objects. The story of colonial sexual relations depicted in "Maguey" is also part of a familiar allegory within Mexican popular narratives of the revolution. O'Malley writes that the "tales told about the revolution and life during the *porfiriato* often involved the sexual manifestation of class: a campesina commits suicide after being seduced and abandoned by the *hacendado's* son; a young man runs off to join the revolution when his sweetheart is raped by the landowner; an Indian girl gives herself to the *hacendado* to protect her lover from punishment" (136). What interests me in these narratives of the revolution are the tropes of sexual violation and betrayal that find expression in a Mexican version of the *droit du seigneur*. In these tales, power relations are established through sexual rights over the female body. Control over the female campesina body becomes articulated with other social and political causes including the struggle against class oppression and racism which are intertwined in many narratives of the revolution.

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<sup>10</sup> Robé cites several Left film critics who leveled harsh critiques of Lesser's version. In one review, Samuel Brody and Tom Brandon summarize the episode's triteness in the following way: "The rape (?) of a peon's girl by a guest of the *hacendado*. Attempt to save the imprisoned girl [...]. Failure. Chase. More chase. Still more chase. And chase again. The *hacendado's* daughter is shot. The hero is captured. [...]" Meanwhile, another reviewer labeled the film a "sadistic melodrama."

The campesina's body becomes an allegory for the nation and is made to stand in for the feminized land. In these tales, oppression is read in terms of sexual relations defined by power and submission, virility and impotence, vulnerability and shame. Within this familiar framework, female sexuality has only two roles: it can be violated through rape or it can take traitorous pleasure in giving of itself voluntarily. Sexual violation then becomes an authorizing source of agency, but only for men, within revolutionary narratives. That is, female sexual violation serves as an alibi for male agency that allows the campesino to avenge and defend the female body/land. Allegories achieve their narrative force through simplicity, thus they make little room for the complexities of human sexuality. The allegorical renderings of the campesina's body, in particular, produce disempowering visions of female sexuality. Helena María Viramontes's "The Long Reconciliation" depicts a complicated relationship between female desire and social, cultural, and political institutions that rejects the allegory as convenient shorthand for representing the inequalities that led to the revolution. Viramontes's story proffers a reinterpretation of the power dynamics involved in the sexual triangle between hacendado, campesina, and campesino by focusing of female sexuality in order to imagine what Pérez calls "decolonized desire." Departing from the narratives that erase female sexual agency, Viramontes's text complicates the familiar story of colonial desire, emasculation, and female sexual treachery.

It is important to point out that these allegories not only appear in popular narratives of the revolution, but they are also written into the historical record. O'Malley notes that the "story about Villa's revenge for the rape of his sister was part of this same current" (136). For example, Haldeen Braddy narrates the scene of sexual violence in *Cock of the Walk: The Legend of Pancho Villa* (1955). In a chapter

entitled “Avenger and Fugitive,” Braddy recounts the supposed event that prompted Villa’s life as an outlaw before the revolution: the sexual violation of his sister by the hacendado’s son Leonardo López Negrete. In dramatic detail, Braddy describes Villa’s reaction upon first hearing about his sister Mariana’s attack:

The picture of the don’s degenerate son swept full before his eyes and blinded him. Mariana! Mariana! Mariana! Another picture thrust itself before him, a scene of her ripening olive body, her nude body two shades lighter than gold – all its treasures ransacked, ravaged, plumbed to a source bespangled with blood. [...] Each time he thought of the stained body, he trembled from top to toe. [...] It seemed as though she had died. [...] How rotten [sic], vilely rotten, it all was. She was dishonored irreparably. How sad – how unutterable and vacant the sadness. (22-23).

Villa then confronts López Negrete who, in Braddy’s version, draws his gun on Villa first. However, Villa is faster and shoots López Negrete three times. López Negrete is his first murder victim, killed “to avenge the family honor” (24), and is the initial reason for Villa’s life as a runaway from the law.

Braddy’s veiled pleasure in describing Mariana’s sexual violation highlights varied and familiar tropes of female sexuality that liken the virgin female body to “ripening” fruit and looted “treasure.” Mariana’s body is deemed to be impure and “stained” by rape, an act that further renders her as figuratively dead. Throughout Braddy’s account, he emphasizes the link between Mariana’s virginity and family honor. Villa is compelled to act on the breach made by López Negrete’s sexual conquest: “Pride in his pretty sister Mariana made Doroteo Arango an outlaw. His pride in her, and in family honor, meant more than life to him. Her sad fall was one day to affect his whole future”(16). Villa’s masculinity and power depend on policing the sexual availability of the women in his family. By confronting Mariana’s attacker, Villa operates according to a masculine code of power relations that rest on female sexuality. Furthermore, reacting to Mariana’s violation paints him as a reluctant rebel,

compelled by circumstances beyond his control to seek an extra-legal form of justice for his sister. Acting in this manner, Villa's violence is mitigated and condoned. Thus, Mariana's rape is a crucial, inaugural event in establishing Villa's legendary status because it ennobles his behavior, upholds his masculine identity, and suggests that he acts courageously and impulsively on the side of justice against the oppressive upper class.

Braddy focuses on the notion of a female vulnerability that must be jealously guarded by the patriarch. But Louis Stevens's earlier version of the sexual assault in *Here Comes Pancho Villa: The Anecdotal History of a Genial Killer* (1930) is altogether different. In Stevens's version, Villa hears that his sister has been raped by the local sheriff but that "she is in love with him now. She is his mistress simply because he will not marry her" (14-15). Villa confronts his sister about this rumor and reveals his intent to kill the sheriff to which she replies: "If you do it, if you just try it, Doroteo, I'll see you killed too! I'll be looking at you when they put you against a wall – and I'll be glad too!" (18). In Stevens's rather elaborate and imaginative version of the encounter, Villa corrals a priest and a group of men to hunt down the sheriff and his sister who had runaway the night before. Upon finding the anxious couple in the hills, Villa orders the priest to marry them immediately. After the makeshift ceremony, time for the newlywed couple is cut short: "The moment the sheriff and F— had been made man and wife, Doroteo stepped forward as if to kiss his sister. Instead, with a sudden, quick movement, he jabbed his revolver into the stomach of his new brother-in-law" (24). Villa then orders the sheriff to dig his own grave before Villa shoots him dead.

In both Braddy's and Stevens's accounts of the sister's rape, the event is presented differently in order to support positive or negative depictions of Villa. Both

writers take liberties with the scene, embellishing dialogue and conjuring up details to suit the overall image of Villa as a “Mexican Robin Hood” or a “genial killer.” Stevens’s account not only vilifies Pancho Villa, but his sister as well. She is portrayed as a willing accomplice rather than a victim of rape. Not only does she fall in love with her rapist, but she values his life over that of her own brother in a show of familial betrayal. In these narratives, female desire is effaced because male desire takes precedence and because female sexuality is vilified for its promiscuity or vulnerability. These stories suggest how Mexicana and Chicana sexualities are hardly ever neutral representations. Rather, their expression is embedded in cultural and historical narratives that link female sexuality with treachery.

It is against these popular narratives that Viramontes presents an alternative vision of female sexuality in the context of revolution. Her story begins on the Day of the Dead when an elderly Chato speaks to his deceased family members as he faces his own imminent death. He calls for a response from his aborted son but hears the voice of his deceased wife Amanda instead. Chato’s resentment over Amanda’s decision fifty-eight years earlier continues to haunt him as approaches his own death. In this moment of reflection, Chato recalls his early years as a twenty-four-year old man asking Amanda’s father for his fourteen-year old daughter’s hand in marriage. In the face of crushing poverty, Chato could only offer Amanda an idealized future represented by a miniature musical carousel whose beautiful music contrasted with the life of hardship they would both endure. While Chato’s odd obsession with the carousel reveals his occasional detachment from reality, Amanda remains firmly grounded in the daily struggle for survival. Realizing that their meager life as landless campesinos makes childrearing impossible, Amanda aborts her fetus. Chato is devastated and refuses to be intimate with Amanda for some time afterward. His

attitude changes after he saves enough money to buy a plot of land from Don Joaquin which he views as a possible new beginning for him and Amanda. However, when he realizes that the land he was sold was infertile desert, he confronts Don Joaquin and eventually learns that Don Joaquin had not only cheated him out of his land, but also out of his wife. For months, Amanda had been seeing Don Joaquin in search of the solace of intimacy that Chato had denied her. Chato then mortally stabs Don Joaquin and is hailed as a revolutionary leader by the villagers who misread his actions and assume that Chato was driven by ideological impulses. Incensed by the Don's betrayal of their affair, Amanda puts maggots in his wound in order to hasten his death. Chato soon leaves the village to fight in the revolution and to flee from the dissolution of his marriage and dreams. Eventually, he flees from the Mexican federales into the U.S. where decades later he approaches death as an invalid in a hospital.

The resentment that leads to the "long reconciliation" in the story's title stems from Amanda's abortion. Both Amanda and Chato have taken life, but only Chato's action is deemed culturally acceptable. Chato absolves his murder of Don Joaquin by claiming his prerogative as a patriarch: "I killed for honor" (84). To which Amanda replies:

Then I killed for life. It's the same thing, isn't it? Which is worse? You killed because something said: 'you must kill to remain a man' – and not for this honor. For me, things are as different as our bodies. I killed, as you say, because it would have been unbearable to watch a child slowly rot. But you couldn't understand that because something said 'you must have sons to remain a man.' (84)

Like the narratives of Villa who killed his sister's attacker, Chato's behavior is read within the context of cultural scripts that condone the patriarch's violent guardianship of female sexuality. Writing on the ideology of gender in northern Mexico, Alonso

explains that “attacks on the sexual purity of mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters are insults (*insultos*, injuries, *ultrajes*) that put valor, virility, and virtue into question and must be avenged if honor is to be restored” (89). Thus, Chato’s identity as a man is contingent on his control of Amanda’s sexuality and also on his ability to produce sons. Chato’s lingering anger over the abortion is based on the fact that Amanda denied him yet another cultural demonstration of masculinity: fathering a son. In this story, both female and male constructions are thrown into crisis as the abortion impacts Amanda’s and Chato’s gendered identities. Amanda’s decision to abort is a direct refutation of the role of motherhood that defines womanhood within the community. Her decision also compromises Chato’s role as “pater and genitor” which “must coincide if honor is to be maintained” (Alonso 88). That is, Chato’s virility must be substantiated by fathering a son and establishing a patriarchal lineage.

For Amanda, sexual difference within a patriarchal culture helps explain the reasons for her actions: “For me, things are as different as our bodies.” Viramontes emphasizes the physicality of bodies, their limits and desires, and the power each one wields over others. For example, the story begins and ends with descriptions of Chato’s physical infirmity as we read about the “stubborn phlegm” that plagues his lungs and the way the “veins in [his] arms escape as thick hospital tubes” (83). Chato is a man near death. His concern for immortality forestalls reconciliation with Amanda because, for Chato, sons are extensions of his body. They secure the patrilineage that is a necessary component of manhood. Now that he is near death, the pain and fear of oblivion are more acute: “Now I die with pain knowing that all I will have left as a sign of my life is a stonemark without a name. I die alone” (84). Having offspring or sons, in particular, would have prevented Chato’s life from being erased by the anonymity which Amanda’s abortion has now consigned him to.

Don Joaquin's body also undergoes intense scrutiny as it is alternately depicted as authoritative and weakened by mescal. As the hacendado of the village, he wields power over the campesinos who toil in his fields. His male gaze easily scans over women's bodies including the cantina waitress who feels "his blurry red eyes burn holes into her skin" (91). For all of Don Joaquin's power, he is also physically vulnerable. Chato recalls how stabbing him was like cutting "butter" (86). "He was so soft," this man who ruled over the lives in the village. Don Joaquin's body is further corrupted and polluted by Amanda who takes her revenge on the body from which she had once guiltily sought pleasure. Viramontes rewrites colonial sexual relations by reversing familiar gendered expressions of power and powerlessness. In this story, Don Joaquin is physically violated, not Amanda. After Chato stabs him, Don Joaquin lies helplessly as Amanda undoes the doctor's stitches that had sutured his wounds. In a series of role reversals, Amanda becomes the one who "impregnates" Don Joaquin by placing maggots in his body while he is the one who will give gruesome "birth" to flies. Furthermore, the putrescence that feeds on his body recalls the way Amanda experienced the costly fetus that slowly devoured her: "I stroke it to calm its hunger, but it won't be satisfied until it gets all of me" (89).

Viramontes focuses on the body in order to present it as a social and historical construction that functions within networks of power and is inscribed with differential meanings and values. Alonso's description of the body's relation to power helps illuminate the relationships between hacendado, campesino, and campesina that Viramontes's text deconstructs:

what allows the body to become an alibi for power is an ontology that situates the social skin in the 'elsewhere' of a nature outside society and history and hence beyond the scope of human transformation. An epistemology that enables certain signs to be interpreted as nature, objective givens rather than as social and semiotic products is also implicated in this erasure of history. (78)

Chato's and Don Joaquin's bodies, as representative of the patriarch, are culturally endowed with social power that is sustained by the phallus even though each man occupies different positions within a social hierarchy. As Alonso further states, the "iconic and indexical character of many somatic signs facilitates their apprehension as facts of nature rather than culture." In this sense, the iconic character of the phallus renders it a "natural" basis for patriarchal power. We need only remember Paz's description of the verb "chingar" in order to demonstrate the ways in which careful and persistent work is needed to designate the phallus as a "natural" form of masculine domination. Paz's elaborate description draws attention to itself indicating his need to impose a particular meaning on an appendage that might be perceived otherwise; perhaps his description also signals a latent anxiety over the possibility that that meaning might not adhere.

Viramontes's text also illustrates how the "indexical character" of semen as a "somatic sign" functions within a story of land dispossession. Land, sexual reproduction, and the female body are intertwined as mutually constituting markers of Chato's masculine identity. In the opening pages, Chato imagines the aborted fetus as one of his "seeds" planted within Amanda's "eggplant womb" that slowly travels down her thigh to return to the "heartland" (83). In his conversation with Amanda's father, Chato promises that he "would be as virile as the land he would buy" (86). Chato's confrontation with Don Joaquin over the land once again mixes virility and masculinity with land possession which turns the struggle into a dispute over multiple forms of power and property. In his confrontation with Don Joaquin, Chato shouts: "I've given you everything I'm worth...without being castrated," to which Don Joaquin replies: "And I've given you what you're worth, my friend. Desert!" (85). Alonso's work on northern Mexican "peasant-warriors" helps illuminate the possible

meaning of this exchange as she describes how many communities view a close relationship between agricultural work and constructions of masculinity. Alonso writes that “agricultural and battle fields were the principle domains of masculine value” where men’s work feminized, “fecundated and rendered productive” the land (108). In their view, “it took huevos [testicles] to tame the wilderness and to make it produce.” Chato’s views on land and male fertility echo the kinds of social practices that Alonso describes. His ability to produce from the land and to reproduce with his wife both depend on his “seed.” Both forms of (re)production – of crops and children – validate his claim to a respected masculinity.

Chato’s and Don Joaquin’s bodies further function as “alibis for power” in the sense that their ability to dominate women is never questioned and that that power is instead naturalized within the patriarchal culture. Yet, they wield different forms of power within the family and community. The power that each man accrues is determined by his control of and access to Amanda’s body. In this way, racial and class hierarchies are expressed through sexual relations. The kind of masculine power differentials that Viramontes illustrates in her story were also expressed during the revolution. O’Malley explains how specific forms of subaltern masculinity informed revolutionary action:

In the language of sexist ideology, it may be said that racist class oppression emasculated lower-class men, who recovered their manhood during the revolution by assaulting the socioeconomic structures that had oppressed them. They then took their places, at least in theory, as equals in the post-revolutionary society. As they conceived it, equal manhood included the prerogatives of the patriarch. That entailed the continued oppression of women as women, although women shared in the improved status of their classes. (136)

Chato’s “emasculination” takes several forms including “racist class oppression,” the denial of fatherhood, and most importantly, Amanda’s adultery. However, Chato is

able to recuperate a culturally determined notion of masculinity by killing Don Joaquin in an act that wins him false praise from the villagers and secures his status as an “honorable” man.

Viramontes’s text further demonstrates how the restrictions placed on the female body are also naturalized. The power structures that produce women’s naturalized disempowerment are evident in cultural conventions and social expectations. Viramontes’s text, however, questions those forces – the Church, the village, the husband – to identify the female’s “social skin” and to locate the female body within a history and society that inscribes meaning in the body rather than essentializes women’s subordinate status as inherent in the female body. From the beginning, Amanda’s body is depicted as an object traded between Chato and her father for a miniature carousel and two red apples. During her wedding night, Amanda drifts from “the priest, with his matrimonial rosary chains linking them together until death, to the reception where the neighborhood men” play their guitars to “finally her husband’s crusty rooms” (87). Even before her affair with Don Joaquin, we can see how Amanda’s body circulates within a male economy wherein men dictate the allocation of power in particular social relations and practices. As her husband, Chato will have the ultimate control over her body – at least for a while – through consummation. After their first night together, she acknowledges Chato’s sexual rights over her body: “so this is love, reaching down to contact her undiscovered island which Chato had just claimed as his own” (88).

However, Chato’s control over Amanda’s body is severed once she becomes pregnant and grows increasingly distraught over their future. She knows that poverty limits the chances of her child’s survival as well as her own: “Each morning is drearier than the last. To awake and feel something inside draining you. Lying on my back, I

can almost see where all my energy is going, below my navel, where my hair stops” (89). She drinks corn-silk tea and eats dried orange peels to terminate her pregnancy, meanwhile Chato is unaware of the source of her distress and the pain that leads her to act in fits of despair: “He watched her turn into a hurricane in the darkness. She threw up the meal she could not afford to, shattered dishes, and overturned the small kitchen table. Winded, she collapsed on the floor, sobbing until her eyes were swollen” (90). Grounded in the materiality of her own body, Amanda recognizes its limits as well as its needs. Furthermore, she recognizes her responsibility for the daily maintenance of other bodies, including “a child that we can’t feed or care for” (89). Chato’s only concern is for a future secured through offspring who will perpetuate his seed after his death, but Amanda is concerned for the present and on how to prevent a child from starving: “‘Children die like crops here,’ she said. But he could not hear her, for the bells of the carousel music came forth sounding like an orchestra in the silence of the night” (90).

Throughout the story, Amanda responds to the demands of her body, what it requires for survival and the forms of sustenance it seeks. After the loss of his child, Chato withholds his affections for Amanda, denying the intimacy she sought: “Before, Amanda would touch him and try to make him love her again. Each time she touched him, he saw his child’s face, and would jerk away from her grasp” (85). In showing Amanda’s desire for physical intimacy, Viramontes breaks social taboos by representing a demanding female sexual agency.

Amanda and Chato’s wedding is narrated from Amanda’s perspective revealing her feelings of confusion, fear, and wonderment at her body’s responses. But the sexual act is also read through the lens of the community’s views on sex,

power, and procreation. Earlier that evening, the villagers' voices taunted the newlyweds about their impending sexual rite of passage:

“The cock will pluck the hen tonight.”  
“Ah, Chato, my friend, how many sons will you sire? Five? Six? Can you even father one, you son of a bitch!”  
“She is big-hipped. She will carry many children.”  
“Always stand up. That way you won't get pregnant. Look at me, only seven!!”  
[...]

“...then I took off my pants and I told her, ‘Now you put them on,’ and she did. Then I said, ‘See! The pants fit me, not you. Don't forget that it's me who wears them...’” (87)

In this verbal confluence of advice, jokes, and warnings, the couple learns how social conventions and expectations mediate the private act of sex. This communal policing of sexual conduct educates practitioners about the local constructions of masculinity and femininity and designates fatherhood and motherhood as the proper gender roles which each individual must aspire to. Dominance and submission are embedded within the discourse of sex because gender hierarchies are enforced by those who “wear the pants” both in the family unit and the community at large.

The patriarchal Church's management of female sexuality further fortifies village maintenance of the sexual act. Amanda engages with what Foucault calls the “will to knowledge” regarding sex and the technologies of power that police female sexuality (12). In the text, Viramontes skillfully incorporates the Church's role in shaping sexual discourse through the “institutional incitement” (Foucault 18) of the confessional as Amanda seeks the advice of the village priest. Amanda's confession is driven by an inner compulsion “so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us” (Foucault 60). In seeking divine guidance to the problems in her life, she visits the confessional: “It is so hard being

female, Amanda, and you must understand that that is the way it was meant to be, *said the priest in the confessional*. But this is pain, Father, to sprout a child that we can't feed or care for. Pray, pray, pray, *said the priest*, but what is a poor Amanda to do?" (89). Although the priest's response is pitifully inadequate, Amanda seeks the advice of the Church to not only ask for guidance but to demand answers or reasons for her predicament.

But Father, wasn't He supposed to take care of us, His poor? When you lie together, it is for creating children, *said the priest*. You have sinned, pray. Sex is the only free pleasure we have. It makes us feel like clouds for the minutes that not even you can prevent. You ask us not to lie together, but we are not made of you, we are not gods. You, God, eating and drinking as you like, you, there, not feeling the sweat or the pests that feed on the skin, you sitting with a kingly lust for comfort, tell us that we will be paid later on in death. (89-90)

Through the confessional, the Church perpetuates relations of power between itself, the community and the individual. The confession is "a ritual of discourse" that "unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile" (Foucault 61-62). But the priest's power resides not only in his position of authority within the Church and the community, but also in his function as an interpreter of the "truth" of sex. It is his "function to verify this obscure truth" and to "constitute a discourse of truth on the basis of its decipherment" (67). By telling Amanda that sex is "for creating children," the priest privileges its reproductive function, proposing a delimited definition of sex, the "truth" of its meaning, and implicitly limits further interpretations. In this way, sex is policed and managed; it is "inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum" (Foucault 24).

While the priest's interpretation of sex's function substantiates the Church's "uniform truth of sex" (69), Amanda's response challenges institutional definitions and relations of power by insisting on her own interpretation. Once again, Amanda is attuned to the physical needs of the body and the way it responds to sex as a "free pleasure" that "makes us feel like clouds" (89). In a striking move of defiance, she switches her address from the priest to God Himself and contrasts the human body's needs with those of the celestial. She recognizes the injustice of denying humans the pleasure of "lying together" as one of the few satisfactions available to the poor. In this way, she reads sex outside of institutional definitions. She sees it as not only a reproductive act, but also as a human need that eases the lives of the oppressed. Anticipating the standard Church mandate to submissively endure and accept hardship on earth while awaiting the glories guaranteed in the afterlife, Amanda is defiantly dissatisfied with the promise "that we will be paid later on in death" (90). Unlike Chato who chooses to privilege future rewards of salvation, Amanda remains unconvinced and stays firmly grounded in present realities that condemn earthly bodies to suffering, poverty, and sexual repression. Through Amanda's challenge to the church, Viramontes reflects what Chicana feminist theorists such as Cherrie Moraga describe as the struggle with institutional repression: "Women of color have always known, although we have not always wanted to look at it, that our sexuality is not merely a physical response or drive, but holds a crucial relationship to our entire spiritual capacity. Patriarchal religions [...] have always known this. Why else would the female body be so associated with sin and disobedience? Simply put, if the spirit and sex have been linked in our oppression, then they must also be linked in the strategy toward our liberation" (132).

Amanda not only challenges God, but also “acts” like God by becoming an agent who makes choices based on lived circumstance. Chato condemns Amanda’s abortion because it denies him of fatherhood, but also because the decision endows her with a power to determine death – an agency not afforded to women. He states, “*You acted like God, Amanda. I acted like a man should*” (85). Chato’s actions are culturally understood because he operates within social codes of behavior such as “killing for honor.” Amanda challenges the codes that constrict her life: she refuses to be a mother under conditions of poverty; she is a reluctant partner rather than a victim of Don Joaquin’s sexual appetite (although it is debatable whether or not she would have been able to refuse his advances); and through the abortion, she “acts” like God/man by challenging power structures and operating according to her own will. Amanda’s response to Chato is direct and accusatory: “*God didn’t listen to me, and neither did you, Chato. You are as guilty as I am*” (88). She takes responsibility for her actions, accepting the guilt that comes with making painful decisions in dire circumstances.

Foucault explains that confession is supposed to operate as a form of liberation: “Confession frees” (60). Confession “exonerates, redeems, and purifies” the confessor; it “unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation” (62). For Amanda, confession does not serve a liberatory function; rather, she recognizes that the Church’s responses to her pleas for help and guidance are profoundly inadequate. Instead, she decides what course of action to take and acts against the wishes of her husband, the institutional doctrine of the patriarchal Church, and the social taboos of the village. However, as Yarbrow-Bejarano explains of Viramontes’s stories, “In most cases, Viramontes’s female characters pay dearly for breaking with traditional values concerning women, and the exploration of their

sexuality often brings negative consequences” (“Introduction” 12). For Amanda, adultery and abortion result in the dissolution of her marriage to the man she loved.

Viramontes’s story is fundamentally about desire and memory. Viramontes reproduces the workings of memory through narrative technique that includes flashbacks. She rejects simplified representations of events by dodging from stable, singular perspectives. Her story’s rejection of linearity requires multiple readings and places an interpretive burden on the reader as a way to narratively recreate the experience of memory. Scenes have to be reread and relived in order to organize events and make meaning from scraps of phrases. Chato’s flashbacks to family strife reflect the ways in which desire and memory impede on the present. Chato’s conversation with the deceased Amanda reveals the depth of his affections and the unresolved issue of betrayal that abruptly ended their marriage. But as the title suggests, there is closure through reconciliation – though long in coming. Chato eventually comes to terms with Amanda’s sexual betrayal which makes this story possibly the only one in the Chicano and Mexican literary canons in which female-sexual-betrayal-à la-Malinche is forgiven. Early on, Chato had transformed his resentment into an immovable mountain, but eventually realizes that “the mountain was no bigger than a stone” and that Amanda has returned from the dead to help “me to cast the stone, to bury it, and we will be reconciled for eternity” (94).

For Emma Pérez, memory forms the basis of history, and desire is integral to the formation of both memory and history. She argues that the memory of previous desires can leave its imprint on the body, conditioning the body to seek out those previous pleasures which in turn condition the memory that initiated the search. Memory is crucial to the historical project and to social change because, as Pérez puts it, “to erase memory is to erase history” (109). Furthermore, memory “as history is

often the motive for revolution, for transformation, whether the transformation is of society and its collective memory or of the damaged individual who is part of some collective” (105).

Viramontes reveals how the memory of desire transforms the individual and leads to broader interpersonal transformations. Amanda’s affair with Don Joaquin is based on a complicated form of consent, one that responds to physical needs rather than complete willfulness. In the following passage, Amanda recalls her body’s response as Don Joaquin’s romantic entreaties are eventually displaced by physical contact:

She remembered, he ceased his elaborate romantics, the offerings, and guided her hand to his loin, hard like a stone, and he rubbed her hand against it until he eased away, and she realized she was rubbing of her own free will, without his hand and she began to die. When Don Joaquin pulled up her skirt, she heard the music of the carousel. Chato, she sang to herself, over and over, my lovely Chato, I miss you, your warmth, your scent, your love. Damn you, damn you, forgive and get on with our life, she thought over and over. (93-94)

In tracking the machinations of Amanda’s desire, we can understand how the body is simultaneously haunted by desire and inscribed by power. Amanda’s memory of the pleasure she shared with Chato compels her strained acquiescence to this affair. At great personal guilt, she heeds her body’s needs despite her mind’s dissent. For Amanda, the “past, its memories, becomes so much a part of the body’s desires that it will attempt to re-create what has come before, the way flesh has been caressed” (Pérez 108). Within the context of social and institutional constraints on female sexuality, we can read Amanda’s actions as a transformation, a personal revolution in the matrimonial relation that is itself embedded within a larger network of social relations. This revolution on a micro-level, made possible by a memory of desire, transforms Amanda from object of colonial desire to a decolonial subject of desire. However, in this case, the transformation is made at a high cost: Amanda’s marriage.

Amanda's desire has an important function in Viramontes's text because it destabilizes the standard sexual plot between hacendado-campesino-campesina. The familiar colonial rape scene – depicted in stories of Pancho Villa's revenge against his sister's rapist – is complicated by the persistence and expression of Amanda's memory of desire. Yet, Amanda's sexual betrayal recalls Paz's charge of treason against the entire female sex and might substantiate, for those who agree with Paz, the notion that female sexuality is a danger that must be contained. Rather than ascribe to Paz's notion of women's universal betrayal, Chato disarticulates women from betrayal by placing Amanda's actions within social and historical context. In a key moment during the reconciliation, Chato acknowledges that Amanda's betrayal was only one of many committed by individuals including himself. Chato's role as "the honorable liberator of the village" is a betrayal of the villagers' belief in the revolution (93). After deep reflection, Chato recognizes his own complicity in his marriage's tragic decline: "It began when I cheated you, drained you. You, in turn, cheated Don Joaquin. He cheated me and so I killed him. Maybe we were all born cheated" (95). In Chato's retrospection, blame is generously yet honestly assigned to all involved which puts Amanda's actions in context rather than essentializes treachery in the female sex.

## **Conclusion**

Berman's, Cisneros's, and Viramontes's texts demonstrate a concern over the tension between women and the historical imagination. I have shown how their work is about the historiography of the revolution as much as it is about the revolution as an historical event. By foregrounding women's experiences, these authors subject revolutionary history to scrutiny and challenge authoritative interpretations of the past that privilege male subjects as historical agents of change. They also challenge

historiography's exclusionary practices by emphasizing female desire as an alternative source and subject of historical knowledge. As an affective force and mode of agency, female sexuality not only impacts historical events, but also infuses the writing of those events.

In the next chapter, I continue an examination of how Latina war stories re-interpret historical events. María Cristina Mena was also invested in how the Mexican revolution was remembered and the biases inherent in institutional versions of the war. The revolutionary government's ideological attack on Catholicism inspires Mena's story of a Catholic indigenous boy whose faith contrasts with the capitalist greed and anticlericalism of the Porfiriato. I also show that, similar to Berman and Cisneros, Mena understood the symbolic capital of war icons. Like Villa and Zapata, the Niños Héroes are often recirculated historical figures central to state war stories. In *Boy Heroes of Chapultepec* (1953), Mena takes up the battle of US and Mexican war historiography as she re-writes the events leading to the fall of Mexico City to US invaders in the final days of the US-Mexico War of 1848. Prompted by President Harry Truman's invocation of the Boy Heroes as exemplars of national defense, Mena challenges the way competing US and Mexican nationalisms attempt to appropriate the story of patriotic sacrifice.

### CHAPTER 3: HEROIC BOYS AND GOOD NEIGHBORS: U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS IN MARÍA CRISTINA MENA'S YOUNG ADULT FICTION

In 1998, the Cinco Puntos Press was awarded a grant of \$7,500 from the National Endowment of the Arts to help defray the cost of publishing a translation of the children's book, *La historia de los colores (The Story of Colors)*, by the Zapatista member Subcomandante Marcos. Before the check could be sent to the small publishing house, however, NEA director William Ivey rescinded the grant under the pretence that he feared the money would end up in the hands of Marcos and the Zapatistas (Wypijewski 68). The book was eventually published without the NEA's assistance and remains part of a larger literary tradition of U.S. Latina/o children's literature that includes writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, Lucha Corpi, Julia Alvarez and earlier writers like Pura Belpré and Jose Martí.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the cultural assault on Latino youth through negative or non-existent references to Latino culture, these writers have produced a children's literature that attempts to instill pride in Latino heritage, reflect cultural values and positive images, and inculcate an ethics of social justice and cross-cultural understanding. The N.E.A.'s decision signals not only a reactionary response, but also reveals the ways in which children's literature has long been a site of political struggle where racial and imperialist discourses can coalesce in an ostensibly innocuous cultural medium.

This chapter is situated in the first half of the twentieth century and examines the neglected field of children's entertainment within and in relation to Chicana/o

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<sup>1</sup> A partial list of titles include: Pat Mora, one of the most prolific Chicana children's writers; Gloria Anzaldúa's *Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y la llorona* (2001); Sandra Cisneros's *Hairs/Pelitos* (1997); Lucha Corpi's *Where Fireflies Dance/Ahi, Donde Bailan las Lucienagas* (1997); Julia Alvarez's *Cuando Tía Lola vino (de visita) a quedarse* (2004); Pura Belpré's *Pérez and Martina: A Portorican Folk Tale* (1932); and Jose Martí's monthly magazine for children, *La Edad de Oro*, published in 1889.

Studies. Children's entertainment that takes Mexico or Latin America in general as its subject reveals the ways in which children's popular culture and state discourses on U.S. imperialism intersect and, in the texts reviewed herein, that connection is made via the gender construction of a militarized masculinity. More specifically, the cultural construction of Anglo-American and Mexican boyhood is figured as an ideological battleground on which state discourses of capitalism, imperialism, and anti-communism are fought. I begin by showing how early twentieth-century young adult (YA) literature that featured Mexico as its setting frequently reproduced the tropes of empire to foster U.S. imperialism by promoting its values. Much of this literature outlined expectations for its targeted readership – Anglo-American adolescent and teenage boys – who were then trained in the ways of warfare, capitalism, nativism, and ideal notions of masculinity.

If YA fiction often instructed young readers on how to be Anglo-American and masculine in Mexico, one children's author provided a cultural and critical intervention in imperial children's fiction and its espousal of militaristic values. Mexican-American writer María Cristina Mena (b. 1893 – 1965) is known for her adult short stories published in *Century Magazine* between 1913 and 1916, but no research has been done on her children's literature perhaps because of the false assumption that it offers little insight into Chicana/o Studies or its concern with forms of U.S. hegemony.<sup>2</sup> However, by looking at her YA fiction we can detect a powerful voice that predates the Chicano movement and the emergence of an associated literature. Two of Mena's YA books, *The Water-Carrier's Secret* (1942) and *Boy Heroes of Chapultepec* (1953), focus on Mexican boyhood and pose an important yet

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<sup>2</sup> Mena is known within Chicana/o literary studies for her adult short stories which were published under her maiden name "Mena". Although all of her children's books were published under her married name "Chambers," I will refer to her throughout this paper by her maiden name to avoid possible confusion or misrecognition.

subtle critique of U.S. militarism and its cultural corollaries in children's entertainment. In *The Water-Carrier's Secret*, she promotes an alternative set of values such as wariness about the virtues of capitalism and modernization. The text examines how the importation of US technology – in the form of a water pump – threatens Mexican cultural and social practices in the name of modernization and development. *Boy Heroes* depicts Mexican patriotism and heroic sacrifices in opposition to US military invasion and resignifies the historical narrative of the US-Mexico War of 1848 within a Cold War context.

However, embedded into Mena's YA fiction is a critical reflection on the Mexican elite's complicity with US economic and cultural imperialism. *The Water-Carrier's Secret* challenges Mexico's development narratives about itself. After the Mexican revolution came to an end, a series of postrevolutionary governments enacted policies to assimilate Indians and to disempower the Catholic Church – both of which were deemed by anti-clericals as obstacles to national modernization. Mena's book attempts to redefine postrevolutionary Mexican nationalism by designating Indian difference and Catholicism as central to national identity. *Boy Heroes* launches an equally critical view of Mexican militarism and the war discourse it produces to achieve its own nationalist agendas. Thus, both of Mena's texts negotiate the conflicted ideological space between competing US and Mexican nationalisms that converge in the most unlikely of places: children's literature.

Mena's YA fiction, like her adult short stories, are written for Anglo-American readers, but maintain a subtle dialogue with Mexican nationalism. The majority of her fiction is concerned with the US and Mexico – a reflection of her binational and bicultural subject position. Mena has gained increasing attention from Chicana/o scholars in recent years because, according to Edward Simmen, she is “the first naturalized American from Mexico to write in English and publish in prestigious

American magazines” (147). Born in Mexico City, she enjoyed the privileged life of the Mexican elite. Three years before the outbreak of the 1910 Mexican revolution, her parents sent her to live with family friends in Brooklyn, New York, which became her permanent home and the site of her promising, yet brief, literary career. She published eleven short stories between 1913 and 1916 and was known for her attempt to change U.S. misperceptions of Mexicans through her stories about life in Mexico. After a long hiatus, she ventured out into the publishing world again with her 1942 children’s book *The Water-Carrier’s Secrets*, which would become the first of her five children’s books. The theme of war runs throughout her adult and children’s writing, prompting us to consider the meaning of militarism in her work and in the cultural and political moments in which she wrote.<sup>3</sup> Focusing on her war fiction reveals a different dimension of her literary commitment to examining the cultural and social practices of both her native and adopted countries.

In this chapter I show how militarism is historically and politically contingent and how it attempts to maneuver gender constructions through a common discursive framework or, more specifically, a war discourse. The specific forms of war discourse that I will analyze promote certain ideals of masculinity and practices of empire building and management and rearticulate previous conflicts to cohere with changing ideological positions. The militaristic values and ideas espoused in the children’s entertainment I will briefly discuss in the next section include the use of military service to define young adult masculinity as exemplified by juvenile literature written for boys. This literature includes the “West Point Series,” the “Annapolis Series,” and

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<sup>3</sup> Many of Mena’s stories deal either directly with the Mexican revolution or its effects. They include: “Doña Rita’s Rivals” (Sept. 1914), “The Sorcerer and General Bisco” (April 1915), and “A Son of the Tropics” (Jan. 1931). As I will show in this paper, her YA fiction which includes *The Water-Carrier’s Secrets* (1942) and *Boy Heroes of Chapultepec* (1953), also deal with war. It is also notable that, according to a brief biographical entry in *The American Catholic Who’s Who*, Mena lists her special interests as “war, work and gardening” (59).

the “Boys of the Army Series.” Many of these stories take place in Latin America and promote the idea of armed intervention to protect U.S. investments as part of the nation’s responsibility and prerogative. The prevailing war discourse continues into the 1940s with Disney’s series of films about Latin America. The collaboration between Walt Disney and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) was perhaps the most direct attempt at state maneuvering within children’s entertainment during this time period. The U.S. government contracted Walt Disney to promote the politically expedient notion of “neighborliness” through his company’s animated films which demonstrates how the state and popular culture mutually produce war discourses and how militarism relies on cultural production.

The Disney Company was crucial to US war discourse because of the connection between imperialism and representation. Ricardo Salvatore argues that between 1890 and 1945 a disparate group of U.S. writers, missionaries, scientists, and academics produced similar discourses about “South America” which he calls the Informal Empire. Salvatore explains how their “construction of ‘South America’ as a territory for the projection of US capital, expertise, dreams, and power required the channeling of massive energies into the production of images and texts” (“Enterprise” 71). Salvatore describes travel books and other texts written by adults for adults on the subject of Latin America, but I argue that YA books did similar ideological work for a much younger audience. Young adult entertainment had a legitimating function within public discourse about U.S. foreign policy because its images of an underdeveloped Latin America made U.S. intervention seem like a logical conclusion. As part of the Informal Empire, YA representations performed “a double and simultaneous textual construction: describing the Other (South America) in terms of a perennial deficit or vacuum, and ascribing meaning to ‘the mission’ (the role of the North Americans in the region). Without one or the other, the expansion of U.S. capital and culture would

be impaired, its legitimacy negated” (“Enterprise” 71). From dime novels to serial fiction to animation, war discourse took different forms. Attention to this war discourse allows us to see how Mena intervenes within it and enables us to read her books as counterhegemonic texts which expose the asymmetrical power dynamics at work in US-Latin America relations.

Before continuing, it is important to understand why juvenile audiences were targeted by imperialist agendas. In her work on British children’s fiction, Daphne Kutzer argues that “children’s fiction is one way of acculturating children into an acceptable ideology” (138). “The desires of the adult creators of classic children’s books” communicate a desire that children “grow up into the kind of adult who can maintain Britain’s strength – and that strength was an imperial strength” (138). The same practice can be said of the U.S. imperialist fiction I will describe below which attempts to groom young male readers for future roles as leaders, voters, consumers, and soldiers who are expected to perpetuate the policies of imperialism. Finally, it should be no surprise that matters of foreign policy made their way into children’s entertainment because children’s culture is, after all, imbricated within a larger culture in which imperialism and intervention dominate public discourse.

### **Bellicose Boys and the Fiction of U.S. Empire (1910 – 1945)**

At the turn of the twentieth century, a series of juvenile weeklies published in the U.S. for young adults featured Latin American countries as the setting in which Anglo-American boys performed imperial fantasies. In this fiction, Latin America is depicted as untamed land and premodern space rife with treasure, bountiful in natural resources, and awaiting modernization. Juvenile weeklies included titles such as “The Bradys in Mexico; or, The Search for the Aztec Treasure House” and “Frank Merriwell in Mexico; or, The Search for the Silver Palace.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to weeklies,

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<sup>4</sup> Information on these titles and other dime novels and penny dreadfuls comes from the Stanford

children's serial fiction included Victor Appleton's *Tom Swift and His Big Tunnel, or the Hidden City of the Andes* (1916) about US railroad contracts in Peru, and *Tom Swift in the Land of Wonders, or the Idol of Gold* (1917) about American boys who find gold in Honduras. While many stories involved hidden treasure awaiting discovery, others emphasized military plots. For example, after the Mexican revolution broke out, the Happy Days series featured titles such as "A Forced Fight with Villa; or, An American Boy in Mexico." Frank Fowler's YA book *The Broncho [sic] Rider Boys with Funston at Vera Cruz* (1916) featured brave and patriotic youth who, despite their age, were responsible for enforcing US foreign policy in Mexico.

Both themes of Latin American underdevelopment and US armed invasion are staples of early twentieth-century YA fiction, and in many cases, authors combined both themes to form elaborate adventure plots. In this section, I briefly explore the tropes of modernization and US military intervention in YA entertainment in order to situate Mena's YA fiction within its cultural and historical context. I examine how such fiction constructed images of bellicose boyhood in order to foster the xenophobic patriotism that served US imperialism in Latin America. I then analyze the ways in which Mena's YA fiction works within and against representations of an

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University Library special collections website under the link "Dime Novels on Mexico". The website explains that storypapers or "6-cent weeklies" were "weekly 8-page tabloids" that usually had national circulations and usually "appealed to the whole family" while dime novels "aimed at a youthful working class." The Happy Days series, published in 1900 – 1922, also produced "In the War; or, A Boy's Adventure in Mexico" (vol. 40, issue 1031). Other YA series targeting mostly boys included the Secret Service (1899-1925) which featured the following titles: "The Bradys in Mexico; or, The Search for the Aztec Treasure House" (no. 193, Oct. 3, 1902), "The Bradys at Fort Yuma; or, The Mix Up with the 'King of Mexico'" (no. 272, April 1904), and "The Bradys and 'Kid Joaquin'; or, The Greasers of Robbers Canyon" (no. 429, April 1907). The Brave and Bold Weekly (1907-1911) published "Under Sealed Orders; or, Lost in the Wilds of Yucatan" (no. 19) and "From Bootblack to Grandee; or, Charles Manton and Montezuma's Treasure" (no. 412, Nov. 12, 1910). The Tip Top Weekly (1896-1912) published "The Slaves of Yucatan" (no. 717, Jan. 8, 1910), "Frank Merriwell in Mexico; or, The Search for the Silver Palace" (no. 17), and "Frank Merriwell's Gold Train; or, His Great Victory in Mexico" (n. 374). The Work and Win series (1899-1925) published "Fred Fearnot's Rescue; or, the Mexican Pocahontas" (no. 155, Nov. 22, 1901). This limited list of titles suggests how Mexico was represented in YA popular culture.

underdeveloped Mexico in need of US economic and military intervention.

Imperialist YA fiction draws on earlier practices in adult political and popular culture which used Latin America as a site for gender construction. Amy Greenberg argues that during the U.S. antebellum period, one dominant notion of masculinity included martial manhood which “celebrated martial virtues, strength, bravery, and idealized the adventurous outsider” (12-13) and was epitomized by men like filibusterer William Walker. For many martial men, the “frontier, whether in the western United States or in Latin America,” provided the location to display strength through aggression and sometimes violence at a time when “fewer public acknowledgments of their masculine prowess [were made] in the industrializing United States” (13). The Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898 perpetuated the notion of the Caribbean and Latin America as the ideal site for constructing militarized Anglo-American masculinities. Amy Kaplan describes the crisis of Anglo-American masculinity during the 1890s as being related to the supposed closing of the “frontier” and the incursion of modernization (94). The war in Cuba allowed men like Theodore Roosevelt and his band of “Rough Riders” to perform a martial masculinity that valued battlefield bravery, violent encounters with racialized Others, and above all, physical action.

The early twentieth-century imperialist YA fiction that I review here was written in the post-1898 context which included Theodore Roosevelt’s 1904 Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, “Gunboat Diplomacy,” the construction of the Panama Canal, and over 35 U.S. military interventions in Latin America between 1898 and 1933.<sup>5</sup> Given this historical and political context, it would have been remarkable if

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<sup>5</sup> “The years 1898 to 1933 witnessed over 35 armed US interventions not only in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic but also in Costa Rica (1921), Guatemala (1920), Honduras (1903, 1907, 1911, 1912, 1917-22), Panama (1903-14, 1921, and 1925), Mexico (1913, 1914, 1916-17, 1918-19), and Nicaragua (1909-10, 1912-25, and 1926-33).” (McPherson 10).

intervention had not been thematically represented somehow in the YA literature of the time. The link between intervention and capitalism is a common plot that sustains much of this YA fiction and reflects the prevailing political discourse. For example, in 1907, Woodrow Wilson described the nation's military obligation to keep markets open for trade: "Since trade ignores national boundaries and the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of the nations which are closed against him must be battered down" (qtd. in Phillips and Wojcik-Andrews, 68). Children's literary scholar Bob Dixon explains how children's literature often follows the imperatives of the nation, or in his words, children's "fiction follows the flag" (74). Both statements taken together neatly triangulate the forces that shape YA imperialist literature: capitalism, intervention, and children's entertainment. The U.S. used military intervention with regularity in Latin America which suggests that it was the most effective way to "batter down" the "doors of the nations which [were] closed" to U.S. capital. Children's fiction writers then used military intervention as a pedagogical plot device to instruct young male readers on how foreign policy often requires military aggression, on the importance of U.S. capital and open markets, and on the kind of martial masculinity needed to uphold state policies and the national economy. While some young readers may have been more interested in the daring rescues and displays of bravery performed by their peer-protagonists; they nonetheless learned the lessons of US imperialism. The ubiquity of imperialist tales in YA entertainment made the formula of manufacturer-flag-children's fiction an effective mode of presenting U.S. imperialism in Latin America as intuitive, natural, and acceptable. In what follows, I offer a brief sampling of U.S. imperialist YA fiction and the changing tropes of intervention, empire, and militarized masculinity.

H. Irving Hancock's *Dave Darrin at Vera Cruz: Fighting with the U.S. Navy in*

*Mexico* (1914) fictionalizes the 1914 U.S. armed invasion of Veracruz, Mexico, and positions teen boys directly within the theater of war. Dave Darrin and his best friend Danny Dalzell are young naval ensigns from the Annapolis Academy who are sent to Veracruz to await possible military engagement with Mexican rebels. President Wilson's policy of "watchful waiting" is explicitly critiqued by the narrator and the protagonists who view U.S. intervention as necessary: "Lives and property of citizens of European governments had been sacrificed, [...] looked askance at by the Washington government, which was expected to safeguard the rights of foreigners in Mexico" (19). Darrin and Dalzell are among the "Americans [who] demanded a policy of active intervention in Mexico to end the uncertainty and misery [...]." While many U.S. investors at the time favored the annexation of Mexico to protect their property, Gilbert González explains that a larger section of the U.S. population preferred economic control of Mexican markets and resources rather than territorial acquisition (17). Darrin represents this latter view when, in a discussion about annexation, he replies, "I hope our country won't go that far. [...] I should hate to think of having to welcome the Mexicans as fellow citizens of the great republic" (145). The text not only draws our attention to the militarization of young U.S. readers, but also the early appropriation of Mexico as a site of adolescent gender and racial construction and of the Mexican revolution as an event used to justify U.S. intervention.

The US military was often deployed to countries deemed underdeveloped by US standards and in need of US technical and scientific knowledge in order to benefit from vast natural resources untapped by native governments. Thus, YA fiction represented a different form of intervention, one in which young male protagonists bring their superior and advanced technical knowledge to pre-modern countries. For example, Hancock's 1913 book *The Young Engineers in Mexico; or, Fighting the Mine Swindlers* endows its protagonists with advanced technological skill rather than

with military prowess, yet the message remains the same: Mexico is the proving ground for the development of young Anglo-American masculinity in the service of U.S. capitalism. G. Harvey Ralphson's *Boy Scouts in Mexico; or, On Guard with Uncle Sam* (1911) follows a similar plot in which a group of wealthy boys from New York City practice their scouting skills in Mexico by finding a lost mine.

In much imperialist YA literature, Anglo-American boyhood masculinity is defined vis-à-vis Mexican men. In physical encounters with racialized “natives” (which usually includes Mexican creole, mestizo, or indigenous men), whiteness trumps age. This plot device is found in British children’s fiction as well. For example, Kutzer describes how racial hierarchy exists in Rudyard Kipling’s classic children’s book *Kim* which features superior British boys in relation to Indian men: “Kim’s whiteness will make him the superior to many of the Indian adults in the novel: his age is less important than his ethnicity” (17). In YA fiction that takes place in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, Mary Pat Brady analyzes similar relational constructions of masculinity in Freemont B. Deering’s *The Border Boys across the Frontier* (1911), Gerald Breckenridge’s *The Radio Boys on the Mexican Border* (1922), and Sterner St. Paul Meek’s *Pagan: A Border Patrol Horse* (1952). Brady describes how these texts stage scenes in which “Mexican masculinity is declared inept in this border region – young, inexperienced white boys successfully tackle smugglers and revolutionaries” (75). Like the previously mentioned *Boy Scouts in Mexico*, the protagonists in these books are “the sons of scions of industry” which “further suggests the ideological link between narratives of masculinity, race, and economy, between the nation as imperialist economic power and young men as its allegorical embodiment.”

The depiction of Mexican men who are easily overtaken by Anglo-American boys draws on prevailing representations of Mexican and Latino “immaturity” that had circulated throughout U.S. popular culture for some time. Ricardo Salvatore argues

that U.S. writers have deployed the rhetoric of infancy to Latin America ever since the spate of nineteenth-century independence movements freed most of its countries from Spanish rule: “La mayoría de los escritores de este período equiparaban la inestabilidad política – el rasgo más notorio de las ‘jóvenes repúblicas’ – con la inmadurez o la inexperiencia políticas y, por ello, comparaban a estas jóvenes naciones con niños o adolescentes indisciplinados” (“The majority of the writers from this period equated the political instability – the most notorious risk of the ‘young republics’ – with immaturity or political inexperience and, for that, compared these young nations with undisciplined children or adolescents”) (*Imágenes* 146). These views appeared in concurrent accounts of Mexican soldiers during the 1910 revolution as Jack London, for example, described Mexican troops in Tampico as “child-minded men, incapable of government, playing with the weapons of giants” (qtd. in Gonzalez 85). The trope of immaturity was pervasive during the period and could be found in political cartoons that pictured Latin American and Caribbean nations as children being taught lessons in democracy by Uncle Sam. The supposed “ineptness” of Latino masculinity as proof of racial inferiority and the “political immaturity” of Latin American governments presented Latin America as a group of underdeveloped states that depended on U.S. economic and political tutelage.

The unnatural and improbable scenario of “white boys” overpowering Mexican men continues into the 1930s and beyond as the aptly named “Hardy Boys” further naturalized U.S. intervention in Latin America for young readers by adapting plots to fit changing political circumstance. For example, Franklin W. Dixon’s *The Mark on the Door* (1934) sent the Hardy Boys (two brothers who inherited their sleuthing acumen from their father, Fenton Hardy, a famous detective) to Mexico to investigate fraud. They discover that Pedro Vincenzo, a “swarthy” Mexican (3), had swindled money from unwitting investors in the quiet town of Bayport by tricking them into

buying stock in the non-existent Rio Oil Company. Joe and Frank Hardy refuse to stand for the theft of U.S. capital investment; they go to Mexico with their father, who remains mostly absent throughout the book, and retrieve the money before having Vincenzo arrested. This narrative of a Mexican who “steals” from U.S. investments in Mexican oil anticipates Mexico’s nationalization of its oil industry in 1938 – an event that raised tensions between Mexico and the United States. Throughout the duration of the series, the Hardy brothers make various trips to Latin America including Guatemala (*The Clue in the Embers* [1955]) and Brazil (*The Masked Monkey* [1972]). They also travel to an undetermined location in South America to stop money laundering intended to fund armed terrorists (*The Wailing Siren Mystery* [1951]) and into revolutionary Cuba to stop the proliferation of atomic weapons (*The Ghost at Skeleton Rock* [1958]).

In the 1930s and 40s, war discourse and children’s entertainment changed in response to the innovation of animation and to the political context of Franklin Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy. Beginning with FDR’s predecessor, Herbert Hoover, the U.S. government attempted to repair the damage intervention had caused to U.S.-Latin American relations. With another World War pending, there was a need to foster friendly allies which required more positive portrayals of Latin America within U.S. cultural production. To this end, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, run by Nelson Rockefeller, contacted Walt Disney and enlisted his services as a Goodwill Ambassador. Julianne Burton writes that “[b]etween 1941 and 1943, Walt Disney, his wife, and a score of staff members made three trips south of the border in search of the ‘raw material’ for this Good Neighbor initiative” (26).<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> Disney’s company was also enlisted, quite literally, by the military to serve wartime needs. Julianne Burton states that by the end of 1941, “the Studios had turned into the most extensive ‘war plant’ in Hollywood, housing mountains of munitions, quartering antiaircraft troops, providing overflow office space for Lockheed personnel. By 1943, fully 94% of the footage produced at the studios was war-related” (33).

material was then produced into “nearly two dozen films, both shorts and features, both educational and escapist” and included titles such as *El Gaucho Goofy* and *Cleanliness Brings Health*. The three most well-known films comprise the “South American trilogy” which includes *South of the Border with Disney* (1941), *Saludos Amigos* (1943), and *The Three Caballeros* (1945).

Even though the Disney films did not explicitly target Anglo-American boys as the imperialist YA fiction did, the films perpetuated an imperialist perspective within children’s entertainment which operated under the guise of neighborly relations. Disney’s film trilogy contributed to the prevailing war discourse by using refashioned yet familiar tropes of intervention with an emphasis on Latin American underdevelopment. In *The Three Caballeros*, Disney presents the image of a quaint and picturesque yet underdeveloped Mexico frozen in time. Mexico is shown as being bountiful in material resources, folk practices, and women – all of which are offered up as gifts between “caballeros.” Donald Duck goes to Latin America to celebrate his birthday with his newfound hemispheric amigos; however, this seemingly innocent celebration belies the more serious mission of political rapprochement that was critical to the Good Neighbor Policy.

Development narratives were necessary to the U.S. war discourse because they helped to justify intervention. They also positioned the U.S. as a benefactor of knowledge and technology, suggesting that U.S. infusion of technology was partly about altruism. Good neighbors are supposed to help their less fortunate ones. *The Three Caballeros* capitalizes on the logic of gift giving, but, as Burton argues, gift giving is not a benevolent act; rather, it becomes an act of appropriation: “Disney’s ‘gift’ of intercultural understanding turns out to be the act of packaging Latin America for enhanced North-American consumption” (38). The film masks unequal relations of

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power by having Latin America offer its “gifts” to the U.S. However, in the context of development theories that relate to Latin America, it is the U.S. which gives the “gift” of technology in a manner that requires obligation on the part of the recipient. Such dependent relationships were particularly useful in a time of war because it gave one party leverage over another.

Concurrent with the Disney trilogy’s release, Mena published her first YA book, *The Water-Carrier’s Secret* (1942) which aimed at fostering cross-cultural understanding that just happened to suit the Good Neighbor Policy’s objectives. In an interview, she describes why she wrote the book: “I’ve written this book – my first juvenile – with ‘the hand on the heart’ as we say in Mexico. It is my small contribution and very large wish for a better understanding by the youth of the United States – my adopted country – of Mexico – the country of my birth” (Hoehn 199). This sentiment informs all of her juvenile books and reveals her practice of using literature to challenge denigrating stereotypes of Mexicans. I will also show how her YA version of the story engages with the narrative of development in Mexico which, I argue, was part of a larger war discourse which fostered the diplomatic rapprochement that was crucial to a US wartime economy.

*The Water-Carrier’s Secret* recounts the hardships of an Indian peasant named Juan de Dios who works as an aguador (water carrier) carrying water from a well to the homes of the wealthy. He carries on his father’s line of work, and despite the difficult manual labor, he seems content with his station in life. Juan begins his occupation as an aguador at the age of twelve, and by age sixteen, he is forced to move to Mexico City where “from early morning to the fall of the afternoon Juan de Dios would go from fountain to fountain and from patio to patio, his lean body so accustomed to bending that he never thought of straightening it” (100). He is so proud of his physical labor that he refuses to use the American force-pumps that begin to

appear in his clients' patios. He asks his friend: "But is it the will of God that water should run up-stairs, except in jugs sustained by the proper legs of a man?" (113) Juan de Dios resolves not to work with the new "American water-pumps" which required someone to manually pump water into roof-top holding tanks so that "tenants [could] supply themselves with water by only turning a little stick of brass in their kitchen." Rejecting such new technology, Juan de Dios "much preferred to make many sociable visits, up and down and between the fountains and the kitchens of his customers." He refused to "endanger his soul" by colluding with "the plumber – that worker of evil" who introduced the "Modern Improvement" of American water-pumps.

Juan's discomfort with US modernization is not shared by Tiburcio, Juan's younger brother, who comes to Mexico City along with Dolores, Juan's betrothed. Upon their arrival, Juan asks Tiburcio to finish his day's work of carrying water while Juan visits with Dolores. Juan's employers take advantage of his absence and implore Tiburcio to operate "the American force pump which had been rusting, for years, in peaceful waiting" (132). Soon, the neighbors of other patios hear the "news that a water-carrier who would pump was on the premises." Tiburcio continues pumping water despite the "weight in his chest" and the way his legs "bend under him like green twigs" (133). He happily collects "the silver pieces that he had truly earned by the sweat of all his body" before "abandon[ing] himself like a tired child to his well-earned siesta."

We subsequently learn about a love triangle between the two brothers and Dolores, and that Tiburcio and Dolores had come to Mexico City to break the news of their budding romance to Juan. Juan becomes angry and curses Tiburcio: "For your tricks and the sorceries with which you have bewitched my Dolores, may God cripple you!" (136). As a result, Tiburcio immediately feels his brother's wrath as he becomes crippled by pain: "In a series of shrieks Tiburcio described the progress of his

affliction, which extended to all the muscles that he had brought into rash action during his brave exertions with the pump. [...] Shudder after shudder convulsed Tiburcio as he sprawled with his forehead on the pavement, the poison of terror adding to that of fatigue.” Tiburcio is eventually saved from the intense pain when Juan decides to rely on his religious faith to remedy Tiburcio’s body. He carries Tiburcio to the base of the “sacred hill” where pilgrims travel in order to pray to the Virgin of Guadalupe (139). In an act of extreme devotion, he prays to the Virgin of Guadalupe: “I will carry Tiburcio on my knees, over all those steps unto Thine altar! This I do that he may be permitted to move the body in a healthy way again” (141).

At this point, it is useful to consider the symbolic construction of the “Indian” in Mexican culture. As an Indian, Juan de Dios represents the Mexican national identity fostered by elitist images of Mexican Indians, yet he is also a detriment to national economic prosperity. The Mexican elites’ pride in an indigenous past had to contend with the indigenous people in the present who allegedly impeded Mexico’s progress. Juan de Dios embodies the Porfiriato’s anxieties as his disdain for the water pumps suggests a rejection of technological progress and modernization.<sup>7</sup> However, Juan’s response to the water pump was perhaps not as unusual as it appears. William Beezley provides actual examples of analogous reactions to the importation of foreign tools and methods during the Porfiriato. For example, when one U.S. hacendado

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<sup>7</sup> The “Porfiriato” or “Porfirian” Mexico are terms often used to refer to President Porfirio Díaz’s regime (1876-1880, 1884-1910) which was characterized by his embrace of “Orden y Progreso” (“Order and Progress”). During the Porfiriato, the country enjoyed rapid economic growth as exports, mining, agriculture, and textile industries increased production. This development leveled off in 1900 and led to major domestic problems. Díaz did not encourage technological innovation or Mexican control of major industries. Foreign interests began to dominate the economy as well as the state’s financial system. Increased revenues empowered Díaz to implement more repressive political measures and to ensure his longevity as president. He opposed the formation of real political parties and preferred instead to play off various factions against each other including the upper- and middle-classes, the Church, the army, and the peasantry. His presidency culminated in the 1910 Mexican Revolution spurred by the mass uprisings against decades of strongman politics and policies, entrenched class hierarchies, and increased U.S. cultural and economic intervention in Mexico.

attempted to introduce the thresher to his Mexican workers, the result was disastrous: “The village priest came to see the machine and declared it was possessed by the devil and forbade the peons to work with it. The American owner had to ship the machine out of the region to prevent the workers from destroying it” (73).<sup>8</sup> Because the Porfirian state went to great lengths to mount photos of its railroads, bridges, factories and other images of convenience and progress at various World’s Fairs, stories about laborers who rejected new technology or efficient work methods were certainly not welcomed. In order to court foreign investment and immigration into Mexico, there had to be a compliant workforce that accepted and used imported technology. *The Water-Carrier’s Secret* illustrates the trouble of managing certain workers whose defiance of and resistance to modernization was, simply put, bad for business.

Juan seems to reject more than just the “evil” plumber; rather, his amazement upon arriving in a modernizing Mexico City soon turns to disbelief and lament. His description of electricity in Mexico City expresses the traditionalism that he represents in conflict with the modernization that he demonizes: “In his secret soul Juan de Dios felt more than ever bewildered and shy in that city of light, as he called the capital, because of the blinding electric globes everywhere at night, making it look like day. There was light, blinding lights everywhere, over stores and theaters and streets. To him the *eléctrico* rays were very disturbing and possibly evil [...]” (*Water-Carrier* 98). His critique of modernization, however, is also a veiled commentary on U.S. influence in Mexico that, according to the story, has a deleterious effect on Mexican tradition and customs. González describes how electricity was run by U.S. companies

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<sup>8</sup> Beezley also describes how “North American contractors imported wheelbarrows to use in building the railroads and other projects” and how they had to “coax” the workmen into using them (74). They were later surprised at *how* the Mexican workers used them. They would load the wheelbarrows with material, lift it onto their heads, and carry them to their destination.

that served the needs of other U.S. investments which, taken together, changed Mexican practices and modes of living: “When in Mexico City, electricity from El Oro Mining Company supplied energy to run the streetcars built in the US. American industrial enterprises and their spin-offs – all built with US-made machinery – were visible at many points” (54). Therefore, beneath a layer of Mexican Catholicism that infuses most of Mena’s stories is a critique of US cultural imperialism. Amy Doherty points out that the US force-pumps represent the power of US influence on “the residents of Mexico City [who] work Tiburcio to the point of exhaustion to have the convenience of modern plumbing” (“Redefining” 172). She notes how Mena “indirectly criticizes the influence of American capitalism and subtly foregrounds a dispossessed sector of the Mexican population.” The tone used to describe the changing Mexico City cityscape is one of regret for the imminent loss of “traditional” Mexican culture.

As a text written specifically for U.S. juvenile readers, *The Water-Carrier’s Secret* implicitly engages with prevailing values and stereotypes in both U.S. culture and children’s literature. Juan seems to exemplify (and Tiburcio seems to defy) what was called the “Mañana complex.” González explains that “No other cultural trait affixed itself to Mexico as did the mañana complex. The mañana attitude implied a willingness to put work or a responsibility off until tomorrow, or that tomorrow will solve today’s problems so no need to hurry. [...] ‘Mañana’ also meant that the Mexicans’ sense of time differed radically from that which defined American behavior” (147). As a telling example of this attitude, González cites Richard Bogardus’ *Essentials of Americanization* (1919) and its discussion of Mexican immigrants: “With them time is not commercialized as with us. Their wants are not aroused as ours, consequently, they do not drive themselves as we drive ourselves” (qtd. in González 148). Beezley further explains the rural Mexican notion of time and

the “countryside’s indifference to the hour” (78).<sup>9</sup> He writes that in rural Mexico “no one needed minutes or hours, when morning and afternoon, evening and night served as small enough designations.” More importantly, Beezley argues that many workers rejected the capitalist “conception of time and money, [and] found no reason to save either.” Many workers “in both the traditional and modern worlds probably recognized that producing any surplus would more than likely lead to its being expropriated by local elites.” Misunderstanding the subversive refusal to “commercialize” time, foreign observers often viewed the Mexican as a “lazy native”: “it was those who rejected the foreign intrusion and changes or who saw little gain in hard work when the profits went to outsiders who were branded as slothful Mexicans” (82). Mena’s text reflects this rejection of capitalism by showing Juan’s hostility toward the water pump and his preference for traditional modes of labor that prevent him from optimizing or “commercializing” his time and labor.

While Juan’s attitude resonates with elements of the “mañana complex,” Tiburcio immediately embraces the pump’s efficiency as he recognizes its value in increasing his income. We learn about Tiburcio’s capitalist tendencies early in the text through his entrepreneurial ingenuity of selling fruit to railroad passengers who stopped at the village station on their way to Mexico City: “Tiburcio had already put him [Juan] to shame by his initiative in selling pomegranates and purple passion fruit at the railroad station to the elegant *señores* [...]. It was clever of Tiburcio, Juan de Dios admitted, to so capitalize on the national weakness” that señores had for “spending their dinero when they are traveling” (18). Through Tiburcio’s drive for profit, he mimics the characters found in Horatio Alger stories – yet another set of

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<sup>9</sup> Beezley explains that “[e]xcept for Mexico City and one or two other cities that had imported clocks for their municipal buildings, the provincial towns shared the countryside’s indifference to the hour” (78).

tales about moral and economic development told exclusively for Anglo-American boys. The Horatio Alger work ethic claims that hard work and luck lead to success that can be measured in terms of wealth. Tiburcio seems to reinforce the Horatio Alger ethic, but in Mena's text, his industriousness and materialism lead to debility which shows how Mena wraps her critique of U.S. materialism within a religious notion of avarice as sin.

Tiburcio's zeal to use the pump leads to his physical debilitation and his moral damnation. As Juan's "sinful brother," Tiburcio succumbs to the vice of greed and thus represents the dangers of materialism. Yet, if we read Tiburcio as a representative of the Mexican American or Mexican immigrant child, we will see that he will not partake in the Horatio Alger myth of meritocracy. The figure of the laboring child body – injured by overwork and exploitation – is a tragic figure that resonates throughout Chicana/o literature in texts like Tomás Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971) and Helena María Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995). But it also was prevalent among real Latino child laborers who worked during the time period in which Mena wrote. González describes the social injustices and labor demands that Mexican American and Mexican immigrant children endured. He states that many Tejano (Texan) children, for example, were kept out of school in 1945 to work. In other instances, children who did go to public schools went to segregated ones and were often put in Americanization programs as a way to expel the cultural impediments – like religious and patriotic devotion – to modernization and progress. Many were also enrolled in industrial courses where they were taught the skills required to run U.S. machinery and to become part of a permanent working underclass. Tiburcio's future seems analogous to this reality. He eventually becomes a water pump operator instead of a traditional aguador, but he will never own one of the pumps himself, much less, one of the patios which house the pumps, nor will he have

the money to pay someone to pump water for him. The success promised by the Horatio Alger stories applied only to Anglo-American boys, and would remain inaccessible to many children of color in the US during the 1940s.

Meanwhile, Juan continues in his cherished profession as an aguador, but he no longer works for the Mexican elite and the demanding needs of their “porcelain baths.” Rather, he works for himself carrying water to the shrine of la Virgen, sharing water with those religious pilgrims who also trek up the steep hill to worship her. For his labors, he is not paid, nor does he charge for his services. This is yet another value that flies in the face of the Horatio Alger stories and of capitalist principles in general. The idea of working hard without asking for monetary compensation and without desiring wealth accumulation or commodity consumption is an untenable position in a U.S. wartime economy, much less at any other point in time. He takes pride in his work, derives meaning from his labor as an aguador, and develops a close relationship with his labor and the social network that it relied on and created. For this reason, Juan is not a satisfactory model of the Mexican American, Mexican immigrant, and Mexican laborer because he refuses to serve the economic expectations of U.S. capitalists and investors in both the U.S. and Mexico. Rather, the moral triumph of Juan de Dios over his brother Tiburcio reveals Mena’s deference to Mexican communal values and traditions *as she perceives them* over the importation of US modernity.

### **The 1940s and Development Discourses**

As World War Two came to an end and the U.S. began to solidify its growing economic and political dominance, significant transformations in the geopolitical landscape occurred. María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo argues that “[a]lthough development has occurred throughout history and across civilizations, its formal, self-conscious articulation as a necessary and self-evident social process is of fairly recent

elaboration” (17). Earlier notions of development and modernization are “quite distinct from the twentieth-century concern with the engineered economic development of entire ‘peripheral’ and ‘semiperipheral’ areas.” The 1940s was particularly crucial in this new and enduring formulation of development. For example, it was in 1944 that the Bretton Woods Conference was held as “a preparatory meeting for the foundation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)” which would later become the World Bank (18-19). The eventual need for and concern over postwar reconstruction in Europe allowed the U.S. to take a more expansive view of development in which “underdeveloped” countries presented both a burden and a boon to U.S. economic interests. The U.S. Treasury Department’s public view of the Bretton Woods Accord and the IBRD reveals the potential for economic gain through U.S. investment in development:

The underdeveloped countries offer immense stores of raw materials that the more advanced countries, including the United States, need to supplement their own exhaustible resources. They also offer the prospect of a substantial market for manufactured goods. Their first need, however, is for machinery, tools, and heavy equipment, all of which will have to be imported and largely paid for with borrowed funds. (qtd. in Saldaña-Portillo 19).

The government’s view suggests reciprocity of economic benefits stemming from development projects and asserts a mutual dependence between developed and underdeveloped economies and national interests. But leaders from Latin American countries decried the uneven implementation of U.S. economic investment as the Marshal Plan made provisions for economic reconstruction in Europe while Latin America received insufficient investment. One year after the Bretton Woods conference, the 1945 inter-American conference held at Mexico’s Chapultepec castle allowed Latin American leaders to vent their dissatisfaction over U.S. economic policy: “At Chapultepec, several Latin American presidents made clear the

importance of industrialization in the consolidation of democracy and asked the United States to help with a program of economic transition from war production of raw materials to industrial production. The United States, however, insisted on questions of hemispheric defense, reducing economic policy to a warning to Latin American countries to abandon ‘economic nationalism’” (Escobar 29).

In his study of developmentalism, Arturo Escobar identifies President Harry Truman’s 1949 inaugural presidential address as a significant moment in the discursive and political construction of developmentalism. In his speech, Truman outlined the role U.S. technology and scientific knowledge would have in shaping post-WW2 global relations:

I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life...What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing...Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge. (qtd. in Escobar 3)

The ostensible benevolence compelling Truman’s foreign policy agenda comes from “the ‘discovery’ of mass poverty in Asia, Africa, and Latin America” during the early years after the war (21). This newfound “discovery” of poverty posed serious threats to U.S. political and economic stability. First, “poor” countries were susceptible to social upheaval which could disturb “the international arena” (22). Secondly, as the Cold War’s geopolitical demarcations began to take shape, many feared that social instability made “poor” countries vulnerable to communist influence. Finally, the U.S. postwar economy was threatened by the weight of its own production and consumption demands, a burden illustrated in the U.S. Treasury’s statement on the importance of underdeveloped nations to the U.S. economy.

Mena published *The Water-Carrier’s Secret* (1942) in the years preceding this series of events in which development came to function as a formal set of political and

economic policies. By locating Mena's text as a precursor to the rise of development and its discourse, I hope to show how her YA fiction responded to the important political concerns of her day. In my brief examination of YA literature, I have emphasized how modernization and development subtends discourses of U.S. military intervention and imperialism in Latin America and the discourse of revolution in Mexico. By challenging different U.S. and Mexican notions of development, Mena's text engages with these war discourses that dominated the first half of the twentieth century.

In order to enact and impose a policy of development on "poor" countries, a variety of public and private interests engaged in wide-ranging discursive practices that identified the object of study as an object of aid. Escobar writes that development "proceeded by creating 'abnormalities' (such as the 'illiterate,' the 'underdeveloped,' the 'malnourished,' 'small farmers,' or 'landless peasants'), which it would later treat and reform" (41). Implicit in the development paradigm is the notion of growth, maturity, progress – terms resonant with modernization and modernity. Escobar's analysis of development discourse raises two points that are germane to my reading of Mena's *The Water-Carrier's Secret*. First, Escobar describes how technology was a crucial component of development projects. As is evident in Truman's address, developmentalists identified technology as the key to initiating the economic and political "growth" needed in "poor" countries. Escobar notes that technology was viewed as a value-free yet "moral" force of change that would transform political and economic systems but not national cultures: "It was never realized that such a transfer [of technology] would depend not merely on technical elements but on social and cultural factors as well. Technology was seen as neutral and inevitably beneficial, not as an instrument for the creation of cultural and social orders" (36). As I will argue in what follows, Mena's text refutes the notion of "neutral" U.S.-imposed technology

and reveals how the technology of “American force pumps” threatened “cultural and social orders” in Mexico.

Escobar further argues that development discourse contributed to the familiar practice of infantilizing non-Western countries particularly in Latin America. The demarcation of First, Second, and Third Worlds in the early 1950s allowed development proponents to reinvigorate the paternalist discourse of “immature” nations in order to suit U.S. policy agendas: “the representation of the Third World as a child in need of adult guidance was not an uncommon metaphor and lent itself perfectly to the development discourse. The infantilization of the Third World was integral to development [...]” (30).

The discourse of “immaturity” and “infancy” also circulated within the field of children’s popular culture where the depictions of a “childish” Latin America are used to instruct child readers on the issue of U.S. imperialism. Exiled Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman, describes how children’s fiction often draws on development discourse as a pedagogic device of U.S. imperialism. Dorfman examines the complicated nature of “development” in children’s popular culture and the way the term applies not only to “poor” countries, but also to the young reader. His analysis first makes clear the political benefits of teaching the young about notions of hegemony: “To the extent that the child prepares himself to become an adult, [...] he understands that colonization (that of his parents as well as that of the more powerful nations) is highly beneficial to those who receive it” (44-45). Dorfman’s analysis exposes the ways in which children’s entertainment often naturalizes forms of colonization between “mature” and “immature” characters thereby condoning relations of domination. Young readers presumably carry this lesson in colonization with them as they themselves reach maturity which makes colonization a familiar practice easy to accept. However, what makes development discourse truly unique in

children's entertainment is not that children are exposed to colonization at a young age, but that they are seemingly placed in a position to identify and then dis-identify with the "underdeveloped" nations and peoples they read about. Both the child reader and the colonized nation within the story are united by their subordinate status as "immature" dependents. Both must defer to the judgment of the parent/adult/Western nations whose "maturity" and power is uncontested. While the child's subject position as a young reader is a site of identification with the Third-World-as-protagonist, that identification of dependency is eventually subsumed for the U.S. child reader by national and racial identifications with the colonizing nation.

Dorfman's critiques of Disney's role in Latin America remain classic texts in Disney studies precisely for their analysis of imperialism within Disney's cultural production and of children's entertainment in general. Dorfman reveals the link between children's entertainment and the ideology of development:

there are "developed" countries and others which do not exhibit the characteristics of progress or modernity, and are therefore perceived as "backward," but also that there is a set of "solutions" to such an "abnormal" predicament. Even before he can read, however, the child has come into contact with an implicit history that justifies and rationalizes the motives behind an international situation in which some countries have everything and other countries almost nothing. (22)

Dorfman examines how underdevelopment is portrayed as an "abnormality," a defect that implies inherent, ahistorical deficiencies rather than deliberate national and international policies or histories of colonialism, racism, war, and exploitation which account for why "some countries have everything and other countries almost nothing." But while some countries have the misfortune of being "abnormal," others exalt in their ability and duty to provide "solutions" and enjoy the authority that comes with having achieved the "normal" status of "progress and modernity." At a young age, juvenile readers are taught that "progress and modernity" are part of a natural process that nation-states undergo, in a manner similar to human development, and that the

process is defined and measured by those nations that have completed it. Thus, Dorfman argues that children's entertainment (specifically Disney products) plays an insidious role in exposing young audiences to positive and naturalized depictions of imperialism.

Dorfman further argues that "countries are always treated as organisms with cycles that can be compared to birth, childhood, and maturity" (43). He goes on to explain that the "idea of development as growth, the idea that 'young' economies need only mimic 'older' ones" is part of "all developmental theory" (42) "This superimposition of the individual on the social, of the biological on the historical" (43) forms the basis to claims of economic and political immaturity that were central to US imperialism. Mexico was depicted as a site of material abundance and natural resources that were going to waste or not being utilized by pre-modern, child-like Mexicans. In *The Water-Carrier's Secret*, the water pump stands in for the importation of US technology meant to help nurture a "young" Mexican economy and to better utilize its natural and labor resources. In the early years of World War Two, the U.S. needed markets for its exported goods; Latin American markets were often the most convenient and available ones left open during the war. Mena's *Water-Carrier's Secret* portrays a threat to U.S. wartime economy in its depiction of a portion of the Mexican public that refuses to accept U.S. imports. The story of Juan de Dios is about a recipient's refusal to accept the "gift" of technology and how the acts of giving and accepting are implicated in development narratives.

### **Revolutionary Developmentalism**

Mena's text engages with development's imposition of U.S. technology and its discourse of infantilization. But her text also reveals Mexico's internal development discourses that circulated within the Porfiriato and postrevolutionary governments – both of which had anti-clerical policies that Mena's text critiques. Her story shows

how Mexico viewed development as part of a nationalist project of modernity that existed independently of yet supported US discourses of development. In other words, Mexico had its own development narratives about itself and these often centered on two segments of the population that were represented as anti-modern elements: Indians and the Catholic church.

Mena's 1913 story was written during the early years of the revolution, but it also looks back to the Porfiriato which, Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo explains, coincided with the nineteenth-century emergence of "nationalism and modernism as a global phenomenon" (xiii). In the earlier years of the Díaz regime, Mexico participated in World's Fairs in order to display itself as a cosmopolitan, modern nation that reached "national maturity" after having "grown up" from an "unstable adolescence" of civil wars and foreign invasions during the nineteenth century (30). The rhetoric of growth, evolution, and progress was central to Mexico's desire for modernity and nationalism. Tenorio-Trillo explains how modernity is a "history of self-awareness of progress" where progress is regarded as a "seemingly ahistorical and natural stage of humankind" (1). Mark Overmyer-Velázquez describes it as an "interminable development and restless forward movement of time and history" (7). Both historians emphasize modernity's constructed nature and that to understand the Porfiriato, we must place it in the context of a "universal metanarrative of modernity" which Overmyer-Velázquez calls a Western myth that "successfully colonized the world insofar as every society [had to] contend with the West's framing of civilization and progress" (9). In this sense, Mexico's image of itself as a nation that aspired to achieve modernity adhered to the same notion of progress that informs the development narratives found in children's popular culture which Dorfman strongly critiqued.

Part of Mexico's modern image included the veneration of Mexico's indigenous past which elites used to reconcile Mexico's majority indigenous

population and the state's desire for parity and progress on the world stage. Mexican elites during the Porfiriato often orientalized the indigenous population by celebrating indigenous arts, crafts, and customs. The Indian past served as a legitimating claim to an autochthonous culture that cemented Mexican identity with a revered indigenous founding that modern Mexico had successfully moved beyond. Through elite displays of indigeneity, the Porfiriato "created a civic religion" in the 1880s that allowed for the "beatification" of "heroic" Indian figures such as Benito Juárez and Aztec emperor, Cuauhtémoc (Tenorio-Trillo 66).

The Mexican discourse of development continued after the Porfiriato into the succession of postrevolutionary governments where Indians and the Catholic Church remained as putative obstacles to Mexico's growth. Saldaña-Portillo's work on development and Latin American revolutions examines how these seemingly antithetical projects of change converge in their conception of human subjectivity. Saldaña-Portillo argues that "development's goal is necessarily two-fold: producing 'developed' capitalist national economies and thereby 'developed' liberal citizens therein. Revolutionary movements similarly seek to transform their national economies from a condition of dependent development and neocolonial exploitation to a condition of sovereign and independent development, thereby transforming dependent and exploited classes into freed revolutionary subjects/citizens" (13). For Saldaña-Portillo, revolutionary subjectivity often involved the "transcendence of a premodern *ethnos*" in which one could attain "the universal(ized) condition of revolutionary agency" by "the leaving behind of one's own particularity" (7). In her analysis of "revolutionary developmentalism" (197) after the Mexican revolution, Saldaña-Portillo argues that revolutionary elites constructed Indian difference as the feminized "premodern *ethnos*" that needed to be transcended. Citing Manuel Gamio's *Forjando Patria*, she reveals how revolutionary indigenismo both celebrated "the

Indian warrior as the symbol of revolutionary nationalism” while “identify[ing] Indian difference as the most powerful threat to the possibility of unifying and homogenizing the nation” (205). Gamio as well as other prominent Mexican writers of the 1920s and 30s such as Jose Vasconcelos depicted mestizaje as a unifying force and the future of the nation. In this narrative of Mexican progress in which mestizaje is idealized as the telos of a racialized notion of human and national evolution, Indian difference is absorbed and subsumed as a past racial heritage and a present racial identity in need of assimilation:

Mexican revolutionary indigenismo inscribed particular Indian subjectivity within a teleology of becoming more perfect citizens. [...] Indian difference is an essential precedent for this mestizo nation, but *Indians*, the bearers of difference, are the continuing targets of educational and cultural reform. In the years immediately following the revolution (and the publication of Gamio’s influential book), institutes and programs for the education and assimilation of Indians proliferated at national, regional, and local levels. (212)

Saldaña-Portillo’s reading of “revolutionary developmentalism” helps illuminate Mena’s response to inter/intra-national development discourses. Because Mena’s story focuses on Juan de Dios – an Indian Catholic boy who venerates the Virgen de Guadalupe – Mena’s text implicitly challenges postrevolutionary anti-clericalism by reappropriating Indian difference to uphold Mexican Catholicism.

Mena uses the construction of Indian difference to further a cultural agenda and in this way, her treatment of racial identity as a “tool” is superficial and problematic. Like revolutionary indigenismo, Mena sees Indian difference as a “‘folkloric cultural backdrop’ and ‘abject premodern residual’” (233). As I will describe later, several of Mena’s stories depict Indians in the paternalistic, condescending manner consonant with other work of Mexican indigenismo fiction of the time. In Mena’s work, Indian difference represents a national origin and through this mythic racial heritage, Mexicans (and the Mexican diaspora including Mena) maintain bonds of national affiliation. As Saldaña-Portillo points out, the Indian

origin story is used as a politically expedient discursive method of consolidating power among elite mestizos and perpetuating racial hierarchies through its erasure of Indian particularity:

The mask of Indian difference functioned as the quintessential empty signifier within the discourse of revolutionary mestizo nationalism, for while it politically galvanized national identity as the common origin among the population – temporarily providing a mythical fullness of community – it was itself devoid of all particularity. It was a discursive construct which shunned all Indian specificity, preferring instead a content so abstracted as to lose all referential meaning as origin. Indian difference is a signifier unmoored from its presumed referent, the indigenous population of Mexico. (253)

In Mena's text, Juan de Dios represents a nationalist Indian origin and a figure that rejects the imposition of foreign technology and its resultant cultural values. But her representation of Juan de Dios is a strategic use of Indian difference as an "empty signifier" that is as unconcerned with "Indian specificity" as revolutionary indigenismo is. However, what differentiates her text from revolutionary developmentalism is that Indian difference and Catholicism are inseparable. As a story that venerates Mexican Catholicism, Mena's text refutes revolutionary developmentalism's notion that part of the "premodern *ethnos*" that Indians need to transcend is their Catholic faith. Rather than support a teleological move away from *ethnos* and Catholicism, Mena's text depicts a stoppage of time. Through Juan de Dios's refusal of U.S. technology, Mena depicts a cultural resistance to U.S. and Mexican developmentalist notions of progress and evolution and instead asserts a nationalist embrace of Catholicism. The publication history of her story – first published in 1913 during the revolution, then in 1927 during the Cristiada, and finally in 1942 after the government's open acceptance of Catholicism – shows Mena's ongoing debate with post/revolutionary anti-clericalism.<sup>10</sup> Her text asserts that Indian

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<sup>10</sup> *The Water-Carrier's Secret* is an extended version of her 1913 adult short story "John of God, the Water Carrier" first published in *Century Magazine* and then later republished in a 1927 edition of *The Monthly Criterion*, edited by T.S. Elliot. The story's trajectory spans three key moments in Mexico's history of modernization: 1) the original November 1913 version in *Century Magazine* was written and

difference and the Catholic Church *are not* obstacles to national development but are symbolic of national identity itself.

### **Mena's "Inditos," Mexican Catholicism, and (inter)national Development Narratives**

Juan de Dios is portrayed as a naïve Indian who stubbornly holds on to past traditions and sees the water pump as a product of “a new and mischievous spirit in the air of the capital” named “Modern-Improvements” (110). Mena’s depiction of Juan and other Indian characters drew harsh criticism from the first scholars of Chicana/o literary studies to comment on her work. Ironically, Mena’s version of indigenismo with its condescending portrayals of Indians, which suited the aesthetic trends of the time, was the same reason why later Chicano critic, Raymund Paredes, dismissed her work. In his 1978 article, “The Evolution of Chicano Literature,” Paredes characterizes Mena as having a sensibility that “unfortunately tended towards sentimentalism and preciousness” (85). Paredes was particularly disdainful of her depiction of Mexican Indians: “Mena took pride in the aboriginal past of Mexico, and she had real sympathy for the downtrodden Indians, but she could not, for the life of her, resist describing how they ‘washed their little brown faces...and assumed expressions of astonishing intelligence and zeal’” (85). Paredes justifiably rejects the essentialism and elitism that reside in Mena’s characterizations. For example, in her story “The Gold Vanity Set” (Nov. 1913), published in *American Magazine*, the protagonist, a Mexican aristocrat, defines “Indito” as a term of endearment: “We use the diminutive (*Indito* rather than *Indio*) because we love them. [...] With their

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published in the context of Mexican revolutionary anticlericalism. 2) The 1927 republication aligns with international modernist interest in Mexico and its literary appropriation by British and U.S. writers like D.H. Lawrence and Katherine Ann Porter. More importantly, this republication coincides with a Mexican postrevolutionary modernist aesthetics, the discourse of indigenismo, and the anticlericalism of the Calles regime which culminated in the devastating religious war known as the Cristero Rebellion (1926-1929). 3) In 1942, the story appears in its final incarnation as a YA book that challenges U.S. imperialist representations of an underdeveloped Mexico in need of U.S. economic and technological intervention. In each version, Mena’s texts foreground Mexican Catholicism and its challenge to state formations.

passion, their melancholy, their music and their superstition they have passed without transition from the feudalism of the Aztecs into the world of today, which ignores them; but we never forget that it was their valor and love of country which won our independence” (10).

In her first and most popular story for *Century Magazine*, “John of God, the Water-Carrier” (Nov. 1913), Mena presents the stereotypical Mexican Indian that *Century* readers expected. It is likely that Mena romanticized the lives of *Inditos* because she was so far removed from their impoverished living conditions. Amy Doherty points out that, in Mexico, Mena enjoyed an “upper class status in a racially stratified society.” Her status “as a Mexican of European descent influenced her perspective of the Mexican Indians and provided a window for her similarly privileged *Century* audience” (“Redefining” 171). Although her class status and European heritage may have aligned her with her readership, her nationalist and religious identifications most likely marked her as different. Mena was a Mexican immigrant who wrote exclusively about Mexico at a time of heightened nativism and when *Century* and other magazines were publishing anti-immigrant articles and editorials next to stories by or about “foreign” and “exotic” peoples.

Aside from her class and racial bias, Mena was also an astute, well-read student of literature. In her correspondence with *Century* editors, Mena displays her understanding of literary conventions:

I was perplexed by discovering in the August *Century* a story very much longer than “John of God.” [...] Could it be that the water carrier’s lowly station in life made him a literary undesirable? Then what of Maupassant’s Norman peasants, Kipling’s soldiers and low-caste Hindoos, Myra Kelly’s tenement children, and many other social nobodies of successful fiction? (qtd. in Doherty, Introduction xxii)

Because Mena understood the way authors often endowed characters with symbolic meanings beyond their literary functions, it is likely that Mena did the same with her

*Inditos*. She endows Juan de Dios with a specific social significance and employs his character as part of a deliberate narrative strategy in which his racial and class status exceed U.S. stereotypes of the “Indian” and, instead, serve as a literary mode of social critique leveled at both U.S. imperialism and the revolutionary Mexican state.

Upon an initial reading, Mena’s characterization of Juan de Dios comes off as an uncritical romanticization of racialized manual labor and of the indigenous Mexican population. The “mysteries” of technology elude and baffle the superstitious and religious Indian who fears the “mischievous spirit” of modernization. We are to believe that Juan actually prefers hard physical labor that requires him to haul large clay jugs of water up the stairs rather than working stationary at the more convenient patio pumps. For Juan, work involves “sociable trips” that make back-breaking labor pleasant or at least tolerable. But Mena’s satiric voice which narrates Juan’s demonization of technology alerts us to additional readings that demand a closer look at her choice of the aguador as the protagonist and the “*American* force-pumps” that he opposes.

The figure of Juan does represent a condescending portrayal of the naïve *Indito* that appears in many of her stories. However, Juan de Dios is also the embodiment of Mexican modernist aesthetics, the history of Church-State conflict in Mexico, and a challenge to U.S. wartime narratives of an underdeveloped Mexico. To understand the symbolic significance of Juan as an indigenous boy, a devotee of la Virgen de Guadalupe, an aguador, and his views on labor – in other words, to dig beneath the facile stereotypes of Indians that rightly disturbed later Chicano readers and critics – we must contextualize the story and its relation to the historical conflict between the Catholic church and Mexican liberalism.

The complicated and contentious relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Mexican government began in colonial Mexico. When anticolonialists

sought independence from Spanish rule in the early 1800s, the Church threw its support behind the Spanish crown whose policies had allowed the Church to grow in wealth and power (Redinger 3). After Mexico won its independence, the conflict between Church and state continued as Conservatives and Liberals battled each other for state rule. Conservatives were mostly pro-clerical; but Liberals were largely anticlericals and anticorporatists who viewed corporate landowners like the Catholic Church as fetters that prevented the rise of private property ownership. Additionally, Adrian Bantjes explains that liberal anticlericals objected to more than the issue of corporatism and Church wealth; rather, they viewed “Catholic culture itself as an obstacle to the creation of a new, secularized *hombre positivo*, [who was] utilitarian, industrious, enlightened, and virtuous” (141). In other words, the Church hierarchy and its religious obscurantism prevented free markets and free minds through its vast landholdings and its propagation of “fanaticism” and “superstition” (140).

The Liberal presidency of Benito Juárez (1855-1872) and the Constitution of 1857 signaled a blow to Church power. The Constitution included liberal reforms that stripped the Church of much of its land and also declassified Catholicism as the national religion. However, the Church survived liberal attacks and, during Porfirio Díaz’s regime (1876-1910), managed to regain some degree of power (Redinger 4).<sup>11</sup> During this period of Church-state détente, Catholicism underwent its own internal evolution with the emergence of social Catholicism, inspired by Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which “criticiz[ed] both the crude reality of ‘savage’ capitalism and the new ideology of socialism” and instead favored “an economy based on small and medium-sized family properties” (Meyer 282). Tensions remained

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<sup>11</sup> Although Díaz was a Liberal, his “benign neglect” of certain anticlerical provisions in the Constitution “allowed the clergy to more than triple in size during his reign from 1,600 in 1878 to nearly 5,000 by the time he left office in 1911” (Redinger 4). The clergy not only increased in size, but also regained “control of education, baptism, and marriage” ceremonies (Bantjes 141).

between pro- and anti-clericals up until the 1910 revolution but were lessened somewhat during Francisco Madero's brief presidency (1911-1913) when "[d]ozens of Catholic deputies, senators, and governors won elections" and many Catholics were "enthusiastic about the historic opportunity of being openly Catholic in the public sphere" (282). The enthusiasm ended, however, when anticlerical constitutionalists defeated Victoriano Huerta in 1914 and three years later instituted the revolutionary Constitution of 1917 which contained a series of anticlerical reforms including Article 130 which "established the state's right to limit religious worship" (283).<sup>12</sup>

The anticlerical laws, while devastating on paper, did not lead to an immediate crisis because they were unevenly implemented as many local and federal officials sought to avoid social upheaval especially after a decade-long civil war. Yet, in certain locales, liberal officials did not hesitate to implement "defanaticization" campaigns intended to rid the public of organized religion. Churches were either burned or converted into "schools, offices, cultural centers, or warehouses," while priests were either expelled or, in some cases, assassinated (Bantjes 145). *Quemasantos*, or "saint burners," torched Catholic icons. In fact, the very altar to la Virgen de Guadalupe at the basilica at Tepeyac that Mena describes in *The Water-Carrier's Secrets* was bombed on November 14, 1921 (137). Someone had hidden "a stick of dynamite" in "a bouquet of flowers" and placed it on the altar, but, miraculously, the image of la Virgen remained "unscathed."

The tenuous "peace" turned into renewed bloody strife in 1926 when President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) decided to enforce Article 130 of the Constitution. Marjorie Becker explains that as a "proponent of agrarian capitalism [and] private property," Calles "pursued an anticlerical politics with the vigor of a man who had

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<sup>12</sup> The 1917 Constitution also included article 3 which "prohibited religious instruction in all schools; article 5 equated religious vows with slavery; article 13 denied legal status to religious organizations; article 27 nationalized all church property" (Meyer 283).

encountered evil incarnate and was determined to vanquish it” (37). As a result of his demand for full enforcement, the state “deported foreign-born priests, nationalized all Church property, and closed all religious schools, convents, and monasteries” (Redinger 8). In response to Calles’s orders, thousands of Catholics protested through a public outcry shouting “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” (“Long Live Christ the King!”) which, in abbreviated form, became the nickname of militant Catholics: “Cristeros.” The Church also protested the state’s actions by closing all of its Churches and holding a clerical strike in order to put pressure on the government (9). The strike devastated the social life of many Mexicans as “people found themselves cut off from the sacraments; they could neither marry, confess, nor take communion. They had to die without the last rites” (Meyer 287). Such an extreme attack on Catholicism prompted an armed and violent rebellion known as the Cristero Rebellion or the Cristiada of 1926-1929 which pitted thousands of Cristeros against the federal army and, by some estimates, led to the death of over 80,000 people before the Church and state reached an agreement (Becker 6). Sporadic violence persisted into the late 1930s, but in his 1940 presidential campaign, Manuel Ávila Camacho “declared himself a Catholic” and through this gesture, “confirmed the defeat of postrevolutionary antireligiosity” (Vaughn and Lewis 15).

Mena’s primary reason for using the aguador as the protagonist was most likely due to the figure’s social and religious meaning. Beezley provides a description of the important social role aguadores played in the community:

These aguadores served as the principal communications link in communities, as they made their rounds delivering water from the fountains and gossip from the neighbors. Described as latter-day descendants of water carriers from biblical times, the aguadores played an essential role in the community not simply for the water they delivered, but for the news they brought. The aguador was recognized as the one man in the neighborhood who knew everyone and what he was doing and why. The profession was called by some “the noblest part of proletarianism, and the boundary-line of vagabondism.” (106-107)

Aguadores were crucial to the social life of the community. As news bearers, they kept open the lines of communication among neighbors and neighborhoods. By the time Mena first published her story about Juan de Dios, the aguador had already been immortalized, caricatured, and parodied in Mexico by popular Mexican artists such as Jose Guadalupe Posada who drew “Simón el aguador” in calavera form. The aguador had also been portrayed as a cultural curiosity in nineteenth-century travel literature about Mexico. The aguador was a social fixture who served cultural and utilitarian needs; the importation of water pumps threatened the aguadores’ profession and the social practices that were sustained by the water carrier’s many “sociable trips.” Thus, the shift in labor practices signaled the demise of certain cultural figures and traditions as aguadores were being phased out of Mexican life and replaced by plumbing.

The aguador also symbolized a religious connection to the popular ritual of Judas burnings. The ritual was held at the end of Lent and involved burning effigies of Judas that often appeared in the parodic form of “some local bureaucrat, some wayward cleric, some pompous dude, or some nabob with up-turned nose” (4). According to Beezley, Judas burnings were held on Holy Saturday which was regarded as “the special day of water carriers” (107). Judas burnings were popular rituals yet were deemed by elites to be socially dangerous because they reversed social hierarchies, allowing the public to critique government and local officials in a satirical form in which the force of public disapproval and protest was mitigated by joviality. Beezley explains that the Díaz government “attempted to regulate these Judas burnings because the celebrations threatened disorder, mocked the establishment, and above all waved traditional Mexico in the face of bureaucrats dedicated to their particular notion of order and progress” (4). In this sense, the aguador represents both a religious figure and a symbol of social critique due to its relation to Judas burnings and the “critical parody of the establishment” that the ritual represented. Mena’s text

draws on this social and cultural figure of the aguador to portray the moral, social, and subversive value of Mexican Catholic practices in the social life of the Porfiriato. Juan de Dios represents Catholicism in both his devotion to the Virgin and his choice of occupation suggesting that we read his character as an assertion of Catholicism over the liberal Mexican state under the Porfiriato and the rising anticlericalism of the revolution that ousted Díaz, and as a preference for Mexican traditionalism over imported U.S. technology.

In the early 1920s, Mexico entered its postrevolutionary phase and recuperated earlier forms of anticlericalism and indigenismo in order to fashion its national identity. Rick Lopez shows the effect of indigenismo on Mexican cultural production which resonates with Mena who was an elite member of the Mexican diaspora in the U.S.: “Indianness, [political elites] argued, was the thread that would unite the diverse populations living within the territory of the Mexican Republic and distinguish Mexico among a global family of other nation-states. To be truly Mexican one was expected to be part Indian or to demonstrate concern for the valorization and redemption of the Mexican Indian as part of the nation. Those who rejected the country’s Indianness were publicly chastised for their foreignness and lack of nationalist zeal” (295). As an Indian, Juan is a symbol of Mexican modernism and the postrevolutionary movement of indigenismo.

But if Juan could be seen as a modernist primitive figure, similar to those depicted in murals by the likes of Diego Rivera, his Catholic faith was deemed, at certain points, by both US and Mexican groups as anti-modern. US writers often saw Catholicism as an impediment to progress. According to González, many of them described the religious tradition of crawling up the steps of Tepeyac to the Basilica de La Virgen de Guadalupe as an example of Catholicism’s “irrational religious practices” (65). González explains that “In seeking to convert Mexico, the Protestant

missionaries believed that they were also eliminating an obstacle to modernization, the Catholic Church, which promoted blind faith, mass ignorance, despotism, idolatry, and greed” (94). To these writers, Juan would presumably exemplify “an obstacle to modernization” because of his rejection of the water pump and his devotional trek to la Virgen’s shrine on his knees. But Juan’s Catholicism is also reflective of Mena’s probable opposition to the 1917 Constitution, the anticlericalism of several postrevolutionary presidencies, and to the devastating *Cristiada*.

In the YA version of Juan’s story, Mena’s critique of modernization takes on new meaning in both genre and context. As described earlier, the 1942 YA version appeared simultaneously with Disney’s trilogy at a time when Latin America became a focal point in U.S. children’s entertainment. We must now read the story of Juan’s rejection of technology in relation to the U.S. imperialist YA entertainment that so forcefully advocated U.S. military and economic intervention in Mexico.

The changing political and social context in Mexico further alters the meaning ascribed to Juan’s Catholicism. After President Ávila Camacho’s public embrace of Catholicism in 1940, “Catholics could once again feel free to express their Catholicity” (Redinger 10). The Church did not come to dominate the state; rather, its symbols and practices became a part of the rituals of rule and the construction of a postrevolutionary national identity. Vaughan and Lewis describe the state’s changing relationship to the Church:

The desacralization of religious culture and its resacralization as the art and culture of a national patrimony became an enormous resource for state and society alike as they experienced ever-deepening and uneven processes of modernization. Such a secular, ecumenical framework permitted the continued valorization and revalorization of indigenous cultures in their religious devotion and their prescientific communal practices. It condoned the proliferation of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in increasingly modern incarnations...(15-16).

By the time Mena’s 1942 YA book was published, Juan’s Catholic devotion registered

more as a patriotic commitment to Mexican nationalism. As la Virgen becomes a “resacralized” symbol of Mexican nationalism, Juan’s devotion to her transforms him into a patriot. He values Catholicism, culture, and the Mexican nation above US economic and cultural imperialism. Mena’s text thus embeds the Catholic faith, Indigenismo, and Mexican patriotism which collectively operate as a narrative of anti-imperialism and a critique of U.S. forms of modernization.

Mena offers a different representation of patriotic masculinity embodied in young men, one that uses religiosity and physical strength in non-aggressive or non-confrontational ways. Because of this, Juan shows a moral dimension that is distinct from imperial boyhood. While the authors of *Dave Darrin* and the *Broncho Rider Boys* seemed intent on linking masculinity to violent encounters with racialized Others, Mena presents an alternative use of physicality to demonstrate moral and physical strength without resorting to interpersonal acts of domination. Rather, Juan’s domination is self-inflicted; his career as an aguador and his climb to the shrine require commitment and self motivation. The violence that does surface in the text comes in the form of bodily pain, but even this is reinterpreted as moral devotion and strength and a form of personal salvation. Juan’s pain is a penance for the curse he laid on Tiburcio and for Tiburcio’s greed in taking both the money earned from the water pumps and in taking Dolores away from Juan. Pain is also represented in the form of labor exploitation.

Mena’s critique of modernization and the development narratives produced by both the U.S. and the anticlerical Mexican state is couched within religious allegory as she presents a parable about two brothers who play out a moral struggle over faith and patriotism. While Juan de Dios represents piety and Mexican traditionalism, Tiburcio embodies materialism and foreign values. Juan’s moral triumph over Tiburcio teaches readers that money leads to the corruption of faith and fidelity to the nation. In

choosing the “American force pumps,” Tiburcio rejects the traditional Mexican occupation of the aguador and its social meaning and loses the use of his body as a result. His mysterious paralysis is not so surprising if we consider the way similar tales of misfortune supposedly happened to those who desecrated the Church. Bantjes explains that “tales of sacred punishment” were part of an “important discursive repertoire” in which people involved in defanaticization campaigns were said to have suffered mysterious accidents, illnesses, or deaths (149). Such tales and rumors allowed Catholics to “resist dechristianization with the cultural tools at their disposal” (152) by using stories about the wrath of God to warn against antireligiosity or impiety.<sup>13</sup> Mena draws on these popular Mexican Catholic discursive practices to craft her tale and to underscore the dangers of anti-Catholicism and U.S. imperialism. Because Tiburcio covets Dolores, money, and U.S. technology, he is designated as the Judas figure in Mena’s story about greed and betrayal. For this reason, Juan de Dios is the ideal character to expiate the sins of greed because of the historical symbolism of the aguador and its relation to the popular ritual of Judas burnings.

The book’s resistance to US war maneuvering is embodied in Juan’s resistance to the water pump. Disney shows us a Mexico and Latin America frozen in time, arrested in its development and awaiting different forms of US intervention. Mena’s text reveals a segment of Mexico that refuses or at least laments the imposition of certain forms modernization as it fosters other forms of nationalist Mexican modernity. Contra Disney’s practice of representing the availability of Latin American abundance for U.S. consumption and development, Mena’s text projects the

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<sup>13</sup> Bantjes gives examples from the 1920s including one about “a colonel who decapitated the image of the Christ of Carácuaro [and] fell terribly ill but was not granted a peaceful death until he had begged for forgiveness” (149). In Pátzcuaro, workers who demolished a church to build a movie theater in its place “suffered mysterious fatal accidents.” In Sonora, a worker “who incinerated San Francisco Xavier in the furnace of the Sonora Brewery went mad, or was hit by a truck.” By telling such tales of “sacred punishment,” Catholics attributed shootings, drownings, and even volcano eruptions to sacrilegious behavior on the part of anticlericals and state officials.

imbrication of religion, race, nationalism, and masculinity in evolving forms of Mexican modernity. Furthermore, Mena's Mexican Catholicism does not serve the purposes of a war discourse that promotes capitalism, modernization, Mexican acceptance of US domination, a compliant Mexican labor pool, or the uncritical embrace of imported US products and technologies – all of which were crucial to the US wartime economy.

Her depiction of Juan reveals Mexican boyhood to be antithetical to the capitalist militarized boyhood found in imperialist YA fiction in which Anglo-American boys exhibit masculinity through violent encounters which assert their racial and national superiority. In Mena's book, Juan shows a patriotic masculinity expressed through religiosity that embraces an anti-capitalist identity in opposition to the Horatio Alger myth. We see an indigenous Mexican boyhood in which physicality is represented through strenuous labor and acts of sacrifice. We also see how US technology facilitates the Mexican elite in their exploitation of Tiburcio's labor showing how the Mexican juvenile's relationship to capitalism differs radically from the Hardy Boys who make Latin America safe for U.S. capital. Juan de Dios's actions question the value of modernity and technological progress and challenge what Dorfman calls the biologization of the nation. For, what does it mean when a "child" refuses to "grow up"?

### **Boy Heroes and Cold Warriors: Anti-Communism and the Symbolism of Chapultepec**

In 1947, President Harry Truman became the first U.S. president to make an official visit to Mexico.<sup>14</sup> Much of his public address in Mexico City given on March

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<sup>14</sup> According to David McCullough, Truman's official visit was "the first visit to Mexico ever by a President of the United States" (539). Upon landing, he was greeted by "hundreds of thousands of people" who "poured into the streets to see and cheer an American President for the first time" (542). Public esteem for him would rise after his stop at Chapultepec. However, Truman was apparently not the first President cognizant of Chapultepec's symbolic significance and its potential usefulness in strengthening U.S.-Mexican relations. President Roosevelt also had an interest in the battle at Chapultepec. In a letter dated October 26, 1942, to President Roosevelt, Acting Secretary of War

3, 1947, stressed the political creed of neighborliness and friendship among both nations:

The United States and Mexico are working together for the mutual benefit of their peoples and the peace of the world. You [President Miguel Alemán of Mexico] have made me feel, what I could not have doubted in any case, that I stand here, in the midst of the great people of Mexico, as a trusted friend and a welcome guest. To you and to the people of Mexico I bring a message of friendship and trust from the people of the United States. Though the road be long and wearisome that leads to a good neighborhood as wide as the world, we shall travel it together. Our two countries will not fail each other. (“Address”)

Truman’s speech unwittingly echoes the lyrics from the theme song of Disney’s *Three Caballeros* sung in unison by Donald Duck, Panchito the Mexican rooster, and Joe Carioca the Brazilian parrot: “Like brother to brother,/ We’re all for each other/ Like three caballeros/ Together we’ll stay./ Through fair or stormy weather/ We stand close together” (qtd. in Burton 22). At the risk of being overly facetious, I bring together both Truman’s address and Disney’s cartoon jingle in order to draw attention to the rather serious ways in which presidential speeches and children’s entertainment operated within a particular war discourse that had a grave impact on U.S.-Latin American relations. The nexus between political rhetoric and children’s popular culture helps explain why Mena’s YA fiction became relevant in the early years of the Cold War. At the end of his three-day visit, President Truman stopped by the Monument to the Children Heroes at Chapultepec Park to lay a wreath at its base. The

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Robert P. Patterson responds to “the suggestion made by the Under Secretary of State that certain flags captured by our troops in the battle of Chapultepec be returned to the Mexican Government as an expression of the fine relations which now exist between our two countries. Particular emphasis is placed on the desirability of returning those flags which were taken from the Cadets of the Mexican Military College who died in the defense of Chapultepec Castle during that battle.” Patterson writes that many of the Mexican flags held at the U.S. military academy at West Point “cannot be positively identified as having been captured in any particular battle.” But Patterson notes that the War Department would be willing to attain special congressional authorization to return any captured Mexican flags to Mexico if President Roosevelt so desired. See “Return of Captured Mexican Flags.”

gesture was a symbolic act of remorse and reconciliation for U.S. aggression during the U.S.-Mexican War. Mena's *Boy Heroes of Chapultepec: A Story of the Mexican War* (1953), published six years later, commemorates this symbolic moment as a concomitant act within a larger program of the Good Neighbor Policy.

Chapultepec was a multivalent site of social and national memory that many Mexicans held in high regard. Truman must have learned of its social significance and therefore may have felt compelled to acknowledge Mexico's profound reverence for the site. One of the last battles of the U.S.-Mexican war took place in Mexico City at the military academy housed in Chapultepec Castle. On September 13, 1847, U.S. troops led by General Winfield Scott attacked the castle which held six young military cadets, between the ages of 13 and 19, who refused to flee in what they deemed a dishonorable surrender. In the face of an overwhelming U.S. military victory, the six teens committed suicide by jumping from the castle battlements to their deaths. One of the boys was said to have wrapped himself in the Mexican flag. In Mexico, the six young men are revered as patriot martyrs and were immediately dubbed "Los Niños Héroes." They had several monuments erected in their honor and were also pictured on Mexican currency. The main monument to the fallen Niños Héroes is called El Altar a la Patria ("Altar to the Country") and "is honored according to protocol by almost every head of state on official business in Mexico" (Benjamin and Velasco Márquez 99).

Chapultepec Castle, then, was hallowed ground, made that way by successive Mexican governments who fostered the meaning of los Niños Héroes in the attempt to construct a ready symbol and key component of Mexican patriotism. The Mexican state consecrated the Boy Heroes, and U.S. presidents (beginning with Truman) followed its lead. Judging from Mexican newspaper headlines at the time, public skepticism may have been somewhat attenuated by Truman's symbolic gesture.

Truman biographer David McCullough describes Truman's political savvy in regard to winning Mexican popular support. Just as the visit to Mexico was Truman's idea, the brief trip to the Chapultepec memorial was also his: "he announced suddenly that he wished to make an unscheduled stop at Mexico City's historic Chapultepec Castle, where, with one simple, unheralded gesture, he did more to improve Mexican-American relations than had any President in a century. Within hours, as the word spread, he had become a hero" (542). At the site, he placed a floral wreath at the monument while "a contingent of blue-uniformed Mexican cadets stood at attention" and "wept silently." Mexican newspapers attempted to capture the momentous occasion in screaming headlines such as "Rendering Homage to the Heroes of '47, Truman Heals an Old National Wound Forever" (543). Quoting a "prominent Mexican engineer," one newspaper wrote: "One hundred years of misunderstanding and bitterness wiped out by one man in one minute. This is the best neighbor policy." The responses to Truman's act reflect both hyperbole as well as the extent of state indoctrination as the story of the Boy Heroes was taught to Mexicans everywhere. Truman's actions attempted to assuage wounds of historical memory over the loss of land and the sacrifice of Mexican youth. However, his act of magnanimity served a specific ideological purpose and required deliberate obfuscation and, one would imagine, some anxiety over potential charges of diplomatic duplicity.

As discussed in the previous section, Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy underscored the importance of Latin American support for U.S. ideological agendas. That support remained necessary in the immediate postwar years when anticommunism replaced antifascism as the premise for hemispheric alliance. Inter-American conferences had been convened ever since 1889, but the 1945 Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace held particular significance for the postwar era. There, conference delegates adopted the Act of Chapultepec named

after the conference location in Mexico City's Chapultepec Castle. The Act outlined the first postwar regional security alliance and stipulated that "invasion by armed forces of one state into the territory of another [...] shall constitute an act of aggression" ("Act" 174). In instances of invasion, state signatories to the Act would then consult on the course of action necessary "to prevent or repel aggression" (175). It is not clear whether U.S. delegates understood the irony of the Act's resolution against invasion and the conference's location and its history. However, Truman would have to confront that irony two years later during his visit to Chapultepec if he wanted to garner Mexican support against communism in the hemisphere.

The primary purpose of President Truman's visit was to solidify Mexico's allegiance to open markets and to the U.S.-led effort in the battle against communism.<sup>15</sup> In his public address to the Mexican people, Truman emphasized his intentions: "The Good Neighbor Policy specifically includes the Doctrine of Nonintervention. This assures each nation freedom for its own development. [...] Without it we could not exist as a community of good neighbors. [...] My own country will be faithful to the letter and to the spirit of that law" ("Address"). Many groups in Mexico were skeptical of such claims, especially on the eve of the centennial commemoration of the U.S.-Mexican War of 1848 (referred to in Mexico as the U.S. War of Intervention). A. Martínez Camberos's 1947 poem, "The New Invaders," written for the occasion of the centennial best exemplifies a segment of popular Mexican sentiment:

A century after  
General Taylor and General Scott,  
Come General Electric and General Motors,

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<sup>15</sup> In the same year of Truman's historic visit, the U.S. was making its presence felt in Mexico in another way. McPherson writes that in February 1947, Sears opened its first department store in Mexico (17). "In the first two weeks alone," Mexican shoppers "bought more than \$1 million" worth of merchandise.

As they are now known.  
Through every border and every port,  
And even by air,  
Comes the invasion.  
We all know very well,  
The traitors of the past,  
But do we know who are those of today? (qtd. in Bachelor 273).

Those who were dubious of U.S. intentions, it turns out, had a right to be. Truman's promise that the U.S. would uphold the Doctrine of Nonintervention was broken only one year after the publication of *Boy Heroes* when, in 1954, the C.I.A. planned a covert operation to overthrow the democratically-elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz. Alan McPherson explains that this U.S.-supported coup d'état was only part of a growing Latin American instability and that "by 1954 several of the democratizing regimes of the mid-1940s had reverted. Now, thirteen of twenty Latin American nations were dictatorships tied closely to Washington" (25). Therefore, it is against this backdrop of U.S. imperialism in Latin America that Mena's narrative of land loss and U.S. military invasion can best be understood.

The facts and outcome of the war make it an imperfect historical allegory for the Cold War context. Truman's evocation of Mexican defeat and U.S. invasion troubles the goal of inter-American unity he hoped to establish. His call for bilateral unity and friendship seems hollow given the U.S. abrogation of Mexican American and Mexican rights beginning with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and extending into the 1940s which witnessed the Zoot Suit riots (1943), continuing school segregation of Latino youth, abuse of Mexican worker rights under the Bracero Program, and other instances of racial discrimination.

Yet, Truman's strategic evocation of the Niños Héroes points to one of the most pervasive and recognizable strategies of war discourse: the resignification of previous wars for the purpose of waging new ones. Miriam Cooke identifies such acts of recall as part of the organizing effects of war discourse which attempt to align

current conditions with past realities: “To be at war entailed a remembering of what other wars had been so as to understand what was and would be happening and so as to know how to proceed” (29). Previous wars are resurrected and retold in order to provide an example of how to negotiate current conflicts and to justify military and diplomatic maneuvers. However, Patrick Deer argues that as war discourse attempts “to manage the contradictory times and spaces of the present” it also attempts to lay “claim to the future” (1). We see this move most clearly in Truman’s use of 1848 to smooth over rising U.S.-Latin American tensions regarding U.S. hemispheric (and global) dominance. Another way to put it is that Truman used the past conflict to “manage” immediate postwar concerns and to lay claim to a communist-free future.

Surprisingly, such ploys were not uncommon within the U.S. and Mexican film industries at the time. Seth Fein describes how the 1939 Warner Brothers release of *Juarez* attempted to link the nineteenth-century Mexican battle against French invasion with the twentieth-century war against Axis incursion into the hemisphere. Fein points out that the film failed miserably among Latin American audiences who rejected “Hollywood’s co-optation and perversion of Mexican history” and the “film’s attempt to sell a liberal version of U.S. imperialism as a means to enlist Mexico in an unfolding world conflict that did not threaten the nation’s sovereignty” (171-72). In 1943, the Mexican film industry – mostly under the economic control of the U.S. – produced its own retelling of the *juarista* victory in the film *¡Mexicanos al grito de guerra!, historia del himno nacional*. This film was more favorably received, but raises questions about the Mexican state’s own ideological agenda in recasting Mexican resistance to foreign invasion. Fein convincingly argues that the Mexican film not only “propagandize[s] a nationalist, rather than Warner Bros.’ internationalist, rationale for supporting the Allied cause,” but also uses “historical emplotment” to “transcend all political opposition” to President Manuel Ávila Camacho’s

administration and “to legitimize the state’s claim to embody the nation” (173).

I have gone on at some length about these two films because they bring into focus the relationship between cultural production and war discourse. More importantly, they highlight how competing state militarisms can actually become complementary in their goal of opposing the Axis powers. With this in mind, I turn now to Mena’s *Boy Heroes* and its location within such a terrain of competing war discourses that use the example of patriotic sacrifice to different ends. Truman used the history of Chapultepec as part of a U.S.-led imperative against communism; but for many Mexicans, the site solidifies an indelible history of U.S. imperialism that has had a strong hand in shaping Mexican national identity.

In his attempt to downplay U.S. imperialism and build hemispheric unity around the theme of “defending against invaders,” Truman provided the occasion for Mena to reinscribe the historical narrative of the U.S.-Mexican War as she focuses on Mexican resistance to Manifest Destiny. However, while exposing the history of U.S. empire, she also challenges notions of a democratic Mexican state. Her text critiques the Mexican elite’s complicity with U.S. imperialism, casting light on internal racial and class exploitation and challenging the myth of a unified and egalitarian Mexican nation. Mexican militarism memorializes patriotic sacrifice to the state; its commemoration of los Niños Héroes attempts to socialize the Mexican public into accepting state authority and to instantiate the state’s status as an object worthy of death. Mena’s text takes part in this Mexican war discourse that builds reverence for Mexican nationalism – a truly odd stance in a text intended for U.S. youth. Nevertheless, I argue that in addition to her critique of U.S. imperialism, her text challenges the ideological deployment of patriotic suicide and hence the status of the Mexican nation-state by making an indigenous peasant boy the protagonist of the book rather than the Niños Héroes themselves.

### **Militarized Mexican Boyhood and Nationalist Narratives**

The book begins with an introduction by editor Cecile Matschat and consulting editor Carl Carmer who provide a brief outline of the US-Mexican War and the resulting purchase of Mexican territory. Their opening lines suggest a particular interpretation of the war that rejects claims of U.S. imperialism: “Some historians have claimed that the war of 1846 – 1848 with Mexico is a ‘foul blot upon our national honor.’ They contend that the war was fomented by slaveholders interested only in acquiring new territory. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth” (vii). They go on to explain President Polk’s continued efforts “to negotiate for peace” in the face of Mexican diplomatic recalcitrance. After dubious dealings with General Santa Anna, both nations entered into peace negotiations in which “Mexico was given almost as generous terms as before the Americans had stormed and won their capital” (vii). These introductory remarks interpret the war as being justified rather than a “foul blot” within US national memory while emphasizing the Polk administration’s fair dealings with a conquered state. Readers are encouraged to view the war and the resulting annexation of land as the result of treaty negotiations between consenting parties without the taint of coercion. The interpretation leads into a brief mention of Truman’s visit to Chapultepec Park “to lay a wreath on the monument to the six Mexican cadets” (viii). The editors then end their introduction by stating: “This book is the story of that heroic defense, honored alike by Americans everywhere and their neighbors south of the border.” Here, the editors mimic Truman’s sentiment about the Boy Heroes when he responded to reporters’ questions about why he visited the site: “Brave men don’t belong to any one country. I respect bravery wherever I see it” (qtd. in McCullough 543). For Matschat and Carmer, what matters in the story of the Boy Heroes is their bravery in the face of invasion, not the national origin of the actual invaders themselves. The event of the Boy Heroes’ suicide is abstracted to its furthest

possible extent so that U.S. youth might be able to read the text of U.S. invasion without feeling implicated in an imperial national past or making connections between the past and similar machinations in the present. Working within Matschat and Carmer's imposed narrative frame of the U.S.-Mexican War and within the fragile political moment of the early 1950s, Mena strikes a delicate balance of not overtly criticizing the U.S. invasion of Mexico while nevertheless providing an account of Mexican resistance to U.S. imperialism. Like much of her earlier work, Mena also chastises the ruling Mexican elite and their complicity in Mexico's economic and social instability.

The protagonist of *Boy Heroes* is, ironically, not one of the Niños Héroes; rather, he is a fourteen-year old Indian peasant named Pedro who works on Don Luis Ramos Blanco's hacienda. Pedro is described as a boy who, since the age of ten years, "had been doing man's work around the hacienda, with never a complaint about anything. His father was forever reminding him to look upon Don Luis as his lord and master, because he had been born on his hacienda and owed the master loyalty all his life" (5). However, as he grows older, Pedro views himself as a slave and longs to leave the hacienda with his father. The only member of Don Luis's family that Pedro holds in high esteem is the young son, Domingo, who will eventually become one of the Niños Héroes. The book begins with Domingo's return from the Chapultepec military academy to warn his parents that the Americans plan to attack the hacienda. When U.S. General Zachary Taylor is close to the hacienda, Don Luis and his family flee the property leaving the Indian peasant workers to face possible death while protecting the hacienda. Eventually, the U.S. Army will occupy the hacienda while preparing for their confrontation with Santa Anna's forces nearby.

Mena's treatment of the U.S. invasion remains noticeably ambiguous and actually challenges the editorial introduction's insistence on U.S. anti-imperialism.

When Domingo tells his parents about the threat of U.S. attack, he shows them two clippings from a Mexican and U.S. newspaper that narrate U.S. intent. The Mexican newspaper describes the U.S. Army as being “made up of Texas adventurers who have no country, no political or religious creed, no moral principles and there is nothing to fear from such people” (19). This veiled reference to the Texas Rangers draws attention to the immoral character of the group in a way that later Chicana and Chicano writers would expand upon. The article from *The Washington News* also presents the U.S. as a dominating force: “We must teach the Mexicans we are superior to them in energy as well as military skill” (20). Both accounts combined reveal an aggressive U.S. power whose claims to superiority are related to the use of violent paramilitary groups like the Texas Rangers. When news of the imminent invasion spreads, the peasants’ reactions further underscore the perceived character of U.S. rapacity as one couple shouts “The Yanquis are coming to raid Buena Vista, and Dios help us!” (44).

Only a few hundred peasants out of thousands decide to stay; the majority head for the hills in search of safety. Mena’s story then breaks down and takes an improbable turn when Pedro, as self-appointed leader of the remaining peasants, attempts to calm down the rising fear of raiding Yanquis by convincing the group that “the Americans are on the side of the workers!” (50). This odd recuperation of the U.S. Army is narratively unsuccessful, but it does suggest Mena’s attempt to reconcile the Mexican view of U.S. imperialism with the anti-imperial framework of the editorial introduction by recasting the imperial invaders as challengers to the Mexican exploitation of its own underclass. But even in the revisionist characterization of a pro-labor U.S. Army, the text maintains its skepticism of U.S. forces. After describing his intent to meet with the Army leaders, Pedro says, “I believe the Americans are good people but...” (67). The sentence suggestively trails into an ellipsis as Gaspar,

Pedro's father, interjects, "But if the Yanquis begin shooting and try to burn the hacienda before you have time to speak, and when you speak they do not listen to you, what then?" "Then we shall defend the hacienda!" exclaims Pedro in a moment of renewed patriotism that highlights his conditional support for the invading army.

The book's middle section focuses on the internal workings of the U.S. Army as it prepares for attacks by Santa Anna's forces. In this sequence, Mena continues her subtle opposition to the book's editorial frame by presenting Zachary Taylor's views on the war's origins. Matschat and Carmer insist that the U.S. engagement was justified and that Mexico had been the actual aggressors: "Texas had been an independent Republic for nine years before its annexation by the United States. Yet Mexico claimed this annexation as a cause for war" (vii). Mena rebuts the tone of their view by incorporating Zachary Taylor, one of the war's acclaimed leaders, as an authoritative voice that reiterates Mexico's position. While speaking with one of his favorite sergeants about the war's beginning, Taylor states, "As a matter of fact, the war actually began on April 25, 1845, when Congress agreed to the annexation of Texas" (60-61). He goes on to say, "It was when President Polk ordered troops to the frontier and put me in command of the American troops there. [...] Well, the Mexicans thought it was an invasion of their country and the Mexican General Santa Anna started playing his little tricks" (61). Taylor's words implicate U.S. policy and the diplomatic moves that reflected imperialist intent which corroborates the Mexican view of the war. He locates the war's origins in Congress's annexation of Texas which repeats the book's editorial view, yet mimics the Mexican interpretation of Texas annexation as an act of war. Furthermore, Taylor implicates himself in prompting a Mexican military response as he established a fort in the contested territory between the Nueces and Río Bravo Rivers. He views his own actions from the perspective of the Mexicans and implicitly suggests that the Mexicans were justified in their reaction

to the U.S. presence (“the Mexicans thought it was an invasion of their country”). Readers are presented with a muddled and contradictory picture of the war and its causes. Expecting to read about a justified U.S. invasion of Mexico as laid out in the editorial introduction, readers are instead treated to an ambiguous depiction that makes room for the possibility that the Mexican defensive reaction to U.S. policy was fair and reasonable.

Mena’s ultimate condemnation of U.S. invasion and the imperialism that, I argue, she detected in President Truman’s visit to Chapultepec, is the patriotic deaths of the six cadets. The last two chapters of the book provide a detailed description of Domingo’s final days in the Castle. Earlier in the plot we learn that Pedro had been rewarded for his help in scouting for Taylor and was sent with other troops to Mexico City to assist with General Winfield Scott’s invasion of the capital. Once in the capital, Pedro decides to abandon his spot in the U.S. rear guard and help his young master Domingo who was still in Chapultepec Castle. As the U.S. forces get closer to Chapultepec, Domingo and a small group of cadets, who will become immortalized as los Niños Héroes, decide to stay in the towers to defend what they can of the castle. While Domingo sends Pedro to deliver a message outside the castle, U.S. forces begin bombarding. Domingo, who had been momentarily separated from his fellow cadets, soon finds their bodies in a barricaded room: “The young cadets were on the floor, their pistols near each one. They had shot themselves!” (179). Being the lone survivor of the group, Domingo also decides to take his own life. From the ground below outside of the castle, Pedro watches “Domingo deliberately walk to the very edge of the parapet, wrap the Mexican flag tighter around his body, then look down at the precipice below for a quick moment and throw himself off crying at the top of his voice: ‘*Viva México!* Long live Mexico!’” (181).

The tragedy and horror of multiple suicides, especially of youngsters, provides

the most biting condemnation of the U.S. military invasion that one could raise and actually has analogues in other Latin American anti-colonial struggles. Although Cuba's long history of insurrection against Spanish and later U.S.-supported forces is quite different from the war of 1848, Louis Pérez's analysis of patriotic sacrifice in Cuba resonates with the death of the Niños Héroes. He argues that patriotic suicide pervades Cuban history and that it often had a shaming effect on invaders: "Self-immolation served to discredit iniquitous rule through the enactment of the claim of a superior morality conveyed in the willingness to die" (335). We already know that the war of 1848 had been shrouded in shame and perceived, by some, to be a "foul blot upon our national honor."<sup>16</sup> *Boy Heroes* reverses the YA imperialist stories of "white boys" who defeat Mexican men. In *Boy Heroes*, Mexican boys challenge white men, and although the boys commit suicide, they win the moral high ground. The joint suicide of the Boy Heroes adds to the sense of historical shame, yet oddly allows for later leaders like President Truman to use that shame selectively. That is, Truman's

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<sup>16</sup> The battle at Chapultepec might also be a source of shame for another reason. Michael G. Connaughton explains that at the same battle in which the Boy Heroes died, the U.S. Army hung a group of 48 Irish immigrant soldiers, known as the San Patricios, for deserting the U.S. military. He writes: "At daybreak on 13 September 1847 the condemned men were led to the gallows on a ridge overlooking the final battle of the war at Chapultepec Castle [...]. Colonel William Harney, the U.S. executioner, insisted that their hanging would only take place once he sighted the U.S. Army flag flying over the castle. The men waited agonizingly for hours in the baking heat with nooses around the necks [...]. Finally at 9:30 a.m. their former comrades flew the Stars and Stripes signaling the final defeat of the Mexican forces. Colonel Harney gave the order and the San Patricios entered Mexican folklore." Every year at the Plaza San Jacinto, the San Patricios are commemorated by "the Mexican government and military." In this sense, the San Patricios are akin to the Boy Heroes as both groups of defenders are annually celebrated as martyrs for anti-imperialism. Sam Chamberlain's 1867 painting captures the image of the condemned men on the gallows with the castle in the background. Shelley Streeby analyzes the nineteenth-century U.S. dime novels that also depict the hanging of the San Patricios (110-111). However, elements of the U.S. military culture have commemorated the U.S. victory in a different way. On display at the Old Guard Museum in Fort Myer, Virginia, is the Chapultepec Baton "made of wood from the original flagstaff that in 1847 stood in front of the cathedral" in Mexico City (see "Chapultepec Baton"). It was given to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry unit to commemorate its role in the 1848 battle and "especially the successful bayonet assault it made upon the fortress of Chapultepec." The Baton "is traditionally taken out of its case and used in ceremonies for the regiment's Organization Day." On a final note, the U.S. victory at Chapultepec led to the founding of the "Aztec Club," a social organization founded by and for U.S. military members in October 1847 and which still exists today. For more on this see the Aztec Club's impressive website.

commemoration of the Boy Heroes expresses remorse over their deaths, but not necessarily remorse for U.S. invasion. Nevertheless, by focusing on the desperate measures taken by the six cadets, Mena shows young U.S. readers a more humanitarian portrayal of Mexican resistance that, in many ways, resonated with the contemporary Latin American anti-imperial struggles of the 1950s.

While Truman strategically expressed national guilt over the incident itself and not the war, Mexican militarism used the memory of the Boy Heroes for its own nationalist agendas. Again, the Cuban example is relevant to a discussion of what K. Lynn Stoner calls “national suicide” (72). She argues that the Cuban state memorialized female heroism and sacrifice, in particular, to inspire patriotic commitment: “By demonstrating a collective will to fight to the death for independence, publicists restored some national self-respect and reminded Cubans that they were capable of an unyielding militancy, if only they would refer to the past” (76). Like Cuban publicists, the Mexican state consecrated the Boy Heroes’ act of patriotic suicide and turned it into a source of national pride as well as a palliative for the pain entailed in acknowledging massive defeat. More importantly, patriotism requires instruction and examples. In Mexico, the Boy Heroes are an example of patriotic suicide or sacrifice meant to serve as an injunction for sustained commitment to the state. That is, they are symbols of the state and are thus used to galvanize patriotic sentiment and provide examples for others to emulate if not in deed, then in spirit.

Memorialization of the Boy Heroes is the Mexican state’s retroactive attempt to promote national unity, but Mena’s text shows that disunity is precisely what led to their suicides in the first place. With Pedro as the protagonist and Domingo a minor character (indeed, the Boy Heroes appear primarily in the last two of the book’s eleven chapters), the text foregrounds Mexico’s history of exploiting indigenous

communities. In the telling of Pedro's story, Mena exposes the "foul blot" that mars Mexico's national memory. The text reframes the war or, rather, embeds internal class and racial struggle within the larger foreign invasion. The hacienda at Buena Vista becomes metonymic of the Mexican state in which Don Luis represents the elite and Pedro the indigenous underclass. Don Luis flees for safety from U.S. forces and takes for granted his workers' loyalty when he says, "Those Yanquis [...] don't know our Indians! Our millions of patriots who are ready to die for their country!" (19). As described earlier, these presumed patriots shift allegiance from the hacienda to the invaders because of the injustice they suffer. For example, a crowd of peasant women exhorts Pedro to voice their grievance to the U.S. Army: "Tell them, tell the Yanquis how every year at harvesttime [sic] Don Luis promised to give us a little piece of ground for ourselves, but after the harvest he gave us nothing, nothing" (51). Pedro's followers applaud his resistance to exploitation when he tells them, "I've heard that the Americans are on the side of the workers and against the masters. I am a Mexican and love my country, but I am a worker and we here all are workers [...] I am for fighting against the cruel masters on the side of the Americans!" (52). Again, readers are subjected to a conflicted story of national allegiance as Pedro's freedom and that of his fellow workers is dependent upon U.S. invasion, yet the U.S. Army is not necessarily glorified as it would be in the previously discussed imperialist YA fiction. Furthermore, Mena's version of *los Niños Héroes* challenges Mexican militarism because it questions the idea of a Mexican state that is worth dying for. The story of patriotic suicide is intended to calcify the bonds between state and citizen-subject. Yet, the fact that Pedro and the Indian workers reject the Mexican call to arms shows how the Mexican state has a tenuous hold on the allegiance of its people. For Pedro, the state's treatment of indigenous Mexicans makes it unworthy of his sacrifice.

Pedro occupies the dual position of traitor and patriot by simultaneously aiding

the enemy and championing Mexican workers' rights. He is also equally as brave and patriotic as his rich master, Domingo. For example, Pedro faces death early in the book when Don Luis sends a pack of dogs and search party on a manhunt to find him after he had runaway from home. Don Luis heard rumors that Pedro had expressed dissatisfaction with his station in life and tells Gaspar to discipline his treacherous son: "I suspect him to be on the side of the workers against his master. Now, go and teach that son of yours to do his duty" (22). Gaspar, who is the overseer of the hacienda, later viciously slaps Pedro who refuses to beg for the master's forgiveness. This scene crystallizes the link between the patriarchal state and the patriarchal family and shows how Pedro questions the authority of the father and the state by rejecting racial and class hierarchies. That is, dissolution of the family precedes the dissolution of the state and suggests how both institutions rely on each other and the internal hierarchies within each institution that maintain order and unity.

Pedro's status as a teenage boy makes his defiance all the more impressive, yet it is significant to note that age plays a large factor in the adulation of the Boy Heroes. From the U.S. point of view, it is easier to honor the death of children than the death of patriotic adults who wield more power and represent a more dangerous, mature foe that merits little or no sympathy. From the Mexican point of view, their patriotic suicide represented what Rolando Romero calls "a suitable metaphor for national innocence" (368). The age discrepancy between boy defenders and adult invaders also emphasizes asymmetrical power relations which makes the U.S. seem like a ruthless aggressor who would fight against anyone, even children. The Boy Heroes are symbolically potent because they are "boys" which makes it easy for both the Mexican state and the U.S. to honor them and to simultaneously dismiss them. That is, their suicide can be read as an act of rashness or impetuous youthful behavior that lacks the kind of mature, rational, and effective conduct that states usually demand from their

citizens.

On the other hand, boys are vigorous, youthful, but also obedient and therefore serve as the perfect representations of citizenship. Just as boys must rely on their parents for guidance and support, citizens must rely on the state for direction and instruction. In *Boy Heroes*, Pedro's encounter with Gaspar and Don Luis suggests that boys were still subject to domination as they were expected to obey both their elders and the state. In this sense, the actual Boy Heroes also occupied a subordinate position within the patriarchal state's hierarchy at the time of their deaths even if they were being groomed to become its eventual leaders. Drawing such parallels between the parent-child relationship and the social contract between the citizen and the state naturalizes the latter. *Boy Heroes*, however, uses the example of a child's defiance against his father and patrón to challenge the presumed equivalence between citizen and patriot.

Pedro is a threat to the Mexican hierarchy despite his youth. His vision of an egalitarian Mexican future includes one in which the indigenous workers topple their oppressors. Mena presents a wonderful scene that anticipates the Mexican revolution as Pedro watches the peasants take over the hacienda: "Pedro welcomed the transformation of the elegant and forbidden Manor House into an Indian worker's home, nearly every inch of which was now covered by straw mats over Don Luis's precious Spanish carpets" (63).

In their analysis of MGM's 1950 film version of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, Jerry Phillips and Ian Wojcik-Andrews describe "the vital role of popular culture in the ceaseless ideological struggle to uphold the imperial order" (70). They ask how US children are implicated in the historical narratives of empire building and how adult cultural producers of films or books "organize history for children in a way that serves the present moment" (76). The specific Cold War moment that prompted Truman's

visit to Mexico and his praise for los Niños Héroes reveals the state's practice of "organizing history" in such a way that US aggression is obscured and excused by recognizing the bravery of young men. Mena's text attempts to provide an alternative historical narrative of US empire told from the perspective of the resistant and the colonized.

Early Chicano literary critics did not fully acknowledge Mena's deftness at engaging with political and social ideologies as she negotiated racial stereotypes and competing nationalisms within the heightened tensions of the postwar era. For example, Raymund Paredes characterizes her as an individual who lacked sufficient courage as a writer: "Mena's portrayals are ultimately obsequious, and if one can appreciate the weight of popular attitudes on Mena's consciousness, one can also say that a braver, more perceptive writer would have confronted the life of her culture more forcefully" (85). Paredes's comments are important because, as one of the first critics to analyze Mena's work, his negative descriptions not only influenced subsequent critiques, but also discouraged others from pursuing a more in-depth study of her stories (Leal 153). In the 1990s, a growing body of literary analysis, much of it conducted through a Chicana feminist lens, produced perceptive readings of Mena's work that exposed the narrative complexity of her stories and the various strategies she deployed under "the weight of popular attitudes" that prevailed in her time.<sup>17</sup>

One could further argue that Mena's *Boy Heroes* forms an important link to the

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<sup>17</sup> Paredes's critiques went largely uncontested until the late 1990s when, in 1998 alone, two articles and one book were published that challenged his early reading of Mena's work. They include Leticia Magda Garza-Falcon's *Gente Decente* and articles written by Tiffany Ana López, and Gloria Louise Velásquez Treviño. The previous year saw the publication of Mena's 13 short stories collected with a critical and comprehensive introduction by Amy Doherty. For other sources that offer new interpretations of Mena's work see Charlotte Rich and Edward Simmen. Also, Arte Público's series "Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage" consistently publishes new scholarship on Mena in its edited volumes.

kind of “forceful” Chicano literary aesthetics that Paredes values. Chicano activist Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s landmark poem “I Am Joaquín: an Epic Poem, 1967,” is considered to be one of the most galvanizing literary works produced during the Chicano movimiento because of its defiant, militant tone. The poem constructs Chicano cultural identity by drawing parallels between the figure named “Joaquin” and figures from Mexican history including the Boy Heroes:

I jumped from the tower of Chapultepec  
Into the sea of fame;  
My country’s flag  
My burial shroud;  
With Los Niños,  
Whose pride and courage  
Could not surrender  
With indignity  
Their country’s flag  
To strangers ... in their land. (24)

Gonzales’s reference to the fallen boys reveals the importance of Mexican history to Chicana/o cultural identity and the reach of national symbols of patriotism that, in this case, span national borders and centuries. The poem expresses Chicana/o protest to a history of U.S. dominance experienced by generations of Mexican Americans and Chicanas/os in the U.S. since 1848. Mena’s *Boy Heroes* is the precursor to Gonzales’s epic poem but portrays a more critical assessment of the Boy Heroes that acknowledges their ideological deployment by both Mexico and the United States. Instead of using the Boy Heroes to construct a cultural nationalist sentiment that only glorifies their suicidal defiance, Mena’s text exposes the racism of the Mexican state. Nevertheless, both Mena’s and Gonzales’s literary representations register the profundity of the historical wound of a war that has shaped Mexican and Chicana/o cultural production.

*Boy Heroes* does more than commemorate the dead; rather, it engages with the tradition of imperialist YA fiction and shows how war discourse promotes certain

ideals of masculinity and practices of empire as well as rearticulates previous conflicts to cohere with changing ideological positions and state formations. Mena's YA fiction exposes the relationship between state formation and children's entertainment and the way U.S.-Mexican relations operate under unequal systems of power that continue to exist in the present. Her prescience is especially evident when we remember Vice President Al Gore's 1993 visit to Mexico and his address given on the eve of NAFTA. In an odd, palimpsest-like gesture, he commemorated Truman for commemorating the Niños Héroes:

For at one point during his visit, Harry Truman drove to Chapultepec Castle, and walked to the stone monument honoring Los Niños Héroes – the brave, child heroes of the Mexican-American War, who had died a hundred years before. There, he laid a floral wreath, a gesture of respect symbolizing his belief that the United States must acknowledge the heartache of our past in order to enter the future. I saw a glimpse of that future when I arrived last night and looked into the bright shining faces of 100 Mexican children of this generation. (“Toward a Western Hemisphere Community”)

This complex layering of historical moments uses the familiar and successful practice of appropriating the memorialized bodies of boys (and, now, the invocation of Mexican children) to suture diverse national agendas. Four years later when U.S.-Mexican relations faced difficulties, the Boy Heroes were once again called for duty as President Bill Clinton paid a visit to their shrine to shore up Mexican popular support for U.S. policies (“Clinton to Honor”). Both acts of recognition are contemporary examples of the symbolic value of the Boy Heroes and the attempt to use their patriotic suicide to obscure newer forms of U.S. domination and elite Mexican complicity. Like the currency that once donned their images, the Boy Heroes have been easily exchanged among nation-states in the service of patriotism, nationalism, and anti-imperialism or hemispheric unity, anti-communism, and neoliberalism. Yet this homage to the martyred boys by both U.S. and Mexican officials elides the existence of opposition groups like the Zapatistas who opposed

NAFTA and were struggling against the Mexican government's own history of oppressing its indigenous populations and its failures to uphold democratic values.

### **Conclusion**

The construction and marketing of Mexicanness within children's entertainment was an important ideological ground in the first half of the twentieth century because it afforded cultural producers and state formations the opportunity to maneuver historical conflict, racial identity, imperialism, and militarized masculinity in politically useful ways. For example, the same year of *Boy Heroes's* publication, Disney Studios introduced their initial version of the Speedy Gonzalez character in the 1953 cartoon *Cat-Tails for Two*. The cartoon featured a lascivious, racialized revolutionary rat that contrasted with the wholesome and asexual Mickey and Minnie Mouse characters that would have their own club and TV series in the following years.<sup>18</sup> William Nericcio suggests that Speedy's regional wardrobe marks him as a veracruzano (a person from Veracruz, Mexico) and evokes memories of the 1914 U.S. invasion of Mexico (128). In this sense, Speedy is part of a larger imperialist YA image repertoire along with the stories of Anglo-American racial and military superiority in Veracruz found in *Dave Darrin* and *The Broncho Rider Boys*. Speedy not only joined Donald Duck in perpetuating the goals of empire that were bolstered by U.S. militarism, but also generated profits for the Disney Company.

The N.E.A.'s refusal to fund Subcomandante Marcos's children's book reminds us that the ideological battle that is waged at the level of the state, continues in its attempt to "maneuver" children's popular culture. The state formation constructs

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<sup>18</sup> Eric Zolov writes about the origins and eventual popularity of the "Speedy Gonzales" character: "Speedy Gonzalez makes his first appearance in 1953 (*Cat-Tails for Two*), where he is depicted as 'browner, lankier and rattier than his eventual incarnation, he wears no hat and has lots of imperfect teeth – one of them gold.' Following this pilot cartoon, Speedy's character lay dormant for two years until he was revived in 1955...Between 1934 and 1953, Mexico served as the narrative backdrop for a total of only six cartoons. Between 1953 and 1969, however, there are 45 Speedy Gonzalez cartoons alone" (266).

its “common discursive framework” and attempts to silence those texts which challenge state militarisms. But speaking in the language generated by war discourse itself, María Cristina Mena was able to articulate a Mexican and Mexican American perspective of anti-imperialism and a simultaneous critique of the Mexican nation-state and its oppression of indigenous peoples. Almost forty years later, Subcomandante Marcos would do the same. By appropriating the moniker of Speedy Gonzalez to sign the communiqués he pens on behalf of the Zapatistas, Marcos resignified one of the most denigrating images of Mexicanness within U.S. children’s popular culture to speak back to U.S. hegemony and to speak out against the Mexican oppression of indigenous communities.

Mena’s texts may be written for YA audiences, but the themes she explores such as the economic “progress narrative” inherent in developmentalism are quite sophisticated. Developmentalism’s evolutionist discourse persists in more recent neoliberal policy as Jorge Castañeda’s analysis of NAFTA suggests. He describes how many in the US believed that “[i]nvestment from abroad would enable the [Mexican] economy to grow, while introducing new technology and greater efficiency and modernizing Mexican society” (55). Mena’s *The Water-Carrier’s Secret* is a fictional account that reminds us of how a segment of Mexican society in the past was skeptical of imported US technology and how, then, as now, indigenous groups were viewed as impediments to economic modernization.

Mena’s critique of postrevolutionary developmentalism and the Zapatistas’ opposition to NAFTA sets the stage for my final chapter on Latinas/os and neoliberal militarism. In addition to free trade, neoliberal economic policies in the US and Mexico include privatization, the deregulation of industries, and in Mexico, an increase in foreign investment. Another key element of neoliberal policy is the reduction of government spending on social services. In the following chapter, I focus

on this tenet of neoliberalism in the US and examine how the disinvestment in social welfare correlates to an increase in the military enlistment of people of color. My focus then moves to more general effects of domestic neoliberal policies on Latinas/os – citizens and immigrants – as they negotiate what I call neoliberal militarism.

## **CHAPTER 4: REPRESENTING THE NATION: LATINAS/OS AND U.S. NEOLIBERAL MILITARISM**

In 1949, Beatrice Longoria sought help from Mexican American activists to battle the discrimination that prevented her from holding a wake at the Three Rivers funeral home for her deceased husband, Felix Longoria, a decorated war hero who had posthumously earned a Bronze Star. Beatrice contacted WWII veteran Héctor P. García who led the activist charge against racial discrimination in Three Rivers, Texas, by forming the American G.I. Forum, a powerful group of Latino veterans. For Beatrice and a growing group of outraged Latino veterans and civilians around the country, Longoria's "body and memory deserved better treatment than the undertaker in his hometown gave them" (Carroll 5). By organizing an effective public media campaign and appealing to local politician Lyndon B. Johnson, activists transformed the incident into a national controversy that highlighted discrimination and the plight of Latinos. The controversy occurred during a period of intense efforts by the US government to minimize racial discrimination through the Good Neighbor Commission. Also, the US had been in the process of renegotiating the Bracero Program with a Mexican government that looked unfavorably on the treatment of Mexican nationals (179). The Longoria controversy thus exacerbated an already tense and delicate period of foreign relations which eventually worked to the Longoria family's advantage in seeking justice on Felix's behalf. On February 16, 1949, Longoria was interred at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

As the Longoria case suggests, military service does not automatically endow individual Latino soldiers or their communities with equal rights and protections. Military service has often been the ideal expression of US citizenship for the obvious fact that soldiers carry out the policies of the state, but also for the way the white male

body of the ideal soldier represents somatic understandings of national identity. Felix Longoria, as the deceased decorated Latino war hero, complicated the long standing tradition that figured white militarized masculinity as dominant national icon. Male soldiering has always been a racialized practice that relies on regulating images which deflect from preferred expressions of national power. For example, in her analysis of the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898, Amy Kaplan shows how Theodore Roosevelt's symbolic construction of a group of white US soldiers known as the Rough Riders, were projected as embodiments of American nationhood while the African American soldiers who served along side them challenged such narratives of white dominance ("Romancing" 234). Kaplan argues that the racialized soldier has often portrayed a threat to nationalist representations because US war discourse is often predicated on representational hierarchies in which the white male body stands in for the national body politic. The Longoria case not only upset hierarchically-arranged masculinities, but more importantly, exposed racist segregationist practices that would continue to disrupt postwar US society.

Because military service is revered in American culture, Latino veterans were able to accrue some political capital and social status as citizen-soldiers who faced death for their country. The symbolic value of the military uniform was critical to the emergence of Mexican American civil rights activism in which Latinos have used military service as a leverage to make political demands. As one 1945 LULAC newsletter put it, Mexican American soldiers "have learned equality through the uniformity of uniforms [...] through the distribution of ranks, awards, and citations based on merit and the similarity of hardships, pain, and horror" (Qtd. in Kells, 48). During and after WW2, Latino servicemen used their record of service to contest racism and segregation, and, as Lorena Oropeza explains, through Latino

organizations like the American GI Forum and LULAC, “Mexican Americans launched an invigorated campaign to secure equal rights that included staging public protests, running for office, and suing for equal rights in court” (13). It was their claim to sameness that grounded their demand for equal justice.

The culture’s hypocritical stance on celebrating democracy’s supremacy while dishonoring those who died in service of national defense was tenable for only so long before the U.S. State Department felt it necessary to intercede on behalf of Longoria’s family. The contingencies of politics and war made it necessary to alter representational hierarchies and to reconfigure racial discourses to accommodate state and military objectives. Burying Longoria in Arlington National Cemetery, the state bestowed its official posthumous recognition of Latino service in a manner that reaffirmed its prestige and reputation for fairness while seemingly attributing segregationist practices to discrete local officials thereby provincializing what were actually national racist policies.

The Felix Longoria case and the activism it gave rise to is a critical moment in the formation of Chicana/o political activism and the emergence of an intensified embrace of militarized masculinity. Influential Latino veteran groups nurtured cultural notions of gender as well as community responses to war. Such groups promoted a kind of militarized masculinity or, what Mariscal calls “warrior patriotism” that drew on a cultural legacy based on masculinist Mexican nationalism in which “masculine behavior must include a readiness to die for ‘la patria’” (Mariscal, *Aztlán*, 27). This cultural ethos was embedded within Chicano collective consciousness through song, social practices, and family rituals and is still detectable today although the political and social issues have obviously changed from a post-WWII context.

In order to service current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, state and military officials have appealed to Latina/o recruits through an array of cultural formations including standard magazine recruitment advertisements. Images of Latina/o soldiers are now more prominent and prevalent which raises new questions about Latina/o soldiers' representational capacity and the state's self-serving logic of promoting the racialized and gendered bodies of its national defense forces. While the Latina/o soldier's status and role in the US military has changed, so has the military itself. In the context of two protracted wars with no foreseeable end in sight, waning popular support, and low recruitment numbers, the US military has resorted to cost-cutting tactics and free market practices to secure the personnel and resources it needs to complete state mandates. This military re-organization and reorientation constitutes the emergence of what I call "neoliberal militarism" in which a capitalist, neoliberal logic actually transforms traditional military practices, policies, and protocol. It is important to understand neoliberalism in all its permutations including the ways in which neoliberal policies often push working-class communities into enlistment and how both women and men are impacted by the state's disinvestment in critical social services. This is only one reason why the military provides a critical investigatory site where we can examine how neoliberalism's economic rationality transforms ontologies by influencing individual behaviors, self-perceptions, and relational practices. Examining Latina/o soldiers in the US military gives us insight into the construction of idealized neoliberal citizens and the significant implications for the meaning of gender, citizenship, and civic engagement.

### **Military Rationalization and Neoliberal Recruitment Strategies**

According to population projections from the U.S. Census Bureau, by the year 2050, Latinos will comprise one quarter of the U.S. population. Military planners and

civilian demographers are already aware of such changes and their implication for military recruitment. In a 2003 report, the Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment reported that in the next two decades, Latinos will significantly change the “ethnic composition of the youth population”: “Based on recent fertility patterns, the percentage of young adults who are Hispanic, of whom the largest subgroup is of Mexican origin, will increase substantially” (Sackett and Mavor 3).<sup>1</sup> In response, the U.S. military has proved resilient by accommodating itself to demographic changes. Mariscal describes how Latinas/os are targeted by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and why it is no accident that Los Angeles and San Antonio are the Army’s “top two recruiting battalion areas” (Mariscal, “Homeland,” 46). Not only are young Latinos “being targeted at about twice their rate in the general population,” but Latino immigrants are also using military service as a pathway to citizenship as a result of President George W. Bush’s 2002 Executive Order which “expedite[s] the naturalization process for non-citizens in the U.S. military.” Such reinvigorated recruitment efforts reflect the Army’s goal “to boost Latino enlistment from 10 to 22 percent by the year 2025” (Amoruso).

Although previous surveys show declining support for the Iraq War within Latino communities, Latino enlistment continues to increase in response to a variety of factors, most notably, limited economic opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey track how military spending, cuts in social programs, and a contracting

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment was established in 1999 by the National Academy of Sciences at the request of the Department of Defense (see Sackett and Mavor, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> According to a December 2006 phone survey done by the Pew Hispanic Center, 62% of native-born Latinos were in favor of withdrawing troops from Iraq (an increase from 46% in 2005). 68% of foreign-born Latinos in the US favored troop withdrawal (up from 55% in 2005) (3).

job market have resulted in “high unemployment for young working-class and poor African Americans and Latinos”: “Their main ‘choices’ are to join the military or to work in the informal economy, often ending up in jails and prisons. In the United States, military recruitment and the criminalization of people of color are two aspects of increasing global economic integration” (3). In addition, a struggling economy further limits options for social mobility and financial stability. Maryam Roberts notes that the current economic recession which began in 2007 may be responsible for the fact that “all four branches of the armed forces met their recruiting goals for the federal fiscal year, as 185,000 men and women signed up for service. This was the highest number of people joining since 2003.”

The turn to labor market rationale is part of an evolving military reorientation that began in the 1970s. Within three months of his inauguration, Richard Nixon formed the President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force in response to his campaign pledge to end the draft (Segal 36). Referred to as the Gates Commission, after its chairman former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, the panel of military officials and academics convened throughout 1969 and early 1970 to examine ways to end conscription. The Commission recommended the formation of an all-volunteer force that would attract enlistees by “making entry-level military compensation competitive with civilian wages” which would theoretically maintain the military’s racial composition and high-caliber personnel (38). The all-volunteer force came into effect in 1973 after the conclusion of the Viet Nam War. The elimination of the draft was initially successful in attracting personnel due to a struggling US economy that resulted in high levels of youth unemployment. A large portion of the enlistees were unemployed young black men and women of all races who may have been influenced by the women’s movement “to regard the military as a

channel for mobility.” As a result of the military’s new market orientation, Segal suggests that since its inception, the all-volunteer force “became increasingly dependent on the poor, the black, and, to a lesser extent, women.”

While Segal locates the beginning of the military’s market rationality in the formation of the all-volunteer force, Leonard Feldman points to an earlier form of market logic that goes back as far as the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> He describes the practice of substitution in which

conscription is combined with a provision allowing the conscripted to pay another person to stand in his place. Although substitution and buyout provisions were a product of the feudal order [...], the practices persisted into the nineteenth century, with justifications concerning the utility of elites serving their country in more valuable ways than with their bodies in battle. (Feldman 200)

Substitution was practiced during the Civil War as conscripts in the Union army were given the option to hire their replacement. Eventually, the state attempted to regulate the practice rather than ban it in order to democratize the process for all male conscripts. By setting a “flat fee commutation provision,” legislators believed that non-elite conscripts would have the opportunity to find even more economically disadvantaged men to take their place in the army. Feldman’s larger purpose in excavating the history of substitution is to underscore the various ways it continues to operate today. Although the practice of hiring a replacement no longer exists, the idea that economically disadvantaged men and women enlist for financial motives is still a present concern in today’s modern army. In addition to the members of the all-

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<sup>3</sup> Feldman points to an even earlier source of the substitute soldier concept in the work of the seventeenth-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Feldman cites the following passage from chapter 21 of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*: “Upon this ground a man that is commanded as a soldier to fight against the enemy, though the sovereign have right enough to punish his refusal with death, may nevertheless in many cases refuse without injustice, as when he substituteth a sufficient soldier in his place; for in this case he deserteth not the service of the commonwealth” (Feldman 201).

volunteer force that fight under the auspices of the US government, substitute soldiers also include “an estimated 25,000 private armed security personnel, contracting in a ‘public/private partnership’ with the US government, and substituting for the US military in such activities as guarding US compounds in Iraq” (211).

Feldman’s analysis casts the concept of voluntarism in a different light. For the substitute soldier, enlistment is framed within a practice of economic exchange in a way that resonates with the self-interested soldiers of the all-volunteer force whose induction into military service rests on the economic and social benefits they will receive. Feldman astutely argues that the existence of the substitute soldier presupposes the ways in which “economic inequality and economic vulnerability” have always informed some individuals’ military service (203). In this sense, the substitute soldier complicates the notion of voluntarism by exposing its economic undergirding. As Hector Amaya points out, thousands of individuals from poor and working-class circumstances continue to negotiate the fallacy of military voluntarism.

Amaya asks us to consider how

the volunteer army is, at best, a lazy idea, if not an outright fantasy. This notion fails to acknowledge the social, economic, and cultural pressures the poor and non-whites disproportionately face to make the risks of service palatable. [...] The idea of voluntarism is a cornerstone of illiberalism in America that not only fools most into believing that we have an army of choice, but also that propagates the idea of the citizen-soldier while hiding the racist and classist way in which it operates. (“Dying American” 18)

Feldman’s analysis of the substitute soldier further contextualizes and historicizes Amaya’s critique of voluntarism. Both writers demonstrate the underside of neoliberal militarism which the Gates Commission did not anticipate when it recommended the formation of an all-volunteer force. Or, perhaps the Gates Commission did rely on the fact that unemployment and poverty will always exist and thus provide the economic incentive to induce the “voluntary” enlistment of the economically marginalized.

The military's shift to "a labor-market model of military manpower and a human-relations orientation to management" required the adoption of civilian and industrial employment strategies including a reconfiguration of military compensation, training, and other workers' benefits (Segal 69). No longer did the military primarily promote a traditional collectivist and patriotic ethos which defined military service "as something other than a civilian job." Instead the rationalized military came to reflect more general neoliberal trends and behaviors within civilian life which privileged individualism and commercialism at the expense of traditional notions of national pride and civic obligation. Later in this chapter, I return to the issue of individualism within the military and the debate it engenders among military academics who view self-interested behavior as a threat to military cohesion and as a subversion of the idealized citizen-soldier. For now, it is enough to describe the military's rationalization and the ways in which this labor-market rationale pervades other aspects of military operations.

The military's increased emphasis on service as occupation rather than as citizen obligation appears most starkly in its recruitment manuals in which the military utilizes market logic and rhetoric to recruit economically disadvantaged youth. Due to various legislative amendments, public high schools and college and university campuses are economically coerced into allowing military recruiters access to students on campus.<sup>4</sup> Market rhetoric is noticeable in the United States Army Recruiting

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<sup>4</sup> The Solomon Amendment which passed in 1996 makes it possible for postsecondary institutions to be denied access to federal funding if they disallow military recruitment on their campuses. The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 otherwise known as the No Child Left Behind Act includes Section 9528 which permits military recruiters to gain access to confidential student information. The Hutchinson Amendment which took effect in 2002 grants recruiters access to public secondary schools (School Recruiting Program Handbook 9-10).

Command's *School Recruiting Program Handbook* (2004) which gives specific details to army recruiters on how to conduct recruitment in public high schools and colleges and universities. The School Recruitment Program (SRP) is "designed to assist recruiters in penetrating their school market" (2). By following the SRP, recruiters can enjoy almost "total market penetration" as they identify potential high school students eligible for military service. In economic (and gendered) terms, the handbook represents high schools as "markets" where students become customers and commodities. The manual further provides useful tips such as: "Remember, first to contact, first to contract" (3). It encourages recruiters to take the initiative upon first meeting unsuspecting students: "Don't get the impression that you have to contact seniors three times before you ask them to join the Army. If you can make an appointment for a sales presentation on the first contact, then do so. Remember, that you will probably need to tailor your sales message to meet the stage of the SY [senior year]" (3). Recruiters take on the role of salespeople selling wares and manipulating their "sales message" to potential consumers, a disturbing strategy that minimizes the life-altering prospect of enlistment and the very real possibilities of death and injury.

The handbook also lays out instructions on how take advantage of the "college recruiting market" which "is an excellent source of potential Army enlistments due to the high percentage of students who drop out of college, particularly during the first 2 years" (8). Assessing the reasons for high attrition rates at different stages in the academic year, the handbook advises recruiters on when and how to approach vulnerable students who are on the verge of dropping out of school: "Students dropout during this time [first year of college] because they are homesick, have to work, are out of money, or are in academic difficulty" (9). Not only does the handbook illustrate

a range of predatory strategies, but it also reveals the extent to which market logic and rhetoric has suffused current recruitment practices.

This logic is also present in magazine advertisements that emphasize the military's occupational opportunities and benefits in order to entice potential enlistees who might have economic motives for considering military service. A recent Marine advertisement in *Latino University* (November 2007) illustrates the military's discursive strategies as it attempts to recruit Latino men. It depicts a Latino youth who stands firm in his dress uniform. With chin up, eyes determined, and posture erect, he exudes strength and confidence. We can identify the soldier as Latino based on his brown skin tone and the caption located to the right of the image which begins with the Spanish word "Herencia" ("Heritage") and continues in English. With a few simple, declarative sentences, the caption enumerates the would-be recruit's reasons for enlisting:

HERENCIA. It's in your family. Like your father and grandfather, you're a committed and focused man. You take fierce pride in being a leader. You are determined to achieve success in life. That's why you have pursued a college education. That's why you belong in the United States Marine Corps. With a bachelor's degree, you can become an officer in the Marine Corps. Only a few are strong enough to meet our challenge. Only a few have the physical and mental might to excel in the Corps. We think you can be one of us.

Here, the components that go into the Latino soldier's subject formation are in bold display: "herencia" (respect for family legacies); masculinity ("like your father and grandfather"); class (upward mobility through college education); and citizenship (national belonging through military service).

Besides these crucial markers of identification and individuality, the rest of the advertisement, with its emptied background and the familiar uniform of a Marine, engulf the youth in anonymity and community. That is, his personal background loses

significance once he dons the uniform of the nation and becomes a soldier for the state. Furthermore, he becomes one of “the few, the proud” who qualify to be included in a selective military community where exclusivity suggests the superlative qualities of its members. After all, not everyone can become a Marine. Ironically, the “uniformity of the uniform” also hides a more troubling “herencia.” The Marine uniform represents the ambiguous and complex incorporation of Chicana/o and Mexican immigrant soldiers because the history of the US invasion of Mexico is ritually embroidered into the Marine uniform itself. According to Marine history, “the scarlet stripe on the trouser leg is the ‘blood stripe’ which was earned in ‘the halls of Montezuma’ during the Mexican War” (“Dress Blues”). Thus, Mexican defeat in 1848 becomes part of institutional history and is embedded in the uniform worn by servicemen and women.

The ad’s multiple appeals to the Latino recruit draw on familiar recruitment strategies that emphasize pecuniary or occupational interests. “Herencia” uses market logic or what Michael Shapiro describes as a utilitarian appeal to enlistees. The utilitarian appeal proposes “a match between what are projected as the recruit’s personal career objectives and the ways that the military unit can provide resources and a context for achieving them” (107). US Army recruitment ads, as well as those from other branches, emphasize “free job training” or “financial aid for college later.” In addition to utilitarian appeals, military advertisers promote an ontological appeal by depicting “the military unit as a place in which the self can be realized or perfected.” In this kind of appeal, “What is offered is a way to *be* rather than the fulfillment of preferences or the acquisition of valued things.” The “Herencia” ad utilizes both codes as it offers the Latino recruit a chance to become an officer while suggesting that the military will provide him with the opportunity for personal growth where he

can demonstrate his “fierce pride in being a leader.” However, it is clear that the utilitarian appeal overshadows the ontological one and emphasizes the military’s muting of patriotic sentiments in favor of self-interested motives. As a consequence, the pragmatic appeal to financial needs and educational aspirations denaturalizes the military by suggesting that enlistees do not have a natural affinity for military service. Rather, they need to be persuaded, bargained with, and coaxed into serving. The ad avoids a heavy-handed appeal to patriotic sensibilities which would expose the ad as a blatant ideological appeal “too clear to be believed” (Barthes 129). “Herencia” does not presume the Latino’s national allegiance; rather, the military gains credibility by presenting itself as a practical, accommodating institution.

However, it is clear that the ad relies on more than economic self-interest and educational aspirations. Rather, the reference to the recruit’s “father and grandfather” draws on family honor and a valued form of masculinity. The ad makes appeals to family belonging and cultural understandings of gender as the word “herencia” signals an emotional injunction to would-be recruits who value their family and its legacy. It naturalizes military service by highlighting familial masculine traditions of service: “Like your father and grandfather, you’re a committed and focused man.” The military is presented as a male rite of passage that naturalizes the military as a social space for personal growth, gender construction, and cultural affirmation. To choose an alternative path from service, as this ad suggests, would be to disrespect one’s family herencia and to fall short of the specific militarized masculinity that has been passed down through generations of men. In this sense, the Marine ad is more effective in tapping into sentiments and values supposedly held by young Latino men. The ad further reveals how Marine advertisers did their homework. Latino pride in past generations of veterans works to the military’s advantage in recruiting successive

ones. Thus, the “Herencia” ad signals the state’s understanding of ethnic honor as it attempts to capitalize on cultural values and family traditions.

While “Herencia” foregrounds a family heritage of military service for men, the ad in *Hispanic Magazine* (June/July 2008) by [TodayMilitary.com](http://TodayMilitary.com) deploys family rhetoric in more complicated ways. The ad features a 1x2 inch black and white photo of a Latina mother and her young daughters as they stand in a kitchen preparing a meal. With slightly upraised eyebrows, the mother turns to her oldest daughter who awaits her mother’s response. In the center of the page, a caption contextualizes the photo: “Your daughter wants to enlist in the Military. You want her to go to college. Is this the end of the conversation? Or the beginning?” At the bottom right-hand corner, a smaller caption reads: “Make it a two-way conversation. Learn more at [todaymilitary.com](http://todaymilitary.com).”

Unlike “Herencia,” the “Your Daughter” ad directly addresses the parent of the would-be recruit in the context of the feminized domestic space of the family kitchen. Intervening in the personal conversation between mother and daughter, the omniscient voice of the military offers counsel to a perplexed mother: “Is this the end of the conversation? Or the beginning? Make it a two-way conversation.” Perhaps more surprising than the fact that the military feels qualified to give parental advice, is that the Latina mother is the subject being addressed. The issue of enlistment is staged as a dialogue between mother and daughter, the father (presuming there is one) is absent from the discussion.

However, military appeals to mothers are quite common. Enloe argues that the militarization of motherhood has always been a crucial component of recruitment strategies: “Insofar as women are presumed to be the chief caretakers of sons and insofar as political leaders wanting to raise armies need to persuade mothers to offer

up their sons to military service, women will be encouraged to see their maternal duty as a public duty and to release their sons (and sometimes daughters) for some higher good” (*Maneuvers* 11). Lorraine Bayard de Volo argues that militaries often employ maternal symbolism and direct appeals to mothers in order to mitigate “potential maternal opposition” to war (241). By creating constructs such as the “good mother,” military planners attempt to “draft” mothers into supporting the war effort just as the military asks them to give up their sons and daughters to war making. Mothers who resist militarized motherhood are labeled “unpatriotic mothers” (242). Their failure to condone warfare through the willing sacrifice of their child’s life is deemed as a “selfish” expression that indicates an “excessive attachment to their sons [and daughters].” However, coopting maternal support for war has always been a risky endeavor because motherhood carries a powerful symbolic weight within the cultural imaginary. Motherhood can easily become a threat to militarism if it is not controlled. For example, Sara Ruddick argues that the *mater dolorosa* is an effective symbol that antiwar groups often use to oppose war (215). Given the potential value and threat of maternal imagery, the military’s appeal to motherhood must be carefully measured.

The subdued graphics in the “Your daughter” ad might make it a weak recruitment device that would fail to persuade most mothers. However, the ad’s effectiveness is not necessarily in its design lay-out, but in the war culture in which it circulates. It does not exist in a social vacuum; rather, it relies on a culture that valorizes the military. Thus, even if a mother remained unconvinced that the military is a viable option for her daughter, the pressure to consider it may be overwhelming: “if just government officials alone articulated these militarized maternalist expectations, a mother may not find it all that hard to resist them. It is the confluence of militarized family dynamics, a militarized popular culture, and a militarized state that makes the myths of militarized motherhood so potent” (Enloe *Maneuvers* 254)

Enloe further argues that militarism encourages “women to imagine that being a loyal female member of a family is synonymous with being a patriot. For women in wartime, the nation becomes a family” (*Morning* 175). The question remains if the Latina mothers who see the “Your daughter” advertisement will be convinced that their motherhood is tied to the state’s needs or whether they will view their parenthood as a reflection of their own citizenship. Will the Latina mother be a “good mother”? To the extent that the Latina mother does not ask about the violence in which her daughter will participate (and be subjected to), the Latina mother will model the military’s preferred behavior towards war.

Although the military tolerates female recruits, it has no intention of altering its masculinist and misogynist structure. This reality presents the military with the unique challenge of confronting the very gender norms that militarism seeks to maintain. In order to convince the Latina mother that the military is a prudent option for her daughter, the ad reverts to a utilitarian narrative which is further embedded in a larger narrative of female autonomy. Like the “Herencia” ad, the military acknowledges and accommodates the financial needs of enlistees. In this case, the military presents itself as a solution to the mother’s financial straits which further legitimates the state’s power and influence in her family and depoliticizes the choice of enlisting. Moreover, the ad suggests that college and the military are not mutually exclusive, but that both are institutions who have equal commitments to fostering personal growth and responsible citizens. With the rising cost of tuition nation-wide, the military’s financial appeal no doubt resonates with many families. But the insidious nature of the appeal lies in the way the military takes advantage of a family’s genuine desire to send their child to college. George Lipsitz asserts that the state “borrows legitimacy and commands obligation by insinuating itself into family and gender roles” (76). By offering itself as a solution to their financial burdens, the

military intervenes in difficult family dilemmas as parents and children struggle to improve their lives.

By “civilianizing” itself through its persistent and oftentimes subtle presence in daily life, the military presents itself as a politically neutral and respectable institution where women can advance their careers. This “civilianizing” process is crucial to female recruitment because connections between femininity and the military are fraught with complications not encountered in male recruitment. While militarism supposedly upholds masculine values, it threatens normative notions of femininity. Dominant heteronormative social views often regard women who want to join the military with some level of suspicion: Why does she want to be surrounded by men? Is she sexually promiscuous? Will she be vulnerable to rape and harassment? Will she be able to guard her sexual “purity”? Is she a lesbian? If a mother had any lingering concern about the way the military might affect the specific cultural notions of Latina femininity that she has instilled in her daughter, the “Your daughter” ad carefully allays these hesitations by emphasizing the military as a respectable career choice. The ad’s decidedly noticeable lack of military insignia deemphasizes the fact that it is promoting a male-dominated institution of soldiering and warfare and instead presents it as a career enhancement opportunity. This narrative of professionalism is crucial to current recruitment strategies particularly at a time when the beleaguered armed forces are struggling to fill its ranks. The idea is that if female recruits and their mothers (and fathers) see the military as a respectable option that does not cast doubts about the character of the woman entering it, then more women may be willing or even eager to enlist. Professionalism, Enloe reminds us, is a highly valued status “in an American society in which formal education and publicly conferred licensing have come to be seen as guarantors of social respect and economic success” (*Morning* 220).

Thus, professionalism through officer training is prominently featured in the “Herencia” ad. Professionalism for servicewomen is equally prized and further provides “a protective shield” from questions about women’s character and their motives for enlisting by suggesting that they are career-oriented rather than “morally loose” or “suspiciously manly” (220). The notion of professional female soldiering makes the military a plausible option for mothers to consider as they contemplate their daughters’ futures. Without knowing how the military’s internal hierarchies function or how women’s professional advancement is limited by occupational barriers, a mother might believe that the military will provide her daughter with equal opportunities for success.

### **Welfare and Warfare: Contradictory and Complementary Neoliberal Agendas**

I turn now to the 1990s in order to trace the significant factors that shaped current forms of neoliberal militarism and its effects on Latinas and Latinos. By examining social divestment policies and the resultant rise of female enlistment during the 1990s, I provide the context for a reading of Elena Rodriguez’s *Peacetime: Spirit of the Eagle* (1997) which gives insight into past and present Chicana enlistment and how neoliberal practices in both civilian and military life inform Latina soldiering. For the women in the novel, the army is an option of last resort. For example, the novel’s other Chicana soldier, Adela Canela, had been previously arrested for damaging property and enlisted after being given an ultimatum by the court: “The judge told me either I’d join the military or go to jail. You can guess which I picked” (153). For the Native American soldier, Morningstar, the army was the most viable option on the reservation for earning desperately needed income. She tells Medrano that she enlisted in order to help support her sister’s children after her sister’s husband had abandoned the family. Medrano joined the army in order to earn money for

college and to help provide for her family. The fact that she does not have any children of her own to support astonishes the army recruiter who initially inducts her:

“No kids at all?” His eyes showed surprise.

“No. Is the Army only taking people with kids these days?”

“No,” he said laughing, “Of course not. I was just surprised that a Mexican American female like yourself doesn’t...”

“Not all of us have ten kids, you know,” Medrano said with her voice dripping resentment. (4-5)

Medrano’s exchange with the incredulous recruiter emphasizes the common stereotypes about fertile Chicanas that circulate within society. More importantly, it highlights the issue of child support which compels many women to seek income and benefits by enlisting in the military. As more and more women seek ways of providing for their families in the face of limited alternatives, the military finds a steady and inexhaustible pool of potential enlistees who join the military because, as Morningstar puts it, “poverty is not fun” (126).

Rodriguez’s depiction of women who enlist in the service as a result of dire economic straits provides the occasion to more closely examine the link between economic policies and military recruitment. Feminist antimilitarists and war scholars have produced a proliferation of incisive critiques on militarism’s interdependence with neoliberal capitalism and the particular effects on women in all areas of the global economy. Zillah Eisenstein debunks the notion of women’s enlistment as a sign of the military’s egalitarian and democratic constitution. Rather, she argues that women’s enlistment signals the constriction of democracy “if democracy means choice and opportunity” (“Resexing” 30). High unemployment and limited options for social mobility and advancement curtail women’s choices and makes the military appear to be a viable solution to economic stratification: “The military – given this militarist stage of global capital – is a main arena where working- and middle-class

women can find paid work. These women are looking for ways to get medical and housing benefits, educational resources, career training.” Ilene Rose Feinman further argues that women turn to enlistment to offset the “loss of unionized industrial-sector employment to overseas manufacturing’s highly exploitative labor practices, and the proliferation of part-time service-sector jobs” which leave “little in the way of quality occupation and prospects for women’s work” (72).

The social divestment programs of the 1990s which include the Personal Responsibility Act of 1995 and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) comprise particular neoliberal policies that, perhaps in an unforeseen way, doubled as incentive for military enlistment. Barbara Sutton and Julie Novkov explain how such neoliberal policies “undermined public education, reduced the quality of available jobs, and encouraged the severe underfunding of social programs” while military spending, on the other hand, became a budgetary priority (18-19). These critical unmet social needs became “military recruiters’ selling points” as they touted the military’s ability to compensate for the cut in social services. Thus, Sutton and Novkov argue that neoliberalism militarizes civilians “by bolstering inequalities that push people into the military as a means of economic survival and social mobility.”

These analyses suggest a movement of poor, working-class and people of color from welfare to warfare as the dismantling of the welfare state in the 1990s correlated with the increasing numbers of military enlistment. However, David Segal’s study suggests that welfare and the military are not antithetical; rather, they have much in common as both state institutions offer critical social services and benefits to their respective constituents. Segal argues that it is possible to locate the beginnings of the American welfare state to Civil War pension programs and World War I mortgage

assistance programs (8). Through these early programs and later legislation such as the first GI Bill of Rights, officially called the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, the military established massive benefit systems for soldiers and veterans (and eventually for dependents of soldiers and veterans) that influenced the construction of non-military social welfare programs. Through what I am calling "military welfare," the government subsidized the social advancement of returning soldiers and veterans through "a massive program of education and training for veterans at government expense; government-guaranteed loans for homes, farms, and businesses; a system of job counseling and placement; and medical-care benefits that have served as the basis for the largest hospital system in the world" (88).

Military welfare comprised a large percentage of the federal budget as it attempted to accommodate the multiple economic needs of active and retired military personnel. Segal notes that during the 1950s, military welfare took up over 7 percent of the federal budget and continued to exceed "nonveteran federal expenditures for health, education, housing, and community development into the 1960s" (90). After the 1960s, government spending on nonveteran welfare increased apace. Segal's research on the evolution of veterans' programs helps us identify the state's fluid spending priorities and neoliberalism's ironic trajectory. While military welfare consumed a larger portion of the federal budget until the 1960s, non-military welfare surpassed it after the 1960s. By the 1990s, neoliberal policies eviscerated non-military welfare which facilitated the enlistment of large numbers of working-class and people of color that joined the armed forces in order to reap the benefits of military welfare.

While Segal traces the rise of the US welfare state to veterans' programs, he emphasizes the negative consequence that non-military welfare programs have had on the concept of citizenship. He notes that in the 1960s, the term "benefits" was legally

replaced with “entitlements” in a move that emphasized the idea of citizenship rights over obligations: “The rationalization of citizenship rights in the welfare state virtually stripped the conception of citizenship of any notion of obligations that accompanied the rights” (8-9). If soldiers and veterans received welfare, that welfare was construed as benefits in return for service rendered due either to conscription or civic obligation. Thus, society and the government did not denigrate soldiers by attaching to them the stigma that accompanies non-military welfare:

Whereas the clients of other welfare institutions were regarded as less than full citizens, military personnel were regarded as good citizens. Clients of other institutions who were taken care of because they were outside the productive economy were looked down upon, whereas military personnel were cloaked in the social honor that derived from their association with the military institution and the myths that legitimized it. Because benefits that were received – whether housing, medical care, education, or disability insurance – were regarded as earned entitlements in exchange for the fulfillment of a citizenship obligation, the soldier was not looked down upon for accepting them” (Segal 85-86).

Segal’s seemingly objective description oddly simplifies the distinction between good citizens and bad. By neglecting (or refusing) to interrogate the ways in which social designations are made, Segal’s description underemphasizes the racialized and gendered nature of the military and civilian employment. The idea that non-military “clients” of social welfare are “outside the productive economy” downplays the ways in which racialized and patriarchal capitalism has actively sought to limit employment for white women and people of color *inside* the “productive economy.” Furthermore, his description leaves out the possibility that military personnel who receive welfare are not stigmatized because they are predominantly white men. As Jacqui Alexander reminds us, “race, class, and gender have historically operated as powerful markers to distinguish between the undeserving poor” and other groups who receive entitlements such as the “deserving elderly” (223). In this case, the deserving male soldier enjoys

full citizenship as he is “cloaked in the social honor” bestowed to soldiers. Finally, Segal’s account makes no mention of the ways in which the majority of white men who received military welfare were already in a better position to secure employment than most men and women of color. Such benefits only strengthened white men’s privileged social status and expanded their range of opportunities.

Uncovering this cyclical movement from warfare to welfare to warfare enables a more informative analysis of the ways in which many enlistees from disadvantaged backgrounds negotiate between limited social options. When one institution of social welfare is closed off, people consider alternative kinds of institutional support. As Alexander explains, “The military has been positioned as the new citizenship school for women and men removed from public assistance, thereby making the downsizing of the social wage the corollary to the increases in the military budget whose expenditures finance both the war abroad and strategies against ‘domestic terrorism’ at home” (233).

### **Race, Gender, and the Latina Soldier in Elena Rodriguez’s *Peacetime***

The increasing enlistment of women in the military after the dismantling of the welfare state coincided with a series of highly publicized and controversial events that focused on women and the military in the 1990s. As female soldiers became increasingly visible in media coverage of the 1992 Persian Gulf War, military feminists and their sympathizers debated social conservative opponents on the issue of women in combat. The increased participation of servicewomen and dual-career military couples during the Gulf War was due, in part, to recruitment strategies during the 1980s that targeted women “to compensate for the decline in the pool in eligible young men” who were “high school graduates, drug-free, [and] non felons” (Enloe *Morning* 178) But the increased attention on female soldiers was also the result of

milestones and scandals that exposed the military's deep-rooted masculinist and misogynistic culture. In August 1991, Congress passed legislation that ended "the formal ban on women flying combat airplanes" (223). One month later, elite navy carrier pilots known as "tailhookers" held what would become a notorious convention at a Las Vegas hotel where female naval personnel and female civilians were sexually assaulted and harassed as they were "forced to run the tailhookers' frightening and humiliating hotel corridor gauntlet" (196). In 1996, a legal challenge forced the Citadel, an "all-male public military college in South Carolina" to admit Shannon Faulkner as its first female student (Burke 103).

Elena Rodríguez's novel *Peacetime: Spirit of the Eagle* (1997) appeared toward the end of this significant decade where female soldiering garnered high public attention. Rodríguez herself was one of many women who enlisted and filled the state's peacetime military personnel. Her autobiographically-inspired novel provides insight into what military life was like for a working-class Chicana in boot camp through the fictionalized account of Private Medrano. Rodríguez's novel best exemplifies the destabilizing presence of the racialized female soldier in the multiracial military and how particular political and social claims are made from within the military's limiting purview.

Perhaps the only work of literature that focuses on a Latina soldier, the text reconfigures the militarized space of an Army boot camp to assert Chicana cultural identity and female empowerment within a patriarchal institution predicated on racial, class, and gender hierarchies. By limiting the time and setting of the novel to Medrano's seven-week stay at boot camp, Rodríguez focuses on the process of military induction through uniforms, training, and regulations that standardize the physical appearances that take place at boot camp. The boot camp's function is to

sever the recruits' ties to civilian life and to eradicate a subject's individuality as he or she is subsumed into the military's corporate identity: "Boot camp transforms recruits from jocks and nerds, boys from the 'hood and women from the suburbs, into knockoffs of model soldiers by stripping them of their clothes, shaving off their hair, forbidding them their accustomed freedoms, and instilling military discipline in them as second nature" (Burke 13). If, as Carol Burke asserts, the military boot camp is a site of fundamental transformation where the civilian becomes a soldier, Rodriguez's novel demonstrates how that transformation is fraught with difficulties for Latinas and other female enlistees.

In the early pages of the novel, Rodriguez alludes to the visual and ideological value of sartorial uniformity and reiterates what Melani McAlister calls "military multiculturalism" in which the military presents itself as an example of one of America's progressive race-blind institutions. After looking around at her peers, Medrano comments on the equalizing effect of the Army uniform among the racially diverse platoon of women:

She walked into the barracks, and the variety of races hit her. She was still in awe of the different races represented in the Army. Sergeant Acosta had told her something that struck Medrano in a special way. He said there was only one color in the Army and that was green. Differences among the races were not as pronounced as soon as soldiers put on their uniforms, since all dressed the same. They were going through the same experience. So at that time, they seemed more alike than different. (12-13)

The scene evokes the crucial function of military multiculturalism which is to simultaneously recognize and sublimate racial difference. That is, racial difference is not completely obscured but is strategically celebrated. The Army heralds ethnic identity in order to reinscribe its value, to transform the racialized and gendered soldier into a defender of the nation. The Army's "variety of races" signals the plurality of American society where racial tensions and economic disparities are

subsumed by service to the state. The military thus becomes a model of egalitarianism for a society still divided along racial lines. The passage reminds us that as part of the multiracial platoon, Medrano herself will ostensibly transcend her racial identity by donning the Army green.

But the novel expands the notion of military multiculturalism by taking on a military feminist perspective that articulates how race, class, and gender are linked. Burke reminds us that the process of transformation that boot camp instates also relies on culturally familiar gender codes. She describes how drill instructors denigrate recruits by “infantilizing” them and, “if the recruits are male, feminiz[ing] them through the kind of humiliation designed to impress on them that to be degraded is to be female (‘Come on, ladies’)” (13). Throughout the novel, Rodríguez puts pressure on the military’s limited embrace of gender difference and its misogynistic practices. She depicts the Fort Jackson base in South Carolina as the site for Medrano’s bildungsroman, the place where she learns to test her own physical fortitude and build emotional strength. Medrano struggles to endure seven weeks of intensive training with her platoon members that include Anglo, Latina, African American and Native American women from working class communities who enlist in order to avoid a jail sentence, to support children, or, in Medrano’s case, to travel the world and to earn enough money to pay for college. For Medrano, attending college and enlisting in the Army represent female independence from the family. The military is the ideal site for her personal empowerment where she can earn an education and learn skills that will enable her future economic success and independence from men.

The novel’s military feminist stance complements although does not fully align with what Feinman calls feminist egalitarian militarists who advocate for “women’s full inclusion to the military” by allowing women to serve in combat positions and

requiring Selective Service Registration and compulsory conscription for all women (31). Feminist egalitarian militarists consider women's full participation in military service a sign of fully-recognized citizenship status. Although these feminists and feminist soldiers seek to change the highly-guarded masculinist and misogynist culture and structure of the military, the military has often converted this potential feminist threat to positive publicity. That is, the military embraces women's rights discourse when politically expedient. With the decline in recruitment and the need to replenish overextended forces, military planners are all too happy to tout the need for increased women's participation in the defense of their country – a strategy that makes recruitment that much easier. Militarists also take advantage of any opportunity to enhance the institution's carefully constructed reputation and social status including the chance to appear supportive of women's empowerment: "the increasing presence of women helps legitimize the institution by giving it an egalitarian façade" (D'Amico 122). Women help "soften the military's image as an agent of coercion and destruction, and help promote the myth of the military as a democratic institution, as an 'equal opportunity employer' like any other, without reference to its essential purpose: organized killing for political objectives."

Francine D'Amico characterizes the egalitarian position as a "'me-too' variety of liberal or equal rights feminism" in which women define equality as "sameness with men" (120). She also points to the larger illusion that such feminists harbor in which female soldiering can alter the patriarchal military institution: "Some liberal feminists also argue that women's entry into the military will gradually transform it into a less hierarchal, more democratic and egalitarian social institution." Rodriguez's novel tests this feminist presumption by following Medrano's seven-week stint in boot camp and ultimately shows that "femininity has been militarized while the military has not been demasculinized" or democratized (Eisenstein "Resexing" 37).

Medrano begins her limited feminist reconfiguration of the predominantly white male institution by casting it as a space to develop and assert a strong sense of her Chicana identity. In a conversation with a fellow Chicana soldier named Adela Canela, Medrano commiserates over her hometown newspaper's racist depictions of Latinas/os. Adela describes how a journalist wrote an article depicting the Latinos of Sunland Park, New Mexico, as speaking English only, being illiterate, and living in "one room shacks" where "the only food people ate were beans" (102). As the novel's vocal moral center and source of cultural knowledge, Adela's character enables Medrano to vent her own frustrations with the "subliminal messages" and "stereotypical media depictions" of Latino degeneracy (103). These sporadic conversations about home life and Chicano culture transform the boot camp into a site where the production of social consciousness begins to take root. The conversation further suggests that Medrano and Adela's participation in the process of becoming citizen-soldiers disproves negative stereotypes of the Spanish-speaking, illiterate, and destitute Latina/o.

Medrano's education in Chicana/o cultural identity continues as she also learns to place herself in a feminist genealogy of Mexican female fighters after Adela explains that the *soldaderas* were women who fought in the Mexican Revolution. As icons of female social and historical agency, *soldaderas* have long been part of Chicana cultural production. *Soldaderas* were often called *Adelitas*, after the name of the most well-known *soldadera*. In Rodríguez's novel, both Adela and Medrano represent the Mexican *soldadera* and the ways in which Chicanas construct a feminist identity by drawing on Mexican history. While the *soldadera* is a figure of feminist agency who challenges normative gender roles, B.V. Olguín argues that, within the multiracial military, the potential for radical change is foreclosed by the institution that

gives rise to it: “even as the women resist the racist and masculinist military establishment by appropriating boot camp as a feminist consciousness-raising experience, they still are potentially contained within it, almost by rote, precisely at the point of their resistance” (94).<sup>5</sup> By invoking the *soldadera*, Medrano expresses both female empowerment and cultural affirmation, yet this liberating potential is partly circumscribed by the patriarchal institution of the military itself.

Medrano frequently subverts military culture and protocol, chipping away at the edifice of patriarchal conventions. For example, she undoes the traditional association between gun and phallus in her description of her M-16. Rather than mimic the common military refrain “this is my weapon, here is my gun; one is for fighting, the other’s for fun,” Medrano asks her M-16 for help after she continuously fails to shoot the required number of targets to pass the weapons test: ““We have not been the greatest friends, but we can change that. I need you to pull through for me, so I can qualify and get out of basic. From this day on, I’m baptizing you Midnight – dark, mysterious, and beautiful”” (158). Medrano’s baptism of her M-16 not only renames but re-genders the literal and metaphorical phallic weapon, altering its association with male virility and sexual dominance over women. Instead, Medrano’s M-16 becomes an extension of her own body and an equally suggestive symbol of female sexuality that is “dark, mysterious, and beautiful.”

Although Medrano’s resignification of the phallic weapon reads as a feminist reversal of power, it calls to mind what Kelly Oliver describes as culturally entrenched associations between women’s bodies, sex and death. She notes that the link between

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<sup>5</sup> This aspect of my analysis draws on Olguín’s important work on Mexican-American war narratives. His article, “Sangre Mexicana/Corazón Americano: Identity, Ambiguity, and Critique in Mexican-American War Narratives,” is the only article, to date, that I have found on Rodríguez’s *Peacetime*.

women and weaponry draws on “age-old fears of women and the fantasy of female sexuality as a threatening weapon” (5). Such fantasies help explain the proliferation of military aircraft nose-art and the designation of popular Hollywood actresses as “bombshells” during the Second World War. In a more recent and disturbing example, the military has used women’s sexuality as part of its interrogation repertoire against detainees at the US prison in Guantanamo Bay where female interrogators reportedly used “‘sexual touching,’ ‘provocative clothing’ (including miniskirts, bras, and thong underwear), and ‘fake menstrual blood’ to ‘break’ Muslim prisoners by making them unclean and therefore ‘unworthy to pray’” (27).

Medrano’s repeated challenges to masculinist practices emphasize the incongruous fit of female soldiers and military culture and the ways in which women’s bodies become disruptive to the military’s protocol. Medrano explicitly describes female bodily functions and how women adjust to procedures not intended to accommodate them. In the opening pages, we read about Medrano’s straining and perspiring body as she struggles to do male pushups during Army PT or physical training: “She detested male pushups. They were not the female kind where the knees were bent. These were the macho kind where the weight of the body was placed on the shoulders” (1). The scene foretells the various physical exertions Medrano will make as she endures seven weeks of PT and emphasizes female physical difference in a male-dominated institution. Later, she expresses her gratitude that her period did not occur during a training session because “having to change pads during bivouac would’ve been a nightmare” although the “many pockets in her uniform had made it easy to store pads” (181). In similar passages throughout the text, Medrano highlights her female body’s limitations and functions which emphasize both her perseverance

and adaptive skills.<sup>6</sup> Yet her descriptions also call attention to the military's anxious attempts to accommodate and control the bodies of female enlistees.

Rodriguez combines Medrano's descriptions of physical training which depict the female body in non-sexualized behavior with descriptions of the military's contradictory position on female sexuality and normative notions of femininity. In one scene, Medrano is taken to "a lecture room full of females from all the platoons" where she is instructed on standard military cosmetic procedures:

A mirror and make-up tray sat in front of each female. They were being taught how to apply make-up by a beauty consultant. [...] Medrano started applying blush the way the beauty consultant instructed. Next came eye shadow. She chose a shade of brown for her lids. With a disposable mascara wand, she applied black mascara to her eyelashes. (104-105)

Immediately after the cosmetic session, soldiers are told to return to their barracks to wash off the makeup and report immediately for weapons training where they are to learn "how to adjust the sights on their M-16s" (106). In this brief scene, Medrano reveals the extent of the military's concern with normative signs of femininity as it incorporates and thus oddly equates makeup lessons with weapons training. That the army would find it imperative to teach women how to apply mascara suggests the value that military officials place on women's bodies and their appearances. Medrano and the other women are puzzled by the need for such a lesson, but go along without asking questions. This seemingly innocent yet admittedly odd lesson underscores the military's investment in maintaining proper gender norms and how those gender norms are then necessary to uphold militarism itself.

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<sup>6</sup> Ironically, Rodriguez used the notion of female physical limitations to her advantage to get out of her military contract. According to Olguín's personal interview with Rodriguez, she "received a medical discharge after boot camp by strategically invoking her male drill sergeant's sexist views that women were too feeble for military service" (94).

Enloe argues that militarized cosmetic application is not anomalous, but is part of a “bureaucratic campaign” in which military officials write memos and have meetings about the serious business of eye shadow and blush (*Maneuvers* 270). Special committees are tasked with creating the standards for properly feminized soldiers. While the Marines require women “to tweeze their eyebrows in a regulation arch,” other service branches stipulate the appropriate length and style of hair. The military’s adoption of civilian cultural beauty standards reifies those standards within the military; however, more importantly, the fact that entire committees are devoted to such concerns suggests an intense level of regulation and control over female bodies. In addition to regulating outward appearances, Enloe describes one Navy memo which recommends the standardization of women’s undergarments in order to prevent female soldiers from wearing “fancy panties and half-bras” (271).

Medrano seemingly disregards the makeup lesson without fully contemplating the ways in which militarism relies on normative notions of gender. It matters to military officials that women look recognizably feminine so that they are not confused with men. More importantly, feminized female soldiers project the military’s image as an institution that protects dominant gender codes: “To be ‘mannish’ is to be a freak, a defiler of femininity, an offender of both respectable women’s and respectable men’s sensibilities. In short, a mannish woman is a threat to the proper order of things” (Enloe *Maneuvers* 263). Feminized female soldiers give the appearance of a heterosexual female soldiery and since gender constructs are relational, the feminized female soldier protects rather than undermines the necessary construction of masculinized men.

The night before the lesson on cosmetic application, Medrano had learned from Adela that Sergeant Grimes was suspected of sexually assaulting women in another platoon who were too scared to report him. Medrano expresses her disgust at

seeing “his eyes pawing the females” and “taking advantage of his position” (104). In a later scene, Grimes is finally reprimanded when he physically assaults a female drill sergeant from another platoon: “Sergeant Grimes yelled, ‘Bitch! Cunt!’ and then slapped Sergeant Duke so hard she fell. After a couple of seconds, she stood up and looked as if she was going to kill him. By that time, Sergeant Acosta and the captain ran in between them” (166). The menacing presence of Sergeant Grimes throughout the novel underscores the condoned forms of violence and harassment that women soldiers often face. It further points to the maintenance of gendered hierarchies that are maintained by authority structures and by processes of feminization that hyper-regulate women’s bodies. Medrano’s description of the restriction of and the violence against women’s bodies belies feminist egalitarian militarists’ claim that women’s presence can democratize the military.

At the same time, it is important to remember that democratizing the patriarchal structure of the military is not Medrano’s actual goal. Rather, Medrano views the army as a way of achieving social mobility through education benefits and a steady income. Thus, the novel focuses on her adaptive abilities, perseverance, and the survival skills she learns – skills that will help her survive not in a combat zone, but in the patriarchal civilian culture to which she will eventually return. Ironically, boot camp is seemingly depicted as a relatively safe space compared to civilian life because of the female camaraderie that develops within the platoon. We see this particularly at the end of the novel after Medrano’s multiracial platoon completes basic training. As the women discuss their future assignments, Adela questions the importance of their singular accomplishments in the context of insurmountable social disparities: “The world is all screwed up with wars, racism, sexism, diseases, rapes, mutilations, child abuse, wife beating, sexual harassment, and so on! What’s the use?”

What's the purpose?" (224-25). Adela's complex list of concerns moves from large-scale conflict to intimate forms of violence, linking war with specific forms of race- and gender-based oppression. Ironically, Adela does not acknowledge how the military is implicated in the violence that she decries. Instead, the passage curiously distances the military from social disorder but also presents the military as the solution.

Medrano dispels Adela's negativity by reaffirming the Army's meritocratic ethos of self empowerment and responsibility as she tells Adela that "your safety net is yourself." For Medrano, the purpose of boot camp is to instill self reliance rather than to question the larger systems of power in place. By focusing on the individual, the novel deflects attention away from institutional accountability – a move that preserves the military's image as a progressive social institution while suggesting that aggrieved communities should "be their own safety net." Judging from Medrano's response, we can read Medrano's embrace of the military's "boot-strap" mentality as a reflection of her induction into what Wendy Brown calls neoliberal citizenship. Brown describes how neoliberalism's economic rationality is not confined to economics, but rather permeates all spheres of social life as it interpellates citizen-subjects, and in this case, the citizen-soldier, into neoliberal citizens. By this process she writes that neoliberalism "figures individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for 'self-care' – the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions" (15). This ethic of "self-care" acts as a cover for neoliberalism's insistence on privatization which enables the state's abdication of responsibility for ensuring that everyone has access to basic resources.

Earlier in the novel, the roles between Adela and Medrano were reversed when Medrano explained why she joined the army: "In high school I always felt I had to get

top grades, so I could get into college. My parents couldn't help me with homework. They don't have much education, and they couldn't afford to help me financially for college. I never had a safety net" (124). In response to Medrano's assessment of her predicament, Adela says, "your safety net is yourself, Eliza." The conversation takes place at the beginning of week four or the mid-point of basic training. By the end of week seven, Medrano has adopted Adela's motto to the point where she can now repeat it to Adela herself. What Brown shows us is that the military's ethic of self reliance correlates with neoliberal citizenship as Medrano learns to assume all responsibility for her life choices: "the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action, e.g., lack of skills, education, and childcare in a period of high unemployment and limited welfare benefits" (Brown 15). Medrano's response best exemplifies Brown's assertion that neoliberalism's moralizing rhetoric of responsibility lays the weight of full accountability onto individuals thus "depoliticizing social and economic powers and at the same time reduc[ing] political citizenship to an unprecedented degree of passivity and political complacency." In this light, Medrano's depolitical response to Adela's catalogue of social disparities suggests an inward turn to individual initiative rather than an outward critique of institutional accountability which eventually limits the possibility of how she can "strive with others to alter or organize these options" (Brown 15).

### **Latina In/Visibility and the Global War on Terror**

Rodriguez's novel helps illuminate the complex position of Latinas and Latinos in today's multiracial military force which continues to rely on a growing Latino community. According to Mady Wechsler Segal and David Segal, Latinas/os "are overrepresented among enlisted personnel," yet their recruitment numbers

continue to increase. Latinas, in particular, have “surpassed Latinos in their gender’s representation in the military.” As of September 2006, Latinos comprise 11 percent of enlisted men while Latinas make up 12 percent. With this rise in Latina enlistment come more images of the Latina soldier. *Latina Style* magazine has worked to train a general public who is largely unaccustomed to seeing images of Latinas in uniform by featuring stories on Latina soldiers and civilian military personnel as early as 2004.<sup>7</sup> Recently, the magazine also began a feature called “Latina Letters from the Front” which publishes letters written by actual Latina soldiers serving mostly in Iraq. The series provides one of the only publishing venues where we can learn about Latina soldiering and sheds light on why many Latinas enlist, what benefits they feel they gain, and how they negotiate the military’s culture and organization. Because the military is a male-dominated institution charged with the ostensibly male duty to physically defend national sovereignty, women are not generally socialized to want to be a part of it. In order to understand the evolving social phenomena of Latina servicewomen, I draw from *Latina Style’s* various articles and interviews to compose a general depiction of Latina soldiering based on the words of actual soldiers themselves.

Reading these accounts, one quickly learns that regardless of a Latina’s motives for enlisting, many Latinas must first overcome their family’s opposition to enlistment. US Army Lieutenant Colonel Maricela Alvarado enrolled in R.O.T.C. basic-training camp “over the objections of her parents” (Young). Marine Brigadier General Angela Salinas describes how her parents reacted to her decision to enlist:

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to various stories about Latinas in the military, Latina soldiers are also featured on the cover of at least four issues: vol. 10, no. 5 (2004); vol. 12, no. 5 (2006); vol. 13, no. 6 (2007); and vol. 14, no. 6 (2008).

“Oh, my gosh, my mom went apoplectic, and my dad was like ‘Women don’t join the military especially not the Marines’” (Farabee). For US Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Susan Ayala, the fact that her family had a long history of military service did not assuage her parents’ views on her desire to enlist: “I wanted to join desperately. I kept saying I wanted to do something for my country to help out, but my mother and father were very traditional” (Young). Eventually, she enlisted in the Air National Guard “and instantly fell in love with the military.”

For some Latina enlistees, it is precisely the idea of family that appeals to them as they seek military induction. US Air Force Technical Sergeant Marie L. Villegas describes the unique bond that men and women of the armed forces develop as their common objective of national defense cements their organizational unity: “In the military there is the feeling of belonging, of a family. The military life is made up of men and women from all different backgrounds, beliefs and yet we are made to feel like one big family with a common goal – to support and defend the United States of America” (“Leading the Way”). Salinas equates military cohesion with her cultural heritage by asserting that Latinas/os are “all about the familia” (Farabee). The “sense of family” that she feels in the Corps compels her to refer to her fellow service personnel in kinship terms as she asks: “Where else could I have millions of big brothers?” (Farabee). Of course, the service is not only composed of “big brothers,” but also Latina “sisters.” US Army Cpl. Celestina Torres Rudziewicz points out that being part of a small group of Latina soldiers fosters equally strong bonds: “I am honored and humbled to serve with my fellow Latina soldiers. We are sisters; we are family.” These sentiments help promote the military’s public relations campaign to obscure its institutional purpose of waging war and to appeal to women interested in

camaraderie and teamwork. But just like most families, the military has hierarchies in which “big brothers” maintain male privilege and domination over Latina soldiers.

While some Latinas regard the military as a space to re-define traditional family expectations and to form new bonds of filiation, many join in order to pursue personal aspirations like earning a college education. Many of the Latina soldiers such as Marine Captain Catalina Estrada Kesler describe the need for college tuition as a reason for enlisting: “My reasons for joining the military were like those of many other kids growing up in a low-income household. My parents could not afford my college tuition and I did not want to stay at home and be a burden to them.” Marine 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Maia Molina-Schaefer adds the more common refrain that the military provides opportunities “to serve our country, travel the world and receive an education.”

In addition to these motives, many Latinas expressed a desire to actively take part in social change. Marine 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bessie Louise Bernstein puts it this way: “I believe I have been given one of the best opportunities in the world. I am able to lead Marines, just like President Ronald Reagan once said ‘Some people spend an entire lifetime wondering if they made a difference. The Marines do not have that problem.’” This notion of “making a difference” is reiterated by Marie Villegas who feels that she is “part of something huge” and Marine Sergeant Dilia Paredes who writes, “I just couldn’t wait for my turn to make a difference and to be a part of something that so many people looked up to [...]. That’s what the Marine Corps is all about” (“Leading the Way”). These responses say a lot about how some Latinas view the military and the nation-state. Many of the letters regard the military and the state policies it carries out in largely humanitarian terms which enable these Latina soldiers to view themselves as part of the military’s institutional history and tradition of making a presumably positive difference in domestic and foreign affairs. Being

imbricated within the military structure enables them to envision themselves as part of a larger, ennobled force for change – an opportunity that seems nonexistent in the civilian world where there are few places in which Latinas are symbolically included within the national imaginary and where their service is publicly valued.

Consequently, some Latinas perceive themselves as contributing to national security and thus occupying the novel role of a Latina defender of US sovereignty. For US Coast Guard Lieutenant Pamela Garcia, making a difference means contributing to “the concerted effort of protecting our country’s liberties and taking care of its people [...]. And I wanted to be a part of that.” Interestingly, the words “defender” and “protector” are often perceived as a masculinist position of agency while the idea of “taking care” of others resonates with the traditional view of women as caregivers. Because female soldiers occupy this ambiguous position, the public may have a hard time accepting the Latina soldier in uniform. It may also be difficult to perceive of Latina soldiers as defenders or caregivers in *this particular war* because of how a majority of US Americans view the war as a profit-driven, unjustified invasion. The Latina soldiers who submit their letters to *Latina Style* do not discuss the destructive consequences of the military force to which they contribute and so we are left to wonder how they feel about things like occupation, imperialism, and civilian casualties.

In order to understand how the Latina citizen-soldier is formed, it is necessary to temporarily put aside the US government’s war policy and focus on the military as an institution detached from war making. At least this is what some of the Latina soldiers manage to do as they describe the personal benefits that accrue from military service. As previously discussed, popular media rarely depict Latinas as productive, inspiring contributors to society which is why the symbolic power of the military

uniform appeals to some Latinas. Marine Staff Sergeant Blanca Gonzalez-Phelps's letter provides a fascinating account of when she first saw a powerful Latina soldier command the respect of others:

There she was. She stood with her arms crossed and the stern look on her face as she scanned her eyes past each recruit going through the Marine Corps Basic Training in June 1999. From that moment that she took charge of us, I knew I wanted to be like her. Her hair seemed so neat and perfect with no hair strands astray. In those green camouflaged utility uniform and black shiny boots, you could tell that she was proud to be one of the few female Marines to serve our country and one of even fewer: a Latina Marine.

For Gonzalez-Phelps, the Latina drill instructor epitomizes self control, self-confidence, and self-respect. Without a single hair out of place, the Latina D.I. easily commands the group of subordinates in her charge. Additionally, she exudes pride in the organization and in her status as one of the few Latina Marines in its ranks.

Gonzalez-Phelps's desire to want "to be like her" suggests that Latinas are not solely moved by economic motives to enlist. Although I have argued thus far that economic hardship compels much of Latina recruitment, I am not suggesting that this is the only motivation. To do so paints a one-dimensional picture of a more complex process in which Latina enlistees weigh a variety of factors including social status and public honor in their decision-making process.

Ana María Alonso's study of military honor as a "technology of power" emphasizes the need to consider the influence of affect on subjectivity (100). Alonso describes how military honor can become "the 'capital' of the dispossessed" (182). By this, she suggests that honor has its own intrinsic value which translates into social status and respect – both of which compensate for lack of economic power and thus enable subaltern soldiers to intervene in oppressive social practices. As the first ever Latina Marine Brigadier General, Angela Salinas reveals how public acclaim can have a formative effect on the identity of a Latina soldier. She describes attending her

cousin's wedding and feeling the intoxicating power of honor as family and friends paid tribute to her accomplishments:

I stood up and it was kind of like Moses parting the water, an aisle opened up and I went, and that was such a moment for me, I'm looking into the faces and eyes of all these people who are related to me and what I was seeing was this tremendous admiration, this tremendous respect. I felt I was a representative of them, of the American dream, of serving their country. (qtd. in Farabee)

It is at this moment that Salinas realized how much pride her family and community had invested in her social status as a high-ranking military officer. Salinas's comments suggest how she has internalized military honor and how it is a key part of her identity. We may assume that military honor informs her self-image and that it verifies her status as an autonomous, capable Latina whose mettle has been tested. It endows her with a speaking voice for her community as she sees herself as "a representative of them." Salinas further describes how military honor changed her perception of her responsibility to her community: "That moment is when I said I'm going to make a difference. I went back and started going out and speaking as a Hispanic and a Latina." When Salinas speaks at public engagements as a Marine Brigadier General, we can assume that, in the context of our militarized culture, her words will carry significant weight.

While Salinas's experience represents an important instance of community pride and recognition of a Latina's military accomplishments, Alonso reminds us that military honor is also a form of state subjection. Military honor functions as a technology of state rule because of the way it is selectively distributed to those who participate in state-sanctioned military violence (100-102). Through military rituals, official designations, and institutional accolades, the state succeeds in socializing individuals in the military and in the civilian public to esteem subjects who obtain high ranks. Thus, the degree of power that someone like Salinas has is always

enmeshed in larger systems of state power. It is important not to lose sight of this interrelation. It is also important to recognize that by participating in the maintenance of militarized violence and state imperialism, Salinas is equally accountable for and culpable of carrying out the state's oppressive policies and agendas.

Examining Latina soldiers' experience of militarism brings into relief the interlaced processes of subject formation and subjection. Therefore, it is necessary to take seriously Latinas' claims about self-growth and confidence and the way that a military career enables women like Gonzalez-Phelps to declare that "We, Latinas, are capable to surpass boundaries if we believe in ourselves." It is not surprising that Latinas respond positively to the military's ontological appeal to help individuals "be all that they can be." What is surprising is that despite the military's status as a patriarchal institution, Latina soldiers continue to work within its gender politics as they construct their identities. For, even as they praise the military, many recognize its gender and racial biases. US Navy Civilian Grace Gabaldon expresses how racialized patriarchy becomes a motivator for self-improvement: "There was always a certain amount of skepticism about how this female Latina could have possibly been the best choice [...]. But that's fine...this kind of challenge has only spurred me on to prove myself each and every time. It keeps me on my toes, continuously learning and developing my skills and abilities" ("Profile of 11 Latinas"). Marie Villegas adds that in the Air Force (and in civilian society as well), "You need to prove yourself more than a man." She goes on to say that "It is male dominated, and as a woman and a minority even though we embrace the diversity, as a women [sic] in a power position you have to be consistent and be assertive." Sergeant Stephanie Valle explains that a similar attitude toward Latinas exists in the National Guard Bureau: "In some of my jobs, I was the first female they were working with and at times it was challenging

trying to show infantry men that though I was a young female, I should be measured on my abilities as a soldier and not on my gender.”

Part of this institutional gender bias has to do with cultural stereotypes more prevalent within civilian society. US Coast Guard Lieutenant Xochitl Castañeda explains that a “Latina woman is somewhat expected to be passive, so you have to find a blend of culture and professional self” (qtd. in Romano). Alternatively, for others like Salinas, the military offers a way to challenge derogatory beliefs: “I think if I’d never come into the Marine Corps, I never would have finished college or gained the confidence that I’ve developed over the years. [...] I would have believed I was a second-class citizen, reinforcing all the stereotypes for a Hispanic female” (Young). These accounts reveal how Latinas often struggle to dispel Latina stereotypes, assert cultural identity, and profess allegiance to the institution and its missions. In his study of Mexican-American war narratives, Olguín describes a similar process as some Latina/o soldier-authors try to maintain their cultural difference while supporting the ideology of militarism, or as Olguín puts it, making “a claim to ideological sameness” (90). The Latina soldiers featured in *Latina Style* appear to reconcile cultural and gender difference with ideological sameness by asserting their value to the military. Marine Cpl. Marsha N. Garcia avers that “Latinas in the military are definitely making a difference” while Bessie Louise Bernstein adds that “Although we [Latinas] are small in numbers, we are clearly an integral part of the Marine Corps.” To underscore Latinas’ relevance to the organization, Bernstein notes that “women serve in 93 percent of all occupational fields and make up 6 percent of the total fighting force.” Marine Sergeant Dilia Paredes’s view of Latinas’ contribution to the military has more to do with their epistemic value to a predominantly white male institution: “I would like to be a reminder to everyone that because I come from a very rich culture, the fact

that I do things differently or see things from a different perspective is nothing but beneficial. Instead of expecting less from us because we're females, we can all learn to look at it from a more positive point of view and understand that we too are capable of accomplishing great things like many already have" ("Profile of 11 Latinas"). For Paredes, Latinas offer knowledge based on diverse cultural and gendered experiences that can potentially transform and strengthen the military's operations.

While these Latina soldiers assert that their presence and perspectives have the ability to change the military, they also argue that the military has not totally changed them. In her letter from the front, Molina-Schaefer emphasizes the Latina Marine's enduring femininity. She writes that her fellow Latina Marines have a message for "every Latina out there": "they are women just like you. They are mothers, sisters, and daughters. They love wearing their hair down and spending time with their families and friends. However, when the time comes, they are proud to don their uniforms and go where our military services are in need." Celestina Torres Rudziewicz also feels compelled to underscore the femininity of Latinas in the Army saying that "At home, we have families, we love to shop, and we love to look like girls. But here we are Soldiers, proud to do our duty." As discussed earlier, Latina femininities are called into question when women join the military. Women who engage in "manly" behavior are immediately deemed to be lesbians rather than patriots. By emphasizing how Latina soldiers "love wearing their hair down" and "love to look like girls," Molina-Schaefer and Torres Rudziewicz reassure concerned parents and potential female recruits who fear the masculinization of women soldiers or who fear the charge of lesbianism that Latina soldiers can remain identifiably feminine by stepping in and out of uniform.

Accompanying the various articles on Latina soldiers in *Latina Style* are pictures of Latinas in uniform. Unlike the “Your Daughter” recruitment ad discussed earlier, these images emphasize patriotic commitment as the women pictured are actual Latina military personnel whose uniforms visually tie them to the state as actors upholding national defense. These women are presented as citizen-soldiers rather than the self-interested enlistees that military advertisers attempt to reach. However, like the recruitment ads, these images increase the visibility of Latina soldiery and thus raise important questions that always surround representations of women and war. Eisenstein notes that because there are an increasing number of women “fighting on behalf of the powerful,” women soldiers are becoming “more visible”: “This visibility is unusual because females are more often than not out of view – made absent, silenced – rather than seen. So the fact that women appear more present needs attention” (“Resexing” 27). *Latina Style*’s consistent focus on Latina soldiers “needs attention” as well.

Eisenstein’s analysis reminds us that women, as combatants and non-combatants, are made visible in ways that serve state and military agendas. But as Chandra Mohanty, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Robin Riley point out, “gendered bodies are also racialized bodies, and ‘race’ as a concept is profoundly significant in the ways that women’s bodies are made visible/invisible” (7). Race played a critical role in the media coverage of three US female soldiers who had been part of a US Army convoy that had been ambushed in Nasiriyah during the first week of the Iraq War. During the attack of the convoy, mayhem ensued and each woman suffered a different fate. Nineteen-year old Army private Jessica Lynch was captured by Iraqis and was eventually rescued by other US soldiers. Shoshanna Johnson was injured, taken as a

prisoner of war and was later released. Lori Piestewa was killed in the assault when the Humvee she was driving was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

While the extent of the media coverage on all three women differed, what united the women was their working-class background. Media reports describe how Lynch came from a small, working-class family from Palestine, West Virginia, and that she enlisted in order to gain educational benefits that would allow her to pursue a career as an elementary school teacher. Shoshana Johnson's motives stemmed from her father's career as a serviceman. In fact, Johnson was born on a US military base in Panama where her father was stationed. Eventually, Johnson's family moved to El Paso, Texas, and eventually enlisted in the army as a way to support her young child. Lori Piestewa was a twenty-three year old private who had been raised on a reservation in Tuba City, Arizona. Piestewa had been part of her high school's Junior ROTC program and this might have influenced her decision to join, but Pat Flannery and Betty Reid describe other possible motives: "an inordinate number of young Native Americans make the military their destination, if only short-term, because it offers instant money, free on-the-job-training, decent benefits, a structured and patriotic environment and a line on the resume that says 'veteran.'" Additionally, Piestewa was a single mother of two young children and the "lack of opportunity" may have "left her few other options when it came to feeding her ambitions and her children."

Feminist media critics have written extensively on the media representation of the three women or lack thereof in the case of Johnson and Piestewa. After reviewing the A&E channel's documentary *Saving Private Lynch* (2003), Stacy Takacs argues that "Lynch is selected for media stardom over the other candidates [...] because her race, age, and background identify her with the American heartland and connote the

maximum vulnerability” of a woman in need of masculine protection (301). John Howard and Laura Privera discuss how Lynch was repeatedly described by press accounts as “‘cute,’ ‘young,’ ‘attractive,’ ‘blonde,’ and a winner of ‘Miss Congeniality’ who just loved her ‘hairbrush’” (93). In contrast, Piestewa was “given a minor role” in descriptions of the ambush. Furthermore, Piestewa “is often identified as the friend of Private Lynch. Her role and involvement are important only so far as they supplement Lynch’s story. In fact in a number of interviews Lynch is the one who introduces Piestewa’s military efforts in to the reporting” (95). Robin Riley’s theory for Piestewa and Johnson’s lack of coverage vis-à-vis Lynch is that “women of color are believed to be stronger than white women and more able to bear oppressive circumstances; hence, what Shoshana and Lori did seemed unremarkable” (199). Most studies of the media coverage on the women of the ambush agree that race played a major factor in the media’s lack of interest in Piestewa and Johnson.

Although Piestewa is considered to be the first Native American woman killed in combat, she may also be the first Latina to die in the Iraq War. According to Flannery and Reid, Piestewa is the daughter of Terry Piestewa, a Hopi Indian, and of Priscilla ‘Percy’ Baca Piestewa, a “Hispanic mother.” And so Piestewa is part of a small group of Latina soldiers who have been killed in the Iraq War including Chicana Staff Sergeant Melissa Valles (d. July 9, 2003), Mexican native Ana Laura Esparza Gutierrez (d. October 1, 2003), and three women of Puerto Rican descent: SPC Frances M. Vega, SPC Lizbeth Robles, and SPC Aleina Ramirez Gonzalez.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Jorge Mariscal’s “Mexican-American Women in Iraq: La Adelitas 2003” for more on Valles and Esparza. Vega died on November 2, 2003, and is considered to be the “first female soldier of Puerto Rican descent to die in a combat zone” (Santiago n.p.). Robles (d. March 1, 2005) is the “first female soldier born in Puerto Rico to die in the War on Terrorism.” Ramirez Gonzalez (d. April 15, 2005) was also born in Puerto Rico.

Cataloguing these deaths does not make them more significant than others who have died in the war. Rather, I am attempting to highlight the specific experience of Latina soldiering. Their lives and deaths tell us something important about women in the neoliberal military. For example, the deaths of female soldiers debunk the notion that because women are not assigned to combat roles, they are safe from injury or death.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the media treatment of Lori Piestewa's death as ultimately inconsequential in relation to Jessica Lynch underscores the ways in which Latinas alternate between visibility and invisibility within narratives about war. The case of Felix Longoria reminds us that the Latino, and now, the Latina soldiering body, occupies an ambivalent space within the dominant national imaginary. The race and gender of the Latina soldier complicate the traditionally masculine and white iconography of the American soldier thereby limiting the Latina's capacity to represent the nation.

### **Neoliberal Militarism and the Non-Citizen-Soldier**

In February 2009, US military officials announced a new Army pilot program that would recruit 1,000 immigrants with temporary visas into the military in exchange for the chance to obtain US citizenship "in as little as six months" (Preston). The decision expands the previous immigrant recruitment pool which had been confined to immigrants with permanent residency more commonly referred to as "green cards." The new program allows recruiters to tap into a large group of temporary immigrants who have lived in the US for at least two years. If the program succeeds in yielding

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<sup>9</sup> As of July 18, 2008, Jennifer Hogg writes that the "current occupation of Iraq has left 97 women dead, the most so far of any American military intervention. Forty percent (39) of those are attributed to non-combat related injuries. Still uncounted in these numbers are suicides and murders that happen in the United States or on military bases post deployment."

high quality recruits, officials intend to expand it to all branches of service which could produce “as many as 14,000 volunteers a year, or about one in six recruits.” The program reflects the military’s need to find individuals with strategically useful foreign language skills that will be critical for future missions. In his article on military demography, George Quester asserts that there may be a “need to consider recruiting those who have just arrived in the United States, legally or even illegally, and perhaps (where the shortages become extreme enough) even to consider the establishment of recruiting facilities outside the United States” (31-32).

Such attempts have arguably already happened as reports indicate that the military has attempted to recruit people outside the US. In Mexican towns along the US-Mexico border, recruiters have been seen approaching Mexican students during school to the dismay of school officials (Amoruso). However, the history of Mexican and Latino immigrant soldiers in the U.S. military is not specific to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, Tijuana author Federico Campbell writes that Mexicans in Tijuana have participated in many U.S. wars:

Some of my schoolmates had been left behind on Pacific beaches, in Normandy, in Korea, and in Vietnam, and it wasn’t unusual to see the well-known olive green car drive up in a cloud of dust from the naval base in San Diego on its way to the mountains where it would disgorge some admiral or other officer. The mother would accept without ceremony the Purple Heart or whatever other posthumous metal she was given for the son killed on the battlefield. (59)

This long-standing practice of Mexican recruitment is not widely reported and thus constitutes one of the unpublicized, subversive recruitment strategies that the US military pursues as it attempts to fill its ranks with personnel. What Campbell’s passage also makes clear is that Mexican citizens have died in wars as US soldiers.

The significant death rate of non-citizen soldiers in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan reflect the disproportionate number of non-citizens in combat positions. Richard Hil cites figures from the US Department of Defense that puts the casualty rate of all Latino military personnel at 13 percent. He also points out that “of the first 1,000 US deaths in Iraq, the overwhelming majority was among the lowest-ranked, poorest-paid, and worst-trained troops. Over 120 were Latinos – about 70 of them Mexican.”

The military’s increased search for immigrant soldiers and their high casualty rate require a closer look at military recruitment appeals to non-citizens. For example, one ad in *Hispanic* magazine (May 2005) that targets Latino immigrants features an actual veteran, Fernando Quijano. In the ad, a smiling Quijano sits at a library table with paper and a pencil in his right hand. With the help of special visual graphics, his left arm and shoulder are dressed in camouflage as he holds a folded map in his left hand. The image suggests a link between educational success and military training while the ad’s narrative tells us the more detailed story of Quijano’s achievements. We learn that he is from Bogotá, Colombia, that he served in the Army from 1982 to 1987, and that he is now an economics professor at Dickinson State University. The image emphasizes how the military is an institution that transforms individuals. The visual provides a kind of before-and-after shot, a representation of his transformation in status and occupation that moves from immigrant soldier to citizen professor, from unemployed recruit to salaried academic.

The caption fills out the details of Quijano’s transformation and emphasizes his own effort as the key to his success. Like the other ads previously discussed, this one mixes utilitarian, market rationality with ontological appeals as we read how Quijano increased his social and class status:

Arriving in America with nothing but his dreams, Fernando looked in vain for work. When a friend suggested he join the U.S. Army, Fernando didn't hesitate. The Army taught Fernando to focus on his goals and to work hard to achieve them. He became a citizen while still in uniform.

The narrative attempts to appeal to other immigrants who also arrive in this country “with nothing” and who have limited employment options. The caption further emphasizes Quijano's self reliance and his quick decision to join the army reinforcing the idea that the decision to join should be made without reluctance, apprehension, or doubt. Although Quijano is now a professor, he was once a student, “taught” by the Army “to focus on his goals and to work hard to achieve them.” Thus, the army not only makes requirements on the enlistee, but is an educative institution that offers services and benefits in return. Aside from these points, the ad's main impact lies in the fact that we see a former immigrant soldier who has already achieved economic and professional success after his military service. His image serves as visual proof of future success unlike the other ads in which the future has to be imagined. Although “the road” from Colombia to Dickinson State “has been a long one,” his image and title promise that military service is a low-risk, high-reward endeavor and that Quijano's success can happen for others.

The most interesting line of the caption is the one which states that Quijano “became a citizen while still in uniform.” This sentence contains perhaps the most important and enticing information for would-be immigrant recruits. The short sentence almost deemphasizes the notion that Quijano joined only for the chance to obtain US citizenship although the narrative does repeat his “focus” on “goals” and “dreams” that are never described but presumably include citizenship. While the sentence is understated, the value of citizenship is obviously not lost on military recruiters. For example, Lieutenant General Benjamin C. Freakley, a top-ranked recruitment officer for the Army, praised the new pilot program for temporary

immigrants I described earlier by saying that the “Army will gain in its strength in human capital and the immigrants will gain their citizenship and get on a ramp to the American dream” (qtd. in Preston). His comment reflects the usual invocation of the “American dream” that immigrants supposedly seek when entering the US, a dream which requires naturalization. For military advertisers, the concept serves as a particularly strong enticement that works well in magazine advertisements like the one featuring Fernando Quijano. But Freakley’s comments also underscore the military’s view of citizenship as a tradable commodity or “a neoliberal good” that can be exchanged for service (Feldman 210).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the move to an all-volunteer force in 1973 was not welcomed by all members of the military community precisely because it emphasized labor-market rationality to the detriment of a civic obligation ethic. Segal explains what civic republican militarists regarded as the stakes involved in relying on the self-interested enlistee:

Instead of being motivated to serve his [sic] country and make the world a better place, he is concerned with pay, benefits, and the quality of working life. The nature of the individual’s relationship to the organization is transformed, with the traditional implied contract of mutual obligations between the service person and the service being replaced by an explicit contract in which work and time are exchanged for economic remuneration. The military installation, base, or post is seen less as a community and more as a work place, in which the uniformed employee spends only his working hours. (71)

Those who advocated a civic republican conception of the citizen-soldier ideal viewed the all-volunteer force as bankrupting the ethos of the military and of service. The civic republican tradition, according to R. Claire Snyder, conceives of “military service and civic participation” as necessary components of citizenship (1). The citizen-soldier is seen as the ideal embodiment of this preferred form of citizenship because *his* service lies in non-pecuniary commitments to the political community to

which he belongs. His motives for service are based on deep-seated beliefs in “liberty, equality, camaraderie, the rule of law, the common good, civic virtue, and participatory citizenship” (1-2). Thus, the concept of an all-volunteer force, particularly one based on market rather than political principles, offends the civic republican tradition of civic obligation. That is, service must not be viewed as a choice, but an obligation to the polity.<sup>10</sup>

The debate between those who favor the all-volunteer force and those who view it as a corruption of civic and military values underscores the internal dissension within the military community. At stake in the debate is the meaning of citizenship, voluntarism, and obligation. If these issues are irresolvable for citizen-soldiers, how does the interjection of the non-citizen-soldier complicate the terms of the debate? It may appear to some that offering citizenship to non-citizen enlistees as part of the “benefits package” further erodes the meaning of the military. However, in some respects, the immigrant soldier actually embodies many of the the ideals of civic republicanism. As I discuss below, some Latina/o immigrant soldiers are moved to

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<sup>10</sup> Civic republican militarists often emphasize the need for a form of national service which may or may not include military service. Quester explains that advocates such as Charles Moskos believe that national mandatory service would be “healthy for the nation” and would serve “as the embodiment and renewal of a concept of duty” (34). At the center of many civic republican arguments is the idea of equal representation. “Just as the elected Congress must be representative of the nation as a whole,” the military should also reflect the national polity. By mandating national service, the military would be representative of the entire population thereby altering the current reliance on enlistees from working-class backgrounds and theoretically democratizing the institution: “Critics point to several problems with the unrepresentativeness of the current military, including, most prominently, that economic and political elites are shielded from the realities of war. Because the elites who make the decision to go to war are shielded from its direct effects, making the decision is that much easier” (Feldman 204). Ironically, the civic republican militarist position is also in some ways an anti-war position since mandatory all-inclusive civilian participation would “encourage civilian control of the military” and would hold officials accountable for making war policies that affect all citizens in equal ways thus potentially “induc[ing] a more cautious approach to the use of military force” (203-204).

service by feelings of patriotism and allegiance to their adopted country as well as a deep sense of obligation. What makes these sentiments somewhat peculiar is that in the context of nativist hysteria, the tenets of civic republicanism – equality, camaraderie, the rule of law, participatory citizenship – are often denied to Latina/o non-citizens.

The notion that the non-citizen soldier in some ways exhibits ideal citizen behavior presents a paradox that is often resolved in official and media discourses in which the immigrant soldier – particularly the deceased immigrant soldier – is hailed as a selfless super-citizen motivated by fundamental USAmerican values to serve the nation. The case of José Antonio Gutierrez is an important example of how depictions of deceased non-citizen soldiers are imbricated in the construction of martial nationalism. Gutierrez, a native of Guatemala, was one of over 30,000 non-US citizens or “green card soldiers” serving in the US military and fighting in Iraq (Specogna). His story is particularly notable partly because he was the first military casualty in the war. Furthermore, he was among the war’s growing group of immigrant soldier casualties. In fact, “[f]our of the first coalition soldiers to die in Iraq were non-citizens” from Guatemala, Mexico, and Colombia (Amaya 3).

Gutierrez was killed by friendly fire on March 21, 2003, as his squad engaged in a confrontation with Iraqi soldiers along the Kuwait-Iraq border. It is unclear why or how he was killed by a fellow Marine; it is also equally unclear as to why he decided to join the military in the first place. Heidi Specogna’s documentary *The Short Life of José Antonio Gutierrez* (2006) presents a complicated picture of Gutierrez’s motives based on his comments to different people at different points of his life in the United States. Gutierrez illegally entered the country in 1996. Although he was in his early twenties, he was able to convince others that he was in his teens.

After leading local church members to believe that he was a minor, he was taken into the Children's Health Services, assigned a social worker, and lived with various foster families. The state agency sponsored Gutierrez's application for permanent residency which enabled him to get his "green card." He entered and completed high school and also began taking classes at a community college. However, when he was unable to secure a scholarship to continue his education, he began to consider the military as a way to pursue his goal.

According to his social worker, Gutierrez resisted Americanization despite her efforts to help him assimilate. She remembers insisting that the reluctant Gutierrez cut his hair because it was "an American thing to do."<sup>11</sup> His resistance also took on other forms: "He refused to speak English because he was proud of being from Guatemala. And he said that he never wanted to be an American." If Gutierrez did not want to be an American, there is also reason to believe that he did not want to be a Marine either. According to one of his foster brothers, Gutierrez felt pressured by limited options to enlist in the military: "He hadn't planned to do it. He never intended to go into the Marines. [...]. What he wanted was to become an architect [...]. But after he graduated from college, he couldn't see any future for himself. He did it out of sheer desperation. What else could he have done?" His social worker also recalls how Gutierrez saw the military as a means to an end when he told her: "If I get my education paid for by the government, then I could do a lot of things." However, his educational aspirations were, of course, not his only motivations. His sister, Engracia, who was still living in Guatemala, provides another reason for Gutierrez's enlistment:

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<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from Gutierrez's friends and family come from Specogna's documentary.

“He wanted to become a US citizen, to be able to get papers for me. His wish only came true after he was dead.”

The image that Gutierrez’s friends and family present is of a man who calculated the benefits that the military had to offer with the potential risk of enlistment. We see an immigrant who wanted to secure citizenship status for himself and his family and to find a way to continue his education. However, Gutierrez’s platoon sergeant provides a different account of Gutierrez’s motivation. Marc Montez recalls reviewing the applications of each new recruit in his platoon and how Gutierrez’s response stood out from the rest:

one of the questions on there is: why did you join the Marine Corps? And I distinctly remember his ’cause I read it a couple times. And it said that he, the reason he joined the Marine Corps was to give back to the United States, to give something back to the country that took him in basically. And that struck me pretty hard. I was like, wow, you know, he’s not joining for any other reason but to give back to the United States, give back to the country.

Gutierrez’s response suggests his effusive commitment to the country of which he was not yet a citizen. The statement also seems to contradict earlier statements he had made to others in which he saw enlistment as a way to benefit from the military rather than to give back to the military and the nation. It is possible that Gutierrez could be grateful and self-interested at the same time. It is also possible that Gutierrez’s motives changed over time.

Whether Gutierrez genuinely believed in the various responses he made over the years to different people, we will never really know. However, this does not prevent others from formulating narratives about Gutierrez’s life and the meaning of his death. It is important to examine how the narrative of the grateful immigrant resonates with the idea of the citizen-soldier. While the military’s treatment of citizenship as a “neoliberal good” offered to immigrant enlistees obviously challenges the civic republican ideal, in some sense, the grateful immigrant soldier actually

upholds key tenets of the civic republican tradition which includes patriotic commitment. Despite the fact of their non-citizen status, many immigrants and immigrant enlistees develop a profound patriotism for their host state. Mariscal argues that many immigrants “adopt uncritical forms of patriotism based on ‘gratitude’” to the nation in which they may have accrued some form of economic mobility or improved standard of living (“Immigration” 362). He cites a conversation with a twenty-one year old undocumented man from Mexico who has lived in the US since the age of twelve: “I would serve in the military if I was given the opportunity to do so and DIE for America if necessary. Shouldn’t I be able to be legal?” (emphasis in original). The young man’s response resonates with Gutierrez’s statement that he wanted to “give back to the United States.” Immigrant enthusiasm for service demonstrates the immigrant soldier’s non-pecuniary motives for service which are driven by hyper-patriotism and an ethic of civic obligation irrespective of citizenship status – both of which are fundamental to the civic republican ideal of the citizen-soldier. However, as Mariscal points out, it is a “sad irony that the issue of ‘giving back’ has been reduced to military service in an age of perpetual war” (362).

The immigrant soldier upholds another crucial aspect of civic republicanism and of a general liberal contractarian tradition: the legal and symbolic act of consent. Bonnie Honig points out one of the short comings of US liberalism is that citizenship for the native born is not explicitly voluntary and is usually taken for granted (92). For native-born citizens, their birth is their “consent.” For some theorists, “the liberal consenting immigrant addresses the need of a disaffected citizenry to experience its regime as choiceworthy, to see it through the eyes of still-enchanted newcomers whose choice to come here [...] is seen as living proof of the would-be universality of America’s liberal democratic principles” (75). Honig has studied how political

theorists such as Michael Walzer perceive immigrants as individuals who rejuvenate core American beliefs in family and community that have eroded as a result of “the success of the capitalist economy and America’s liberal ideology in individuating, uprooting, and alienating most of the regime’s members” (82). Honig writes that, for Walzer, the “communitarian immigrant imports a form of citizenship that liberal capitalist America is always in danger of losing or consuming.” In a similar way, the immigrant soldier reinvigorates the ideal of the citizen-soldier by representing the figure of an individual beholden to the state, who gives back to the nation through military service, and whose patriotic sacrifice relegitimizes the state and its objectives. The immigrant soldier’s “choice” of enlisting serves the ideological function of replenishing the state’s status and reifying it in the eyes of its native born. We could also say that this act of symbolic consent made legal by official oaths represents the moment of citizen-production that civic republicanism would find appealing because it makes national allegiance a conscious decision that is not taken for granted.

Although gratitude may be a genuinely felt response among immigrants, it is also politically and pedagogically useful because, through the figure of the immigrant soldier, native-born citizens are given a model of preferred citizen behavior and attitude. However, the case of José Antonio Gutierrez demonstrates how the narrative of the grateful immigrant may be a fiction. Patrick Atkinson, the director of the Guatemalan orphanage that Gutierrez lived in as a child, disputes media accounts of Gutierrez’s life:

The story that is often told and which was first released by the US embassy, by the US military, was a classical war propaganda story. Once again, people using and exploiting Tono for their own ends. And you read “Boy came to the states illegally at 14. Wants to be an American. Wants to be a Marine.” You know what? False. Completely untrue. Why would they lie like that when this boy’s story is so powerful for who he is? (qtd. in Specogna)

If the state imposes meaning on Gutierrez's death, his life story actually exposes the state's longer history of military operations in Central America and undermines the narrative of the grateful immigrant soldier. Specogna's documentary reveals the social and economic conditions that circumscribed Gutierrez's "choice" to enlist and thus discloses the discrepancies in official narratives about his death.

The film recounts how Gutierrez was born in the 1970s during the devastating civil war. His family fled from their mountain village to the capital in order to avoid the Guatemalan army's massacre of Indians. Due to unknown circumstances, both parents died leaving Gutierrez and his older sister to fend for themselves. At some point, the two siblings were separated and were eventually reunited years later through Gutierrez's determination to find his sister. Before the reunion, however, Gutierrez joined the many other war orphans that populated the city streets of Guatemala City before eventually moving in to the Casa Alianza Orphanage.

Greg Grandin has described the vicious nature of the Guatemalan civil war and the particularly brutal assault that civilians suffered at the hands of the Guatemalan army. He writes that between 1981 and 1983,

The army executed roughly 100,000 Mayan peasants unlucky enough to live in a region identified as the seedbed of a leftist insurgency. In some towns, troops murdered children by beating them on rocks or throwing them into rivers as their parents watched. "*Adiós, niño*" – good-bye, child – said one soldier, before pitching an infant to drown. (90)

The extent of brutality and the war-waging techniques used by the Guatemalan army reflect changes in the US military warfare strategy which, as Grandin puts it, used Central America to test out and perfect counterinsurgent methods. The Guatemalan army's use of "primitive" warfare was part of US Army Colonel John Waghelstein's theory of effective counterinsurgency tactics which would be crucial in facing what he believed was the future of US military engagement: counterinsurgency operations in the third world (89).

“Going primitive” in Waghelstein’s view included “psychological operations, civic action, and grass roots, human intelligence work” (qtd. in Grandin 91). Yet Waghelstein’s description obscures the kind of training that his Central American “apprentices” received at the hands of US military advisors. Grandin writes that “U.S. allies in El Salvador and Guatemala preferred to conduct their killing with artisan expertise” in which their victims’ bodies would show the “marks of unhurried, meticulous cuts, amputations, and burns made while the victim was still breathing” (89). The US began training Central American militaries in the practice of low-intensity warfare as a cost-cutting method of maintaining US power in Latin America. Grandin argues that the US “support of counterinsurgent regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala” allowed the US to “outsource” military operations (88). Part of this outsourcing included Guatemalan death squad units “created and directly supervised by American security advisers” (96).

My larger point here is to underscore the connection between the US military and the Guatemalan army which wreaked mayhem on Guatemalan civilians like Gutierrez and his family. In the documentary, Specogna retraces Gutierrez’s life in the orphanage and interviews friends who described his intense longing for a family and a home, both of which were destroyed by US-sponsored military aggression. Furthermore, we see the journey he likely traveled from Guatemala through Mexico on top of railroad cars along with other economic migrants seeking work in the United States. In total, Gutierrez’s constant displacement due to war and to Guatemala’s war-torn economy bears a direct link to US foreign policy and military power. To call his eventual induction into the very institution partly responsible for destroying his country and compelling his migration ironic does not seem to fully capture the devastating power of neoliberal militarism.

Sutton and Novkov also remind us about the link between US military interventions and neoliberal economic policies which “have helped to create unbearable conditions of social tension, violence, and crisis in many developing countries” (19). Kirk further adds that such conditions demonstrate how “how war and militarism uproot people and make them available, indeed force them, to look for livelihood elsewhere” (34). Gutierrez’s story illustrates how neoliberal militarism can perpetuate itself in different forms as it contributes to the conditions that compel some individuals to join its ranks. Gutierrez’s life also shows us that just like US working-class citizens have felt economically compelled to enlist in the military, the draw for Latin American economic and political refugees is equally strong and, due to new recruitment programs, their enlistment is made easier.

### **Citizenship and the Latina Immigrant Soldier**

In order to reconcile the reality of non-citizens, such as Gutierrez, dying on behalf of a nation to which they did not officially belong, legislators wrote and passed a series of bills that imposed citizenship onto deceased non-citizen soldiers.<sup>12</sup> In a bipartisan effort, Congress quickly passed the *Armed Forces Naturalization Act of 2003* (H.R. 1954) which granted citizenship to deceased non-citizen soldiers and their immediate surviving families (Amaya, “Dying American” 4). Although the act is a seemingly magnanimous gesture on the part of the state, Amaya describes the granting of posthumous citizenship as an illiberal practice that negates the very notion of

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<sup>12</sup> Congressional bills include H.R. 1691, introduced on April 9, 2003, which “expedite[d] the granting of posthumous citizenship to members of the United States Armed Forces” (Amaya “Dying American” 8). On the same day, H.R. 1685 was also introduced and proposed “amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act to include those military personnel killed by illness or in combat, and their families. In addition, it made this amendment retroactive to September 11, 2001.” On April 29, 2003, H.R. 1850 known as the *Fairness for America’s Heroes Act*, granted “immigration benefits to the immediate surviving family (children, wife, parents).”

contractual liberalism: consent. For obvious reasons, posthumous citizenship is nonconsensual because the “dead cannot enter into the contractual aspects of naturalization” (9). Furthermore, after studying the lives of several deceased immigrant soldiers who died during the Iraq War, Amaya asserts that some may not have wanted to gain US citizenship including Marine Lance Cpl. Jesús Suárez del Solar who died on March 27, 2003. Suárez del Solar’s father “has repeatedly stated that his son did not want to become a citizen, and wished to remain a Mexican citizen” (11). Amaya also points out that many of these immigrant soldiers had permanent residency for over five years (the length of time required before a permanent resident can apply for citizenship) which means that they could have applied for citizenship before joining the military but for some reason chose not to (11). Amaya’s argument is that it is false to assume that all immigrant soldiers want to become US citizens and that the series of legislative acts that grant posthumous citizenship imposes postmortem naturalization irrespective of the deceased immigrant’s desires.

For Amaya, the issue of imposed naturalization is tied to a US history of imperialism including imposed US citizenship on Mexicans living in conquered Mexican territory after the US-Mexico War of 1848 and on Puerto Ricans in 1917 after Congress passed the Jones Act (12-13). Thus, for Latinas/os, the issue of citizenship without consent has historical antecedents which suggest that “[n]aturalization cannot simply be seen as a privilege or an honor. Consent is important, particularly for Latino/as, many of whom chose not to become citizens, not to enter into the contract, even though they may have qualified” (13). In the end, Gutierrez received the citizenship that he may or may not have wanted as legislators codified the grateful immigrant narrative into legislation which grants posthumous citizenship.

Amaya's analysis of the illiberal practice of posthumous citizenship exposes the hypocrisy and imperial history of US citizenship policies. He rightly critiques the manner in which US citizenship is imposed on deceased immigrant soldiers irrespective of their wishes or is granted to those who desire it only after the fact of their death. But it is also tragic when immigrant soldiers are denied the US citizenship that they *want* and have presumably earned through military service. The case of Ekatherine Bautista adds another dimension to the dilemma that non-citizen soldiers face and also provides a much needed glimpse into the experiences of Latina immigrant soldiers.

Little has been written about Latina immigrant soldiers and their motivations for enlisting, their experiences as female soldiers, and their views on war. Julia Young's article "A Salute to Latinas in the Armed Forces" provides insight into how one Latina immigrant enlisted in search of economic and personal growth. Young describes how Storekeeper First Class Isabel Paez joined the Coast Guard in order to secure economic stability, educational benefits, and career options for herself and her family. While some militarists decry the rationalization of the military, women like Paez rely on and benefit from the military's turn to economic incentives and its ability to provide key social services. Paez explains: "I was able to support my family, my husband went to school full time, [...]. Plus, there were the intangible benefits: medical and dental services, going shopping at the military exchange, tuition benefits, the training you get." Additionally, Paez received one of the most important benefits of service: US citizenship. For Paez, a recent immigrant from Colombia, the military is an accommodating institution for immigrants seeking to improve their circumstances: "People that come to this country have to struggle with many things.

But [the military] gives you the skills to compete and the assurance that you are capable of doing anything.”

While Young’s account of Paez depicts the story of a successful Latina immigrant soldier, Mariscal’s brief article on Mexican-American female soldiers reminds readers of the dangers of war even for women who are theoretically unexposed to deadly combat. Mariscal describes how Ana Laura Esparza, a native of Monterrey, Mexico, viewed the military as a stepping stone to a future career: “Esparza joined the Army in 2002 so she could receive money to attend the University of Houston. Her dream was to become a psychologist and buy her parents a bigger home” (“Mexican-American Women”). Esparza, who had lived in the US since the age of seven, was killed on October 1, 2003, at the age of twenty-one by an improvised explosive device.

Like Esparza, Ekatherine Bautista is a Mexican immigrant who enlisted in the US military. Originally from Morelia, Michoacán, Bautista immigrated to the US at the age of fourteen and attended high school and college in the United States (Truax “Sargento con identidad falsa”). Her reasons for joining were based on personal and civic motivations. Her father, Luis Bautista, noted that “ella quería una carrera, no tenía dinero para pagarla y le gustaba el Ejército, es su vida” (“she wanted a career, she did not have money to pay for one and she liked the army, it is her life”). Eileen Truax adds that it was only after the attack on the World Trade Center that Bautista “decidió ingresar a las fuerzas armadas para servir al país que la vio convertirse en mujer” (“decided to enlist in the armed forces to serve the country in which she became a woman”). Bautista has served in the Army for seven years and has been stationed in Iraq. Under normal circumstances, she would be officially honored for her service and would have been granted citizenship by now. Instead, she faces a

judicial hearing in military courts and possible deportation to Mexico because she used false documents when she enlisted.

Because Bautista entered the country as an undocumented immigrant, she used her aunt's name and identification in order to negotiate life in the U.S. She continued this practice when enlisting in the Army in 2002. According to Bautista, the FBI detected her use of a false identity but took no action to reject her enlistment application. Instead, a few months after the discovery, she was sent to Iraq. Bautista had little reason to anticipate the consequences of her indiscretion: “Yo he llegado a la conclusión de que me aceptaron aún sabiendo que mi nombre no era el que aparacía en los documentos, por la cantidad de personas que necesitaban en ese momento para ir a la guerra en Irak” (“I reached the conclusion that they accepted me knowing my name was not the one that appeared on the documents because of the number of people they needed at that moment to go to the war in Iraq”). To Bautista's surprise, the Army sent her a notice on June 18, 2009, stating that an investigation had already begun into her conduct, that she would be discharged in July, and that upon reentering the US (after leaving the Army base in Germany where she was stationed), she could be deported at any time.

According to her lawyer Noemí Ramírez, Bautista will petition for US citizenship based on “una cláusula de la ley que determina que los soldados que hayan servido en tiempos de guerra pueden convertirse en ciudadanos estadounidenses” (“a clause in the law which determines that soldiers who have served in times of war can become United States citizens”) (Morales Almada). In 2002, President George W. Bush partly resolved the military's image problem of relying heavily on non-naturalized soldiers by exempting non-citizen soldiers from the usual lengthy period required for naturalization. The Executive Order “provide[s] expedited naturalization

for aliens and noncitizen nationals serving in an active-duty status in the Armed Forces of the United States during the period of the war against terrorists of global reach” (qtd. in Feldman 208).

Bautista’s predicament points to the deficiencies in US immigration policies. It is easier for legislators to grant citizenship posthumously because there is no fear that the immigrant soldier will use his or her service to demand rights or significant changes in public policy and social attitudes. Furthermore, the deceased immigrant soldier serves the useful function of reflecting US American values back onto the nation and upholding “the fantasy of America as an immigrant nation where everyone has a chance at fulfilling the American dream” (Amaya “Latino Immigrants” 243). If the immigrant soldier is symbolically embraced in what Amaya calls an “ethnocentric fantasy” (247), he/she is also a constitutive threat to that nationalist fantasy.

Alexander emphasizes this point in her study of the Patriot Act of 2001 which, she argues, allows for the slippage between “domestic terrorist” and “immigrant” (237). The act endows the president with the power to establish “trials by military tribunal” for non-citizens thereby increasing the suspicion and detention of immigrant subjects. As a result the immigrant “as perennial suspect, risky by virtue of status and bearing the disproportionate brunt of enemy is further criminalized in this act of patriotism and made to function as nonpatriot.” How does the Latina/o immigrant soldier negotiate the ambiguous and treacherous space of war-time nationalism? Does military service deflect charges of “domestic terrorist” away from un/documented Latina/o immigrants?

In Bautista’s case, her status as an undocumented immigrant may not have led to charges of domestic terrorism, but it has certainly left her vulnerable to imprisonment and deportation. She has told reporters that she feels

muy decepcionada, no del Ejército, sino de ciertas personas a cargo. No sé si esta decisión se tomó por un sentimiento antiinmigrante, o sexista, pero yo he hecho un servicio impecable; he recibido certificaciones, hay mucha gente que puede hablar de mi carrera.

very disappointed, not with the Army, but with certain people in charge. I do not know if this decision was made because of anti-immigrant sentiment or sexism, but I have given impeccable service; I have received certifications, there are many people who can speak about my career. (qtd. in Truax, “Sargento con identidad falsa”)

Unable to identify which prejudices – nativism or sexism – motivated “ciertas personas,” she can only await the possible fate of deportation. Despite her impeccable record of service, her near death experience in Iraq, and her unyielding commitment to both the Army and the state, Bautista was simultaneously discharged and criminalized.

Bautista’s case might also suggest how the Latina immigrant soldier is caught in the matrix of what Alexander calls “hypernationalism,” a process which relies, in part, on the hypermasculine soldier and the “new citizen patriot” (234). While the hypermasculine soldier is “more usually racialized externally as white so as to be juxtaposed against the dark enemy,” Post-9/11 legislation such as the Patriot Act of 2001 has called into existence the patriot who shares the soldier’s hypermasculinity and heteromasculinity (235). This citizen patriot is also racialized white because he represents “the originary citizen who was ‘here’ at the very beginning of the carving of the homeland, and therefore entrusted with its guardianship, which he presumably promised never to betray.” Both figures limit the kinds of subjects who can occupy these privileged positions of power. Alexander’s characterization of the state’s construction of soldier and patriot reveal the limited extent to which “non-citizen

Latinos can be part of narratives of ideal citizenship” (Amaya “Latino Immigrants” 245). In a sense, Bautista represents both the “grateful immigrant” and the ideal citizen-soldier. Truax describes how “su deseo de servir a la que considera su patria había estado ahí siempre, pero se avivó tras los ataques terroristas de 2001” (“her desire to serve what she considers to be her country has always been there, but it awoke after the terrorist attacks of 2001”) (“La Sargento Bautista”). Even after being prematurely discharged and threatened with deportation, she has said, “si me aceptan, yo regreso. Se necesita mucha gente luchando no solo en Irak, sino en muchas lugares” (if they accept me, I will return. They need many people fighting not only in Iraq, but also in many places”). Despite her enduring fidelity to the service and the state, her identity as a woman, a Mexican, and an immigrant renders her patriotic commitment suspect in the eyes of the state. Or, as Alexander puts it, “not just (any) body can be a patriot” (233).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter traces the varied ways in which Latinas/os and Latina/o immigrants are positioned within the neoliberal military. I began by describing the military’s turn to a labor-market rationality with the inception of the all-volunteer force. In order to attract enough service people to fill the ranks of a standing peacetime army, the military turned to economic incentives and benefit packages that induced the enlistment of mostly working-class people. I have also drawn on Feldman’s work on the “substitute soldier” to show that the military has always had a tradition of relying on economically disadvantaged individuals who are motivated by pecuniary reasons to serve. This history then leads into an analysis of current military recruiting strategies that treat enlistees as consumers by appealing to their economic interests. Military recruitment ads that target Latinos and Latinas also draw on

supposed cultural values such as a sense of masculine honor and family tradition that Latinos purportedly have. In ads that appeal to Latinas, the military often addresses Latina mothers whose influence over their daughters is critical to enticing Latina recruits. By combining economic appeals with cultural appeals, the military hopes to increase Latina/o recruitment exponentially. In addition to the rationalization of the military as a sign of neoliberal militarism, I also examine the connection between neoliberal policies that promote social disinvestment and the rise of enlistment figures among America's poor and working-class people. I show how military welfare is the antecedent to nonmilitary welfare programs. As the state's priorities shift and it adopts economic policies that favor ending the welfare state, working-class and people of color seek economic resources from various institutions.

Elena Rodriguez's novel *Peacetime* fictionalizes the struggles of working-class and women of color in the military by focusing on a Chicana soldier's experience in basic training. Medrano's repeated challenge to the military's patriarchal structure and misogynist traditions emphasize the problems women face within a military institution that, for some of them, is their only viable option for economic survival. Rodriguez's novel also suggests that women are not only inducted into the military but also into what Wendy Brown calls "neo-liberal citizenship" in which individuals internalize the neoliberal logic of privatization by displacing institutional responsibilities onto themselves.

Rodriguez's novel sets the stage for a more extensive study of Latina soldiering in the US military. Working with available albeit limited published accounts of Latinas in the war on terror, I chart the factors that motivate Latinas to join the service. How and why do some Latinas eschew traditional racial and gender expectations to wear the uniform? How does the Latina soldier position herself within

an institution inhospitable to racial, cultural, and gender difference? How does her service then change dominant understandings of gender and race?

In any study of militarism, one must address the status of the nation-state and the individuals it relies on for its defense. By treating citizenship as a “neoliberal good,” the military attracts thousands of immigrant recruits each year to the dismay of civic republicans who cherish traditional notions of service and sacrifice. The case of José Antonio Gutierrez tragically illustrates the effects of US military intervention in Latin America and how individuals who flee the effects of that policy sometimes end up embedded in the military institution itself. If, as Amaya asserts, “the soldier becomes a synecdoche that stands for the fraternity of citizens,” then how does the “legal and ethnic status of soldiers” complicate the representation? (“Latino Immigrants” 249). The experiences of Gutierrez and Ekatherine Bautista suggest the vexed position that Latina/o immigrant soldiers occupy in the neoliberal military. As non-citizens who accept and perform the role of citizen-soldier, they force the state to reconcile its exclusionary practices in order to accommodate the military’s manpower needs. Tragically, it does so by awarding posthumous legal status while withholding citizenship from the living.

As each section highlights the ways in which Latinas/os and Latina/o immigrants negotiate life within the neoliberal military, they also underscore the ambivalent position of the Latina/o soldiering body. I began the chapter with the controversy over Felix Longoria’s body in order to emphasize the racialized body’s limited capacity to represent the nation even when that body is vested in the symbolic power of the military uniform. In the case of Longoria and Gutierrez, the state deigned to acknowledge the death of Latino soldiers by posthumous recognition. Meanwhile, Latina soldiers like Piestewa and Bautista achieve visibility when it is

politically expedient to recognize that the military needs Latina soldiers for its national defense.

## CONCLUSION

In 2007, Latina/o media activists launched a media campaign against the Public Broadcasting System's (PBS) scheduled airing of a fifteen-hour documentary on World War Two. The film entitled simply *The War* was directed and produced by renowned documentarian Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. Activists felt that the participation of people of color as soldiers, citizens, and workers was largely omitted from a film that purported to show the American experience. In an effort led by journalism professor Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, concerned and outraged individuals formed the Defend the Honor campaign, a "grassroots effort representing thousands of individuals, [and] members of dozens of organizations" that petitioned PBS and Burns to amend the film before its airing so that it could reflect a more inclusive portrayal of American life ("Defend the Honor"). The name and the objective of the Defend the Honor campaign placed value on the notion of honoring the service and sacrifice of the approximately 500,000 Latino men and women who served in the armed forces and the general Latina/o population that helped stabilize wartime America. Latina/o military service during WWII has been a particularly important source of pride among Latina/o communities. For example, many Chicanas/os pay tribute to the distinguished record of bravery in which Mexican American soldiers earned eleven Congressional Medals of Honor during that war (Oropeza 13). It is this history of service that animated many participants in the Defend the Honor campaign to fight for Latina/o inclusion in what they viewed as Burns's myopic depiction of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of an intense letter-writing campaign, the group successfully pressured Burns to hire noted Latino documentarian Héctor Galán to film interviews with Latino and Native American veterans, part of which were added to *The War* in a manner that seemed to suggest that these voices were an after-thought to the epic narrative of World War Two.

Were Burns a struggling documentarian with little audience, his films would not have sparked this latest controversy within the Latina/o community.<sup>2</sup> In a letter of protest signed by New York Latina/o legislators and sent to PBS executives, Representative José Rivera describes the cultural weight that Burns' productions carry: "When PBS, agencies of the federal government and state governments put their resources behind an expansive project like the 'The War' [sic], it not only assumes a special place in our culture and an enduring part of the historic video record; it displaces other efforts to cover the topic. Like other PBS productions, 'The War' will be widely aired, distributed, marketed and made available in libraries, classrooms, and stores" ("News from Assemblyman"). Rivera's assertion reveals how dominant martial narratives become institutionalized forms of knowledge that perpetuate exclusionary curricula.

Because Burns' work often gets embedded within educational curriculum, it takes on the mantle of "History" and, as a result, Latina/o communities are prompted to take his films seriously. These skewed versions of national memory also have serious implications for Latina/o cultural citizenship. As historian Ronald Takaki explains in his letter to Paula Kerger, President and CEO of PBS, the film potentially represents a contribution to an already problematic US historiography:

What Burns has done is to reflect and reinforce the Master Narrative of American history – the pervasive and popular story that our country was settled by European immigrants and that Americans are white or European in

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<sup>2</sup> Latino media activists have identified what they see as a disturbing trend in several of Burns's films. According to Henry Casso, President of Project Uplift, four of Burns's films including *The Civil War* (1990), *Baseball* (1994), *Jazz* (2001) and *The War* (2007) total 3,705 minutes in length, yet "the appearance of a Latino subject in these 4 works is about 9 – 11 minutes total." Activists argue that this lack of coverage, whether intentional or not, suggests to viewers that the U.S. Latino population did not participate in the country's history or has had no hand in shaping important moments in American culture.

ancestry. Even when innocent or non-intentional, the Master Narrative's omission of minorities is not only inaccurate but also injurious, for it presents a narrow and exclusive definition of who is American.<sup>3</sup>

At issue in the debate is how American audiences will see Latinas/os or, more accurately, *not* see Latinas/os. If Latinas/os are perceived to be absent from US history or otherwise inconsequential to nation formation, then their struggles and accomplishments are not only diminished, but their claims to rights and equality are mitigated by the notion that if one does not participate in the nation's progress, one is not fully entitled to its benefits.

The Burns controversy makes clear how war historiography continues to be an important terrain of struggle for Latina/o communities. It also makes clear how those communities have mobilized to protest state and corporate sponsorship of war stories and to produce counternarratives of their own. However, this particular debate over *The War* stops short of addressing the larger ideological implications of the cinematic valorization of WWII in the context of an increasingly militarized culture. Because Latina/o media activists focused on ensuring recognition for Latina/o participation in WWII, they relegated a critique of US military power to the margin. My reading of the controversy emphasizes the need to view Burns' documentary as contributing to a general militarization of US culture that must be critiqued as much as the historical occlusion the film perpetuates.

The film's coincidental timing proved felicitous for George W. Bush's insistence that WWII serve as the historical model for foreign policy and national resolve needed to defeat terrorism. As Patrick Deer points out, the "inescapability of the invocations of World War II" in political speeches delivered during the early years

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to his letter, Dr. Takaki enclosed a copy of his book *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (New York: Little, Brown, 2000).

of the war, “signals a powerful desire to legitimize our own culture of violence” (4). If we view Burns’ documentary as part of a war discourse that promotes the country’s militarization, what is at stake in insisting that Latina/o histories be included in such a project? More pointedly, how might a Latina/o activist campaign that seeks public recognition and historical accuracy be appropriated by the state to serve its current military needs?

In this dissertation I have shown that Latina writers have been astute critics of the ways in which war narratives are recycled and of the cultural and political implications of such reiterations. Just as WWII serves as an imperfect analogy for the War on Terror, US and Mexican officials deployed the US-Mexico War of 1848 as a problematic analogy for understanding hemispheric relations during the early years of the Cold War. María Cristina Mena’s binational upbringing and bicultural identity informed her nuanced analysis of competing and complementary nationalisms and war narratives. Reading her young adult fiction provides an unexpected critical model of how to question the received official narratives that attempt to rewrite histories of war – an urgent skill that we need in our own moment of war and of proliferating war stories.

I have also analyzed Latina literature that reveals how masculinist re-articulations of previous wars – 1848 and the Mexican revolution – are unable to re-imagine libratory roles for women in the present. The texts I examine compel us to think anew the relationship between war, gender norms, and nationalism or cultural nationalism and move beyond the uncritical celebration of historical figures like Villa and Zapata. As we approach the centennial of the Mexican revolution in 2010, the revolution will gain even more prominence in the Chicana/o and Mexican cultural imaginary. We can anticipate new narratives of the revolution that will once again re-write history by reinterpreting the revolution’s symbolic and political meanings. As

political leaders and artists think of ways to relate the revolution to the present, the works of Berman, Cisneros, and Viramontes remind us of the importance of female desire and experience in shaping revolutionary war stories.

Chicana/o and Mexican depictions of soldaderas often show fierce indigenous and mestiza women with rebozos and rifles – icons of empowered Mexican women who participated in the mass uprising against the Mexican state. The Zapatistas have already demonstrated how groups can reclaim and re-envision iconic figures from the revolution to serve as symbolic embodiments of subaltern resistance to oppressive state policies. But not all invocations of the revolution represent anti-state positions. In Rodriguez's *Peacetime*, soldaderas are invoked by Chicana enlistees who draw on cultural references to understand their role as US Army soldiers. In one scene, Eliza Medrano and Adela Canela discuss their place in a genealogy of Mexican warrior women:

“Adela, are you ever scared?”

“Todo el tiempo.”

[...]

“Dealing with fear is part of life. I’m sure that even the soldaderas were scared.”

“Who?”

“The soldaderas,” Canela said, looking at Medrano’s puzzled expression.

“They fought during the revolution in Mexico.”

“Females on the front lines?”

“You better believe it. You know, Eliza, we come from a long history of bravery. Our men have received more Medals of Honor than any other group.”

“Really?”

“Yes. We’re a brave people.” (123)

Adela and Eliza find solace in these examples of Mexican and Chicano bravery as the two women struggle to endure the Army’s sexist and patriarchal structure. In this context, soldaderas represent female empowerment and cultural pride which enables these Chicana soldiers to accept their place in the US military.

While the image of a Chicana soldier can inspire comparisons to the figure of the stoic *soldadera*, the association seems problematic because the revolution does not make a convincing or appropriate analogy for all wars particularly for the Iraq War. Mariscal writes that the “US invasion and occupation of Iraq bears little resemblance to the Mexican Revolution in which common people rose up to take back control from a corrupt government and foreign influence” (“Mexican-American Women in Iraq”). Mariscal’s point in describing the incongruence of these two wars is to consider the representation of Melissa Valles and Ana Laura Esparza, a Chicana and Mexicana “green card soldier,” who were killed during the Iraq War in 2003. Were these women “Adelitas” simply because they took up arms in a military campaign? Or does the *soldadera* more accurately symbolize a subaltern position against government corruption and US imperialism? “History alone will tell us,” Mariscal writes, “if Valles and Esparza – these new ‘Adelitas’ – gave their lives in a righteous cause or in an unjust act of arrogance and political miscalculation.”

I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation that Latina literature proves to be a rich source of cultural critique that unfortunately continues to be overlooked in most studies of war. While I have made a committed effort to analyzing this critical body of work, my dissertation remains limited in scope and coverage. Nonetheless, in what follows, I will discuss at least two areas of inquiry that require more attention: 1) a more prominent transnational analysis of war and militarism; and 2) emphasis on the role of capitalism and neoliberalism in mobilizing Chicana/o and Mexican subaltern resistance. These two areas would strengthen a more comprehensive study of Latinas/os and war culture yet to be written.

Because this dissertation has centered mostly on Chicana/o experiences of and scholarship on war, its transnational focus remains limited. But it gestures toward a transnational analysis of militarism that, as Sutton and Novkov point out, can “expose

'linkages' among different places, underscoring how social processes and ideologies in one area of the world relate to crises, power struggles, or political designs in other areas" (11). The "linkages" are especially pronounced between Chicana/o and Mexican communities as both share deep historical, cultural, and social connections that are continually evolving. It is no wonder then that Chicanas and Mexicanas have imagined and produced cultural formations that speak to their similarities and differences. Mining these cultural texts for what they have to say about militarism can reveal important insights into how separate yet connected communities of Chicanas and Mexicanas negotiate war and the impact of militarization on their societies.

For example, one could examine the rich body of cultural and political work done by Chicana anti-war activists during the Viet Nam War, particularly the activism of Delia Alvarez. Alvarez's protest against the war carried special weight because she was the sister of a P.O.W. and therefore her public position complicated the Nixon administration's policy of "quiet diplomacy" in which the Alvarezes and other P.O.W. families were told to avoid public displays of grief over their loved one's absence. The policy, according to Natasha Zaretsky, "advised the families of captured and missing men to stay out of the public eye, refrain from contacting the press, and keep their private concerns about their men precisely that: private" (206). Delia, as the family spokesperson, initially complied, but soon she and her mother, Soledad, began researching the country of Viet Nam and learned about its embattled history with French and then U.S. imperialism. Delia, along with other POW relatives, formed a group called the POW-MIA Families for Immediate Release and began to speak out against the war. Delia's protest joined the voices of thousands of other Chicanas and Chicanos who protested U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia and the devastating effects of the war on the Chicano community.

Delia Alvarez's defiance of the Nixon administration's "quiet diplomacy" policy resonates with Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska's efforts to posit an equally powerful ethical challenge to Mexican president Luis Echeverría's administration and to Mexican militarism's circumscription of public discourse. In *La noche de Tlatelolco* (1971), Poniatowska resists the foreclosure of public grief by focusing on the Mexican military's murder, assault, and imprisonment of protestors during the 1968 student demonstrations. While the state tried to silence the attack, Poniatowska's collection of testimonios from the victims resists militarism's repression of dissent.

Both Chicana/o and Mexican youth-led movements protested against militarism – in Southeast Asia and in Mexico – and faced intense scrutiny as their leaders came under state surveillance. Recently released transcripts of private conversations between Nixon and Echeverría, reveal the level of interest that top political leaders had in Chicana/o war protests and their international implications. Thanks to Nixon's secret recording habits, we can now read about Echeverría's attempt to garner support from the US government by presenting himself as America's staunchest Latin American supporter in the fight against Soviet influence in the region. In conversations held on June 15 and 16, 1972, Echeverría warns Nixon about the growing interest in Fidel Castro and the spread of Marxism among Mexicans and US minority activists: "Mr. President, I was informed by various people that groups of Mexicans had been in touch with friends of Angela Davis [...]. And that we were aware of the plans of the organization that Angela Davis heads to mount a key demonstration in San Antonio protesting the existence of political prisoners in Mexico. All of this is connected to people in Chile, with people in Cuba, with the so-called 'Chicano' groups in the United States, with certain groups in Berkeley, California - they're all working closely together" (qtd. in Doyle). Echeverría's urgent

tone suggests concern over the transnational solidarity movements forming throughout the hemisphere as “Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans and other racial minority groups” within the US make contact with disaffected Mexicans. Because US and Mexican heads of state view war policy through a transnational lens in order to identify, encourage, or neutralize key alliances, it is equally necessary to examine how Chicanas/os and Mexicans protest war and militarism through a transnational lens as well. By positioning both Chicana protest to the Viet Nam War with Mexicana challenges to the Mexican state’s violence at Tlatelolco and the subsequent period of military oppression known as *la guerra sucia*, we can better examine how Latinas engage in the tactics of opposition and redress as they narrate the brutality of the late 1960s and 1970s.

While I have alluded to the role of capitalism and neoliberalism in each chapter and more extensively in the chapter on neoliberal militarism, there are many angles from which to approach neoliberalism and militarism that would provide additional insight into how Chicanas and Mexicanas resist or affirm both ideologies. One could study women in the Zapatista movement as a particularly important and complex example of Mexicana militarism and anti-neoliberalism. By launching their assault on several towns in Chiapas on January 1, 1994, the day Mexico was to begin implementing neoliberal reform vis-à-vis the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Zapatistas used the expected media coverage to turn the world’s attention to the political, economic, and ethnic crisis in Chiapas. Thus, a strong critique of neoliberal policies has always been central to Zapatista resistance as its members recognized that the prospect of opening up markets to advanced foreign competition did not bode well for Mexico’s working classes.

In order to implement oppressive neoliberal policies, federal and state armed forces increased their use of violence to suppress dissent and discourage organizing

efforts. Although Mexican officials bear responsibility for the country's political and economic oppression and its disregard for the human rights of its citizens, the role of the United States in expanding the rise of neoliberalism and militarism in Mexico cannot be underemphasized. The US government has used its dominating influence in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to construct loan programs that require neoliberal restructuring of debtor nation economies. During the 1990s, the US offered \$10 billion to help Mexico stabilize itself in the face of economic crisis in exchange for its switch from "import substitution and protectionism" to privatization and foreign investment (Stephen "Los Nuevos Desaparecidos" 83). The infusion of US financial aid into Mexico went hand-in-hand with Mexican militarization. During the Carlos Salinas and George H. W. Bush administrations (1988-1992), the US sold over \$214 million in military equipment to bolster Mexico's army and police forces. Major arms deals continued into the Ernesto Zedillo and Bill Clinton administrations including one in 1994 totaling \$64 million and another \$46 million in 1995 which, according to John Ross, resulted in Mexico having the second largest military in Latin America (41).

Mexican militarization continues under the guise of anti-narcotics programs which deflect criticism of the increasing use of military presence and force in civilian centers. Among the repertoire of low-intensity conflict (LIC) military tactics is the commingling of military and civilian police forces. For example, Lynn Stephen writes that at one point the "entire top command of Mexico City's police was replaced with army officers, and active or retired military personnel now head police forces in 21 of Mexico's 31 states" ("The Construction of Indigenous Suspects" 387). In Chiapas, militarization alters the daily life practices of Chiapanecos as people negotiate military road blocks, permanent installations, and roving humvee patrols in which soldiers

armed with guns and video cameras simultaneously surveil and terrorize civilian populations (389-397).

Mexican military officers use many of the LIC tactics learned from their training at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in Fort Benning, Georgia, formerly known as the School of the Americas (391). Such specialized training is having devastating and unforeseen consequences for Mexicans who live throughout Mexico. According to Alex Sánchez, many former members of Los Zetas, Mexico's elite Special Forces, are now working as "hitmen and contract killers" for the infamous drug cartel known as the Gulf Cartel. In addition to their mercenary duties, former Zetas have also set up training camps in Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Michoacán where they train other cartel members in the torture techniques they have learned from the US military. These Zetas have also established ties with former members of Los Kables, Guatemala's elite military force who have also deserted the state military to "become enforcers for various Central American drug-trafficking operations."<sup>4</sup> Like a cancer that spreads uncontrollably, militarism increasingly appears in frightening manifestations as it morphs into different forms of violence. As counterinsurgents become "narco-soldiers" involved in drug-trafficking and human smuggling, U.S. and Mexican civilians are left vulnerable to paramilitarists trained by the US military in specialized torture techniques.

In the face of military violence, women in the Zapatistas have taken up arms in order to protect themselves and their communities against the state's economic and military onslaught. For Enloe, such a reaction only works to spread the malignant power of militarization: "Without a self-conscious avoidance of militarized forms of public action, the militarization of one sector of public life can generate an equally

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<sup>4</sup> According to Stephen, many members of both Los Zetas and Los Kables were trained by the US military at the School of the Americas ("Los Nuevos Desaparecidos" 87-88).

militarized response, apparently based on the assumption that the only effective response to official militarism is the militarization of dissent” (*Maneuvers* 4). Enloe characterizes the “militarization of dissent” as “a tragic failure of political imagination” because of the way in which militarism “*privileges* masculinity” (emphasis in original). While Enloe’s critique is well-founded, the Zapatistas propose a different model of militarism that eschews organizational structures based on patriarchal orders, misogynist practices, or masculine privilege.

Indeed, the year before the Zapatistas made their debut on the world stage, a revolution had already taken place within their ranks as women rebels mandated the disarticulation of militarism and masculinity through a 10-point list of demands called *La Ley Revolucionaria de las Mujeres* (LRM) or the Women’s Revolutionary Law.<sup>5</sup> The LRM’s significance lies in its assertion of women’s rights within the EZLN organization, the various indigenous communities, and the individual families to which Zapatista women belong. The LRM and the Zapatista men and women who abide by it debilitate patriarchal militarism by acknowledging women’s “specific situation of discrimination” and placing “the corresponding responsibility for gender subordination” onto men (Millán Moncayo 86). The gradual yet powerful dismantling

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<sup>5</sup> The LRM includes the following ten demands: women have the right to 1) “participate in the revolutionary struggle in a way determined by their desire and capacity”; 2) to receive a just salary; 3) to determine the number of children they will bear; 4) to “hold positions of authority if they are freely and democratically elected”; 5) to receive primary medical attention for themselves and their children; 6) to have an education; 7) to “choose their romantic partner, and are not to be forced into marriage”; 8) to not be beaten by family members; 9) to hold leadership positions within the EZLN and “hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces”; and 10) to “have all the rights and obligations elaborated in the Revolutionary Laws and regulations” (see “Women’s Revolutionary Law” 3-4). Comandante Susana, head of the women’s commission of the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee (CCRI) which serves as the top organizing body for the EZLN, compiled the list of demands after speaking with women in various communities about their major concerns. In March 1993, she presented the LRM to the CCRI assembly for ratification. In an interview, Subcomandante Marcos described the crowd’s response to Susana’s provocative demands: “The Women’s Revolutionary Law that Susana had just read meant a real revolution for indigenous communities. The men looked to one another, nervous, restless. [...] The women were singing; men were scratching their heads. I prudently called for a recess....That is the truth: the first Zapatista uprising was in March 1993 and was led by Zapatista women. There were no losses, and they won” (qtd. in Millán Moncayo 85-86).

of patriarchal privilege within the EZLN and its supporting communities challenges our notions of militarism in general and raises new questions about women's relationship to militarism. Can the "militarization of dissent" be a viable form of resistance to the even greater power and weaponry of a state-sponsored military and counterinsurgency force?

Another important question to ask about Zapatista militarism is how women operate within the guerrilla group and what benefits they receive from their association. Women are involved in all levels from the CCRI to the descending organizational levels of the EZLN's military structure.<sup>6</sup> Published interviews with Zapatista women reveal the extent of military training that all Zapatistas receive. In one account, Infantry Major Ana María, who became a Zapatista at the age of twelve or thirteen, describes the education she received in weapons and politics: "They taught us to walk in the mountain, to load a weapon, to hunt. They taught us military combat exercises, and when we had learned that, they taught us politics. Then we went to the communities to speak with our people" (qtd. in Millán Moncayo 84). Mária Millán Moncayo's study of indigenous women in the EZLN explains how the majority of Zapatista women, like Infantry Major Ana María, join when they are young girls. For many, the decision to take up arms with the Zapatistas is based on the potential opportunity to redress the conditions of abject poverty that devastate their lives as is the case with Laura, a captain of Zapatista troops: "I was very young when I heard about the EZLN. I was working the land with other women who got together to grow some food. That's where we started talking and began to understand why we live in

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<sup>6</sup> Violeta Zylberberg Panebianco describes the EZLN structure as follows: "Below the CCRI is the military and regular structure of the EZLN, composed of men and women who live in the military camps in the region's mountains. At the third level are the women's militias, composed of women who live in their communities but who have had military training; they form irregular troops that are called into action at specific times. Finally, there are the women who are part of the support bases" (222-223).

poverty and cannot find a better way of living.... I joined out of conscience, to fight for the poor; it is not right that children go on dying” (82).

Laura’s reasons for joining the Zapatistas contrast with the motivations of a Chicana soldier, Corporal Celestina Torres Rudziewicz, who joined the US Army. For Torres Rudziewicz, the military presented financial opportunity and training that aided in her personal growth: “The Army has provided many opportunities for me, a Latina from a small South Texas town, where jobs are scarce and only pay minimum wage. Yes, the Army was an opportunity for me to support and provide for my family [...]. The Army has taught me that I can accomplish much more than I had imagined and can overcome; adapt to any situation.” Both women’s statements demand a closer analysis of how women are differentially invested in militarism. Their accounts of voluntary military enlistment reveal how Zapatista and US militarism enable women from disadvantaged circumstances to maximize opportunities in order to lead better, fuller lives. Military life provides these Latinas with a way to challenge the economic oppression of their communities. For Laura, subaltern militarism enables her to take action as a moral agent who acts “out of conscience” while Torres Rudziewicz experiences the satisfaction of personal growth and empowerment. Although it is possible to say that Zapatista women take up arms against US-Mexican neoliberalism while Latinas in the US military fight on neoliberalism’s behalf, a nuanced analysis of economic, political, and cultural circumstances would reveal a more complex picture of Latinas and neoliberal militarism. Ultimately, we must ask ourselves why there are not more non-military options available for Mexicanas and Chicanas who seek economic justice and self-improvement.

Chicana writer Graciela Limón provides at least one possibility of how Mexicanas and Chicanas can join forces in the Zapatista war against neoliberalism and gender hierarchy. Her novel *Erased Faces* (2001) focuses on a Chicana photographer

Adriana Mora and a Tzeltal woman named Juana Galván, a Zapatista leader who encourages Adriana to use her camera to document the Zapatista insurgency. Events are set in the year leading to the Zapatista attack on San Cristobal in 1994; however, the novel emphasizes the historical context of indigenous resistance to the multiple forms of colonial and imperial wars throughout Mexico's history. While both women escape from tragic lives of neglect and family betrayal, they experience powerful dreams that reveal their past lives as indigenous women who stood up to Spanish invaders in the sixteenth century. By the end of the book, we learn that their dreams of the past actually foretell their future. Images of the Spanish colonizers' dogs chasing and mauling the women as they flee through the jungle are replaced with Mexican paramilitaries who use automatic weapons to mow down men, women, and children suspected of sympathizing with the Zapatistas. Because both women knew each other in a past life, they develop a deep connection upon first meeting in a small village at the foot of the Lancandón Mountains. Their historical ties are further cemented by the love that develops between the two women as they become part of the Zapatista uprising. Limón's novel reiterates the importance of history and memory to current narratives of transnational resistance and, importantly, places women's lives at the center of the war story. By doing so, her novel provides yet another example of how Latina war stories help us reclaim history, transform the present, and imagine the future.

Understanding how Mexicanas and Chicanas struggle to live amidst the militarization of their communities requires a full accounting of how militarism operates on material and symbolic levels. I have shown how Latina authors are among the most important thinkers who can help envision and express community responses to war and violence. They often model the aesthetic literary practices needed to question war's influence on the organization of social relations. While I argue that

much of the Latina literature discussed in this dissertation rejects the dehumanizing experiences of war, the experiences of Zapatista women and Chicana soldiers in the twenty-first century caution us against hastily presuming that all Latinas oppose militarism. Rather, Latina war stories reflect Latinas' diverse stance on war and their changing relationship to militarism and state formation. This dissertation only begins to address the issues raised by the increasing presence of women in state militaries and subaltern resistance movements. However, I have shown that reading Latina war stories attentively can generate new understandings of how Latinas rewrite master narratives, reconfigure gender norms, and redefine citizenship practices in times of war and revolution.

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